

# Trans Students. Difficulties, needs and educational actions in Spain

Short title: Trans Students in Spain

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## **Abstract**

Due to social changes in Spain in recent years, more and more people feel free to express their trans identity in childhood and adolescence. There are very few studies in Spain about their problems in school settings. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to draw on the experience of experts in the field to understand the difficulties and needs faced by trans people in formal educational settings. The Delphi method was used with 72 experts from four different groups: trans activists, activists who are parents with trans children, health professionals and teachers. The results show that the difficulties faced by trans students and their families are many and diverse, although the opinions manifested by trans activists and professionals differ from those of parents and teachers. However, they reached a consensus on the actions that need to be taken to guarantee the educational inclusion of trans students.

**Keywords:** Trans students, gender identity, educational inclusion, formal education, Delphi.

Recent studies report that the LGBT+ community is subject to discrimination, aggression, and ostracism in various social contexts, and especially in school settings (Council of Europe 2015). However, little research from Spain focuses specifically on LGBT+ students in the initial stages of the education system and their needs and difficulties while they are at school, where they spend a considerable amount of time. Therefore, it is difficult to know the real significance of the problems that this collective suffers in such vulnerable ages as childhood and adolescence. Furthermore, one of the limitations of many studies on sexual and gender minorities is that they combine Sexual Orientation (SO) with Gender Identity (GI), which may provide misleading results because they are different concepts and not always related.

Because of social changes in Western countries and the recognition of the rights of gender minorities, more and more children and adolescents are daring to reveal their trans GI (Council of Europe 2015). The term ‘trans’ refers to people whose gender differs from what is normatively expected of their assigned sex at birth (Bartholomaeus et al. 2017). According to the LGBTQIA Resource Center, trans is an umbrella term that encompasses different experiences and realities; for example, people whose gender identity or expression does not fit within the dominant social constructs of assigned sex and gender, people with a gender outside the man/woman binary, people with no gender or multiple genders, etc. For its part, the term “cisgender” is used to refer to people whose reproductive organs (sex characteristics) coincide with the social category of man or woman (gender) to which they were assigned at birth.

The term cisgender began to be used by trans activists in the 1990s to criticise the traditional ways of conceiving sex and gender to be strictly related. The traditional cisnormative view assumes that all human beings have a gender identity that matches their biological sex, which leads to the stigmatization and pathologization of transgender people. In fact, the terms “man” and “woman” tend to reinforce the traditional view that cisgender is

natural, while the terms “cis man” and “cis woman”, along with “transman” and transwoman”, break down this cisnormative view and prevents pathologization (Aultman 2014). Traditionally, labels have only been used for those people who depart from the social norm, thus giving people who comply with the norm a privileged position and marginalizing those who do not. For this reason, the term cisgender helps to shift from a unitary hegemonic position of gender identity to a new conception that involves more experiences and realities. In this study, the term cisgender is understood as one of several gender identifications.

### **Trans students and formal educational contexts**

School is one of the main environments in which trans people become vulnerable, marginalised groups at high risk of assault and harassment (Devís-Devís et al. 2018). These problems occur at all educational levels from primary school to university. In the context of primary education, Pullen Sansfaçon, Robichaud and Dumais-Michaud (2015) found that the fact that education personnel tend to confuse gender identity and sexual orientation is a matter of concern for parents of gender-variant children. This confusion involves a lack of understanding about gender diversity. Parents also identified other specific challenges: for example, the need for the educational community to give support and training to staff so that they can respond to the specific needs of these students. According to the authors, the key to inclusion in schools lies in all members of the education staff having an understanding of sexual and gender diversity.

In the context of secondary education, trans adolescents suffer higher rates of violence, physical aggression, sexual assault and verbal threats than cisgender adolescents or lesbian, gay and bisexual adolescents because they are more visible and they have to cope with greater social rejection (Council of Europe 2015). In Spain positive measures have been taken to protect the rights of trans people, and the general context is more positive than in some other

European countries, as can be seen in the comparison between countries made by the Transgender Europe organization (TGEU, 2020). This positive situation is reflected in the healthcare system and in legal and administrative measures for legal gender recognition, hate crime laws, or hate speech laws to protect vulnerable people. Despite this, in Spain a high percentage of trans students experience harassment in the educational context (Devís-Devís et al. 2017). In 2019, the survey by the Spanish Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and Bisexuals (FELGTB) revealed that 58% of adolescents and young people had suffered from transphobia in school settings, especially during secondary education. A total of 40% had been insulted, 25% harassed and 22% threatened, while 18% had been victims of cyber violence, 12% of physical aggressions and 9% of sexual violence. However, most of them received no support from the educational community. The situation is also worrying in other European countries where 69% of trans students are victims of transphobia (Council of Europe 2015). It should be noted that there are very few studies with representative samples that show which problems trans students are facing nowadays in Spanish educational contexts. For this reason, Spanish LGBT+ associations are warning about the importance of having up-to-date information in order to develop measures that are appropriate to current needs (FELGTB 2019).

LGBT+ children and adolescents are subject to intimidation and constant discrimination at school by other students, teachers and the school administration, who often do not defend them (Gato et al. 2020). This situation may force LGBT+ students to leave school, which means that they will be at a social disadvantage in society in the long term (Hanımoğlu 2018). Even so, despite the importance of this issue, research on SO and GI minorities in children and adolescents is scarce in education journals (Espelage 2016). The professionals involved in education – teachers, educational psychologists, educational counsellors, etc. – must be trained to accompany students in their human development and be able to provide advice and

consultations. They are in a position of great responsibility in schools because they can respond to the needs of LGBT+ students and improve their situation (Thomas et al. 2014).

Most studies suggest that institutional policies against discrimination are the first step towards adequate inclusion (Meyer & Keenan 2018). But these laws and policies must be complemented with actions that guarantee they are complied with and put into practice (Meyer & Keenan 2018), especially in rural areas, where traditionally less action has been taken to create safe spaces for transgender students (Davies et al. 2019). Some studies, mostly in university settings in the United States, Canada, and Australia, have proposed tools that allow for the adequate inclusion of trans students and an educational environment more suited to their needs: for example, improving educational systems and procedures for registering name and gender, making physical changes to the facilities, holding people accountable, offering support to trans people and encouraging greater inclusion and recruitment of various groups (Beemyn 2005; Seelman 2014). Likewise, the Council of Europe (2015) informs about the challenge in Europe to facilitate the use of gendered facilities in school settings (such as locker rooms or sanitary facilities) and increase the participation in daily school life in accordance with the individual's gender identity. Regarding the situation in Spain, the survey by the FELGTB association in 2019 revealed that many educational centres do not take into account the needs of trans students. For example, most schools only had binary identified bathrooms and changing rooms. Trans students are often afraid that if they use the facilities that match their GI they will be harassed, so these binary bathrooms and changing rooms may exacerbate their feelings of exclusion and denigration (Herriot, Burns, & Yeung 2018). However, even when institutions provide specific facilities for trans students (usually in basements, in the school's sickroom/infirmery or in the staff room), they may feel isolated and frustrated, the victims of a social stigma that obliges them to have separate facilities from the rest of students (Porta et al. 2017). Moreover, the survey by the FELGTB association also showed that in most schools

there was a lack of intimacy in the changing rooms, and the school activities were separated by gender. However, it should be taken into account that this survey was not made with a representative sample, so other studies are needed if the situation in Spain is to be better understood.

### **The present study**

Against this background, and taking into account that Spanish LGBT+ associations warn about the lack of up-to-date information in Spain, the present study aims to draw on the experience of experts in this field to understand the difficulties and needs faced by trans people in formal educational settings. It also intends to establish possible educational action for the proper care of trans students.

## **Materials and methods**

### **Design of the investigation**

We used the Delphi method because it is appropriate for dealing with knowledge areas that are complex, dynamic, ambiguous, and lack information. It is a structured process that obtains the most reliable opinion consensus of a panel of experts, without them having to confront one another directly. The method involves a series of rounds. The first round usually begins with an open-ended questionnaire that requires participants to express their own views and experience on the issue. From these responses, researchers develop a well-structured questionnaire. In the second round, researchers provide feedback to the panellists about the viewpoints of the other members in the first round, so that they can change their views or opt for other options they had not considered in the first round. Then, panellists are asked to respond to the structured questionnaire, and measures of central tendency (such as the mean) are used to determine the consensus. The rounds finish when consensus is reached. In the present study, the participants reached consensus after two rounds of questions.

This research follows the guidelines suggested by Pickard (2013) for a Delphi study: *a*) only experts participate in the panel, *b*) all data are collected in written form, *c*) systematic attempts are made to reach a consensus, *d*) there is more than one round; *e*) the experts are anonymous. The preservation of the anonymity of the participants is important to prevent likeable people or domineering personalities from leading other panellists to biased judgements. The Delphi method has many advantages but it also has some drawbacks, such as the risk of losing some of the participants from one round to another.

## **Participants**

We contacted four groups of experts to take part in the Delphi method: *a*) Trans activists aged over 18 years, *b*) activist parents of trans children and adolescents, *c*) health and social professionals (doctors, psychologists and social workers) working with trans children and adolescents, and *d*) teachers of early childhood education, primary and compulsory secondary education, vocational and upper-secondary education who have had trans students in their classrooms.

To select the participants, we contacted 26 LGBT+ associations, 6 trans associations and 1 trans family association. A total of 24 associations agreed to take part in the study and, in the first round, the questionnaire was shared with their expert members by email, WhatsApp groups or Facebook groups. A total of 72 people agreed to participate. Clayton (1997) recommends that if the Delphi method is to be properly implemented, the group of experts must be heterogeneous and consist of at least five members. So, the sample of the present study is heterogeneous and big enough to provide results that reflect the situation and the needs of the trans collective.

### First round

The sample in the first round consisted of 72 experts from 27 Spanish provinces. More specifically, 79.2% of the sample lived in an urban environment and 20.8% in a rural environment. A total of 54.20% stated that they lived in municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. The sample is divided up as follows:

- a) 16 trans activists, aged between 19 and 58 ( $M = 34.0$ ,  $S.D. = 14.5$ ),
- b) 33 parents of trans children and adolescents ( $M = 43.3$ ,  $S.D. = 6.7$ ),
- c) 9 medical, psychology and social work professionals who were experts in the care of trans people. They were aged between 31 and 61 years old ( $M = 48.4$ ,  $S.D. = 10.27$ ),
- d) 14 teachers from the various stages of formal education (except University), aged between 23 and 54 years old ( $M = 41.5$ ,  $S.D. = 8.14$ ).

Therefore, the sample consists of several kinds of participants and it can be said to be heterogeneous.

### Second round

The sample of the second round consisted of 46 participants (64% of the sample in the first round) from 21 Spanish provinces. Characteristics of the sample:

- a) 12 trans activists, aged between 22 and 56 ( $M = 30.0$ ,  $S.D. = 10.6$ ),
- b) 22 parents of trans children, aged between 34 and 58 ( $M = 45.6$ ,  $S.D. = 6.2$ ),
- c) 4 medical, psychology and social work professionals who were experts in the care of trans people. They were aged between 31 and 45 years old ( $M = 38.8$ ,  $S.D. = 5.8$ ),
- d) 8 teachers from the various stages of formal education (except University), aged between 23 and 54 years old ( $M = 42.1$ ,  $S.D. = 9.29$ ).

A total of 43.5% of the participants reported living in municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, and 28.3% in municipalities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants.

Therefore, 71.8% of the participants live in urban environments and the rest in rural environments.

## **Procedures and measures**

We followed the guidelines of Spanish Organic Law 15/1999 and the Spanish Agency for Data Protection, which regulates the fundamental right to the protection of data. We contacted several trans associations before starting the research, who prevented us from introducing cisnormative conceptions into the design of the study. We also followed Hale's recommendations for non-transgendered researchers writing about transgender (Hale, 2009).

The first page of the survey explained the objectives of the study. In order to continue with the survey, respondents had to provide their informed consent. We did not administer the survey to people under 18 years old.

The online surveys used to collect the data in round 1 and round 2 were designed specifically for this study. At the beginning of each questionnaire, the main concepts were defined for purposes of standardisation and the avoidance of ambiguity.

### First round

The procedure followed in this round was qualitative and the information was collected with open-ended questions. More specifically, an online survey of five questions was developed by the authors of this study. These questions were assessed by six external judges (two experts in LGBT+, two trans rights activists and two expert researchers in gender studies) to determine whether the language was appropriate (e.g., inclusive), easy to understand and suitable for the sample. These external judges did not participate in the study either as participants or as researchers.

The final survey consisted of the following items: 1) List what you consider to be the needs and difficulties that trans people may encounter when they are in formal education (kindergarten, elementary school, compulsory secondary education, vocational and upper-secondary education); 2) List what you think is required to ensure appropriate educational inclusion for trans students; 3) What do you think the teaching staff and management of schools should know if they are to improve the educational inclusion of trans students?; 4) What information do you think cisgender classmates and their families should know if they are to improve the educational inclusion of trans people?; and 5) Are there any other aspects you consider important for the educational inclusion of trans people?

We sent a mail to various experts to invite them to participate in the study. The mail contained information about the procedure, a link to the survey and information about the time they had to fill it in (five weeks).

### Second round

All the participants in the first round were contacted again by email to participate in the second round. The time lapse between the end of the first round and the beginning of the second round was two weeks. Participants were asked to rate 57 items on the difficulties, needs and educational actions with trans students using a 10-point Likert-type scale. Depending on the statement of each item, the response options ranged from Not frequent [0] to Very frequent [10], Not priority at all [0] to Top priority [10], or Not useful at all [0] to Very useful [10]. These items were developed after taking into account the contributions made by the experts in the first round. A total of 46 participants (64% of the total sample) answered the questionnaire and their responses were included in the data analysis. There were no incomplete questionnaires.

Participants were contacted a month later by email to thank them for their participation and to provide information about the consensus achieved.

## **Data Analysis**

### First round

The data from the first round was qualitative, and for this reason it was analysed using constant comparative analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña 2014). This procedure is appropriate for categorizing data, and it reduces some limitations of qualitative models such as the subjectivity of researchers. The procedure is divided into three stages. First, the responses from the first round were read in-depth. Second, two researchers separately grouped all the similar answers into categories according to the content of the answers. Both of them coincided in identifying the same four categories of answers (A, B, C and D). Third, examining the items that each researcher had included in each category, they agreed on which ones should be kept in each category and which ones should be removed.

### Second round

The findings from the first round were used to categorise the answers and develop a quantitative questionnaire to find out what the participants thought of the opinions of the other participants. An issue or opinion had to be proposed by at least one participant to be included in the second round.

The data from the second round was quantitative (Likert-type items were used). The written items took into account the four categories obtained in the first round, and the different opinions and issues for each of these categories. In this second round, we analysed the consensus between the study participants for the items in categories B, C and D. Consensus was regarded as having been reached on needs and actions if at least 70% of the participants answered seven or higher on the Likert scale option.

Unlike the other categories, category A sought to identify the difficulties that trans students and their families encounter in formal educational environments in Spain. Because the difficulties are diverse and personal, the consensus was not analysed in this case. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to compare the means of the four groups of experts in the items of this category. Moreover, frequency analysis was performed, and the answers were divided into three groups: 1) infrequent difficulty (answers between 0 and 3), 2) moderately frequent difficulty (answers between 4 and 6), and 3) highly frequent difficulty (answers between 7 and 10).

Statistical analyses were carried out with SPSS v25. We used the “Frequencies” module, the “Descriptives” module, and the “One-Way ANOVA” module of SPSS.

## **Results**

### First round

The results of the first round yielded four categories:

- A: Difficulties that can be found in trans students and their families in formal educational environments;
- B: Needs of trans students and their families in formal educational settings;
- C: Needs of the educational community if they are to be able to include trans students;
- D: Actions that can guarantee the educational inclusion of trans students.

Two categories (B and C) refer to the needs of both trans people and their families, as well as the educational community. The other two categories refer to the difficulties that trans people have (A) and the actions (D) that need to be carried out if they are to be included in the educational environment.

Because different opinions were expressed in each category, several items were written (see tables 2, 3, 4 and 5). Category A contained 23 items referring to the following types of difficulty: 1) discrimination, 2) administrative aspects, 3) aggression and feelings of insecurity. Category B contained 11 items on the recognition of the gender identity and educational protocols or standards. Category C had 9 items on understanding gender diversity and its dissemination. Category D had 14 items on specific actions for improving the educational experience of trans students.

### Second round

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for each sample and for the items in category A. The table also shows the ANOVA analyses for the comparison of means between the four samples. As can be seen, the differences between the groups were significant in all the items but three (1, 3 and 7). More specifically, pairwise mean comparisons using Tukey's HSD test showed that the groups of trans activists and professionals differ from the groups of parent activists and teachers. Therefore, trans activists and professionals have similar opinions regarding the difficulties of trans students and their families in formal educational environments. Parent activists and teachers also have similar opinions about these difficulties, but they differ from the opinions expressed by trans activists and professionals. Because an extremely high number of pairwise comparisons were carried out, these results are not shown in the article although they are available upon request.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages for the different kinds of answer (infrequent, moderately frequent and highly frequent) in each item of category A. Many difficulties were regarded as moderately frequent or highly frequent by experts. Of the 23 items, 18 are regarded as moderately frequent or highly frequent by more than 50% of the

experts. Difficulty 1 stands out in particular because it was evaluated by 82.6 % of the participants to be highly frequent. Therefore, the immense majority of the participants consider that the teaching staff, management staff and administrative personnel of the schools have an insufficient understanding of gender diversity. This data is worrying because understanding gender diversity is basic if gender minorities are to be included. Likewise, difficulties 5, 14, 20 and 22 were considered by 50% of the participants to be highly frequent. They refer to the following issues: being implicitly discriminated by classmates, being questioned about gender identity, and having problems to access the bathroom and dressing room that matches their gender identity. Finally, difficulties 3, 8, 10, 12 and 23 were evaluated by 50% or more of the participants as infrequent. They refer to the following issues: being coerced not to make the gender transition, undergoing explicit discrimination by the teaching staff and other educational workers, having difficulty in participating in extracurricular activities and using the clothing as a medium of gender expression.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Regarding category B (needs of trans students and their families in formal educational settings), Table 3 shows the number and percentage of participants who reached an agreement on the items in this category, and also the mean and the standard deviation of the items in the overall sample. As can be seen, all the items reached the criteria for consensus. The percentages of agreement ranged between 74% and 98%, and most were higher than 85%. Regarding school facilities, there was considerable consensus about the use of the bathroom in terms of gender identity, and the need to change communal showers for individual cubicles. There was also consensus about the need to have their identities recognised by staff and other students (for example, so that they can use the appropriate name and pronoun in all academic situations and activities). There was also consensus about the need to show acceptance and understanding of these students, provide psycho-educational support (companionship to facilitate academic,

social and personal development) and avoid pathologization. The experts considered that teachers should be specialised in matters of gender diversity, and they should use textbooks, stories and tales with which these students can identify. They also considered that there is a need for more specific national and school action protocols to be strictly followed in cases of bullying or cyberbullying.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

Table 4 shows the percentage of agreement, and the mean and standard deviation of the items in category C for the overall sample. Nine needs were identified in the first round. Participants reached consensus on all of them in the second round. The three needs with greatest agreement were training for the whole educational community on the detection of harassment, the need for knowledge of sexual and gender diversity (differentiation between sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics and sexual practices) and training teachers on how to explain gender diversity at each moment of the life cycle.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

Finally, the results in category D are shown in table 5. More specifically, the table shows the number of participants who reached agreement, the percentage of agreement, and the mean and standard deviation of the item in the general sample. This category deals with actions that can guarantee appropriate educational inclusion in trans students. Round 1 produced 14 proposals for actions, all of which generated consensus in the second round. The action that most participants agreed would improve the inclusion of trans students is number 5. This action refers to awareness about the consequences of discrimination and being a victim of aggression. Therefore, according to the participants, making the educational community aware of how being victimised affects trans people would decrease discrimination in formal education. Consensus was also reached on the following actions by more than 90% of the

participants: creation of safe spaces where any student who has been bullied or wants to talk, etc., can receive attention; active listening to trans students and their families by the educational community; and a change of the "living in the wrong body" paradigm for the construction of gender from a psychological, cultural and social perspective.

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

### **Discussion**

The objective of this study was to identify the difficulties faced by trans people and their families in the initial stages of education, and the results show the systemic effects and impacts of cisgenderism in school. Of the four samples that participated in the present investigation, there were some discrepancies between the groups of experts in category A (difficulties that trans students and their families may find in formal educational environments), while in the three remaining categories there was greater consensus. In category A, the opinions manifested by trans activists and professionals differ from the opinions manifested by parents and teachers. For example, the first two groups tend to think that trans students have problems in physical education classes and perceive little confidentiality, as opposed to the other two groups which gave these issues less importance. This may be due to the fact that trans activists and professionals have been in contact with a larger number of trans people, so they may have a more global understanding of the needs and claims of trans children and adolescents. On the other hand, many things happen in a class at the same time and teachers may not be aware of some of the things they experience, or trans students may not tell them about their difficulties. Likewise, parents do not experience the problem first-hand in the classroom, or their children may not tell them about all their problems, which makes it difficult to understand the global situation of this collective in schools. Another difference between these two groups is that parents and teachers are educators, while trans activists and professionals are not, so parents

and teachers may be more sensitive towards some specific problems of the school context, while the other group may have a more global perspective. This may explain why teachers and parents have similar opinions that are different from those of the other two groups.

The difficulty that most participants identified was the lack of understanding of gender diversity in the educational community, which is congruent with previous studies (Meyer 2016; Pullen Sansfaçon et al. 2015). According to Pullen Sansfaçon et al. (2015), the understanding of gender diversity by all members of the education staff is the key to inclusion in schools. If the educational community does not have an adequate understanding of gender diversity, they will hardly be able to teach these issues to students, which will make it more difficult to reduce the bullying and harassment of trans students. This lack of understanding is also an obstacle to reducing their problems in physical education classes, their problems with the use of the bathroom or their problems with wearing certain clothes. This inadequate or deficient education on gender diversity, because of the dominance of cisnormativity in formal education, may also lead to trans students having insufficient information about their non-cisgender identities. The dominant cisgender approach to sex education in schools also leads to trans students having insufficient applied sexual health knowledge, and not being prepared for sexual encounters, which facilitates negative or nonconsensual encounters (Hobaica et al. 2019).

The highest consensus on the needs of trans students and their families in formal educational settings was on using the bathroom, wearing clothes that matched their gender identity – as already pointed out by Porta et al. (2017) – and being called by their desired name in all academic areas. In fact, the survey carried out by the FELGTB association in 2019 showed that most schools in Spain have binary identified bathrooms and changing rooms, and that trans students are afraid of using the facilities that match their GI because they may be harassed. Previous studies in other countries also show the relevance of improving educational systems and procedures to register the name and gender (Beemyn 2005; Seelman 2014). Also,

many of the experts who have taken part in this study have pointed out that trans students need to have their identities recognised by their teachers and fellow students and that the specific action protocols designed to avoid bullying and cyberbullying must be complied with strictly. This is in line with the studies by Devís-Devís et al. (2018), which shows that trans people are exposed to greater situations of violence, victimization, harassment, aggression, etc. Furthermore, the experts also pointed out the importance of supporting trans students through psychoeducational guidance to avoid pathologization. This psychoeducational guidance is usually provided by school counsellors, who must be available when a student needs them so that they can provide guidance and support on academic, social and personal issues, with a trans-positive attitude and no attempt at pathologization. Horton (2020) gives several examples of pathologization: avoiding the word trans when referring to trans children, delegitimising trans people by citing old research that does not comply with current standards, focusing on trans people as a problem instead of a way of enriching the school community, etc. According to this author, using the word trans to define these adolescents is the first step in normalizing this term, and combating stigmatisation and pathologization. Therefore, school counsellors should have specific training so that they can help transgender people within the academic context with a trans-positive attitude.

If the educational community is to be able to respond to the needs of trans students, it is widely agreed that training needs to be provided on how to prevent harassment, which is in line with other studies that point out that the lack of safety in school environments worries trans students (Council of Europe 2015, FELGTB 2019, Wernick et al. 2017). The high percentages of harassment in Spain (Devís-Devís et al. 2017) also show the need to prevent these behaviours through training. The results of the current study also show that families, school employees and classmates need to be taught about sexual and gender diversity, and teachers need to be trained how to explain it at different stages of development.

With regard to the actions that can guarantee appropriate educational inclusion for trans students, the highest consensus was that people should be made aware of the consequences of being a victim of aggression and discrimination. Lowe (2015) showed that exploring sensitive issues with students in the classroom made them comfortable with these issues. Our study also showed there was wide consensus on offsetting up safe spaces where all students can be attended, with active listening by the educational community and a rejection of the “living in a wrong body” paradigm. According to Radi (2019), this biomedical paradigm ignores trans people who are satisfied with their bodies and do not wish to modify them. This paradigm is based on the normative epistemologies of sex and gender, which perpetuate the traditional male/female categories through genital reassignment operations and the use of hormones, without contemplating that there may be women with a penis and men with a vagina. The current study provides evidence of the systemic institutionalized forces of cisgenderism and some of the problems faced by trans students. It also provides information about the problems faced by Spanish trans students in school settings at the present time, in response to the demand of Spanish LGBT+ associations, which warn that there is a lack of current data in Spain. For this reason, we consider that this study was a necessary first step to improve the educational experience of Spanish trans students. In order to make realistic changes, it is first necessary to know what the needs are. However, this knowledge alone does not guarantee that the necessary changes will take place. If the administration and schools do not perceive the need for these changes, they are unlikely to happen. But studies such as the current one may help to prevent the problem from being ignored.

Although the current study uses the Delphi method, which requires impartial experts, further studies should be made with other procedures, in order to include the perspective of trans adolescents. Furthermore, it should be taken into account that full impartiality is probably not achievable, because some cisnormative biases may be internalised to some extent by some

participants. However, there is a general positive context in Spain, reflected in laws and other measures for the recognition of the rights of trans people. This makes the use of the Delphi method feasible, as experts are more likely to have more benign attitudes towards transgender people than other countries where the context is more negative.

**Declaration of Interest statement:** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Acknowledgment:** This research was supported by the Catalan Ministry of Universities, Research and the Information Society under grant 2017 SGR 97.

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Table 1

*Descriptive statistics for category A in each sample and ANOVA analyses*

Item	Trans activists		Professionals		Parents		Teachers		<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>		
1	8.4	3.0	8.5	1.3	7.5	3.0	8.0	2.1	0.31	0.02
2	7.0	1.7	6.0	1.4	4.3	3.8	1.4	2.9	5.71**	0.29
3	5.2	2.4	5.8	2.5	3.0	3.0	1.6	2.8	3.72	0.21
4	7.7	2.6	6.0	1.8	2.9	3.1	2.8	3.2	8.08**	0.37
5	8.1	1.7	8.3	1.3	3.7	3.7	4.5	3.2	6.85**	0.33
6	7.2	1.5	8.0	1.4	3.5	3.3	2.8	2.1	8.60**	0.38
7	6.0	2.7	7.3	1.9	3.2	3.1	3.1	3.2	4.12	0.23
8	5.3	1.9	5.8	1.3	2.1	2.3	1.1	2.1	10.37**	0.43
9	5.9	2.0	7.5	1.7	2.8	3.0	3.0	3.5	5.59**	0.29
10	5.3	1.9	6.0	0.8	2.2	2.5	1.4	3.2	7.77**	0.36
11	7.4	1.8	8.5	0.6	3.5	3.9	4.5	4.9	4.42**	0.24
12	6.0	2.1	5.0	0.8	2.6	3.2	1.4	3.2	5.81**	0.29
13	8.1	1.7	9.0	0.8	3.3	3.7	3.3	3.5	9.18**	0.40
14	9.0	1.6	9.3	1.0	3.3	3.9	3.1	4.5	10.01**	0.42
15	9.1	1.1	9.0	0.8	2.6	3.4	3.1	4.0	15.49**	0.53
16	7.3	1.7	7.3	1.7	3.3	3.8	3.0	3.7	5.42**	0.28
17	7.7	2.9	8.0	0.8	3.5	3.7	3.0	3.4	5.99**	0.30
18	7.3	1.8	8.5	1.7	3.1	2.8	2.4	3.3	11.77**	0.46
19	7.6	2.2	8.8	1.3	3.6	3.3	3.9	3.3	7.19**	0.34
20	8.1	3.0	9.3	1.0	4.3	4.0	3.8	3.7	5.17**	0.27
21	6.9	2.4	8.5	1.3	3.1	3.6	3.5	4.0	5.78**	0.29
22	8.3	2.0	8.5	1.3	2.7	3.6	3.5	4.6	9.43**	0.40
23	7.3	3.1	8.5	1.0	2.0	2.9	2.3	3.7	11.71**	0.46

Note. See items in table 2 \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 2

*Percentages and frequencies for the items in Category A (Difficulties that trans students and their families may find in formal educational environments)*

	Infrequent	Moderately frequent	Highly frequent
1. Teaching, management and administrative staff may lack training on matters of sexual diversity.	8.7 (4)	8.7 (4)	82.6 (38)
2. Parents' associations may object to the provision of information and training on sexual diversity.	34.8 (16)	26.1 (12)	39.1 (18)
3. The school may pressurize families to dissuade trans students from transitioning.	52.2 (24)	28.3 (13)	19.6 (9)
4. Staff members may lack empathy (sympathy, closeness, proximity) with students in transition.	45.7 (21)	17.4 (8)	37 (17)
5. There may be implicit discrimination from classmates of the trans student.	34.8 (16)	15.2 (7)	50 (23)
6. There may be explicit discrimination from classmates of the trans student.	37 (17)	21.7 (10)	41.3 (19)
7. There may be implicit discrimination from members of the teaching staff.	47.8 (22)	19.6 (9)	32.6 (15)
8. There may be explicit discrimination from members of the teaching staff.	58.7 (27)	30.4 (14)	10.9 (5)
9. There may be implicit discrimination from administrative staff, cleaners, canteen staff and caretakers	47.8 (22)	19.6 (9)	32.6 (15)
10. There may be explicit discrimination from administrative staff, cleaners, canteen staff and caretakers.	58.7 (27)	23.9 (11)	17.4 (8)
11. There may be administrative discrimination.	37 (17)	17.4 (8)	47.7 (21)
12. Trans students may have problems in participating in extra-curricular activities.	50 (23)	30.4 (14)	19.6 (9)
13. Trans students may be insecure at school if they feel bullied, lonely, ostracised or socially excluded.	41.3 (19)	10.9 (5)	47.8 (22)
14. Trans students may have problems in physical education classes.	41.3 (19)	8.7 (4)	50 (23)
15. There may be a lack of confidentiality.	45.7 (21)	6.5 (3)	47.8 (22)
16. The academic performance of trans students may be low due to victimization.	41.3 (17)	21.7 (10)	41.3 (19)
17. They may suffer psychological problems due to discriminatory socialization.	41.3 (19)	13 (6)	45.7 (21)
18. They may be victims of direct aggression.	45.7 (21)	21.7 (10)	32.6 (15)
19. They may be victims of indirect aggression	43.5 (20)	13 (6)	43.5 (20)
20. They may have their identity as trans students questioned.	37 (17)	13 (6)	50 (23)
21. Their parents may be suspected of manipulation.	41.3 (19)	17.4 (8)	41.3 (19)
22. They may have problems using the bathroom or changing room they wish to use.	45.7 (21)	4.3 (2)	50 (23)
23. They may have problems wearing the uniform, clothes or accessories they wish to wear.	52.2 (24)	17.4 (8)	30.4 (14)

Table 3

*Percentage of agreement, means and standard deviations for the items in Category B (Needs of trans students and their families in formal educational settings)*

	N	Percentage of agreement	Mean	SD
1. To use the bathroom and uniform they wish to use according to their sexual identity.	43	94	9.5	1.7
2. To use the name and pronoun that is appropriate to them in all academic situations and activities.	45	98	9.9	0.6
3. For specific action protocols to be strictly followed in cases of bullying or cyberbullying.	43	94	9.5	1.1
4. To have teachers who are specialised in matters of sexual diversity available to make trans students feel secure.	36	78	8.4	2.5
5. To feel understood and accepted by the educational community.	42	91	9.1	2.5
6. To feel identified in textbooks, stories and tales included in the curriculum.	39	85	9.1	1.4
7. To have communal showers changed for individual cubicles for all students.	35	76	7.9	2.9
8. To have their identities recognised by their teachers and fellow students.	43	94	9.6	0.9
9. To have a simple process for changing their assigned name at birth to their social name.	43	94	9.6	0.9
10. To be provided with psycho-educational guidance, avoiding pathologization.	34	74	8.2	2.8
11. To have more specific national protocols available.	40	87	8.9	1.9

Table 4

*Percentage of agreement, means and standard deviations in Category C (Needs of the educational community if it is to include trans students)*

	N	Percentage of agreement	Mean	SD
1. Provide parents' associations, school employees and classmates with training and information on sexual diversity.	40	87	9.0	1.8
2. Provide the educational community with training on how to detect bullying.	42	91	9.5	1.2
3. Understand the symbolic chain (non-correlation with sex, gender identity, gender roles, affective-sexual orientation and sexual practices).	42	91	9.4	1.2
4. Train teachers how to explain sexual diversity at each stage of development.	42	91	9.4	1.3
5. Know the laws and protocols that protect trans people.	37	80	8.8	1.5
6. Enable professionals who are specialised in the subject to provide advice.	41	89	9.0	1.4
7. Train teachers how to use alternative strategies instead of dividing students into groups by gender.	37	80	8.9	1.6
8. Use case studies to train teachers how to act in different situations that may arise.	40	87	8.9	1.4
9. Create an observatory of good educational practices in matters of sexual diversity.	39	84	8.8	1.5

Table 5

*Percentage of agreement, means and standard deviations in Category D (Actions that can guarantee appropriate educational inclusion for trans students)*

	N	Percentage of agreement	Mean	SD
1. Teachers should request information from organizations specialised in sexual diversity.	37	80	8.9	1.4
2. The educational community should listen actively to trans students and their families.	42	91	9.4	1.1
3. Trans students should be monitored.	33	72	8.3	1.7
4. All families should receive training in sexual diversity using specially adapted pedagogical tools.	37	80	8.8	1.6
5. Awareness should be raised about the consequences of discrimination and aggression.	44	96	9.5	1.2
6. Specific resources should be provided for family counselling.	40	87	9.0	1.7
7. It is NOT necessary to explain the sexual identity of any new trans student who arrives at the school.	37	80	8.7	2.4
8. Attach just the right amount of importance to a trans student's moment of transition. Do not place the focus of attention on the trans student.	34	74	8.7	1.9
9. Hold a prior meeting between the family and the teaching staff to establish the best way to intervene in the transition process, taking as the starting point the decision of the trans student or their family on whether to communicate their decision.	41	89	9.4	1.6
10. Ensure the visibility of positive trans referents.	39	85	9.0	9.5
11. Change the "living in the wrong body" paradigm for a construction of gender from a psychological, cultural and social perspective.	43	94	9.5	1.1
12. Create safe physical and virtual spaces where any student who has been bullied or wants to talk, etc., can receive attention.	43	94	9.4	1.0
13. Have quality scientific information available that is adapted to all types of public (scientific research adapted for information purposes).	36	78	8.6	1.8
14. Correctly apply educational accompaniment protocols for trans people who are transitioning.	39	85	9.2	1.3