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“If they made it, why not me?” Increasing Educational Expectations of Roma and Moroccan Immigrant Families in Spain through Family Education

In Europe, Roma and immigrant students continue to experience great inequities, as they face the probabilities of educational failure, segregation, and early school leaving. Previous research has shed light on the multiple factors that perpetuate this situation. However, the role played by family involvement and family educational expectations have been considered to a lesser extent. This research delves into how Family Education programs provided by eight Spanish schools are playing a central role in increasing Roma and Moroccan families' expectations of their children's education. Based on the communicative methodology, this study was conducted in schools located in five Spanish regions. The schools serve minority students from low-SES families and provide Family Education programs in their own facilities. We applied a convergent mixed methods design, implementing qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques (semistructured interviews, communicative focus groups, communicative daily life stories, and questionnaires). The sample included Roma and Moroccan family members with low SES and teachers involved in Family Education. The results suggest that Family Education is increasing minority families' educational expectations of their children's education. Three elements have been identified as facilitators: 1) the co-creation of a high expectations climate in the schools; 2) the improvement of family members' academic skills; and 3) the generation of new role models.

Introduction

In Europe, Roma/Gitanos¹ and immigrant students continue to experience great inequities, as they are exposed to the probabilities of educational failure, segregation, and early school leaving (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020a; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019). In recent years, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has posed profound challenges to ensuring educational equity and inclusion of these vulnerable students (OECD, 2020). In Spain, the context in which this study takes place, the increase in the educational gap for minority students has been one of the significant impacts of the coronavirus crisis (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020b). Specifically, Roma/Gitanos and immigrant families have been considered two of the most affected groups by increased racism and discrimination (Cisneros-Kostic, et al., 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Many studies have emphasized strategies to overcome minority students' educational inequalities by focusing on early childhood education, late tracking, or class and school composition (Weiner, 2016). However, the roles of family involvement and family expectations of their children's education have been considered to a lesser extent (Makarova, et al., 2021). Contemplating the essential contributions that minority families can make toward their children's educational opportunities, we pose the following research question: what is the role that Family Education has played in increasing educational expectations of Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan migrant families of their children's education? Specifically, we delve into the role of Family Education, as a successful educational action (Díez, et al., 2011), in increasing educational expectations of their children's education in the Spanish context. To address this aim, we first provide relevant data illustrating the inequalities suffered by Roma/Gitanos and immigrant students in Europe and Spain. In addition, we present the state of the art on the influence

of family educational expectations and family involvement in the educational success of minority students.

Second, we describe the methods, based on the development of a communicative approach and the implementation of a convergent mixed methods design, with emphasis on the qualitative data. We also present the sample selected, which included low-SES Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan families and teachers involved in Family Education.

Third, we share the main results obtained by this study. Although there are significant differences in the experiences of the participating Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan families, the actions studied have reported similarities in terms of the educational benefits provided for both groups. Specifically, we delve into three elements that have contributed to increasing both Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan families' educational expectations of their children's education: 1) the co-creation of a high expectations climate at school; 2) the improvement of family members' academic skills, and 3) the generation of new role models.

Finally, the main contributions made by our study in relation to previous works are presented and discussed.

Educational inequalities suffered by Roma/Gitanos and migrant students

This article focuses on Family Education's role in the educational expectations of Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan migrant families regarding their children's education. The following sections include significant differences in their inclusion processes and educational situations. Despite these divergences, Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan migrant families share experiences linked to the dynamics of racism and discrimination that have caused the two communities to present the highest rates of educational and social

exclusion in Spain (Cisneros-Kostic, et al., 2020; de Miguel-Luken & Solana-Solana, 2017).

The case of Roma/Gitanos students

The case of the Roma community in Europe illustrates the connection between educational and social exclusion. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020a), two-thirds of Roma aged 18–24 years in Europe leave school with only lower secondary education, and an average of 12% of Roma felt discriminated against when in contact with school authorities either as a guardian or as a student.

Regarding the Spanish context, understanding the situation of Roma/Gitanos students implies considering the consequences of the repression, stigmatization, and lack of protection this community has suffered since they settled in the country in the 15th century (Melgar, et al., 2011). These processes of discrimination and racism have caused the Roma/Gitano population, despite having adopted the Spanish language and most of their cultural practices, to be perceived as a minority who refuses to integrate or as an eternal foreigner (Marques Gonçalves, 2020). Despite this challenging background, great advances have been made in recent decades. Among them, the increase in primary education enrolment of Roma/Gitanos children stands out (Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2013). However, data show the persistence of large inequalities throughout the educational trajectory of Roma/Gitanos students. According to Fundación Secretariado Gitano (2013), the Roma/Gitanos enrolment rate in secondary education is 55% by age 16, which is far below 93.5% for the general population. Furthermore, 64% of Roma/Gitanos youth do not complete their compulsory secondary education studies compared to 13% of the general population.

Ethnographic studies have pointed out both conditions of schools' dynamics and community/family in the promotion or interruption of Roma students' educational expectations (Bereményi & Carrasco, 2015). Regarding the school conditions, teacher discourses and expectations are frequently conditioned by widely held assumptions that Roma families do not value education or that their cultural frame of reference is oppositional to academic success (Brüggemann, 2014). Community/family influence on the Roma student's educational success has been explored to a lesser extent. Some studies have pointed to the risks associated with adverse situations experienced by Roma families related to poverty, community conditions, and family structure (Carmona-Santiago, et al., 2021).

The case of migrant students

A focus on education and training has been a key strategy for achieving one of Europe's policy priorities: the social and economic integration of migrants (De Paola & Brunello, 2016). The educational situation of migrant students varies substantially across European countries (Crul, et al., 2012). However, on average, there are clear disparities in educational performance between EU migrants and non-migrants (Osadan & Reid, 2016). Specifically, Spain ranks as one of the European countries with the highest rates of educational inequalities between native and migrant groups with respect to educational attainment and early school leaving (García Yeste, et al., 2020). Taking this into account, we focus on the case of Moroccan migrant families living in different Spanish regions.

Moroccan migrant families are the minority group with the highest rates of migration to Spain in recent decades (Domínguez-Mujica, et al., 2014). Large-scale immigration in this context is a relatively recent phenomenon. Spain became one of

Europe's leading countries in terms of receiving immigrant workers between the late 1990s and 2008. In the Spanish context, Moroccan migrant families tend to suffer greater isolation and exclusion than other migrant groups (Rogozen-Soltar, 2012). Furthermore, they often face discrimination maintained through essentialized racial and gender categories.

Moroccan students also make up the largest minority group attending school in Spain, with 23.6% of all minority students (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2020). School failure and underachievement suffered by these students are often interpreted with cultural biases that emphasize their families' lack of interest or low expectations (de Miguel-Luken & Solana-Solana, 2017). However, several studies have refuted this idea, finding instead that one of the main reasons for the family's migration was to provide better educational opportunities for their children (Taurini, et al., 2017).

Family educational expectations and educational success

Several theoretical approaches have focused on how the family environment shapes children's educational success opportunities. Authors such as Rogoff (2003) highlight the importance of acknowledging that children, families, and schools are embedded within changing social, cultural, and historical influences. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems approach (1979) identifies different systems that embody the child's context. It includes microsystems of direct influences (e.g., family, teachers, and schools) and macrosystems of indirect influences (e.g., cultural attitudes and ideologies).

Specifically, family educational expectations, or how far in school family members expect a child to go, have been shown to influence students' educational outcomes (Lawrence, 2014). Among the aspects studied, the correlation between family

educational expectations and grades and test scores has been investigated (Kaplan et al., 2001). The influence of family attitudes and behaviours has also been explored, especially in relation to the prospects and educational attainment of disadvantaged students (Flouri & Hawkes, 2008; Mortimer, et al., 2017). For instance, a large group of studies suggests that disadvantaged parents tend to be more pessimistic about their children's educational attainment possibilities (Oyserman, et al., 2011; May & Witherspoon, 2019). Such pessimism can have negative consequences, including the reduction of family motivation for actively engaging in students' educational careers, as parents doubt themselves and have less hope for the future. A common approach to these studies has been to focus on the tangible advantages that money and social status bring families. However, authors such as Crosnoe et al. (2002) corroborate that despite the value provided by these approaches, they also neglect "the possibility that one of the greatest influences of poverty may be on the way that families work as opposed to what they get" (p. 692).

It is also worth mentioning the wide disparity in results regarding how race and social class intersect family educational expectations. Studies presented thus far reveal inconsistent findings that are dependent on the sample and the controls used (Kim, et. al., 2000; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). While some works indicate that parents with high educational attainment may value education more highly, a factor associated with higher expectations (Crosnoe, et al., 2002), other investigations identify higher expectations among racial minority families (Cheng & Starks, 2002; Raleigh & Kao, 2010). Despite this diversity of outcomes, there is an agreement that high family educational expectations of their children's education, while positively correlated with later outcomes, are not a sufficient condition for high educational attainment for any social group (Lawrence, 2014). Works such as Modood (2004) suggest that what drives

the educational success of minority students is the ability of parents to get their children to internalize high educational ambitions and to enhance appropriate behaviours, despite their disadvantaged status.

Successful parenting and educational actions have also been the focus of relevant research (Castro et al., 2015; Crosnoe et al., 2002; García-Carrión, et al., 2018), showing that parents and family members can make a positive difference even in more deprived contexts. These studies have shown that if disadvantaged families believe that they can make a difference, they can be tenacious in ensuring protective environments and mapping out opportunities for their children. Several family factors intervene in the academic careers of disadvantaged young people, including parental attitudes, parental behaviours, and parental efficacy. For instance, family members may be more optimistic about their children's educational futures when their children are doing well in school, or they believe that their children are socially and emotionally well equipped. Furthermore, parents who perceive themselves to be highly efficacious or able to provide academic supervision may have more optimistic outlooks on their children's educational futures (Castro et al., 2015).

Authors such as Lawrence (2014) have pointed to the lack of research that has addressed the intersection of family educational expectations and school and community. On many occasions, the literature uses family expectations as a key indicator, but it is likely that there are a variety of factors that shape family expectations. Schools, for example, can exert a strong influence on family expectations of their children's education through relevant elements such as school climate, teacher communication, or school policies, among others. Our study provides evidence on how the selected schools have activated successful educational actions capable of improving family expectations.

The role of family involvement

The connection between family involvement and educational success has been a topic of great interest. Beyond traditional analyses linking family socioeconomic status to students' educational outcomes (Pomerantz, et al., 2005), approximately two decades ago, Hidalgo, Epstein & Siu (2002) showed that family involvement has a greater impact on children's school success than other factors, such as family structure, socioeconomic status, and cultural background. In addition, research has found that disadvantaged schools can address and reduce the educational exclusion of minority students by involving family and community members in meaningful initiatives (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Flecha & Soler, 2013).

The benefits that family involvement can provide to minority students academic improvement have been widely analysed, including dimensions such as its influence on family educational expectations (Chen & Gregory, 2009; Fan, et al., 2011; Joe & Davis, 2009). Goodall & Montgomery (2014) identify the positive impact of family participation on students' motivation, self-esteem, engagement, and achievement. Other studies have found a positive influence of family participation on student performance in several curricular areas (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Additionally, a limited number of studies have determined that opening schools to minority families introduces students to a wide variety of role models, which corresponds to the diversity of minority students' experiences in their own lives (Oliver, et al., 2011).

Despite the potential for family involvement, several barriers (e.g., organizational and cultural) often prevent the benefits of family engagement from reaching schools (Kim, 2009). At the same time, not all types of participation show the same capacity to engage minority families, and some of them produce greater benefits

than others. A limited number of studies have focused on responding to these limitations by identifying effective actions to overcome family participation barriers in schools and education. Among them, some successful examples of family and community education have been reported as one of the strategies that have resulted in the greatest impact on improving student learning and social cohesion (Flecha, 2015). One major common characteristic of these educational programmes is that the activities are organized in response to the needs and requests of the families (Serrano, et al., 2019; Tellado, 2017).

The present study is grounded on the results provided by previous research that has identified effective and culturally relevant Family Education (Flecha, 2012; Garcia Yeste, et al., 2018). Specifically, our study delves into a dimension rarely addressed by previous studies, namely, the relationship between family education programmes and increased educational expectations of Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan migrant families of their children's education.

Methodology

The results presented in this article are obtained from the research project *Improving the education system through family education aimed at vulnerable groups* (EDUFAM), which was funded by the National Research Plan of the Government of Spain.

EDUFAM has been carried out to identify the characteristics and social impact of Family Education programs aimed at vulnerable groups in Spanish primary schools. Although the project has provided a wide variety of results, this article focuses exclusively on the increase in educational expectations of minority families regarding their children's education.

This research is based on the principles of communicative methodology (CM), which is recommended by the European Commission for its suitability to work scientifically with groups belonging to cultural minorities (Puigvert, et al., 2012). The CM approach has shown a potential to go beyond the diagnosis of social problems. One of its main aims is the identification of those interventions capable of reducing educational and social inequalities. From this perspective, knowledge is built through an egalitarian and intersubjective dialogue between researchers and social actors. Thus, in CM, knowledge emerges in the process of contrasting the scientific knowledge brought by the researchers with the ‘life-world’ knowledge (Habermas, 1981) brought by the research participants. Furthermore, one of the keys to the impact achieved by CM lies in the direct participation of end-users throughout the research process (Melgar, et al., 2011). To enhance this involvement, we organized this research in a communicative way, creating spaces for dialogue among potential participants. We established an advisory committee, which consisted of minority family members participating in Family Education, minority students from the schools selected, members of community associations, and staff from the research team. The advisory committee's role was to validate aspects such as the adequacy of the techniques, prevent the emergence of cultural bias throughout the research process, and discuss the validity and potential impact of the findings.

The choice to use a communicative methodology has also been based on the growing importance of carrying out research that demonstrates a social impact in its results and co-creation processes in its development. The social transformation orientation of CM and the communicative organization of the research itself responded to these two requirements.

Another important criterion in selecting the CM was its use for more than 20 years with the Roma community. As a result of all this accumulated work, especially that developed through the Workaló project² a new conceptualization of dialogic public policies was achieved. These policies are built through an egalitarian and inter-subjective dialogue between end-users, researchers, and policymakers. The actions applied following the dialogic approach combine this dialogue with scientific evidence, achieving social and political impact (Álvarez, Aiello, Aubert, García, Torrens & Vieites, 2020). In the background was an issue not directly addressed in the article, but which the use of CM entails, which is social justice in two senses. First, because of the positive impact it has had on the people who participated in the research, and second, because of the ethical and social positioning of the research personnel against inequalities, highlighting the critical and active positioning.

Sample

The sample of the study includes eight Spanish elementary schools that conformed to the following criteria: (1) presence of minority students; (2) implementation of Family Education in the school for at least two years; (3) minority families' involvement in Family Education, and (4) presence of evaluations and/or publications that provide preliminary evidence on the positive impact of Family Education. The schools have been territorially distributed in five different Spanish regions. All of them are urban schools. Seven of them are public, and one is semi-private. Table 1 summarizes contextual information for each of the selected schools:

[Here is Table 1. Characteristics and context of the schools selected]

In relation to the Family Education programs, it should be noted that all selected schools base these family interventions on the principles of the Schools as Learning

Communities project (Flecha & Soler 2013; Garcia, et al., 2012). Many of the courses taught are influenced by the dialogic learning theory implemented in the Learning Communities (Tellado, 2017). Among the features that define Family Education offered, it is worth noting that the programs are based on the needs expressed by families. It is a central aspect since schools offer Family Education usually do so from "peripheral participation" approaches (Díez, et al., 2011), from which professionals decide what and how families should learn. To respond to the diversity of demands, participating schools create a diverse pool of volunteers (e.g., community members, university students, and professionals from different social areas). All courses are free of charge for family and community members. Table 2 shows some of the Family Education courses provided by the schools we have considered in our study.

[Here is Table 2. Family Education provided and summary of their content]

Regarding the participants in Family Education, most of them were mothers or fathers of the school's students. However, other family members (e.g., aunts, uncles, grandmothers, and grandparents) are also identified. That is why throughout our research, we use the term "families or family members" and not "parents", as is common in the previous studies reviewed.

Among participants, the two predominant cultural groups were Roma/Gitanos (56%) and Moroccan migrants (23%). It is worth highlighting that their vulnerability is linked to low educational levels and unemployment. For instance, 75% of these minorities present very low educational levels—21% do not have an academic degree, and 54% have completed only primary school—. Furthermore, only 4% of participants had a stable job, 71% were unemployed or inactive, and nearly half of the participants (48%) were beneficiaries of social aid.

Concerning the teachers involved in the study, it should be noted that the racial composition of the sample is quite representative of the general situation in Spanish schools: although teachers serve in schools with high student racial diversity, they present racial homogeneity (e.g., all of them are Caucasian). Fifty-nine percent of participating teachers were women, and the average age was 35 years old.

Data collection techniques

We applied a convergent mixed methods design, applying qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques at the same time, with qualitative data being the central ones. Quantitative data were used only to complement some qualitative information. Specifically, four techniques were applied: semistructured interviews (N=61), communicative focus groups (N=24), communicative daily life stories (N=13), and questionnaires (N=111). Table 3 shows the techniques used, as well as their distribution in relation to the profile of the participants.

[Here is Table 3. Techniques and participants' profiles]

Qualitative techniques

Semistructured interviews with communicative orientation were conducted with family members and teachers involved in Family Education. Two different interview schedules were used, one for families and one for teachers. The interview schedules focused primarily on identifying the influence of Family Education on family educational expectations of their children's education. Different strategies were considered to overcome cultural barriers. For instance, we collaborated with local translators for the interviews with some Moroccan participants whose primary language was Arab or Amazigh.

The communicative life stories made it possible to conduct a longitudinal study of the impact of Family Education on the participants and on their family environment. The longitudinal study was carried out for three years (2015-2017) and incorporated the daily life stories of family members selected throughout the course of the study. This technique is considered communicative, as its aim is not to obtain a biography of the family members but to build—through the interactions established between the participant and the researcher—a reflective narrative on the impact of Family Education on their present, past, and future expectations. The interview schedules were designed with the objective of identifying the family members' perceptions during different phases of the research regarding the impact of the training at a personal level and in relation to their expectations of the educational trajectory of their children.

The communicative focus groups were conducted separately for family members and teachers with the objective of identifying collective interpretations about what elements of Family Education contributed to positive results in the involvement of family members, the academic improvement of their children, and the increase in families' educational expectations of their children's education. This technique's communicative application implied generating a climate that facilitates an egalitarian dialogue between the participants by, for instance, being sensitive towards families' cultural values and codes.

Quantitative techniques

Questionnaires were administered to family members and teachers. The questionnaires consisted of 17 questions—10 semi-open, 4 open, and 3 closed. In the case of questionnaires administered to families, for instance, the questions were divided into four thematic blocks: 1) personal situation; 2) family situation; 3) Family Education in

which they participate, and; 4) perception of the impact of Family Education. Open questions were in the fourth block, providing information regarding the perception of the social and educational impact of Family Education among family members. Participants who had difficulty reading the written information were offered the opportunity to have the questions read to them.

Communicative data analysis

All personal information was anonymized by applying pseudonyms, codification ,and carefully safeguarding data privacy. Moreover, the data collected were transcribed for further analysis.

The analysis of the qualitative data was performed following the premises of CM (Pulido, et al., 2014). According to the CM orientations, an analysis matrix was designed with two dimensions (exclusionary and transformative). The exclusionary dimension considered those barriers that hinder family members' participation in Family Education and those characteristics of the programmes that fail to improve their educational expectations of their children's education. Conversely, the transformative dimension included data referring to those elements that enhance the participation of participants in quality Family Education and that increase families' educational expectations of their children's education. Furthermore, the matrix has included eight categories of analysis, which were deductively established. These were extracted from the review of scientific literature and were specified in 1) characteristics of Family Education; 2) contextual characteristics; 3) participation and motivation; 4) impact on learning; 5) impact on the personal sphere; 6) impact on the family sphere; 7) impact on educational expectations; and 8) others.

For the analysis of the quantitative data, we used the specialized software SPSS® (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). For this purpose, a data matrix was developed, and a descriptive analysis was performed that entailed the extraction of the main frequencies.

In summarizing, semistructured interviews, communicative focus groups, and daily life stories were analyzed following transformative and exclusionary dimensions, paying special attention to the transformative one. It is necessary to analyze all qualitative information, in the same way, to reach social impact with the research results.

Questionnaires were analyzed by applying descriptive analysis, obtaining main frequencies for close and semi-open questions, and categorizing the open questions regarding main benefits for family members.

Findings

In this section, we provide the main findings regarding factors that have promoted high educational expectations among Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan families. The different linguistic and cultural characteristics of these two participating groups have been associated with diverse experiences in school life. Despite this, our findings reveal a collective positive impact generated by Family Education in both groups. Specifically, we delve into how Family Education has played a central role in increasing minority families' expectations of their children's education. We focus mainly on three elements that have been related to these improvements: 1) the co-creation of a high expectations climate at school; 2) the improvement of family members' academic skills, and; 3) the generation of new role models.

The co-creation of a high expectations climate at school

One of the main principles of Learning Communities, a project implemented in participating schools, is the establishment of a climate of high expectations for all. Data collected indicate that the eight schools have adopted active roles not only in promoting high expectations among the students but also in involving their families in the co-creation of this climate. Family Education has been one of the central strategies used by schools to build shared high expectations. The data obtained from the questionnaires answered by the teachers indicate that 81% of the teachers identified the promotion of high expectations to be one of their priorities in the educational programs offered to the community. The promotion of this climate has been the result of a process developed with diverse paces and intensities in the different schools, in which the type of interactions established among teachers has played an essential role. For instance, several teachers have stated that interacting with colleagues who had high expectations towards the families participating in Family Education helped reduce some of the biases they initially held regarding Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan families. In the following quote, one of the teachers participating in a focus group emphasized the role these interactions between teachers have played in reducing prejudice and low expectations towards the Moroccan women who attended Spanish courses in his school:

Initially, the problem was mine. I had a group that was comprised almost entirely of Moroccan women, and I planned out some things to work on with them, but I never dared to give them an exam. I thought, "No, we will do things little by little." [...] And then, the next year, I noticed...and spoke with other teachers. I saw that they had given exams[...]. I set expectations that were very basic. I should have tried to do more because people who were attending the class would have responded...they could do much more than I had anticipated (Rosana, teacher).

The change in attitudes has not only been identified in relation to the influence exerted from school to the community but the inverse influence has also been identified (from community to school). Thus, the involvement of Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan family members in schools through Family Education has resulted in changes in the attitudes of both families and teachers. First, minority families realized that despite their disadvantaged situation and their low academic skills, they could become involved in their children's schools. One of the factors that have favored this change has been the reduction of some emotional barriers. The data obtained from the interviews and communicative life stories indicate that when most of the participants first began Family Education, they identified negative feelings such as fear, insecurity, low self-esteem, or negative self-concept. In contrast, many of the participants identified that perceiving that the school staff trusted in their capacities and had high expectations of them was crucial for softening some negative emotions. These emotional changes have been revealed in several interviews and focus groups conducted. For instance, a Roma/Gitana mother involved in Family Education makes explicit changes in her self-perception in the following quote:

In all my life, I would never have imagined I would be able to do this. It is true! [...] I feel valued and important (Lucía, Roma/Gitana participant).

Second, families' approach to school and teachers contributed to reducing negative perceptions teachers held towards families' educational expectations. In the interviews carried out with teachers, it has been recurrent to find that they interpreted the lack of communication and participation of the Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan families as a lack of interest in their children's education. However, most of them have perceived that Family Education has improved the communication, coordination, and relationships between teachers and minority families. These improvements can be

identified in the following quote provided by a teacher involved in Family Education participating in a focus group:

We have noted improvements in the communication [of families] with the school. It is much closer. Families also take the education of their children much more seriously. Legitimacy and respect towards teachers are greater, and the parents do not oppose or argue with the teacher's messages[...]. They now know how things work. In many cases, they sit with their children to do their homework, something that we didn't see before (Alberto, teacher).

The improvement of family members' academic skills

In the previous section, we focused on how Family Education has promoted emotional and attitudinal changes. Next, we provide evidence that suggests that Family Education has also offered specific strategies and skills, which have enabled participants to increase the educational supervision and support provided to their children.

The promotion of children's educational success has been one aim of Family Education taught in the selected schools. Thus, family initiatives such as mathematics, literacy, or language courses have been oriented towards increasing the family's cultural level while simultaneously providing them with strategies and skills to support their children academically. The acquisition of this new knowledge has contributed to a change in the perceptions of some family members regarding the role they could play in the educational process of their children. For instance, most of the participants stated that before being involved in Family Education, they found it challenging to support their children with their homework and read books together or that their conversations at home about school were minimal. In contrast, their involvement in Family Education has provided family members with a new confidence about their capabilities to support their children academically. These changes have been especially identified in the

interviews and focus groups with Moroccan families. They identified their poor command of the school's official language as a significant challenge in providing educational support to their children.

In the following quote, a Moroccan mother who participated in dialogical literary gatherings perceives that the learning obtained in Family Education has allowed her to improve their language and reading skills. In addition, she correlates these improvements with her participation to a greater extent in her children's education. Specifically, she feels more capable of establishing conversations about school life and activities and sharing readings with her children:

Our dialogue is different. I can talk [with my children] about things I couldn't talk about before. We can work together on some project that they bring [from school], which I couldn't do before... For example, now that I'm in the literary gathering, the book we are reading there, we can read it together at home. We can talk about the book. I can explain things I couldn't explain before (Estefanía, Moroccan participant).

Thus, the findings suggest a connection between participants' perception of greater educational capacity and effectiveness and an increase in educational expectations towards their children. Data collected from questionnaires indicated that 96.4% of the family members expected their children to continue their studies in high school, and 89.3% expected them to pursue higher education. These quantitative results coincide with the results obtained from the qualitative techniques. The life story conducted with a Roma/Gitana mother whose extended family work as street vendors provides some examples in this regard. In the following quote, this mother establishes connections between her involvement in Family Education and the increase in her expectations regarding the academic future of her children:

My idea since I started participating in the training has changed 100%. I want my children to reach their highest level of education, to be happy above all, but to reach an academic level that I could not reach. I want them to have a university degree and to work in an area that they truly like. (Dolores, Roma/Gitana participant).

The generation of new role models

The involvement of minority families in schools through Family Education has facilitated the emergence of new collective narratives based on the recognition of education as the main way to improve the community's future. Both family members and teachers interviewed identified a key facilitator: the emergence of new role models. Thus, changes were appreciated in the discursive dimension (e.g., the way families talk about the educational futures of their children) and in family members' behaviours (e.g., families' first-hand involvement in educational processes, setting the example for their children). Several examples of discursive and behavioural changes have been identified in the two participating groups. From the Family Education obtained in the school, some Moroccan mothers have taken official state exams for the first time in their lives. These participants consider that their example and effort have increased their children's motivation for education, especially in the case of their daughters. The value of the family's direct involvement can also be identified in the following quote from a street vendor and Roma/Gitano parent who participated in Family Education:

My children are realizing that I'm struggling to raise them and that I'm struggling to reach a goal. Therefore, they also want to study to have a good future. The way is not only the street market, the scrap [collection], or the usual things [...] They'll have me as a reference and a role model...they'll want to study so they can, in the future, be somebody (Ricardo, Roma/Gitano participant).

The Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan families' involvement also contributed to generating new perceptions about the educational contributions minority families could make in schools, settings in which they were not previously represented. Through their involvement in Family Education, teachers have been able to identify that some of the Moroccan family members with difficulties in the Spanish language had high skills in foreign languages (e.g., English, or French) and invited them to participate in students' curricular activities. In this way, students obtained more linguistic support while the families' capacities and skills were valued. Furthermore, the impact of including key referents for Roma/Gitanos people in the school, such as "persons of respect", has been remarkable. Roma/Gitano "persons of respect" are highly regarded, and their opinions are especially relevant to solving community problems. In the following quote, a Roma/Gitano grandfather and "persons of respect" who participated in Family Education identifies the impact his presence in the school exerts on Roma/Gitanos students:

When children started to see me in the school, they were amazed. In addition, of course... all the children were looking at me and they were staring and saying: 'Damn it! How your grandfather is talking!' It was as if they had seen the President in person. Being Roma, they didn't expect it (Manuel, Roma/Gitano participant).

Throughout our research, we also collected several cases in which participation in Family Education broadened opportunities for social mobility. Among the positive examples identified through the communicative life stories is Francisco, a Roma/Gitano participant from a neighbourhood where 34% of the population did not complete secondary education, and 62.8% were unemployed. Francisco, who had not finished secondary school, emphasized that his participation in Family Education was the first step to pursuing his education. From the remarkable involvement Francisco showed in the school, Family Education teachers encouraged him to enrol in an official vocational

training centre. Once he obtained his degree, the school offered him a contract as a mediator with the aim of increasing the participation of the Roma/Gitano community. As mentioned below, Francisco is now perceived as a community leader. His educational trajectory has led him to become a role model for the Roma/Gitano community. Other young people in the neighbourhood are now following his same path:

They [young people] are realizing that without education, there is no future. They have identified role models to follow in their community. They consider me a reference [...].

Now, there are also other young people who are studying and working. It has had a tremendous change in the neighbourhood. The students said, 'Hey, they have been trained in the school...they have studied, and now they are working. Why not me?'

(Francisco, Roma/Gitano participant).

Discussion and conclusions

In this article, we have delved into the role that Family Education has played in increasing the educational expectations of low-SES Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan migrant families involved in eight Spanish schools towards their children's education. The study has been grounded in the communicative methodology (CM) (Puigvert, et al., 2012), which encouraged the direct participation of minority families throughout the different stages of the investigation process. It has been possible through the communicative organization of the research, which has prompted the emergence of situations for egalitarian dialogue (Melgar, et al., 2011). The establishment of specific strategies has included the creation of an advisory committee consisting of minority families and students, community entities, and researchers. The contributions provided by the advisory committee have contributed to the identification of cultural biases and have guaranteed the social relevance of the findings reported.

The CM claims the need to go beyond the diagnosis of situations of inequality and to focus on successful actions that contribute to overcoming such realities (Puigvert, et al., 2012). The schools, teachers, and families that participated in the study face huge challenges. However, the approach offered by the CM has allowed us to go beyond the identification of these barriers and has made it possible to identify the way in which these communities have recreated successful educational actions in their contexts to deal with these adverse situations.

This article makes some relevant contributions in relation to previous studies. Our research focused on the influence that high family expectations can exert on the educational attainment of minority students (Chen & Gregory, 2009; Childs, et al., 2017), focusing especially on a little-explored dimension, the identification of factors influencing the construction of these expectations. Furthermore, we have delved into the intersection between family educational expectations and school and community (Lawrence, 2017). Thus, we have shed light on how certain successful interventions, such as Family Education (Garcia Yeste, et al., 2018), have shaped minority family expectations.

This work illustrates how participating schools have managed to overcome some of the barriers that frequently hinder the involvement of minority families in schools and education. These schools constituted as Learning Communities (Flecha & Soler, 2013), have implemented Family Education understood as a successful educational action (Flecha, 2015). It has implied situating the needs of families and their children as a central priority of Family Education. Furthermore, one of the main objectives shared by Family Education was to create a climate with high expectations for Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan children and their families. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that this climate has arisen from a process of co-creation developed by both the school and

minority families. This result is in line with one of the current priorities of the European Commission (Bellavista, et al., 2022), which includes co-creation as an essential aspect of achieving social impact and innovation. Thus, dialogic interactions established among the teaching staff have contributed to creating an environment in which Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan families have felt welcomed and assisting them in surmounting some of the barriers that had previously hindered their participation (e.g., emotional barriers). However, this influence has not been carried out in a unidirectional way (school families), but families themselves have exerted an influence on teachers' beliefs and expectations. Thus, the interactions established between family members and teachers through Family Education have contributed to reducing prejudices some teachers had towards these family members' capabilities and interest in their children's education.

Our findings also suggest that Family Education has exerted a positive influence on factors that intervene in the academic careers of disadvantaged students, such as family attitudes, behaviours, and efficacy (Crosnoe et. Al., 2002). For instance, initiatives such as dialogical literary gatherings (Lopez de Aguilera, 2021), mathematics, literacy, or language courses have increased families' cultural levels and have provided them with strategies and skills to support their children academically. The acquisition of this new knowledge has increased families' perception of efficacy and has allowed them to identify new opportunities to become involved in their children's education. These findings are in line with previous studies (Flouri & Hawkes, 2008), which found that family members who feel more capable of providing educational support to their children tend to feel more optimistic and hopeful for their children's academic futures.

Hope has also been an element identified in the life stories collected throughout the research. Among the factors generating more optimistic views is the emergence of new role models. Several family members involved in Family Education have shown how education became a turning point in their life trajectories. Opening schools to these new role models has also contributed to diversifying the racial homogeneity of the school staff and has made it possible to recognize the contributions minority families can provide to the schools' context (Oliver, et al., 2011).

Finally, we are aware that high family educational expectations of their children's education, while positively correlated with later outcomes, are not sufficient for high educational attainment (Lawrence, 2017). Furthermore, we agree with previous studies that have pointed out that what drives the educational success of minority students is the ability of their communities to get their children to internalize high educational ambitions (Modood, 2004). The results of our research suggest that the direct involvement, example, and effort shown by the Roma/Gitanos and Moroccan families could contribute to internalizing these high expectations. However, further research is necessary to assess the degree to which these expectations have a real impact on minority students' academic trajectories or to what extent these expectations modulate the diversity of adverse contextual conditions these students face.

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¹ We use both terms throughout the article since, in Spain, the word used by the Roma community to designate themselves is “Gitano” (m), “Gitana” (f.), and “Gitanos” (pl.). However, following the guidelines provided by the Council of Europe (2012), we also include the term “Roma”.

² The project of the 5th Framework Programme of the European Commission Workaló aimed to define innovative strategies for social and economic development oriented towards social cohesion, considering that the Roma community has a lot to contribute to reinforcing social cohesion in Europe (Girbés-Peco, et al., 2022).