

"Can anybody help me?". High school teachers' experiences on LGBTphobia perception, teaching intervention and training on affective and sexual diversity.

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Abstract

This article analyzes the perceptions of sexual affective diversity among teachers in Spanish high schools. Specifically, we address LGBTphobia, and teacher intervention and training through a survey study of 119 teachers. We administered a questionnaire to investigate these issues based on Pichardo and De Stéfano (2013) and Penna (2012). The data were analyzed on the basis of descriptive statistics. We attempted to answer three research questions: How do teachers analyze LGBTphobia in high schools? What is their experience and teaching intervention with regard to affective and sexual diversity? What perception exists in high schools about the need for training and education on affective and sexual diversity? The study concludes that high schools and their communities remain hostile places for LGBT students. Therefore, incorporating training into teaching practice and rethinking pedagogy from a queer perspective is fundamental to building an inclusive educational culture.

Keywords: sexual affective-diversity; LGBTphobia; survey; teachers; high school; training; queer pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to providing basic knowledge for young people to develop in today's society, schools must also contribute to their personal development. It is therefore crucial to promote an inclusive education to ensure that teachers give a voice to all students and care about their welfare by integrating equality and recognition of diversity into their teaching practices.

However, numerous studies find that educational institutions have the highest levels of LGBTphobia among all social institutions. Universities, high schools and primary schools are revealed to be hostile spaces in which heteronormativity prevails (Munoz-Plaza, Quinn & Rounds, 2002; Palladino & Giesler, 2014, Rowntree, 2014; Sandurria, Picariello, Valerio & Amodeo, 2017). According to Swanson and Gettinger (2016) the school environment is perhaps the most critical for LGBT+ youth because of the large amount of time they spend there. If schools do not provide a safe and supportive environment for these students, they face a high risk of sustaining socio-emotional and academic problems (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Murdock & Bolch, 2005; Santrock, 2004; Shibley & Delamater, 2006).

These discriminations are translated into LGBTphobia, which implies the rejection of all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, or those presumed to be, as well as people who do not conform to traditionally assigned gender roles (Borrillo, 2001). LGBTphobia and sexism combine together in such a way that a wide range of people who transgress gender and sexuality norms are persecuted, regardless of the sexual orientation and gender in question. As a result, gay, lesbian, transsexual and bisexual children and adolescents learn to hide significant parts of their lives, knowing that if they reveal these aspects of themselves, they can become targets of rejection, isolation, mockery and intimidation (Platero, 2008).

In Spain with the Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education (LOE), sex education appears explicitly. The preamble specifies that "among the aims of education, the full development of the personality and affective capacities of students, training in respect for fundamental rights and freedoms and effective equality of opportunity between men and women, the recognition of affective-sexual diversity, and the critical assessment of inequalities, which will make it possible to overcome sexist behavior, stand out". For its part, the Organic Law 8/2013, of December 9, for the improvement of educational quality (LOMCE), currently in force, maintains the aforementioned contents of the previous law, insisting on guaranteeing the integral development and equal opportunities among students.

In the Autonomous Community where this study has been conducted, in 2016, a protocol was established to guarantee the right to gender identity, gender expression, and intersexuality. This protocol aims to provide educational centers with an effective tool that will allow them to become spaces of freedom and equality, in which all the people who make up the educational community feel free from exclusion, coercion of any kind and in conditions to build their reality fully.

In spite of global efforts demanding respect for sexual affective diversity and educational legislation on the subject, LGBT+ youth continue to be attacked by their peers and teachers in the school setting (Bochenek & Brown, 2001; Guasp, 2012; Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005; Jones, 2015; O'Higgins-Norman, 2009). In Europe, research has shown that LGBTI+ youth experience significantly higher levels of verbal, physical and sexual discrimination and violence than their heterosexual peers during their school years (Magić & Maljevac, 2016). Schools must therefore address LGBTphobia in all areas of their activity (Warwick & Aggleton, 2013). It is important to work together on sexuality and gender identity, since research has identified a clear connection between gender, misogyny and homophobic attitudes (Generelo & Pichardo, 2005; Jones, 2014; Prati, 2012).

In this field, the role of teachers is key, although studies have shown that fifty percent of teachers work in schools where there are no educational policies to combat such harassment (Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005). At the same time other research, such as Francis (2012), describes the difficulties teachers have when talking about affective and sexual diversity, and how they acknowledge their failure to address it, even when they know LGBTphobia exists (Guasp, 2009), due to their confusion, inability or lack of will (Warwick, Aggleton & Douglas, 2001) or because they have not received adequate training, they lack support, and are afraid of how families might react (Meyer, 2008). Other studies find that teachers are unaware of LGBTphobia in their classrooms (Mostert, Gordon, & Kriegler, 2015), and uncover the dominant heteronormative climate in schools, such as Komidar and Mandeljc's (2009) study of schools in Slovenia, among others.

In turn, the picture is no more encouraging from the students' perspective. Young people point to the lack of adult LGBT+ role models, the limitations in queer information and resources, and the use of curricula that are far from inclusive (Hughes-Hassell, Overberg, & Harris, 2012; Steck & Perry, 2017). They also call for better interventions from teachers (Taylor, Meyer, Peter, Ristock, Short & Campbell, 2016), and they perceive that their teachers do not intervene when homophobic bullying occurs in their presence due to the construction of the teachers' own social identity and their personal experience in situations of harassment (Meyer, 2008; Taylor & Peter, 2010, 2011).

In the same way that educational spaces can be hostile places, they can also be one of the most effective agents in eradicating these negative behaviors by promoting the elimination of sexual discrimination and creating a more equal and balanced gender culture. The creation of safer and more inclusive school environments is essential for the well-being and learning of all students (Dessel, 2010).

Teachers must guarantee environments that promote the teaching and support of all students through an educational process based on equity and inclusion (Steck & Perry, 2017). A good relationship between students and teachers predicts the school success of young people, which suggests that the strongest positive influence for LGBT+ students is to have supportive adults in their schools (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016). Teachers play a vital role as agents to prevent LGBT+ stigmatization and oppression (Sandurria et al., 2017), and it is important to highlight their obligation to act and achieve an equal education for all students (Payne & Smith, 2011).

Despite this, teachers often do not know how to deal with these issues in the classroom (Díaz de Greñu, Anguita & Torrego, 2013; Pichardo et al., 2013; Salas & Salas, 2016). Teacher training is an essential part in this process. In our context of study (Spain), there is a clear absence of LGBT+ references within the Spanish educational system, both in terms of the official curriculum and training, and in the visibility of those who form part of the educational community in primary schools and high schools (Gallardo & Escolano, 2009; Penna & Sánchez, 2015; Penna, 2012; Pichardo, 2009; Platero, 2014). It should be remembered that in Spain to practice the profession of high school teacher you must own the Master's Degree in Teacher Training. The program consists of 60 ETCS credits, normally taken in an academic year, that does not have any subject specifically related to sexual affective education, coeducation or sexual and gender diversity.

In her study of teacher training, Melani Penna (2012) finds that 80.5% of future high school teachers believe there should be specific training on this issue. This interest, however, contrasts with the misinformation they have and the lack of academic content in the bachelor's degrees they studied and in the master's degree that qualifies them to enter the teaching profession. The picture from the data on educational practices in schools is no more optimistic. Although programs have been developed by government institutions, teacher training centers

and by some teachers, two main problems emerge: insufficient training, and the apathy, disinterest and lack of commitment of these professionals (Ortega & Pagès, 2018). These programs are offered sporadically to teachers, are voluntary, organized according to the will of each region, do not have a previously defined curriculum or an evaluation, their continuity is not guaranteed and they are usually of short duration (about 15 or 25 hours of training). The studies that have been carried out by teams of teachers around coeducation and affective and sexual diversity are still very scarce and the recommendations arising from them are not systematically put into practice.

The continuous training of teachers is key to tackling LGBTphobia (Schniedewind & Cathers, 2003). However, as we have seen, LGBT+ issues are rarely addressed in either initial teacher training or continuous professional development. As Sandurria et al. (2017) point out, because ideas and subjective thoughts are extremely difficult to reshape, teachers must receive continuous training. It would therefore be desirable for all universities to provide specific training programs on sexual and gender issues, which would give teachers the confidence to incorporate affective and sexual diversity in their classes and establish queer practices in their classrooms.

In short, homophobic behaviors, together with the lack of teacher training (Brant 2014), lead to the isolation of LGBT+ students and violence against them. This situation has serious short- and long-term consequences for physical and mental health (Martxueta, 2013, in Penna & Sánchez, 2015). In light of these observations, studying homophobic and transphobic dimensions in centers of education can help us identify where intervention is needed in order to prevent these consequences (Sandurria et al., 2017).

It seems that schools still have much work to do to ensure adequate attention to diversity, an endeavor that would be aided by a discussion of teacher perceptions to create a space for dialogue and exploration of the heteronormative privileges that underlie educational

systems (Steck & Perry, 2017). Against this background, our research aims to uncover the attitudes, experiences and training on sexual and gender diversity of high school teachers. We consider that the information resulting from this study will help to identify the shortcomings in initial teacher training and continuous professional development in order to produce fruitful recommendations in this line.

METHOD

Our study is descriptive, since we were interested in collecting data on various aspects, dimensions and components of the phenomenon investigated (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2010). We used a survey study (Kerlinger & Lee, 2002) to discover the perceptions of sexual affective diversity (LGBTphobia, intervention and training) among high school teachers in the province of Castellón (Spain).

In this article, we set out to answer the following questions:

- *How do teachers analyze LGBTphobia in high schools?*
- *What is the experience and teaching intervention regarding affective and sexual diversity in high schools?*
- *What is the perception of the need for training and education on affective and sexual diversity in these high schools?*

Participants

The study involved teachers from 20 Spanish public high schools in different cities and towns in the province of Castellón (Spain). Specifically, this article reports the perceptions of the experiences and actions of the 119 teachers who completed the questionnaire.

To form the sample, we contacted the high schools' management teams by phone and email. The Ministry of Education confirmed that permission to administer the questionnaire

was not required since the survey was addressed to adults. The school managers shared the information about the study with all the teachers; in most cases approval to conduct the survey was given by the faculty; in the other cases the decision to participate was taken by school's administration, which sent out the survey to the teachers' emails. Once the teachers had received the information from the schools' directors, they completed the questionnaires on an internet platform. One of the schools opted to fill in the questionnaires on paper; the data from these questionnaires were then transferred to the same template as we used for the web-based option.

The sociodemographic characteristics of the 119 participants were as follows: 83 were women and 36 were men (in Spain, for the secondary education population, the percentages are distributed as follows: 58.2% are women and 41.8% are men); 16 of the teachers were aged between 26 and 34, 29 between 35 and 43, 44 between 44 and 52, and the remaining 30 were between 53 and 62 years of age. Regarding their teaching experience, 27 of them had been working for less than 9 years, 41 had between 10 and 19 years teaching experience, 34 had between 20 and 29 years of experience and the remaining 17 were the most experienced with between 30 and 38 years working in high schools. Finally, in terms of physical and amorous attraction, 86.55% of the teachers were identified as heterosexuals, 5% identified themselves as bisexuals, 0.84% as lesbians, 1.68% as gay and 5% of the teacher preferred not to answer the question.

Research instruments

The instrument selected to investigate the research questions is the "Questionnaire on diversity and coexistence in educational centers", based on Pichardo and Stéfano (2013) and Penna (2012). The survey consists of 33 multiple-response items. We use this instrument to elucidate

the teachers' perceptions of LGBTphobia, their experience and intervention in this matter, and their perceptions of the need for education in affective and sexual diversity.

In this article we analyze the 18 items (4–8, 14–18, 21, 23–25, 27–29) that correspond most closely to our aims. The rest of the questions were eliminated because they were not substantially relevant to our research objectives. To facilitate the analysis, we grouped these items into three factors arising from the questions posed: LGBTphobia, experience and training.

Table 1. Items analyzed from the questionnaire.

Item	Question	Factors
4	How often do you think that students insult, mock or exclude classmates for each of the following reasons?	LGBTphobia
5	It seems to you that the existence of these insults and taunts...	
6	Who perpetrated these taunts or insults?	
7	Where have the taunts or insults suffered by the students occurred?	
8	When these situations have taken place, who helped the student in question?	
14	Have you ever had students who belong to one of these groups?	Experience
15	Estimate how often the following situations occur in your school.	LGBTphobia
16	Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.	Experience
17	When one of the abovementioned situations occurs, do you usually intervene?	
18	Indicate which of the following reasons, if any, may prevent you from intervening when these situations occur.	
21	During your teaching career, have you had any students who wanted to be treated differently from the gender they were assigned at birth?	
23	At what age do you think that the following issues should be addressed in the education system?	Training
24	Have you ever dealt with issues of sexual diversity (homosexuality, bisexuality, trans) in class?	
25	Can you give an example of how you have approached it?	
27	Have you received any training on how to intervene in cases of homophobic behavior?	

28	Have you received any type of training in attention to affective-sexual diversity in schools?	
29	Would you be interested in receiving training related to this topic?	

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used, and frequencies and percentages were calculated to analyze the data using the statistical software SPSS version 23.0. To avoid problems of missing data, a list deletion was carried out (Enders, 2010), since less than 1% of the study participants had missing values in their answers (Allison, 2002).

Ethical issues

Ethical aspects of the study were observed by assuring the confidentiality of the participants and the data provided in the questionnaire. The research team kept the questionnaires and sent a report of the overall results to the high schools to maintain the anonymity of the participants since in some high schools a small number of teachers had participated and could be identified. In addition, teachers were informed that if any of them wished to abandon the investigation, their data would be deleted and would not be included in the research report.

RESULTS

The answers gathered in the questionnaire describe the lived experience of LGBTphobia in the educational context, the experiences of and interventions made by teachers in the schools with regard to affective and sexual diversity, and their perceptions about the need for training in affective and sexual education for themselves and their students. The results obtained from the unanswered questions provide added value. It is highly significant that between 10 and 15% of the teachers responded with “no answer” to most of the questions posed. In what follows, we describe the results of each section based on the data obtained in percentages and frequencies. Each table shows the item analyzed and the data mentioned with the highest result is marked in bold.

LGBTphobia in the educational context

Teachers have a high perception of the existence of insults, ridicule or rejection. More than half of the respondents believe that the students behave in these ways in response to the personal characteristics of their classmates (item 4). Table 2 shows that there is a large percentage of teachers who respond with “often” and “at times” to all the reasons. Teachers report that at times students insult, mock or exclude classmates for the following reasons: they are from another country (58.6%), their hygiene (48.1%), the way they speak (46.6%), their Roma ethnicity (45.9%), they have a disability (44.4%), for being a girl who behaves like a boy (44.4%) or a boy who behaves like a girl (42.1%), practicing a certain religion (43.6%), the way they dress (42.9%) and being gay, lesbian or bisexual (42.1%). They also highlight that such behavior happens often or sometimes in the case of girls who date a lot of boys (27.1%, 30.1%); by contrast, in the case of boys who date a lot of girls, the percentage of “never” responses is high (53.4%). However, they tend to answer that these actions never occur between gay and bisexual friends (40.6%) or lesbian and bisexual friends (40.6%), nor for economic reasons (40.6%) or for demonstrating no sexual interest (43.6%).

Table 2. Item 4: How often do you think that students insult, mock or exclude classmates for each of the following reasons?

	Often	At times	Constantly	I don't know	Never	No answer
From another country	19.5% (26)	58.6% (78)	2.3% (3)	0.8% (1)	7.5% (10)	11.3% (15)
Roma ethnicity	16.5% (22)	45.9% (61)	3.8% (5)	3.8% (5)	18% (24)	12% (16)
Religion	15% (20)	43.6% (58)	0.8% (1)	4.5% (6)	25.6% (34)	10.5%(14)
Clothing	24.8% (33)	42.9% (57)	2.3% (3)	1.5% (2)	18% (24)	10.5%(14)
Disability	10.5% (14)	44.4% (54)	0.8% (1)	4.5% (6)	28.6% (38)	11.3% (15)

Gay, lesbian, bisexual	23.3% (31)	42.1% (56)	8.3% (11)	3% (4)	11.3% (15)	12% (16)
Boy who behaves or looks like a girl	22.6% (30)	45.9% (61)	6.8% (9)	5.3% (7)	9% (12)	10.5%(14)
Girl who behaves or looks like a boy	13.5 % (18)	44.4% (59)	6.8% (9)	6% (8)	18% (24)	11.3% (15)
Girl who goes out with a lot of boys	27.1% (36)	30.1% (40)	6.8% (9)	8.3% (11)	16.5% (22)	11.3% (15)
Boy who goes out with a lot of girls	4.5% (6)	24.8% (33)	0	6.8% (9)	53.4% (71)	10.5%(14)
Hygiene	27.8% (37)	48.1% (64)	5.3 (7)	0.8% (1)	7.5% (10)	10.5%(14)
Having friends who are gay or bisexual	3% (4)	30.1% (40)	0	13.5% (18)	40.6% (54)	12.8% (17)
Having friends who are lesbians or bisexual	4.5% (6)	28.6% (38)	0	13.5% (18)	40.6% (54)	12.8% (17)
Way of speaking	22.6% (30)	46.6% (62)	2.3% (3)	3.8% (5)	12.8% (17)	12% (16)
Little money	6% (8)	34.6% (46)	0	7.5% (10)	40.6% (54)	11.3% (15)
No sexual interest	2.3% (3)	24.8% (33)	0	16.5% (22)	43.6% (58)	12.8% (17)

More than half of the respondents affirm the existence of insults, ridicule or rejection regarding the issues directly related to gender and sexual diversity (65.4% gay, lesbian and bisexual, 68.5% boy who looks or behaves like a girl, 57.9% girl who looks or behaves like a boy).

The response tendency in item 15, in which we estimate the frequency of situations of homophobia or transphobia among students, is mostly “at times” when the harassment is verbal (“queer”, “dyke” or other words, threats and/or verbal expressions of hatred toward homosexuality or homosexual persons) and also “someone is excluded because he/she seems to be homosexual or does things associated with another sex”. In the rest of the responses the majority answer “never”, although in all the responses there is a percentage that has “at times” as the frequency for these situations (physical aggression, boy wants to flirt with a peer who he thinks or knows is a lesbian, person who appears as a boy on the register wants to be treated as a girl or vice versa, a student is treated differently because he or she has gay, bisexual or transgender fathers or mothers).

Table 3. Item 15: Estimate how often the following situations occur in your school.

	Often	Constantly	At times	Never	No answer
You hear “queer”, “dyke” or other words	17.3% (23)	3% (4)	54.1% (72)	13.5% (18)	12% (16)
Someone is excluded because he/she seems to be homosexual or does things associated with another sex	6.8% (9)	0.8% (1)	47.4% (63)	30.8% (41)	14.3% (19)
Physical assaults for looking/being homosexual or doing things associated with another sex	1.5% (2)	0.8% (1)	18.8% (25)	63.9% (85)	15% (20)
You hear threats and/or expressions of hatred toward homosexuality or homosexual people	7.5% (10)	1.5% (2)	42.9% (57)	34.6% (46)	13.5% (18)
One or several boys try to flirt with a girl who is thought or known to be a lesbian		0.3% (4)	4.5% (6)	72.2% (96)	20.3% (27)

A person who appears on the school register as a boy wants to be treated as a girl or vice versa

0.8% (1) 1.5% (2) 9% (12) **73.7% (98)** 15% (20)

A boy or girl is treated differently from the rest because they have homosexual, bisexual or transgender fathers or mothers

0 3%(4) 4.5% (6) **76.7% (102)** 15.8% (21)

When we asked the teachers who perpetrates these insults/taunts/rejections, most of the responses pointed to the students themselves, without distinction between boys and girls (63.9%). Even so it is noteworthy that 18.8% of the teachers affirm that they came from male students, and it is also remarkable that 4.5% of teachers have heard these taunts or insults uttered by other teachers. These results surprise and contrast with studies carried out on students, wherein their responses the girls were less likely to exhibit attitudes and participate in activities involving rejection or aggression. (Generelo & Pichardo 2005; Moliner, Francisco & Aguirre, 2018). In this sense, it would be interesting to deepen this aspect from a qualitative investigation that could contribute more data to the discussion.

Table 4. Item 6: Who perpetrated these taunts or insults?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: one or several students, generally boys	25	18.8
2: one or several students, generally girls	1	0.8
3: several students, boys and girls alike	85	63.9
4: one or several teachers, generally men	8	6
5: one or several teachers, generally women	1	0.8
6: several teachers, men and women alike	6	4.5
7: I don't know	4	3

8: I prefer not to answer	0	0
9: Other	3	2.3

Although these insults, taunts or rejections have been witnessed in many locations, the following stand out: during class (43.61%), between classes (66.92%), in the playground (59.40%) and via cell phones (47.37%).

Table 5. Item 7: Where have the taunts or insults suffered by the students occurred?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: During class	58	43.61
2: Between classes	89	66.92
3: Playground	79	59.40
4: Bathrooms	19	14.29
5: Dining room/Cafeteria	18	13.53
6: Transportation to the school	16	12.03
7: Vicinity of the high school	47	35.34
8: Via cell phones	63	47.37
9: Via Internet	42	31.58
10: I don't know	3	2.26
11: I prefer not to answer	1	0.75

Responses to item 8 reveal that help for the students in these situations has come mostly from teachers (73.68%), followed by classmates (50.38%) and the management team (39.1%).

Table 6. Item 8: When these situations have taken place, who helped the student in question?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: No one	8	6.02

2: Classmates	67	50.38
3: Relatives	31	23.31
4: Teachers	98	73.68
5: School management/administration	52	39.10
6: Education inspectors	2	1.50
7: I don't know	8	6.02
8: I prefer not to answer	0	0.00

In relation to the teachers' perceptions about these actions, 116 teachers out of 119 feel it is a (serious) problem that must be solved.

Table 7. Item 5: You think that these insults and taunts...

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: ...are inevitable, there are people who deserve it	1	0.8
2: ...happen everywhere, it is not a problem	0	0
3: ...are not malicious, there is no need to take them seriously	4	3.4
4: ...are a problem, something should be done	49	41.2
5: ...are serious, should not be allowed in any case	61	51.3
6: I don't know	1	0.8
7: I prefer not to answer	3	2.5

Specifically, more than 90% respond that these attitudes should not be ignored: 41.2% think it is a problem and something must be done to solve it and 51.3% consider it to be very serious and it should not be allowed. It is remarkable that some teachers, albeit a low percentage, consider that these attitudes are not malicious (3.4%) or have no position on this issue (0.8%).

Personal experiences and intervention

Regarding the presence of LGBT students or children of LGBT parents, practically 80% of the teachers have had students from the LGBT community in their classes.

Table 8. Item 14: Have you ever had students who belong to one of these groups?

	Always	At times	Never	I don't know	No answer
Lesbians	7.5% (10)	48.9% (65)	4.5% (6)	22.6% (30)	16.5% (22)
Gays	7.5% (10)	61% (81)	1.5% (2)	15% (20)	15% (20)
Bisexuals	3% (4)	20.3% (27)	12.8% (17)	42.9% (57)	21.1% (28)
Transsexuals	0	10.5% (14)	33.1% (44)	32.3% (43)	11.3% (15)
Children of gay, bisexual or transgender parents	0.8 % (1)	18% (24)	17.3% (23)	42.9% (57)	21.1% (28)

In item 16, teachers were asked about their agreement or disagreement in discriminatory situations. The percentages of responses given in agree or somewhat agree to reveal their lack of acceptance of LGBT+ people. In this sense is considered as about 15 % of the sample believes that going out with gay people makes it easier to be included in the group, on their behalf, almost 25% think that LGBT people are no longer discriminated against.

The considerable diversity in teachers' responses to the statement "Combating homophobia in schools is a task for teachers" is noteworthy in that 9.8% of the teachers do not agree with this statement. This item also reveals contradictions in the answers given to the following statements:

- Homosexual people currently have the same rights as heterosexual people.

- LGBT people used to be discriminated, but that is no longer the case.

In the first statement, 28.6% of the respondents strongly agree, whereas in contrast, 54.9% of the teachers do not agree with the second statement.

Table 9. Item 16: Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree	No answer
If you defend a homosexual person against an insult, it is likely that other people may think you are homosexual	81.2% (108)	0.8% (1)	6.8% (9)	0	11.3% (15)
Going out with gay people makes it easier for other people to think you are homosexual	92% (69.2)	4.5% (6)	14.3% (19)	0	12% (16)
Combating homophobia in schools is a task for teachers, as they are involved in the situation	9.8% (13)	19.5% (26)	24.8% (33)	32.3% (43)	13.5% (18)
Homosexual people now have the same rights as heterosexual people	18.8% (25)	20.3% (27)	18% (24)	28.6% (38)	14.3% (19)
Expressions like “queer” or “tomboy” are just ways of speaking and not insults	78.9% (105)	2.3% (3)	6% (8)	0.8% (1)	12% (16)
LGBT people used to be discriminated, but that is no longer the case	54.9% (73)	8.3% (11)	23.3% (31)	0.8% (1)	12.8% (17)
On occasion, assaults on homosexual people are justified because of their provocative and exhibitionist behavior	84.2% (112)	1.5% (2)	2.3% (3)	0	12% (16)
If a colleague in the school where I work told me that she was a lesbian, I would not want to have too close a relationship with her because the other teachers might think that I am also homosexual					

85.7% (114)	1.5% (2)	0.8% (1)	0	12% (16)
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In situations of LGBTphobia, 50% of the surveyed teachers intervene constantly, followed by 25% who do so often and 16.4%, at times.

Table 10. Item 17. When one of the situations mentioned above occurs, do you usually intervene?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: Never	1	0.9
2: At times	19	16.4
3: Often	29	25
4: Constantly	60	51.7
5: I prefer not to answer	7	6

One fact to highlight in the following item is that 63% of the sample gives no reason for not intervening. Of those who do respond, the most commonly reported motive is “I do not have the proper training to act”, followed by “I do not know how to act”.

Table 11. Item 18: Indicate which of the following reasons, if any, may prevent you from intervening when these situations occur (you can mark more than one option):

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: These are situations that occur all the time	1	0.75
2: They are only harmless jokes	2	1.50
3: I do not consider there is any underlying homophobic intention	10	7.52
4: I am afraid of how the students will react	2	1.50
5: I do not think I will have the support of the management team	1	0.75
6: I do not feel confident enough	9	6.77

7: I am worried about the possible reaction from families	2	1.50
8: I do not know how to act	15	11.28
9: I do not have the proper training to act	16	12.03
No answer	75	63.02

In response to item 21, 87.5% of the teachers stated that during their teacher career they had never had any students who wanted to be treated differently from the gender they were assigned at birth; however, 66% of respondents to item 20 answered that if it happened they would respect the student's decision and address them according to their choice. Also of note in this item is that 35% of the teachers, in a case like the one described, would speak with the student's family and 25.56% of the sample would consult with the high school management team.

Table 12. Item 21: During your teaching career, have you had any students who wanted to be treated differently from the gender they were assigned at birth?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: Never	98	87.5
2: On more than one occasion	3	2.7
3: I prefer not to answer	0	0
4: On one occasion	11	9.8

Table 13. Item 20: If a person who appears on the student register as a boy wants to be treated as a girl or vice versa, how would you act? (You can mark more than one option).

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: I would not take it into consideration	1	0.75
2: I would talk to the student's family	47	35.34
3: I would consider it to be an age-related uncertainty	1	0.75
4: I would consult with the high school management team	34	25.56

5: I would consider it as a case of transsexuality or transgender.	34	25.56
6: I would pay special attention to that student	24	18.05
7: I would not know what to do	5	3.76
8: I would respect the student's decision and address them according to their choice	88	66.17

Training received and educational approach

The high school teachers were asked about the ages they consider certain issues should be introduced in the education system. Regarding sexuality, 45.9% said that educational intervention should begin between the ages of 6 and 11, although 21.9% said this subject should be addressed earlier, from 0 to 5 years. On the second issue, sexual orientation, 39.8% of the teachers believe it should be approached between 6 and 11 years of age, followed by 34.6% who would introduce the subject later, between the ages of 12 and 15. Regarding gender relations, around 30% consider that it should be addressed between the ages of 6 and 11, whereas 30% consider the ideal age to be between 12 and 15. A similar pattern occurs in the case of transsexuality: 33% respond between 6 and 11 years old, and 39.9% between 12 and 15. As regards sexual health, 41.4% affirm it should be addressed between 12 and 15 years old, and 31.6% consider it should be introduced earlier, between 6 and 11. Responses shift noticeably on the question of family diversity, which 43.6% of the surveyed teachers consider should be addressed between the ages of 0 and 5 years, and 33.8%, between 6 and 11 years. For the six issues in question, practically all the responses identify the suitable age range between 6 and 15 years.

Table 14. Item 23: At what age do you think that the following issues should be addressed in the education system?

Never	0-5 years	6-11 years	12-15 years	16 and above	No answer
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Sexuality	0	21.9% (29)	45.9% (61)	22.6% (30)	2.3% (3)	13.5% (18)
Sexual Orientation	0.8% (1)	15.8% (21)	39.8% (53)	34.6% (46)	5.3% (7)	14.3% (19)
Gender relations	0	23.4% (31)	33.2% (44)	33.9% (45)	6.1% (8)	15% (20)
Transsexuality	0	14.3% (19)	33.2% (44)	39.9% (53)	9% (12)	14.3% (19)
Sexual health	0	12.8% (17)	31.6% (42)	41.4% (55)	8.4% (11)	12.8% (17)
Family diversity	0	43.6% (58)	33.8% (45)	19.6% (26)	6.1% (8)	12.8% (17)

Of the 119 teachers surveyed, 61 have dealt with issues of gender and sexual diversity in class, mainly (item 25) through tutoring, as a cross-cutting issue in different subjects and also as a way of naturalizing and promoting respect for diversity. Some of the tools used for this purpose are videos, films (full length and short), interviews, debates, texts, and talks.

Table 15. Item 24: Have you ever dealt with issues of sexual diversity (homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality) in class?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: Yes	61	53.5
2: No	41	36
3: I don't know	11	9.6
4: I prefer not to answer	1	0.9

The results for item 27 are remarkable in that 71.8% of teachers have received no training on intervention in cases of homophobic behavior, and the 20.5% that had received training considered it to be insufficient. Likewise, 71.2% have received no training in attention to affective and sexual diversity in schools. Any training they had received was at conferences

and congresses (5.4%) and in courses or seminars (23.4%). It is noteworthy that 75.8% of the respondents would be interested in receiving training related to the subject.

Table 16. Item 27: Have you received any training on how to intervene in cases of homophobic behavior?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: Yes, I have received enough training	7	6
2: Yes, I have received training but not enough	24	20.5
3: I have not received any training	84	71.8
4: I don't know	2	1.7
5: I prefer not to answer	16	

Table 17. Item 28: Have you received any type of training in attention to affective-sexual diversity in schools?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: No	79	71.2
2: Yes, at conferences and congresses	6	5.4
3: Yes, through courses and seminars	26	23.4

Table 18. Item 29: Would you be interested in receiving training related to this topic?

Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1: Yes	88	75.9
2: No	13	11.2
3: I don't know	15	12.9

DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that high schools continue to be hostile places for LGBT+ people. Although international research is scarce on teachers' perceptions about LGBTphobia in high schools, previous studies find similar results (Munoz-Plaza, Quinn, and Rounds, 2002; Palladino & Giesler, 2014; Rowntree, 2014; Sandurria et al., 2017). Thus, this work bridges a

gap in the literature on the experiences of teachers and their perceptions of LGBTphobia in their schools, their attitudes to it and what training they have received in this regard.

The study conclusions could serve as a point of inflection by instigating analytical processes in schools on the teachers' role and what training they should be given in their schools, as well as assessing whether the actions that are currently being offered respond to the needs of the teaching staff and, above all, to the diversity of the students.

One of our main conclusions is that LGBT+ youth continue to be attacked by their peers and teachers in the school setting (Bochenek & Brown, 2001; Guasp, 2012; Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005; Jones, 2015; O'Higgins-Norman, 2009). A large percentage of the teachers surveyed in this research have witnessed incidents in which students from vulnerable groups are insulted and ridiculed. Notably, insults against LGBT+ people are frequently heard from both students and teachers in the school. These percentages include teachers who consider that these behaviors are not carried out maliciously.

Regardless of who is perpetrating the harassment, a homophobic educational environment has serious consequences for the physical and mental health of all students. Harassment, assault and homophobic intimidation are strong predictors of development problems and risky behavior among LGBT+ youth (Saewyc, 2011). School connectedness and feeling safe in school have been identified as protective factors for these young people (Saewyc, 2011). However, the creation of safer and more inclusive school environments is essential for the well-being and learning of all students (Dessel, 2010). It is therefore necessary to continue raising teachers' awareness of diversity and encouraging them to pay attention to it. Not only are they unaware of how to work on these issues, but much more seriously, they do not perceive them as harassment.

Another conclusion drawn from this study is that the spaces where harassment occurs are not limited to the classroom. In fact, according to the teachers' perceptions these hostile places in the school include spaces in which teachers are not present, such as the times between classes and in the playground breaks. In addition, cyber harassment is an emerging phenomenon with the rise of the cell phone, identified by almost half of the teachers surveyed as one of the main channels of harassment; this finding coincides with results from the study by Buelga, Cava and Musitu (2010). This shows us that spaces of risk or conflict are increasing and are not limited to classrooms and teaching hours. Therefore, the figures for bullying will be higher since it can occur when the teacher is not present and this situation may not be reported to the teacher (Meyer, 2008; Birkett, Espelage & Koenig, 2009). Pichardo et al. (2015) found that three out of four students in Spain had witnessed homophobic attacks in the form of insults or taunts, while 6.4% had witnessed beatings of LGBT+ students.

One proposal to address this situation would be for teacher-oriented training to include tools and strategies that serve all students in the classroom, between classes, and during breaks, as well as an explicit focus on how to intervene and act in incidents of cell phone harassment.

On the one hand, the study allows us to conclude that teachers have considerable experience with LGBT+ students, as most of our respondents have had students belonging to the LGBT+ community in their classes. In addition, teachers remain a fundamental support in situations of harassment and are aware of the need to end this problem, as reflected in their assessment that homophobic/transphobic bullying should not be ignored and they must take steps to end it.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that not all teachers act in situations of harassment occurring in the school. Most teachers reported that they had heard homophobic discourses and indicated that support for sexual minority students was not available. Some refer to the fact that they do not have adequate training, others do not know how to act in such situations, but a large

percentage gives no reason for why they do not intervene. This leads us to wonder whether the reasons and their role in these situations have never been raised. Training policies should therefore remedy this omission by designing actions to address teachers' passivity to LGBTphobia, because it is crucial to develop a safe environment for these young people.

Many teachers are not comfortable or equipped to work with LGBT+ youth (Mudrey & Medina-Adams, 2006; Young & Middleton, 1999). Often, teachers who want to create more welcoming classrooms lack sufficient knowledge and study plans to be inclusive on the subject of sexual orientation. Likewise, we know from other research that students want adult role models in the classroom (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2012; Steck & Perry, 2017). We therefore believe that training is needed which emphasizes the role of the teacher as a support agent and learning model in schools. Teachers must be able to play a role that guarantees all students receive attention, and must know how to educate from a position of diversity while at the same time relating to students from an emotional and affective connection.

In relation to affective and sexual education, the teachers surveyed believe that the topics of sexuality, sexual orientation, gender relations, transsexuality, sexual health and sexual diversity should be addressed with children and young people between the ages of 6 and 15. This finding identifies the need to work on affective and sexual diversity during ages of compulsory education in Spain. It is also notable that half the respondents have worked on these topics, mainly in the tutorial sessions. However, most of the teachers surveyed have never received training on how to intervene in cases of homophobic behavior. The rest told us that the training they have received is insufficient. A large number of teachers would also be interested in receiving such information, although some of them were unsure and others expressed a clear lack of interest in such training. These results lead us to propose that specific training in attention to affective and sexual diversity cannot be voluntary, but must be included in the study programs leading to qualifications to teach in the Spanish public education system,

for teachers of early childhood education, primary education and secondary education. Such provision would guarantee that all teaching staff had the necessary training from the beginning of their teaching career.

We now know where our efforts must be addressed in order to end this situation (Sandurria et al., 2017). The data collected in this study have identified several lines of action. First, there is a need to enhance academic training for teachers from their initial university teacher training studies. Second, LGBT+ harassment and discrimination must be combated both inside and outside the classroom. Third, the teaching role of an educational process that takes into account diversity and prevents LGBT+ stigmatization and oppression must be visualized and strengthened (Sandurria et al., 2017). And fourth, knowing how to teach, what aspects work in the classroom, how to maintain relationships and close links with students to enhance their interest, among other aspects, should be considered (Taylor et al., 2016).

We therefore propose that one of the main lines of focus with which to transform LGBTphobia in the education system is initial teacher training and continuous professional development. According to Steck and Perry (2017), achieving an inclusive and equitable curriculum, regardless of the student's sexual identity, is only possible by directly challenging the formal curricula and the pedagogy that currently permeates the educational system. If the heteronormative system is not challenged, LGBT students will continue to be excluded from sexual and gender diversity in the educational process (Blackburn & Smith 2010, Britzman, 1995; Castro & Sujak, 2014; Fredman et al., 2015; Toomey et al., 2012). Thus, we are currently still immersed in an educational process that systematically ignores the issues of development, socio-emotional needs and learning of the LGBT+ student (Hughes-Hassell et al., 2012).

The pedagogy and materials used in the classroom convey beliefs, attitudes and behavioral expectations (Banks et al., 2005; Castro & Sujak, 2014). In this regard, we believe queer pedagogy proposals should be implemented. Queer pedagogy can offer a framework that

allows us to rethink educational interventions. Its objective is not limited to or focused exclusively on issues related to the experience of LGBT+ identities, but it seeks to destabilize the normal/abnormal dichotomy (Moliner, Francisco & Aguirre, 2018). Queer pedagogy goes beyond the simple challenge of understanding gender and sexual identity to deconstruct the categories and languages that support them (Meyer 2007). As Taylor et al. (2016) point out, training teachers in LGBT+ issues has an important contribution to make in the pursuit of social justice. The incorporation of a queer perspective in teaching provides a means to rethink current educational practices and the power relations present in the school system.

Although our study provides much-needed insights into a vital context, high school, it has its shortcomings. First of all, having only one province of Spain limits our understanding of experiences, teaching intervention and training on affective and sexual diversity. More cross-province or cross-national variability would allow us to have a broader view on the subject and to compare the variables by province or by country. In addition, the use of qualitative information would have helped to provide a more in-depth understanding of some of the issues addressed in the questionnaire. Despite these limitations, our study provides findings that may make visible the need for broader training on LGBT+ in teachers since we still find LGBTphobic attitudes and difficulties when intervening when these behaviors occur.

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