

Teaching for Immigrant Girls' Inclusion: Social Justice Physical Education Teachers' Involvement With School Stakeholders

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Purpose: This study seeks to analyze the involvement of the various stakeholders related to the educational context, namely school management team, teaching staff, families, and students, to foster the social inclusion of immigrant girls through their participation in physical activities. **Methods:** Data consisted of interviews and focus group sessions involving 19 physical education (PE) teachers from state primary schools in Catalonia, Spain. **Results:** The involvement of the stakeholders can foster greater inclusion of such immigrant girls through initiatives, such as: extracurricular physical activities specifically designed for them; the creation of specific spaces for their physical activities; a greater number of PE class hours for immigrant newcomer pupils; supportive feedback for these girls from PE teachers; and greater consideration of these girls' interests and preference in PE programming. **Conclusion:** These findings suggest that the greater the degree of involvement and cohesion among the various parties, the higher the likelihood of successful social inclusion.

Keywords: educational environment, immigrant female students, intersectionality, physical activity


The early 21st century has seen many changes in the socio-cultural, educational, and economic spheres (UNESCO, 2009), with one consequence being that educational environments have become more intercultural and heterogeneous. Schools in Spain, for example, have experienced over the last two decades, a significant increase in the number of students whose home culture is not Spanish. More specifically, in the 2003–2004 academic year the educational system of the autonomous region of Catalonia enrolled 54,009 immigrant students (including first- and second-generation immigrants), which by 2018–2019 had risen to 181,936 (Departament d'Educació, 2019). It was this context which suggested the need for a study intended to shed light on how schools might facilitate the active and effective participation of female immigrant students in physical and sport activities, as a way to promote their social inclusion. Various previous studies have pointed to low participation by girls in these sorts of activities (Oliver & Kirk, 2015; Telford et al., 2016), particularly in environments characterized by cultural and/or ethnic diversity (Thorjussen & Sisjord, 2019; With-Nielsen & Pfister, 2011), and, more specifically, when the immigrant girls come from a Muslim background (Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012).

According to McCall (2005), it is important to acknowledge the limitations of gender as a simple category for analysis and adopt instead an intersectional perspective that includes ethnic and cultural dimensions. Taking as our starting point this intersectional approach, the goal of the present study is to analyze the involvement of the various stakeholders related to the educational context, namely school management team, teaching staff, families, and students, to foster the social inclusion of immigrant girls through their participation in physical activities. This study forms part of a larger research project examining various factors bearing on the inclusion of female immigrant students through physical education (PE; Nieva Boza, 2015).

Intersectionality in Physical Education

Because it is an inherently experiential area which facilitates interaction and the development of social skills, PE can be used to create scenarios that favor inclusion, social cohesion, and cultural diversity (Capllonch Bujosa et al., 2007; Carter-Thuillier et al., 2018; Flores et al., 2015; Lleixà & Nieva, 2020; López-Pastor et al., 2007; Medina, 2002; Nieva Boza, & Lleixà, 2018; Oliver & Kirk, 2014). The PE can also generate educational spaces for communication and socialization, based on nonverbal body language. According to Oliver and Kirk (2014), this can be especially beneficial for girls. These authors argue that girls' engagement with PE is a crucial component in encouraging them to lead physically active and thus healthier lives.

Studies linking gender and PE have often applied an intersectional approach with the aim of exposing the structural processes that produce inequality and exclusion (Thorjussen & Sisjord, 2019). This approach interrelates categories, such as culture, ethnicity, ability, and gender, creating multiple and complex educational spaces, as described by Hill Collins and Bilge (2016), who observe that thinking intersectionally involves considering "relationships between apparently different phenomena" (p. 195). Intersectional investigations in PE, such as those by Dagkas (2016), Flintoff et al. (2008), Flintoff (2015), Flintoff and Dowling (2019), Simon and Azzarito (2019), Thorjussen and Sisjord (2019), and With-Nielsen and Pfister (2011), denounce educational contexts that favor dominant cultures in which gender, culture, or religion are often seen as problematic. They corroborate the idea that PE teachers should be trained to develop a theoretical and reflective knowledge of current social complexities (Benn et al., 2011; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001) in order to promote educational environments based on equity, equality, justice, and inclusion. Likewise, PE teachers should be trained to promote such situations not only within PE as an academic discipline, but also in the practice of physical activity in nonformal educational environments (Columna et al., 2010; Fernández & Aguilar, 2016; Lleixa Arribas et al., 2020).

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Specifically, intersectional studies concerning Muslim girls and the practice of physical activity (Dagkas et al., 2011; Dagkas & Hunter, 2015; Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012) suggest that the contexts for such activities become more inclusive when they are more flexible in terms of the types of activities carried out and when those involved have a clearer understanding of cultural differences. The possibility that girls will use their own spaces and negotiate their own forms of participation (Benn et al., 2011; Hamzeh & Oliver, 2012; Puig & Fullana, 2002) and better communication among related social agents like parents and teachers (Dagkas et al., 2011; Pfister, 2004a) also favor social inclusion. However, Dagkas and Hunter (2015) point out that Muslims girls should not be viewed as a homogeneous group and that the economic and cultural capital available to such girls plays a significant role in the degree of their participation in physical activities, whether informal or organized.

Conditioning Factors in the Inclusion of Immigrant Girls in PE

In fostering the active participation of immigrant girls in physical activities and sport, coordination among the actions of three essential stakeholders in the education system—the school management team, the teachers, and the parents—is crucial. It is the management team that bears primary responsibility for ensuring that this coordination takes place (Dagkas et al., 2011). It is also up to the management team to guarantee and maintain an educational environment that pays special attention to aspects such as mutual respect, understanding, dignity, and values (Daniels & Billingsley, 2019).

Maiztegui-Oñate et al. (2019) analyze the importance of management teams committed to projects based on interculturality, inclusion, and coeducation, whether cultural diversity is already present in that particular educational context or not, and conclude that regardless of the composition of their student body, schools must engage in diversity practices in order to improve social justice and equity, which goes beyond differences in color, ethnic origin, or nationality. Along the same lines, in their study on the characteristics that a PE program will require in order to properly address the needs of immigrant students, López-Pastor et al. (2007) argue that an approach that is interdisciplinary and/or coordinated among the various stakeholders will best favor and strengthen an awareness and understanding of cultural diversity and an acceptance of multiculturalism.

For its part, the teaching staff as a whole can play a key role in making sure that a cultural system awarding hegemony to the male gender is not reproduced (Brown, 2005) and bringing about change. At the same time, it is essential that teachers engage in critical reflection about their own beliefs and habitual behaviors, which comprise the “hidden curriculum” (López-Pastor et al., 2007; McCaughy, 2006; Oliver & Kirk, 2015). In the words of McCaughy (2006, p. 161), inclusive PE implies showing the students how to “group themselves in nonsexist ways, recognise and refrain from abusive comments and behaviors, restrain boys’ physicality, ensure equal opportunities to learn, use peer assessments so boys develop realistic perceptions of girls’ abilities, focus less on competition, and emphasize enjoyment and healthy outcomes.” According to this author, diversifying the curriculum beyond competitive sport is a hallmark of gender-inclusive teaching.

Furthermore, PE teachers must not remain isolated from the rest of the teaching staff, with whom coordination is indispensable.

As argued by Maiztegui-Oñate et al. (2019), devoting class time to inclusive and intercultural projects with a gender perspective “implies not only rethinking the teaching activity, but also coordinating and rethinking the activities between educational teams” (p. 138).

Families are another key element in the educational and social inclusion of girls and in their relationship with the practice of physical activity. It is sometimes necessary to encourage the participation of immigrant families in the education of their children (Dagkas et al., 2011; Flecha, 2012; Nieva Boza, 2015; Oliver et al., 2013; Santos & Lorenzo, 2009; Serra et al., 2013), and to this end it can be important to prioritize the sort of informal ties (Besalú & Tort, 2009; INCLUD-ED, 2011) that foster dialogue and social commitment (Castanedo & Capllonch, 2018; Díez et al., 2011) rather than focusing exclusively on the achievement of academic results. And although families as a whole are important, mothers are especially so, according to Serradell et al. (2020) and Solé et al. (2013), who describe immigrant women as active agents for promoting inclusive citizenship, due to their link to associations and informal spaces for participation. The involvement of mothers as well as the solidarity networks that can be created among people with a diversity of beliefs, ideologies, or levels of education, is likely to affect directly and positively the education and future of immigrant girls.

In another sense, the creation of PE and physical activity spaces for families and their children reinforces dialogic coexistence among them and can be employed to help overcome social inequalities (Castanedo & Capllonch, 2018; Marttinen et al., 2019) and contribute to the development of a healthy family lifestyle (Bodnarchuk et al., 2018).

Methodology

The methodological approach applied here is framed within an interpretative paradigm; whereby, the knowledge and understanding of a reality is considered dynamic, multiple, and holistic (Latorre et al., 2003), and the main concern is to comprehend how study informants—in this case primary school PE teachers—perceive their experiences, as revealed in their own testimony (Hernández et al., 2014).

Research Context

Field research for this study in the region of Baix Llobregat in the province of Barcelona, an area in the autonomous region of Catalonia which has the third highest number of students of foreign origin (including both first- and second-generation immigrants). The Maghreb is the most common place of origin, representing the family home culture of 34.5% of students enrolled in the Baix Llobregat during the 2018–2019 academic year. Other places of origin include Central and South America (25.1%), other member states of the European Union (16.9%), and Asia and Oceania (14.1%) (Departament d’Educació, 2019).

For this study, the PE teachers who constituted our body of informants came from state primary schools, since 92.1% of foreign students enrolled in primary education are in the public education system (Departament d’Educació, 2019). Specifically, the 19 teachers selected to participate in this study were teaching at the time in the Baix Llobregat region and had all previously undergone general primary teacher training as well as specific training to be PE teachers. In their replies to preliminary

questionnaires, they estimated that 30%–50% of the student body at the primary schools where they were teaching consisted of first- or second-generation immigrant children from working class backgrounds with middle to lower middle income levels.

Sample

The sampling technique was nonprobability based, directed, and voluntary (Hernández et al., 2014), with the participants representing a subgroup of the population of public primary school PE teachers in the Baix Llobregat region.

Of the 19 informants, 10 participated in semistructured interviews and nine took part in two separate focus groups. The 10 interviewees were balanced for gender (five women and five men) but had varying years of professional experience.

Of the focus groups, one consisted of five female teachers and the other comprised three males and one female. The selection of participants for the focus groups was based on criteria proposed by Suárez (2005), as follows: (a) the number of participants ranged from five to seven, (b) the participants did not coincide with those who had been interviewed in the interviews, (c) the participants came from different schools, and (d) the participants did not know each other.

Instruments and Procedure

As noted, two techniques were used to gather data, the semistructured interview and the focus group.

The script for the semistructured interviews was designed based on the objectives and dimensions of this study and was organized around four different thematic areas: (a) the involvement of the school management team in the issues of PE and the inclusion of immigrant girls, (b) the role of the school's teaching staff, (c) the role of immigrant families in their daughters' willingness to participate in physical activities at school, and (d) the decisions taken by PE teachers during PE sessions to improve the participation and inclusion of female immigrant students.

This script was validated by 12 experts, all of them university scholars with prior or current research experience in the fields of gender and/or immigration, who assessed the clarity of the language used and the relevance of the questions in relation to the goal of the study.

With prior consent of the interviewees, all 10 semistructured interviews were video recorded. The audio tracks of the resulting recordings were transcribed and then used to inform the preparation

of a new set of questions for use in the focus groups. This new script was designed to expand on, complement, corroborate, or contrast with the answers obtained in the semistructured interviews. Field notes were also taken by one of the researchers during both the interviews and the focus group sessions.

The final data set for analysis was made up of the transcripts of all 10 interviews and both focus group sessions. This data set was then subjected to a categorical analysis (Rodríguez et al., 1999), following a deductive–inductive process, with the help of NUDIST Vivo (version 11.0; QSR International) software. The four dimensions detailed above, and the relevant categories detected within each of them are set out in Table 1.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study are organized according to the four dimensions of analysis: management teams, teaching staff, students' families, and PE classes. The quotes are identified by participant (P) and focus group (G) or interviewee (E).

The Role of the School Management Team

One of the key factors for the development of a physical activity program that favors the inclusion of immigrant girls, according to the teachers participating in our study, was the close involvement of the school management team in inclusive initiatives, such as the promotion of financial aid or scholarships to subsidize the practice of physical activity after school hours. Some informants reported that their school management teams were following the *Pla Català de l'Esport* ("Catalan Sports Plan"), an initiative undertaken by the Government of Catalonia that is intended to increase student participation in physical activities outside school hours, as explained by one of the teachers interviewed:

The scholarships that come as a result of the Pla Català de l'Esport, which is a subsidy that they gave us to spend on students who wanted to do extra-curricular sports I admit that they gave many scholarships to girls and especially to Maghreb boys. (P3, G1, Paragraph 80)

Several interviewees noted that their management teams encouraged the introduction of extracurricular physical activities specifically designed for immigrant girls, with the aim of increasing their participation:

Table 1 Prestablished Dimensions and Categories Detected

Dimensions	Categories
1. School management team	Existence of initiatives to promote inclusion Inclusive projects
2. Teaching staff	PE teacher empowerment PE teacher relationships with other educational agents
3. Families	Socioeconomic factors Cultural factors
4. PE classes	Inclusion promoting units Role of feedback Strategies favoring inclusion

Note. PE = physical education.

The director of that school got involved, we ran campaigns [. . .] They passed out surveys because they saw that the girls didn't take part in the sports. They were asked what they wanted to do, skating, basketball, dancing [. . .], and using the survey results [. . .] they assembled the group. (P5, G1, Paragraph 82)

These initiatives reflect a management team that conceives physical activity as a key subject within education (Dagkas et al., 2011), favoring coeducation, transforming hegemonic models (Lleixa Arribas et al., 2020), and addressing interculturality (Martínez-Ten, 2012). In addition, these actions by the school directors would be in accordance with an intersectional educational approach because they address the multiple singularities of immigrant girls, openly promoting their preferred physical practices and trying to determine what they would like to participate in, outside of school hours (Thorjussen & Sisjord, 2018). In short, these interventions are based on principles of equity, equality, justice, and inclusion (Daniels & Billingsley, 2019).

The creation of spaces for physical activities that are tailored to the girls' own preferences can provide an incentive for them to take an active role in structured physical activities and sport (With-Nielsen & Pfister, 2011). The creation of girls-only physical activity classes is another strategy that favors their inclusion, as it can increase their presence at practice (Dagkas et al., 2011; Nieva Boza, 2015; Puig & Fullana, 2002). These sort of more personalized activities can open the possibility of participation of these girls—with the support of their families—in physical activities both during and after school hours (Bodnarchuk et al., 2018; Castanedo & Capllonch, 2018; Martinen et al., 2019).

It should be noted, however, that these are inclusive interventions produced in educational settings with a high number of immigrant girls. When informants in this study were asked whether they regarded it as necessary to carry out interventions specifically intended to increase the participation of these girls, they answered that such actions were appropriate only when the proportion of immigrant students in the classroom was significant:

I have been teaching at this school for three years, and since we don't have a high proportion of immigrants, I haven't felt that need. (E7, Paragraph 24)

I think that schools where there aren't so many immigrant children don't campaign so hard to promote sport [among those children], there isn't as much concern about immigrant families. I spent my first year teaching at a school where 90% of the students had a Moroccan background, and there was a girls' football team, and a lot of girls who attended extracurricular sport activities, and mothers who participated as volunteers In my current school there isn't the same degree of concern because there aren't so many immigrant children. (P5, G1, Paragraph 84)

These perceptions conflict with the recommendations offered in Maiztegui-Oñate et al. (2019); whereby, the school management must be committed to programs based on interculturality regardless of the number of foreign children in classrooms, because respect for cultural diversity must also be present and promoted in contexts that are culturally homogeneous. The same view is held by López-Pastor et al. (2007), who point out that though many schools may currently have a low proportion of immigrant children, that proportion is increasing or likely to do so.

Like these authors, we share the view that, to achieve an inclusive, coeducational, and intercultural environment, intervention is most effective when it is coordinated among the different agents that make up the educational community, regardless of the percentage of immigrant children in the student population.

As for inclusive projects carried out by management teams, reference was made by our participants to the *Madre Puente* ("Mother Bridge") program:

The project is called "Madre Puente" and it is directed at families, especially mothers. Starting with the Primary Third-Year students, it is intended to get their families to involve themselves a bit more in the school so that the boys and girls don't feel so isolated, because they are children who don't get much stimulation at home, they don't participate much in school holiday festivities. The programme seeks to increase the participation of this group of students and to more fully integrate them into the school community. (P1, G2, Paragraph 43)

As this teacher notes, the program seeks to increase the involvement of immigrant mothers in order to bring about the creation of spaces where communication can take place and experiences can be shared, which will facilitate the education and inclusion of their children. Although attention on the child is greatest during her or his first year at the school, the program continues to follow the child over the subsequent years. The teachers interviewed here described immigrant mothers as the focal points of this program since it is they who most closely followed their daughters' education and who were likely to want a connection with the school.

The *Madre Puente* project appears to correspond with the view of both Serradell et al. (2020) and Solé et al. (2013) that immigrant mothers are key agents for the improvement of the social environment. This educational strategy seeks to increase the confidence and strength of the immigrant mothers participating in the project, based on respect, understanding, dignity, and shared values (Daniels & Billingsley, 2019). With this educational experience, the management team makes it possible to create spaces for family intervention and action (Castanedo & Capllonch, 2018; INCLUD-ED, 2011; Serra et al., 2013).

The Teaching Staff and Its Relationship With PE Teachers

In general, the PE teachers in our study showed a high level of empowerment and reported feeling valued by their peers at their respective schools. This was especially evident in the meetings at school that are scheduled periodically every term in which teachers gather to assess the progress of students. This is described by one of the teachers participating in the study:

Where I most notice this positive perception of me is in the assessment meetings. Some teachers listen to me when I speak and are interested in what I have to say, though others don't. But we PE teachers also must work on this by talking to our fellow teachers a lot more than we do. (P3, G1, Paragraph 120)

As a consequence of this positive perception, several of the interviewees indicated that the active participation of immigrant girls was enhanced when the teaching staff as a body adopted educational initiatives, such as increasing the number of PE hours per week for

recently arrived immigrant pupils. In addition to the two weekly sessions with their own classroom group, the newcomers did two more PE sessions with the other group of the same level:

When they come from abroad the idea of doing more PE classes is great and has worked well because it helps them learn the language. Playing games helps them to integrate socially and is an activity which does not require any special mental effort, but which nonetheless has other very good benefits because they are learning the language and becoming integrated through games. (E1, Paragraph 40)

In this educational initiative, the teaching staff decided to restructure the timetable of the immigrant girls and boys to improve their educational experience by making it more inclusive, fair, and democratic, and PE was the main catalyst for this. These sorts of initiatives are the consequence of a high degree of coordination with the school's management team, which in our view—in keeping Maiztegui-Oñate et al. (2019)—is essential if such actions are to be successful.

Finally, empowering PE teachers, led to their encouraging immigrant girls to expand the range of physical activities they did outside of school hours:

The teacher could also help them to become more motivated through sport. (P1, G2, Paragraph 268)

Taken as a whole, these comments demonstrate that if the involvement of the PE teachers is combined with actions taken by the management team and the rest of the teaching staff, the participation of immigrant girls in extracurricular sport activities is more likely to be sustained over time.

Nonetheless, even when they felt valued, the teachers in our study reported feeling that PE did not always receive the recognition it deserved from other teaching staff, as indicated by the following:

I feel that PE is somewhat neglected in terms of the degree of importance it deserves as a space for interaction and social cohesion. (P1, G1, Paragraph 111)

I think they give it momentary importance, then they don't take it seriously anymore. There are some teachers who do, but I think most don't. (P1, G1, Paragraph 122)

As reported by Oliver and Kirk (2014), PE and nonformal physical activities are perceived as a key tool for improving the personal and social well-being of girls, their interpersonal relationships, and self-esteem. Teachers need to play a critical role in bringing about actions that are sustained over time and whose goal is to facilitate the engagement of girls and especially immigrant girls and by the same token help these girls to identify and overcome any barriers to their engagement. However, in the case of the PE teachers in our study, their involvement was limited exclusively to two classes per week with each group of students, which made it difficult for them to extend their influence to other agents and educational spaces. Several informants described the difficulties they faced when attempting to change the mentality of family members regarding increasing their daughters' participation in extracurricular activities.

We, teachers, within the PE class, what we cannot do is change the parents' way of thinking. Some parents think that girls shouldn't play sports (P3, G1, Paragraph 64)

When the schoolday is over, the immigrant girls don't usually play sports. It is extremely rare. I don't think I know of a single girl who did. Right now, I can't think of one. But I do have some girls who, as I can see during PE class, have a very good attitude toward sports. (P1, G1, Paragraph 82)

The Role of Families

The PE teachers in our study believed that immigrant families confront a variety of factors that can either favor or hinder the inclusion of their daughters. Such factors may include the length of time the girls had spent in Spain, the cultural background of the families, their religion, their social class, their economic situation, their parents' educational backgrounds, and their place of origin.

It depends a lot on where the immigrants come from. (P4, G2, Paragraph 64)

There were immigrant families that came from small villages, and other families that were more open. (P5, G1, Paragraph 87)

These perceptions on the part of informants correspond with the observations made by Santos and Lorenzo (2009) who found that the degree of participation and collaboration by immigrant families in their children's education varied according to the family's culture and/or country of origin.

Other results of our study suggest that it is immigrant Moroccan families that exhibit the greatest differences in customs and values relative to the host culture, which has repercussions on both the children's willingness to engage in organized physical activity and their attitudes to and understanding of sport (Puig & Fullana, 2002). This is reflected in the following comment:

In our school there are many Arab immigrants and there are many differences in the profile of the Arab girl. (P1, G2, Paragraph 78)

Teachers also reported their perception that in Moroccan culture males are expected to oversee and monitor female behaviors. One of the informants (a woman) described a reality in which one gender dominated the other and how she intervened to try to minimize or eliminate this sort of behavior:

Sometimes you could see that there were some things that a group of girls would not do because there was another person [a male] who was monitoring them and had told them "You can't do that" [On such occasions] I would make it clear that I could see what was going on, not shut my eyes to it and say, well, I'm not going to accept this because it's acceptable to you. (E10, Paragraph 32)

It must be borne in mind that to be able to intervene in situations, such as the ones this teacher describes, it is important to know about such culture-based practices, calling attention to and acting upon instances in which the female immigrant is being treated as the property of a male in violation of her human rights. A study by Cobo et al. (2006), indicated that teachers capable of making these cultural performances visible are needed.

These aspects and others linked to the reality of family contexts needs to be a key component of basic teacher education because it would prepare teachers to recognize, analyze, and reflect on the various minority cultures present in their classroom. Such a critical understanding would help them to calibrate flexibility in their approach to policies and practices affecting

these girls and their families (Benn et al., 2011; Dagkas et al., 2011). One possible method for improving inclusive intercultural skills development with a gender perspective is the creation of informal educational spaces linked to physical activity as a key tool (Dagkas et al., 2011; Nieva Boza, 2015), in order to develop a healthy family lifestyle (Bodnarchuk et al., 2018). In summary, this set of educational actions would allow the empowerment of families and take family engagement with the school beyond peripheral participation (Castanedo & Capllonch, 2018; Díez et al., 2011; Flecha, 2012; INCLUD-ED, 2011). According to Dagkas (2016), good relationships with families can allow teachers to develop a “family pedagogy” that will have a significant and positive influence on the education of children, particularly with regard to physical activity.

The Role of PE Classes

Regarding the last dimension, the data gathered in this study point to the need for programs of teaching units in PE classes that favor inclusion with a gender and intercultural perspective. Cooperative games and dances from different parts of the world are good examples of this sort of activity. Diversifying the PE curriculum along these lines, as urged by McCaughy (2006), can improve interpersonal relationships, arouse positive emotions, and enhance overall personal well-being for immigrant girls. Teaching units of this type were acknowledged by our informants to be inclusive tools that favored social and emotional well-being, as noted by one of the teachers interviewed:

I have done units about games of the world, so I can describe several. But if there are children from abroad, I tell them to ask their parents about this and have them describe a game from their own country. And the same goes for any girls from abroad. When the girls come back and describe a game from their home country, they take centre stage in class. (P2, G1, Paragraph 196)

This idea is corroborated by Carter-Thuillier et al. (2018), who point out that the incorporation of the physical cultural practices associated with immigrant students favors their inclusion and increases positive intercultural relations. In our study, this is reflected in the following statement by one of our informants:

I do a unit on dances from around the world, for example, and what I do is work on some dance from their country and let the girls explain how to do it. That way you get them engaged and motivated if they show that they are willing. (P2, G2, Paragraph 133)

The perception of this teacher links to the activist perspective proposed in Oliver and Kirk (2015), since both advocate PE activities centered around the female student and based on her agency. On the other hand, cooperative methodologies favor the creation of links between students, which constitutes a continuous and systematic commitment throughout each educational stage. One informant made the following comment:

With the older students I usually do a cooperative games unit, in which I set various challenges, and then divide the kids up into groups to overcome the challenges, which they won't be able to do unless they help each other. They can't move on to another challenge until they have overcome the one they are working on. (P4, G2, Paragraph 187)

In another vein, the feedback received by the immigrant female students from teachers constitutes a key tool for their inclusion, participation, and learning. This feedback has a lasting impact and because it is closely bound to emotions, will have either a strengthening or weakening effect on their levels of motivation and engagement, depending on whether it is positive or negative. Informants referred to this in several remarks:

And positive support, when they are doing an activity, always tell them that they are doing very well, that they should continue. (P3, G1, Paragraph 208)

It is very important to create some kind of bond of trust. Once they trust you, they become much more likely to participate in everything. If they lose that trust for an instant they immediately close ranks and it becomes very, very difficult to get them to participate again in something, because it is much easier for them to refuse to do things. (E10, Paragraph 154)

This result is in line with that described in Boud and Molloy (2015), where feedback has a more powerful impact on learning and the person than any other educational variable, including the ratio of immigrant students in the classroom and the teacher's expertise.

In addition to the strategies described above, one of our informant teachers recommended modifying the order of teaching units according to the students' characteristics and interests.

The alternation of the units could be taken into account, that is, alternating units that you know will favour them. (P2, G2, Paragraph 199)

This variation in the order of programmed teaching units can be regarded as a flexible, democratic, and inclusive educational approach (Díez et al., 2011), since it addresses particular student needs and increases their motivation. Moreover, combining the contents of these teaching units in accordance with the interests of students constitutes a strategy that favors their personal and social well-being. This is clearly the teacher's intention:

Find more activities in which they can excel, so that they feel a little more important. (P1, G2, Paragraph 268)

In addition to this prioritization of content in teaching units, another inclusive aspect to highlight would be the role of the interpersonal relationships of these girls with their class group.

Group work in general is something to bear in mind. If you can create a good climate in the PE class, then that will be extrapolated to other areas, and in this fashion the girl can develop a good relationship with her peers. (P1, G1, Paragraph 239)

Despite the importance of the various learning strategies mentioned above, PE teachers sometimes revealed limitations in their knowledge of the skills and abilities of the immigrant student. This idea is reported in studies, such as that by Fernández and Aguilar (2016), which suggests that PE teachers tend to have greater competence in intercultural skills related to awareness and attitudes than in procedural ones.

Finally, and especially in the case of Muslim female students, this study shows that teachers have limitations regarding the understanding of the role of the Islamic religion in the lives of

immigrant girls. Some of the participating teachers made assumptions like the following:

Maybe in their culture it is seen as inappropriate for girls to express certain personal sentiments or emotions, and to do so in front of so many people that she doesn't know well. (P1, G1, Paragraph 243)

In addition, teachers here seemed to think that Islam prohibits women from doing any kind of physical activity. Research, such as that by Benn et al. (2011), Dagkas et al. (2011), Nasri (2013), and Pfister (2004a, 2004b) has pointed out that Islam does not prohibit physical activity but rather, on the contrary, encourages it as a means for a Muslim to lead a healthier life. Along the same lines, Keddie (2018) and Nasri (2013) advocate interpreting the Koran from a gender perspective to improve the inclusion of Muslim women in today's society. This demonstrates the need for further training for PE teachers in relation to the cultural contexts of their immigrant students, training that takes into account the gender perspective.

Conclusions

In this study, aimed at improving the social inclusion of immigrant girls in society, the effects of the actions of different agents in the primary education context have been analyzed in relation to the practice of physical activity at school. The PE can play an important role in this inclusion, by facilitating socialization and reinforcing identity. However, as has been shown, it is not only the teachers of this subject who bear the responsibility for promoting inclusive processes. This responsibility must be shared by school management teams, non-PE teaching staff, and families. The manner in which these agents jointly address the practice of physical activity, as well as the cohesion of the actions undertaken, will be decisive. Management teams must promote sport and physical activity projects based on interculturality, inclusion, and coeducation, and must also commit to the pursuit of these values. Similarly, recognition of the educational value of PE by the non-PE teaching staff will help this subject achieve its objectives. At the same time, there exists a need for further training of teachers about different cultures in order to facilitate a better relationship with immigrant students' families and, in the PE sessions themselves, achieve greater motivation in, and participation by these students. This relationship will be of crucial importance for encouraging families to collaborate in projects that involve their daughters in physical activity, whether curricular or otherwise.

It follows from all this that, if our goal is a fair and inclusive educational environment, the greater the degree of union among stakeholding parties, the more successful the likely outcomes in terms of the social inclusion of immigrant girls.

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