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Absence of Transgender Identities in Primary Education Teachers' Training and Its Implications in the Classroom: A Phenomenological Study

Begoña Sánchez Torrejón ^{1,*} , Alejandro Granero Andújar ^{2,*}  and Jesús Esteban Mora ³ ¹ Instituto para el Desarrollo Social Sostenible (INDESS), University of Cádiz, 11003 Cádiz, Spain² Department of Didáctica, University of Cádiz, 11003 Cádiz, Spain³ Department of Evolutionary and Educational Psychology, University of Granada, 18071 Granada, Spain; jesteban@correo.ugr.es

* Correspondence: begonia.sanchez@uca.es (B.S.T.); alejandro.granero@uca.es (A.G.A.)

Abstract: The main objective of this article is to acquire in-depth knowledge of the training primary education teachers receive regarding transgender identities, as well as the resulting consequences in school realities. A phenomenological qualitative research approach was used to accomplish this purpose. The data were collected using a semi-structured interview technique. The participants were 38 primary education teachers from different public schools in the province of Cádiz, Spain. They acted as key informants, allowing us to gain knowledge, understanding, and meaning regarding our object of study. Among the results obtained, the absence of transgender identities in pre-service and in-service teacher training is observed. As a result, a severe lack of knowledge and confusion about the subject, as well as discriminatory values, are perceived in teachers. The need for transgender identities to be present in initial and continuous teacher training is stressed in order to see to the social and educational needs of transgender students in primary education and avoid reproducing the invisibility of transgender identities and the transmission of inequalities.

Keywords: primary education; transgender identities; teacher training; LGBTI



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1. Introduction

Transgender identities represent a reality that has been addressed in different disciplines, such as medicine, biology, and psychology. The concept has therefore been understood in a multi-disciplinary manner throughout history. It has traditionally been considered an aberration, a hormonal imbalance, and even a mental or physical pathology, causing transgender people to be marginalised and socially excluded [1].

In this study, the term “transgender” refers to those people whose (felt and self-determined) gender does not correspond to the one assigned at birth by hegemonic biological criteria [2]. Transgender people are hence regarded as problematic, since they break with the traditional view that considers them to be unrelated to hegemonic sexuality by challenging the rigid and dichotomous sex–gender system [3].

An example of this is transgender identity's classification as a mental illness according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), under the term “gender dysphoria.” In children, it is characterised by the desire to belong to and adopt roles, wear clothing, and possess the bodily characteristics of a gender category other than the one assigned at birth for a period of at least six months. Meanwhile, in adolescents and adults, it is defined by the following criteria: (1) a marked incongruence between the experienced/expressed gender and the assigned gender of a person (or, in young adolescents, the anticipated secondary sex characteristics), lasting for at least six months; and (2) the condition is associated with clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning in the individual's life [4].

However, more and more voices confront this pathologizing conception of transgender identities, especially those belonging to the socio-constructionist current, even within the field of psychology [5].

As a result, transgender people suffer a series of social consequences that perpetuate oppressive cultural values based on reinforcing the borders between sexes and genders, as well as legitimising the parameters of normality [6]. These social repercussions include silencing, harassment, rejection, invisibility, and different kinds of violence [7,8]. Despite having existed throughout history, transgender identities are a highly neglected phenomenon in culture, education, and science [9].

In the context of education, research reflects how the school system makes transgender students invisible and how it contributes to their experience of discrimination [10,11]. The values transmitted in schools, a reflection of the hegemonic social model based on biologism, are present from an early age, directly affecting the way in which children perceive themselves and others in terms of normal or abnormal, healthy or sick, moral or immoral, etc.

It can be said that schools act to perpetuate inequality and gender discrimination from childhood onwards [12]. In fact, transgender children are seen as problematic students because they challenge the static construction of gender, break with the gender binary that prevails in schools, and deconstruct the traditional view of sexuality [13].

Transgender identities are invisible in curricular content from early educational stages onwards, and this content reproduces the ciscentric conception that links gender to a certain physiological, chromosome, and hormone conformation [9,14–16]. Moreover, only hegemonic gender options are considered, ignoring and rejecting non-binary forms, as well as the complexity inherent to gender formation [17,18]. As Puche et al. [6] point out, the school institution itself interweaves mechanisms of exclusion and violence towards the transgression of the gender binary.

Another mechanism that generates inequalities in educational centres is bullying for reasons of transphobia, and gender identity is closely linked to it. Transgender children are hence made a target in these discriminatory practices [19–21]. This situation is even more worrying, as transphobic bullying is often silenced or made invisible in schools, even shifting responsibility to the victims [10,22]. At the same time, teachers transmit prejudices and misconceptions present in society in classroom contexts in an implicit, subtle, and almost unconscious manner [23].

As a result of the above, transgender children suffer discrimination at school from an early age, which prevents them from fully enjoying their rights. They are often forced to remain invisible and marginalised [24]. As Bello [25] puts it:

When transgender people set foot in school, they are subjected to stigmatisation, non-recognition of their identity, the impossibility of choosing names themselves and being treated as people, and to the demand of normalisation as a condition for their access to the right to education. (p. 107)

In this regard, Platero [26] postulates that one of the most repeated strategies by transgender students to avoid transphobia in schools is to go unnoticed and try to participate as little as possible in class activities. They also often develop feelings of guilt or low self-esteem, practice self-mutilation, turn to substance abuse in adolescence, or even have suicidal thoughts and commit suicide in some cases [3,27]. The values transmitted by different socio-cultural surroundings, such as school and family, and the lack of support in these contexts end up leading to the social and emotional isolation of transgender people [21]. Educational centres seem to be configured as disciplinary institutions that seek to normalise gender [28].

Although situations of transphobia may be generated for different reasons, several research studies [29–32] point to the lack of training on gender diversity in pre-service and in-service teacher training. This causes difficulties in seeing to transgender students and addressing transgender identities in the educational context, hence contributing to their social and educational invisibility. In this regard, Platero [26] refers to the lack of training

as a reason why teachers do not act and do not pay attention to non-hegemonic gender identities in their teaching practice. Pichardo and Moreno [33] added the following:

The lack of specific training is a handicap that becomes more evident when there is harassment as a consequence of gender or sexuality issues, situations in which a substantial number of teachers comments they do not act because they do not know how to, or do not feel confident enough to intervene. (p. 100)

In the research carried out by Álvarez and Rodríguez [34], in which 149 students of a degree in primary education took part, it was observed that 80% of the participants did not have proper knowledge about sexuality, nor did they know how to deal with transgender identities at school.

Likewise, a lack of scientific knowledge is observed in the training of in-service teachers, since this topic has not been addressed from a research perspective, and the data of their evaluations have not been used to shed light on this field of knowledge [35,36].

As a result of the above, some voices in the academic field point out teacher training is a key element in building inclusive schools that include transgender students. This is the case for Nieto and Martín [37], who state that it is of vital importance to “increase teacher training to be able to act against non-egalitarian behaviour, prevent from an earlier age, and educate by fostering tolerance and respect for diversity” (p. 1151). It is necessary for teachers themselves to clearly know which action to take in situations of bullying due to gender identity [38]. They therefore need to have sufficient knowledge on the topic.

There is research on interventions aimed at enhancing knowledge and attitudes in teaching, as well as on acquiring tools of interest to do so [39,40]. They include intervention programmes in teacher training related to the LGTBI community [41–44]. However, most of these programmes focus on affective–sexual orientations, leaving transgender people in the background. Many of these programmes have not been subjected to a thorough assessment to show their impact and effectiveness.

At the same time, the challenges posed by the UN 2030 Agenda also stress the need to promote the construction of inclusive school institutions in which all students, including transgender students, are taken into account. The 2030 Agenda especially refers to sustainable development goals 4, *quality education*, in terms of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all; 3, *good health and well-being*, which concerns different targets related to the social barriers that transgender people face; and 16, *peace, justice, and strong institutions*, which reflects the problem of the different forms of violence and discrimination against transgender people.

Spanish legislation also strengthens the idea of well-trained teachers that promote the proper development of these students through *Law 4/2023 on real and effective equality of transgender people and on ensuring LGTBI rights*. It considers both pre-service and in-service training as mechanisms to achieve respect for rights and freedoms, early detection of situations of abuse, and the implementation of relevant action protocols.

In the regulations of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, Law 2/2014 of 8 July on non-discrimination based on gender identity and recognition of the rights of transsexual people in Andalusia specifically concerns transgender identities in different socio-cultural dimensions like education, and it establishes a framework of rights to protect against discrimination. With respect to this study, chapter IV of this law is entirely dedicated to educational attention, and it reflects that transgender identities should be addressed in the training programmes developed for public workers and agents in health and social sectors, with the aim of turning educational spaces into places in which different gender identities are recognised and respected.

Along the same lines, the Order of 28 April 2015, which modifies the Order of 20 June 2011, by which measures are adopted to promote coexistence in educational centres subsidised with public funds and the right of families to participate in the process of their children’s education is regulated, explains the possibility of providing orientation and implementing certain intervention guidelines. These guidelines refer to seeing to transgender students, organisational measures of schools, activities promoting awareness,

advice and training for the different sectors of the educational community, and tools to prevent, detect, and address violence or bullying of a transphobic nature.

Initial and continuous teacher training should therefore be a reality through which to encourage the inclusion of transgender students in the educational system and a key element in the fight against discrimination and transphobia. Teachers can thus become aware of the presence of these students in their classrooms and of their needs, since, according to Hall [45], this factor is decisive in turning schools into safe places for students with a non-hegemonic gender identity. It would also contribute to one of the great challenges of the Spanish education system [46]: addressing the dimension of gender–sex diversity in all curricular areas of the education system in order to promote students' integral development.

Addressing sex–gender diversity at school from an early age is a major objective, as, according to Pichardo et al. [33], this is when children shape their gender identity. In their research, the authors also stress the need to intervene from early educational stages onwards to break with the gender binary that limits the possibilities of self-determination and to eliminate insults and harassment that may later affect transgender students negatively.

The figure of the teacher is key in offering teaching that supports and accompanies transgender students in their education and gender transition to help them develop properly both emotionally and psychologically [47,48]. Teachers are also essential in elaborating action plans that address students' gender and sexual diversity [9]. To achieve this, educational awareness-raising measures, including teacher training on this subject [49], are required.

As a result of the foregoing, the main objective of this research is to know the training primary education teachers have received with regard to transgender identities, as well as its implications in school contexts. The specific objectives have been specified as follows: (1) determine the presence of transgender identities in the pre-service and in-service training teachers have received; (2) detect possible shortcomings in the training received in the educational community of primary education with regard to transgender identities.

2. Materials and Methods

Qualitative research [50] of a descriptive kind was used to generate concepts, knowledge, and deep and scientific understanding of our object of study from the perspectives of the people constituting the reality studied [51,52].

2.1. Participants

Purposive non-probabilistic sampling was used. The main criterion was that the teachers had to be 6th grade teachers at a public primary school in the province of Cádiz, Spain. A total of 38 informants from 27 schools located in 5 different municipalities took part in the study. A total of 16 male and 22 female teachers aged between 27 and 56 participated (Table 1).

Table 1. Details of the informants.

Code of the Informant	Gender ¹	Age	Municipality
E-1	M	32	Jerez de la Frontera
E-2	M	45	Cádiz
E-3	F	39	Puerto de Santa María
E-4	F	53	Cádiz
E-5	F	44	Jerez de la Frontera
E-6	M	49	Jerez de la Frontera
E-7	M	35	Chipiona
E-8	M	54	Jerez de la Frontera
E-9	M	37	Sanlúcar de Barrameda

Table 1. Cont.

Code of the Informant	Gender ¹	Age	Municipality
E-10	F	34	Jerez de la Frontera
E-11	F	28	Jerez de la Frontera
E-12	F	31	Cádiz
E-13	F	43	Jerez de la Frontera
E-14	F	49	Chipiona
E-15	M	33	Jerez de la Frontera
E-16	F	29	Sanlúcar de Barrameda
E-17	M	46	Cádiz
E-18	F	34	Jerez de la Frontera
E-19	F	54	Cádiz
E-20	F	34	Jerez de la Frontera
E-21	M	37	Puerto de Santa María
E-22	F	56	Jerez de la Frontera
E-23	M	51	Jerez de la Frontera
E-24	M	29	Jerez de la Frontera
E-25	F	43	Sanlúcar de Barrameda
E-26	F	48	Cádiz
E-27	M	53	Jerez de la Frontera
E-28	F	35	Jerez de la Frontera
E-29	M	45	Cádiz
E-30	F	37	Jerez de la Frontera
E-31	F	29	Cádiz
E-32	M	38	Puerto de Santa María
E-33	M	49	Jerez de la Frontera
E-34	F	50	Sanlúcar de Barrameda
E-35	F	34	Jerez de la Frontera
E-36	M	39	Cádiz
E-37	F	47	Jerez de la Frontera
E-38	F	55	Jerez de la Frontera

¹ “M” corresponds to the male gender, and “F” stands for the female gender. Source: authors’ own work.

2.2. Procedures

To gather information, 38 individual semi-structured interviews [53] were conducted with the above-mentioned participants.

The interviews were held during academic year 2022–2023 between the months of October and March, their duration ranging between twenty and thirty minutes each. To avoid interviewer bias and contribute to the credibility of the research, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim [54]. The transcripts were returned to the informants to check the accuracy of the content.

Participation was voluntary and was based on the principle of informed consent. Likewise, the right to confidentiality and anonymity of the subjects who participated in the research was respected. The specific requirements of informed consent, as stated by [55], include information about the risks, purpose, and benefits of the research, as well as alternatives to the research; the subjects’ understanding of this information and of their own situation; and making a free decision on whether their participation is convenient or not.

2.3. Data Collection Instrument

Prior to implementation of the semi-structured interviews, the set of a priori questions that made up the script used was evaluated and validated by a team of six experts in the field of gender and sexual diversity and transsexuality in education. After several revisions, the members suggested changes that contributed to improving the quality of the instrument implemented [56].

The final script consisted of ten questions organised into the following sections: training received on transgender identities, assessment and impact of the possible training received, consequences of the possible lack of training, teaching strategies and tools to address transgender identities, perception of transgender identities in education, knowledge and attitudes regarding transgender identities, and possible experiences related to seeing to transgender students.

2.4. Data Analysis

The coding technique was used to process data [53]. The nuclei of common ideas were identified so as to establish the categories of analysis. Taking the transcripts of all the interviews carried out as a starting point, categories and subcategories of analysis were identified from the search for the main existing topics regarding the object of study. This enabled grouping the data and dealing with existing discrepancies and interrelationships, thus gaining knowledge as well as a holistic understanding of our object of study [54].

The system of categories designed allowed us to perform a thematic or content analysis sequenced in several phases (see Table 2).

Table 2. Categories used in the data analysis.

Categories (C)	Subcategories (c)
C.1—Training received	c.1.1—Absence of transgender identities c.1.2—Training needs
C.2—Consequences of lack of information on transgender identities	c.2.1—Inability to see to the needs of transgender students c.2.2—Not addressing transgender identities as educational content c.2.3—Reproducing discrimination and misconceptions
C.3—Teachers' values and knowledge about transgender identities	c.3.1—Lack of knowledge c.3.2—Misconceptions c.3.3—Biological essentialism c.3.4—Ciscentrism c.3.5—Hostility at schools
C.1—Training received	c.1.1—Absence of transgender identities

Source: authors' own work.

Following the indications of Glaser and Strauss [57], an analysis based on an approach of constant comparisons between researchers was carried out. In the first phase of analysis, a first coding and categorisation was performed by one of the researchers independently, and it was later reviewed by two other researchers from the team to make sure the category system designed was applied correctly. To ensure the quality of the process, reflexivity was mainly given attention.

Different techniques were used to ensure the veracity and quality of the study. First, *researcher triangulation* was used, debating and contrasting the perceptions, understanding, results, and interpretations reached between the researchers of the study during the analysis process. This debating and contrasting took place on an ongoing basis throughout the data collection and data analysis process. Second, *data triangulation* was employed. For that purpose, consistency was sought between the results from the comparison of the data gathered. Discrepancies could thus be found that allowed obtaining a broader view of the object of study, as well as points of agreement, which enabled gaining a more in-depth perspective and understanding of it [50,54,58].

3. Results

Before presenting the results in further detail, the table below shows the main contributions found in the study with regard to the categories of analysis (see Table 3).

Table 3. Main results according to the category of analysis.

Categories (C)	Subcategories (c)	Main Results
C.1—Training received	c.1.1—Absence of transgender identities	The teachers state they have not received any specific in-service training on transgender identities. They also comment they did not receive any training when they were university students.
	c.1.2—Training needs	The teachers explicitly express the need for training in transgender identities to break their own barriers and those of the environment, as they hinder working on transgender identities in the classroom and at school. Almost all the teachers express their inability to meet the needs of transgender students and address gender identity as educational content.
	c.2.1—Inability to perceive and address the needs of transgender students	Transgender identities appear as hidden and invisible realities in the curricular content. Together with a lack of knowledge, fear and reluctance to address transgender realities are observed among the teachers.
C.2—Consequences of lack of information on transgender identities	c.2.2—Not addressing transgender identities as educational content	Some of the teachers perceive transgender people as sick, considering their gender identity the result of anomalous physiological and psychological alterations. They also show behaviour and knowledge based on biological essentialism, ciscentricism, or lack of knowledge.
	c.2.3—Reproducing discrimination and misconceptions	The teachers do not know what transgender identities are, or they do not have a clear idea of what they are.
	c.3.1—Lack of knowledge	Some of the teachers confuse transgender identities with transvestism.
C.3—Teachers' values and knowledge about transgender identities	c.3.2—Misconceptions	Some of the teachers perceive gender as a condition of nature, dependent on biological factors.
	c.3.3—Biological essentialism	Some teachers conceive the gender of transgender people based on the classification assigned at birth, instead of self-determined gender.
	c.3.4—Ciscentrism	According to the teachers, schools are hostile places because of the abuse and discrimination transgender students are subject to.
	c.3.5—Hostility at schools	

Source: authors' own work.

From a more detailed description, the results obtained from the analysis of the data collected show that none of the teachers interviewed received any type of training on

transgender identities in their university preparation to carry out their future teaching. They were not provided with training within the framework of the different subjects studied or in the extra-curricular activities (volunteering, training seminars, conferences, etc.) they engaged in.

No, the truth is that I did not receive any training on transgender identities at school when I was studying to be a teacher, I was not given any training on this subject during my studies. (E-19)

This issue of transgender identities was not discussed when I did my degree. The topic was not talked about in any subject. (E-15)

As far as I can remember, [I did not receive] any training on transgender identities during the years I did my degree. (E-14)

All the teachers also commented that they had not taken any training course in which this subject was addressed while working as teachers.

Well, not really, every year I take several courses because I like to be informed of what is going on, but never on this specific topic. (E-36)

No, on this topic in particular. . . never. No, I have not taken any courses. (E-2)

No. I usually do several courses that interest me and I have never seen a course offered on this topic. I have not done any course on transgender identities. (E-18)

As a result, the vast majority of the teachers mentioned they were not able to deal with the needs and realities of transgender childhoods in the school environment and did not know how to address gender identity as educational content.

I lack the necessary resources and up-to-date training to work on this topic, which I am completely unfamiliar with, in the classroom. (E-9)

I think that, to work on it in an inclusive way, I do not have the specific tools because I have no training on this subject. . . (Teacher, E-7)

I do not have any specific tools to include transgender identities in the daily routine of my class. I have never done any training. (E-14)

However, the reduced number of teachers that believed they had educational resources and tools to work on the needs and realities of transgender childhoods indicated that those resources were the product of learning acquired autonomously based on their own professional experience, not on pre-service or in-service training received:

Given my experience as a teacher, I have been working as a teacher for several years, I think I can do it. . . (E-6)

Because of this lack of training, these teachers' interventions started from their ignorance of transgender identities, instead of from a solid referential training framework guiding their action. Numerous misconceptions, myths, and discriminatory messages may be transmitted to students when addressing this issue in class if no previous conceptual learning and values exist.

We need training. We should receive it to properly incorporate transgender identities into the classroom, because, without prior training it is impossible to do it optimally. (E-14)

A lack of knowledge, as well as some forms of discrimination towards transgender identities, were observed. They appeared in the interviews with the informants in different ways:

1. A large number of teachers had difficulties in answering whether they had transgender students in their classrooms or not because of their lack of knowledge of what transgender identities are.

I have had children in class who I think may have been transgender or gay, I am not sure. . . (E-7)

2. They perceived transgender identities as a topic concerning clothing, thus confusing it with transvestism:

[Transgender identities consist of] dressing as a man if you are a woman and vice versa. (E-19)

3. The teachers conceived transgender people as sick because of their gender identity, since they consider transgender identities to be the result of physiological (hormonal predominance of the opposite sex) and mental (rejection of their body and psychological discomfort) health disorders:

They change their bodies because they are not comfortable with theirs. I think that these people were born, for example, in the case of men, with more female hormones, and need to have a female body because they are not well psychologically. The truth is that I don't know much about transgender identities. . . (E-9)

I think transgender identities are a sexual condition in which you do not like your body and want to change it entirely. I think it is very difficult and it must cause a lot of suffering. . . (Teacher, E-37)

4. They subordinated gender self-determination to biological essentialism:

I consider it is complicated and problematic because nature has endowed them with a body, fairly or unfairly, but it is what they have been given, and they need to change the course of their own nature as a body. I see it as a very difficult change. (E-3)

5. They showed ciscentric behaviour after referring to a transgender student using the gender assigned at birth (male), instead of the one the student identifies with. This is known as "misgendering":

I had a transgender student last year. He transitioned from a boy to a girl. His family told us at the school a year ago, and we worked with him and with the whole class for the student to be integrated and accepted by all his classmates. (E-16)

Furthermore, transgender identities turned into hidden realities in the teachers' way of thinking of students:

It is possible that I have had transgender students in the years I have been teaching, but I have not even thought about it. . . (E-12)

This lack of consideration of transgender identities among the school teachers shows they are ignored in the educational discourse, which leads to not valuing transgender identities as a necessary topic in school curricula. Silence, denial, and invisibility in educational realities are hence promoted.

The lack of training also implies that teachers have to decide on the measures to be taken with regard to the inclusion and needs of transgender students in primary education. Their decisions are, in turn, subject to their own resistance and fears to address the issue:

One barrier for me is families. I mean, some of the students' families become very angry when you bring up these issues. (E-15)

Training is the key to knowing how to work on any topic, especially this one. I consider it to be delicate, since it is a topic that often causes controversy, especially in the case of some families that do not want these issues to be addressed. (E-1)

It thus becomes a topic excluded from the educational routine, which, according to the teachers, contributes to the fact that transgender students feel excluded from school:

It is a taboo topic. It is less taboo now, but it still is at school, and we should overcome this, so that none of the students feel excluded. (E-11)

It is worth mentioning that all the teachers interviewed considered the fact of not starting from a reference training framework as one of the major barriers when working on the inclusion of transgender identities in their classrooms. They all pointed out the importance of and need for addressing this reality in both initial and continuous teacher training:

I think that little work is done because it is taboo. In my opinion, this is the biggest barrier because we need proper training to know how to act in the classroom, and I personally don't know. . . . (E-30)

I think that the topic should be made more visible in primary school because one of the barriers, in my opinion, is that the topic is not even discussed, and another barrier is the fear of rejection. (E-4)

Of course, training on this topic is necessary, but I am not familiar with it. We need this kind of training because, to be able to include transgender students without any problems, teachers need to have tools, and need to know what is going on. (E-12)

Finally, it is important for the understanding of our object of study that these teachers considered educational centres to be hostile spaces for transgender students due to the abuse and discrimination they are subject to, which may lead to the concealment of their gender in the school context:

It is normal for many parents to hide the issue so that their children do not suffer bullying. . . . (E-5)

I think there has never been a transgender child in my class, or their families may have been hidden their children's gender identity to protect them. (E-12)

They denied the possibility of transgender students making their gender identity visible in public spaces, such as the school, for fear of intolerance and harassment from their peers and even from the staff. They also believed that the families themselves evade the gender identity of their children to protect them from exclusion and discrimination in educational settings.

4. Discussion

With respect to the first category of analysis, *training received*, it may be said that transgender identities are a neglected reality in primary education teachers' initial and continuous training, despite the fact that state and regional regulations [59], as well as social and educational needs themselves [10], consider it as a need to be addressed in educational contexts.

In this regard, several scientific studies coincide in stating that teachers lack training in terms of transgender identities [29–32]. Others point in another direction and concern proposed training carried out with teachers in which understandings of non-hegemonic forms of sexuality are worked on [41–44]. However, the latter are outdated and revolve mostly around affective–sexual orientations, as a result of which transgender identities seem to remain in the background.

As a consequence of the results, and as Sánchez et al. [60] pointed out, it is also obvious that there is little involvement on behalf of the educational authorities in proposals for teaching updating. No coordinated and serious institutional efforts are made that enable eliminating barriers observed in teachers so that these realities may be addressed within the framework of primary education. Thus, as shown in this research, the approach to transgender identities as educational content and how they are addressed in school contexts are left to the knowledge, values, experiences, interests, and desires of each teacher. However, this study shows that active involvement of teachers is essential to build inclusive education that is sensitive to transgender childhoods, respectful of plurality, and committed to the inclusion of all students in schools [61].

Regarding the second category of analysis, *consequences of lack of information on transgender identities*, we found that this lack of training entails a series of implications in school and classroom realities, such as the impossibility of perceiving and addressing the needs of transgender students.

To avoid this, teachers should provide support and act as a driving force for the transition towards a more inclusive education that embraces transgender realities. It is

therefore necessary to implement training proposals that address transgender identities with an egalitarian approach [49].

The lack of knowledge, together with the fear generated by not knowing the regulations that protect the discussion of non-hegemonic gender identities in formal education, contribute to the fact that these realities are not being addressed. They thus become part of the *absent curriculum* [62] in our educational centres. These data coincide with the contributions of Álvarez and Rodríguez [34], Álvarez and García [14], Gavilán [9], Granero [15], and Vela [16], who pointed out the concealment and existing ciscentrism in formal education.

Not making non-hegemonic gender identities visible transmits a ciscentric educational model that rejects transgender childhoods and realities. It provides a biased view of human sexuality and perpetuates social inequality and injustice towards those that do not have a hegemonic gender identity [63]. It hence contributes to the reproduction and legitimisation of the ciscentric and discriminatory conception causing transgender people to be marginalised and socially excluded [9,14–16].

This lack of training also prevents the deconstruction of non-egalitarian beliefs and attitudes internalised by teachers, thus contributing to the reproduction and legitimisation of discrimination from the *hidden curriculum* [64].

As to the analysis of the third category, *teachers' values and knowledge about transgender identities*, the results allow us to confirm there are deficiencies in the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes of teachers needed to work on transgender identities in a profound and egalitarian manner.

Likewise, in accordance with Granero [10,15], teachers also have misconceptions and ciscentric conceptions typical of biological essentialism that may emerge in their teaching and that may be internalised by students.

For all the above reasons, it is concluded that both pre-service and in-service training on gender identities is necessary for teachers to become key agents in the transformation of educational spaces into places where gender diversity is addressed, respected and valued as something enriching [16,37,38]. It will hence be possible to break the silence that prevails in schools with respect to transgender realities and start overcoming the different barriers that hinder the full inclusion of these students [65].

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, it is essential for teachers to receive solid and in-depth training that contributes to the development of socio-educational learning to achieve a cross-curricular presence of transsexuality in schools. Likewise, it is clear that the shortcomings found in teacher training need to be addressed by providing teachers with knowledge, instruments, and resources to eradicate fear, prejudice, and obstacles that hinder or prevent dealing with transsexuality in schools.

The importance of future lines of research, necessary to continue achieving rights for transgender people in educational spaces, has to be stressed.

First of all, the importance of continuing to address teacher training regarding transgender identities and its consequences in classroom and school proposals needs to be highlighted. It would be interesting to undertake a quantitative study with a larger population so as to obtain a more general view of this phenomenon, as well as case studies that enable seeing to the specificities of each specific context to be addressed. This would allow defining a solid study framework and establishing measures and proposals that improve the invisibility of, lack of recognition of, and discrimination experienced in transgender childhoods.

Secondly, it is key to address the prevention of transphobic bullying, as it is a universal problem that frequently occurs in educational centres. It should be recalled that it leads to negative consequences at the individual and group level and even in the entire educational institution. On numerous occasions, given the psychological and/or academic repercussions, transgender students that suffer aggression are exposed to risk behaviour

that can range from isolation, alcohol and drug use, risky sexual practices, and self-harm to suicide attempts and suicide [66].

It is also necessary to carry out research on transphobic cyberbullying. An alarming increase has been seen in recent years, considering the constant evolution of technology and the increasingly younger ages at which children have access to it [67]. Likewise, as Sánchez and Mestre [68] point out, anonymity and the direct, immediate, and non-perceived nature of the damage caused make transphobic cyberbullying a great challenge that the school should face and to which it should respond.

Based on the research here presented, the need to propose training programmes for teachers, both in pre-service and in-service training, addressing the topic of transgender identities is emphasised. An integrated approach should be adopted in this training, based on innovative methodologies that provide primary education teachers with a solid background for teaching in an inclusive and effective manner. Schools are hence encouraged to become institutions committed to opposing bullying that are safe for transgender students.

One of the limitations of this research is the lack of specific studies on the topic, considering the few research studies found in the review of the literature. This limitation sheds light on the urgent need to continue researching this issue so as to build inclusive schools in which transgender children are included.

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