

**SEXUALITY EDUCATION, GENDER EQUALITY, AND SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:
Portuguese school curricula and students, teachers, and parents' knowledge and attitudes**

A mixed-method study
(April - December 2022)



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Who we are

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Executive Summary

Recently, gender equality has assumed a significant role in contemporary societies, becoming crucial for human development. Since the initiatives to promote gender equality are increasing worldwide, education emerges as the most significant pathway to promote gender equality. School environments are in a privileged position to intervene with youth and facilitate the development of skills, attitudes, knowledge, and values that are fundamental to their lives. Particularly, during compulsory schooling, there is an opportunity window for schools to strongly contribute to building students' skills and awareness of social inequalities and discrimination and empower them with knowledge and skills to engage in informed decision-making processes about their lives. In Portugal, the inclusion of a compulsory subject in school curricula - Citizenship and Development – allows students to access learning opportunities regarding sexuality, gender, and inequalities throughout their schooling process (e.g., from primary to secondary education), within both public and private educational establishments. Note that these topics are included in the subject as compulsory, but the subject is not limited to these contents.

In this context, the present study aims to: (a) characterize knowledge, attitudes and comfort regarding gender equality of Portuguese students attending regular school curricula of sexuality education; (b) analyze students' knowledge and attitudes regarding sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention; (c) describe teachers' attitudes, knowledge, comfort and needs regarding gender equality and sexuality education school curricula; (d) document parents' knowledge, comfort and needs towards the curricula on gender equality and sexuality education in schools; and (d) document the topics (on sexuality, gender and SGBV) approached by the school curricula according to teachers and students perceptions.

The participants of this study included 227 students, 129 teachers, and 57 parents from schools located in the North of Portugal. Students' age varied between eleven and thirteen years old ($M = 11.95$; $SD = 0.37$); 118 (52%) students identified themselves as female, 92 (40.5%) as male, 2 (0.9%) as non-binary and 15 (6.6%) did not answer this question. Teachers were aged between 30 and 66 years ($M = 52.35$; $SD = 6.03$), with 93 (72.1%) identifying themselves as female, 29 (22.5%) as male and 7 (5.4%) preferred not to answer. Nearly all teachers were middle school teachers ($n = 126$, 97.7%), with 109 teachers having a bachelor's degree, 19 with a master's degree, and one with a Ph.D. Parents included 47 females and 5 males, aged between 35 and 55 years ($M = 43.85$; $SD = 4.61$). Most of them were Portuguese ($n = 50$, 96.2%), with higher education degrees ($n = 27$, 51.9%) or secondary school ($n = 19$, 36.5%). The study followed a mixed method and multi-informant approach, combining online questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. More specifically, 22 interviews were conducted with students, 13 with teachers, 2 with parents, and 5 focus groups with teachers and students. Data was collected between September and October 2022, e.g., at the beginning of the Portuguese schoolyear.

The overall results show that **students' conceptualizations about gender, gender diversity, sexuality, and gender equality seem to be mainly associated with a binary perspective of gender, with only male and female (in)equalities emerging in their discourses**. Students are generally aware that gender does not refer only to sex and biological characteristics but is a multifaceted and flexible concept, consisting of social, biological, cultural, and linguistic components, and is an idiosyncratic process. **These conceptions seem to be based on students' personal experiences, likely indicating a lack of opportunities to engage in learning experiences that allow them to broaden their perspectives**. Generically, their narratives about these concepts reveals that tolerance and respect are fundamental to the promotion of gender equality. Both male and female students seemed to share similar perspectives.

Both quantitative and qualitative data prove that students' knowledge about support and information services at school and in the community is scarce. Students feel most comfortable broaching topics related to gender and sexuality with friends and family members, with teachers and members of the school health team being elements with whom students report the least comfort in broaching these topics. **Surprisingly, when students need to report and ask for help regarding SGBV, they primarily identify teachers as those they can turn to**. This may indicate that

laughing students feel more comfortable in talking about sexuality and gender with peers, they recognize teachers as adults to whom they can turn to for support in situations of violence and for information.

As for SGBV, students were not able to define the phenomena, although some knowledge about what SGBV is emerged in the examples provided. Students identified some information about general signs, motivations, and consequences. The knowledge seems narrow and superficial, and examples of dating violence and peer violence mainly reported. Physical and psychological consequences for survivors emerged, showing that students are aware of the signs and consequences of SGBV, especially when it comes to survivors and schools, with **18% of students perceiving that sometimes** homophobic and sexist comments occur in schools. Regarding knowledge about the school and community services to support sexuality and gender education, students appear to lack information about school and community resources aimed at supporting the prevention and combat of SGBV. However, particularly regarding SGBV, **even though they do not know the designation of specific services or institutions to turn to in the case of SGBV, they are aware that there are institutions and authorities to support children concerning SGBV. Students identify the need of several actions to change the landscape of SGBV, which demands individual, community, and institutional efforts, including strategies at both micro and macro levels.** They are aware that SGBV can occur in many different contexts: school and its different spaces, out-of-school activities, families, and even the digital world, but still feel that there is a lack of consequences for aggressors when situations are reported in schools.

Four profiles of students regarding their stance toward sexuality education in schools were found. Most students (profile 3, $n = 119$), reported **high level of diversity of topics** related to sexuality, gender, and Sexual and gender based violence approached in **school activities** and medium levels of **comfort and knowledge**. One group of students (profile 1, $n = 35$ students) perceived **higher diversity of topics and more activities in schools** related to sexuality, gender, and SGBV, **better school climate**, and describe high levels of **comfort and a medium level of knowledge** about resources; while other students (profile 4; $n = 53$) perceived low **levels of diversity of topics addressed in school, had lower levels of comfort and knowledge** on these topics. These results highlight variations in students' experiences at schools, as well as in their knowledge and levels of comfort.

Regarding teachers' conceptions and experiences of gender equality and SGBV, the majority considered school to be a space where there are few gender inequalities, with school being a safe space for gender and sexuality education. Over 90% of the teachers participating in the study recognize that it is both the school and family's responsibility to support children's learning about gender, sexuality, and SGBV but also that the school is responsible for implementing activities to develop students' knowledge and values on sexuality and gender topics. They mention that regulations (e.g., salaries are regulated and are equal regardless of gender) ensure equality at work, but still identify some inequalities when focusing on student relationships and interactions. When focusing on SGBV, they were particularly attentive to hypothetical situations that may occur in schools among students (e.g., dating violence, peer violence, sexual orientation violence, transgender violence, physical and psychological violence, and verbal violence), in different spaces (classrooms, playground, digital world), highlighting the negative impact to students, school, and society. Good practices, such as using school psychologists to help students when they detect a sign of alert, were described by teachers. **Both qualitative and quantitative data indicate that teachers' levels of knowledge and comfort depend on individual factors, with a strong recognition that both in-service and pre-service/initial academic training should focus on developing teachers' skills to teach about gender, sexuality, and SGBV are needed to improve school practices.**

Four teacher profiles were found, highlighting variability in teachers needs, comfort, knowledge, use of practices/strategies, implementation, and participation in activities on topics related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV in schools. Worth noting is that **teachers who reported having more knowledge and feeling more comfort were not those who reported implementing**

more activities in class on the topic or engaging in collaborations with other professionals in this regard. The profiles underline the variability in teachers' preparation for and implementation of practices in schools regarding sexuality, gender and SGBV. The qualitative data reveals their concern with the lack of training and insecurity about their ability to communicate with the students about these topics; which was also identified through the quantitative results. In both the quantitative and the qualitative results, teachers highlight several needs for the implementation of curricula on gender and sexuality, namely: training, planning time, time to implement activities inserted in different subjects, materials, and support from specialized professionals.

The data about parental perceptions indicate that **parents consider themselves to have adequate knowledge and feel comfortable talking to their adolescent children about gender, sexuality, and SGBV, with sexuality being the topic that, in general, parents perceive to have the most knowledge about.** Despite this, the percentage of parents who effectively talk to or encourage their children to talk about these topics is lower. Similarly to **teachers, most parents (98%) believe it is both schools' and parents' responsibility to provide opportunities for children gender, sexuality, and SGBV education, and report various needs for materials and activities to support their children in gender, sexuality, and SGBV education in family settings. Moreover, parents (from 43% to 58%) believe that little support is given to Portuguese students on topics related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV in their education.**

Students' and teachers' perspectives on what and how gender and sexuality education curricula are being implemented at schools reveal that students and teachers identify that **Citizenship and Development and Natural Sciences** are the two subjects where gender, sexuality, and SGBV are discussed the most; and that **frequently discussed topics include gender and human rights, gender and social inclusion, sexuality and reproductive anatomy, and sexuality and human rights, privacy, and family relations.** Their perspectives are also aligned on the less-addressed topics of gender expression. In addition, students point out that gender identity, body image, sexuality and sexual behavior, Sexual and gender based violence, and domestic violence are also poorly explored. **Teachers add that gender and sex, gender roles, sexual orientation, respect for diversity, communication skills, negotiation and refusal, and consent are also less present in school sexuality education.** Both male and female students shared similar perspectives. This seems to indicate that not all the topics expected to be covered in school according to the curricula are being included in the activities, with teachers pointing out that only a few classes throughout the year are intentionally focused on these topics. **Although some of the less discussed topics are sometimes present in specific subjects, this does not appear to be sufficient to meet the guidelines for gender and sexuality education and ensure that all students have access to quality, comprehensive, and integrated sexuality education.** Results indicate **that schools seem to have a statistically significant but small effect on students' self-reported knowledge and attitudes.** Such evidence seems to be linked to some difficulties in recognizing properly the structural nature of SGBV and addressing its association with gender asymmetries.

According national and international recommendations, to achieve gender equality, and to prevent and combat SGBV, a multilevel, systematic, and specialized approach should be implemented in schools, ensuring the training of teachers and the participation and involvement of the whole community, especially students, teachers, non-teaching staff and families, but also experts and education professionals. Our results underline that, according to students and teachers, such systematic, multilevel and comprehensive approach is not being implemented in Portuguese schools, with lack of teacher training underlined. Thus, a more systematic approach, covering topics of sexual diversity, gender identity/expression, information on services that provide help and support and aiming to transform harmful gender practices and dismantle stereotypes is needed.

Index

Introduction	1
1. Gender Equality and Prevention of Sexual and Gender based Violence in School Contexts	1
2. The Portuguese School Curricula for Gender Equality and Prevention of Sexual and Gender Based Violence	2
3. Study goals	4
Method.....	7
1. Participants.....	7
1.1 Students	7
1.2 Teachers	8
1.3 Parents	13
2. Measures.....	14
2.1 Students	14
2.2 Teachers	17
2.3 Parents	18
3. Procedures	19
3.1 Sample Selection and Data Collection.....	19
3.2 Data Analyzes	21
Results	23
1. Gender equality: Students' perceptions	23
1.1 What do students know and what attitudes do they present regarding gender?	23
1.2 How comfortable are students discussing and expressing their gender identity?	31
1.3 What are students' perceptions regarding strategies to promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality in schools?	33
2. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV): Students' perceptions	36
2.1 What do students know regarding SGBV and what attitudes do they show?	36
2.2 Are students aware of the signs and consequences of SGBV?	39
2.3 What do students know about support services and initiatives for gender equality and SGBV prevention?	41
2.4 What skills do students identify in themselves for detecting and dealing with SGBV?	44
2.5 Which strategies, according to students, can promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality and SGBV?.....	45
3. Gender equality and SGBV: Teacher's perceptions	48
3.1 How do teachers understand gender equality?	48
3.2 How do teachers understand SGBV?	54
3.3 What are teachers' needs for approaching gender equality and SGBV and implementing the school curricula on sexuality education and gender equality?	58

3.4 What are teachers' levels of comfort and perceived competence for approaching gender equality, sexuality, and SGBV in schools?.....	61
3.5. Which strategies, according to teachers, can promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality and SGBV?.....	64
4. Gender equality and SGBV: Parents' perceptions.....	71
4.1 What are parents' levels of comfort and perceived competence for approaching these themes with their children?	71
4.2 How are parents involved in school activities regarding gender equality and SGBV?..	74
4.3 How do parents understand gender and gender equality?	79
4.4 How do parents understand SGBV among young people?	82
4.5. Which strategies, according to parents, can promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality and SGBV?.....	84
5. School climate and the effect of schools on students' and parents' knowledge and attitudes	87
5.1 How do students perceive the school climate regarding gender equality and SGBV?.	87
5.2 What are the effects of schools on students' and parents' knowledge and attitudes?	92
6. Portuguese Sexual Education Curricula: What is being implemented.....	94
6.1 Students' perceptions	94
6.2 Teachers' perceptions	111
6.3 Parents' perceptions	123
Limitations and biases	129
Conclusions	131
References.....	138
Appendix A.	147
Appendix B.	166
Appendix C.	183

Introduction

1. Gender Equality and Prevention of Sexual and Gender based Violence in School Contexts

In the educational context, gender equality refers to the opportunity for all students, regardless of gender, religion, culture, age, and other characteristics, to access education and equal development opportunities. However, gender equality is often implicit in discourses or pedagogical materials, which often reflect the male gender (Gråstén et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2018). In this sense, educational contexts, particularly schools, are privileged contexts for promoting gender equality and preventing Sexual and gender based violence.

In the past decades, gender equality has assumed a significant role in contemporary societies, becoming a core factor for human development. Initiatives to promote gender equality increase worldwide (e.g., the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations, 2015) their practical implications in several spheres of life, including education, gained more visibility.

Sexual and gender based violence is still a pervasive problem affecting youth all around the world. In Europe, the magnitude and severity of the phenomena have been stimulating the development of scientific studies aiming to understand both risk and protective factors (Vives-Cases et al., 2021). The school context contributes to increasing knowledge and competencies regarding healthy interpersonal relationships (Ajduković et al., 2021). Additionally, several studies seek to understand how gender-based violence can be prevented and how gender equality can be promoted in school settings (Ajduković et al., 2021; Makleff et al., 2020; Matthew et al., 2021; Montserrat et al., 2022; Prezenszk et al., 2018). According to the results of some of them, these phenomena can be addressed efficiently through the implementation of socio-emotional learning (Cahill et al., 2019), namely through the promotion of students' relationship skills, social awareness (e.g., empathy) and conflict resolution skills (Latorre-Coscolluela et al., 2021). Furthermore, another investigation concluded that presenting statistical data on the prevalence of these phenomena is also an appropriate practice since it promotes adolescents' awareness of the dimension of the problem (Racionero-Plaza et al., 2020).

Although the school plays a significant role in addressing these topics, interventions gain greater consistency and generate better results when a support network is established. That is when there is collaborative work between school, family (Espelage et al., 2019; Niejenhuis et al., 2020), and institutions dedicated to promoting gender equality and preventing Sexual and gender based violence.

2. The Portuguese School Curricula for Gender Equality and Prevention of Sexual and Gender Based Violence

Since the instauration of democracy in Portugal, in 1974, successive steps were taken to ensure, both politically and legally, that gender equality becomes a reality in the multiple contexts of social life, with schools at the forefront of these efforts. The National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination – Portugal + Equal¹ (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 61/2018, 2018; Decree-law n.º 55/2018) aligns with several national and international documents of reference, such as the Convention of Istanbul (2011). It sets different goals concerning education: (1) to ensure conditions for education and training free from gender stereotypes, (2) to qualify primary and secondary prevention programs and the respective entities and professionals, and promote their implementation, as well as (3) to deconstruct homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and interphobic stereotypes.

In the Portuguese educational system, gender equality is a mandatory part of the curriculum since preschool. In the 2nd and 3rd cycles of basic education, education for gender equality is one of the domains foreseen for Citizenship and Development subject (Direção-Geral da Educação, n.d.). The integration of gender equality in the curriculum aims to “promote the equal rights and duties of female and male students, through an education free of prejudice and gender stereotypes, to ensure the same educational opportunities and social and professional options. This process is shaped from a growing awareness of the living experiences of female and male students, considering their historical growth, with the prospect of changing attitudes and behaviors” (Direção-Geral de Educação, 2013, p. 3). The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) developed guidelines (e.g., Pinto et al., 2015) that support education professionals in addressing gender equality, thus promoting the “gradual elimination of social gender stereotypes that predefine what one is supposed to be and do as a boy or a girl” (Pinto et al., 2015, p. VII). Besides gender equality, health education is another part of the mandatory curriculum in this subject, “which aims to give children and young people the knowledge, attitudes, and values that help them make choices and decisions that are appropriate to their health and physical, social and mental well-being” (Direção-Geral de Educação, 2013, p. 4). Within the health framework, the theme “Affects and Education Sexuality” also addresses “Identity and Gender” and “Affective relationships”, “Development of sexuality”, “Maternity and Paternity”, and “Sexual and reproductive rights”.

¹ “Estratégia Nacional para a Igualdade e a Não Discriminação— Portugal + Igual” (ENIND). Its main concern is the elimination of stereotypes. On this basis, three action plans were devised that concern (1) non-discrimination on the grounds of sex and equality between women and men, (2) the prevention of all forms of violence against women, gender-based and domestic violence, and (3) fight against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, identity and expression of gender, and sexual characteristics. This strategy was implemented from 2018 to 2021 and monitored every four years.

Although there are no specific mandatory objectives in the Citizenship and Development curriculum on gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence, current guidelines underline that other school subjects, activities, projects, and partnerships with the community can and should complement the development of students' knowledge, attitudes, and values in these matters, underlining an integrated vision and consistent and systematic school practices. The Portuguese Decree-law 60/2009 establishes that sexuality education should be promoted in public and private educational establishments, from primary to secondary education. The implementation of sexuality education should be accomplished within the framework of education for health, and the workload defined by the different educational establishments. Among other topics, paragraphs f), h), and i) of Article 2 underline fostering the "respect for the difference between people and for different sexual orientations", "the promotion of equality between sexes", and "the elimination of behaviors based on sexual discrimination or violence based on sex or sexual orientation" (Law n. º 60/2009, p. 5097) as the main goals of sexuality education in schools. In the past few years, several materials were released that support teachers and schools in Portugal, such as the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination – Portugal + Equal (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n. º 61/2018), Health and Education Referential (2017), and the Guidelines for Education, Gender and Citizenship. Additionally, in 2017, the Ministry of Education released the "Students profile at the end of Compulsory Education" (Dispatch 6478/2017, 26 July). This document provides a matrix regarding the attitudes, values, and knowledge, of all schools serving students under compulsory schooling to follow. Several goals, values, and attitudes defined in this profile align with both the Portuguese recommendations and guidelines for gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence in schools, as well as with international guidelines (for instance, UNESCO, 2018, WHO, 2010). Responsibility, integrity, citizenship, and participation are the basic dimensions of this profile. They envision that, at the end of compulsory education, students must be able to value and respect human dignity and cultural diversity, reject all forms of discrimination and social exclusion, be aware that their actions and decisions affect their health and well-being, and take increasing responsibility to care for themselves, others and become active members of the society.

Despite these guidelines' relevance for professionals and the fact that sexuality education is mandatory in Portugal since 2009, Rocha et al. (2016) document analysis on school-based sexuality education in Portugal reveals that its evaluation tends to focus on fulfillment indicators (such as the number of activities) rather than effects on students. These authors also point out that from the few existing studies on this matter, obstacles to a successful implementation of sexuality education in schools can be identified namely "a heavy focus on health-related topics,

difficulties in undertaking cross-curricular teaching, low community participation (especially parents) and evaluation being still at a very early stage" (p. 173). Other recent studies (e.g., Ferreira et al., 2022) also underline the variability among high school students on their knowledge about sexuality, as well as resources for sexuality support. Students seem to have more knowledge about the body and sexuality and feelings, with less knowledge about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases. Nonetheless, some strengths are identified, such as the provision of resources and school teams in charge of sexuality education. Thus, studying students' and teachers' knowledge and attitudes regarding sexuality, gender equality, and prevention of gender-based violence is crucial to inform school interventions focused on preventing risk behaviors and discriminatory attitudes, and on the development of students' empowerment to engage in positive and healthy relationships throughout life (Carvalho et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2022; Makleff et al., 2020).

3. Study goals

This baseline study is part of a larger project (4-year study) aiming to analyze the effects of gender-transformative education on students (aged 11-14 years old) attending the 3rd cycle of mandatory education in Portugal. Overall, this study aims to describe the knowledge attitudes among students, teachers, and parents in Portugal regarding gender equality and sexual and gender based violence. The main questions of the baseline study are: What do students learn in school regarding sexuality education? What do students know about sexual and gender diversity, sexual orientation, and gender equality (e.g., are discussions including LGBTQIA+? Do they know and identify signs of homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination based on gender? What kind of attitudes (e.g., respect, tolerance) do students have regarding sexual and gender diversity and equality? What skills do students identify in themselves to promote gender equality, and to detect and report gender inequalities and discrimination based on gender? Do students feel comfortable expressing their gender identity? What do students know about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)? Are students aware of SGBV signs and consequences, and how to prevent and combat it? What are students' attitudes toward SGBV? What do students know about support services and where to report SGBV? What skills do students identify in themselves for detecting and dealing with SGBV? Are they aware of gender stereotypes that can lead to harmful practices for them and others? What content, when, how, and with what frequency are teachers approaching gender equality and prevention of SGBV in schools? What are teachers' levels of comfort and needs for implementing sexuality education curricula? What do parents know about sexuality education curricula and what are their needs to approach sexuality at home with their children?

Additionally, as the study builds on the several documents that support gender equality and sexuality education in Portuguese schools, it will also provide an overview of how current practices align with international guidelines (e.g., what is covered, and what is missing according to the international guidelines from UNESCO and WHO), and which of them are teachers aware of and implement.

To answer these questions the baseline study follows a mixed methods approach with quantitative and qualitative components. The **quantitative component** aims to contribute to:

- a) characterize knowledge, attitudes, and comfort on topics regarding gender equality among Portuguese 7th graders (aged between 11 and 13 years old, in the specific region of the North of Portugal) currently attending the regular school curricula on sexuality education;
- b) understand what approach is used in schools regarding sexuality education (e.g., understand if students know what a comprehensive sexuality education approach is).
- c) characterize knowledge, attitudes, and skills (e.g., decision-making, help-seeking behaviors) regarding the prevention of SGBV among Portuguese 7th graders (aged between 11 and 13 years old, in the specific region of the North of Portugal) currently attending the regular school curricula on sexuality education;
- d) describe attitudes on gender equality, prevention of SGBV, and sexuality education curricula and models of teachers teaching different subjects (including Citizenship and Development) to students aged 11 to 13 years old;
- e) describe teachers' needs regarding the implementation of sexuality education;
- f) document parents' (of students aged between 11 and 13 years old) knowledge about the school curricula on gender equality, prevention of SGBV, sexuality education, and their attitudes regarding it;
- g) analyze associations between students' attitudes, knowledge, skills, and their parents' and teachers' attitudes towards gender equality, SGBV, and sexuality education curricula.

The qualitative study aims to reach in-depth knowledge of the meanings attributed to gender equality and the prevention of SGBV, from the experienced experts of the school context: students and teachers.

For *students*, the main goals are to:

- a) understand students' conceptualizations (definitions) of gender, sexual and gender diversity, gender equality, and prevention of SGBV, including both benefits and challenges;

- b) describe students' opportunities to discuss sexual and gender diversity as well as gender equality in school and family contexts, and assess their needs for more/additional information and know-how to prevent SGBV in those contexts;
- c) document students' perceptions and needs regarding sexuality education, gender equality, and prevention of SGBV in current curricula;
- d) explore how schools prepare students to detect, report, and seek help regarding SGBV.

For **teachers**, the main goals are to:

- a) understand teachers' conceptualizations (definitions) regarding gender, gender equality, and prevention of SGBV, including both benefits and challenges;
- b) discuss teachers' level of comfort and perceptions of their ability to explore such themes in their classes, as well as their needs and type of support for implementing the curricula regarding sexuality education and gender equality topics;
- c) understand what approach is used in schools regarding sexuality education (e.g., understand if teachers know, feel comfortable and use a comprehensive sexual education approach);
- d) analyze teachers' perceptions of the schools' challenges in implementing the curricula regarding gender equality and prevention of SGBV.

Method

1. Participants

1.1 Students

The sample was constituted of 311 students which answered the survey; 227 (73%) completed all the questionnaires. Participants who did not complete the whole set of questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. Considering the fully completed surveys (Table 1) there were 118 (52%) students identified themselves as female, 92 (40.5%) as male, 2 (0.9%) as non-binary and 15 (6.6%) preferred not to answer. Participants had eleven to thirteen years of age ($M = 11.95$; $SD = 0.37$), with mean ages of 12.92 ± 0.44 and 11.98 ± 0.21 for female and male students, respectively. The majority were Portuguese ($n = 217$, 95.6%) and never repeated a year ($n = 218$, 96.0%). Those who repeated a year were, on average, 12.56 ± 0.53 years old and an equal number of female and male ($n = 4$) students, representing 3.4% of female and 4.3% of male students (one student preferred not to answer the gender question). Those who never repeated a year were, on average, 11.92 ± 0.34 years old.

The most common household number of these students is 4 people ($n = 103$, 45.4%), the less frequent is 2 people ($n = 20$, 8.8%), with the majority living with their father, mother, and siblings.

Table 1. Students Sociodemographic Characteristics

Sample Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age			11.95	0.37
Gender				
Female	118	52.0		
Male	92	40.5		
Non-binary	2	0.9		
Prefer not to answer	15	6.6		
Nationality				
Portuguese	217	95.6		
Other	10	4.4		
School Retention ^a	9	4.0		
Household size				
2 persons	20	8.8		
3 persons	58	25.6		
4 persons	103	45.4		
5 or more persons	46	20.3		
Household				
Mother	216	95.2		
Father	186	81.9		
Siblings	155	68.3		
Grandparents	21	9.3		
Others	27	11.9		

Note. $N = 227$

^a Reflects the number and percentage of participants answering "yes" to this question.

From the 311 students, a subsample of 40 students (Table 2) participated in individual interviews and/or focus groups. Specifically, 20 students participated in the individual interviews, 18 in the focus group, and 2 in both. Notably, one student participating in the interviews had a disability. In general, there were 21 (52.5%) students identified themselves as female, 18 (45%) as male, and 1 (2.5%) preferred not to answer. Ages varied from eleven to thirteen years ($M = 11.91$; $SD = 0.37$). Most students were Portuguese ($n = 37$, 92.5%) and never repeated a year ($n = 39$, 97.5%). The most common household number is 4 people ($n = 18$, 45%), and the less frequent is 2 people ($n = 1$, 2.5%), with the majority living with their father, mother, and siblings.

Table 2. Students' Sociodemographic Characteristics (Interviews and Focus Groups)

Sample Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age			11.91	0.37
Gender				
Female	21	52.5		
Male	18	45		
Non-binary	0	0		
Prefer not to answer	1	2.5		
Nationality				
Portuguese	37	92.5		
Other	3	7.5		
School retention ^a	1	2.5		
Household size				
2 persons	1	2.5		
3 persons	16	40		
4 persons	18	45		
5 or more persons	5	12.5		
Household				
Mother	40	100		
Father/paternal figure	36	90		
Siblings	21	52.5		
Grandparents	5	12.5		

Note. $N = 40$

^a Reflects the number and percentage of participants answering "yes" to this question.

1.2 Teachers

The sample comprised 318 teachers of which 129 fully completed the survey. Participants who did not complete the whole set of surveys were excluded from the analysis. All participants (Table 3) were Portuguese aged between 30 and 66 years ($M = 52.35$; $SD = 6.03$), with 93 (72.1%) teachers identifying themselves as female, 29 (22.5%) as male, and 7 (5.4%) preferred not to answer. The mean ages of female and male teachers were 52.43 ± 6.09 and 52.79 ± 6.00 , respectively. Nearly all the participants were middle school teachers ($n = 126$, 97.7%), with 109

teachers with a degree level, 19 with a master's degree, and one with a Ph.D. A large part of the participants had full-time schedules ($n = 121$, 93.8%) and 73.6% belonged to the school cluster board, with time service varying from 0 to 43 years ($M = 27.16$; $SD = 7.25$) and time at current school from 0 to 33 years ($M = 10.91$; $SD = 9.96$). Nearly 60% ($n = 74$, 57.4%) of the teachers had a school role other than teaching/lecturing, from these, 81.1% ($n = 60$) were female and 14.9% ($n = 11$) were male teachers, representing 64.5% and 37.9% of female and male teachers, respectively. The most represented subjects lectured were Natural Sciences ($n = 20$, 15.5%), Citizenship and Development ($n = 19$, 14.7%), Portuguese ($n = 18$, 14.0%), and Physical Education ($n = 16$, 12.4%).

Of the 129 participant teachers, only 13 (9 female and 3 male teachers) reported having received training on gender-based equality and/or SGBV in the last two years, with the short-duration action being the most frequent. Nonetheless, half of the teachers ($n = 65$, 50.4%) said that had already developed or had been involved in the promotion of actions related to gender-based equality and/or violence from which 73.8% ($n = 48$) were female and 23.1% ($n = 15$) were male teachers, representing similar proportions of female and male teachers (51.6% and 51.7%, respectively). Classes to students about GBE/GBV were the most frequent initiative ($n = 54$, 41.9%), with 77.8% ($n = 42$) given by female teachers and 20.4% ($n = 11$) given by male teachers.

Table 3. Teachers Sociodemographic Characteristics

Sample Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age			52.35	6.03
Gender				
Female	93	72.1		
Male	29	22.5		
Prefer not to answer	7	5.4		
Nationality				
Portuguese	129	100.0		
Number of children				
0	22	17.1		
1	34	26.4		
2	59	45.7		
3 or more	14	10.9		
Education				
Graduate or MSc (Pos-Bologna)	109	84.5		
MSc (Pre-Bologna)	19	14.7		
PhD	1	0.8		
Level lectured				
Pre-school	2	1.6		
1 st cycle of basic education	2	1.6		
2 nd cycle of basic education	15	11.6		
3 rd cycle of basic education	126	97.7		
Secondary school	23	17.8		

Professional status			
Full-time	121	93.8	
Part-time	8	6.2	
Type of contract			
School Cluster board	95	73.6	
Pedagogical area board	19	14.7	
Contracted (one-year contract)	12	9.3	
Substitute teacher	3	2.3	
Subjects lectured			
Natural Sciences	20	15.5	
Citizenship and development	19	14.7	
Portuguese	18	14.0	
Physical Education	16	12.4	
Foreign Language I	13	10.1	
Foreign Language II	11	8.5	
History	10	7.8	
Mathematics	9	7.0	
Geography	9	7.0	
Physical and Chemistry Sciences	8	6.2	
Visual Education	7	5.4	
Information and Communication Technologies	5	3.9	
Catholic religious and moral education	1	0.8	
Have other school functions than lecturing/teaching ^a	74	57.4	
Service time as teacher (years)		27.16	7.25
Service time as teacher in actual school (years)		10.91	9.96
Received training on gender-based equality and/or violence in the previous 2 years ^a	13	10.1	
Short duration action	8	6.2	
Training course	5	3.9	
Congress	5	3.9	
Short-duration sessions in school	2	1.6	
Training workshop	1	0.8	
Developed or been involved in the promotion of actions related to gender-based equality and/or violence ^a	65	50.4	
Type of initiative:			
Classes to students about Gender/SGBV	54	41.9	
Lectures to students	27	20.9	
Training initiative for teachers	9	7.0	
Training initiative for non-teaching staff	1	0.8	
Function:			
Active intervenient	31	24.0	
Organizer	27	20.9	
One of the tenderers	25	19.4	
Assistant	18	14.0	

Note. *N* = 129

^a Reflects the number and percentage of participants answering "yes" to this question.

A subsample of 22 teachers participated in individual interviews and/or focus groups (Table 4). More specifically, nine teachers participated in the individual interview, nine in the

focus group, and four in both. Additionally, two psychologists and two social educators participated in the focus groups. Most of these professionals ($n = 3$) had never received training on gender-based equality and/or violence in the last two years and carried out actions in this area. Only 4 teachers received training on gender-based equality and/or violence in the last two years, with the short duration of training courses and congresses/conferences being the most frequent. Furthermore, half of the teachers ($n = 11$, 50%) said that had already developed or had been involved in the promotion of actions related to gender-based equality and/or violence, with the classes to students about GBE/GBV being the most frequent initiative ($n = 9$, 41%).

In general, the ages of teachers varied from 28 to 63 years ($M = 49.5$; $SD = 9.05$), all of them were Portuguese with 19 (86.4%) identifying themselves as female and 3 (13.6%) as male. Most teachers were middle school teachers ($n = 15$, 68.2%), 13 with a degree level or post-Bologna master's degree, and 8 with a pre-Bologna master's degree. Most teachers had full-time schedules ($n = 16$, 72.7%) and 68.2% belonged to the school cluster board, with time service varying from 0 to 37 years ($M = 25.55$; $SD = 7.94$) and time at current school from 0 to 27 years ($M = 10.19$; $SD = 6.41$). The most represented subjects lectured were Citizenship and Development ($n = 12$, 54.5%) and Natural Sciences ($n = 10$, 45.5%). About 81.8% ($n = 18$) of teachers had other school functions than lecturer/teaching.

Table 4. Teachers' Sociodemographic Characteristics (Interviews and Focus Groups)

Sample Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age ^b			49.5	9.05
Gender				
Female	19	86.4		
Male	3	13.6		
Nationality				
Portuguese	22	100		
Education ^b				
Graduate or MSc (Pos-Bologna)	13	59.1		
MSc (Pre-Bologna)	8	36.4		
Level lectured				
2 nd cycle of basic education	3	13.6		
3 rd cycle of basic education	17	77.3		
Secondary school	3	13.6		
Professional status ^b				
Full-time	16	72.7		
Part-time	4	18.2		
Type of contract ^b				
School Cluster board	15	68.2		
Pedagogical area board	2	9.1		
Contracted (one-year contract)	2	9.1		
Substitute teacher	2	9.1		
Subjects lectured				

Natural Sciences	10	45.5		
Citizenship and development	12	54.5		
Portuguese	1	4.5		
Foreign Language I	1	4.5		
Foreign Language II	2	9.1		
History	4	18.2		
Mathematics	3	13.6		
Geography	1	4.5		
Philosophy and Psychology B	1	4.5		
Inclusive Education	1	4.5		
Have other school functions than teaching ^a	18	81.8		
Service time as a teacher (years)			25.55	7.94
Service time as a teacher in actual school (years)			10.19	6.41
Received training on gender-based equality and/or violence in the previous 2 years ^a	4	18.2		
Short duration action	2	9.1		
Training course	1	4.5		
Congress	2	9.1		
Short-duration sessions in school	0	0		
Training workshop	1	4.5		
Developed or been involved in the promotion of actions related to gender-based equality and/or violence ^a	11	50		
Type of initiative:				
Classes to students about GBE/GBV	9	40.9		
Lectures to students	5	22.7		
Training initiative for teachers	2	9.1		
Webinar	1	4.5		
Function:				
Active intervenient	5	22.7		
Organizer	5	22.7		
One of the tenderers	5	22.7		
Assistant	4	18.2		

Note. *N* = 22

^a Reflects the number and percentage of participants answering “yes” to this question.

^b Some participants didn't answer the question.

Most teachers (*n* = 7, 58.3%) received training in sexuality education outside the school context. About 66.7% (*n* = 8; Table 5) reported discussing more frequently in their classes the experiences of positive sexuality, interpersonal relationships, and sexual relations, with the information about support structures in this area being the less approached theme (*n* = 3, 25%). Furthermore, half of the teachers (*n* = 6, 50%) reported having the support of specialized professionals to address these topics, specifically nurses, psychologists, and safety school agents.

Table 5. *Sexual Education Training and Topics Covered in Classes*

Sample Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Training in sexual education ^a	7	58.3		

Training time (hours)		47.86	19.59
Topics covered in classes ^a ^b			
Reproduction mechanisms	7	58.3	
Sexually transmitted infections	7	58.3	
Pregnancy and contraceptive methods	7	58.3	
Adolescent biopsychosocial development	4	33.3	
Experiences of a positive sexuality	8	66.7	
Interpersonal relationships	8	66.7	
Communication and conflict management	6	50	
Feelings and emotions	7	58.3	
Dating and intimacy	6	50	
Sexual relations	8	66.7	
Gender identity	7	58.3	
Sexual orientation	6	50	
Gender-based violence	6	50	
Traditional gender roles	4	33.3	
Sexual violence	5	41.7	
Sexuality through digital media	4	33.3	
Information on existing support structures	3	25	
Support from specialized professionals ^a ^b	6	50	

Note. *N* = 12

^a Reflects the number and percentage of participants answering “yes” to this question.

^b Some participants didn’t answer the question.

1.3 Parents

A total of 107 parents retrieved the survey, and 52 concluded it. From the valid surveys (Table 6), there were 47 women and 5 men, aged between 35 and 55 years (*M* = 43.85; *SD* = 4.61), most of them Portuguese (*n* = 50, 96.2%), with higher education (*n* = 27, 51.9%) or secondary school (*n* = 19, 36.5%). All the parents live with their children and identified themselves as mothers (*n* = 48, 92.3%) or fathers (*n* = 4, 7.7%). The household structure was mainly nuclear (parents and children) (*n* = 37, 71.2%) composed of 3 or 4 persons (*n* = 20, 38.5% and *n* = 19, 36.5%, respectively) and more than half have no education allowance (*n* = 35, 67.3%).

Table 6. *Parents Sociodemographic Characteristics*

Sample Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age			43.85	4.61
Gender				
Female	47	90.4		
Male	5	9.6		
Nationality				
Portuguese	50	96.2		
Other	2	3.8		
Education				

2 nd cycle of basic education	4	707
3 rd cycle of basic education	2	3.8
Secondary school	19	36.5
Higher education	27	51.9
Employment situation		
Employed	44	84.6
Self-employed	6	11.5
Unemployed	2	3.8
Relationship with the student		
Mother	48	92.3
Father	4	7.7
Lives with the student ^a	52	100.0
Household size		
2 persons	9	17.3
3 persons	20	38.5
4 persons	19	36.5
5 or more persons	4	7.7
Family structure		
Nuclear (parents and children)	37	71.2
Single parent	7	13.5
Extended (parents, children, grandparents, uncles, and aunts)	5	9.6
Reconstructed (couple with at least one child from a previous relationship)	3	5.8

Note. $N = 52$

^a Reflects the number and percentage of participants answering "yes" to this question.

Additionally, from this larger sample of parents, 2 participated in individual interviews. In general, the two mothers were Portuguese, and identified themselves as female; one mother was approximately 40 years and another preferred not to answer this question. Both had higher education degrees and were currently employed. Furthermore, the household number of these mothers is 4 people (for both), and the family structure is defined as nuclear.

2. Measures

Self-report measures were selected for each group of participants (students, teachers, and parents/legal tutors). These were aligned with the objectives of the baseline study but also with the project's goal of analyzing the efficacy of a transformative education embedded in school curricula.

2.1 Students

Sociodemographic questionnaire – Students. This is a brief questionnaire about students' birthdate, gender, academic retention, nationality, household number, gender, age, education, and profession of each household member.

Gender Equality in the School Curricula – Students' Perceptions. This questionnaire includes nine questions related to students' experience with the school curricula (including different subjects and particularly the Citizenship and Development subject), to gather information on the frequency, type of activities, subjects, and stakeholders regarding the inclusion of gender, sexuality, and SGBV in the school context. Each question was rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 – never or almost never; 2 – few times; 3 – sometimes; 4 – many times; 5 – always or almost always; 6 – I don't know/does not apply).

Gender Equality and School Climate – Students' Perceptions. This questionnaire encompasses nine questions answered on a 6-point Likert scale (1 – never or almost never; 2 – few times; 3 – sometimes; 4 – many times; 5 – always or almost always; 6 – I don't know/does not apply). These questions are associated with school contexts, such as having someone to talk about topics related to gender and sexuality, feeling comfortable about this, feeling judged by others about gender and sexuality, and witnessing situations of discrimination due to gender and sexuality.

Gender Equality and Sexuality: Resources and Services in Schools and the Community. This questionnaire aims to collect information about students' knowledge about the school and the community services and institutions that can be reached for getting information, counseling, and reporting abuses regarding SGBV and sexuality. The questionnaire comprises 18 items.

Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Beliefs Towards Gender Equality, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (KASB). This questionnaire was developed in the scope of the present study for capturing students' knowledge on key topics regarding gender equality, attitudes regarding gender equality and SGBV, and their skills to uphold their own and other rights, make decisions about their lives and health and engage in happy and fulfilling relationships and experiences. The questionnaire builds on international and national (e.g., Portuguese) guidelines and references for gender and sexuality education in schools. Regarding international frameworks, UNESCO's (2018) key concepts referential for gender education of children aged 11 to 15 years were mapped with the WHO (2010) matrix of learning goals for the same age range. At the national (Portuguese level), the following documents were analyzed and mapped with international guidelines: Decree-law 60/2009, The National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination – Portugal + Equal (2018), the Health and Education Referential (2017), the Guidelines for Education on Gender and Citizenship: 2nd cycle (Pinto, 2015), and the Students' profile at the end of Compulsory Education (2017). These documents were screened for identifying key knowledge, attitudes, skills, and beliefs to be developed by adolescents, thus guiding the questionnaire organization. Additionally, considering the Safe from SGBV toolkit (2021) intervention modules and main objectives, the research team experts on gender equality

and SGBV have created items to capture selected the main knowledge, attitudinal, and skills expected to be taught in schools for the age group students. Besides the mentioned references, several assessment measures were also analyzed and some items from such measures were adapted. Measures analyzed included: The Scale of Attitudes of Adolescent Students about Sexuality (Barros et al., 2021), the Scale of Children's Beliefs about Violence (Sani, 2003), the Multidimensional Peer Survivorization Scale in Children (Minard & Joseph, 2000, adapted to Portugal by Veiga, 2007) and the School Coexistence Questionnaire (Ildefonso, 2011).

Overall, the questionnaire Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Beliefs Towards Gender Equality, Sexual Gender-Based Violence includes 63 items coded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – do not agree or disagree; 4 – agree; 5 – strongly agree).

Semi-structured interview. The main topics of the interview protocols included conceptualizations of gender, sexual and gender diversity, gender equality (including in school context), and SGBV among young people; characteristics of gender equality (or inequality), including in the school context; the role of school, students, and families in promoting (preventing) gender equality (inequality); awareness of school curricula contents on gender equality and prevention of SGBV; the role of family, school, and students in preventing, detecting and reporting SGBV in school context; students' sources when seeking help regarding gender equality and SGBV.

Focus groups. Focus group (FG) protocol includes six vignettes that address gender equality (3 vignettes) and SGBV (3 vignettes) within the school context, evoking diverse situations/contexts and different protagonists and relationship dynamics (peers, student-teacher, teacher-teacher, students' intimate relationship). Four vignettes were selected, following UNESCO (2018) and WHO (2010) international frameworks, and adapted from existing resources (e.g., vignette 2: Blum et al., 2019; vignette 3, 4, and 5: SAFE from SGBV toolkit, 2021). The other two (vignettes 1 and 6) were developed based on these international frameworks and following the qualitative study's purpose. Each vignette encompassed a question, to which a discussion was followed, moderated by two research team members that acted as facilitators. Globally, the main topics included were gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; relationships; inclusion, respect, and tolerance; communication; decision-making. Specific to gender equality vignettes was the role of the student in promoting gender equality. Specific to SGBV, the main topics included gender-based violence (concepts and forms); social discrimination; beliefs about masculinity; intersectionality; the role of schools, students, and teachers in preventing SGBV; domestic violence; intimate relationships; support for survivors of SGBV.

See Appendix A for the complete protocol.

2.2 Teachers

Sociodemographic questionnaire – Teachers. This is a brief questionnaire about teachers' age, gender, nationality, years of education, teaching experience (including in the current school), recruitment group, current teaching subject(s), professional situation, other positions besides teaching, number of children, previous training on sexuality and gender equality and prevention of SGBV, and involvement in promoting actions related to gender equality and/or gender-based violence.

Gender Equality in the School Curricula – Teachers' perceptions. This questionnaire includes four questions answered on a 4-point Likert Scale (1 – disagree; 2 – neither agree nor disagree; 3 – agree; 4 – I don't Know/does not apply) related to the perception of teachers about the responsibility of the school (including the different subjects and particularly the Citizenship and Development subject) in organizing activities on gender, sexuality, and SGBV. It also includes 10 questions answered on a 6-point Likert Scale (1 – never or almost never; 2 – few times; 3 – sometimes; 4 – many times; 5 – always or almost always; 6 – I don't Know/does not apply) regarding the frequency, type of activities, subjects, and stakeholders on the inclusion of gender, sexuality, and prevention of SGBV in schools.

Perception of Knowledge and Comfort in Approaching Gender Equality in a School Context – Teachers' Perceptions. Includes six items answered on a 4-point Likert Scale (1 – disagree; 2 – neither agree nor disagree; 3 – agree; 4 – I don't know/does not apply) associated with knowledge and level of comfort perceived by teachers in approaching students with gender and sexuality topics.

Gender Equality: Teachers' Practices. This questionnaire aims to identify teachers' practices/strategies when addressing gender equality in the classroom regarding the promotion of competencies in students. It is composed of nine items answered on a 4-point Likert Scale (1 – disagree; 2 – neither agree nor disagree; 3 – agree; 4 – I don't Know/does not apply).

Identification of needs – Teachers' perceptions. This brief questionnaire aims to identify needs perceived by teachers related to teaching materials and resources, time to prepare and implement activities, training, collaboration with other professionals, and support to work with parents. It includes seven items, scored on a 4-point Likert Scale (1 – little or no need; 2 – some need; 3 – considerable need; 4 – I don't know/does not apply).

Semi-structured interview. The main topics of the interview protocols include teachers' conceptualizations and their perception of students' conceptualizations regarding gender, gender equality (including in the school context), and SGBV among young people; characteristics of gender equality (or inequality), including in the school context; the role of school and teachers in promoting (preventing) gender equality (inequality); the role of family, school, and teachers in

preventing SGBV in school context; teachers' approaches (e.g., traditional vs. comprehensive sexual education approach), comfort, abilities, needs, and ideal situation to address school curricula contents on gender equality and prevention of SGBV.

Focus groups. Focus group protocol includes six vignettes that address gender equality (3 vignettes) and SGBV (3 vignettes) within the school context, evoking diverse situations/contexts and different protagonists and relationship dynamics (peers, student-teacher, teacher-teacher, students' intimate relationship). Vignettes used for teachers' focus group protocol were adapted from students' focus group protocol to include references to the teacher when these were not present in the vignette (e.g., vignettes 1, 2, and 5). Each vignette encompasses a question, to which a discussion was followed, moderated by two research team members who acted as facilitators. Globally, the main topics included were gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; relationships; inclusion, respect, and tolerance; communication; decision-making. Specific to gender equality vignettes was the role of the teacher in promoting gender equality. Specific to SGBV, the main topics included SGBV (concepts and forms); social discrimination; beliefs about masculinity; intersectionality; the role of schools, teachers, and students in preventing SGBV; domestic violence; intimate relationships violence; support for survivors of SGBV (including, for instance, LGBTQIA+, sex workers); needs and obstacles to the implementation of the gender equality approach in school curricula.

See Appendix B for the complete protocol.

2.3 Parents

Sociodemographic questionnaire – Parents. This is a brief questionnaire about, for instance, parental figures' age, gender, nationality, years of education, professional status, family structure, and the number of household members. This can be completed by parents, the child's legal guardians, or any figure identified as responsible for the child's education and contacts with the school context.

Gender Equality in the School Curricula – Parents' perceptions. This questionnaire includes five questions answered on a 4-point Likert Scale (1 – disagree; 2 – neither agree nor disagree; 3 – agree; 4 – I don't know/does not apply) related to the perception of parents about the responsibility of the school in organizing activities on gender, sexuality, and SGBV.

Sexuality Education - Parents' perceptions: This questionnaire includes four parts. The first part consists of a set of nine statements, rated on a 3-point Likert Scale (1 – disagree; 2 – neither agree nor disagree; 3 – agree, and a "don't know/not applicable" option) which aims to assess parents' perception of what sexuality education is; Part II consists of seven items on the effects of sexuality education on young people's behavior; The third part focuses on the relevance

attributed by parents to sources of information on topics related to sexuality. It includes 8 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 – not at all important; 2 – somewhat important; 3 – important; 4 – very important; 5 – extremely important; and a “don't know/ not applicable” option). The fourth part includes six items on the perception of parents regarding the strategies used in the Portuguese context for young people's sexuality education (including items that focus on CSE approaches).

Perception of knowledge and comfort in approaching gender equality in a family context – Parents perceptions. Includes 12 items answered on a 4-point Likert Scale (1 – disagree; 2 – neither agree nor disagree; 3 – agree; 4 – I don't know/does not apply) associated with knowledge, dialogue, incentive, and level of comfort perceived by parents in approaching their child with gender, sexuality and SGBV topics.

Identification of needs – Parents' perceptions. This brief questionnaire includes four items answered on a 4-point Likert Scale (1 – little or no need; 2 – some need; 3 – considerable need; 4 – I don't know/does not apply) related to the perception of parents' needs in approaching their child with gender and sexuality topics, such as materials and resources, training, and time.

Parents Interview. Parents' interviews were focused on capturing their perceptions of how gender equality is being included in their child's school curricula, their opinions about the role of sexuality education in schools, and their levels of comfort in discussing sexuality and gender-related topics with their children.

See Appendix C for the complete protocol.

3. Procedures

3.1 Sample Selection and Data Collection

Ethical permissions were obtained from the Directorate-General for Education (Portuguese School Survey Monitoring, process nr. 0835900001) and from the ethical committee of the University of Maia. All procedures complied with the Code of Ethics and Deontology of the Portuguese Psychologists Association (Código de Ética e Deontologia da Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses), the American Psychology Association (APA). The General Regulation on Data Protection (Regulamento Geral de Proteção de Dados) from the European Union was followed.

All public school clusters from the municipalities of Maia, Matosinhos, Vila do Conde, Vila Nova de Gaia and Guimarães, (all from North of Portugal) were contacted and invited to participate in the study. First, the educational department of the municipalities was contacted and asked to indicate facilitators or schools that may be interested in participating in the project. Second, school directors were directly contacted. Meetings were scheduled with the school directors/designated facilitators to present the study and explain the research process. A

brochure was delivered to schools describing the study. Schools participating in any project involving additional sexuality education programs (besides the standard activities of the Portuguese curricula related to sexuality education) were excluded.

In each school, informed consent was obtained from school directors, students' legal tutors, and teachers. All parents/legal tutors of students attending the 7th grade were contacted to (a) obtain informed consent for children's participation, and (b) participate in the study as parents. Only those students whose parents/legal tutors signed the informed consent were included. Researchers respected the students' free will when they decided not to keep on completing the questionnaires. Similarly, all teachers lecturing at the 3rd cycle of education at the schools participating in the study were invited to participate.

Participation was voluntary and all adult participants completed an informed consent form. The research also involves students under the legal age to provide informed consent and informed consent was obtained from their legal tutors. Only students whose legal tutors agreed to participate and signed the informed consent participated. Students' free will to complete the questionnaires and participate in interviews/focus groups was also considered.

Data was collected through online questionnaires. Links were generated using the digital platform - LimeSurvey, housed at the University of Maia. For students' questionnaires, data were collected in the school context, within scheduled visits of researchers, ensuring each student had enough privacy to complete the questionnaires individually. Researchers were available in the classroom to clarify any doubts regarding the protocol. When experiencing problems in accessing the internet, data was collected with students using paper protocols. Teachers and parents received an email with the link to complete the questionnaires.

Individual interviews were conducted with students randomly selected from the overall participants, teachers, also randomly selected among those who consent to participate in the study, and parents who volunteered for interviews were mainly carried out in schools in an appropriate setting (a quiet and private room with no disturbances) by a trained interviewer with previous experience. Interviews with parents were conducted online. Five focus groups were organized, two composed of teachers, two composed of students, and one mixed. Focus groups were implemented in schools, in an appropriate setting, like individual interviews. The setting ensured participants' privacy and participants will be asked to complete a confidentiality agreement, so they do not get inhibited to share information about situations of gender inequality and SGBV in their schools. Participants were informed that, if they feel uncomfortable and emotionally disturbed during and/or after participation in the study, they can retrieve their authorization for participating at any time, and they can get psychological help from the research team.

3.2 Data Analyzes

Quantitative Analyzes

The R software was used to treat and analyze quantitative data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Statistical assumptions required for each specific analysis procedure (e.g., normality, measures' psychometrics characteristics) were tested.

The psychometric analysis of the KASB followed an exploratory and confirmatory orientation through robust methods to accommodate possible limitations resulting from sampling variability and size, and response unreliability. The univariate and multivariate normality analyses were performed through the assessment of symmetry and kurtosis with the psych (Revelle, 2022) and the MVN (Korkmaz et al., 2014) packages for R (R Core Team, 2022). To identify inappropriate items due to sampling problems, Kaiser's (1970; Kaiser & Rice, 1974) measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) was used (Lorenzo-Seva & Ferrando, 2021).

The exploratory analysis procedures were implemented in the polychoric correlation matrix between the scores obtained for each of the items of the KASB (e.g., Garrido, Abad, & Ponsoda, 2013). The exploratory graph analysis (EGA; Golino & Demetriou, 2017; Golino & Epskamp, 2017) of KASB was implemented to identify its dimensions. Within EGA, a graph refers to a network consisting of vertices (scale items), and the links between the vertices represent their associations. A gaussian graphic model is used to estimate the strength of each association. The extended Bayesian Information Criterion (Foygel & Darton, 2010) is used to select the most parsimonious network while controlling for type I errors. Finally, the Fruchterman-Reingold algorithm (1991) is used to graphically represent the network of associations between items. Once the network of the associations between the items is estimated, it is explored to identify subgroups of items that are most closely linked and display similar structural characteristics. These subgroups, called communities (Fortunato, 2010), correspond to the factors in traditional exploratory factor analysis and are identified through the walk trap algorithm (Pons & Latapy, 2005). The EGAnet (Golino & Epskamp, 2017) package for R was used to perform KASB's exploratory graph analysis.

Once the communities were identified, confirmatory factor analysis was performed. A robust form of the weighted least squares method (Yang-Wallentin, Jöreskog, & Luo, 2010) was applied to the asymptotic variance/covariance matrix to extract the factors. The global adjustment of the dimensional structure was assessed through indexes selected based on the results of previous studies that considered ordinal data (Hutchinson & Olmos, 1998) and samples of similar size to that admitted to this study (Sivo, Fan, Witta, & Willse, 2006). Consistent with the previous proposals, indexes of different classes were considered (Jaccard & Wan, 1996). To assess the replicability of the factor solution, the generalized H index was used following the standards

proposed by Ferrando and Lorenzo-Seva (2018). The quality and effectiveness of factor scores were assessed through the Factor Determinacy Index, ORION marginal reliability, Sensitivity Ratio, and Expected Percentage of True Differences as proposed by Ferrando and Lorenzo-Seva (2018). Unidimensional Congruence, Explained Common Variance, and the Mean of Item Residual Absolute Loadings are used to assess the factorial solution's closeness to unidimensionality (Ferrando & Lorenzo-Seva, 2018). Procedures for the confirmatory factor analysis were implemented in the R package lavaan (@). Factor replicability, quality and effectiveness of factor scores, and closeness to unidimensionality were performed using FACTOR (Lorenzo-Seva & Ferrando, 2013). The categorical omega and Cronbach's alpha were computed using the MBESS package (Kelley, 2017) for software R to assess KASB reliability.

A latent profile analysis (Oberski, 2016) was conducted to identify distinct subgroups of students, parents, and teachers regarding sexuality, gender equality, and SGBV. Different models were evaluated, considering 2 to 5 distinct profiles. Raw data were centered and scaled before model estimation. In each model, the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm was used to obtain the maximum likelihood estimates for the parameters. AIC, AWE, BIC, CLC, and KIC statistics were used to compare the models' fit (Akogul & Erisoglu, 2017). tidyLPA (Rosenberg et al., 2018) R package was used to conduct the latent profile analysis.

Qualitative Analyzes

Interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed by the research team members. Information allowing the identification of participants was omitted from the transcripts, and an alphanumeric code was used for each participant. The transcripts were analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), using the software NVivo by a team of four trained coders, all with a master's degree in Psychology and previous training in qualitative analysis. One experienced coder audited the entire process. The coding procedures began in a deductive way, with a thematic grid with the main topics covered by the interviews and focus group guides. Then, inductive analysis was used to improve the analysis grid (for students, teachers, and focus groups).

Results

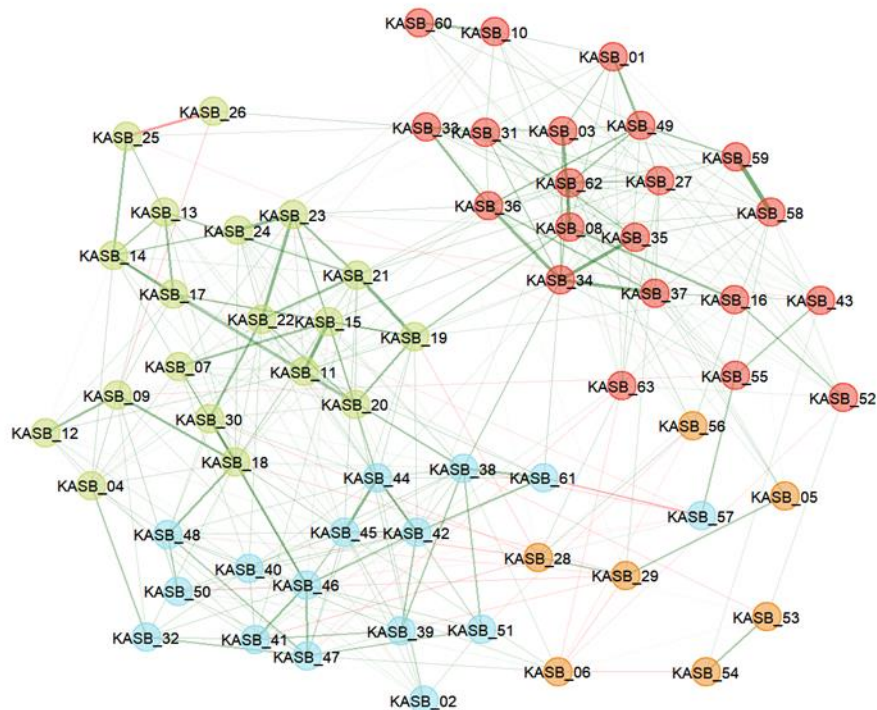
1. Gender equality: Students' perceptions

1.1 What do students know and what attitudes do they present regarding gender?

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

A pool of 63 items was constituted to address Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Beliefs Towards Gender Equality, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (KASBS; see KASBS description in section 2.1, and KASBS items in Appendix A.). As mentioned in section 3.2 (Data analysis), an Exploratory Graph Analysis was performed to explore whether KASB's items are grouped according to the theoretical assumptions underlying KASB's (see section 2.1, measures, students). Exploratory graph analysis of the KASB's items identified four distinct groups which are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Exploratory Graph Analysis of the KASB's items



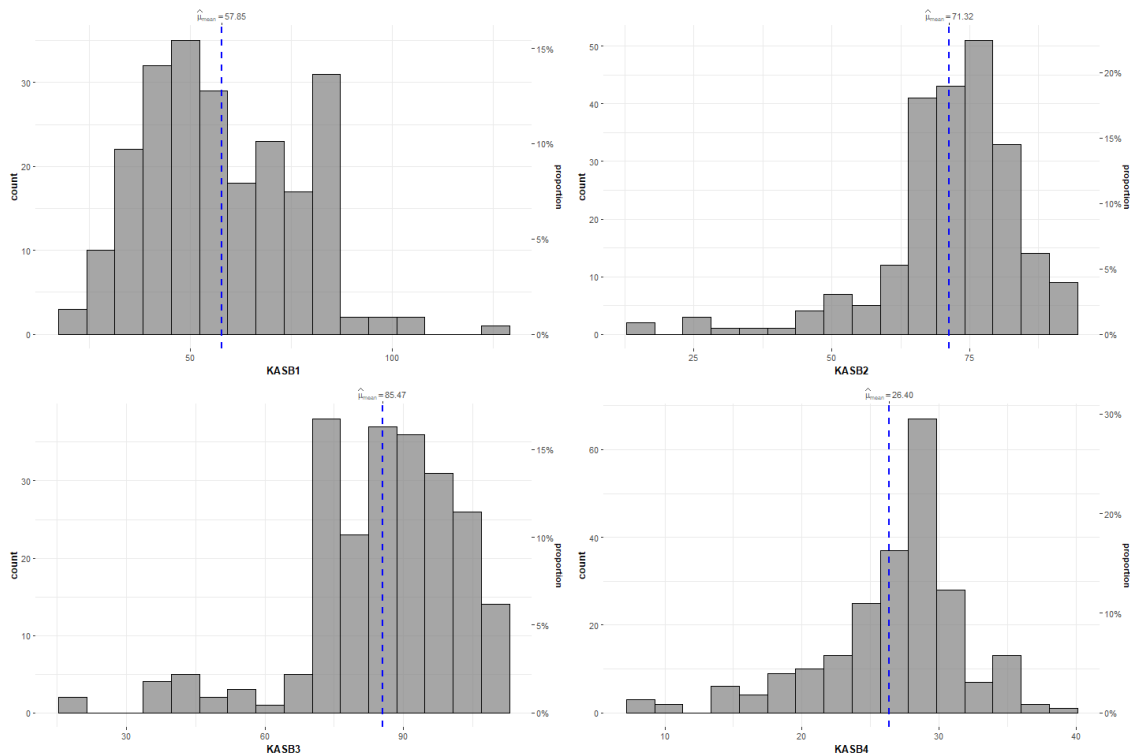
Note. See Appendix A for the KASB's items.

This four-dimensional solution displayed satisfactory fit (Chi-square(1884) = 2165.436, $p < .05$, CFI = .985, GFI = .925, AGFI = .920, NFI = .895, SRMR = 0.79, RMSEA = .026, 90% CI [.021, .031], $p > .05$). All factors revealed high construct replicability ($H > .80$) and adequate score estimates (FDI $> .90$, marginal reliabilities $> .80$, $SR > 2$). KASB's reliability was good (omega = .922, 95%Bca [.905, .939]).

Overall, the four groups of items are in accordance with the theoretical assumptions of the items. **The first dimension to emerge was Gender diversity awareness and non-legitimation of violence.** The items composing the factor are related to the beliefs on gender identity (e.g., gender identity is not defined by genital organs, it's not prescriptive of social roles and responsibilities). Also, sexual diversity is acceptable, with sexual orientation including other sexual orientations besides homosexuality and heterosexuality. Moreover, both family, intimate partner, and peer violence are conceptualized as deviant, whether perpetrated by male or female, youth or older, with psychological, verbal, physical, and sexual abuse being characterized as non-acceptable conduct. Knowledge of violent behaviors and attitudes towards violence are assessed. As shown by previous research (e.g., Schudson & van Anders, 2022), people who demonstrate more accurate knowledge of SGBV matters tend to reveal attitudes and skills more favorable to gender diversity. **The second dimension was designated as Self-determination and freedom of expression.** The items concerning the dimension express students' knowledge about necessities and rights, as well as attitudes and skills (behaviors), adopted when situations are perceived as invasive or abusive. Studies concluded that as youth are empowered to recognize their rights, they become more capable of addressing violent practices (e.g., Pérez-Martínez et al., 2022). **The third dimension was described as Awareness of (in)equality and SGBV.** The items refer to the ability to identify situations revealing gender equality and inequality, considering several contexts and different LGBTI typologies of violence (e.g., intimate partner violence, bullying, LGBTI critical consciousness development in youth-based violence), and awareness of inequality based on race, ethnicity, and gender. The critical consciousness development in youth has been presented as having actions toward equality and a close relationship with awareness of inequality based on ethnicity, and gender attitude aiming to promote equality (Wray-Lake et al., 2022). **The fourth dimension to emerge was Actions towards equality and comprehending attitudes aiming to promote equality,** in terms of enhancing gender diversity and preventing and combating gender violence. Youth's involvement in prosocial behaviors seems to be linked to the willingness to participate in activities that benefit others, especially those exposed to vulnerable conditions (Siu et al., 2012).

The KASB's scores on the four groups of items may vary between 21 and 126, 16 and 96, 19 and 114, and 7 and 42. Students obtained scores between 21 and 126 ($M = 57.8$, $SD = 18.9$) for the first dimension; between 16 and 93 ($M = 71.3$, $SD = 13.2$) for the second; between 19 and 111 ($M = 85.5$, $SD = 16.6$) for the third; and between 8 and 39 ($M = 26.4$, $SD = 5.2$) for the fourth. Histograms depicting students' scores are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Histograms of students' scores on KASB's dimensions



Overall, students' scores on **Gender diversity awareness and non-legitimation of violence** were between 21 and 126 portraying a high variability in student's knowledge about gender and sexual diversity, and knowledge of violent behaviors, including their ability to recognize that both family, and intimate partner and peer violence as deviant. This high variability might be explained by the influence of several factors, both internal and external, such as personal experiences concerning SGB violence and family attitudes and beliefs regarding sexuality topics. On average scores for this dimension were 57.8 (SD = 18.9), indicating a moderate level of awareness (knowledge of gender) and a moderate tendency to agree with acceptance and tolerance attitudes towards gender (considering the maximum score of the dimension of 126). Scores on **Self-determination and freedom of expression** varied between 16 and 93 (M = 71.3, SD = 13.2). These dimensions also seem to portray a high variability in students' knowledge and identification of their skills for standing for their and others' rights. Average scores for this dimension are particularly high (M = 71.3, SD = 13.2, with a maximum score of 96), which may indicate that students strongly agree that they have the skills and positive attitudes (reflect in self-determination) for dealing with gender (in)equalities and for standing for personal rights. Students' scores for the **dimension Awareness of (in)equality and SGBV** varied between 19 and 111 (M = 85.5, SD = 16.6) portraying that students' ability to identify situations of (in)equality,

considering several contexts and different LGBTI typologies of violence, awareness of inequality based on race, ethnicity, and gender. Although average scores are medium-high (85.5 in a maximum of 144), the high variability in students' scores indicates that there are students with very little awareness (minimum of 19 out of 144), while others seem to have a deeper knowledge of the subjects (maximum of 111 out of 144; see students' profiles, section 6.1). For the last dimension, **Actions towards equality and comprehending attitudes**, students' scores vary between 8 and 39 (M = 26.4, SD = 5.2). This dimension captures a behavioral component, through the extent to which students agree with several actions aiming to promote equality and combating and preventing SGBV, which also has a set of positive attitudes associated with the factor. Similarly, to the factor on skills (Self-determination and freedom of expression), average scores are medium-high (26.4 out of 42), indicating that students perceive the need for actions/behaviors to actively intervene.

Measurement invariance between genders is not supported ($\chi^2(59) = 4020.6, p = .008$), suggesting that gender may moderate adolescents' knowledge, attitudes, skills, and beliefs towards sexuality, gender equality, and gender-based violence. Inter-factor correlations are presented in Figure 3, accompanied by correlations with the perception of students of the number of school activities dedicated to sexuality, gender equality, and gender-based violence, the school climate, comfort in addressing these topics with friends and adults, as well as their perception of knowledge about them.

Figure 3. KASB inter-factor correlation coefficients



Small to moderate correlations were found between KASB's dimensions suggesting that this dimensional structure may not approximate unidimensionality which is confirmed by psychometric indexes (UniCo < .95, ECV < .85, MIREAL < .30). Small correlations were found between them and self-reported indicators of school climate, comfort in addressing gender and sexuality-related topics with friends and adults, and knowledge of resources about those topics, suggesting that students' knowledge, attitudes, skills, and beliefs are unrelated to their schools' activities regarding these topics. As discrepancies between self-report, sociological, and standardized measures seem to emerge multi-method, multi-trait designs, such as the one in this study, are advised in future studies.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Interviews with students reveal that **almost half of the students define gender as gender identity or expression in both a binary and non-binary way** (n = 10). This also happened in the mixed and students FG where students were aware of what it means to be transgender and the difference between transgender and transsexual. As for the other half of students, gender is defined as either: (a) based on primary and secondary sexual characteristics (n = 7) with one student underlining that there are biological differences between sexes but not cognitive, and (b) gender identity or expression in a binary way (n = 4). Only two were unable to provide a definition, which was then given by the interviewer. For instance, one student referred that gender *"can be seen through the person's hair, voice, reproductive organs, it can be seen by his/her pubic hair, [and] breasts, the female breasts."* (S04, male, 12 years), appealing to primary and secondary sexual characteristics; while other mentions that *"[...] At first, it is usually seen by their private parts, but some people do not identify with their gender, so it depends on the person, if the person... if they do not identify as feminine, I think we should treat her by the gender the person feels most comfortable with"* (S20, female, 12 years), and that *"A person's gender is the gender with which the person identifies. For example, non-binary, transsexual, and bigender people, there are several genders. Because people feel... for example, fluid or binary gender? For example, I'm binary, but I have a friend who is non-binary, and the person can sometimes feel more effeminate. [...] the person's gender should not be how the person was born, but rather how the person feels"* (S21, female, 12 years).

Regarding the **definition of sexual and gender diversity**, most students were able to understand its concept (n = 18), with one student being able to identify different sexualities (e.g., asexual person, aromantic person): *"So the person can have the sexuality that he or she feels, (he/she) can go on discovering it, or it can also be in gender. [...] if the person feels, for example,*

she is transsexual [...] [and for example in terms of sexualities], be an asexual or aromantic person" (S21, female, 12 years). Nevertheless, some (n = 4) were unable to provide a definition., or that "

Thus, students recognize that gender not only refers to sex and biological characteristics but also recognize there are multiples genders and possibilities (to be a girl, a boy, or even a non-binary person), as an idiosyncratic process.

Globally, students **define gender equality** as a balance between having the same rights, conditions, opportunities, and treatment between genders (e.g., *"Gender equality [happens when] all sexes have equal rights [...] [regarding] rights, wages..."*; S12, male, 12 years). Only four students had difficulties with providing a definition. Overall, about half of students perceive that gender equality is not a reality (n = 10), followed by those who mentioned that sometimes the presence of gender equality depends on the context/situation (n = 8); mixed FG students have a similar perception. Only four students manifested to consider that there is evidence of gender equality. The following **examples of gender equality situations** were identified: (a) equal wages regardless of gender (n = 2), (b) equal power to make decisions, such as voting and protesting for equal rights (n = 2), (c) equal opportunities, such as in driving (n = 1), (d) equal treatment regardless of the gender (n = 4) and (e) normalization of LGBT relationships (n = 1). In the mixed FG, students also identified (a) equal job opportunities, (b) equal roles regardless gender, and (c) equal capacity and power to lead. Only one student did not notice any situation/context of gender equality. Students referred that *"When you can go vote... to drive, I don't think women could drive [in the past]; in wages too, sometimes, and I think that's fair."* (S04, male, 12 years) or that *"Ahh, when the two genders get the same... When they have the same conditions, they are treated the same way..."* (S15, male, 12 years). Note that students' discourses regarding gender equality were often focused on equal rights for men and women, also portraying their difficulties in defining gender diversity, and their tendency to discuss gender in a binary way (e.g., social attributes, roles, tasks, functions, responsibilities, powers, interests, expectations, and needs). The awareness of gender diversity, which revoke the dichotomy of female-male, is not aligned with their representations of how gender inequality is expressed towards non-binary gender identities.

Students were also able to identify several **examples of gender inequality situations**, namely: (a) discrimination against women's access to daily life activities, such as in sports (n = 1), (b) cultural imposition on women's clothing, marriage, and reproductive health (n = 3), (c) different treatment between genders regarding one's romantic and sexual choices (n = 1), (d) discriminatory behaviors against LGBTQIA+ access to daily life activities (n = 2), (e) obligation of men to participate in war (n = 3), (f) different wages between genders (n = 6), (g) unequal power distribution (n = 5), (i) positive discrimination against women, e.g., chivalry (n = 1). In addition, students from the mixed FG referred the cultural imposition on women's and men's clothing and

physical appearance (e.g., hair and nails), having a clear notion of traditional gender expressions. This seems to reveal some awareness of gender discrimination and how traditional gender roles are contributing to such inequalities. For instance, one student referred that *“And also this, for example, a woman must marry a man and have children and that is not right because if a woman does not want to have children, she has that right [...]. Or what happens if a woman gets an abortion; she is punished, judged; but I don't think that's correct because it is her body”* (S21, female, 12 years) or that *“For example, if a man has multiple affairs with multiple women he is considered “the king”, he is the greatest because he has managed to be with many women; but if a woman has affairs with several men, she is mistreated...”* (S21, female, 12 years). And another says, *“I think for example, that sometimes men or even women have more... For example, I'm going to let you go first because you're a woman”* (S21, female, 12 years). Additionally, a student who participated in one of the FGs with students also mentioned the fact that the baby changing facilities are almost always in the women's bathroom: *“For example, in public places, [...] normally the baby changing facilities are always in the women's side which is unfair; it is never on the men's side, because men can't, like... why can't men have changing baby facilities? [...] It's stupid because it doesn't make sense... Anyone can take care of the child, anyone male or female.”* (FG02S², S32, female, 12 years). These examples also show that students are critically thinking about social expectations and aware of inequalities, particularly between men and women, and identify situations where traditional social norms are contributing to highlighting differences between genders. In this sense, students' discourses reveal that some are aware of the signs and consequences of gender stereotypes, how these can limit people's capacity to develop their abilities, and/or make choices about their lives, and how it can lead to inequality. Being aware of the prescriptive nature of gender order is an important step to challenging and deconstructing patriarchal and sexist notions and stereotypical notions of femininity and masculinity.

When discussing **reasons for gender inequality**, students suggest that it may be due to the society's culture itself (n = 5), as well as from the cultural beliefs which sustain them and support the idea that men are superior to women (n = 5; “I think it happens because, I don't know, in the past, they considered man as superior (S12, male, 12 years) and also because of society's culture (n = 5). Students from the mixed FG reinforced the idea that gender roles are imposed by a culture of sexism. Some students from an FG with students mention that in Portugal gender inequality was accentuated by the dictatorship and with the decisions taken by political leaders at the time, for example, *“Because he [Salazar] invented the fashion of putting blue rooms and pink rooms, to separate the girls and the boys. [...] Then he would say like this: «Ah, girls can't like*

² Students Focus Group, School 02

blue. Boys can't like pink they can't wear these kinds of things. You can't even listen to this kind of music anymore.» Literally, he was limiting us from doing things.” and “And he, by doing that, lead people to the thought that in this case, the separation of gender equality was normal.” (FG05S, S23, male, 12 years). One student from the interviews did not identify any reason. Most students consider that women are the most affected the most by gender inequality (n = 9; “Women may be the most affected, whereas men are the most favored [have advantages for being man]; because maybe it happens more often to women being more “unfavored”/in disadvantage, than to men I think that women are more affected by gender inequality. I think women are the most affected ones.” (S02, female, 12 years). However, some students consider the most affected are everyone in general (n = 4), LGBT (n = 1), and men (n = 1). The remaining students did not identify who was more affected.

Although students recognize the assumption of "male domination" that persists in society, they assume that this situation affects not only women but also men in the same way. This perception may contribute to the absence of knowledge regarding global indicators of gender-based inequality, which shows that women are disproportionately affected by structural asymmetries (e.g., Torres et al., 2018).

For **changing the scenario of gender inequality**, students identify the need to (a) change mindsets (n = 2), (b) create opportunities for women (n = 3), (c) make people who discriminate feel the impact too (n = 1), (d) change the culture of some countries (n = 1), (e) empower women's (n = 1), (f) change people's attitude (e.g., adopt a more open attitude to listen to the others and accept each other) (n = 3) and (h) doing manifestations and awareness actions (n = 2), with a student mentioning “unfortunately there are people who still, for example, usually older people or, or people who are being educated by them who still have that mindset... . And they think that is right and if a person disagrees, they don't accept; So I don't know... I hope people can stop being like that because it is... it's not a good thing.” (S21, female, 12 years). And other states that “I don't know, What did you call it, ahm... people who go out on the street, on the streets? [...] yes, manifestations that!” (S12, male, 12 years). According to students' perspectives, social change toward gender equality demands individual, community, and institutional efforts, including strategies at both micro and macro-level. However, not all the interviewed students reported all these dimensions for social change.

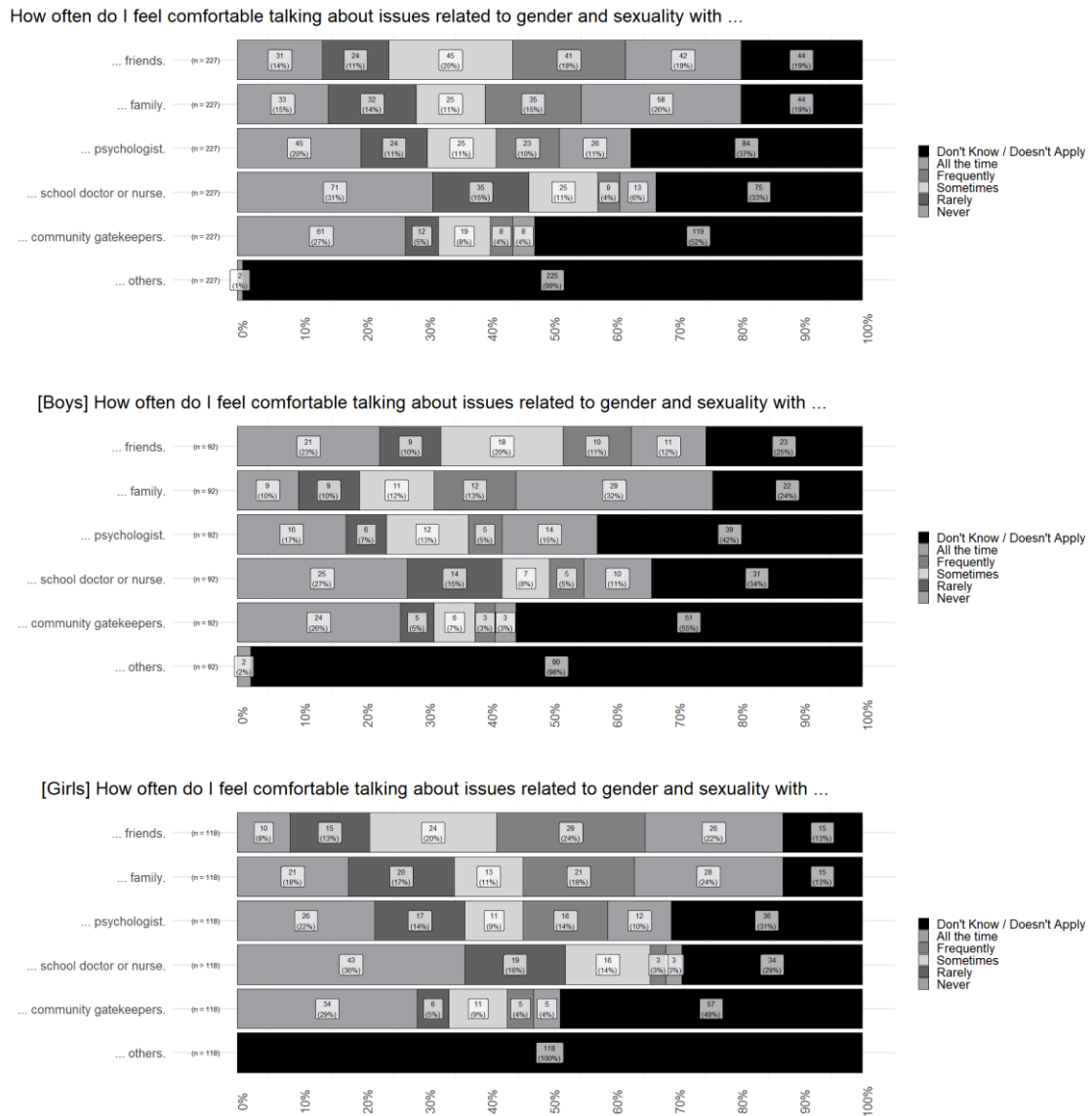
In sum, it seems that students showed some awareness about gender and gender (in)equality, but they show a lack of ability to identify and recognize sexism and how that can be changed and addressed.

1.2 How comfortable are students in discussing and expressing their gender identity?

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

According to students' responses to the Gender Equality and School Climate – Students' Perceptions Questionnaire (Figure 4), they seem to feel more comfortable addressing gender-related topics and sexuality with their friends and their family members. In turn, teachers and school health team members (e.g., doctors or nurses) seem to be the elements with whom students show less comfort in approaching these topics. When asked about their level of comfort in addressing gender identity and sexuality with psychologists or members of other institutions focused on supporting sexuality education and gender equality, students more often responded that they do not know/does not apply or that they would never feel comfortable doing so, which can both indicate that students do not search for such institutions or even know about their roles. This may be related to the fact that students do not have as much knowledge and/or contact with these elements or opportunities to communicate and interact with them, as indicated in section 2.4 regarding "What do students know about support services and initiatives for gender equality and SGBV prevention?". The absence of knowledge or the discomfort to seek information and support from psychologists or members of other institutions focused on supporting sexuality education and gender equality may be indicative of the necessity to improve the mechanisms of approximation to youth.

Figure 4. Students' level of comfort in talking about gender and sexuality with different persons



QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Additionally, interviews with students provided in-depth knowledge about students' levels of comfort to express gender identity. Students mentioned that they believe: (a) some students are comfortable expressing their gender identity in school (n = 12), (b) students are comfortable doing it in school, but not at home (n = 1) and students are comfortable to express their gender identity in the classroom but not in school (n = 1). However, some students (n = 5) claim that whether they feel comfortable or not depends on the situation. In FGs with students, the majority also referred to feeling comfortable expressing their gender at school. However, one student mentioned that he does not feel comfortable expressing his gender because, according

to him, *"That's how it is, I think that in this school there is a lot of prejudice. [...] a person can't express her/himself."* (FG02S, S39, male, 12 years).

On the other hand, some students considered that other students do indeed feel uncomfortable in expressing their gender identity in school (n = 2) because they feel insecure and invalidated (n = 3) and are afraid of being treated differently (n = 2). For instance, one student mentioned that *"I think they can, but it depends on the person. Because there are people who have confidence; persons who think others are her/his friends; but when they know that he or she is LGBT, then the supposed friends turn their backs because they don't accept and don't want to have gay, or lesbian friends... And there are other people who do [accept], who don't care and then yes, (...) they can free themselves and walk at ease in school"* (S20, female, 12 years), and another was more peremptory stating that *"No, they don't feel comfortable, and they feel insecure because of the peers, the teachers, and the staff; because their option is invalidated by others. There it is, they say that you are too young, that's not right...so I think they feel insecure and uncomfortable mostly because of it..."* (S21, female, 12 years). As concluded in previous research, the expression of gender identity, particularly in school, is constrained by the social stigma associated with being transgender or gender non-conforming (FRA, 2020) perpetuating the idea that school could not be a safe place.

1.3 What are students' perceptions regarding strategies to promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality in schools?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS

During interviews, students considered that the role of the school in promoting gender equality is important for the whole of society. Some identify specific strategies to promote gender equality, such as (a) support, teach and practice gender equality in and outside class (e.g., through initiatives with teachers or with someone from outside of school) (n = 18) and (b) guarantee equality (in number) of students' representatives and sub-representative (n = 3). One student stated that *"For example, in classes, we elect a representative and a sub-representative; if at least that selection included a boy and a girl, that would be fair; for instance, in my class, the class elected two boys. If this changed, it could help a little."* (S11, male, 12 years), while another mentions *"I don't know, maybe someone outside from school could come and explain more about it, on this subject... what we shouldn't do"* (S19, female, 12 years). Similarly, to prevent and combat gender inequality, students suggested that (a) school personnel must be alert (n = 1), mentioning that *"I think that first, the school's non-teaching personnel [vigilantes and assistants] should be aware... or when students see this happening, they must tell an adult to solve it, tell a teacher or other staff members from the school, I don't know"* (S19, female, 12 years).

Along the same line, students considered that their role (as students) in promoting gender equality is equally important. Many identified specific strategies to promote gender equality, such as (a) respecting and supporting their peers (e.g., respecting sexual orientation) (n = 13) (b) talking about gender equality in school (n = 4), (c) being fair and giving equal opportunities to everyone (n = 1) and staying away from people who do not respect gender differences (n = 1). To prevent and combat gender inequality, the following measure was identified: request adults' help, with some students saying they need more people aware, namely teachers, assistants, and students to ensure gender equality, and function as they testify situations of inequality or discrimination. Thus, to guarantee gender equality is achieved, schools and students need to engage in active initiatives, claiming the notion that the compromise to eradicate inequality must be multi-level. However, some students could not say what their role would be (n = 2). For instance, one student mentioned that *"But treating everyone equally, every gender, all genders equally, if a person has another gender or something else it is normal, support them if they are hurt."* (S08, female, 11 years).

It seems clear that, for the interviewed students, school not only has a key role to promote equality providing information and awareness about diversity according to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual characteristics, and developing effective and attentive interventions in situations of inequality and recognizing that they assume a significant role on gender equality promotion. Along the same line, students stress their active role, working together with and in the school to achieve a common goal.

Highlights of section 1 are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5. *Key findings about students' perceptions of gender equality and prevent gender inequality in schools*

Box 1. Gender equality: Students perceptions | Key findings

- ✓ Most students were able to identify different sexualities (e.g., asexual person, aromantic person) and genders (e.g., female, male, non-binary) that a person can identify with and express (n = 18), except four students that were not able to provide a definition.
- ✓ In the students' discourses, a tendency to discuss gender in a binary way was noted.
- ✓ Almost all students identified several situations as revealing gender equality (e.g., equal wages regardless of gender, equal power to make decisions, equal use of opportunities, such as in driving, equal treatment regardless of gender, and normalization of LGBT relationships).
- ✓ Most students (n=14) consider that gender equality exists in schools, albeit some students (n=5) consider that gender equality in school does not exist.
- ✓ A high variability was registered for students' knowledge, particularly regarding Gender diversity awareness and non-legitimation of violence.
- ✓ Students identified several situations as indicative of gender inequality which reveals some awareness of gender discrimination and how traditional gender roles are contributing to such inequalities.
- ✓ Students' discourses reveal that some are aware of the signs and consequences of gender stereotypes, how they can limit people's capacity to develop their abilities, and/or make choices about their lives, and how they can lead to inequality.
- ✓ Main reasons for gender inequality in the schools identified by students: differences between gender; teachers' replication of traditional gender roles through teaching; the influence of cultural, social, and family attitudes; genders with different physical strength levels; nobody teaches correctly/reprimands when necessary.
- ✓ Negative impact on mental health and a perception of low self-efficacy were recognized by students as consequences of gender inequality in schools.
- ✓ Students identify several actions that change the gender inequality scenario, and that it demands individual, community, and institutional efforts, including strategies at both micro and macro-level.
- ✓ Students seem to feel more comfortable addressing gender-related topics and sexuality with their friends and family members than with their teachers.
- ✓ Students' discourses indicate an absence of knowledge about resources and services, or discomfort in seeking information and support from psychologists or members of other institutions focused on supporting sexuality education and gender equality.
- ✓ Most students feel that they rarely or never (57%) were the victim of judgments due to their gender or sexuality; However, 18% of students perceive sometimes homophobic and sexist comments occur in schools, and 16% perceive that these situations are frequently occurring.
- ✓ Most students (51%) reported that they rarely or never were discriminated against due to their gender and sexuality expression.
- ✓ To promote gender equality, some students acknowledged the role of school at different levels, such as: supporting, teaching, and practicing gender equality in and outside class, guaranteeing equality number of students' representatives, invite experts to raise awareness of students.
- ✓ Students identified their role in promoting gender equality: respecting and supporting peers, addressing gender equality in school, being fair and giving equal opportunities to everyone, and staying away from people who do not respect gender differences.
- ✓ To prevent and combat gender inequality, students suggested that school personnel should be alert to what happens inside and outside classrooms and be available to respond to requests for help.
- ✓ To prevent and combat gender inequality, students identified their roles in requesting adults' help and acting as they testify situations of inequality or discrimination.

2. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV): Students' perceptions

2.1 What do students know regarding SGBV and what attitudes do they show?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Concerning SGBV, **although not able to provide a definition, most students (n = 18) were aware of what SGBV is**, with one student only referring to sexual orientation as a source of SGBV. All students (including those of the mixed FG) provided examples of SGBV (see section 2.2). For instance, one student was able to define SGBV among youths mainly as the violence that occurs because of the other person's gender and his/her physical characteristics: *"Gender-based violence depends a lot on gender and physical appearance because you can bully a girl because she is different, but you can also bully a boy because he is shorter than normal."* (S11, male, 12 years).

Regarding **contexts where SGBV can manifest**, most students reported that they know that it can happen (a) at school (n = 13), for instance in recess (n = 12) and during class, for example in physical education classes (n = 4); (b) at home within families (n = 5); (c) in daily life (n = 5); (d) in the digital world (n = 4); (e) in extracurricular activities, such as, in football (n = 2) and (f) in a work environment (n = 1). Students from the mixed FG only mentioned that it can happen at school (at recess) and in other daily life situations. It should be noted that some students reported never (in or out of school) having seen any SGBV (n = 7), and 11 students mentioned having seen it, but not at their school (n = 11). For example, one student stated: *"[I believe it can happen] Among friends and at school. Here at school, I've never seen it, but I think it can happen..."* (S03, male, 12 years), or *"[SGBV can happen] For example, in recess. I think it happens more there or in the classroom when teachers are not there or leave for some reason (...). And even at home, it can happen over the Internet."* (S16, male, 13 years). Another mentioned that *"In football, we are friends, but sometimes we can also be enemies (...), [I say that because] some friends of mine start to make fun of it... I don't know how to say this... because of the size of the reproductive organ. Or by the person's appearance."* (S04, male, 12 years). Students from the mixed FG and one of the students' FG mentioned that they had already seen SGBV happening in school between peers and in other daily life situations, with one student stating that she had already been a victim *"I have a case at... not at school, it's at my out-of-school studies center; when I said that I was dating a girl, persons made fun of me."* (FG05S, S25, female, 12 years).

Regarding **survivors' and aggressors' profiles**, 11 students were able to identify some characteristics for survivors and eight for aggressors. About survivors, students mentioned characteristics of (a) being transgender or homosexual (n = 9), (b) being socially isolated (n = 3), (c) being sad and/or fragile (n = 2), (d) being shy (n = 1), (e) being new in school ("Newby") (n = 1), and (f) not having a lot of friends (n = 1). In this sense, some students mentioned: *"A victims*

usually a shy person, a person who doesn't have many friends. A person who is new at school." (S17, male, no info on age); and added that *"Being transgender or homosexual can make you have a victim profile because society doesn't accept, doesn't always accept people who are different."* (S11, male, 12 years).

Some of the characteristics, identified by students, that configure risk factors to being a survivor of SGBV, are already characteristics described in the literature as risk factors (e.g., Duval et al., 2020) for victimization, whereas others are seen as consequences of having been subjected to victimization (e.g., Taquette & Monteiron, 2019).

As for the aggressors, students identified characteristics such as: (a) feeling superior (n = 4), (b) having a violent reaction when frustrated (n = 2), (c) having a lot of friends (being popular) (n = 2), (d) being a student repeating the school year (n = 1), (e) being religious (n = 1), and (f) having friends that are also aggressors (n = 1). Related to this, some students affirmed: *"They [the aggressors] usually feel like they are the greatest, they have a group of friends who also do the same, and sometimes they are repeating students."* (S17, male, no info on age) or that *"The aggressors' profile is usually [...] they are usually Christians. [...] they see this prejudice against, for example, a woman who likes a woman [...] they say that this is a sin and that it is wrong, they usually use God's excuse, because God doesn't like that."* (S21, female, 12 years).

It should be noted that some students (n = 16) did not consider there to be a specific profile, for survivors and/or aggressors, since, for example, *"there is nothing common among all victims and nothing common among the aggressors"* (S20, female, 12 years) and because *"we are not always able to identify this, because [both the aggressor and the survivor] know how to hide it"* (S09, female, 12 years). In addition, when directly questioned, eight students mentioned that the fact that a person is transgender, gay person, or queer does not make them a survivor. Students considered that girls, boys, teachers, and students can be survivors and perpetrators of SGBV.

According to students, the **reasons or motivations for SGBV** are due to (a) a lack of acceptance and understanding of others (n = 10); (b) the influence of others, such as family (n = 6), social network (n = 5), or social media (n = 4); (c) the aggressor be a former survivor (n = 5); (d) not seeing the person/situation as normal (n = 4); (e) a gender inequality (n = 4); (f) an accumulation of feelings and/or emotions (n = 3); (g) a (need for a) sense of power (n = 3); (h) not being reprimanded when committing SGBV (n = 2); (i) fear of being seen with non-heteronormative young people (n = 1); (j) a lack of empathy (n = 1); (k) lack of interest toward others (disconnection) (n = 1) and (l) conflicts between people (n = 1). Two students were unable to identify reasons or motivations for SGBV. Indeed, one student said: *"(...) People don't understand that others can have different genders, that people can feel better in another gender,*

have different preferences.... they only see the "you're gay...you're lesbian" side... and then they insult, are aggressive and make others uncomfortable" (S08, female, 11 years). Students from the mixed FG further added reasons such as: (a) wanting to get the attention of others (especially within the peer group), (b) wanting to make others laugh, and (c) for self-satisfaction.

Students pointed out some aspects that were already mentioned in literature as reasons that contribute to gender-based violence (UNESCO & UN Women, 2016) as traditional social norms, patriarchy and gender discriminatory norms, notions of dominant masculinity or submissive femininity, and wider structural and contextual factors.

Additionally, students consider that those most affected by SGBV are (a) the survivor in general (n = 7) and (b) the LGBTQIA+ community (n = 5), but also (c) everyone (n = 3), (d) women in specific (n = 2), (e) female students (n = 1), (f) fragile people (n = 1) and (g) the aggressor.

When asked what **difficulties or challenges they identify in combating SGBV**, students essentially referred to: (a) the lack of acceptance and understanding of others (n = 7), exemplified in the existence of countries against the LGBTQIA+ community and gender equality; (b) regulatory and/or influencers entities and people (n = 4), such as a president or a famous person; (c) the survivor's silence and/or fear (n = 3); (d) the lack of awareness of the seriousness of the act (n = 2); (e) gender inequality (n = 2); (f) the SGBV prevention and combat being dependent on one's consciousness regardless awareness (n = 1); (g) aggressor's sexist beliefs (n = 1); and (h) the lack of action (n = 1). Four students did not identify any difficulties or challenges. For instance, some students mentioned *"It is usually complicated [combat SGBV], because of the people who are sexist, who think they are superior to women, and so they think they can boss them around, beat them..."* (S01, female, 12 years), or that *"(...) there are countries that support, that are against sexual diversity... So, then, it becomes much more difficult."* (S12, male, 12 years). They also considered that *"most of the population is either an aggressor or neutral given that they don't help, they do nothing, or they harm, so there is also an inequality.... a lack of action, an inertia"* (S21, female, 12 years).

Curiously, the lack of acceptance and understanding of others is considered by most students as both a reason/motivation for the aggressors and a difficulty/challenge in the combat against SGBV. Moreover, conservative cultural and personal beliefs on gender equality and sexual diversity seem to be the major explanations to eradicate SGBV provided by students, reinforcing the importance of investing in education, but also in programs that integrate specific training to improve abilities related to communication, negotiation, and alternatives to intimate relationships based on violence.

2.2 Are students aware of the signs and consequences of SGBV?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

With the interviews, we also sought to understand whether students are aware of the signs and consequences of SGBV. After the analysis, we can say that almost all students (n = 21) know the signs of SGBV, which were grouped in typologies and sub-typologies: (a) violence between peers (n = 19, from which 9 students specifically refer to sexual orientation violence between peers), with 19 students identifying verbal violence, 15 mentioning physical violence and 13 psychological violence; (b) domestic violence (only between adults) (n = 9), with 9 students relating physical violence, 4 mentioning verbal violence and 2 psychological violence; and (c) dating violence (n = 5), with 4 students identifying physical violence, 3 verbal violence and 2 mentioning psychological violence. For example, one student mentioned: “[*Here at school*] sometimes they (the aggressors) don't like to see two people together... they go there and start pushing (...) sometimes they approach and say “why are you with a girl? Get out!”” (S10, female, 12 years). In addition, 3 students identified signs of victimization, for instance “they (the survivors) are more afraid to communicate with people, they are more closed/introverted people.” (S20, female, 12 years). Regarding this, the students from the mixed FG identified (a) violence between peers, with all of them only referring to verbal violence (when referring to: gender roles; sexual orientation, e.g., when using terms like “gay” as a form of joking; and physical features, e.g., hair and nails); (b) dating violence, especially psychological violence (e.g., psychological pressure, control and privacy invasion); (c) verbal violence in general, regarding one's physical appearance, such as nails and clothing styles worn; and (d) student violence against a teacher, identifying verbal violence using nicknames. In the FGs with students were identified the same forms of violence mentioned in the individual interviews were identified.

Thus, we can see that students' perception of SGBV is more focused on peers' violence, where they identify more examples of verbal violence, than physical violence. However, in the other typologies of violence identified, it is easier for them to give examples of physical rather than verbal violence.

Students were also able to identify some consequences of SGBV for survivors, aggressors, and others. As far as survivors are concerned, students (including mixed focus group students) perceive that the consequences are negative mainly (a) in mental health (n = 20), for instance, depression and anxiety. They also referred to (b) physical injuries (n = 8); (c) suicidal ideation (n = 5); (d) questioning one's sexual orientation (n = 3); (e) social isolation (n = 3), (f) insecurity and/or guilty feelings (n = 3); (g) death (n = 2); (h) poorer academic achievement (n = 1), and (i) having to change schools (n = 1). One student mentioned the positive consequence of feeling safe in case of and after SGBV is reported. For instance, one student said that “[*The victim*] can suffer

dangerous damages, because the aggressor can kill unexpectedly; it can have extremely dangerous damage. Or (the victim) may even have those thoughts in her head, she can have depression and she won't feel good about herself (...) [she can] even have suicidal thoughts." (S07, male, 12 years).

As for the aggressors, most students perceive that there are no consequences for them (n = 7), or that SGBV increases students' confidence and sense of superiority, which perpetuates SGBV behaviors (n = 6), or on the contrary, that the SGBV promotes self-reflection on acts of violence committed (n = 5). As such, students stated that for *"the aggressor... I don't think anything will happen, he won't feel anything, he won't do anything, he won't even want to know what the other person will think or feel or suffer..."* (S19, female, 12 years); and that *"they (the aggressors) can feel increasingly stronger and superior to other people"* (S20, female, 12 years) creating *"greater confidence to continue"* (S11, male, 12 years). Additionally, one student mentioned that *"If the aggressor realizes what he is doing, I think he could feel sad [...] and rethink his actions"* (S18, male, no info on age).

Some students state that if reported: (a) there may be serious consequences (n = 7), such as imprisonment [*"The aggressor would probably...go to prison"* (S12, male, 12 years)] or paying for the crime committed (e.g., homophobia); (b) may receive a school suspension (n = 3), and that (c) may be socially isolated (n = 1). One student said that there were consequences but could not specify.

Some students also identified the negative consequences for the school in terms of (a) reputation (n = 6), [*"the school and its image will be harmed"* (S21, female, 12 years)]; (b) punishment (n = 3), [*"for letting it happen"* (S17, male, no info on age)]; (c) continuation of violence (n = 2) [*"the perpetuation of a cycle of violence"* (S11, male, 12 years)]; and (d) climate of fear among students (n = 2) [*"here at school it can create [...] the fear of being the next one."* (S08, female, 11 years)]. However, five students said that there are no consequences for the school. Additionally, some students referred that there are also consequences for society (n = 4), exemplified in the possibility of *"people having a bad impression of the school and the city, thinking that the city is not safe and doesn't have safety conditions for all people"* (S18, male, no info on age).

According to qualitative data, students are aware of the signs and the consequences of SGBV, especially when they are related to survivors and schools, which means they have the conceptual tools to endorse situations where specialized help is needed.

2.3 What do students know about support services and initiatives for gender equality and SGBV prevention?

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

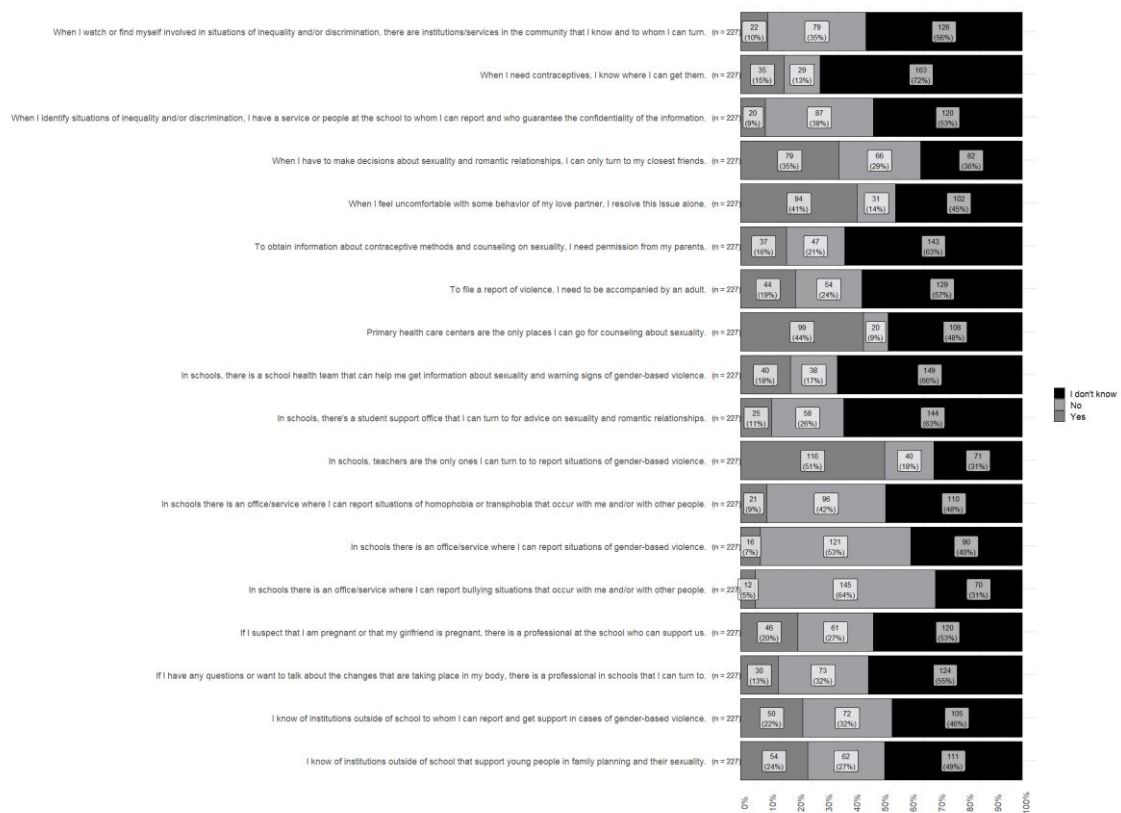
Students were asked about various support services and initiatives that could be available for them to seek support and information regarding sexuality education, gender, and SGBV. Regarding this set of questions, it is noteworthy that a high number of students answered "I don't know" regarding such services. Data is presented in Figure 6 for the whole group of participants and by gender (male and female students answers). Overall results reveal a lack of knowledge of how to obtain valuable information or support regarding gender equality and SGBV prevention. The three situations in which students revealed the highest percentage of "I don't know" answers were: (a) "when I need contraceptives, I know where I can get them" (n = 163, 72%), (b) "in schools, there is a school health team that can help me get information about sexuality and warning signs of SGBV" (n = 149, 66%), and (c) "in schools, there's a student's support office that I can turn to for advice for sexuality and romantic relationships" (n = 144, 63%). The three situations to which students most often answered "yes" were: (a) "in schools, teachers are the only ones I can turn to, to report situations of SGBV" (n = 116, 51%), (b) "primary health care centers are the only places I can go for counseling about sexuality (n = 99, 44%), and (c) "when I feel uncomfortable with some behavior of my love partner, I resolve this issue alone" (n = 94, 41%). This indicates that most students seem to lack information regarding school and community resources that aim at supporting sexuality education, gender equality, and prevention of SGBV, with only teachers and primary health care services being identified as support elements.

The fact that most students perceive teachers as the only ones they can turn to when SGBV situations occur is congruent with their "no" response to the sentences (a) "in schools, there is a office/ service where I can report bullying situations that occur with me and/or with other people" (n = 145, 64%), and (b) "in schools, there is an office/service where I can report SGBV" (n = 121, 53%), and emphasizes the potentially pivotal role of teachers in supporting and empowering students. Along the same line, according to students' perceptions, teachers are the only support within the school context, to whom they can turn to report situations of SGBV or bullying. This fact is interesting, considering that most schools have a "students' support office", with a team of professionals beyond teachers (e.g., nurses, psychologists, social services), available to support students regarding several topics, including for instance health, sexuality education, and abuses. However, these professionals are not recognized by students as sources of support (Figure 6). Note that students have mentioned feeling more comfortable talking about sexuality, gender, and SGBV with friends, and less comfortable with teachers. However, as there

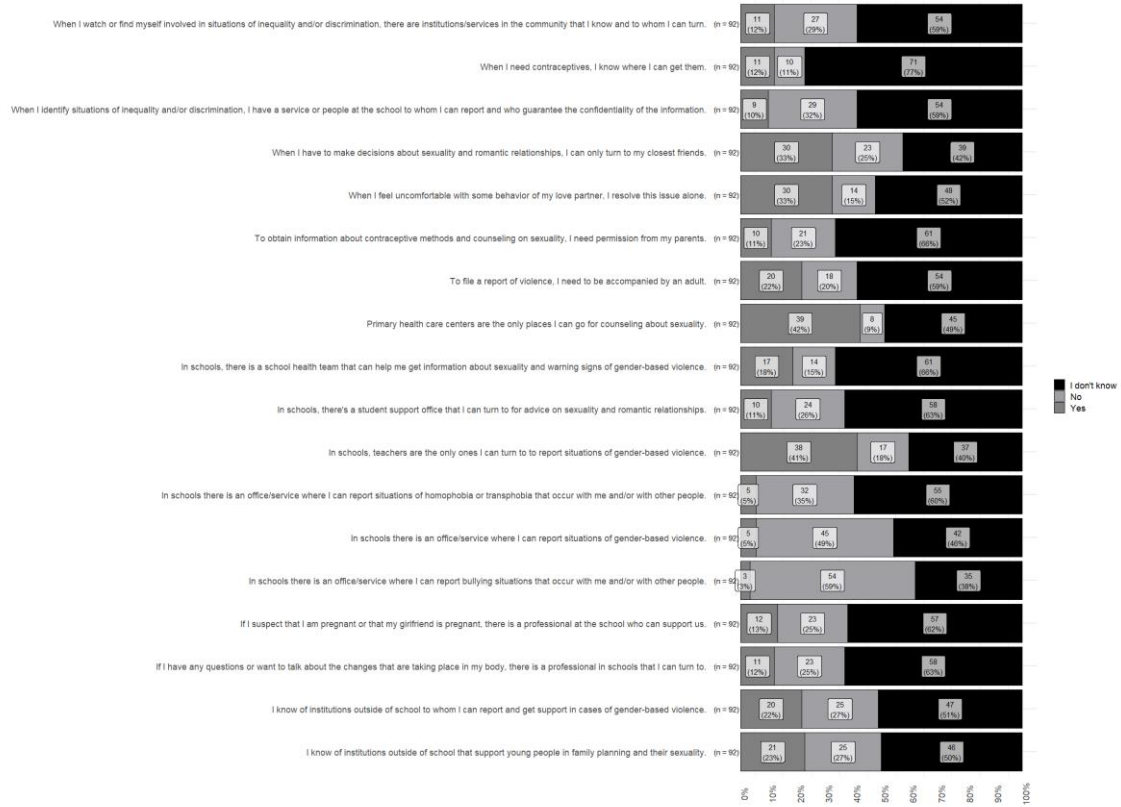
seems to exist a lack of knowledge about other support services/elements that they can turn to for information and report SGBV, and teachers are the adults of reference in their developmental contexts, these are still identified as the primary elements for them to report SGBV.

This evidence is particularly relevant, as it denotes a tendency to misuse the services and resources created specifically to improve students' well-being and reduce the potential negative effects of victimization.

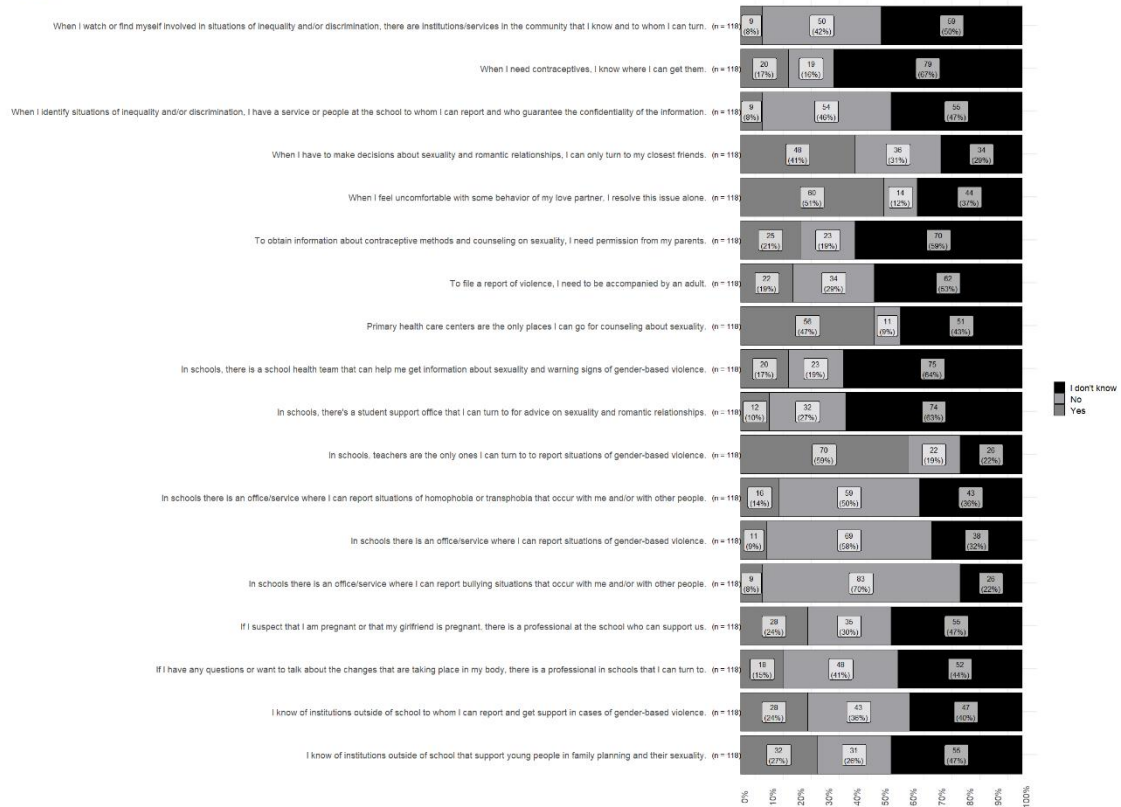
Figure 6. Students' knowledge about resources and support services regarding sexuality education, gender, and SGBV



[Boys]



[Girls]



QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Most students (n = 13), despite not knowing the names of specific services or institutions, are aware of who they should turn to, having specified, for example, psychology services (in or outside school), social workers, police, health centers, a specific school service where students usually report any situations and ask for help and specific service that aims to promote the rights of children and young people and prevent or put an end to situations that may affect their safety, health, training, education or integral development. It should be noted that nine students admitted not being aware of any specific service. For instance, one student mentioned that *"[We can ask for help] from the social worker, the psychologist, or the coordination or school administration [and ask] for them to act; Or to school assistants. Depending on the severity, if it was something serious, I would talk to the administration right away because the aggressor would have to deal with the consequences."* (S21, female, 12 years).

Additionally, most students reported not being aware of any **program or strategy that their school puts into practice** to address SGBV (n = 13). For those who identified, the majority mentioned the Safe School, however, this program only addressed violence in general and bullying. Only one student identified one program that was being developed by an ONG for primary prevention of gender violence and promotion of human rights and gender equality, and another student identified a specific Sexual Education Program in School Health.

2.4 What skills do students identify in themselves for detecting and dealing with SGBV?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS

From the interviews, data reveals that most students, in the first instance, would **report** and **request help** when facing an SGBV situation. Note that this includes: (a) adults within the school context (n = 20), such as teachers, directors/coordinators, school assistants, and psychologists, social workers; (b) adults outside the school context (n = 12), such as parents or family in general; (c) adults in general (n = 7); and (d) friends (n = 5). In addition, some students report that they would feel capable of **reporting/calling the authorities/police** (n = 10), as well as **speaking with the aggressor** (n = 10) and **defending and speaking with the survivor** (n = 10). For instance, some students referred to: *"At school, I would ask for help from teachers and from school personnel and outside of school from parents. An older person who knows how to be responsible."* (S09, female, 12 years) or that *" (...) I will try to talk to that person who is attacking the other person to see if they understand what they are doing."* (S15, male, 12 years). Students from the mixedFG have similar perceptions, however at first instance, they would speak directly with the aggressor to explain that what he/she did was wrong and to educate him/her, and only then would they report and request an adult help (within school or outside, e.g., parents). In

addition, one student mentioned that he would ignore the situation. If there was a situation of violence on the part of a teacher against a student, students said that they would tell another school personnel, for the teacher to at least accept to listen the students' perspective: *"I imagine that if I were the one saying it, the teacher wouldn't care much, because I am just a kid"*. In addition, in situations of peer violence in the class, students claim that the teacher of that class must take certain actions, such as applying a sanction and expelling the student from class and/or talking to the aggressor and explaining to him/her about the situation that happened. In addition to previously mentioned, in the students' FGs, these mentioned that they feel adults at school do nothing when they report a situation, devaluing, or requesting students to solve the situation by themselves. Students say, for example, *"And talking to a teacher, even teachers say, «What do I have to do with that?"* (FG05S, S25, female, 12 years) and *"It's just that one of the things I hate the most is when people say "talk to a responsible adult." But then we talk, and they say, «You have to be responsible"*. (FG05S, male, 12 years old).

We underline **these skills were discussed in a "what if" scenario, not being identified any specific situation regarding SGBV**. Still, students feel they could act as mentioned, which is a positive indicator in terms of a sense of self and others' protection.

2.5 Which strategies, according to students, can promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality and SGBV?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Regarding strategies to prevent and combat SGBV, during interviews students were able to describe the role of family, school, and their role. Thus, regarding the **role of the family**, the students identified specific strategies for **preventing SGBV**, such as (a) **educating children/young people to accept and respect others' choices** (n = 9); and (b) **they, as a family, accept the choices of children/young people** (n = 4). For example, one student mentioned that *"(...) the family must teach the children what is right and what is wrong and teach them to have this insight and encourage them to choose, give them choices, allow them to be who they are. Giving him the freedom to mature in thought, thinking about him/herself, and for him/her; to let them grow and experience, allowing them to have experiences with friends, have experiences, go outsidess, and have moments that the person will remember."* (S05, female, 12 years).

For **combating SGBV** they identified strategies such as: (a) protecting and supporting their children (the survivor) (n = 10); (b) educating the aggressor child (n = 6); (c) talking to the school about what happened (n = 4), (d) report the situation to the authorities (n = 4) and (e) talk to the aggressor's parents (n = 1). For instance, one student referred that *"the family must protect the*

victim and must speak to the aggressor's school, parents, or legal guardians to try to fight this problem." (S21, female, 12 years).

Considering the **school's role** concerning SGBV, students identified specific **prevention strategies**, such as (a) **approaching SGBV in school** (signs, profiles, consequences, support services, etc.), raising awareness, educating and teaching respect for all genders (n = 12); (b) **being alert and vigilant** (n = 3) (e.g., through surveillance cameras; school personnel talks to children when they notice something is up); (c) **create some rules** (n = 1); and (d) **have an "open space" to share feelings** (n = 1). One student mentioned: *"At school, it was necessary for people (e.g., teachers and school principals) to start talking to students more about this and say that there are no differences, or to start talking about these differences; talk about the ones that don't exist, because that exists and so everyone must be accepted (...) the school must act in a way that everyone can understand; all students, the directors, the coordinators are aware of this situation so that if a person comes to complain, they already know why, how to act..."*. (S20, female, 12 years)

As for the **combat against SGBV**, the strategies identified for the school were: (a) **punishing the aggressor** (n = 8); (b) **reporting the situation** of violence (n = 3); (c) **providing help**, e.g., psychological help (n = 3); (d) **promoting gender inequality** (n = 1); and (f) **manage conflict** (n = 1). Indeed, students said: *"Honestly, to end gender violence, I think the best thing would be to end gender inequality, (...) and they could create punishments. If they found out, if they knew about an aggressor, they could punish him/her in a meaningful way that could result."* (S11, male, 12 years) or that *"The school's assistants must be attentive, to, for example, prevent fights... yeah... or have surveillance cameras... and then also call the police"* (S13, male, 12 years).

Finally, about the **student's role** concerning SVSG, students identified specific **prevention strategies**, such as: (a) **saying no to any type of violence**, including SGBV (n = 4); (b) **respecting the choice of others** (n = 3); (c) **being empathic** (n = 3); (d) **being aware of the signs** and (e) **approach SGBV** (n = 1) by, as the student said, *"elaborating a project within the school"* (S12, male, 12 years). Regarding this, one student referred: *"My role is not to do it (to be violent and discriminate based on gender) because then there can be people who follow my example, and if we all do the same - saying no to gender violence - we create a cycle to improve the school."* (S11, male, 12 years)

As for the student's role in **combating SGBV**, the strategies identified by them were: (a) **request adults' help** (adults within school context/ school personnel (n = 14); family adults' (n = 5) and adults in general (n = 4); (b) **help and speak with the survivor** (n = 12); (c) **help and speak with the aggressor** (n = 10); (d) **report the aggressor** (n = 8, e.g. to the authorities and the school); (e) **think of strategies to help the aggressor and the survivor** (n = 3) and (f) **include the student**

(survivor) in a peer's group (n = 2). For example, students mentioned that: *"(I would) Help the victim, report the aggressor and help him/her as much as I could, without mistreating him/her."* (S09, female, 12 years) and that *"Whenever I see something like that or hear... hear about it, I always go and tell the adults, those who are responsible."* (S02, female, 12 years). The students who participated in the FG's students also referred to the strategies presented above.

In students' opinion, to combat and address all forms and drivers of SGBV it is crucial to articulate individual, family, school, community, and institutional strategies that seem to be in coincidence to the socio-ecological model and with the standpoint of a whole school approach (Parkes et al., 2016).

Highlights regarding Section 2 are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Key findings about students' perceptions on how to prevent and combat SGBV

Box 2. SGBV: Students perceptions | Key Findings

- ✓ Most students were unable to define SGBV, except for one person.
- ✓ Students identify several situations related to SGBV, focused on violence between peers, dating violence, domestic violence, and violence based on sexual orientation.
- ✓ Different contexts of violence are identified, including school recess, classes, extracurricular activities, home environments, and the digital world.
- ✓ Students recognize the existence of physical, verbal, and psychological violence.
- ✓ Depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems are considered by students major consequences for survivors of SGBV.
- ✓ Isolation and poor academic achievement were highlighted as consequences of SGBV for survivors.
- ✓ Students perceive that aggressors are not punished, and there are no consequences for aggressors unless the situation is reported to authorities.
- ✓ 32% of students mention not to know support services for SGBV situations.
- ✓ Reasons or motivations for SGBV mainly identified are intolerance, SGV as a cycle (aggressors as former survivors), fear of being seen as non-heteronormative, gender inequality, and absence of consequences.
- ✓ Absence of acceptance and understanding of people's choices, survivors' silence, and the lack of action were considered the main challenges in combating SGBV.
- ✓ Most students know some general signs of SGBV, including offensive language, physical violence, and judgmental attitudes.
- ✓ No specific discriminatory attitudes and/or behaviors emerged in students' discourses regarding signs of alert for SGBV.
- ✓ Reporting to an adult the situation of violence is the main skill students mention for intervening, as well as reporting to the authorities/police, speaking with the aggressor, and defending and speaking with the survivor.

3. Gender equality and SGBV: Teacher's perceptions

3.1 How do teachers understand gender equality?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Based on data collected through individual interviews, and integrating all definitions that emerged in teachers' discourses, **teachers define gender equality** as having the same opportunities and rights for all sexes, and genders, at all levels and contexts (e.g., work, education, reproductive health, economic, social, relational), to combat the differences between sexes (and genders). For instance: *"So, gender equality is trying [...] to fight the inequalities that exist between sexes and the various forms they have, whether at work, in education, in a relationship."* (T01, male, 58 years), and *"Well, gender equality has to do with a set of requirements that allow men, women or other genders to have [...] the same opportunities at individual life, social life, [and] school life levels."* (T12, female, no info on age), as well, *"Gender equality is, in fact, guaranteeing that men and women in society have the same rights, right?, [...] regarding economic matters, the right to have children, [and] even [to access] reproductive health."* (T16, female, 54 years). Only two teachers provided an inclusive definition, rather than just highlighting the two sexes. One teacher had difficulties with providing a definition, despite being aware of it. Interestingly, two teachers perceive that biological sex differences impact (restrain) the achievement of gender equality at all levels: *"for me, gender equality is a bit complex [...] it's a concept that is related to equal opportunities, etc., but we can never forget that there are always, ahh biological factors, right? which always limit such equality whether we want it or not, right?"* (T11, female, 40 years).

It seems that teachers continue to have difficulties in defining gender equality, which seems to be a crucial standpoint and a risk factor that compromises the promotion of gender equality and prevention of SGBV.

Globally, only 4 teachers perceive that gender equality exists in some contexts but not in others. For 3 teachers gender equality does not exist (n = 3), while 2 perceive that it exists. One teacher trivialized women's (culturally defined) condition as mothers (*"And in this profession, we end up being a little more... I won't say tolerant, but maybe... our tenderness ahh since most of us are all mothers, it ends up... ahh... well, to prevail, right?"*, T10, female, 47 years) and had difficulty, in the beginning of her professional experience, accepting non-traditional gender roles (*"For us [teachers], for me [as a mother also] it wasn't easy to see a boy having girl attitudes and vice versa. Well, step by step I educated myself,"* T10, female, 47 years). Regarding gender expression, in one teacher's FG it was mentioned that teachers may feel discomfort if students' gender expression is too different from the norm: *"what shocks and what probably creates this kind of [homophobic] comments [...], it's not so much [...] homosexuality but the way they dress or*

how they present themselves [...] if it's a little different from the standard, this probably shocks more." (FG06T³, Psychologist).

The **situations identified as portraying gender equality** were: (a) equal treatment regardless of gender (n = 1), in work and using services ("At work [school], for example, we are treated equally, being male or female, [we are] treated the same way. And out too. Whether it's in a supermarket, in a bank, or on social security. I don't feel that being a woman was an obstacle or has treated me differently in any way", T07, female, 28 years), (b) equal job opportunities (n = 2), for instance in leadership positions ("Effectively at the level of hospital heads as well. Clinical directors, we have female clinical directors, so medicine is already, it is a position that is already being very well represented by women. Also at the level, for example, hotel management.", T15, female, 54 years), and (c) definition of formal regulations (n = 3), in work ("I think that in formal contexts of work, so rule-setting there is such equality, but perhaps in practice, that no longer works as well", T01, male, 58 years) and legislations in the Western world and globally ("Maybe if we talk in legal terms and everything is very determined and all very pretty, right? Obviously that all human rights, [...] that is all contemplated, but in practice, no," T16, female, 54 years).

The **situations identified by teachers as indicative of gender inequality** were: (a) gender wage differences (n = 4), (b) gender role expectations (n = 3), either in professions, at home, or society in general, (c) unequal job opportunities according to genders and marital status (e.g., in church) (n = 4), (d) women's unequal access to leadership positions (n = 2), (e) unequal domestic tasks distribution (n = 2), including for students, e.g., since early ages and not just in adulthood, (f) women's ability (to perform and understand some tasks) questioned by society (n = 2), (g) specific extracurricular activities being practiced almost only by male students (n = 1). Similarly, to students' discourses, teachers were mainly focused on identifying gender inequality between men and women, not being able to enlarge the discussion to a non-binary perspective of gender, even when questioned. One teacher was unable to specify either a situation of gender equality or inequality: "I don't feel any inequality, so it's a little complicated... Deep down all day-to-day situations for me are of equality so a specific situation is more complicated... [for me] to identify." (T11, female, 40 years). This idea of knowledge is dependent on teachers' own experience, despite only happening to one teacher, which may question the role of some teachers in further searching and increasing their knowledge on these themes.

As for situations which **students** (according to teachers) **perceive that gender equality exists in the following situations**: (a) asking out to date or on a date (n = 1), (b) more share of domestic tasks between family members (n = 2) and (c) women can work in (culturally perceived)

³ Teachers Focus Group, School 06

male professions (n = 2), such as driving a bus. For instance, one teacher mentioned *"a few years ago, students positioned much more than [...] [only] boys could ask girls out. Not the girl. Right now, that doesn't happen. [...] They understand that: "Okay if, if there's interest, why not? If it's on one side or if it's on the other... It's from interest exists." This I see that it has changed over time, [...] the attitude of young people."* (T08, female, 58 years).

On the other hand, teachers believe that **students can consider the following situations indicative of gender inequality**: (a) gender wages differences (n = 3), (b) unequal division of domestic tasks (n = 1) (c) women's difficult access to leadership positions (n = 1), and (d) women's fired because of her pregnancy (n = 1). For instance, a teacher mentions that *"Overall, what they (students) answer, depending on the age group, reflects their claim for rights, and they know, for instance, the fact there is a wage gap based on gender, the fact that women have the maternity issue also that hurt, many mothers who suffered that, layoffs after giving birth."* (T16, female, 54 years).

These perceptions are somewhat corroborated by students' attitudes regarding domestic tasks division, as mentioned in teachers' FGs: (a) while in one school male students agree and accept the need for equal division of domestic tasks, and female students defend gender equality in their home, (b) in another school, some students (especially younger male students from 7th grade rather than students from the 9th grade and above) may perceive that domestic tasks should be carried out by women, and female students do end up behaving according to and accepting culturally imposed gender roles at home. According to participants from teachers' FGs, the **reasons** for this seem to be that: while in the first school students' increased awareness and critical thinking regarding gender equality is due to awareness and debate from school, but also from the influence of social media and peers; in the second school it was mentioned either immaturity as the cause of these perceptions but also the great impact of students living with generational families for they may end up replicating generational family members' (conservative) behaviors: *"Maybe we notice less in children of younger parents, maybe children of younger parents notice that their father helps to clean up the house and does tasks like the mother does and no longer have this vision. When they still live with grandparents, etc., I think one notices more because [...] grandpa doesn't do anything, does he? He doesn't clean the table, he doesn't set the table, doesn't do anything, does he? Then dad doesn't do it either and the kids see that. And the children replicate."* (FG06T, Teacher A). **Regarding students' attitudes (perceived by teachers) that corroborate the perception of gender inequality in professions**, these are: (a) students being aware of and upset about gender inequality situations in class (e.g., regarding women's unequal access to leadership positions), (b) students being upset when the family of a female student criticizes her professional choice, seemed by the family as being a male profession,

and (c) students not associating professions to a specific on gender. If, on the other hand, this gender-based stereotypical attitude regarding professions does exist, it is not verbalized, and is dependent on students' family context (e.g., conservative family) and geographical context (e.g., living in remote areas), but also influenced by peer groups and the access to information (through the internet). Interestingly, in one of the teachers' focus groups, it was stated that there is **more stigma for male students regarding the choice of professions** (e.g., ballerino being associated with less masculinity, but the same does not apply to a cooking chef) **than there is for female**. Regardless of these pro-gender equality attitudes of students, it is important to note that **for one teacher, in a FG, female students were perceived as arrogant, when talking about their empowering, leadership, and participative attitudes**. This perception is of extreme importance, and despite being manifested only by one out of nine teachers (or one out of 12 participants, including psychologists and social educators), this attitude may difficult students' actions in promoting and ensuring their right to equality, regardless of gender.

As for those **who are more affected by gender inequality**, teachers (n = 5) expressed that women are the most affected, and although to a lesser extent, men too (n = 1); while another mentioned homosexual people (n = 1). The reference to men as being discriminated against due to gender topics was highlighted only by a male teacher: *"in inequality, which can often also be towards man, but it is obvious that most cases it affects women, naturally"* (T01, male, 58 years).

For most teachers (n = 5), the main **reason for gender inequality** is perceived to be the reproduction of culturally defined gender roles, which can come from family, peers, and even textbooks; for others, this is caused by power asymmetry (n = 1), lack of consciousness/knowledge of gender equality matters (n = 1), and lack of acceptance towards gender and sexual diversity (n = 1). Thus, the reproduction of culturally defined gender roles is evident in the following statement: *"it happens because Western societies, like others, have been replicating these models, right? which are stereotypes linked to stereotyped behaviors, linked to female and male behavior, to male and female obligations. Deep down, societies have been replicating that. [...] In textbooks of domestic activities, for instance, end up being almost always female elements doing those activities. And the kids, it's funny, they end up replicating these behaviors, then in the choices they make"* (T12, female, no info on age). The idea that gender roles are imposed by society was reinforced by one teacher from the mixed FG, with teachers from one teacher FG highlighting the reproduction of behaviors being greater when students live in generational families, as stated (in the paragraph above) in students' attitudes perceived by teachers. One teacher specifically highlighted the **role of mothers in reproducing these behaviors and beliefs to their children**: *"I think it's cultural, that it's very much linked to tradition, very much linked to a reproduction that fathers due to children and even mothers, and we usually also discuss*

this, when mothers are often reproducing this inequality” (T01, male, 58 years). And to change gender inequality teachers mentioned a double approach, by both: (a) changing regulations and legislations (n = 3), and (b) changing mentalities and behaviors, such as equal share of domestic chores between genders (n = 3).

Specifically related to **women’s access to leadership positions**, two different solutions were presented: while one teacher (T12, female, no info on age) defends that this is not achieved by changing legislation, but rather by changing mentalities; another state (T08, female, 58 years) that quotas can be defined for this achievement, but only in an initial phase (as it is being currently done) since its practice reveals an attitude of positive discrimination in favor of women: *“quotas allocated only to women [...] I accept this in the sense of alerting people [...] but I don’t think that [...] because you’re a woman, you must have a privilege, right? I think it should be because of people’s ability, regardless of gender, you know? And therefore, in that respect, I think it’s being exaggerated” (T08, female, 58 years). Interestingly, one teacher positioned that gender inequality is a positive sign as it means more rights for women are being claimed in comparison with the past: “I think that in Portugal there have already been changes in that direction, because we are already hearing a lot about gender inequality, which, in my opinion, is very positive for changing the role of women, / the other day, during classes, I said that from the moment that woman was no longer at home to deal with household chores and children, and went on to have her economic independence, tried to match herself to the man” (T15, female, 54 years).*

Almost all teachers (n = 12) perceive that **gender equality exists within the school context**, for there are equal opportunities, rights, duties, and treatment for every element of the school context: *“So if we are talking about the context here, a school, therefore, everyone has access to the same, so the same goods, to the same treatment, to the same attention, everyone has the same rights, everyone has the same duties and I think there is no discrimination. If there is, I think there is no major discrimination concerning gender” (T01, male, 58 years). One teacher did not provide a clear answer to the existence of gender equality in school. Nonetheless, the **situations representative of this equality in the school context** are: (a) no gender-based discrimination to access job opportunities in schools (n = 3), (b) equal task attribution regardless of gender (n = 2), whether between teacher or other school personnel, (c) equal learning opportunities for students (n = 2) (d) but also that students’ (increased) acceptance of non-traditional gender roles (n = 1), such as in peer activities: *“It’s not very common for girls to want to play football. It’s more of a boys’ sport, right? However, if a girl a few years ago, played football [...] she would suffer some discrimination. And now, I don’t feel that happens anymore”, T08, female, 58 years). From teachers’ FGs we understand, as the **reason for such attitudes, that for students, competence is more important than gender during sports play. This is also applicable when creating workgroups****

in class, as stated in the mixed FG. Indeed, participants from both teachers' FGs reveal that there has been **more gender-inclusive peer groups, with less gender-based differentiation, especially in cases of male students integrating a female peer in their group**. On the other hand, if male peers do criticize another male student due to interacting with female peers (vignette 2 from FG) it would be more out of jealousy of male students hanging out with female peers, as stated in one teacher FG.

In summary, the teachers' perception of gender equality in school is more focused on what the school personnel or system does, or attempts to do, rather than in terms of peers' and students' interpersonal relationships, as exemplified in these situations. This biased perception can compromise a real understanding of the dynamics of inequality that can punctuate schools as well as compromise the development and strengthening of school policies and procedures against gender inequality and SGBV.

Teachers believe that the **reasons for which gender equality exists in school** are (a) a higher number of women as teachers (n = 3), (b) no gender-based privilege between teachers (n = 1), (c) an attempt from the school community to achieve gender equality (n = 1), (d) an attitude of assertion and defence of one's rights (n = 1), (e) constant awareness promoted by all school personnel (n = 1) and the no discrimination school culture (n = 1). For instance, one teacher highlighted that it goes *"by awareness even [...] in the corridors, about situations ahh not only of gender equality, but less correct situations, ahh so either school assistants, or teachers, pass by, and raise students' awareness, [because it was a very small school] so it was a very familiar environment"* (T11, female, 40 years).

Teachers perceive that the **impacts of gender equality are positive**, namely in terms of (a) achieving personal goals (n = 1), (b) feeling a generalized sensation of well-being (n = 2), and (c) having a good school environment for all school community (n = 2) and (d) respectful relationships between all (n = 1). For instance, a teacher mentioned that she believes that *"the impact is mostly positive, isn't it? Besides the, let's say, calm environment [...] we also end up having a cordial relationship and a polite and respectful relationship; above all, it is all about respect, and we also foster this with the children, don't we?"* (T16, female, 54 years).

Despite perceiving that gender equality exists in the school, throughout teachers' discourses we were able to identify **situations of gender inequality in school**: (a) gender-based discrimination in school textbooks (n = 2), (b) male teachers' paternalistic attitude toward female teachers (n = 1), (c) more men in leadership positions in schools (n = 1). The coordinator of Citizenship and Development from one teacher's focus group also highlighted the greater presence of men in leadership positions in school, while also reinforcing her perception of needing to show more and do more in comparison with male teachers, and that female teachers

“are even accused of not being good colleagues, that we (woman) are even more authoritarian, because “we don't even look like women” [quoting male teachers]” (FG06T, Teacher P.). As for the teacher who gave an ambiguous response (in the interview) to the perception of the state of gender equality in school, she identified a **particular inequality situation that occurs from students towards school personnel**, namely students showing more respect for male school personnel than female: *“We have kids, for example, here that are complicated, difficult classes that behave better if they have a man teacher than a woman teacher, right? And that's when you notice that they don't respect anyone, they don't see everything as equal, they don't see things as being equal, and that you must respect both men and women. At least that's the idea that I get.”* (T13, female, 56 years). This situation, unlike the others, is the only gender inequality situation in schools that focuses on students rather than the school or teachers. Moreover, because teachers perceive that, in school, gender equality exists, no one was identified as being **more affected by gender inequality in school**. However, from the situations teachers presented, one can infer that it is women and that equal respect and tolerance towards everybody is not constant across the school community, as they perceived it to be. Similarly, no **reasons for gender inequality in school nor its' consequences** were identified by teachers. Lastly, according to one teacher, **students** often report a **situation of gender inequality in school**: the unfair treatment in physical education class: *“they often complain [...] especially the boys [...] when [they have to run] in a short time, and they have to run more than the girls, [...] «It's not fair, it's not fair... We're the same, aren't we?» [they say]”* (T10, female, 47 years).

3.2 How do teachers understand SGBV?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

In interviews, when asked to **define SGBV**, teachers provided manifestations of it (see paragraph below). In these examples: (a) 4 teachers referenced gender, 2 of which perceive that SGBV situations are not (entirely) related to gender, (b) 2 teachers referenced sexual orientation, and (c) 3 teachers did not reference gender or sexual orientation. Only 1 teacher referred to both gender and sexual orientation. Only 1 teacher was able to provide a definition of SGBV that encompasses gender as the basis of violence: *“It's [...] any type of physical, psychological violence, of any nature that are perpetrated according to gender, because it's a woman or because it's a man, isn't it?”* (T12, female, no info on age). It is important to note that four teachers (of which only one was not a Citizenship and Development teacher, but a Natural Sciences one) did not provide examples of SGBV, but violence in general, hence their excerpts were exempted for the major part from this section. This number is a warning sign since the teachers interviewed are

those who should be more informed on these matters, for they are expected to teach them in school, as expected for the subject of Citizenship and Development.

From teachers' discourses and when asked about **signs of SGBV in young people**, teachers provided several examples in which SGBV can manifest. These manifestations were divided into typologies and contexts. The **typologies of SGBV** identified were: (a) dating violence (n = 7), particularly psychological and verbal (e.g., depreciative comments), control, privacy invasion, and physical violence, (b) peer violence (n = 2), in which psychological and verbal violence was highlighted, (c) sexual orientation violence (n = 1), particularly verbal violence, and (d) transgender violence (n = 1), but also, and non-specific to a particular group, (e) physical violence (n = 3) and (f) psychological and verbal violence (n = 1). From the teachers who mentioned, the contexts in which these SGBV situations occur are (a) the classroom (n = 2), (b) recess (n = 1), and (c) the digital world (n = 1). Regarding dating violence, one teacher highlighted: *"[there was a] case that indeed [...] there was an absolute control of ... her phone from... all of... her steps, of the girl, made by, by the boy, who felt the right to have this... behavior, since he started dating her"* (T08, female, 58 years).

One teacher also mentioned **signs of victimization** one could identify, namely: social isolation and alienation or sadness: *"in a certain male and female pair, we see that [...] the young woman moves away, and we can even notice physiognomic signs, right? I don't know, either sadness or alienation and things like that."* (T12, female, no info on age).

From teachers' experiences in interviews, we were able to identify which **SGBV situations occur in school**. According to five teachers, these situations never occurred in school, one of which specifically reported never having seen or heard about SGBV directed towards a gay student in school. For those who mentioned the **occurrence of the situations seen in school**: (a) one teacher stated it to be frequent (e.g., peer violence), and (b) three reported it was not something frequent (e.g., physical, verbal, and psychological violence in peer or dating relationships). For instance, one teacher stated: *"Physical violence I had obviously knowledge, not in this school concretely, because this school is only until the 9th grade and there are fewer situations, but in secondary schools, there are more, it is more usual, it happens more frequently."* (T01, male, 58 years). Although not specified in its frequency, data from teachers FG also reinforce the occurrence of dating violence, in the form of control (e.g., male student controlling female student's outfit), privacy invasion (e.g., demanding her password), and physical violence (e.g., slapping her for not obeying; but also, girlfriend slapping boyfriend). In the mixed FG, dating violence between a female homosexual couple within the school context was also mentioned by one teacher. Moreover, in one of the teacher's FG, it was mentioned a **form of gender expression violence**, expressed as psychological and verbal violence, from school personnel towards students

(e.g., school auxiliary or teacher humiliating male students in the class for having nails painted or having lips painted).

Within the school context, and collected from teachers' FG data, we were able to identify **students' attitudes (from the perspective of teachers) regarding gender identity and expression**. Only in the school context, the situation of a male student transitioning gender was mentioned, with all school members respecting the student (e.g., in terms of the social name), although teachers mentioned that this transgender student had *"she had attitude issues, she had problems in terms of personality development."* (FG01T, Teacher A.). Note how teachers adopt the term "she" even after he assumed his gender identity. Moreover, in both school contexts, **no overt discrimination from peers regarding students' gender expression** (e.g., male students preferring to be with female students, coloring hair, wearing braids and/or painting nails; female students wearing boyish clothes and painting their hair with different colors) **was perceived to exist**. However, it was noted that the existence of overt discrimination is dependent on peer groups. Overall, these data reveal that, from the perspective of teachers and other school personnel, SGBV does exist albeit not frequently, and that students reveal a pro-inclusion attitude towards people of diverse genders and sexualities. However, similar to those described regarding gender equality (section 3.1.) from FGs' data, stereotypical attitudes seem to be shown more by teachers than by students.

Despite only 1 teacher mentioning that those **most affected by SGBV** would be women, children, and transsexual people, and other 2 teachers identifying that it would be the survivor, regardless of gender; from the SGBV situations seen or heard in the school context, teachers specified during interviews that the most affected are: (a) the girlfriend from a heterosexual relationship (n = 2), (b) homosexual students (n = 2) and (c) a transgender student (n = 1). From FG data, despite the major focus on dating violence with the girlfriend being the most affected, in one teacher FG, it was mentioned the girlfriend was also committing physical violence.

Teachers stated some characteristics which can compose a **profile of survivor and aggressor in SGBV**. Five teachers mentioned **survivors'** characteristics such as (a) fragility, (b) having been a survivor in the past, (c) having a less supporting family structure, and (d) physical features not conforming with stereotypical beauty standards. Six teachers referred to **aggressors'** characteristics such as (a) authoritative, (b) feeling superior and having high self-esteem (perceived by others), (c) lack of respect for the self, (d) less supporting family structure, (e) poorer social, moral, and cultural development. Despite identifying some characteristics, one teacher had difficulty defining a specific profile. One teacher perceives that there is no survivor nor aggressor profile: *"I don't think there is, because I think [...] This is also the result of a culture,*

right? There's no specific profile because the culture was for everyone, right? (T08, female, 58 years).

According to teachers the **consequences/impacts of SGBV for the survivor** are dependent on the survivors' psychological resilience (n = 2). Nonetheless, the consequences identified were negative: (a) mainly psychological and emotional (n = 5), such as low self-esteem, indulgence in self-harm behaviors, lack of freedom, and (b) not assuming own sexual orientation to family (n = 1), but also (c) on learning (n = 1) and (d) relationships (n = 1); however, another consequence can be (d) either replicating or repudiating violence (n = 1). Participants from both teachers FG and mixed FG (only adults) also focused on the psychological impact of SGBV survivors (e.g., isolation and repressing one's feelings), but on an academic level (e.g., missing classes). As for **aggressors**, the impact highlighted was the possibility of (a) developing psychological disorders (n = 1), (b) regretting having practiced violence (n = 1), or, on the other hand, (c) practicing more violence or abuse (n = 1). As for the **school**, the consequences are: (a) the difficulty responding to violence (including SGBV) (n = 1), (b) being stigmatized by the community for having a lot of violence cases (n = 1), which then (c) could impact the number of inscriptions in school (n = 1). Regarding the school's response to violence, one teacher mentioned: *"if there are many cases it turns out to be a negative consequence because the school cannot answer, cannot help [...] more and more ahh goes from one hand to the other and that is, I think it is negative. When cases are punctual, the school can respond and help, even if it can't reach the families afterward"* (T10, female, 47 years).

The **reasons or motivations for the occurrence of SGBV** are: (a) influence of social and cultural context in the formation of students' personality (n = 6), but also (b) students replicating culturally defined gender roles learned outside school (n = 1); (c) gender inequality (n = 3), (d) power asymmetry (n = 3), (e) lack of knowledge/awareness to violence (n = 4), (e) legitimization of violence (n = 1) and (f) lack of empathy towards other (n = 1). One teacher highlighted that on one hand *"I think they end up... thinking that the male sex is stronger and can [do] all, in comparison with the female sex [...] [this] still comes a lot from home, doesn't it?, [that] the woman is a slave"*; and on the other hand *"although they like to see, then criticize the fact that the girls walk around with necklines. [...] that it happened because the girl... walked like that, so she, herself caused it, right? Or, or, and sometimes even the girls themselves criticized, they didn't help the other girl, I mean... they did not advocate her [being of] the same gender..."* (T10, female, 47 years). Similar to those described above, participants from teachers FG mentioned as reasons for SGBV (in the form of dating violence): power asymmetry, the influence of culture, legitimization of SGBV, lack of awareness of SGBV (e.g., perceiving as normal certain situations of dating violence or having difficulty identifying dating violence situations), exemplified as follows:

"we used the violentometer, and they only consider violence when it is real violence, otherwise it is considered perfectly normal, "Slapping is very normal" [quoting students]. Female students hit them too. And vice versa. "If you're jealous, it's because you like it" [quoting students]." (FG06T, several teachers). Influence of peers, in the sense of replicating language used by peers without giving it much thought was also mentioned as a reason for verbal violence in the mixed FG.

Lastly, during teachers' discourses, a set of **challenges or limitations to combat SGBV** emerged. Globally, it was mentioned (a) the survivor's silence (n = 1) and (b) the difficulty reaching private contexts in which SGBV occurs (n = 1). A teacher highlighted that *"it happens in contexts of intimacy, therefore, so they are not exactly public, and it is often difficult to break, to get there, to break that barrier."* (T01, male, 58 years). Specifically, to the **school context**, the following challenges or limitations were mentioned: (a) the **classroom context which restrains** the possibility of **conversing privately** with a student (n = 1), (b) the **high number of children/students** in school (n = 1) and (c) the **high number of violence cases in school** (n = 1), but also (d) **parents' stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors** (n = 3), such as lying and not accepting about children's violent behavior or sexual orientation (which was associated to an SGBV situation in our data), and (e) the **social, cultural and family contexts** in which students live which perpetuate SGBV behaviors outside school (n = 2). Hence, one teacher mentioned that *"if within the family there are a lot of ideas, stereotypes, it is very complicated then also in the school context ahh demystify these concepts, these stereotypes [...] and make them realize that... that's not right, because... it's that situation which they are used to in their daily lives"* (T12, female, no info on age). Likewise, from the mixed FG, it was mentioned the lack of **acceptance by the parents of the child's sexual orientation**, was difficult to combat SGBV. It is parents' stereotypical attitudes that are highlighted **as a challenge to combat SGBV in school**. Although not a challenge, but rather as a facilitator of combating SGBV we highlight the perception of a psychologist which *"for confidentiality matters, perhaps, it may be easier [for students] to speak with teachers, perhaps of being afraid of sharing with me since they know the limit is crossed, [...] and that may have consequences and most times opt for silence"* (FG01T, Psychologist).

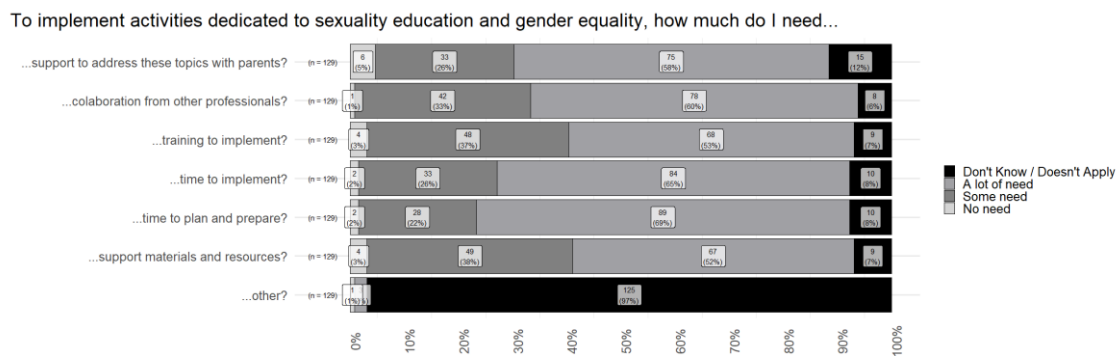
3.3 What are teachers' needs for approaching gender equality and SGBV and implementing the school curricula on sexuality education and gender equality?

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

Gender equality is a mandatory part of the curriculum since preschool in Portuguese schools since 2009, and several guidelines and training were provided for supporting teachers in including such topics in the school curricula. Still, results from the questionnaire conducted in the present study with teachers show that **more than half of the participants** identified as barrier to

discuss sexuality education the **lack time for adequately planning for activities regarding gender equality and SGBV (69%)** and **time to effectively implement activities embedded in the school curricula (65%)** across the several subjects. **Training, materials, and support from specialized professionals** (e.g., nurses, and psychologists) in gender equality and SGBV prevention were also highly focused **as a need** (Figure 8). The relevance of teacher training for discussing sexuality, gender, and SGBV has been highlighted in the literature as a relevant feature when discussing sexuality education in schools, which aim is to empower students and develop their critical thinking competencies (e.g., Spear & da Costa, 2018; Valle, 2022). Finally, **more than half of teachers** referred that there is **“a lot of need of support” to address these topics with parents**. This is important to note since collaboration between teachers and parents is essential to preventing adverse phenomena, such as bullying (Niejenhuis et al., 2020), including homophobic bullying (Espelage et al., 2019).

Figure 8. Teachers needs to implement activities dedicated to sexuality education and gender equality



QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS

Along the same line, data from interviews reveal that Portuguese teachers identify as a **major need, training** (n = 7), specifically practical training which will allow them “to access tools, to have a little more training, in the area, to know how to talk [...] because sometimes I'm afraid of talking too much and confusing them” (T10, female, 47 years). One teacher adds the importance of “practical examples, practical training, right? Not theory [because] theory, the person reads, if interested, will read. At the practical level is that sometimes a few tips come in handy from a specialist.” (T12, female, no info on age). Only 2 teachers mentioned it not to be a major need for already having many training courses, although not specifying if they have more theoretical or practical training. Another **major need is related to time** (n = 7), whether to approach these topics more extensively in the curriculum, create more school projects based on

these themes, prepare the classes, or even explore the materials and guidelines. For instance, one teacher says that *"time also for us... to prepare the activities, we have, to research, ... we must understand if the activity will work if it won't work... there is a lot of work here, on our part, right? Which requires time, doesn't it? It requires time"* (T11, female, 40 years). Teachers underlined that if *"we had 2 or 3 [classes], we would work on all the contents in a much more developed, deeper way. It's better, of course, isn't it? They have such a vast curriculum, with so many subjects for so many hours."* (T12, female, no info on age). Another major need is **resources** (n = 5), for instance in terms of activities stating that *"sometimes I also feel a little bit of difficulty in that aspect [resources]. It's not just having a video and the commentary to watch; we need to do something different and sometimes I have some difficulty in finding different activities. I research, I try, I try and I think there are already some courses, there are already some activities, but I think we could work more on this aspect of... of doing some different activities, some different dynamics, because these are themes that they like and, therefore, I think it's easier to captivate them. if we could get support from the parents [...] it would be excellent."* (T12, female, no info on age). Lastly, teachers also identified as needs for **parents' involvement and support** (n = 2) and the **help of specialized professionals**, such as psychologists (n = 2), stating that *"If some years ago, I felt relatively comfortable approaching these topics and try to deconstruct them because they were new, and maybe nobody ever confronted us with this. Nowadays I already have some fear and I've even talked to some school colleagues, we all think it every day more this a is field that can be swampy for us, let's say; and we would need a little help from someone, a psychologist, someone with more training, more specific training and who knows a little better the target public."* (T16, female, 54 years). Data from a teachers' FG emphasizes again the need for time (e.g., to approach more extensively the curriculum) and training for every teacher, since every teacher should be trained to address and manage these situations. Both in-service and initial teacher training were highlighted.

Teachers' needs and worries about how to include gender and SGBV in the curricula can be summarized in one teacher's statement: *"I'd like to do it differently, I'd like to have the time to do more involved projects between the school and the community. To have the time, the means, and somehow have the enthusiasm of both the students and the parents."* (T01, male, 58 years).

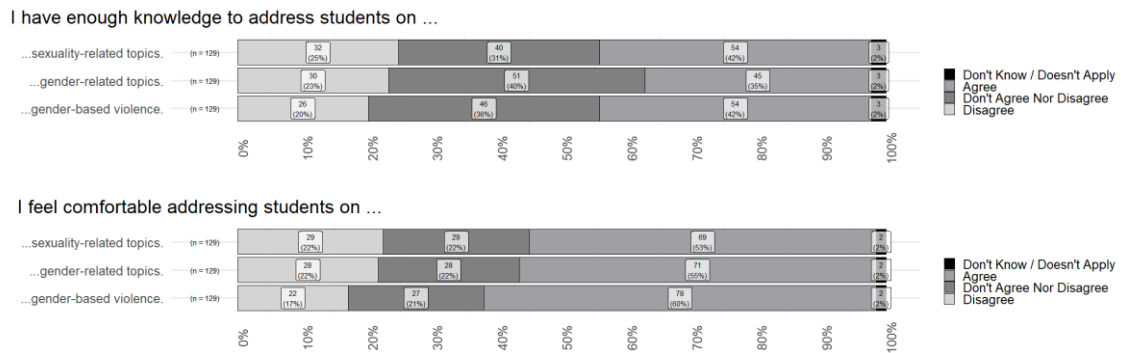
Teachers assume that without specific training, effective strategies, resources, and time it's very difficult to recognize these situations and to work through them without being vehicles of stereotypes. They also recognize that they need specialized professionals to address it and mention that the support of families becomes crucial in these demands.

3.4 What are teachers' levels of comfort and perceived competence for approaching gender equality, sexuality, and SGBV in schools?

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

When analyzing teachers' perceptions of their **knowledge and level of comfort** in teaching middle school students about gender equality and SGBV, **25% of teachers do not feel they have the knowledge to teach sexuality-related topics**, **23% find they do not have enough knowledge to teach about gender equality**, and **20% consider not to have enough knowledge to teach about SGBV** (Figure 9). Still, over **35% believe that to be prepared** to teach their students about these topics. Perceptions of comfort seem to be similar to perceptions of knowledge, with over **50% of teachers stating they feel comfortable teaching about sexuality, gender equality, and SGBV**.

Figure 9. Teachers' levels of comfort and perceived competence for teaching about gender equality, sexuality and SGBV



QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUPS

Still discussing teachers' level of **knowledge and comfort** to approach these themes, during individual interviews 1 teacher reported having **no knowledge** at all, 4 mentioned being **reasonably prepared** to approach these themes, and 3 did not respond to the level of perceived competence but associated it to their perception of comfort. The teacher who perceived not knowing at all said that *"(our) knowledge is very vague, let's face it. Honestly, any teacher can teach the subject of Citizenship and Development with no specific requirements in terms of area of training, isn't it? Everyone knows they may have to teach it, and I feel that in some way I can teach it, but there are themes that we never even listen to at the university, right? It's more common sense, it's general culture. And I would like to have, well I don't have the baggage to teach the gender equality program, I don't have anything, I would have to have a background, I mean, I don't have the knowledge to teach it"*. (T07, female, 28 years). This seems to indicate the need for teacher training, not only in-service training but the need to revise the curriculum for pre-service/initial academic teacher training during their higher education studies. Both adequate in-service and pre-service (initial) teacher training is considered pivotal for teachers' practices.

Those who considered themselves to be **reasonably prepared** perceive that due to (a) having had **formal education** (higher degree in teaching) and (b) **complementary training** on these themes, (c) constantly **seeking knowledge**, and (d) **previous experience** teaching sexuality education. Despite this perception, one teacher mentioned not being completely prepared to teach about themes related to biological aspects of sexuality education, using as a strategy to overcome this limitation seeking new knowledge and conversing with colleagues. Other teachers mention they try to overcome the limitations they feel on their level of preparation for teaching gender and sexuality education, stating that *"So, the truth is, I've been doing pieces of training, I've been doing activities as I told you. But that's not my field of training and specialization in teaching. So, logically, I won't feel completely secure. [...] And then, as I told you, we did some training in health education, and I always teach health education. After health education, we moved on to citizenship and development subject. And since there was a group [in school] already formed for health education, and that was a group that continued with citizenship subjects. So, that helped too."* (T08, female, 58 years). Teachers also mentioned that their **initial training** field may **affect their level of preparation** referring that *"It is more difficult for me, as a language teacher, in this case of French, I certainly have much more for researching, need to invest more in this area than the teacher who is a biology teacher or has some training in psychology. We had very little training in psychology in our teaching degree courses. We had a subject of developmental psychology in the internship part and nothing, nothing else."* (T12, female, no info on age). Training – both initial teacher training and in-service training seem to emerge as a pivotal feature affecting how teachers perceive their level of knowledge and preparation for approaching gender, sexuality, and SGBV in their classes.

Regarding teachers' **level of comfort** to approach these themes: 3 teachers perceived to be **comfortable**, 4 perceived to be **somewhat comfortable**, and only 1 **uncomfortable**. For those who said **comfortable**, it is due to (a) constant learning (n = 1) and (b) being the teachers' field of expertise (n = 1). From a teacher's FG, a Coordinator of Citizenship and Development mentioned being comfortable because of the strategies employed (e.g., (during class debates acting only as a moderator but also imposing limits, such as respect for all, before its approach), which were learned over time from experience teaching. For those who said being **somewhat comfortable**, the reasons identified for that were due to (a) **complementary training** (n = 1), (b) constantly **seeking new knowledge** (n = 1), (c) being **sensible topics** to approach in class with students (n = 1), (d) and **being in constant evolution** (vocabulary being hard to be updated) (n = 3), (e) **not being the teacher's main field of expertise** (n = 2), and (f) teachers' self-questioning of **personal skills** (e.g., conversation skills to converse privately with students on these themes) **and teaching skills** (e.g., questioning the best approach to teaching these themes; not doing a good job) (n =

3). The teachers and social educator of the mixed FG complement some of these ideas by stating that they feel that there is a culture of forcing a certain sexual orientation ("it seems like they want us to *"hey man, you what? Are you straight? What a shame, you should be gay"* [quoting]", FG02M⁴, Teacher A.) and that *"there is a manipulation aimed at dispersing even much of our attention from other issues"*.

Regarding teacher insecurity, a teacher mentioned that *"My biggest insecurity was in terms of knowledge, is in terms of not knowing. Ok not for... not for that kind of... situations. My biggest insecurity, that's why... two years ago I was in a training course on this subject... because I thought it was important to have a little more knowledge to be able to work more safely with my students in that sense of training."* (T11, female, 40 years). Such reveals that knowledge and level of comfort are related, underlining once again the role of teacher training in improving both: knowledge and comfort. Another teacher expressed that *"So, on the cultural and social side, I feel quite well prepared. Since I have a background in the humanities, and I have a master's degree in anthropology. So, I am familiarized with [the subject]. [...] in the physical part, in the mechanical part of the thing, obviously I am not so much in the part of transmitting that kind of knowledge. But everything else here is that I feel less prepared. Obviously, I turn to and educate myself and go, I'll look it up. And there's a lot of information about it provided by the Ministry and not only that, by other entities, and I'll use it, and by a discussion with colleagues and everything, too".* (T01, male, 58 years). Although some confidence is expressed, the teachers have ambivalent feelings regarding their comfort/preparation, assuming that *"No, I don't have much comfort in these themes, I confess. Because no, I'm not comfortable with it and I don't know how far I can go. And no, no, I don't feel completely at ease, for the discussion part; The cultural, social, moral part, I don't have the feeling I have a big problem with that, but the more physical part, the relationships thing, I'm afraid of the extent to which I can go. I'm not a teacher who has a lot of dialogue with personal conversations with the students."* (T01, male, 58 years). Indeed, during one of the teacher FG, when asked, teachers stated that even if they had training in sexuality education, they would not feel comfortable approaching it. Nonetheless, the reasons justifying their evaluation of levels of comfort are the same as the ones justifying their perception of the level of knowledge, underlining the **pivotal role of training** for teachers to feel comfortable and developed the adequate skills and knowledge to teach sexuality education.

Another teacher's statement explicates how teachers are **challenged by balancing their values and perspectives, as well as in incorporating topics related to LGBT persons**: *"I'm not 100% confident. First, I always question myself, because I try to make them see what's there [in the*

⁴ Mixed Focus Group, School 02

*curricula], and not my experience, right? I try not to put my cultural part there and my values part there as well. It's hard sometimes. And then there's always some... insecurities of "Am I approaching this in the best way?" Am I... OK, but then maybe, like many things, there's insecurity. But maybe more... Maybe more the... hum especially now in this part of, of all these LGBT movements... everything, which is more and more... more and more letters are coming. Why is it there? It has to do, I think it has to do mainly with the security of my values and my own, what the culture has done to me, if, if it doesn't also carry over to how, how I'm going to approach it (T08, female, 58 years). As for the teacher who said being **uncomfortable**, it is due to (a) lack of formal education in these fields and (b) the teacher's cultural background. Here we also add the perception of two teachers from a teacher FG who feel uncomfortable, one of whom was already interviewed but did not provide information regarding her level of comfort, also added the reason: for questioning if the approach used is the best for these themes.*

Overall, we can conclude that the reasons why teachers feel less comfortable in teaching gender and sexuality-related topics are: (a) lack of formal education in these fields and (b) teachers' cultural background.

Lastly, all teachers perceived to be safe to teach these themes with students, that is, no threat was perceived from parents, other teachers, or religious organizations with the recognition that *"No, I don't feel threatened. In fact, these are topics that kids usually like when we talk about them. (...) We hear that exists, even though the media, but so far, I haven't felt anything like that."* (T12, female, no info on age). According to teachers participating in interviews, **schools seem to be a safe space for gender and sexuality education**. Nevertheless, we underline that this study results show most topics approached in schools (see sections 6.1 and 6.2) do not cover aspects that could be more controversial, and topics seem to be explored superficially, which may explain these perceptions.

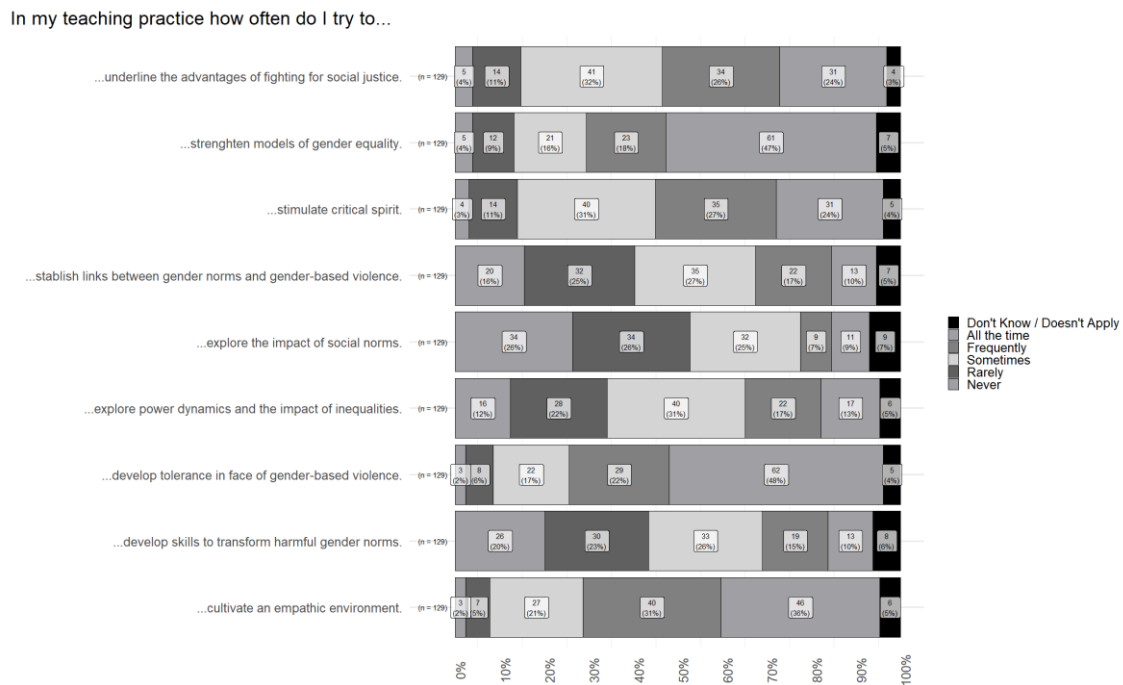
3.5. Which strategies, according to teachers, can promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality and SGBV?

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

Teachers are in a key position for promoting students' development of positive attitudes toward gender equality and for fostering their critical thinking regarding sexuality and awareness of discrimination and SGBV. In this scope, several strategies can be adopted to build students' awareness of gender equality and the prevention of SGBV. Literature suggests that building a positive climate in schools is pivotal for learning and development including addressing gender and sexuality education and supporting students in the development of their identities and social justice values. Over 40% of teachers participating in this study refer that they **always** adopt in

their classes and interactions with students a **tolerant attitude** towards gender equality and **strengthen models** of gender equality to promote students' positive attitudes regarding gender equality. Additionally, 24% mention **always underlining the advantages of fighting for social justice** and **stimulating critical thinking** in their students. The **less used strategies** reported were **exploring the impact of social norms** (about 52% of teachers report never or rarely doing this); **establishing links between social norms and SGBV** (about 41% of teacher report never to rarely doing this); and **exploring power dynamics and the impact of inequalities** (30% of teachers never to rarely doing this; Figure 10).

Figure 10. Teachers' strategies to promote gender equality, prevent and combat gender inequality and SGBV



QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

From interviews with teachers, it was identified several roles (what should be done) and strategies currently implemented for different members of the school community (e.g., school, school personnel, teachers, students, and family) to promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality and SGBV. Some of these roles and strategies were mentioned specifically regarding students' sexuality and sexual orientation sexuality.

Teachers mentioned several **strategies and roles that schools can do to promote gender equality and prevent/combat gender inequality**, namely: (a) educate towards a future without barriers (e.g. of more gender equality) , as a role (n = 1), (b) introduce other realities to students (“Open horizons”) as a role (n = 2), (c) transmit good values by using regulations and governance,

as both strategy and role (n = 2), (d) promote students' awareness through school activities, as both strategy and role (n = 3), (e) promote students' critical thought, as a role (n = 1), (f) involve parents in the discussion of these themes to raise their awareness (n = 1), as a role, and (g) provide training to all members of the school community, including parents, as a role (n = 1). For instance, one teacher said, *"maybe the school, through awareness sessions, lectures, activities, going to a specific place, making a field trip, that deals with gender equality"* since *"the school should not act on the problem, that is, I think it should be all about prevention"* (T07, female, 28 years). As for **preventing and combating SGBV**, teachers named the following **strategies and roles**: (a) promote students' awareness through school activities, as both a strategy and role, (b) establish partnerships with entities and people, as a role (n = 1), (c) provide and use school psychologists to help students (and to talk with parents), as a strategy (n = 1), (d) involve parents in the discussion of these themes to raise their awareness, as a role (n = 1), (e) provide training to all members of the school community, including parents, as a role (n = 1), (f) define guidelines to combat violence, as a role (n = 1), and (g) take measures according to school regulation, as a role (n = 1). One teacher highlighted *"then one can use several means: either to analyze or even to request the intervention, for example, of the psychology office, which is very important in the school. To listen to the students, there must be support services for the students, both at the level of aggressors and at the level of survivors. And I think that the psychology service can give precious help. In collaboration with the family, bridging the work. When the class council, the teachers notice that something is wrong, they try to solve it, if they can't, they go, for example, to the psychology service, the guidance service. We have two psychologists in the school at the moment, who do an extraordinary job, and are normally, are always receptive to any problem that we put to them. Then they will know if it is better to talk to the family, than the Commission for the Protection of Youth at Risk. They will know how best to deal with this situation. They have training in this area that teachers don't have, at least teachers of "regular" subjects"*. (T12, female, no info on age). **The strategy adopted by the school regarding students' sexuality and/or sexual orientation** was providing and using school psychologists to help students (n = 1): *"and then we really need to, to help him, he has to be aware that he needs that help and sometimes they think they can do it alone. So, in the case of this particular student, who is a student of one of my classes who is now in the 9th grade, ahh step by step things are improving [with psychological support]..."* (T10, female, 47 years).

Teachers also identified **strategies and roles (to be) adopted by school personnel, including teachers themselves, to promote gender equality and prevent/combat gender inequality**. These were: (a) promote awareness daily, as both a strategy and role (n = 2), (b) exchange information/communicate with families, as both a strategy and a role (n = 1), and (c)

transmit good values, as a role (n = 2). One teacher mentioned that: *“there are norms of course, but it is also the values that are defended in school, in the affirmation of these rights, not only in the subject of citizenship, usually it’s in all contexts. [...] towards the affirmation of this equality”* (T01, male, 58 years). The **strategies and roles identified to prevent and combat SGBV were:** (a) pay attention to students' signs of victimization (e.g., social isolation), as a role (n = 1), (b) lend a helping hand to the survivor, as a strategy (n = 2), (c) talk with aggressor and survivor, as a role (n = 2), (d) talk with homerooms teachers, psychologists, and /or school direction, as a strategy and role (n = 2), (e) exchange feedback with family, as a strategy and role (n = 3), (f) work as a team, strategy (n = 1), and (g) transmit good values daily, as a role (n = 1). One teacher stated that: *“When the cases are specific, the school can respond and help, even if we can't reach the families, but if in the school environment we can help, we can talk and both the aggressors and the survivors can get there... see that the aggressor has someone who is controlling him, watching over him. The survivor, who has someone who gives him emotional support... That's why I think the school is an asset, the students like the school and value the school for that, if only for that reason.”* (T10, female, 47 years). The **strategies regarding students' sexuality and/or sexual orientation,** were the following: (a) lend a helping hand to students (n = 1), (b) exchange feedback with family, as a strategy and role (n = 1), and (c) work as a team, as a strategy (n = 1). For instance, one teacher stated that the *“school functions as a... a very important thing. All, all... the school staff, I think... is necessary for this type of situation and we have more and more because we have more and more kids that don't really accept themselves and are comfortable in showing and being who they are, right? They don't know yet, they are still in that phase and sometimes need... a clarification.”* (T10, female, 47 years).

As for **strategies and roles (to be) adopted only by teachers to promote gender equality and prevent/combat gender inequality,** it was mentioned: (a) promote students' critical thought, as both a strategy and role (n = 1), (b) deconstruct gender-normative beliefs, as a strategy (n = 2), (c) raise students' awareness and accountability, as strategy and role (n = 3), (d) be a role model for students, as a strategy and role (n = 2). One teacher summarized some of these in the following statement: *“It's trying to get them to think about the topics, not only at a school level but also outside [...] It's making them understand a bit, other people's worlds and the problem worldwide, right? It's giving them clues to open horizons, to make them think, to make them reflect on other matters, to make them develop a critical spirit, to make them also internalize important values for the promotion of gender equality [...] and [for] other situations.”* (T12, female, no info on age). Another teacher also mentioned how during class: *“I have also been telling them, for them to realize, that there is also gender equality, with the pandemic, there were men who made themselves available to be cleaning workers.”* (T15, female, 54 years). Regarding **preventing and**

combating SGBV, the strategies identified were: (a) promote students' critical thought, as both a strategy and role (n = 1), (b) raise students' awareness and accountability, as strategy and role (n = 4), (c) access information of an SGBV situation indirectly through students (peer group), as a strategy (n = 1), and (d) request school's psychological help, as a strategy (n = 1). Hence, teachers usually *"the class director or the teacher that the student trusts the most talks with the student in private and we have been able to solve the situations like that."* (T12, female, no info on age), but also, and if need, teachers talk to *"Class directors, psychologist and then, if necessary, in some cases, meeting with parents and legal tutors, and these [situations] are usually solved this way"* (T01, male, 58 years). The **strategy employed regarding students' sexuality and/or sexual orientation** was to request the help of health professionals (e.g., health centers): *"We won't say no, I don't want to talk about this subject, I don't want to think about it, because we will lose the student and then something will happen and we will be left with a guilty conscience, I don't want to think about it, try to help and try to refer the students to other support services, if it's not of my scope of action, I try to refer the student to someone who can support him/her better."* (T10, female, 47 years). In interviews these strategies and roles were mentioned to be implemented only by teachers; nonetheless, these could be adopted by any other school personnel.

Moreover, in teachers' discourses it is possible to identify **strategies and roles (to be) adopted by students to prevent/combat SGBV**, such as (a) the students' role in being aware (alert) for SGBV situations (n = 1) and (b) the survivors asking help to a teacher (n = 1) (e.g., *"the young girl goes to the teacher to talk about the subject, to vent"*, (T12, female, no info on age). This last point was also highlighted as **a strategy that can be adopted by students regarding students' sexuality and sexual orientation** (n = 1), with a teacher saying that *"students even came to me asking "what do I do in this situation? What don't I do?" [and] I say "look there's this, you see now, you talk to... you go to the health center, if we needed, we can even talk here", because [...] there's an exchange between this science teacher and the health center"* (T10, female, 47 years).

Lastly, regarding **families' role and strategies to promote gender equality and to prevent and combat gender inequality**, two teachers stated the importance of involving parents/legal tutors: *"Usually we talk about the school community, we talk more about teachers, students, non-teaching staff but parents and legal tutors, without a doubt, are also part of the school community and are essential for, for these actions to be successful and bear fruit."* (T11, female, 40 years); with another adding that *"Oh, [families' role] it is crucial. We only follow up, we don't, we don't change behaviors completely at school, it must be always, in fact, at this level or any level, it must be an action, let's say, in which they see that we are all aligned [teachers and families]. Because if in fact at school we fight these situations of gender violence, and at home, they see situations of violence between the father and mother, verbal violence, and sometimes even physical violence,*

then they can't learn, or will learn more slowly, right? Because the family has a fundamental role in education, as in everything, in all areas of education.” (T12, female, no info on age). In this scope, teachers mentioned that families must **adopt an active role in preventing and combat SGBV** by alerting children to violent situations (including SGBV) (n = 1); (b) be aligned with schools' educational attitudes (e.g., against violence) (n = 2) and (c) transmit good values (n = 1). Moreover, they underline that parents' involvement in school is key to promoting, preventing, and combating gender (in)equality. Regarding **students' sexuality and/or sexual orientation**, teachers believe that families need to (a) accept children's sexual orientation (n = 2), and (b) alert the school and request help regarding children's sexual orientation if they consider the child needs such support (n = 1).

Highlights regarding Section 3 are presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11. *Key findings about teachers' perceptions to promote gender equality, prevent and combat gender inequality and SGBV in schools*

Box 3. Gender equality and SGBV: Teacher's perceptions | Key Findings

- ✓ Teachers identified several good practices of gender equality (e.g., equal treatment regardless the gender, equal opportunities, and definition of formal regulations and legislations in the Western world and globally).
- ✓ Only two teachers provided an inclusive definition rather than just highlighting the two sexes.
- ✓ Teachers identified several situations which indicate gender inequality (e.g., gender wage differences, gender role expectations, job opportunities, access to leadership positions, domestic tasks distribution, women's ability questioned by society, and extracurricular activities choices).
- ✓ All teachers consider that gender equality exists within the school context.
- ✓ Teachers identified several situations related to SGBV in young people, such as dating violence, peer violence, sexual orientation violence, transgender violence, physical violence, and psychological and verbal violence, in different contexts (classrooms, recess, digital world).
- ✓ Teachers perceive the negative impact of SGBV on the victims in different areas (psychological and emotional, learning and relationships).
- ✓ Teachers recognize the negative impact of SGBV on the aggressors in different areas (development of psychological disorders, regretting feelings related to the violent practices, practicing more violence or abuse).
- ✓ Teachers recognize the negative impact of SGBV on the school environment: difficulty in responding to violence, stigmatized behaviors by the community, and the number of inscriptions in school.
- ✓ Reasons/motivations for the occurrence of SGBV mainly pointed out were: the influence of social and cultural context in the students' personality, gender inequality, power asymmetry, and lack of knowledge/awareness of violence.
- ✓ Main Challenges/limitations identified by teachers to combat SGBV in the school context: difficulty in engaging in intimate and confidential conversations with students in the classroom; the high number of students in school; the high number of violence cases in school; parents' stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors; social, cultural and family contexts which perpetuate SGBV behaviors outside school.
- ✓ Lack of time for adequate planning (69%), time to implement activities embedded in the school curricula across several subjects (65%), training, materials, and support from specialized professionals (e.g., nurses, psychologists) (60%), need of support to address these topics with parents (58%) were identified by teachers as needs to implement activities related to gender equality and SGBV.
- ✓ Teachers consider schools as a safe space for gender and sexuality education.
- ✓ Main teachers' strategies to promote gender equality, prevent and combat gender inequality and SGBV: adopting an attitude of tolerance and values towards gender equality, strengthening models of gender equality, promoting awareness daily, communicating with families, ensuring help to the SGBV victims and aggressors, collaborating with other education agents.

4. Gender equality and SGBV: Parents' perceptions

4.1 What are parents' levels of comfort and perceived competence for approaching these themes with their children?

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

Regarding the parents' perception of their knowledge about topics related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV, the vast majority seem to perceive having adequate knowledge to address the several topics within gender, sexuality, and SGBV (from 66% to 98%). However, it seems pertinent to carry out a more in-depth analysis, so that it is possible to understand which topics within each theme parents have more or less knowledge of. In **gender-related topics**, parents seem to have **more knowledge** about “**values and gender**” and “**culture, society, and gender.**” In turn, the topics which some **parents** perceive they have **less knowledge** to address are “**gender roles**” and “**gender expression**” (Figure 12). According to an innovative study by Halpern and Perry-Jenkins (2016), children, from a noticeably early age, understand gender roles not only through their parents' beliefs about it but mostly through the behaviors that both mother/maternal figure and father/paternal figure demonstrates. In this sense, if mothers demonstrate more affectionate or caring behaviors, children will assume that women have the role of being caretakers of the home. Likewise, if children perceive a greater absence of fathers, they will understand that men have a responsibility to work to financially support the family. However, it is also known that the higher level of schooling and education of people, the lower their acceptance of traditional gender roles, such as those mentioned above (Bailon, 2019). In this sense, it is essential that parents feel comfortable in approaching topics such as “gender roles” and “gender expression,” so that stereotypes are broken and so that young people can feel comfortable and confident in their behaviors and attitudes, regardless of their gender.

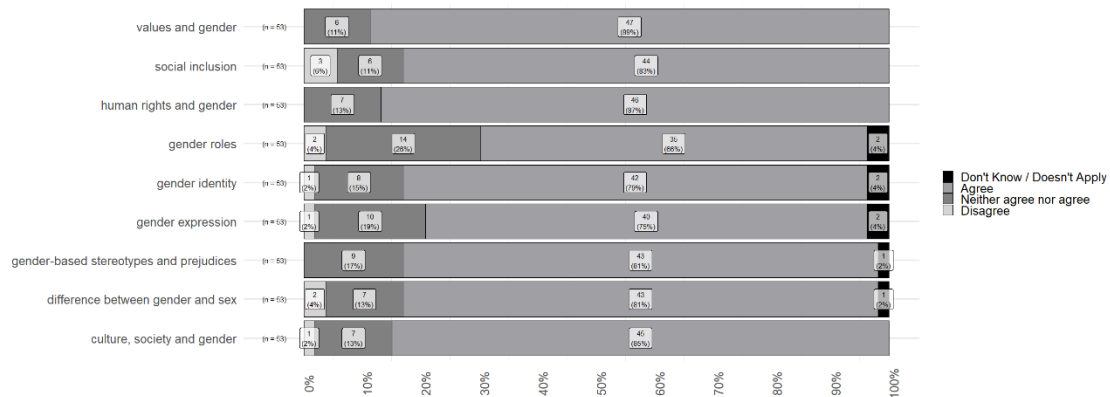
Sexuality seems to be the theme that, in general, parents perceive to **have more knowledge** to approach different topics with their children, especially about “**body image**” and “**sexual and reproductive health**” (Figure 13). The fact that Portuguese students' parents feel they have enough and adequate knowledge to address sexuality with their children can be considered as quite positive. Especially because their knowledge, their emotional support, and their open and safe communication on the subject, contribute to positive results in terms of their kids' sexual health (Klein et al., 2018).

Concerning **SGBV-related topics**, 98% of parents perceived themselves as having the knowledge to address “**family relations**” and 96% to address “**bodily integrity**” and “**privacy**”. It should be noted that these were the three topics that received the **highest number of positive responses from parents**. The fact that parents feel knowledgeable enough to address privacy is also important, as this can prevent adverse situations, such as sexting, from occurring, and

prevent teenagers from experiencing its consequences (e.g., sharing intimate images online) (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2018). The SGBV-related topic that collected the lowest percentage of parents with adequate knowledge was “social support networks”.

Figure 12. Parents' levels of knowledge and comfort to talk about gender, sexuality, and SGBV with their children

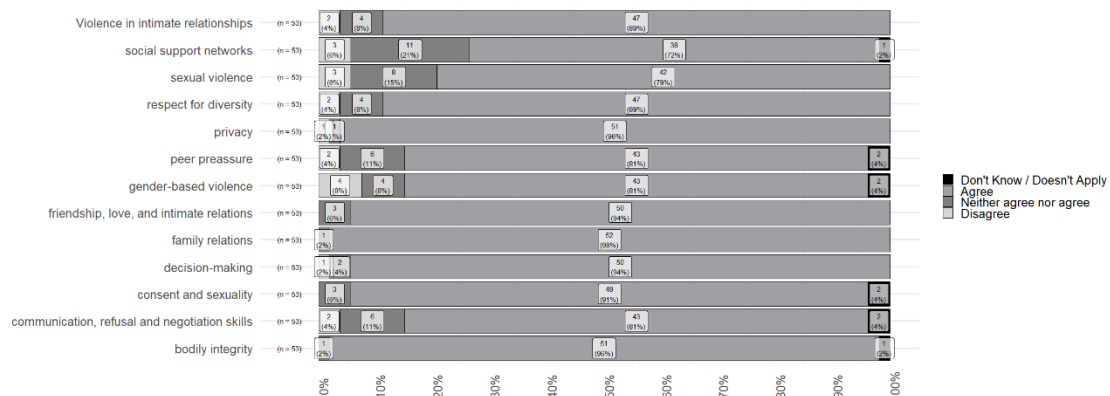
I have sufficient and adequate knowledge to address gender-related topics with my children:



I have sufficient and adequate knowledge to address sexuality-related topics with my children:



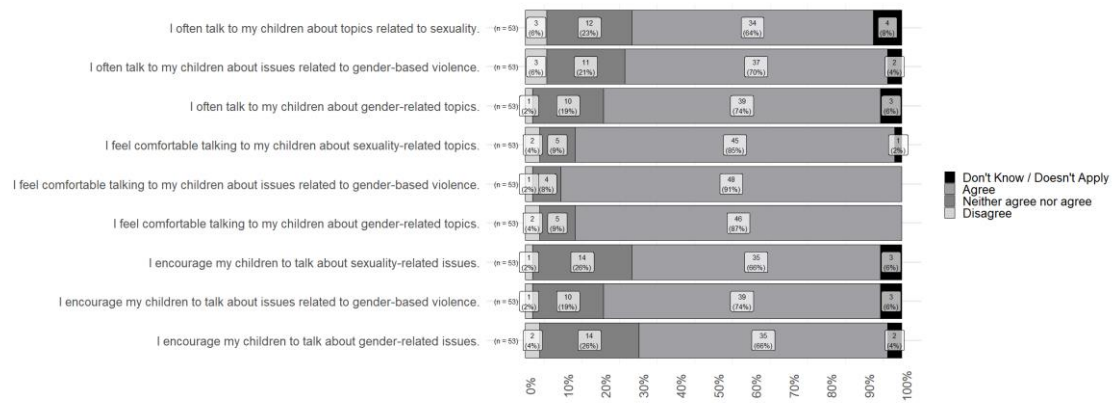
I have sufficient and adequate knowledge to address topics related to gender-based violence with my children:



Although the percentage of parents with adequate knowledge about sexuality is, in general, the highest, the truth is that only 64% of them regularly talk to their children about the topic and only 66% encourage their children to talk about it (Figure 13). Thus, **sexuality** is a topic

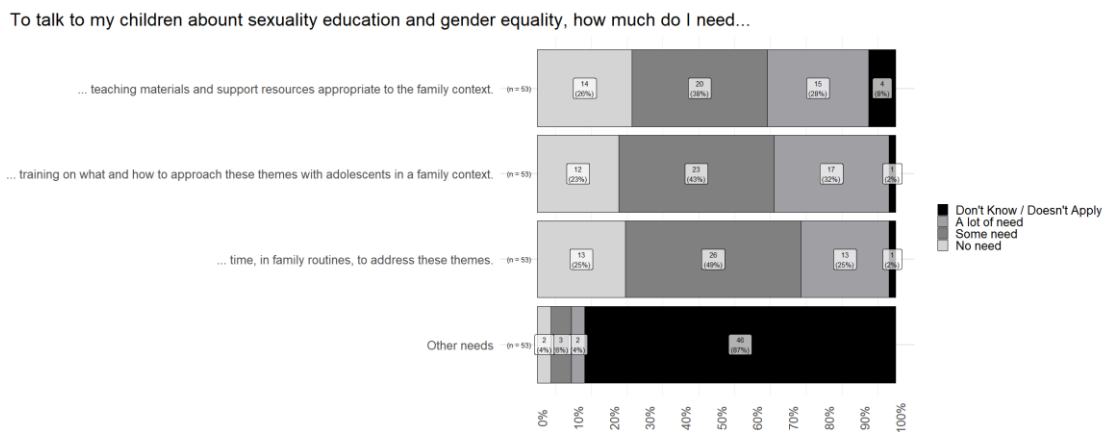
that parents report knowing about, but it is the least discussed topic, compared to gender and SGBV. Now, **SGBV-related topics** are the ones that more parents seem to feel comfortable bringing them up and which more parents encourage their children to talk about. On the other hand, **gender-related topics** seem to gather a larger percentage of parents that often talk to their children about it. The perceived comfort to approach these topics with their children is generally positive and similar regarding the three main topics: gender, sexuality, and SGBV (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Topics discussed by parents with their children on gender, sexuality, SGBV, and levels of comfort



Through the analysis of Figure 14, it is possible to understand that although parents perceive themselves with adequate knowledge and comfort to address gender, sexuality, and SGBV-related topics, **most of them recognize to have some or a lot of need** for educational materials/resources adequate to family context (n = 35, 66%), training (n = 40, 75%) and time in their family routine (n = 39, 74%). These data may indicate that the families of Portuguese adolescents are interested in these themes and are open to new learnings, materials, and strategies that facilitate the approach of these themes within their family context.

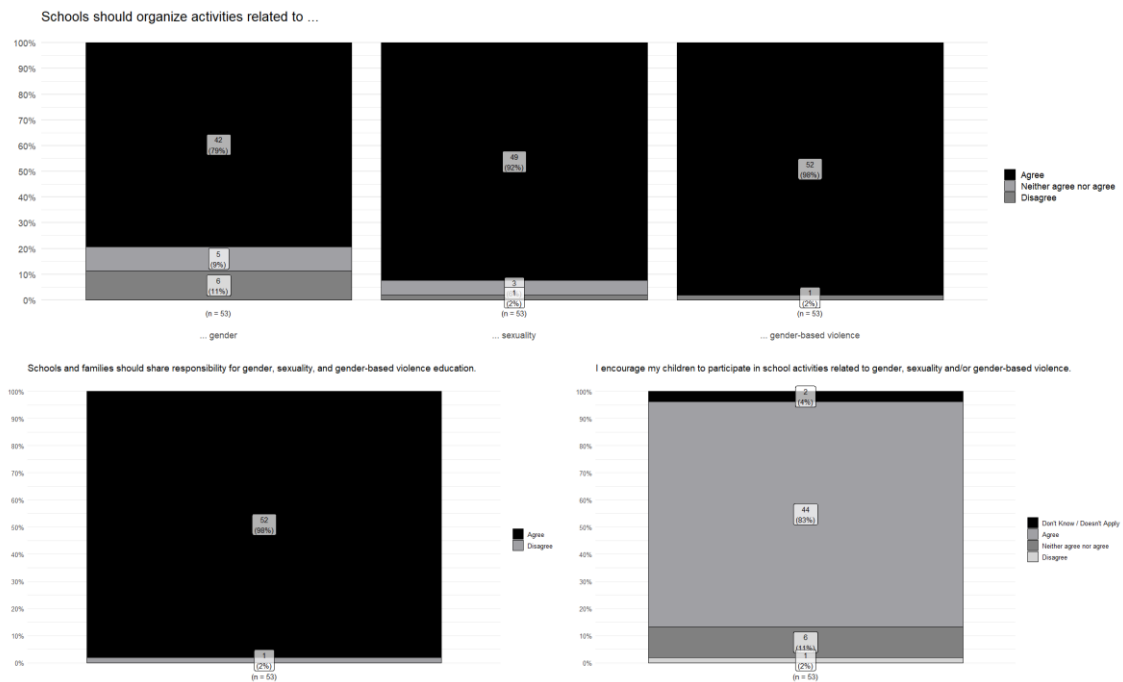
Figure 14. Parents needs to address gender equality and sexuality education with their children



4.2 How are parents involved in school activities regarding gender equality and SGBV?

According to **most parents** (n = 52, 98%), the **responsibility of addressing gender, sexuality, and SGBV-related topics should be shared between families and schools**. In this sense, parents tend to agree with the statement that the school should organize activities related to each topic (from 79% to 98%) and 83% of them encourage their children to be an active part of these activities (Figure 15). Also, most teachers agree with this vision, as will be described later. Additionally, it is important to note that this perception of collaborative **work between school and family** is in line with what is said in the literature as **more beneficial for youths** (e.g., Espelage et al., 2019; Neijenhuis et al., 2020).

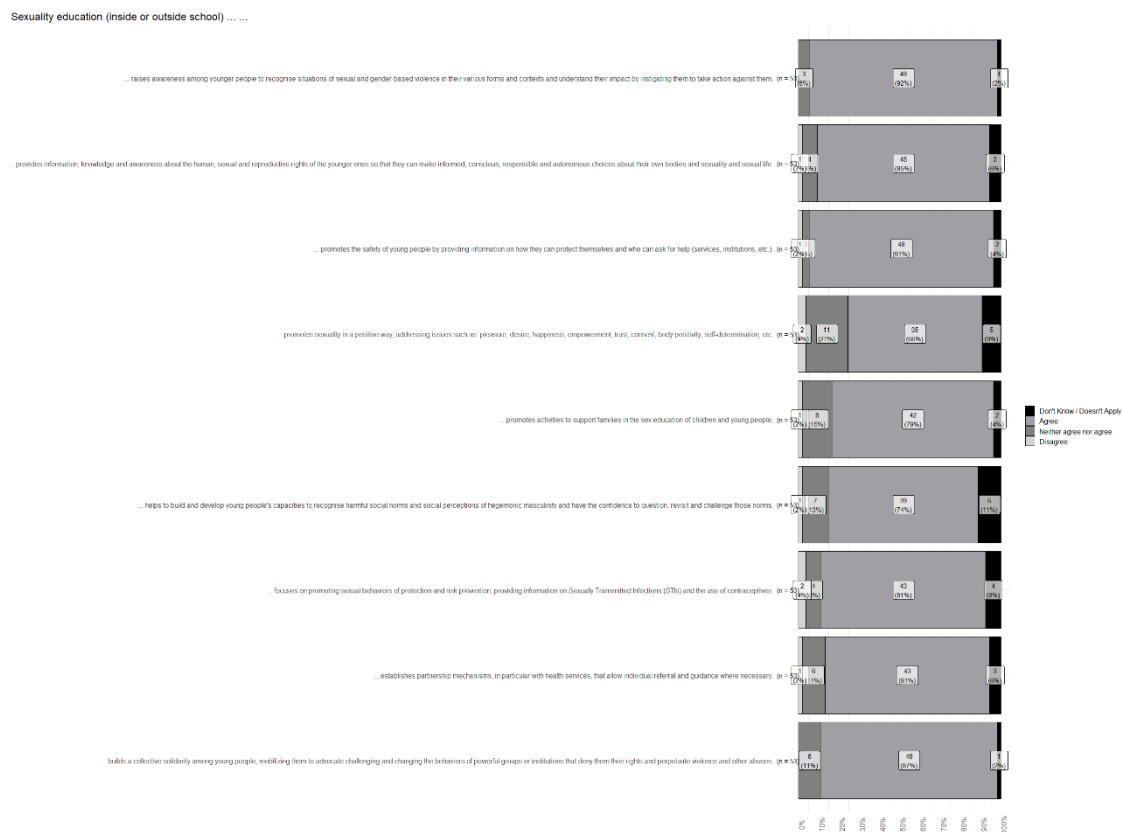
Figure 15. Parents' perceptions of the school and family roles in teaching about gender, sexuality, and SGBV



Parents' perceptions concerning sexuality education (inside or outside school) reveal that 92% of them agree with the statement that it “*raises awareness among younger people to recognize situations of sexual and SGBV in various forms and contexts and understand their impact by instigating them to take action against them*” (Figure 16). Also, 91% of parents agreed that sexuality education can promote students’ knowledge about how they can protect themselves and which support mechanisms they have available in their communities. Most parents perceive sexuality education as beneficial for their children. However, a **high percentage** of parents who “**neither agree nor disagree**” nor “**disagree**” with the statement that affirms that **sexuality education positively promotes sexuality** is found. This find is particularly interesting since CSE - is

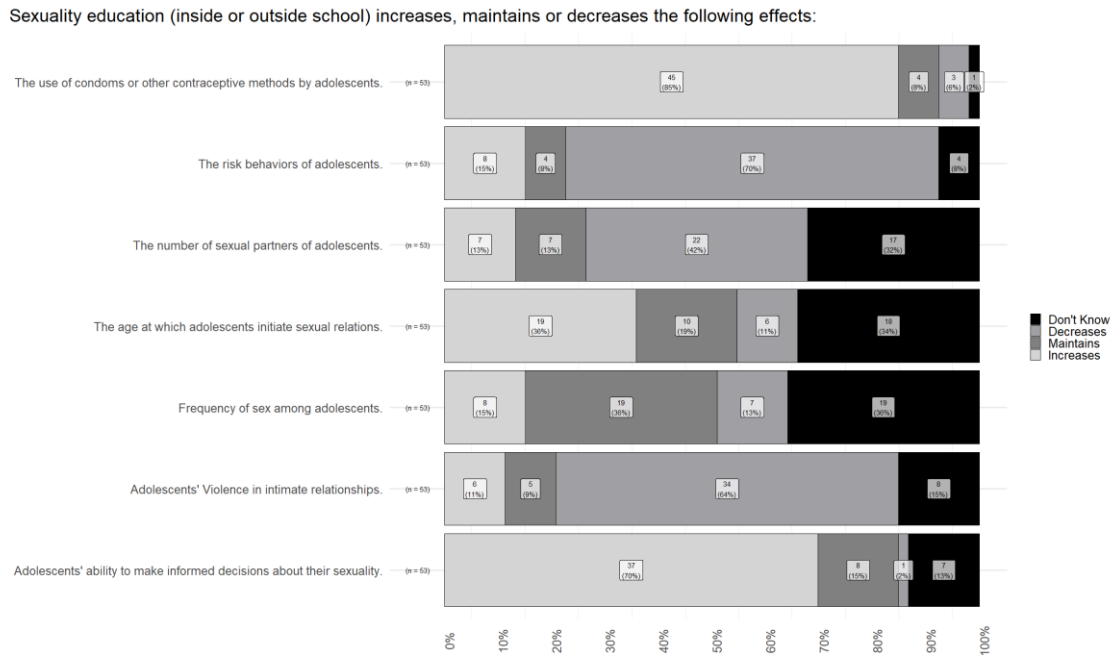
defined as a “curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2018, p. 16) in which children's and teens are empowered to be a critical thinker, by adopting protective behaviors and being aware of their well-being, choices and rights (Lesta, 2021; UNESCO, 2018); - is the one with more showed beneficial results, like reducing the risk taken or increasing the use of condoms, and is also based on gender equality (UNESCO, 2018). In this sense, this approach addresses not only the risks but also the positive aspects of sexuality, such as affection, respect for others, effective communication, and consent, among other topics that are equally important for healthy sexuality.

Figure 16. Parents' perceptions of sexuality education (inside or outside school)



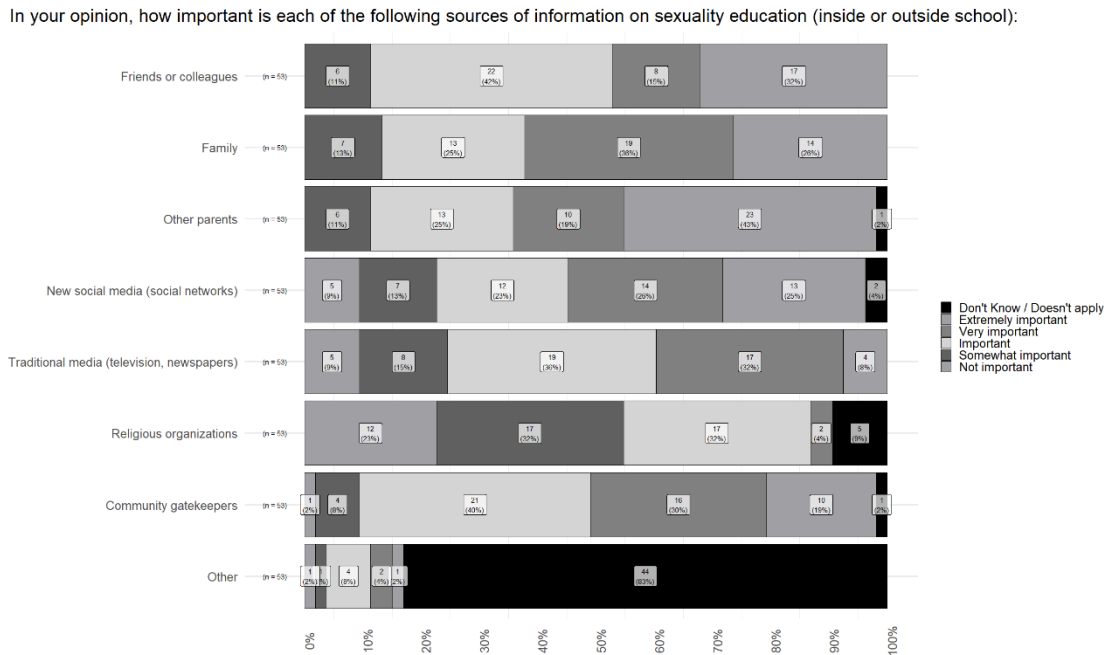
Exploring now parents' perceptions about the effects of sexuality education on children's behaviors/attitudes (Figure 17), overall, parents seem to recognize the benefits of sexuality education. Nevertheless, a small percentage of parents perceive sexuality education as something that stimulates adolescents to initiate their sexual life earlier (n = 6, 11%), to have more sexual partners (n = 7, 13%), and to have a more frequent sexual life (n = 8, 15%). But, focusing on the positive side, 70% of parents agreed that sexuality education promotes the adolescent's ability to make informed decisions about their sexuality, which is one of the objectives of CSE (Lesta, 2021; UNESCO, 2018).

Figure 17. Parents' perceptions about the effects of sexuality education on children's behaviors/attitudes



Parents seem to prefer to **reach out for more information** about sexuality education with **other parents, friends or colleagues, community gatekeepers, and family members**. Also, media seem to have an important role in the search for information, more specifically new media (Figure 18). Although **social networks** have, among many others, the advantage of being an easy way to access information and maintain anonymity, the truth is that they can also contain **misinformation about sexual health**, namely regarding contraceptive methods and sexually transmitted diseases (Sunkara, 2021).

Figure 18. Parents' perceptions about the importance of different sources of information on sexuality education



Overall, 43% to 58% of parents think that little support is given to Portuguese students on topics related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV. More specifically, the lack of support is more perceived in helping students adopt reflective thinking about gender norms and attitudes that reinforce hostile masculinity and aggression. On the other hand, 43% of parents perceive that their children have support in recognizing their right to be respected, but also their responsibility to respect others (Figure 19). This last finding is aligned with students' perception about addressing more frequently topics like "gender and human rights" and "gender and social inclusion" which will be explained further ahead (secção 6).

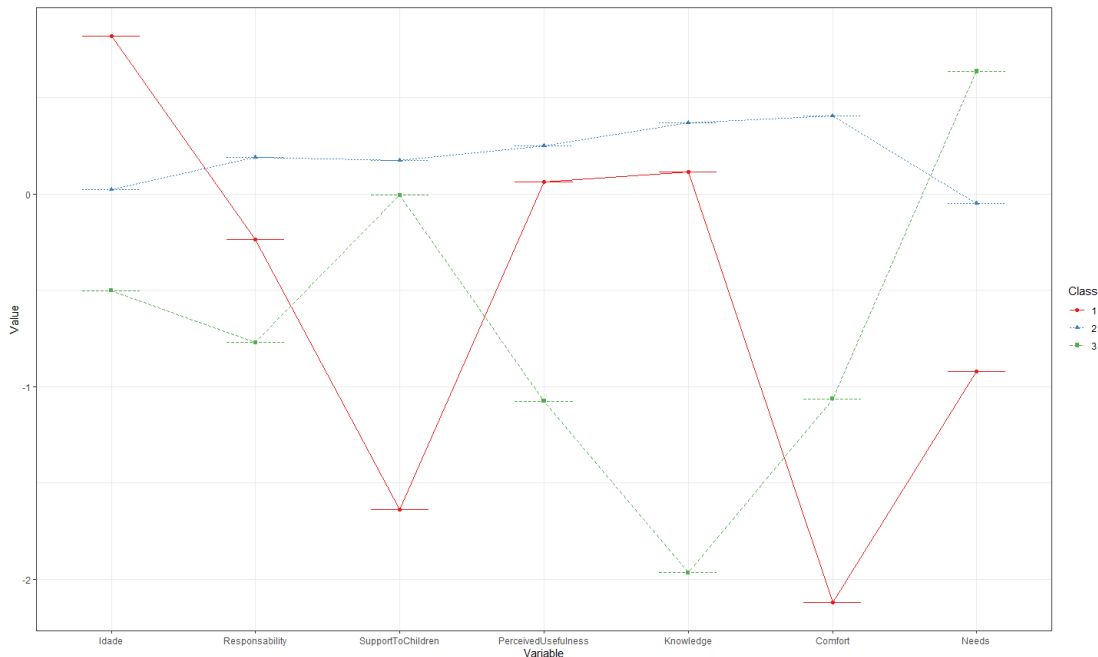
Figure 19. Levels of support given to Portuguese students about topics related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV



Latent profile analysis was performed to **identify subgroups of parents regarding their stance toward sexuality education in schools**. The best-fitting model revealed four distinct profiles ($n = 4$, $n = 40$, $n = 8$) which are displayed below (Figure 20). **Profiles** were computed based on parents, age, their perception of the responsibility of families and schools to promote gender, sexuality, and SGBV education, the level of support parents report to give their children regarding gender, sexuality, and SGBV education, parents' perception on their level of knowledge on regarding gender, sexuality and SGBV education, levels of comfort in discussing these topics with their children and identified needs for fostering gender, sexuality and SGBV education at home. Three distinct profiles emerged. **Profile 1** ($n = 4$) includes the **older parents** (compared to other profiles), who report the **lowest levels of comfort** in discussing gender, sexuality, and SGBV with their children, identify **fewer needs** and report to support less their child's participation in school activities related to gender, sexuality and/or SGBV. Curiously, this group of parents perceive themselves as having **high levels of knowledge** and highly agree with **the usefulness** of gender and sexuality education for their children's positive learning and development. Profile 2 is the one where the higher number of parents fit ($n = 40$). Parents in this profile report the **highest values** for almost all variables, including **responsibility** (of both families and schools for sexuality education), **support** of children's participation in school activities related to gender, sexuality, and/or SGBV, perceived **usefulness** of sexuality education, levels of **comfort** and **knowledge** on the topics; **medium** scores for perceived **needs**. **Profile 3** ($n = 8$) includes the **youngest parents**,

who perceive themselves as having the **lowest levels of knowledge** (compared to other profiles) and perceive the **lowest usefulness** of sexuality education. This group is the one identifying **more needs** for them to approach gender, sexuality, and SGBV with their children. **Levels of comfort are in the middle** (compared to the other profiles), as well as the **support** of their children's participation in gender, sexuality, and SGBV activities in schools.

Figure 20. Parents' profiles regarding their stance toward sexuality education in schools



4.3 How do parents understand gender and gender equality?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS

Regarding parents' perception of gender, one of the parents **defined gender** as *"the personality in which each one is characterized. Each one is characterized and identified with, masculinity or femininity"* (P01). However, the other parent defined it as *"a social construction. In my opinion, it has mainly to do with the way each person sees and feels in their own body"* (P02). Thus, for the first parent, a binary concept is the basis for gender while the other highlights its social construction, without associating a binary or non-binary form; regardless of this, both perceived gender as an identity rather than a biological imposition. Nonetheless, it is important to note that for being a (school) psychologist, the second parent seems to be more aware of these themes. Analyzing **parents' perception of gender equality**, both define it as a set of equal opportunities that are given or not regardless of gender: *"Equality already has to do with a set of opportunities that are or are not provided depending on this social construction"* (P02).

According to parents, how **their children define gender and gender equality** is in line with their perceptions: *“What we've been trying to teach through the experiences we've had is a little bit of what I've conveyed, which is that each person has to try to understand how they feel in their own body and, as a result, try to build opportunities that are fair for yourself and others. It's not easy, it's not very easy, but that's a little bit what we try”* (P02).

Going deeper into parents' perception of the existence of gender equality, one parent manifested that **there is no gender equality in general**, while the other stated that it varies according to the situation. However, from the discourse of the second parent it seems that gender inequality prevails and manifests on different levels (e.g., wages, leadership positions, political, domestic tasks, education): *“It is easy in professional terms, there is still wage inequality, inequality in obtaining leadership positions, in political organs, just look at who we have or have ever had as President of the Republic. If you want, I can go on [laughs]. But there is still a lot of inequality in the world of professions, in the world of work, and even in terms of family management. There is still, in my opinion, a set of prejudices associated with domestic chores and parenting tasks. They are still strongly associated with women, although there has been a greater division of tasks over time, it is still clear that those who participate more in the school life of children are mothers. Parents are mainly mothers and even in household chores. What we are seeing so far... at home, things are a little different, but if we look a little at our families of origin, we still see a lot of reproduction of stereotypes associated with gender in domestic tasks and education”* (P02). From this discourse, we understand that, for this parent (P02), **those more affected by gender inequality are women**, and the **reason for this inequality** is the reproduction of stereotypical attitudes. The other parent, despite providing examples of SGBV (e.g., verbal violence against transgender) when asked about the existence of gender (in)equality, mentioned the unequal opportunity for transgender adolescents to practice sports: *“For example in futsal, and football, he is a football player. And it's masculine. But maybe when he was a girl who, who had the identity as a girl, there would be prejudice; do not go now to football because after all he/she is a girl who is a boy now.”* (P01). It is important to note how this parent discourse focuses greatly on transgenders. This seems to occur knowing an adolescent who was identified as transgender. Likewise, this may reveal that parents' perceptions are dependent on the knowledge which comes from their social environment.

Regarding the **situations in which parents perceive children would identify as gender inequality**, one parent mentioned **unequal wages between genders**: *“issue of pay is also something that we discuss at home because there are still asymmetries both in terms of access to education in which we have and we see that girls have a lot more qualifications than boys and*

then it's not the equivalent in terms of wages and so I think it would be something she would identify." (P02)

Exploring parents' views on **gender equality in the school context** one parent perceives that **there is gender equality in school**, more specifically visible in the form of (a) equal treatment and (b) no rules regarding clothing (e.g., uniform): "(...) Kids fortunately are treated the same way. (...) I think that the fact that it is a public school there is no question of uniforms or clothes that students have to bring. I think that's good, isn't it? Each one can dress and demonstrate according to what they want and for that reason, normally there is no criticism about the way ihow present themselves, either in terms of clothing or in terms of physical presentation. characteristic that should be valued each one being able to express their preferences as they prefer" (P02). However, this parent mentioned how gender inequality is still expressed in school textbooks regarding professions - "I think the issue, for example, the issue of gender equality in school textbooks is still something that has to be thought about and reformulated. There are still many stereotypes linked to professions associated with men and women, colors associated with men and women, and preferences in vocational guidance, it is not there yet, but we are still seeing a lot. I really wanted her to go into engineering (laughs) but we still have a negative connotation associated with gender and therefore I think that our society still has a lot" (P02) - adding that **sometimes people's discourses in school carry out, even if unintentionally, some degree of gender inequality**, - "In terms of education, or rather in terms of learning, it doesn't seem to me that there is inequality in terms of gender, but I think that inequality exists and much more in people's discourse and involuntarily. I think we still have professors who say "no the courses, these courses, they are not for girls", that still exists, but there it is, it doesn't seem to me to be something intentional, but it continues in the discourse and often also in practices. But then there are few intentional activities to promote gender equality, which is a bit different." (P02). Again, it is important to highlight how this parent, as a school psychologist, is a privileged informant regarding what occurs within the school context. However, the other parent was unable to provide a perception regarding the existence of gender equality in school: "It's also a little bit, I never felt anything because there wasn't any situation that [my children] had talked about with me. I can't speak, because no, no, I have no experience in this." (P01). Despite only interviewing two parents, these results may point to the existence of a diverse spectrum of knowledge regarding these themes, which seem to be dependent on parents' formal education (e.g., psychology vs. engineering) and the context in which they work (e.g., how well would this parent know about the school context if she did not work in a school?).

According to one parent, the main reason for **gender equality existing in the children's school** is "that there are opportunities that are suitable for each student and not the same for

everyone, but where there is no pressure to choose certain options depending on whether you are a boy or a girl. [...] there are no consequences regarding the decisions that are made" (P02). This is an interesting perspective, that emerged for the first time in our data, which emphasizes, not the equal opportunities inherent to gender equality, but rather the fact that there is no prejudice regarding each person's choice, regardless of gender choices.

According to this parent, what **sustains or maintains this gender equality** is the pressure of parents, teachers' awareness, and peer's influence: *"It maintains or sustains... pressure from parents on the one hand, also this need of sometimes speaking that this is important. I think also the awareness of teachers, I think it's one of the most important matters that can still be improved, but I think it's through that because it's the teachers who are with them on a daily basis, their [teachers'] decision-making and the strategies they use, which will also shape the kids' behavior and the choices they also end up making. And then we also have the matter of peers, right? Tell me who you hang out with and I'll tell you who you are, I think that also dictates a lot of what the perpetuation of beliefs is, doesn't it? We can relate to people who think in a certain way, and that way is not in favor of gender equality, [and with that] I will think [about it] or [with that] I will end up influencing my decisions [...]"* (P02).

Lastly, the **consequences and impacts of gender inequality** in and outside the school at several levels (e.g., individual construction, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships): *"So I think gender equality has an impact on anyone's development, that's why I think it's fundamental and covers all spheres of development and that's why it's so important and should be explored from an early age. Since children enter preschool education I think it is also still a gap that we have. Everything is still there...the kids' overalls are blue and the girls' overalls are pink in most of the gardens where we place them. And so, in terms of impact, I think even impact in all spheres, individual construction, self-esteem, then in the relational sphere, how do I see my relationship with others, how am I receptive to others... I think this is fundamental to the way I deal with others, the way I look at others, and the way I want those who look at me. A lot goes through this freedom because we can be who we are, right?"* (P02).

4.4 How do parents understand SGBV among young people?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS

Only one parent was able to define **SGBV among young people** as *"the disrespect for characteristics related to gender or to this social construction associated with gender and that can [occur in] different spheres, it can be either in the relational sphere, in the academic sphere.."* (P02).

In terms of **signs of SGBV**, while one parent focused on transgender violence, mainly in the form of verbal and psychological violence, the other parent perceives that SGBV can manifest in its verbal, psychological, physical and social form: *“examples of gender violence everything that is violence from physical violence, psychological violence, social violence, to attacking property too. This is happening at school, kids damage the material on purpose. Now the reason why this happens is that it's related to gender, being a girl or being a boy or not being a girl or a boy, which causes strangeness and that's why we react in a certain way and this all fits with my perspective on what is gender violence”* (P02). This parent further adds that not in all types of relationships, violence occurs due to gender, stating that *“intimate relationships will be particularly challenging because we are dealing with the need to be accepted, with the need for conformism and they often subjugate one's path to the interest of the other. And that's why this job is so important until they start dating, isn't it? To be able to be comfortable with their identity, regardless of whether others like it or do not like it. But in fact, I think that intimate relationships are those where it may be more difficult to identify and intervene as well. In peer relationships, what I think often happens [is] kids feel this need to go along with the group (to feel they belong), [but] after having a good family in the back and can distance themselves [...] but usually, the situations that have occurred are more related to learning matters than gender matters.”* (P02).

From both parents' discourses, we understand that their children would identify SGBV situations that are the most visible. While for one parent this is more in terms of verbal violence (e.g., mocking and name calling) for another it expresses more in terms of physical violence *“What I think is easier are the situations where physical violence... I don't know, because of the way of dressing as we talked about earlier, because of painting your nails, having your eyes painted, boys with painted eyes and so on. Girls who dress up...I don't know, how they look like a boy. This can trigger violence and what is easier to identify from my perspective is physical violence because it is visible. Regarding the issue of psychological violence, I think there is a lot of things that needs to be deconstructed with young people because they are used to being mocked, being called names, and sending derogatory messages, and they think it's normal. I also think that this idea has to be deconstructed”* (P02).

Lastly, from one of the parent's discourses, we identified that the **reasons for SGBV are (a) power asymmetry, but also (b) peer influence**. These are exemplified in: *“I think it's also a little bit trying to belittle the person and “we're the ones who are better because I'm not like you, I'm no different as you are different. So I despised a person” just because they think “I'm better than them because they identify themselves as A or B”, don't they? And a lot of people can't figure it out. And it's complicated (...).”*(P01), but also in *“Making fun of the person and encouraging others to do so, right? Even the other person may even be well neutral, but the other encourages that:*

(...) “look here, look here, look here, look at that other”, right? It’s encouraging someone else who was after all neutral and who’s already being influenced by them.” (P01). For another parent, the major reason is society’s lack of action towards combating violence in general, thus normalizing or giving the idea of permission for young people to act that way: “They think they can, above all. They think nothing’s going to happen. And be educated in this way, what they see throughout development is the mistreatment of others, regardless of race, color, preferences... and so “if we see this when we turn on the television in football stadiums, if we see this when we turn on the television... I don’t know, even in the Assembly of the Republic, isn’t it? It’s normal, we see people treating others badly and nothing happens, so if everyone does, adults do, why can’t they do it too? And every time we hear more that we’re free, so we can do what we want”. [However] it’s just that we forget that part, that we have to respect and respect others, right?” (P02). Despite this last reason being for violence in general, we consider it as also applicable to SGBV. This **legitimization of violence** in essence also represents a **challenge and difficulty to combat SGBV**. Associated with these perceptions, parents immediately mentioned several roles which can be adopted to combat SGBV (see section 4.5).

4.5. Which strategies, according to parents, can promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality and SGBV?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS

From interviews, only one parent provided examples of the role of families and schools in this promotion/prevention and combat, while the other parent provided examples of measures regarding children and young people’s gender identity. Thus the other parent considered that the **role of the family to promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality is to be a role model that values and respects diversity**: “I try to be a model of behavior both in terms of practices and in verbal terms, in the sense of also discussing and opening the door to this type of discussion in the sense of having in my close relationships people that I validate as independently relevant [...] in the day by day, the choices we make and the practices we adopt must allow my children to understand that we must value diversity and we must recognize it and we must respect ourselves and others” (P02). Another role is to **seize children’s daily experiences to talk about gender (in)equality rather than create a formal moment to discuss it**: “I think the role of parents is to discuss what the kids bring home, [...] is to take the experiences that they bring us and not close the door, and explore with them, and also give them our opinion, validating what we consider to be adjusted behaviors, regardless of whether they are boys or girls. But also validate that it is no problem that there are girls kissing each other or boys kissing each other, and we have friends

who live with us and who have different preferences and that is all valid, as long as people are righteous and respectful, that they respect others [...] It's not so much... "OK Let's talk, I'll explain to you what gender inequality is," no, [it's] daily [that we to talk about]" (P02). **For this parent, these roles are clearly used as strategies.**

This parent also recognizes **the role of schools being the role of leadership in promoting an inclusive school, which includes a discussion between school members:** "I work in schools too, so I'm a little critical about this, but I think that this has to start with the leadership [...] an inclusive policy goes through different aspects, [...] [including] gender equality. And this should have clear guidelines for the entire school, which [should] go through conduct codes [...] [and] there should be a consensus here, a shared discussion between teachers and non-teachers. [...] There must be moments of discussion, of sharing, of good practices between schools" (P02). Other roles identified are **teachers' awareness**, but also **an intentional approach to gender (in)equality contents in school:** "This idea of gender-related topics and challenges in the curriculum makes perfect sense. I remember, for example, that one of the things I normally work with the little kids is the story of Beatriz Ângelo, who was the first woman to be able to vote, for example. And first, they have no idea, there are very few people who go looking for these examples, but this exists in the kids' manuals. But this is usually seen more as a Portuguese text that is to interpret and move on, and it's not used intentionally to work on gender topics" (P02).

Specific to the **role of school to prevent and combat SGBV**, besides adopting the same measures described to promote gender equality and prevent and combat gender inequality "because if we promote gender equality we avoid situations of violence", one parent highlights: **(a) promoting and reward positive behaviors instead of reacting to negative ones and thus (b) promoting active and democratic participation of children:** "it's by promoting positive behaviors and not by reacting to negative behaviors. [...] one of the struggles I have at my daughter's school is to end the merit board [which focuses on academic performance] because it's not inclusive. But the existence of a merit board for promoting positive behaviors in which students respect each other is one of the things I have struggled with. [...] As we have Eco School with patrols where kids are watching who litter the ground and then receive prizes for this surveillance... I think we can have surveillance in schools also regarding [violence]. I'm making it up... But I think if we empower kids and give students more voice, I think this democratic participation helps respect values, doesn't it? I think it's a bit about everything that gives students a voice from class councils to school assemblies, empowering students to play an active role in their context, increases the sense of belonging, and in principle reduces risky behaviors, whatever they may be. So now, there has to be a balance between what is expected to be knowledge acquisition and what you expect to be the acquisition of prosocial behaviors and we are not there yet." (P02).

Highlights regarding Section 4 are presented in Figure 21.

Figure 21. Key findings about parents' perceptions of gender equality and SGBV

Box 4. Gender equality and SGBV: Parents perceptions | Key Findings

- ✓ Most parents consider having adequate knowledge to talk with their adolescent children about gender, sexuality, and SGBV.
- ✓ Sexuality seems to be the theme that, in general, parents perceive to have more knowledge, namely regarding body image and sexual and reproductive health.
- ✓ 98% of parents perceived themselves as having the knowledge to address family relations and 96% to address bodily integrity and privacy in the scope of SGBV-related topics.
- ✓ 64% of parents report regularly talking to their children about sexuality, and 66% encourage their children to talk about it.
- ✓ Compared to gender and SGBV, sexuality is the topic that parents report discussing less with their children.
- ✓ SGBV-related topics are the ones more parents seem to feel comfortable talking about and in which more parents encourage their children to talk.
- ✓ Most parents recognize to have some or a lot of needs regarding educational materials/resources adequate to family context (66%), training (75%), and time in their family routine (74%) for approaching gender, sexuality, and SGBV.
- ✓ 98% of parents agree that the responsibility of addressing gender, sexuality, and SGBV-related issues should be shared between families and schools.
- ✓ Most parents (79% or over agree that schools need to take responsibility for organizing sexuality education, gender equality, and SGBV activities for educating children.
- ✓ Most parents believe that sexuality education is relevant for students.
- ✓ Parents (from 43% to 58%) think that little support is given to Portuguese students on topics related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV in their education.
- ✓ Three profiles regarding parents' stance toward sexuality education in schools were found. Most parents were in profile 2 ($n = 40$), reporting high valorization of the shared responsibility between families and schools for sexuality education, high support of children's participation in school activities related to gender, sexuality, and/or SGBV, perceive sexuality education as usefulness, report high levels of comfort and knowledge on the topics and report some needs for discussing sexuality and gender with their children.

5. School climate and the effect of schools on students' and parents' knowledge and attitudes

5.1 How do students perceive the school climate regarding gender equality and SGBV?

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

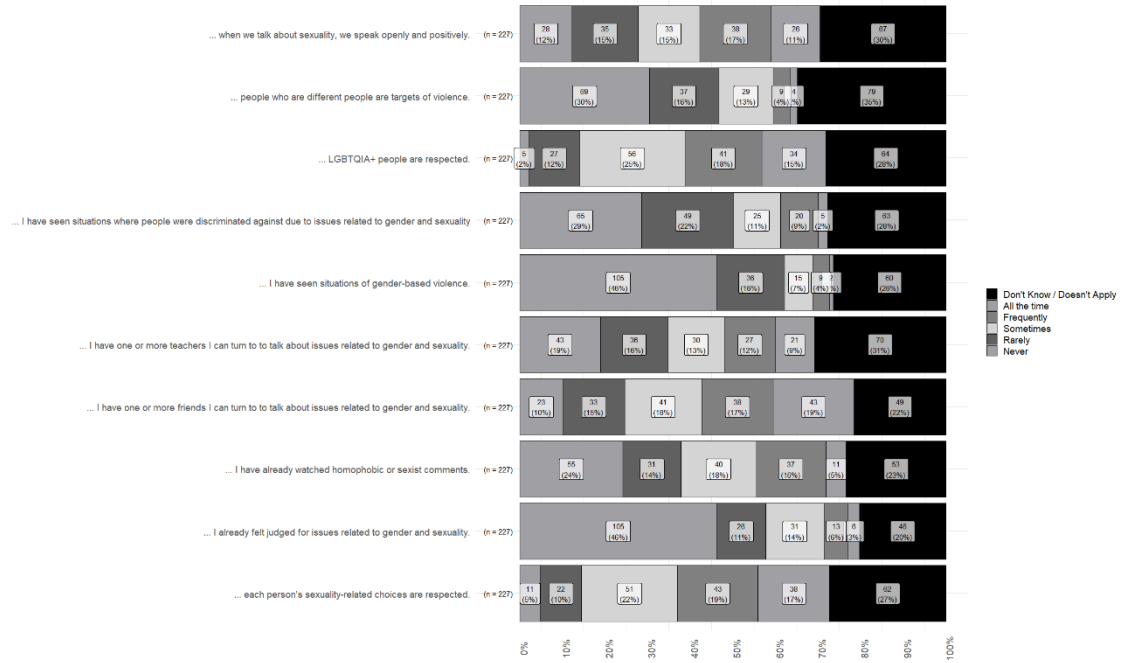
Regarding students' **perception of gender equality in their school context**, most of the participants in the study feel that they **rarely or never (n = 131, 57%) were the survivor** of judgments due to their gender or sexuality. Despite this, only **81 students (36%)** perceive that **choices** regarding gender identity and sexuality are often or always **accepted** in their school context.

Analyzing students' responses about **SGBV**, students seem to perceive their **school context as respectful** towards LGBTQIA+ people and people whom they consider different (Figure 22). In addition, despite the **18% of students perceive sometimes occur** that homophobic and sexist comments occur in schools, **only 16% perceive that these are frequent**, and only 5% report that such comments occur all the time. Most students (62%) reported that they rarely or never were testimonies of SGBV. This number drops slightly when asked how often students are discriminated against because of their gender and sexuality expression (51%).

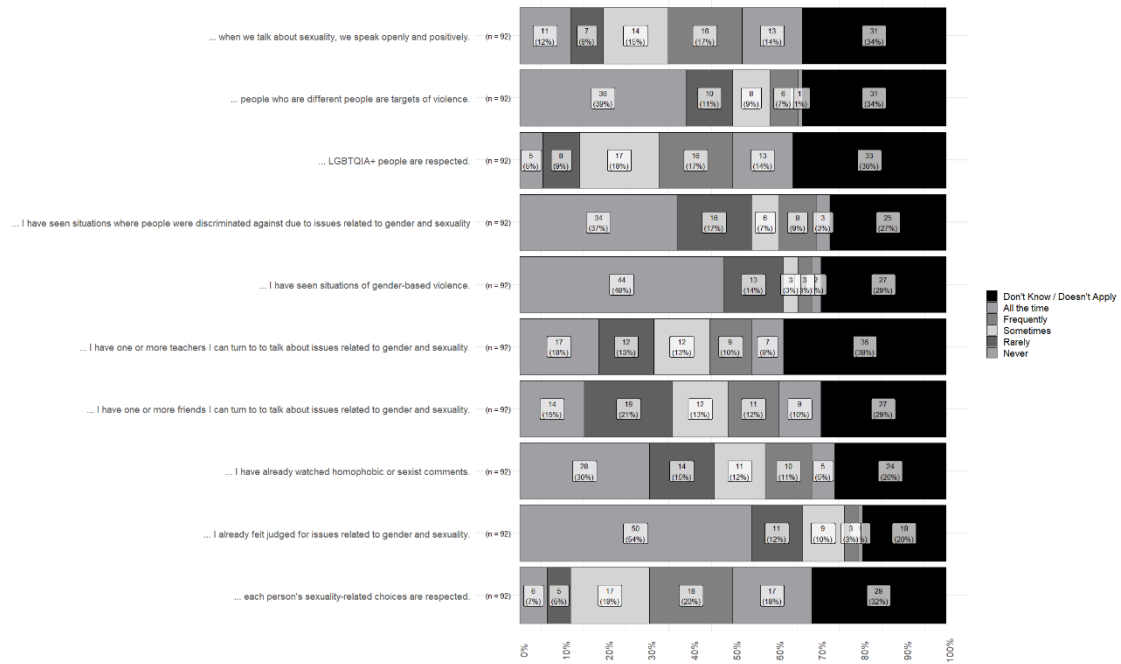
Overall, students seem to have an easier time identifying a friend with whom they can talk about gender identity and sexuality, compared to identifying a teacher with whom they can and feel comfortable talking. Surprisingly, students primarily identify teachers as the ones they can turn to for information and support about sexuality, gender, and SGBV, particularly in cases of violence. Regarding the way these topics are addressed at school, apparently, students' opinions are divided between being approached openly and positively (28%) and a closed and negative way (27%).

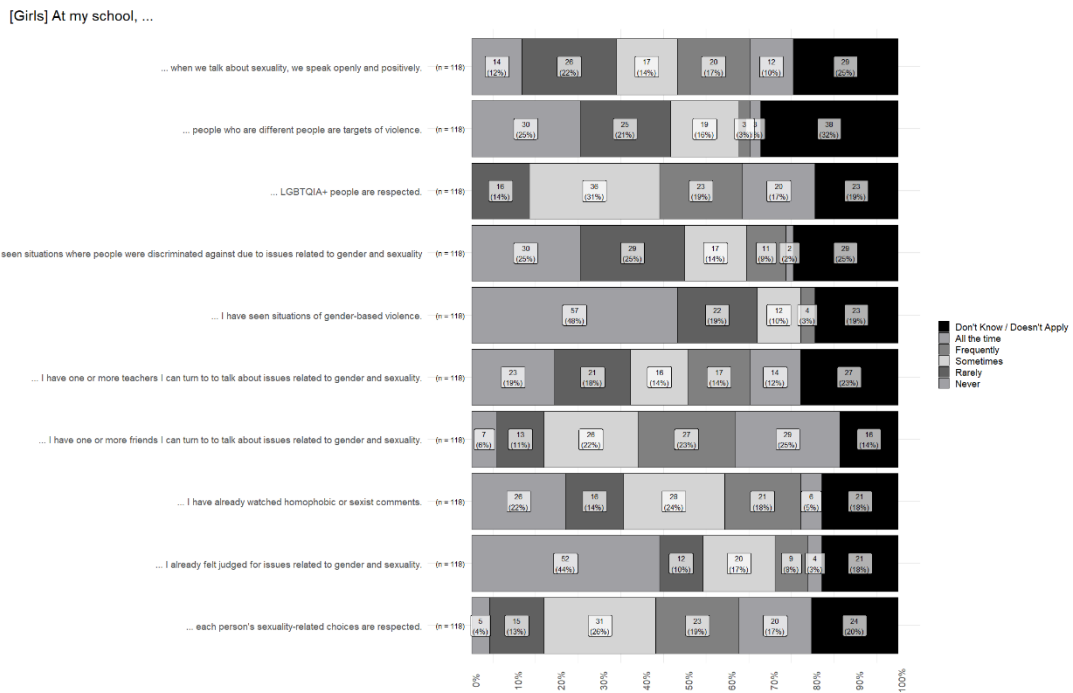
Figure 22. Students' perceptions of gender equality in their school context

At my school, ...



[Boys] At my school, ...

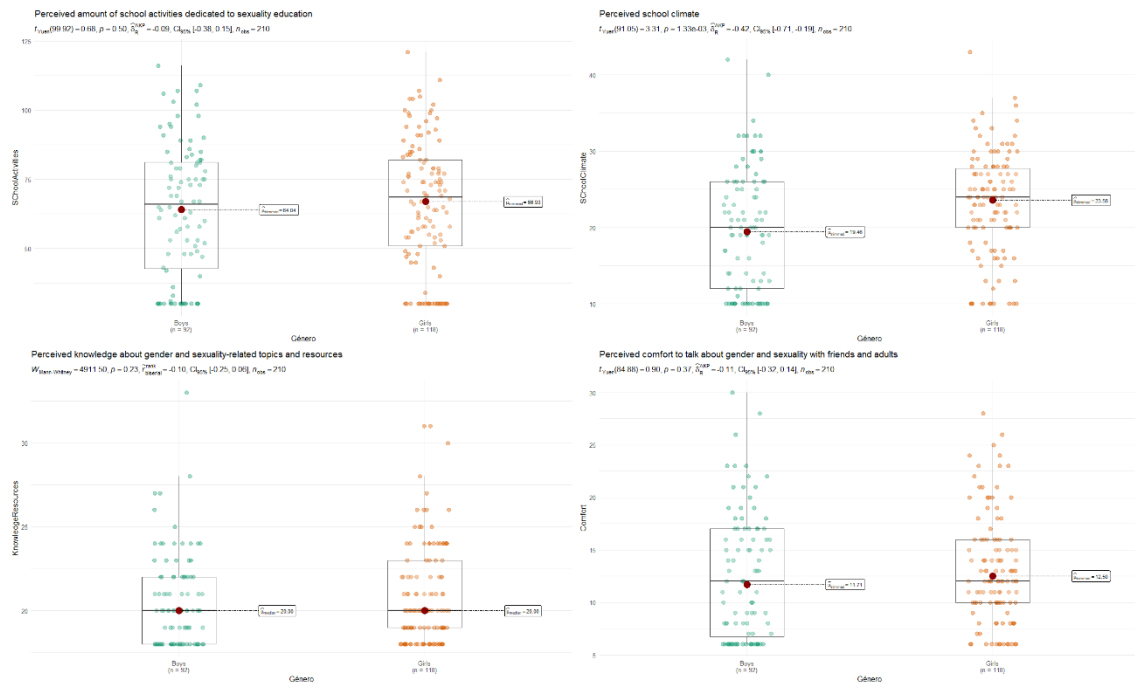




Overall, both female and male students seem to have similar perceptions of the school climate. Regardless we highlight that females seem to perceive to more frequently have a friend to whom talk about gender and sexuality (29% report all the time having a friend someone to talk about), while only 9% of male students have a similar perception. In the same line, 14% of female students report to all the time have a teacher to whom they can talk more often, with only 7% of male students sharing the same perception. Twenty percent of female students also believe that LGBTQIA+ students are always respected in school, with only 13% of male students sharing this perception regarding LGBTQIA+ people.

Figure 22a illustrates some differences between male and female students regarding the number of school activities related to sexuality, gender, and SGBV, perceived school climate regarding gender equality and safe space for sexuality and prevention of SGBV, knowledge about the school and community resources for sexuality and SGBV, and levels of comfort in addressing sexuality, gender and SGBV topics. Compared to male students, female students seem to perceive a more positive school climate.

Figure 22a. Male and female students' perceptions of the number of activities, school climate, resources, and comfort towards gender and sexuality education in schools



QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP

During interviews, when discussing **school climate regarding gender equality and SGBV**, students' discourses reveal that most of them perceive that there is gender equality, mainly when thinking about equality between boys and girls, in schools (n = 14) and others perceive that just in some situations in school exists gender equality (n = 3). Their answers were based on the **following situations that they believe portray gender equality examples in schools:** (a) mixed (binary gender) classes in schools (n = 2), (b) female and male students being treated equally (n = 7), (c) inclusion between friends and (d) equality regarding the number of teachers, which are of different genders (n = 9). They believe that gender equality exists in school because: (a) it must exist in school (n = 4), (b) of school regulations (n = 4), (c) students would not want to be discriminated against (n = 1), (d) school personnel work towards equality (n = 4) and (e) exists cohesion and respect among students (n = 1). However, 4 students did not identify a reason for gender equality existing in school. One student mentioned that *"They must be fair, we are all students, we are all being educated by the same teacher; and also, probably for us to be fair people in the future they have to teach us to be like."* (S15, male, 12 years) and *"I think, that in my school there is a lot of that respect because we discuss these topics in subjects and even for the non-teaching staff in the school and female staff, people are talking talking about it and teaching those*

who don't know very well and explaining to them about gender equality. (S18, male, no info on age)”

Additionally, **5 students perceive that gender equality in school does not exist, as in the following situations:** (a) social exclusion between peers (n = 2), (b) gender discrimination in school activities in class (e.g., only in physical education) and outside class (e.g., in recess) (n = 5), and (c) differences in interpersonal relationships between genders (n = 2). Students identify some reasons for gender inequality in school, namely: (a) differences between gender (n = 1), (b) teachers' replication of traditional gender roles through teaching (n = 1), (c) influence of cultural, social and family attitudes (n = 3), (d) genders with different physical strength levels (n = 1), and (e) nobody teaches correctly/reprimands when necessary (n = 1). For instance, one student mentions that *“I think there are some teachers who also think like that [have gender stereotypes] and consequently students also keep that mindset about these things”* (S21, female, 12 years), and another underlines that *“[...] they don't teach you that you can't do this [discriminate based on gender], that you have to let everyone be who they are; and like no one teaches, nobody says no, you can't do it like this, you have to let it happen and you can't solve it...”* (S19, female, 12 years). In one of the FGs with students, some reported feeling gender inequality in physical education classes. One student argued that *“In physical education class I notice that teachers value boys more”*. (FG05S, S25, female, 12 years) and another student said that *“She didn't really choose girls. [...] Our physical education teacher, was a woman, but she preferred boys. In that case, she was much more attentive to what the boys did than the girls.”* (FG05S, S23, male, 12 years). They also give some examples of moments when they felt this inequality, such as: *“For example, in volleyball, it was completely, that's when I noticed it the most, the boys had the net and the girls the rope”, “When it was handball you [boys] got the goalposts and we [girls] got cones.”* (FG05S, S25, female, 12 years) and *“She explained to the boys and did not explain to the girls. [...] The girls had to listen, (...)”* (FG05S, S23, male, 12 years).

Students underline that the school climate regarding gender equality seems to have some gaps, especially in terms of gender concepts, values, beliefs, relationships, attitudes, and practices.

According to students, the **reasons justifying why gender equality is a reality** in schools rely upon the fact that opportunities are created for both genders (n = 2) and because it's the right thing to do (n = 2), with one student mentioned nothing needs to be changed since the school is already doing everything necessary for ensuring gender equality. Students perceive that **gender equality in school is something positive as it contributes** to something positive (n = 5), a positive school environment (n = 6), and good mental health and well-being (n = 4). However, one student doesn't notice any impact. In the same line, students underlined the **negative**

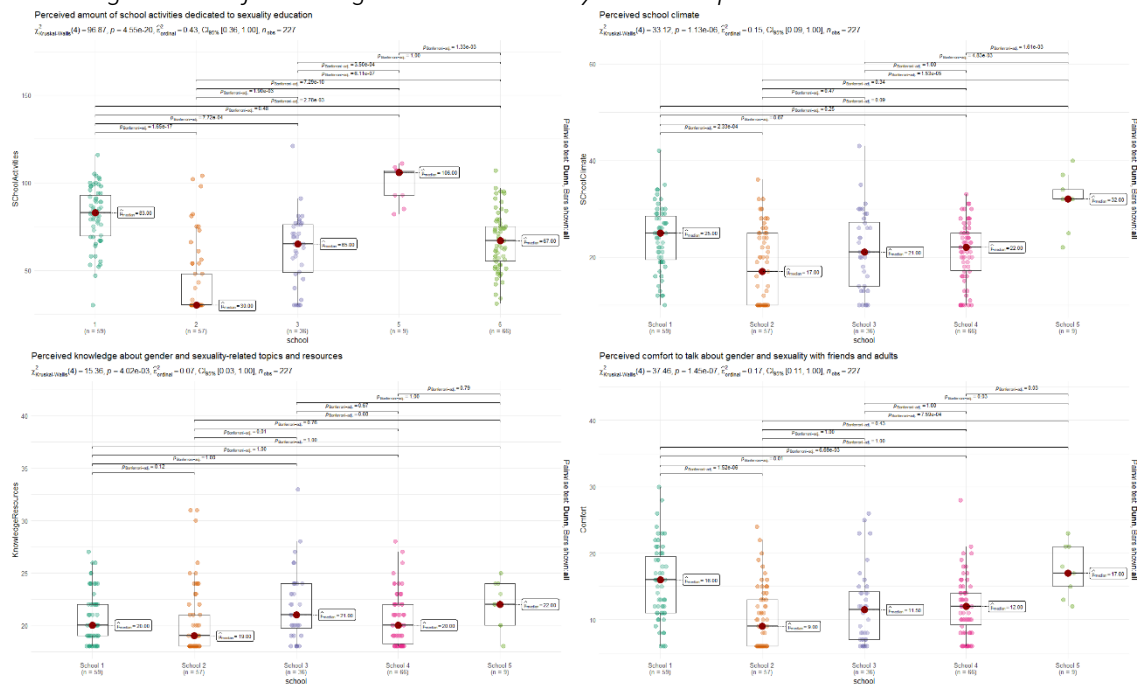
impacts of gender inequality in school namely in terms of (a) **worse mental health** (n = 3), (b) negative emotions (n = 5), and (c) perception of **low self-efficacy** and giving up (n = 3), underlining that *“We, any gender that is diminished, may feel bad and think that (he/she) is not good enough. And you can get into other things like depression and stuff like that. (S09, female, 12 years)”* and that *“I think that because... I think anyone who is affected by inequality begins to feel not good enough, for example, they said ah I can't do it because I'm a boy or I'm a girl and people already give up doing it because they feel they won't be able to do it because the other person said he/she wasn't capable [due to their gender role].”* (S21, female, 12 years). Once again, students' perceptions of gender (i) equality seems to be based both on students' subjective experiences and the efforts (or their absence) made by the school to mitigate disparities, and inequalities and promote justice.

5.2 What are the effects of schools on students' and parents' knowledge and attitudes?

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

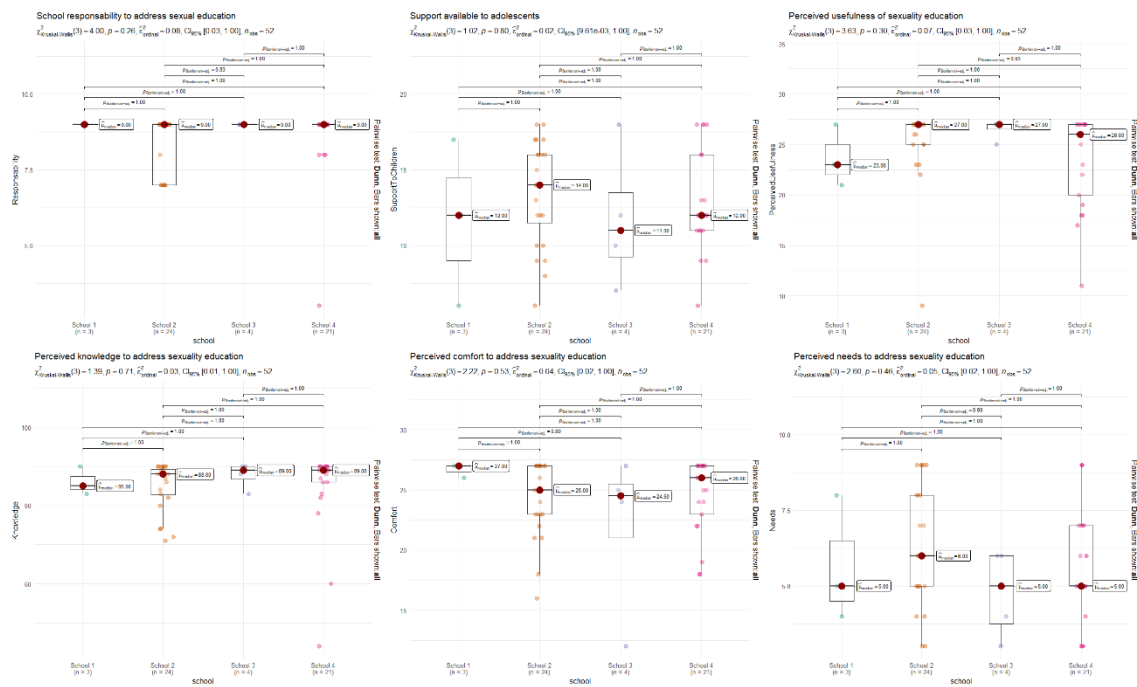
To explore the effect of the school on the **students' perceived involvement of schools in sexuality education, school climate, knowledge** about gender and sexuality-related themes and resources, **and comfort** to discuss those themes with friends and adults, a nonparametric one-way analysis of variance was performed. Results in Figure 23 reveal that schools seem to have a statistically significant but **small effect** on students' self-reported knowledge and attitudes. Although students report substantial differences in their school's involvement in sexuality education, the effects of school on self-reported knowledge and comfort are small suggesting that involvement may not translate into increased benefits for the students, at least considering the way activities are being implemented (see section 6 for a description of curricula implementation). Future studies should further detail the interaction between schools' investment in sexuality education and students' benefits and attempt to identify moderators, as well as ways to maximize the impact of that investment. Note that results indicate that several themes are not being covered in sexuality education, according to students' and teachers' perceptions (see sections 6.1 and 6.2), which may contribute to the fact that only small effects were found.

Figure 23. Effect of school on students' perception of school involvement, school climate, and their knowledge and comfort with gender and sexuality-related topics



Similarly, a nonparametric analysis of variance was performed to explore parents' perceptions of the school's responsibility towards sexuality education, the usefulness of sexuality education, and their needs, knowledge, and comfort in addressing these topics with their children. As depicted in Figure 24, statistically nonsignificant, small effects of school were observed, suggesting that parents are largely disconnected from and unaffected by school's efforts to promote sexuality education, even when they are implemented.

Figure 24. Effect of school on parents' perception of school involvement, the usefulness of sexuality education, their knowledge and comfort with gender and sexuality-related topics, and needs



Highlights in section 5 are presented in Figure 25.

Figure 25. Key findings on the effect of schools on students' and parents' knowledge and attitudes

Box 5. The effect of schools on students and parents knowledge and attitudes | Key Findings

- ✓ Students report substantial differences in their school's involvement in sexuality education.
- ✓ Specifically, schools seem to have a statistically significant but small effect on students' self-reported knowledge and attitudes regarding gender and SGBV.
- ✓ Effects of school on and comfort are small suggesting that that involvement may not translate into increased benefits for the students.
- ✓ Students and parents do not seem largely unaffected by schools involvement in sexuality education.
- ✓ Future studies should identify ways of translating their efforts regarding sexuality education into real benefits for both students and parents, and pinpoint moderators of the impact of those efforts.

6. Portuguese Sexual Education Curricula: What is being implemented

6.1 Students' perceptions

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

According to students' answers, the **most discussed topic** within the gender-related topics in schools is **“gender and human rights,”** followed by **“gender and social inclusion”** (Figure

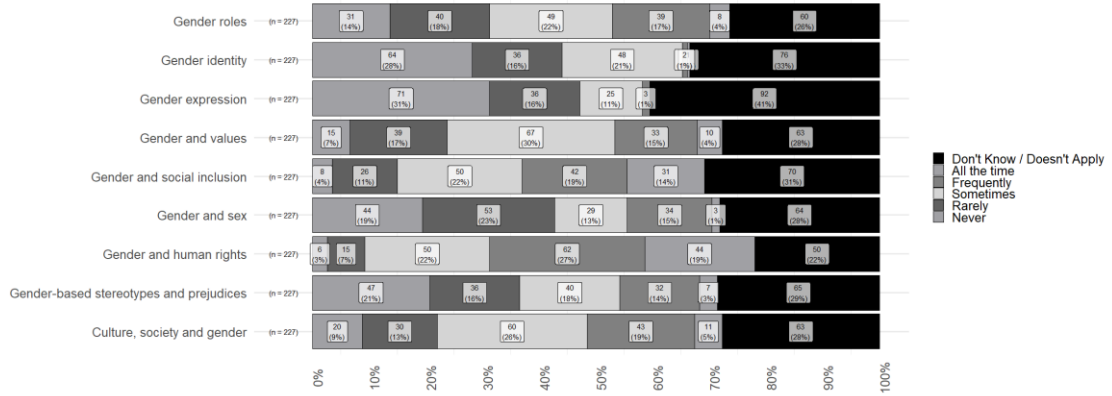
26). These results are in line with the curriculum guidelines for citizenship and development education that is implemented in Portugal since preschool education, which from an early age values human and children's rights, as well as respect for diversity and the inclusion of all children as part of school curricula (Silva et al., 2016). On the other hand, the **less discussed topics**, according to students' perception, are **“gender expression”**, followed by **“gender identity”**. Although it is expected that at the end of primary school, children will be able to "respect peers regardless of differences in ability, gender, culture, religion, language and others" (Cardona et al., 2011), the way this theme is addressed may be more general and not specifically focused on gender identity which may explain why students do not identify this as a frequently covered topic in schools. Regardless, Portugal already has documents with guidelines on how to address gender identity, gender stereotypes, and gender equality from preschool to high school (e.g., Cardona et al., 2011; Cardona et al., 2015; Pinto et al., 2015; Pomar et al., 2012; Vieira et al., 2017) leading us to question: how are teachers following such guidelines?

Regarding students' perception of the frequency of activities carried out by their schools on sexuality, the topics that appear to be addressed **more often** are **“sexuality and reproductive anatomy”** and **“sexuality and human rights”**. On the contrary, the topics that seem to be **less addressed** are those related to **“body image”** and **“sexuality and sexual behavior”**. The percentage of students who consider that they never approached “sexuality and reproductive anatomy” turns out to be surprising, since this topic is part of the curriculum of the subject of natural sciences in 6th grade (Bonito et al., 2013). Additionally, since human rights are a mandatory topic in the curriculum of education for citizenship in schools, the question that arises is whether students effectively address gender and sexuality in light and in line with human rights or if they only selected these responses due to the inclusion of the term “human rights”.

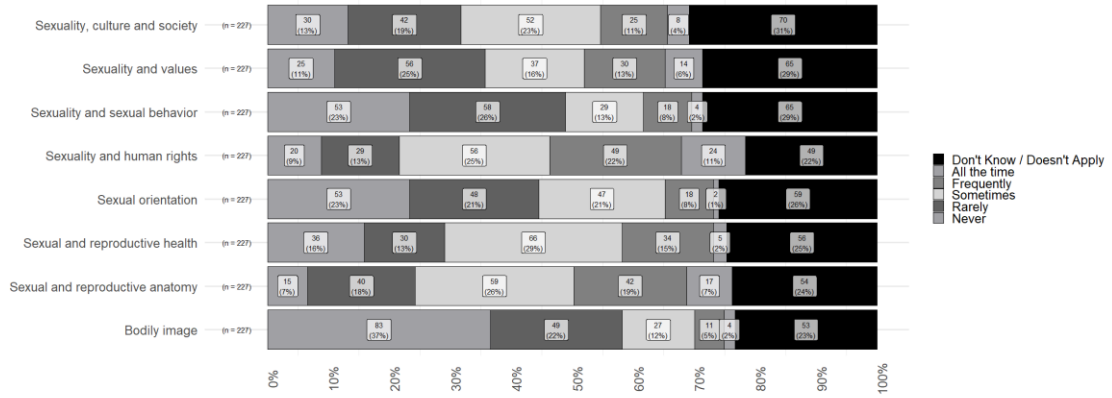
Analysing the topics that students perceive as **most frequent** within the theme of SGBV, these are related to **privacy** and **family relationships**. Contrarily, the topics **less approached** seem to be **gender-based violence and domestic violence**. Both female and male students present similar perceptions regarding the subjects where these topics are discussed, as well as the overall most and less often discussed topics (Figures 26 and 27). These results are concerning, particularly in Portugal where the number of incidents reported to the national authorities about domestic violence is increasing in 2022, compared to 2021 (Comissão para a Cidadania e a Igualdade de Género [CIG], 2022). Thus, data indicates that by the third quarter of the present civil year, 23 250 complaints of domestic violence and 21 voluntary homicides had already been registered, 20 of women and 1 of a child (CIG, 2022). In this sense, it is important not only to address family relationships but also gender roles and the warning signs of SGBV and domestic violence, creating opportunities in schools to inform and empower students.

Figure 26. Frequency of activities carried out in schools on gender, sexuality, and SGBV by students' perceptions

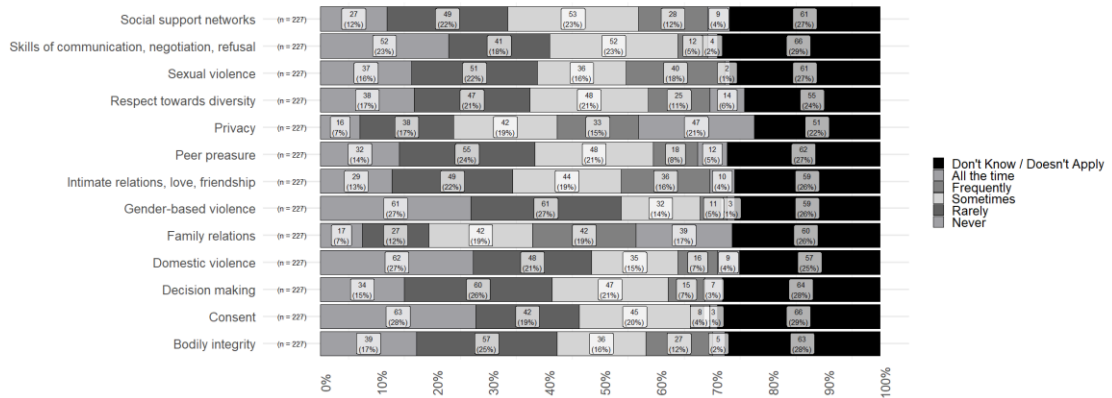
How often does my school organizes activities about gender-related topics?



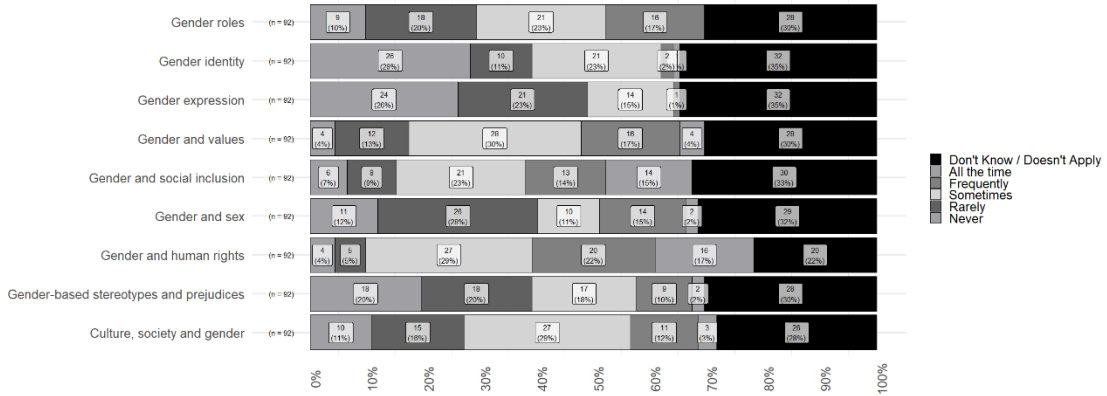
How often does my school organizes activities about sexuality-related topics?



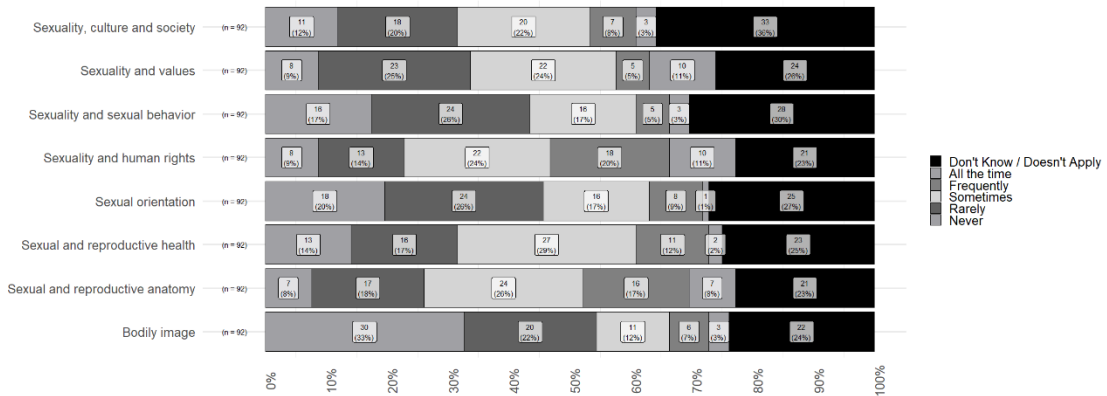
How often does my school organizes activities about gender-based violence?



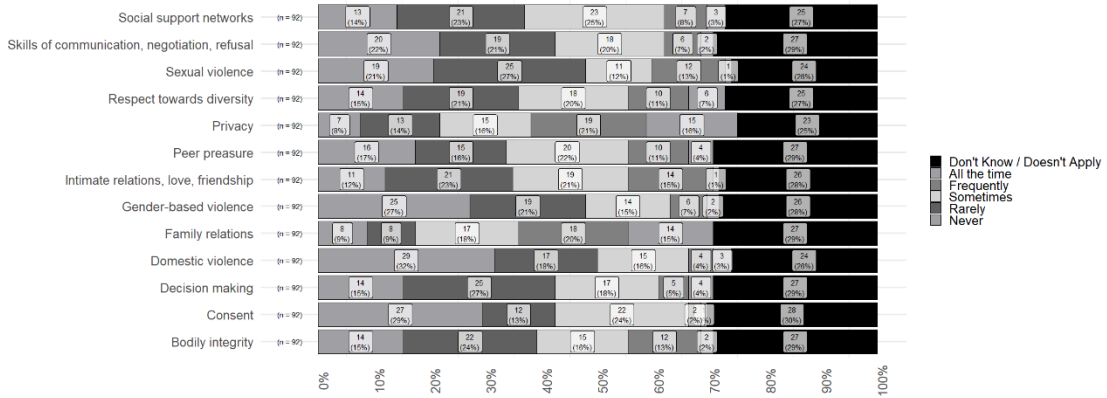
[Boys] How often does my school organizes activities about gender-related topics?



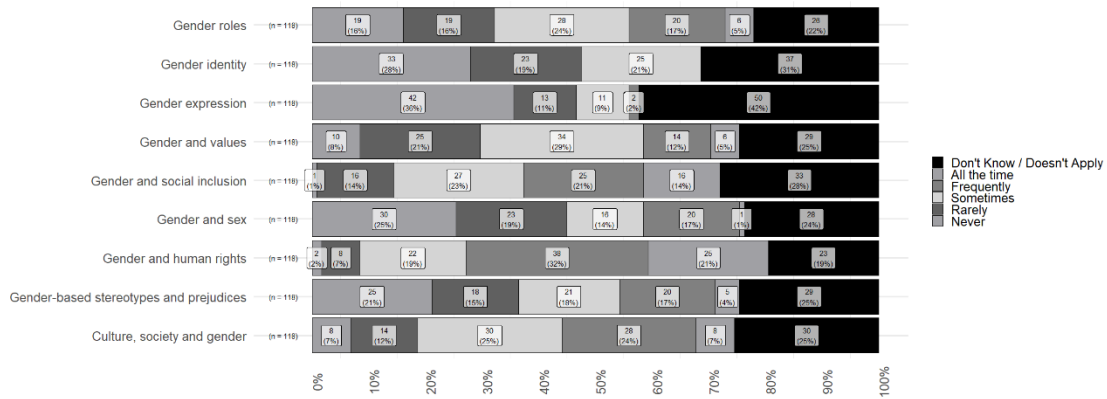
[Boys] How often does my school organizes activities about sexuality-related topics?



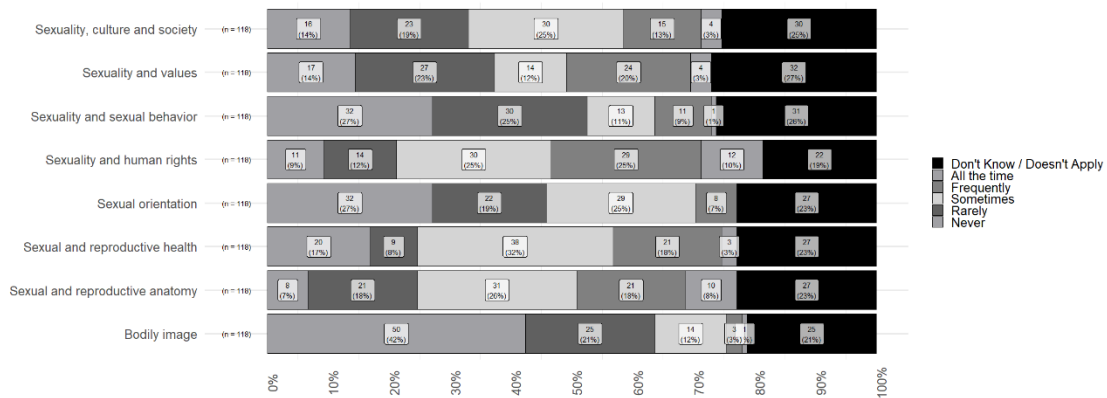
[Boys] How often does my school organizes activities about gender-based violence?



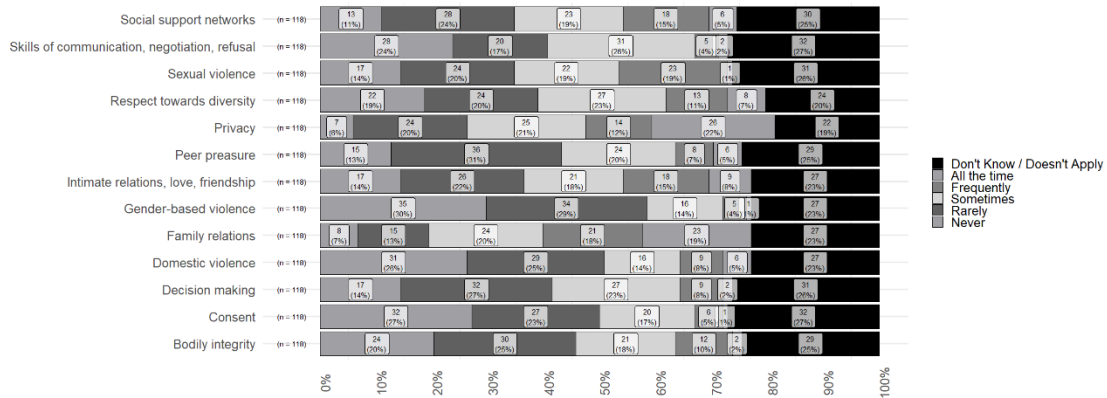
[Girls] How often does my school organizes activities about gender-related topics?



] How often does my school organizes activities about sexuality-related topics?



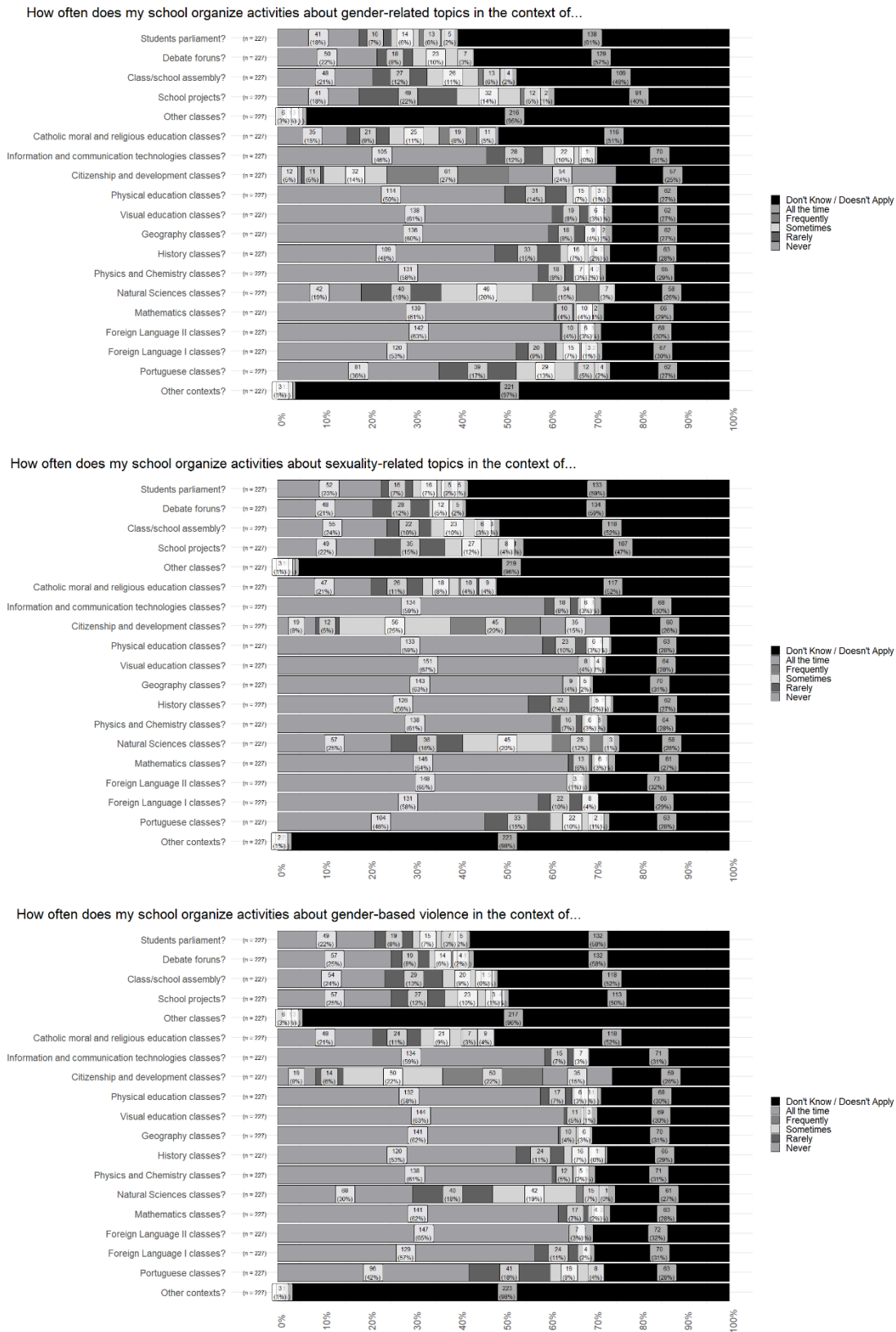
[Girls] How often does my school organizes activities about gender-based violence?



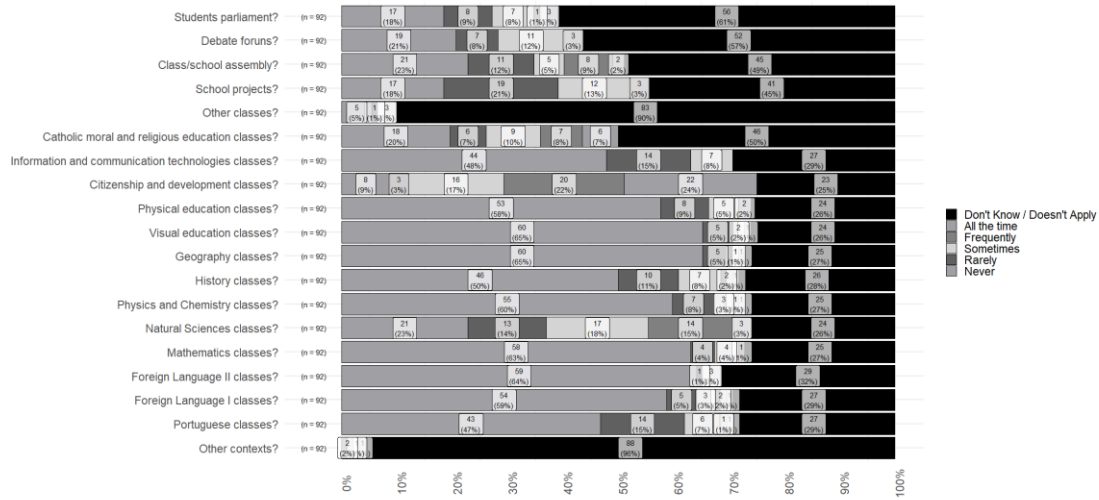
Regarding the subjects in which gender-related topics, sexuality-related topics, and SGBV topics are addressed (Figure 27), it is possible to understand through the students' responses that **gender-related topics** are more frequently discussed during **citizenship and development** and **nature sciences classes**. Between 25% and 40% of students considered that it is rare or non-existent to address this topic in students' projects, class/school assemblies, debate forums, and student parliament. Similarly, sexuality-related topics are more often approached in **citizenship and development** and **nature sciences classes** and are rare or non-existent in other scholarly contexts/activities. Similarly, **SGBV** tends to be more discussed in **citizenship and development**

classes, but its frequency in nature sciences drops compared to the previous two topics. Considering these facts, it's possible to notice the **importance of citizenship and development to explore and promote students' knowledge of gender topics**. Recognizing that the subject of Citizenship and development seems to have a prominent role in addressing sexuality, gender, and SGBV education, aligned with the Ministry of Education recommendations, results suggest that different investment is given by schools to these topics and that teachers feel that the time available and their level of training is insufficient to properly cover all that is expected (section 6.2). Note that the citizenship and development curricula include several topics beyond gender and sexuality.

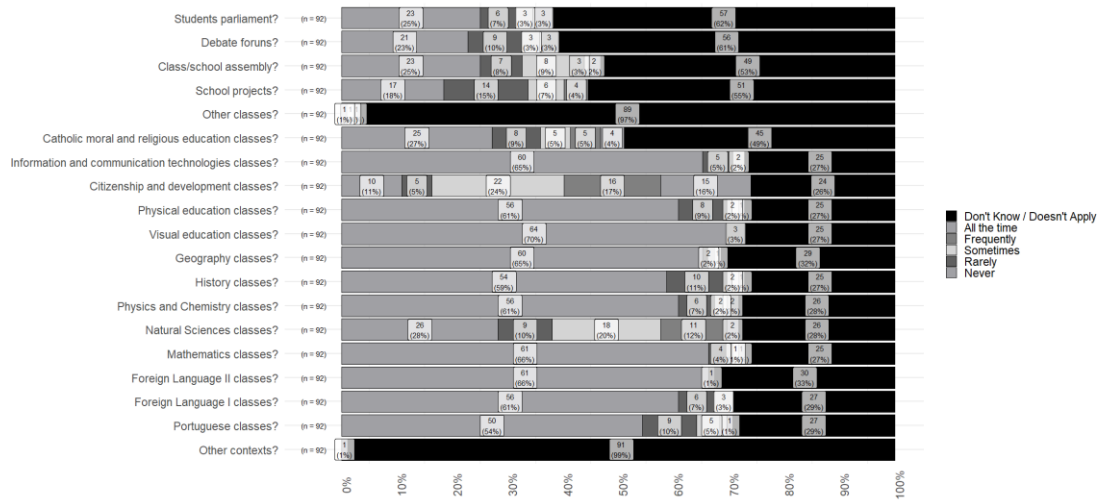
Figure 27. Contexts/classes in which gender, sexuality, and SGBV are discussed - students' perceptions



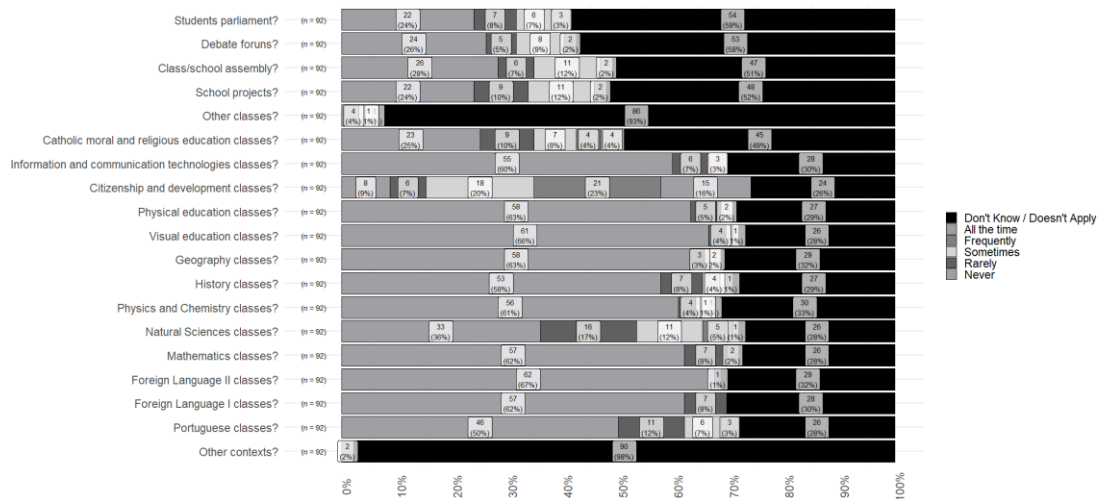
[Boys] How often does my school organize activities about gender-related topics in the context of...



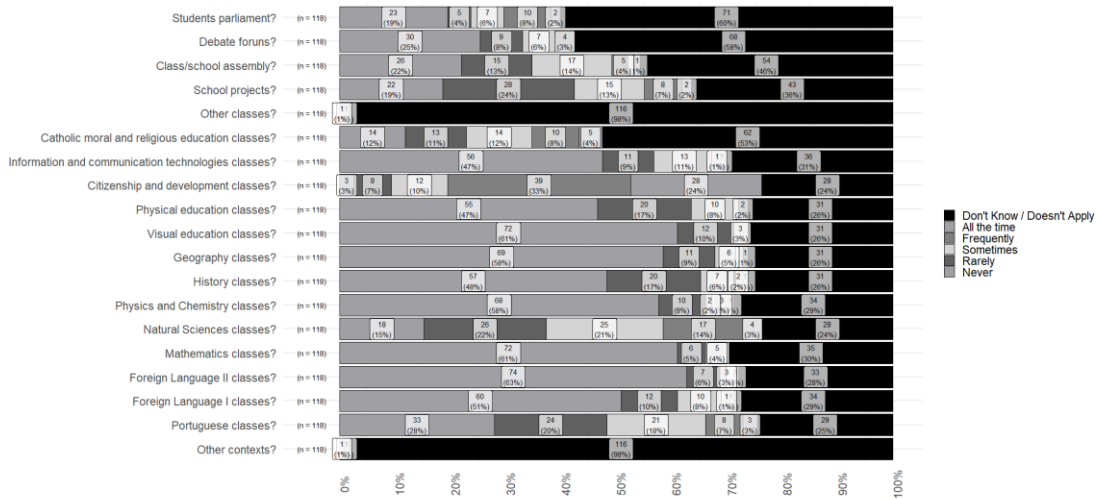
[Boys] How often does my school organize activities about sexuality-related topics in the context of...



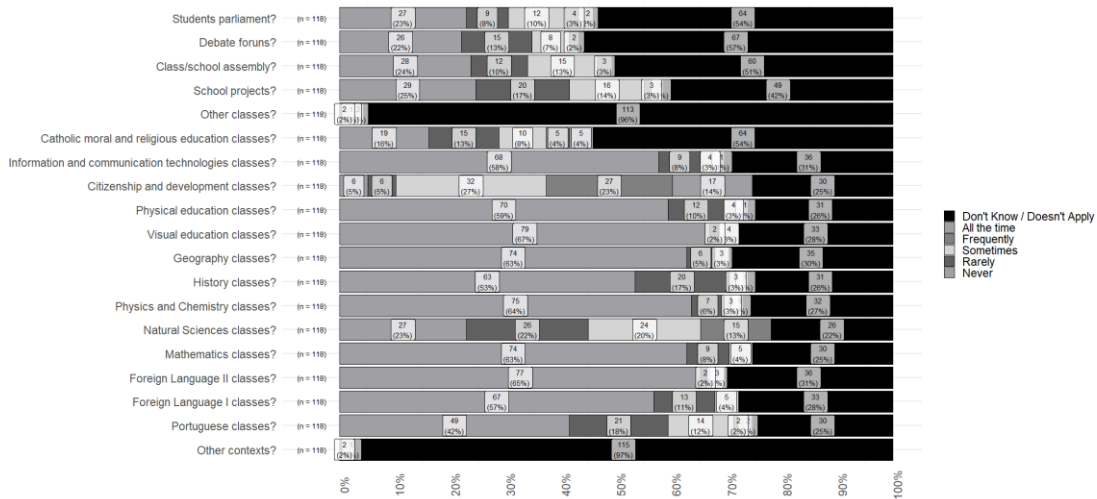
[Boys] How often does my school organize activities about gender-based violence in the context of...



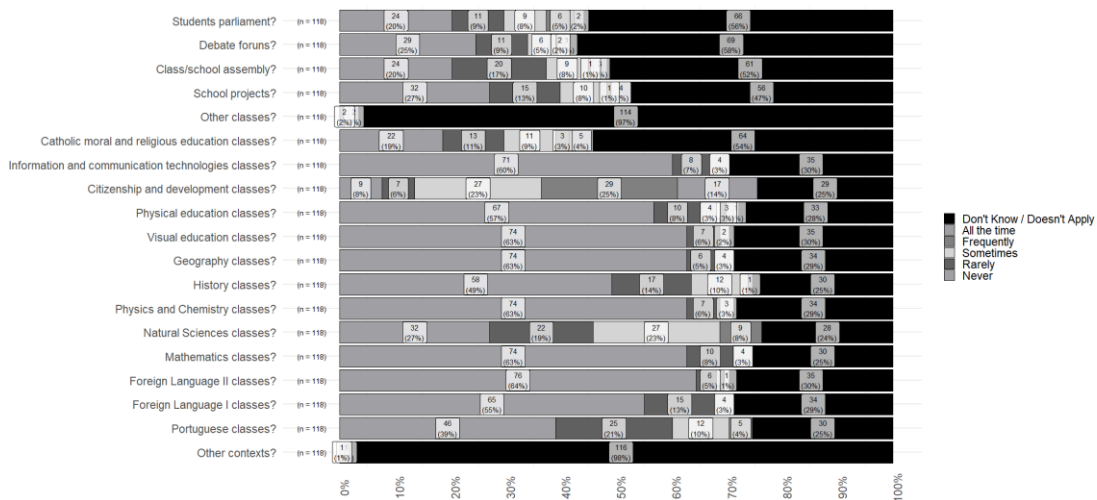
[Girls] How often does my school organize activities about gender-related topics in the context of...



[Girls] How often does my school organize activities about sexuality-related topics in the context of...



[Girls] How often does my school organize activities about gender-based violence in the context of...

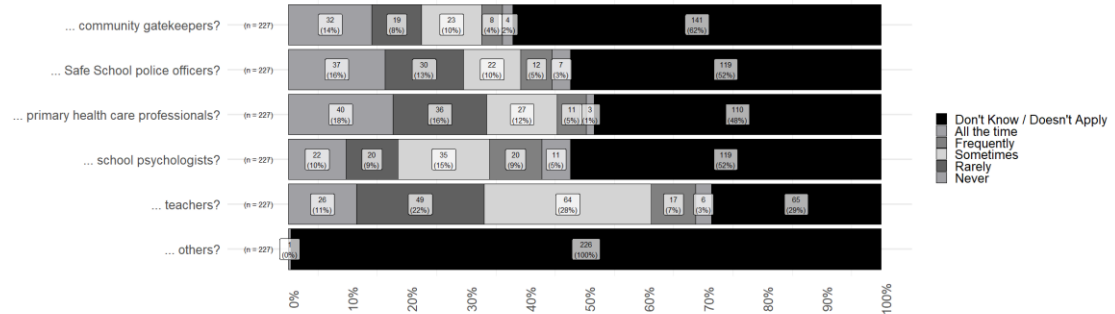


Exploring who are the persons in school contexts that, in students' perceptions, address these three themes, it seems remarkable that teachers are those who are identified as having a more active role in approaching gender, sexuality, and SGBV topics (Figure 28). In this sense,

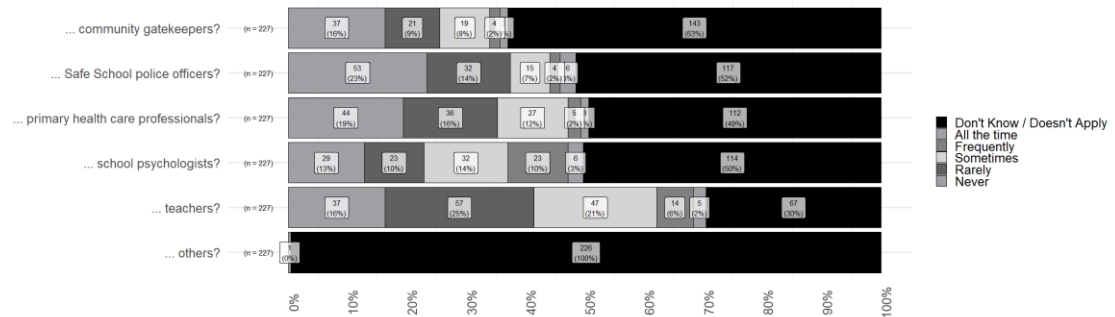
excluding teachers, a large percentage of students (between 48% and 63%) do not know or do not recognize the role of psychologists, primary health care professionals, Safe School police officers, and community gatekeepers in addressing gender topics. Similar results are found for both male and female students' perceptions. The fact that most students only identify one element of the school context (e.g., teachers) as responsible for these topics, maybe a **sign of the lack of a support network in this area**. It also may just be a **sign that students are not aware of the role of different elements** in the most diverse school themes and situations. For example, one of the functions of school psychologists is to support children and adolescents to develop in a healthy way their personal identity (Ordem dos Psicólogos Portugueses [OPP], 2018). In terms of **primary health care**, the Portuguese Ministry of Health (2021) prepared the National Health Plan which includes, among various action strategies, the **promotion of health literacy in schools**, the **promotion of sexual and reproductive health**, **strategies to address different types of violence** in different moments of life, prevention of emotional and behavioral disorders in children and adolescents and **early detection of sexually transmitted diseases**. Regarding **Safe School police officers**, these elements have as some of their operational objectives the promotion of a climate of **safety in schools**, fostering civility for an inclusive climate, and **supporting survivors**, including survivors of sexual offenses, and survivors of bodily harm and injuries and threats. In addition, this team may be trained to carry out awareness-raising actions in the field of bullying and cyberbullying, citizenship and non-discrimination, human rights, **gender equality**, **sexual offenses**, and **domestic and dating violence** (Public Security Police [PSP], 2021). Finally, in terms of community gatekeepers, in Portugal, there are **many institutions** available for **lectures** and even **support for young people's doubts and questions regarding gender**, such as the Portuguese Association for Survivor Support - Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima (APAV), Plan I Association - Associação Plano i, ou Alternative and Response Women's Union - União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta (UMAR).

Figure 28. Responsible persons for carrying out gender, sexuality, and SGBV activities in schools on students' perceptions

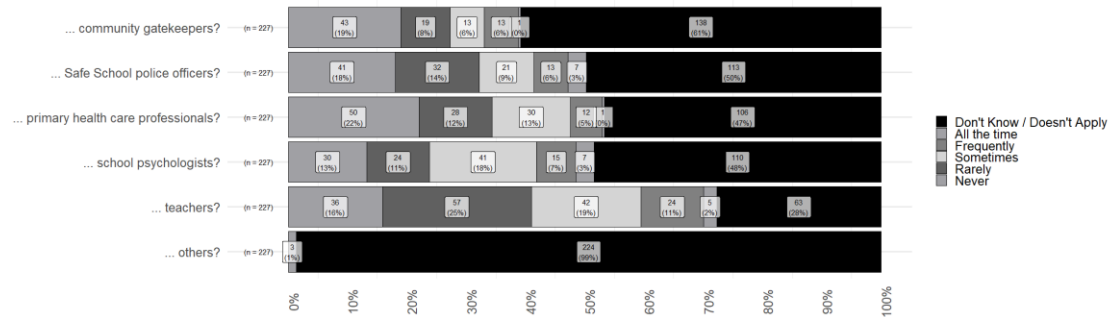
At my school, activities about gender-related topics are carried out by ...



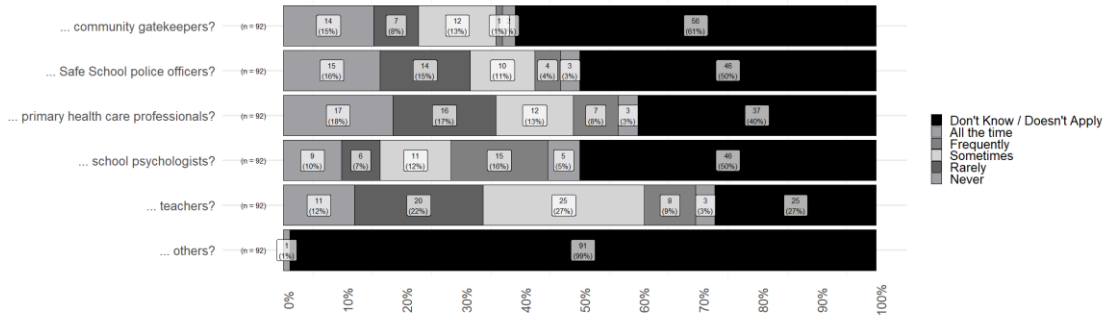
At my school, activities about sexuality-related topics are carried out by ...



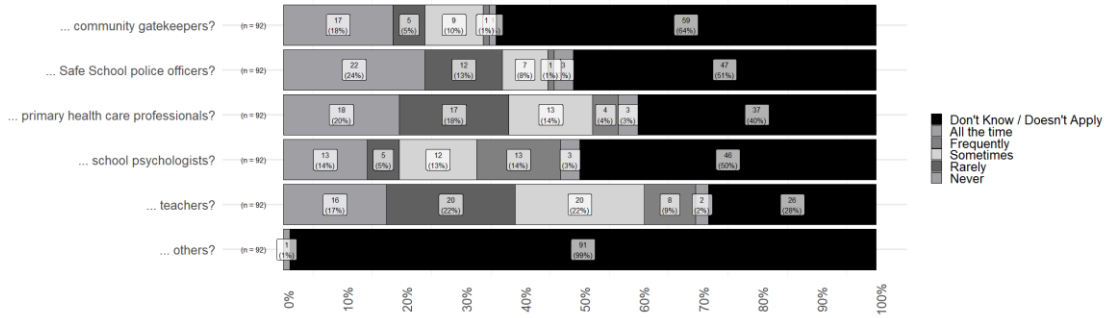
At my school, activities about gender-based violence are carried out by ...



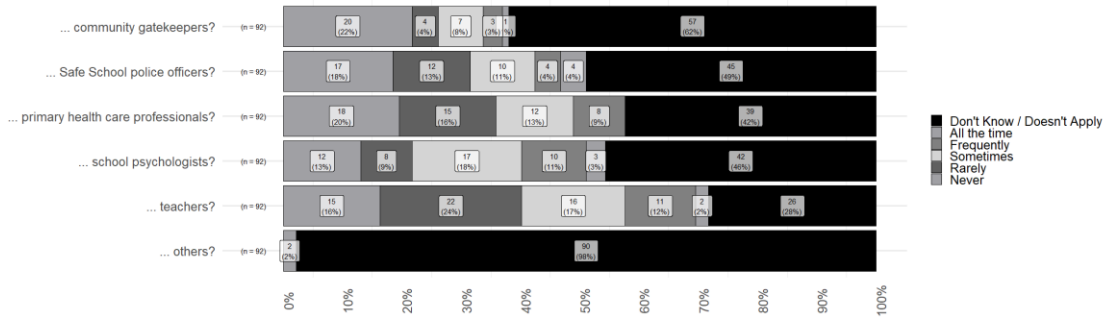
[Boys] At my school, activities about gender-related topics are carried out by ...



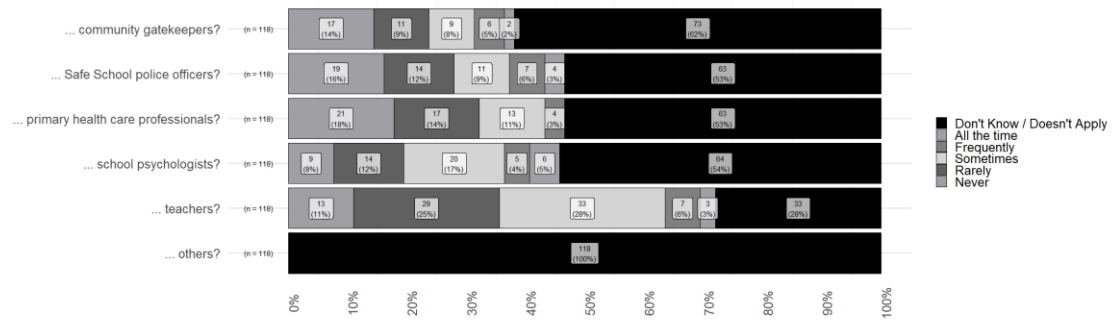
[Boys] At my school, activities about sexuality-related topics are carried out by ...



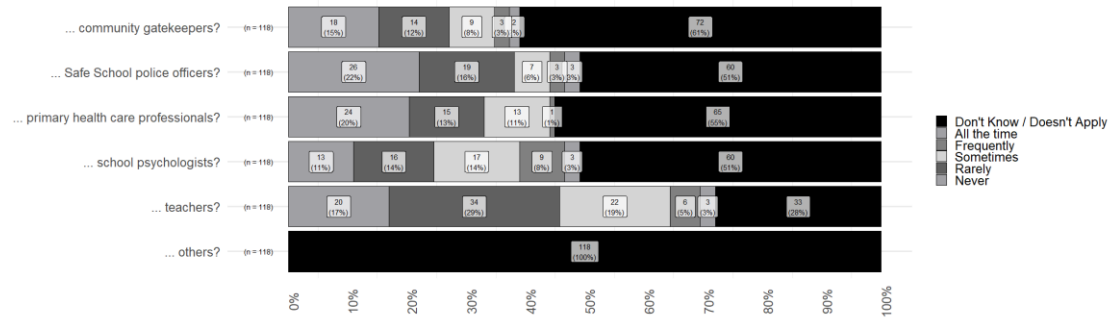
[Boys] At my school, activities about gender-based violence are carried out by ...



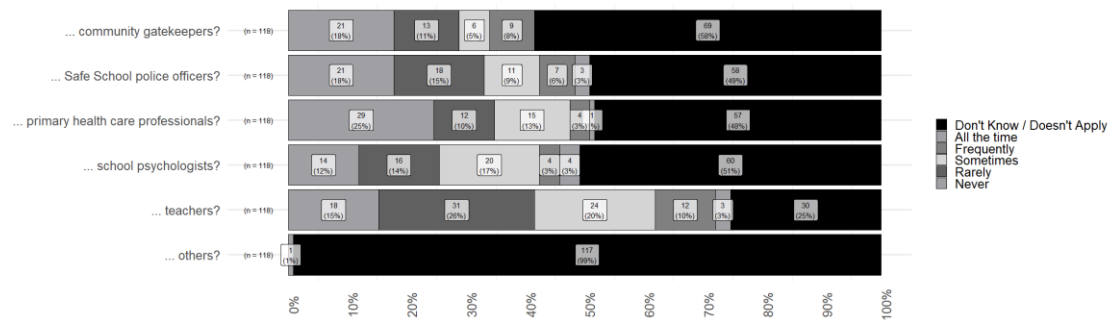
[Girls] At my school, activities about gender-related topics are carried out by ...



[Girls] At my school, activities about sexuality-related topics are carried out by ...



[Girls] At my school, activities about gender-based violence are carried out by ...

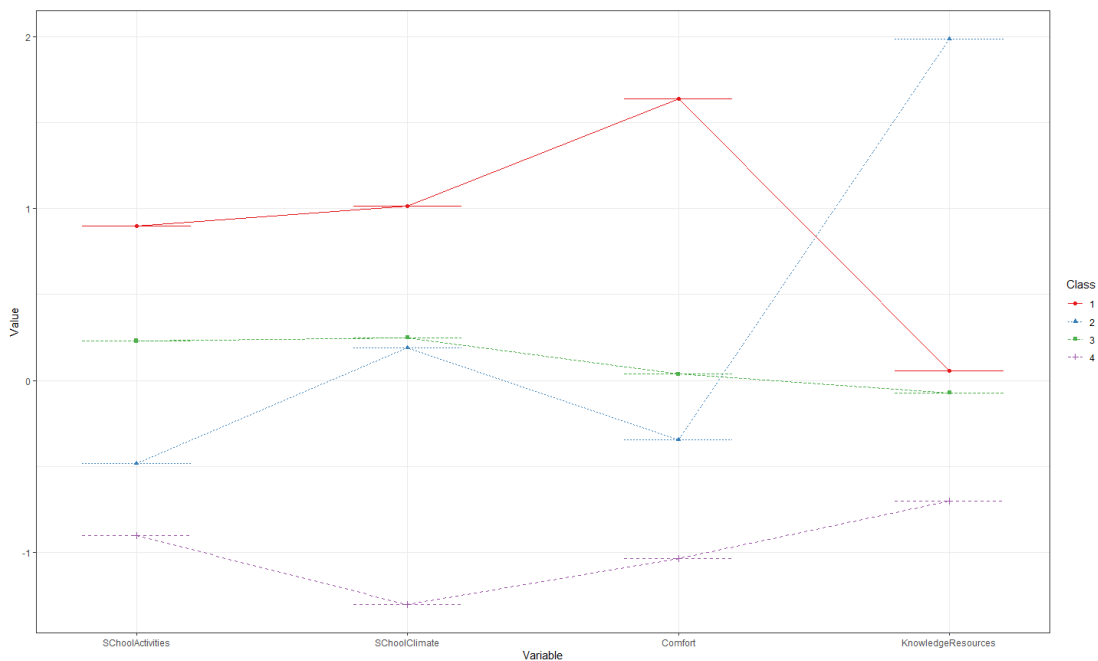


Finally, a **latent profile analysis** was performed to identify subgroups of students regarding their stance toward sexuality education in schools. The best-fitting model revealed four distinct profiles ($n = 35$, $n = 20$, $n = 119$, $n = 53$) which are displayed below (Figure 29).

Profile 1 ($n = 35$) includes those students with a perception of a **higher diversity of topics** related to sexuality, gender, and SGBV addressed in **information, debate, and reflection activities** organized in the school, in the scope of several subjects and projects, carried out by educational agents and community associations. These students (profile 1) are also the ones who perceive a **better school climate and support** from teachers and peers (e.g., respectful attitudes related to gender and sexuality choices of students, open and positive climate for students to talk about these topics, no-discrimination attitudes toward diversity) and are also **more comfortable** (compared to the other profiles) in addressing topics related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV. The **level of knowledge** about resources available in both school and community to support students

on topics related to gender and gender-based violence is **medium**. **Profile 2** ($n = 20$) includes students with the **highest level of knowledge** of resources to support students in gender and gender-based violence topics. Although these students reported **low levels of comfort** (compared with profiles 1 and 3) in addressing gender and gender-based violence with educational agents (e.g., teachers, school psychologists), peers, and family and community associations, the **level of school support is medium**. These students (profile 2) perceived a **low level of diversity of topics** related to sexuality, gender, and SGBV violence addressed in school activities (subjects and projects). **Profile 3** ($n = 119$) includes students with a perception of a **high level of diversity of topics** related to sexuality, gender, and gender-based violence approached in **school activities**. These students (profile 3) reported a **high level of school support**, and the level of **comfort perceived seems to be medium**. This group of students is the second profile reporting to have high levels of activities, support, and comfort related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV topics. The **level of knowledge** about support and information services at school and in the community seems to be **medium**. **Profile 4** ($n = 53$) includes students with a perception of the **lowest levels of diversity of sexuality, gender, and SGBV topics in school activities**. Also, these students (profile 4) are those who feel the **least comfortable** addressing these topics and perceive the **lowest levels of school support**. The **level of knowledge** about school and community resources to support students is the **lowest** compared to the other profiles.

Figure 29. Students' profiles regarding their stance toward sexuality education in schools



QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

During interviews, and focusing on the different subjects that students have, particularly on the subject of Citizenship and Development, students mentioned that several **contents** were addressed regarding (a) sexuality (n = 19); (b) gender equality (n = 17, specifically wages, n = 7); (c) sexual and gender diversity (n = 11); (d) SGBV (n = 10), (d) interpersonal relationships (n = 10); (e) human rights (n = 7); (f) bullying and cyberbullying (n = 4); (g) gender roles (n = 3); and (h) general violence (n = 2). When specifically asked whether they addressed certain topics: (a) 12 students mentioned that the (consequences of) SGBV, were not addressed, 4 said that were, and the rest of them did not answer this question; (b) 14 students mentioned that topics relating to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases, were addressed (mainly reproduction), but 8 said no; and (c) 10 students mentioned that topics related to pleasure, well-being, communication, and trust between partners in relationships was not addressed, but 9 said that it was, and 2 were unsure of it. Some of these topics in the mixed and students' FG were also mentioned being approached. For instance, students from the students' FG mentioned that in school have approached gender equality, sexuality, and sexual and gender diversity (e.g., bisexuality but not transgender) but not gender expression.

The **subjects in which these topics were addressed** were: (a) Citizenship and Development (n = 20); (b) Sciences (n = 13); (c) Portuguese (n = 3); (d) Extracurricular subjects (e.g., Literacy) (n = 2); (e) Information and Communication Technologies (n = 1); (f) PE - Physical Education (n = 1); (g) or other, as a spontaneous comment in a class (n = 2). The **frequency** with which these topics were addressed was mostly: (a) a few classes (e.g., two to four classes) (n = 13); (b) during several classes (n = 5) and (c) in specific works or activities (n = 5). The **resources used to address these themes** were: (a) mostly videos, texts, and PowerPoints as a stimulus for reflection and exploration (n = 20); (b) debates (n = 10), as well as (c) activities/projects (n = 9) (e.g., elaborating a poster with the flags of LGTQIA+ Community or about gender-based wage differences); and (d) roleplays (n = 1). For instance, the student referred that *"we saw a video or PowerPoint that the teacher prepared. We also had debates and assignments, for example, we did a group work on the LGBT community."* (S17, male, no info on age), and that *"[We talked about these topics] in the Citizenship class... and science class (...) with videos, and then we also had to talk about it, to reflect on it. Speaking of each one, their opinion about it, and stories that had happened in each family. (...) And I think it was.... about 5 months or 3 [ago]"* (S22, female, 11 years). The students of the mixed FG also mentioned that these contents were addressed in the Citizenship and Development subject through class activities, usually using videos and debates.

According to students, when asked if teachers were **comfortable** approaching these different themes, most students answered yes (n = 18), and 1 student said that it depended on

the teacher. Regarding the type of **language used**, only 3 students reported that the teacher used non-inclusive language; the rest did not remember/mentioned this.

We also sought to find out **if students would like something to be different in classes** in which these topics were addressed. Twelve students answered “no” (for instance, one student said: *“I don't think so, our teacher explained it very well, she gave us several examples when she showed us videos, she also made us pay more attention, explore more and that was it, I think it was a good technique.”*, S08, female, 11 years); 9 students answered “yes”, stating that they would like the themes to be more in-depth, given due attention, or approached with other strategies (e.g., do more debates and activities and *“some more interesting projects”* (S15, male, 12 years); and 1 student said “maybe” (*“Maybe. Maybe if it was more appealing, there would be more interest and less ... aggressors and thus, fewer victims...maybe. If it were more appealing [the way teachers approach these themes] and if there were even more themes.”*, S02, female, 12 years).

Moreover, we aimed to know **what they would need (or want) to know more about these topics**. Only 8 students stated that they had their interests secured with what was discussed; while the remaining students (n = 14) would like to deepen their knowledge and see other topics related to these being addressed, namely: (a) sexual and gender diversity (n = 7); (b) non-specific themes related to these major matters in general (n = 5); (c) sexuality (n = 4); (d) SGBV (n = 3); (e) interpersonal relationships (n = 2); (f) gender equality (e.g., wages differences) (n = 1); (g) reproduction for transgender people (n = 1); and (h) mental health (n = 1). For instance, one student mentioned: *“[Teachers could] explain how many genders are and what each one encompasses, what each acronym means, for example”* (S15, male, 12 years), and another stated that *“[I would like to know] More about... Gender inequality, which I don't understand very well... Violence... Gender inequality... Sexuality... I think that's it.”* (S06, no info on gender or age).

Additionally, students were asked whether they consider that **the topics covered in the school curriculum meet the needs of all students** (e.g., LGBTQIA+; students with disabilities, and Roma or other ethnic minority students). Most students stated that they see everyone's needs addressed (n = 15), however, 3 students reported that not all needs are met, and 4 stated that the topics do not meet all students' needs. For example, one student stated that *“(Contents reach out to everyone), but not always because sometimes there are people who have a little more interest and these questions, ... the videos can't always answer.”* (S11, male, 12 years). However, most students had difficulties interpreting the question. Regardless, and building on what student S11 (male, 12 years) said, it appears that teachers rely on videos for explaining some contents and that additional information and opportunities to pose questions and discuss these topics with people with deeper knowledge may not be provided in some schools. This seems to be in line

with data from the online survey where students report that gender, sexuality, and SGBV are often approached during classes by teachers, with low participation from other professionals and community institutions. As abovementioned, we note that in Portugal there are **many institutions** available for **lectures** and even **support for young people's doubts and questions regarding gender**, and the framework for sexuality education in Portugal preconizes the articulation with the schools and local community institutions to foster students' awareness, develop social justice values and positive attitudes and build their capacity for active citizenship.

The interviews also sought to find how students assess the **impact** of content related to gender equality, sexual and gender diversity, and/or SGBV **on school culture, school management, and relationships with the community**. Most students considered the impact to be positive (n = 17), in the sense that (a) it increases understanding and changes behaviors towards gender and sexually diverse people (n = 17), (b) makes people more comfortable and secure (n = 5), and (c) improves interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (n = 1). In this regard, one student reported that *"These contents are important because society does not respect these topics very well. (...) Usually, they don't even respect gender. If they started to respect each other better, this would already have a big impact. These contents are important because they promote better thoughts and actions."* (S11, male, 12 years). However, 9 students reported that there was/is no impact, three students that there was/is some impact (namely, on families and society), and 2 students are unaware of the impact caused. Statements like this, produced by different students, evidence their awareness of the existence of gender-based discrimination and the potential role of education in hindering the perpetuation of negative attitudes in society.

Regarding the characterization of **students' participation in the discussion of these themes**, most students mentioned that there is active participation (n = 10). For instance, one student reported: *"Yes, students tend to participate a lot, because then they have doubts and it is a new and more exciting subject, so people tend to interact more in this subject than others"* (S20, female, 12 years). However, 5 students consider the participation to be medium and 4 students consider it to be low. This variability may reflect different levels of comfort by students to discuss these themes in schools, with their teachers and classmates. Note that providing a positive, respectful, and safe space for sexuality education and different teachers, as mentioned by students, may achieve this at different levels, but inconsistently. Moreover, particularly during adolescence, peer judgment and social desirability may also be affecting students' levels of comfort and levels of participation in gender and sexuality discussions.

As for the **participation and discussions with families on gender and sexuality**, students divided their answers into median participation (n = 7), low participation (n = 5), and active participation (n = 4). For example, *"My parents... I usually talk to them a lot about what I learned*

in school very quickly... and they participate a few times." (S11, male, 12 years). However, two students mentioned being unaware of family members' participation. Family contexts are primary development contexts with a pivotal role in children's education. Educational models underline the relevance of school-family partnerships for educational success. As found in the online survey, teachers identify a high need for support to address these topics with parents. If combining that results with the fact that most students stated not to feel comfortable addressing these topics with families (section 2.3), and some still feel, as verbalized in interviews, low opportunities to actively participate and discuss gender and sexuality with their nuclear families, it seems that school-family collaborations need further attention when discussing gender and sexuality education. Moreover, in 2021 the Portuguese Internal Security System (Sistema de Segurança Interna, 2021) registered 183 cases of crimes against sexual freedom and self-determination, 36.3% of sexual abuse against children and 25.2% for child pornography. Also, most survivors were female (83.1%) and most aggressors were male (95.6%). Considering these facts, children are the main targets of sex crimes in Portugal, and over 50% of the aggressors are children's family members. In this sense, it is essential that school addresses topics related to sexuality, so that children and young adolescents can be aware of warning signs and available support networks.

Regarding the knowledge of **programs or strategies that the school puts in place to approach sexuality education**, some students say they are not aware of them (n = 12), and one student mentioned a specific program, namely the Regional Program for Sexual Education in School Health. The rest of them did not answer this question.

Furthermore, when asked if **gender equality and/or SGBV is addressed in another way at their school** (for example, with initiatives, projects, posters, and pamphlets), most students also stated no and/or have never seen it (n = 17). Finally, regarding the **comprehensive approach to sexuality education**, students were asked if sexuality education addressed in school is similar or not to this approach. No student had knowledge of this approach, but after providing a definition of it, 11 students mentioned that their school has a somewhat similar approach, 7 students said that their school does not use a similar approach, and 5 students said that it is very close to the comprehensive approach.

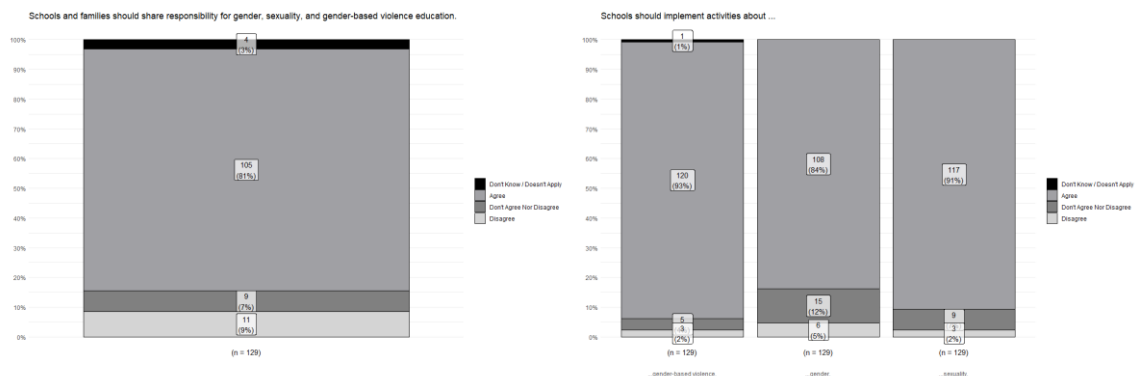
6.2 Teachers' perceptions

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ONLINE SURVEYS

According to the teachers' responses, most of them agree that the **responsibility for addressing topics** such as gender, sexuality, and SGBV **should be shared between family members and teachers** (n = 105, 91%). Similarly, over 84% of teachers seem to agree that gender (n = 120, 93%), sexuality (n = 108, 84%), and SGBV (n = 117, 91%) should be addressed in school contexts.

However, the percentage of teachers who do not agree with teaching about gender in schools is slightly higher compared to those supporting teaching about sexuality and SGBV (Figure 30). In 2019, the Portuguese Ministry of Education published a report of a study they carried out aimed to understand how sexuality education was addressed in schools. The results demonstrated that **sexuality education was not always addressed by schools as set by law nº 60/2009**, because the supposed number of hours was not dedicated, and this is more evident in the middle school and high school. Moreover, the Portuguese Ministry of Education (2019) wanted to know which themes were more frequently approached. In **primary education, gender equality** was the topic **least approached**. In **middle education**, the same happened with **gender equality**. Plus, **gender identity** and **dating violence** also were the less discussed topics. In **secondary education**, the least discussed topics were **affection, dating violence, and the availability of contraceptive methods**. On the contrary, the topics **most discussed** at all educational levels seem to be those related to the **physiognomy of the body and reproduction**. These facts are consistent with students' perceptions of topics approached in their classes. A reason for this to happen may be **teachers' discomfort in answering students' questions** regarding these topics and/or in **using sexual health terminologies** (Rose et al., 2018).

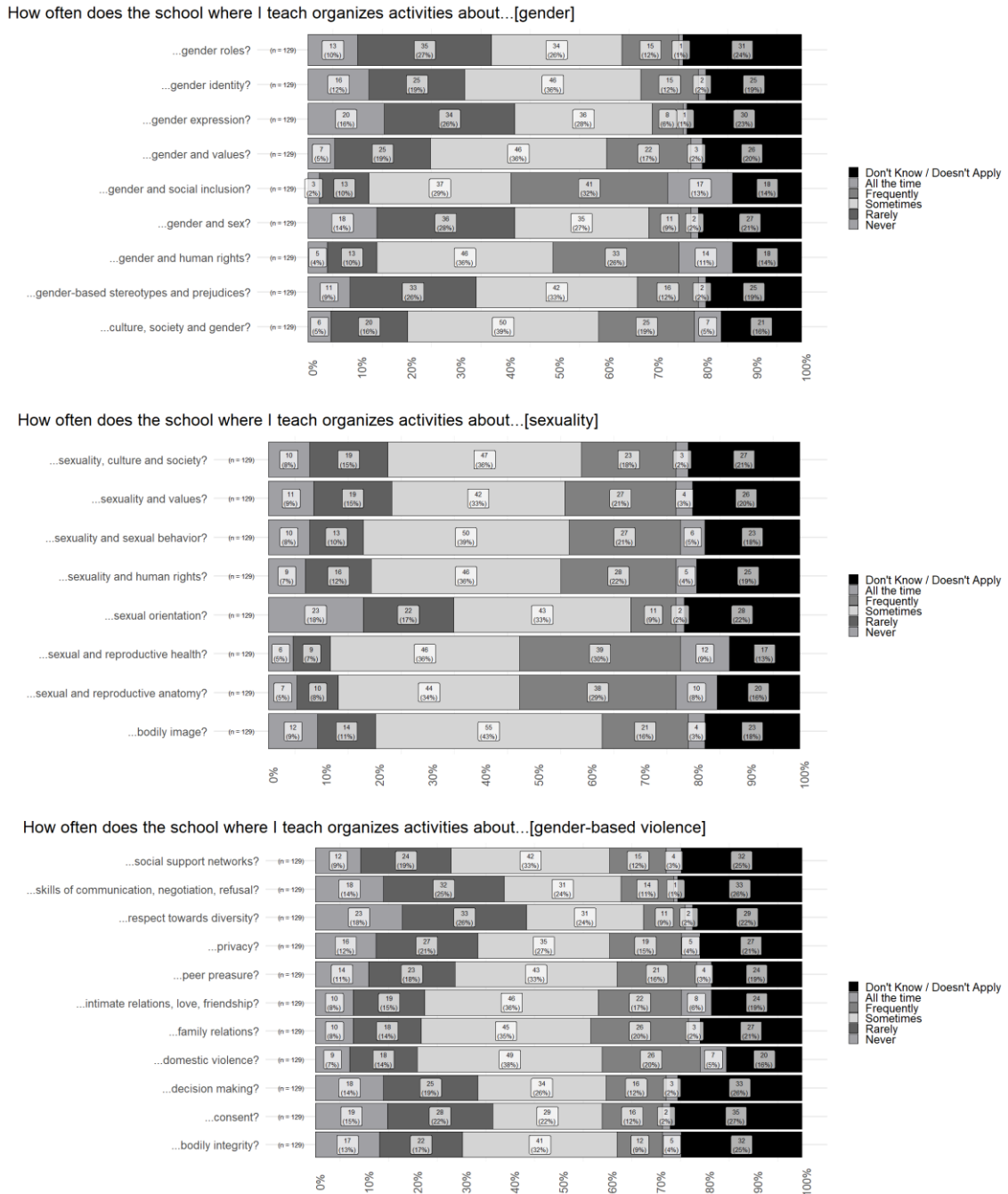
Figure 30. Teachers' perceptions about the role of family and school to carry out activities on gender, sexuality, and SGBV



In the present study, the teachers' perception of the frequency of approaching different topics related to gender and sexuality-related topics, is very similar to the students' perception (see section 6.1). The topics listed in the questionnaires were based on the Citizenship and Development curricula. In this sense, the topics that teachers perceive to **address most frequently** within gender are “**gender and social inclusion**” and “**gender and human rights**”. On the other hand, the **less approached topics** seem to be “**gender expression**”, “**gender and sex**” and “**gender roles**”. Regarding **sexuality-related topics**, the most frequently addressed are “sexual and reproductive anatomy” and “sexual and reproductive health” (Figure 31), which is in line with the

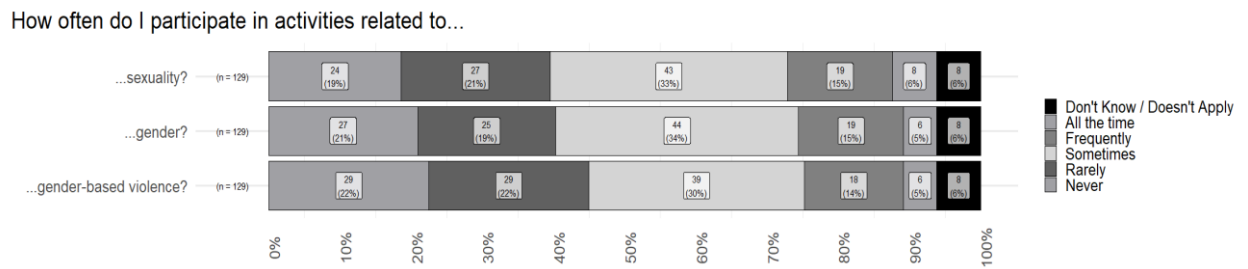
results obtained in the report carried out by the Portuguese Ministry of Education (2019). Contrarily, the topic **least addressed is “sexual orientation”**. A recent investigation tried to understand the reasons that condition LGBTQ inclusive education (Meyer et al., 2019). The most frequent response from teachers about why it is sometimes difficult to address LGBTQ topics was related to the age of the children. This means, the younger the children, the more difficult it is for teachers to address LGBTQ topics. On the other hand, from teachers' interviews, one of the reasons for which teachers are only somewhat comfortable in addressing these topics is due to the constant evolution of these themes (see section 3.4., teachers' level of comfort). Moreover, in **Portugal**, a study was developed to understand **the perceptions of LGBTQ students** (n = 663) about their school context (Pizmony-Levy et al., 2018). The results suggest that these students **feel insecure** due to perpetuated **discriminatory attitudes due to their sexual orientation** (36.8%) or **gender expression** (27.9%). In addition, more than 60% of students have heard homophobic comments and perceive a lack of support from school institutions, as **74.9%** of participants have **never experienced a positive approach to LGBTQ topics in class**. These data justify the relevance of addressing topics related to sexual orientation and gender in schools, in order to promote students' awareness and knowledge about these themes, and promote a context of greater acceptance and a sense of security and belonging for all students. Exploring the most discussed topics within **SGBV**, these are “family relations” and “domestic violence”. These findings are curious since students perceived “domestic violence” as one of the topics less addressed. The topics that teachers perceive to cover less frequently are “respect towards diversity”, “skills of communication, negotiation, and refusal” and “consent”.

Figure 31. Frequency of activities carried out in schools on gender, sexuality, and SGBV - teachers' perceptions



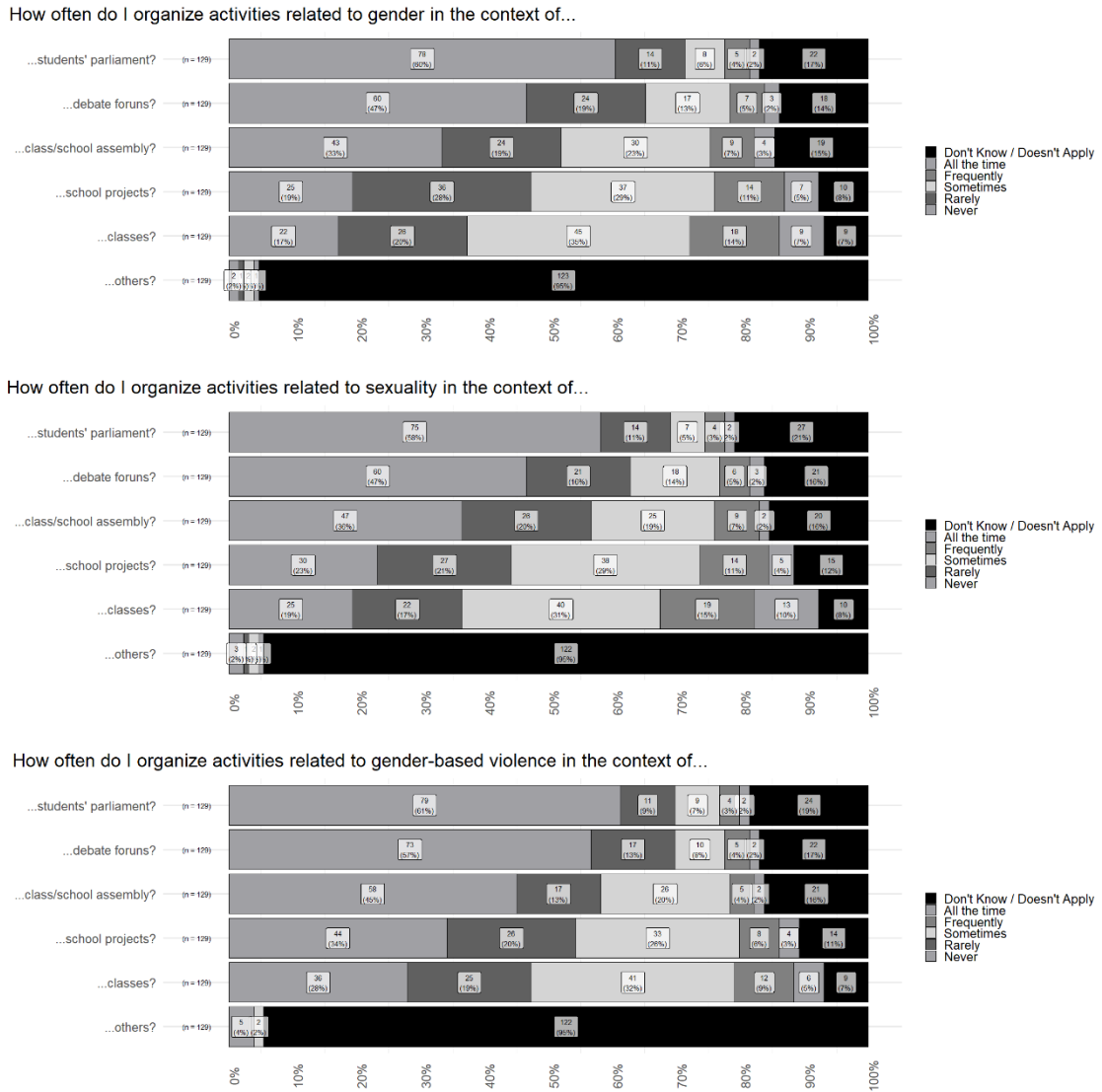
Considering the participation of teachers in activities that address gender, sexuality, and SGBV, it is possible to observe through figure 32 that the percentages are quite homogenous, being the most frequent response “sometimes”. However, the activities that seem to gather fewer participants are those related to SGBV.

Figure 32. Teachers' participation in activities about gender, sexuality, and SGBV



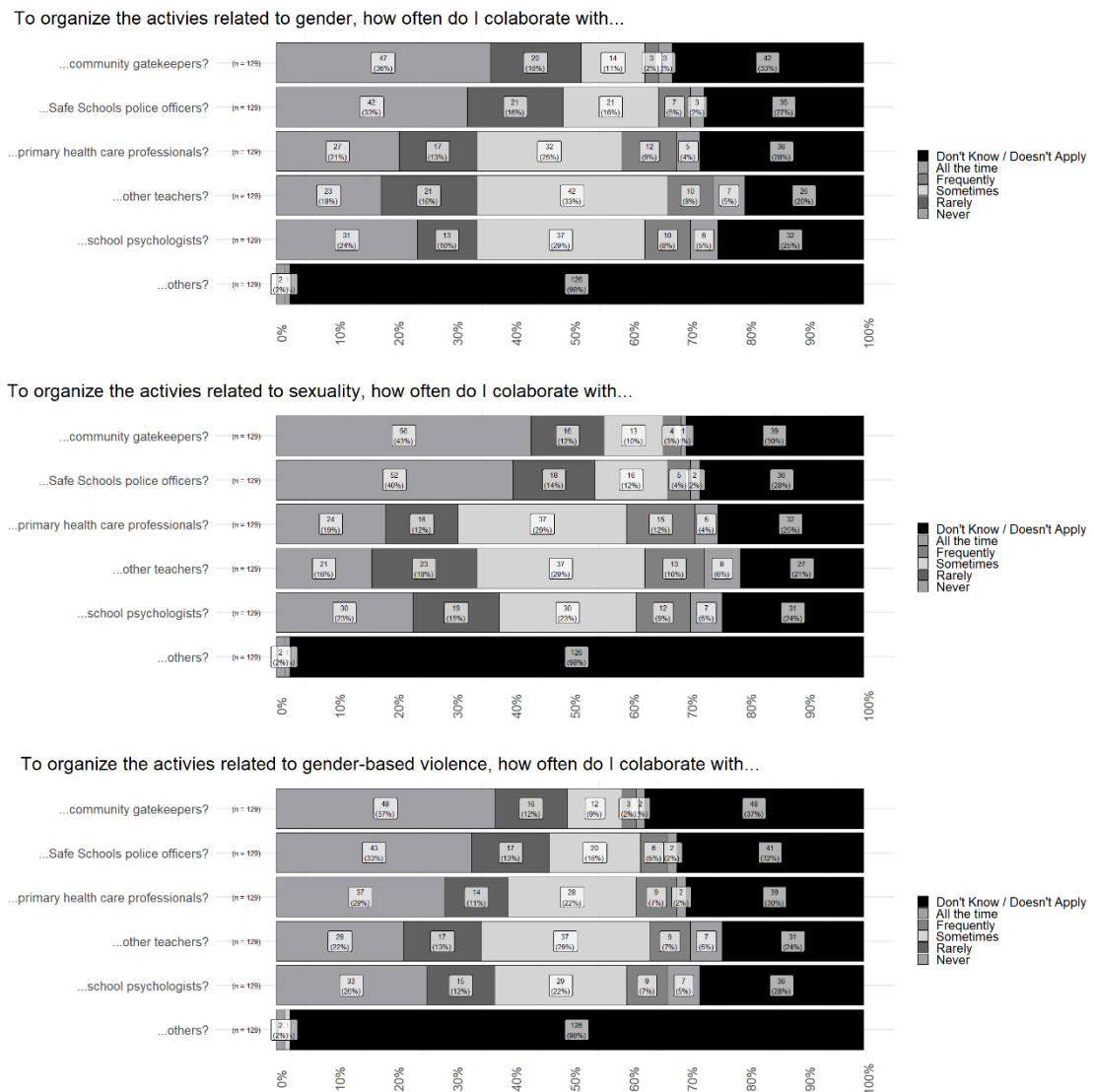
The context in which **teachers most develop activities** related to the three main themes - gender, sexuality, and SGBV - is during **classes**, followed by school projects (Figure 33). Moreover, the theme that seems to be a little **more frequent** in teachers' activities is **gender**. However, Meyer and colleagues (2019) proposed, as a measure to promote the approach to these themes, the inclusion of various elements of the community in training and information sharing. Meyer et al. (2019) consider the approach of these themes only in classroom contexts or through posters and flyers as insufficient. Thus, the inclusion of moments of sharing mediated by institutions with expertise in this area could be a good strategy. Although guidelines for implementing the Citizenship and Development curricula in schools in Portugal strongly state that this subject should be approached transversally, in cooperation with the community, and based both on classes, school, and community level projects, our results show that teachers seem to teach content related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV mainly during their time with students in the scope of the disciples they teach.

Figure 33. Contexts in which teachers organize activities about gender, sexuality, and SGBV



Analysing which elements of the school communities usually collaborate with teachers in developing and implementing activities within the scope of these three themes, **the elements that are more often involved are other teachers, school psychologists, and primary health care professionals** (Figure 34). Since the last-mentioned elements assume a greater expression of participation in matters related to sexuality. However, recalling the results obtained in the students' perceptions, they do not seem to recognize many actions or activities that involve school psychologists or primary health professionals. Additionally, just as students do not identify the frequent involvement of Safe School police officers and community gatekeepers, teachers also tend to collaborate less frequently with these elements.

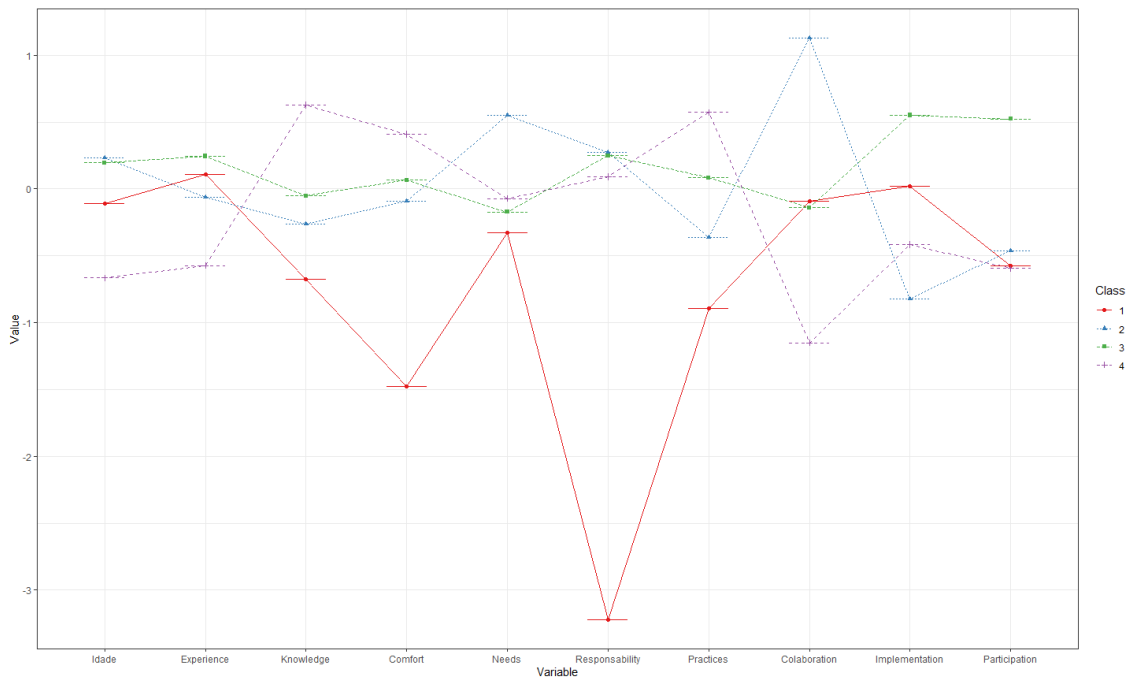
Figure 34. Collaborations made by teachers to organize activities about gender, sexuality, and SGBV



Lastly, a latent profile analysis was performed to identify subgroups of teachers regarding their stance toward sexuality education in schools. The best-fitting model revealed four distinct profiles ($n = 7$, $n = 26$, $n = 52$, $n = 20$) which are displayed below (Figure 35). **Profile 1** ($n = 7$) includes those teachers who less agree that the school is responsible for students' gender and sexuality education, a feature that clearly distinguishes teachers in profile 1 from teachers in the other profiles. These teachers (profile 1) are also the ones with a perception of lower levels of personal knowledge and comfort in the field of gender and sexual education and who identify more needs (e.g., training, time, support from specialized professionals, ...) for being able to teach include gender and sexuality education topics in their classes. Curiously, teachers in profile 1 are

among the ones with **more teaching experience**, and the ones reporting that **collaborate more** with other professionals (e.g., psychologists, social workers, nurses), and **implement and participate more in activities** in their classes related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV related topics. Despite this, they **don't frequently incorporate practices/strategies in their classes**, such as: encouraging students to become critically aware of gender norms and roles and cultivate an environment of empathy so that young people can understand and respond to the reality of others (e.g., empathy and respect for LGBTQIA+ people); explore with students the dynamics of power and the impact of gender inequalities on experience and expression about sexuality; and/or implement activities that allow students to explore the impact of social norms on LGBTQIA+ individuals, sex workers, and others who challenge sexual and gender norms and, as such, are at greater risk of experiencing violence, stigma, and discrimination. **Profile 2** ($n = 26$) includes the older teachers, and the group of teachers reporting the highest levels of need for the implementation of sexuality education in schools. They are also the group of teachers reporting the **highest level of collaboration** with other professionals, but **lower levels of effective implementation and the second profile reporting has less levels of participation in gender, sexuality, and SGBV initiatives**. The levels of knowledge and comfort for teachers in this profile are medium. **Profile 3** ($n = 52$) includes **more experienced teachers**, who report the **highest level of implementation** in their classes and **participation** in the promoting of information, debate, and reflection activities. Although not the group that perceives to have the highest levels of **comfort and knowledge; comfort and knowledge seem to be medium** (compared to other profiles). **Profile 4** ($n = 20$) includes teachers with **higher levels of knowledge and comfort but** reporting **low levels of collaboration** with other professionals. Curiously, their engagement in the **implementation** of activities specifically on gender, sexuality, and SGBV activities in their classes, as well as their **participation in the promoting of information, debate, and reflection activities for students is low** (compared to the other profiles, particularly with profile 3, teachers with higher levels of implementation and participation). **Younger and less experienced** teachers are included in profile 4.

Figure 35. Teachers' profiles regarding their stance toward sexuality education in schools



QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Qualitative results from interviews provided further understanding of how **teachers approach sexuality education curriculum**. Similarly, to quantitative results, teachers mentioned that this is mostly present in the subjects of **Citizenship and Development** ($n = 7$) and **Natural Sciences** ($n = 3$). In **Citizenship and Development**, the topics approached are (a) **gender** ($n = 1$), such as the difference between gender and sex, (b) **gender roles** ($n = 1$), (c) **gender equality** ($n = 4$), such as unequal wages between genders, women's access to leadership positions, and reproduction of gender inequalities in the family environment, (d) **affects, communication, and interpersonal relationships** ($n = 4$), (e) **promotion of health** in general ($n = 3$), including **sexuality and sexual orientation**, contraceptive methods, sexual diseases, (f) **sexual and gender diversity** ($n = 3$), (e) **SGBV in the form of dating violence** ($n = 3$), with one teacher mentioning that SGBV is approached indirectly through human rights and health/sexuality, and (f) **SGBV in the form of sexual violence** ($n = 2$). In **Natural Sciences**, the topics approached were (a) **contraceptive methods** ($n = 1$), (b) **reproductive health and sexual diseases** ($n = 1$; “[reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases] we don't teach it in Citizenship, because we articulate it with Sciences, and it's left to the Sciences teachers, and we, in Citizenship, approach more the part of emotions, relationships, violence and the environment”, T01, male, 58 years), (c) **sexuality** ($n = 1$), and (d) **gender** but in articulation with Citizenship and Development teachers ($n = 1$). Interestingly, Citizenship and Development teachers also mentioned approaching these topics in

History (n = 2), particularly **gender roles** (n = 2), such as women's role in several revolutions throughout Human History and task distribution between men and women, but also **gender equality** (n = 1), such as unequal rights in monarchy regimes. Similarly, one teacher, despite not having approached it, would do so for 9th-grade students. The teacher mentioned that *"In 7th grade, it applies, but not so much. But [we talked about] the question, for example, of the one of descent, having to be male, of... right? In terms of... of monarchy, that's the one, that's the rule. That's right, we talked about that, and we also talked a little bit about history when we talked about the division of tasks, during prehistory when there is a division of tasks because men dedicated themselves to certain tasks and women dedicated themselves to others..."* (T11, female, 40 years). Another teacher mentioned how gender equality **could be approached in Geography** by analysing birth rates, although this is not her subject, and she does not do it. One teacher mentions not to approach any of these themes.

Throughout the interviews, teachers mentioned several **strategies** deemed as important to **approach sexuality education in school**. These can be divided into strategies used **during class**, and strategies used for **class preparation and definition of curriculum**. The **strategies used during class** identified were: (a) provide examples of self or own experiences (n = 4), (b) comment whenever necessary in class or approach when requested by a student (n = 3), (c) use comparisons (n = 4), for example, between cultures and between the past and present, (d) use activities to promote reflection (n = 7), (e) define concepts prior to the discussion (n = 1), and on the other hand (f) question students' interests and opinions prior to approaching a theme (n = 1), (g) give field homework (n = 1), such as students doing interviews and applying questionnaires to parents as a homework, (h) organize groups with an equal number of female and male students to promote an equilibrium between genders (n = 1), (i) use language appropriate for students, that is, one that not much scientific (n = 2), or (j) no use of inclusive language at all (n = 1). As for the **strategies used for class preparation and definition of curriculum**, it was mentioned: (a) providing awareness sessions to students, within the school or with help of specialists and entities (n = 3), (b) approaching these themes in different subjects and curriculum (n = 3), (d) using diverse strategies/resources to address students' diverse interests (n = 3), (e) approach themes considering students' cultural, moral and family background (n = 1), (f) exchange feedback between teachers about practices and approaches (n = 2), and (g) adjust the approach to students' age (e.g., to students' level of maturity to be able to approach sexuality in class) (n = 1). Moreover, as a **general strategy**, 4 teachers highlighted **establishing partnerships with entities and people of the community (e.g., health specialists)**, as an important strategy, exemplified in the following statement: *"we also have a partnership with... that, it is in the hospital [name], [...] and many times psychologists go there, especially to 9th grade classes [...] to do [...] and they*

manage pay attention for an hour. If it was me talking, maybe they wouldn't be able to [do so], but with those people they can because they can... reach them ahh well because they know all the cases and then they know how to respond, right? And... and that's important.” (T10, female, 47 years). This is particularly relevant as results from the surveys show that a high percentage of students do not have knowledge or are aware of the participation of elements in the community in the lessons and activities regarding gender, sexuality, and SGBV (see section 6.1, quantitative results). Thus, although some teacher mentions these partnerships in their schools, it seems that these practices are not being consistently implemented in all schools, as preconized by the guideline for sexuality and health education in schools in Portugal.

Regarding the **frequency** of activities, some teachers (n = 7) approach sexual education contents according to the syllabus agenda, hence the frequency of doing such is reduced to just a few classes (three to six across the whole school year). Others mentioned doing it occasionally (n = 2), such as an activity or assignment, while for one teacher it is very frequent. Lastly, and despite the frequency, teachers also mentioned addressing these topics when needed (n = 2), as a student's request or in reaction to the identification of student's incorrect attitudes, for instance, saying that they talk about sexuality and gender when a *“comment that came up about something else or by an attitude that we see, we end up acting, don't we? At least the best way we know how.”* (T08, female, 58 years).

From teachers' interviews, interesting **challenges to addressing sexual education were identified**: (a) obligation to do complementary training in a field of expertise which compromises the availability of teachers to do training on these themes (i.e., not much time available is left for other type trainings) (n = 1) and (b) captivating students' interests (n = 2). This last challenge is congruent with the strategy (above-mentioned) adopted by teachers of using diverse strategies/resources to address students' diverse interests. As such, a teacher mentioned: *“Ahh I always like to do different things to try to motivate them. Sometimes it's complicated...to find different things because nowadays they have so many stimuli that it's very complicated sometimes for us to make a difference. [...] Sometimes we have the idea and then, in practice, it doesn't always go as we expect, it happened to me more than once, but that's it, we must try. And that's when we also realize if it works or not and sometimes what works in one class, doesn't work in another...”* (T11, female, 40 years)

The support of families in teaching contents related to gender equality, sexuality, respect for LGBTQIA+, sex workers, etc., is perceived, for some, as negative in the majority (n = 2), or for others as positive in the majority (n = 5), in the sense that there have not been any complaints so far. Three teachers did not have a perception on this matter (two for being new in school and one for not approaching these themes in classes). One teacher added that this **support is dependent**

upon students' cultural and familiar context, but also on how sensible or not the themes approached are: "It's quite complicated, not all of them naturally, and many of them [families], as we have seen in the media, quite aggressive, don't support and don't allow it [to teach sexuality]. Another point is the "sensitive topics" in which it is necessary to have some sensibility when approaching these themes and consider the cultural context in which the students are integrated in, which is not all the same, of course. In a city or village things are different. And then also the classes themselves, the students themselves, their values, we must try to approach these situations, and we really must, it's mandatory to do it for the good of the students, but also paying attention to what is their cultural and moral and social context." (T01, male, 58 years). According to another teacher, this **support is dependent on how these themes are approached**: "In [Natural] Sciences a lot [of themes] were already covered. However, then we move on to "sexuality is given in Citizenship". And there are, as we know, parents who revolt against the approach of the themes that should be [taught by] family, right? [But] why not [complain] to the Sciences, that already addressed them? [...] And the role of the school is to inform, to make them see that there is not only one thing, that there are several. Now, when you teach to influence someone, I think parents have every right to say, "I don't want to." When it's approached in the sense of addressing the themes, making them question things, and making them think critically. I don't think there can be, I never felt... from parents some rejection for these kinds of approaches, because I think they also don't have the right to do so because then all subjects had to be questioned." (T08, female, 58 years). These examples highlight that if on one hand the themes can be perceived as sensible to approach, on the other hand, if the focus is on increasing students' critical thinking, instead of imposing a given thought and behavior on students, the support of family can prevail, and perhaps be enhanced.

Teachers perceive that, **in terms of curriculum, the best way to approach sexuality education in school** is inter-curricular for any subject ($n = 5$). Two teachers mentioned that it would be inter-curricular but for specific subjects (e.g., Natural Sciences for reproductive and health topics and another subject for approaching emotions and attitudes). Two teachers were unable to answer. Regarding **whom would be responsible for this curriculum**, most teachers mentioned professionals with training in sciences and/or psychology ($n = 4$), with one teacher also including teachers as these professionals. For two teachers the responsibility should be shared amongst teachers, with one stating that this selection should be based on skills, but not necessarily formal education; in the same line of thought, a teacher stated that those responsible should be the ones interested and comfortable in approaching these themes. Just one teacher perceives that the responsibility should solely belong to science teachers, for having formal training in sexuality. We highlight one teacher's statement which talked about the importance of

addressing gender equality indirectly through other subjects and using different approaches: *“the relevance needs to be framed within other things that are also important [...] I think we are giving an importance [to gender equality] that is not natural, right? Ok, activities of this type, as I told you, in which questions are raised and students are challenged to position themselves leading to debate. Or sometimes even with a film, the debate also arises. And I think it should be addressed in any subject. However, I don't think it should be with the title “we are addressing gender equality”* (T08, female, 58 years).

Regarding the **comprehensive approach to sexuality education**, teachers were asked if sexuality education addressed in school is similar or not to this approach. No teachers had knowledge of this approach, so, after defining it, six teachers mentioned that their school has a similar approach, with three of them stating its use across different subjects. Two teachers did not approach sexual education in their classes. Two did not provide a perception of the similarity. Regarding **teachers' impression of this approach**: despite one teacher perceiving it to be of difficult implementation, three perceived it as interesting. Despite most teachers perceiving their approach to be somewhat similar to the comprehensive approach to sexuality education, considering the frequency with which these themes are approached, either formally according to the curriculum (e.g., just a few classes) or informally when needed, and also considering teachers' knowledge and comfort to approach these themes varies, we question if teachers do indeed use this approach in a comprehensive and transformative way as it is expected to be.

6.3 Parents' perceptions

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: INTERVIEWS

Despite the two parents interviewed supporting the teaching of topics related to gender equality, sexuality, LGBTQIA+, and sex workers in school, they perceive that other parents (at least some) do not support this teaching in school. More specifically, they state as evidence for their perceptions of the lack of support for the subject of Citizenship and Development, but also the lack of parents' participation when, for instance, signing the consent form for this research: *“at the parents meeting where this little paper was passed on for parents to participate in the study, people soon saw “gender identity” and say “oh! Gender identity don't even think about it, because talking about it, is to make sure that children can be something that we do not want”. And, so I think there are still many myths associated, it's not just with gender identity, it's sexual education, it all has to do with what is being different. It's not just about the idea of gender, of sexuality. It has a lot to do with everything that is different, is strange and it is very difficult for many families to deal with it and I've seen it.”* (P02). Moreover, both agree with the **importance of talking about these contents in school**: *“I think so, it's important. They should invest more. [...]”*

*To avoid everything that is violent. To understand that they are people like any other, right? And they have feelings and are not "dolls" "(P01). Another parent also provides an insight into **how these contents should be approached in school**, namely not just in one subject ("I think it's very important, but not in a subject, I also think that everything in a subject is not effective because it makes everyone else less responsible"), and not just about gender equality, but rather all other types of diversities: "Because we have to value diversity, and so often the difference between the word "difference" and the word "diversity", even with different connotations, the difference is often seen as negative and diversity is seen as positive. We must explore this, don't we? The difference is part of a domain, whatever it is, for each domain, here we talk about gender, but if we don't talk about gender, we talk about, for example, intelligence, we talk about the sociocultural background, we talk about language which is currently one of the main barriers that we have in the school context and this is diversity and it has to be valued. So I think it is as important to work on gender equality as any other kind of diversity. I also don't think it's gender equality by itself, it's all part of empowering us to be active and participatory citizens, not to close our eyes when something happens." (P02). This perception that these subjects should be taught across different subjects and not just focused on one topic (such as gender equality) is similar to that of some teachers.*

In terms of **how topics of gender equality, SGBV, and sexuality are approached within the home context**, both parents state its occurrence is **dependent on a given stimulus, with differences in its frequency**: for one parent this approach is occasional, and the news is a privileged source for this approach, while for the other parent, the daily situations and interaction act as the incentive. Hence, the first parent states "*But if they are talking about [something] on the news or we are talking about it, we approach it normally. It's not taboo, but we don't talk about it every day, but occasionally, right? But if we talk about it or if we have dinner and the news is on or we're with family or we talk about it, but we don't have the habit of talking about it all the time. Only if we bring up the subject"* (P01), while the other mentions that "*I think I use a lot to what happens daily, okay? I think they are good examples... This morning, we talked about a kid in my daughter's class who is 15 years old, who smokes and has condoms in his wallet and it's a little bit about this that we talk about, okay, [and] what can come from there? What negative consequence can come from it? Because if we just say "you can't do that, you can't smoke, you can't use condoms", I want my daughter to use condoms if she wants to, it's a little bit "ok, let's take advantage of this attitude and let's talk about it". It was my birthday last week and I invited two of my colleagues who are married and that's everyday life, it's a normal thing, if a friend of mine is coming, so he is my friend,*

and he is bringing his husband (of the same gender), my friend is bringing his husband. And this is part of daily life." (P02).

When asked **whether they address** topics such as (a) **reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases**, (b) the consequences of SGBV, and (c) pleasure, well-being, communication, and trust between partners in a sexual relationship, only the first was mentioned by both parents: *"Yes, we spoke about it. We had to talk. He also doesn't have many doubts because normally. [...] He is mature for his age, even for 12 years he is very responsible and when he wants to ask, he asks. When he doesn't want it, he doesn't ask"* (P01). As for the consequences of SGBV, one parent never approached it for not feeling the need to do so, whereas the other states having probably discussed it, although not being recalled of it. Regarding the third topic, none has directly approached it, although one parent provided an interesting example of how sexuality was approached by the children: *"I still haven't talked much about it with my daughter [laughs], but what we've been talking about a lot is that sometimes there are kids who are always touching their genitals and what I usually say to my daughter and my son, it happens a lot with the little ones, and what I usually discuss with them is "ok, there is no problem but there is a context to do it" is to demystify the idea that "OK, we can touch, we can have pleasure with us, it doesn't have to be in a public context where others are watching". This issue is associated with pleasure, I think that normally I always focus more on the place where we do it because there is no harm, this idea is a little bit what I also try to deconstruct. There is no, there is no harm, none. We do, and as with everything, there's a place and a time for us to do that and try to find those moments"* (P02).

Both parents claim that **there is an impact when they speak with their children as parents about these topics**. For one parent, this impact could be perceived in terms of changing attitudes, albeit firstly it was mentioned how this impact may not be "great" for the child which is characterized as not prejudiced. For the other parent this impact seems of extreme importance given the different sources of information available for their children: *"We, if we don't talk, they will get this information in other and more distorted ways, so whenever possible and I don't think it's by lecturing, (...) or providing explanations, there are a lot of experiences that happened to us, reports of what it happened to us to explain how we feel and be open to talking about it too, not turning it off when a situation happens because they can have access to much worse things. Even with parental control on cellphones, and such things, we've already been there and had access to everything we wanted to see, right? So... and there was no Internet like it is now, and therefore I think we really have to be able to talk about everything and if it's exaggerated, they also tell us to stop, right? It's because I think that the sooner we start taking this opportunity to talk, not only*

about matters of sexuality or gender identity, but about everything, and we have more honest relationships, right? And more frank [ones]" (P02).

Lastly, **both parents state feeling comfortable approaching topics related to gender equality, SGBV, and sexuality.** Knowledge-wise, both perceive to have sufficient knowledge to talk about these topics, with one parent stating having *"the usual [knowledge]"* and being *"no specialist on the matter"* (P01), while the other mentioning: *"I'm also studying in the field of gender equality [...] it's not my field of study, but it's a field that I have to read to be able to work, right? So, although it's not what I know in a more in-depth way, I think I have the necessary skills to deal well with my daughter and my son"* (P02). Again we see the impact that the profession of parents has in being aware and knowledgeable about these topics.

Highlights regarding Section 6 are presented in Figure 36.

Figure 36. Key findings about Portuguese Sexual Education Curricula: students' and teachers' perceptions

Box 6. Portuguese Sexual Education Curricula: what is being implemented | Key Findings

STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS

- ✓ From the topics expected to be covered by the Citizenship and Development curricula:
 - Students perceive that the most often discussed topics in schools are gender and human rights, gender, and social inclusion, sexuality, and reproductive anatomy and sexuality and human rights, privacy and family relationships;
 - Students perceive less often to discuss and learn about gender expression and gender identity, body image, sexuality and sexual behavior, gender-based violence, and domestic violence;
 - Citizenship and development and nature sciences classes are the ones identified as most frequently providing learning opportunities about gender and sexuality;
 - Teaching strategies usually include videos, texts, presentations, debates, and projects.
- ✓ Students identify teachers as those who have a more active role in approaching gender, sexuality, and SGBV topics.
- ✓ A large percentage of students (48% to 63%) do not know or do not recognize the role of psychologists, primary health care professionals, Safe School police officers, and community gatekeepers in addressing gender issues, revealing a lack of network awareness.
- ✓ Students mention that not all teachers show the same level of confrontation and expertise in discussing gender and sexuality.
- ✓ Most students stated that they think everyone's needs are addressed in the topics taught in school regarding gender and sexuality, which may indicate a lower awareness of specific individuals' needs.
- ✓ Most students are unaware of specific projects or activities in school on gender, sexuality, and/or SGBV.
- ✓ Four profiles of students were found, underlining variations in students experiences at schools, as well as in their knowledge and levels of comfort.
 - Most students (profile 3, n = 119, 52%), reported high level of diversity of topics related to sexuality, gender, and gender-based violence approached in school activities and medium levels of comfort and knowledge.
 - Few students (profile 1, n = 35 students, 15%) perceived higher diversity of topics and more activities in schools related to sexuality, gender, and SGBV, better school climate, and describe high levels of comfort and a medium level of knowledge about resources
 - Some students (profile 4; n = 53, 23%) perceived low levels of diversity of topics addressed in school, had lower levels of comfort and knowledge on these topics. These results highlight variations in students experiences at schools, as well as in their knowledge and levels of comfort.

(continuation)

TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS

- ✓ Over 90% of teachers agree that the responsibility for addressing gender, sexuality and SGBV should be shared between family members and teachers/schools and that these topics should be covered by the school activities.
- ✓ Teachers consider that they address topics related to gender and social inclusion, gender and human rights, sexual and reproductive anatomy, sexual and reproductive health, family relations, and domestic violence more often.
- ✓ Teachers consider that they address topics related to gender expression, gender, and sex, gender roles, sexual orientation, respect towards diversity, communication skills, negotiation, refusal, and consent less often.
- ✓ Learning opportunities about gender and SGBV occur during regular classes, which may affect teachers' intentionality when discussing gender-related issues.
- ✓ Persons involved in activities for promoting knowledge on gender and sexuality include mainly teachers, school psychologists, and primary health care professionals.
- ✓ Teachers report little to no interactions with community-based institutions focused on promoting gender equality and preventing SGBV.
- ✓ Four teacher profiles were found, highlighting variability in teachers needs, comfort, knowledge, use of practices/strategies, implementation, and participation in activities on topics related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV in schools.
- ✓ Most teachers were in profile 3 ($n = 52$), these including more experienced teachers, reporting the highest level of implementation of activities related to sexuality, gender and SGBV in their classes and the higher levels of participation in the promoting of information, debate, and reflection activities. Teachers in this profile report medium levels of comfort and knowledge for teaching about sexuality, gender and SGBV.

Limitations and biases

This study was conducted in the scope of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) – European Network (EN) call for the execution of a study - between April and December 2022 - aiming at characterizing Portuguese middle school students and teachers' knowledge and attitudes regarding gender equality and SGBV in school contexts. Due to time constraints, a convenient geographic area was selected for the sample recruitment, including municipalities in the North of Portugal. In this scope, results must be carefully interpreted when discussing the national-level state of students' and teachers' experiences and conceptions of gender equality and SGBV in Portuguese schools. Considering the Portuguese school year organization, data collection was conducted between mid-September (the beginning of the Portuguese school year) and the end of October 2022. Both in the quantitative and qualitative studies, gender parity was foreseen, but not totally achieved. Most students in the quantitative study were mainly defining themselves as females (52%), or males (40.5%) with only two participants defining themselves as non-binary and 6.6% choosing not to disclose their gender identity. Thus, the representation of non-binary gender identities of students was not achieved, which must be taken into consideration when interpreting findings. However, we highlight that our sample seems to be representative of Portuguese culture, where a binary conception of gender prevails. Similarly, interviews with individual students included 52.5% of female students, 45% of male, and one student (2,5%) who rather did not identify its gender identification. For teachers responses, these were mainly from female teachers (72.1%) and participants in the qualitative study also include a high percentage of females. Note that teachers from all schools participating received an email with the invitation to participate in the study and so more females volunteered to participate, which may also be explained by the fact that in Portuguese schools, there is a high rate of female teachers. Future studies including students and teachers with different gender identities are needed for a broader perspective. Participants in this study were not purposely selected to include diverse gender identities, so their perspectives may not be represented in the data. The same occurred regarding parents' participation, mostly females (90%) completed the questionnaires. Additionally, a low participation rate of parents on the questionnaires was registered.

Some limitations must also be acknowledged regarding measurements as instruments in this study were specifically developed in the scope of the study. Thus, although measures were developed by a team of experts, and were piloted before the larger application, it was the first time these instruments were used. Future studies should include validated measures for a better understanding of how the different dimensions are related. Particularly for the KASB, a four-dimension structure, aligned with theoretical models was found which revealed a satisfactory

model and psychometric properties. Although statistics procedures were used to control for biases, some items revealed themselves to be unstable. Its use in future studies is unwarranted without more studies that provide stronger evidence for its validity and factor invariance. The role of social desirability both in answering questionnaires and participating in interviews/focus groups cannot be ignored as the topics approached can be considered sensible (as mentioned by participants).

Regardless of measures piloting process and adaptation based on this procedure, when using the data collection protocol (online surveys), some difficulties emerged namely: (a) students with more difficulties in reading and comprehension of written messages took longer time to complete the protocol which was, overall, too long; (b) access to computers and internet in schools was often failing during the sessions with students to complete the protocols in the presence of researchers (who were there to explain the concepts and clarify any doubt students may have); several sessions were needed for completing data collection; (c) a high percentage of students who did not complete the whole set of questionnaires (27%). The protocol needs to be revised if used in future studies to account for these limitations.

Finally, we underline that the results presented in this report are mainly descriptive and exploratory.

Conclusions

It is undeniable that gender and its inequalities, and the violence associated with it are currently a global concern regarding human rights and development, with gender equality being a priority goal according to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015). In this context, it is widely agreed that education, particularly school education, can have a foundational role in empowering students and promoting their knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills for navigating through life and fostering equality and social justice (e.g., Pinto, 2015; UNESCO, 2018; WHO, 2010). Likewise, while aiming at promoting gender equality, it is also important to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all (United Nations, nd).

Schools are in a privileged position for intervening with youth and facilitating students' development of life skills, attitudes, knowledge, and values. Particularly the mandatory schooling period can be considered a window of opportunity for schools to build students' capacity and awareness of social inequalities and discrimination. Schools are also co-responsible (with parents and the community) for promoting children's development as active and responsible citizens, providing opportunities for them to understand diversity as a source of positive possibilities and learning, and building their critical thinking. Gender and sexuality education in schools aims to develop in students the knowledge, attitudes, and values that will support their ability to make choices and decisions that are appropriate to their health and physical, social, and mental well-being and contribute to eradicating inequalities and discrimination.

In Portugal, the inclusion of a mandatory subject in the school curricula - Citizenship and Development – enables students to access learning opportunities regarding sexuality, gender, and inequalities throughout their schooling (e.g., from primary to secondary education), in both public and private educational establishments. Note that these topics are mandatory, but the subject is not limited to them, and not in all grades these are approached.

The present study offers an overview of students' and teachers' knowledge and attitudes regarding gender equality and SGBV, providing insights into how the curriculum on these topics is effectively contributing to students' learning and values development.

Overall, students' conceptualization of gender, gender diversity, sexuality diversity, and gender equality recognize that gender refers not only to sex and biological characteristics but that there are multiple possibilities in a markedly idiosyncratic process. Although they can conceptualize the multiplicity of gender identities and sexual orientations, the examples used to portray inequality often miss the assumption of diversity. Thus, their discourses are sometimes restricted to a binary perspective of gender, with only male and female (in)equalities emerging, thus showing a lack of awareness towards gender diversity. Therefore, despite students sometimes recognizing general and specific inequalities between “man” and “woman” in society,

almost no knowledge about global indicators of gender-based inequality was evidenced, besides the one inherent to traditional gender roles. These results raise concerns since awareness of gender and gender inequalities seems to be restricted to a binary perspective. We note that both students and teachers mentioned that gender expression is among the least discussed topics in school, which may contribute to this lack of awareness of broader conceptions of gender. The idea that gender ideology attempts against the natural order of social organization, threatening fundamental societal structures such as binarism and heterosexism, and consequently, the traditional conceptualization of family, has been spreading around the world (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). In Europe, countries such as Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia are facing a wave of conservatism against the so-called gender ideology, gender theory, or genderism, with fundamentalist groups and the Catholic Church questioning women's and sexual minorities' rights, gender policies, educational programs, and gender studies departments (Kováts, 2018). Portugal is not immune to this tendency, particularly due to its historical background regarding women's and sexual minorities' rights.

Although the binary conception of gender may have constrained the subsequent reflections on the topic, it is important to state that most students are aware of the negative impact of gender inequalities, both in schools, as well as in society and recognize the need to promote equality and being respectful and tolerant towards others. Students provide some examples and strategies to promote gender equality and combat inequality which portrays an attitude of openness and acceptance towards differences. In this sense, students not only can identify who are the actors involved in inequality situations but also distinguish the contexts where manifestations of power imbalance are observed. According to their perspectives, to achieve gender equality a multi-level approach must be addressed, with students, teachers, families, and institutions having a central role in promoting change in attitudes and beliefs.

As for students' knowledge about support and information services, they mainly identify teachers as the ones to whom they can seek information and/or support regarding sexuality, gender, and SGBV. This may be due to the level of trust they consider teachers deserve based on their theoretical knowledge of the topics, recognizing teachers as reference figures, but also indicative of low or even an absence of knowledge regarding other important services and persons, both in schools and the community, such as psychologists, and elements of institutions focused on supporting sexuality education and gender equality. Improving the mechanisms of approximation to youth, and fostering their knowledge of services and resources available to support them regarding sexuality seems to be necessary, particularly considering that the awareness of different services students can access can contribute to ensuring engagement in informed decision-making processes about their lives and health and know where to seek

information and help when needed (IPPF, 2017). This can be paradoxical considering that most students mention feeling more comfortable addressing gender-related topics and sexuality with their friends and their family members than with their teachers. School climate was perceived as promoting gender equality and having a preventive approach to SGBV, with approximately half of the students feeling that they rarely/never were judged or discriminated against due to their gender or sexuality expression. This evidence may reflect a paradigm shift in addressing SGBV, so it would be interesting to explore in more detail what might be contributing to this perception.

Specifically, on SGBV, it is possible to conclude that students have a narrow knowledge of the SGBV phenomenon, as they can give examples of physical and verbal abuse but were not able to define the phenomenon. Their examples on SGBV focused mainly on dating violence and peer violence. Additionally, their perceptions are focused on their peers' violence, probably because this is the context of their personal experiences. Both physical and psychological consequences for survivors were mentioned, suggesting that students are somewhat aware of the signs and the consequences of SGBV, especially when they are related to survivors and schools. Similarly, with the knowledge of school and community services to support sexuality and gender education, students seem to lack information regarding school and community resources that aim at supporting prevention and combating SGBV. Their perception is that aggressors will only be punished if authorities are involved, and so their main strategy to act and deal with SGBV is reporting to adults. Still, some students mention feeling confident enough to speak up and intervene to defend a survivor. In this sense, providing information on available resources for survivors and perpetrators is necessary.

Students identified several actions that change the SGBV scenario and mentioned that they demand individual, communitarian, and institutional efforts, including strategies at both micro and macro-level. They are aware that SGBV can occur in several contexts: school, and its different spaces, extra school activities, families, and inclusively in the digital world. Considering the inevitable presence of digital environments in youth lives, being aware of SGBV in the digital world is not irrelevant. To combat SGBV students consider it pivotal to articulate individual, family, school, community, and institutional strategies and the awareness that SGBV is a socially complex phenomenon requiring a broader intervention. Surprisingly students refer that frequently there are no consequences for aggressors unless the aggression is reported to the authorities. This may suggest that the actions that schools or even society take towards aggressors are not perceived by students to be negative. This may be related to the main strategy and ability they identify in themselves to deal with SGBV which is to report to an adult.

Four profiles of students regarding their stance toward sexuality education in schools were found. Most students (profile 3, $n = 119$), reported high level of diversity of topics related

to sexuality, gender, and gender-based violence approached in school activities and medium levels of comfort and knowledge. There was also a group of students (profile 1) who perceived higher diversity of topics and more activities in schools related to sexuality, gender, and SGBV, better school climate and support, describe high levels of comfort and a medium level of knowledge about resources; while other students (profile 4) perceived low levels of diversity of topics addressed in school, had lower levels of comfort and knowledge on these topics. This underlines the variability both in schools' activities, as well as in students' knowledge and levels of comfort leading to the need of future studies to better understand the factors contributing to students' knowledge and levels of comfort.

Regarding teachers' conceptions and experiences, results indicate that although they identify some inequalities based on gender in society, all teachers interviewed consider that schools are a space where there are few gender inequalities and that the school is a safe space for gender and sexuality education. They consider that regulations ensure job equality, but still identify that the same is not true when focusing on students' relations and interactions. When focusing on SGBV, they were aware of situations among students (e.g., dating violence, peer violence, sexual orientation violence, trans violence, physical violence, and psychological and verbal violence) in different spaces (classrooms, recess, digital world), and the negative impact of these situations for students, the school and the society was emphasized. Throughout the analysis of teachers' discourses, some incongruences were identified between their perception of gender equality and the examples they use to corroborate it. For instance, the higher number of female teachers was pinpointed as an indicator of gender equality, which does not recognize that the number of women in leadership positions (43.2%) is still inferior compared to men (Rodrigues et al., 2018).

By analyzing teachers' knowledge and level of confidence to include in their classes gender, sexuality, and SGBV-related topics, as preconized by the curricula, it was evident in teachers' discourses that those levels of knowledge and confidence varied, and the lack of training and experience seemed to be accompanied by more or less comfort/knowledge.

Four profiles of teachers were found, highlighting the variability in teachers' needs, comfort, knowledge, use of practices/strategies, implementation, and participation in activities regarding topics related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV in schools. Note that the teachers who reported having more knowledge and feeling more comfortable in approaching gender and sexuality are not the ones who report implementing more activities in classes regarding the topic or that engage in collaborations with other professionals in this scope. Profile analysis also reveals that there is a particular group of teachers who show less agreement regarding the schools' responsibility for sexual education. Professionals in this group feel less comfortable in

approaching these topics and recognizing their lack of knowledge. Still, this group is implementing activities and participating in sexuality education often.

Teachers highlighted that no specific training is required for lecturing on such topics, which can also lead to higher variability and difficulty in ensuring cohesive learning, aligned with the national and international recommendations, and adjusted to the most updated perspectives, both across subjects and even across schools. This may also be due to the perception that training available is more theoretical, as indicated by teachers' need for practical training from their discourses. About 60% of teachers report that they need more time to plan classes adequately to include these topics, also more time to implement activities embedded in the school curricula across several subjects, and more training, materials, and support from specialized professionals, as well as more support, to know how to address these topics with parents. Teachers' discourses reveal concerns about the fact that there is no specific training requirement for teaching the Citizenship and Development subject, and about how well are teachers prepared to discuss and foster students' knowledge on sensitive topics related to gender, sexuality, and SGBV since almost 50% of teachers disagree or do not have an opinion about their knowledge on these themes. Nevertheless, over 90% of teachers, both in the qualitative and quantitative study, agree that the schools and families are co-responsible for students' gender and sexuality education, underling school-family partnerships are crucial for children's awareness and empowerment regarding positive life habits, including positive attitudes towards diversity and sexuality.

Recognizing the relevance of family contexts for students' learning and positive development, as well as the need for family-school collaboration and partnerships, this study also collected information on parents' perspectives on their children's educational experience regarding gender and sexuality education. The main results highlight that most parents consider having adequate knowledge to talk with their adolescent children about gender, sexuality, and SGBV, with sexuality being the theme that parents perceive to have more knowledge of. Although parents mention having more knowledge of sexuality than SGBV, they report feeling more comfortable talking about SGBV. Despite this, the percentage of parents who effectively talk to or encourage their children to talk about these themes is low. Assuming that parents' emotional support and open and safe communication on the subject is relevant to their children's sexual health, these results seem a positive indicator.

Still, similarly to teachers, most parents report having several needs regarding materials and activities for supporting their children's gender, sexuality, and SGBV education in family contexts. Considering that almost all teachers and almost all parents agree that the responsibility of addressing gender, sexuality, and SGBV-related topics should be shared between families and schools and that schools must implement activities to promote their children's development and

learning in this scope, it seems important that schools can offer more support to teachers and families, building collaborative partnerships, and involve them in the activities of school projects dedicated to these topics, as well as in planning gender and sexuality education.

Results focused on students' and teachers' perspectives on what and how the curricula on gender and sexuality education are being implemented show that both students and teachers recognize Citizenship and Development, and Natural Sciences as the subjects where more often gender, sexuality, and SGBV, are discussed. Nevertheless, a slight presence in other subjects is dependent on the fit between the subject with the topics (sexuality, gender, SGBV), as well as with teachers' individual interest, knowledge, and comfort in including these topics. Concerningly some teachers referred they never discussed either of the themes related to gender and sexual education with students in their classes.

Both students and teachers stated that the most often discussed topics in schools are gender and human rights, gender, and social inclusion, sexuality and reproductive anatomy, sexuality and human rights, privacy, and family relationships. Their perspectives are also aligned concerning the less often approached topic of gender expression. Students underline that gender identity, body image, sexuality and sexual behavior, gender-based violence, and domestic violence are also scarcely explored. Additionally, teachers recognize that gender and sex, gender roles, sexual orientation, respect towards diversity, communication skills, negotiation, refusal, and consent are also less present in school activities on sexuality education. This seems to indicate that not all topics expected to be covered in school, according to the curricula, are being approached in activities, with teachers underlining that only a few classes across the year are intentionally focusing on these matters. Despite some of the topics considered to be less addressed in schools are sometimes discussed in specific subjects, this does not seem to be sufficient to comply with the guidelines for gender and sexuality education and ensure all students have access to a quality, comprehensive and integrated education in this scope.

Building on the fact that teachers strongly stressed the need for training (both in-service and pre-service/initial training at universities), materials, and support from other specialized professionals for implementing activities on gender and sexual education, it is not surprising that students and teachers state that, usually, these themes are not very often approached in schools; and when discussed, teaching strategies include mainly videos, texts, presentations, debates, and projects. This seems to indicate that traditional teaching strategies, like classroom-based lectures and group discussions, are the main strategies used in schools, with little to no specific projects or activities in schools on gender, sexuality, and/or SGBV being identified by students. Once again, the lack of network with community institutions particularly focused on promoting gender equality and preventing SGBV is evident, both from students' and teachers' perspectives.

Regardless, teachers identify the participation of other professionals and institutions in school activities for promoting gender equality and preventing SGBV, when compared to students.

Finally, as the study builds on the several documents that support gender equality and sexuality education internationally and in Portuguese schools, results underline that although the contents included in the Portuguese curricula are broadly aligned with international recommendations (as there are no specific learning goals), both students and teachers recognize that not all contents are covered, which may be reflected on the narrow perspectives and knowledge that students present on gender and SGBV. Teachers also underline the lack of training and time to plan adequately for these classes and the difficulties in adopting a teaching model that builds on the transversality of the contents across all subjects and community partnerships.

Overall, regardless of all the variability, difficulties, and needs, results indicate a statistically significant, but small effect of the school's actual sexuality education implementation (which varies from school to school) on students' knowledge and comfort in approaching gender, sexuality, and SGBV. This may be indicative of the potential effect of gender and sexuality education in schools. Small effects were found, with schools with more activities and including more topics affecting positively students' knowledge and comfort. It may be that if a more comprehensive and structured approach is adopted by schools, these effects may increase.

Concluding, the results of this study suggest that to achieve gender equality and prevent and combat SGBV a multi-level, systematic, and specialized approach must be implemented in schools, assuring the training of the teachers and the participation and involvement of the entire community, especially students, non-teacher staff and families, but also specialists. Moreover, gender and sexual diversity topics, namely those concerning sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, should be considered not only as central topics, and effectively explored topics, in Citizenship and Development subject, but also the overall school context, in compliance with the recommendations of national and international education entities, overcoming moral and cultural biases. Additionally, information on the characteristics of phenomena, support services, and resources must be disseminated among students, to empower them and reduce the impacts of gender and sexual discrimination and SGBV.

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Appendix A.

Gender Equality in School Contexts: attitudes and knowledge of students and teachers

DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

- Students -

Quantitative study

Instruments included in the protocol:

- (1) Sociodemographic Data Questionnaire
- (2) Questionnaire: Gender Equality in the School Curriculum – Students' Perception
- (3) Questionnaire: Gender equality and school climate – Students' Perception
- (4) Resources and services to support gender equality and sexuality in school and community
- (5) Gender Equality and Sexual and Gender Based Violence: Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs and Competencies

Data collection:

- Online questionnaires

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDENTS

SCHOOL CODE: _____ CLASS CODE: _____ PARTICIPANT CODE: _____

Date of birth:	
Gender:	Feminine Masculine Non-binary I'd rather not answer
Withholdings:	Yes N If yes , indicate the number of retentions and in which years of schooling:
Nationality:	Portuguese Other. Which one? How long have you lived in Portugal?
Household (number of people residing in your house)	2 people 3 people 4 people More than 4 people

Please fill in the following table considering the people in your household.

Elements of the household (kinship)	Gender	Age	Academic Qualifications	Profession

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION

For each of the statements presented below, rate according to the following scale, choosing the one that best reflects your opinion.

- 1 – Never or almost never
- 2 – Few times
- 3 – Sometimes
- 4 – Many times
- 5 – Always or almost always
- 6 – Don't know/Does not apply

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. My school organizes gender-related information, debate and reflection activities related to gender:						
Gender identity						
Gender expression						
Difference between gender and sex						
Gender roles						
Gender-related stereotypes and prejudices						
Human rights and gender						
Culture, society and gender						
Values and gender						
Social inclusion						
2. My school organizes information, debate and reflection activities related to sexuality:						
Sexual orientation						
Body image						
Sexual and reproductive health						
Sexual and reproductive anatomy						
Sexuality and sexual behavior						
Human rights and sexuality						
Values and sexuality						
Culture, society and sexuality						
3. My school organizes information, debate and reflection activities related to gender-based violence:						
Respect for diversity (e.g., LGBTQIA+ people)						
Violence in intimate relationships (e.g., dating)						
Sexual violence (e.g., what it is, what are the warning signs, where to report it, ...)						
Gender-based violence (e.g., against queer people, transgender people, ...)						
Consent and sexuality						
Privacy						
Body integrity						
Decision-making process						
Peer group influence						
Communication, refusal and negotiation skills						
Support networks						
Friendship, love and intimate relationships						
Family relationships						
4. At my school, gender-related activities are carried out within the scope of:						
Subject classes:						

Portuguese							
Foreign Language I							
Foreign Language II							
Math							
Natural Sciences							
Physical-Chemistry Sciences							
History							
Geography							
Visual Education							
Physical Education							
Citizenship and Development							
Information and Communication Technologies							
Catholic Moral and Religious Education							
Others (specify)							
Activities related to projects implemented at school							
Class/school assemblies							
Discussion forums							
Youth Parliament							
Others (specify)							
5. At my school, activities related to sexuality are conducted within the scope of:							
Subject classes:							
Portuguese							
Foreign Language I							
Foreign Language II							
Math							
Natural Sciences							
Physical-Chemistry Sciences							
History							
Geography							
Visual Education							
Physical Education							
Citizenship and Development							
Information and Communication Technologies							
Catholic Moral and Religious Education							
Others (specify)							
Activities related to projects implemented at school							
Class/school assemblies							
Discussion forums							
Youth Parliament							
Others (specify)							
6. At my school, activities related to gender-based violence are conducted within the scope of:							
Subject classes:							
Portuguese							
Foreign Language I							
Foreign Language II							
Math							
Natural Sciences							
Physical-Chemistry Sciences							
History							
Geography							
Visual Education							
Physical Education							
Citizenship and Development							
Information and Communication Technologies							

Catholic Moral and Religious Education									
Others (specify)									
Activities related to projects implemented at school									
Class/school assemblies									
Discussion forums									
Youth Parliament									
Others (specify)									
7. At my school, gender-related activities are conducted by:									
Teachers of different subjects									
School psychologist									
Health centre professionals									
Safe School agents									
Representatives of Community Associations (e.g., Associação para o Planeamento da Família, APF; Plano i, APAV – Associação de Apoio à Vítima, UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta)									
Others (specify)									
8. At my school, activities related to sexuality are conducted by:									
Teachers of different subjects									
School psychologist									
Health centre professionals									
Safe School agents									
Representatives of Community Associations (e.g., Associação para o Planeamento da Família, APF; Plano i, APAV – Associação de Apoio à Vítima, UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta)									
Others (specify)									
9. At my school, activities related to gender-based violence are conducted by:									
Teachers of different subjects									
School psychologist									
Health centre professionals									
Safe School agents									
Representatives of Community Associations (e.g., Associação para o Planeamento da Família – APF; Plano i, APAV – Associação de Apoio à Vítima, UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta)									
Others (specify)									

GENDER EQUALITY AND SCHOOL CLIMATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION

For each of the statements presented below, rate according to the following scale, choosing the one that best reflects your opinion.

- 1 – Never or almost never
- 2 – Few times
- 3 – Sometimes
- 4 – Many times
- 5 – Always or almost always
- 6 – Don't know/ Does not apply

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. At my school, I have one or more teachers I can turn to talk about topics related to gender and sexuality.						
2. At my school, I have one or more friends whom I can turn to talk about topics related to gender and sexuality.						
3. At my school, LGBTQIA+ people are respected.						
4. At my school, I have felt judged for topics related to gender and sexuality (e.g. appearance, clothing and accessories, interests, and games).						
5. At my school, I have seen situations where people were discriminated against due to gender and sexuality topics (e.g., appearance, clothing and accessories, interests, and games).						
6. At my school, when we talk about sexuality, we talk openly and positively.						
7. At my school, each person's sexual choices are respected.						
8. At my school, I have seen homophobic or sexist comments.						
9. At my school, I have seen situations of gender-based violence.						
10. At my school, people who are different (e.g., Roma people, LGBTQIA+) are often targets of violence.						
11. I feel comfortable talking about topics related to gender and sexuality with:						
Colleagues/friends						
Teachers						
Family						
Psychologist						
School health doctor and/or nurse						
Community associations (e.g., Associação para o Planeamento da Família – APF; Plano i, APAV – Associação de Apoio à Víctima, UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta)						
Others (specify)						

RESOURCES AND SERVICES TO SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY AND SEXUALITY IN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY STUDENTS

For each of the statements presented below, select the option: YES, NO or I DON'T KNOW.

	YES	NO	I DON'T KNOW
1. In schools, there is an office/service where I can report situations of bullying that occur to me and/or others.			
2. In schools, there is an office/service where I can report situations of homophobia or transphobia that occur with me and/or with other people.			
3. In schools, there is an office/service where I can report situations of gender-based violence.			
4. If I have any questions or want to talk about the changes that occur in my body, there is a professional in school that I can turn to.			
5. To obtain information about contraceptive methods and counselling in the area of sexuality, I need permission from my parents (or another legal guardian).			
6. In schools, teachers are the only ones I can turn to report situations of gender-based violence (e.g., bullying, situations of discrimination and/or exclusion, situations of violence) that occur to me and/or others.			
7. When I need contraceptives, I know where to get them.			
8. If I suspect that I am pregnant or that my girlfriend is pregnant, there is a professional at the school who can support us.			
9. There is a student support office in schools that I can turn to for advice on sexuality and romantic relationships.			
10. I know of institutions outside the school that support young people in family planning and their sexuality.			
11. I know of institutions outside the school to whom I can report and get support in cases of gender-based violence.			
12. In schools, there is a school health team that can help me obtain information about sexuality and warning signs about gender-based violence.			
13. To make a report of violence I need to be accompanied by an adult (e.g., father, mother, teacher).			
14. When I watch or find myself involved in situations of inequality and/or discrimination, there are institutions/services in the community that I know and to whom I can turn to.			
15. When I identify situations of inequality and/or discrimination, I have a service/office/teams/professionals at school to whom I can report and which guarantees the confidentiality of the information.			
16. Health centers are the only places where I can go for counseling in the area of sexuality.			
17. When I have to make decisions about sexuality and romantic relationships, I can only turn to my closest friends.			
18. When I feel uncomfortable with some behavior of my romantic partner, I solve this issue alone.			

GENDER EQUALITY AND SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND COMPETENCIES STUDENTS

For each of the statements presented below, rate according to the following scale:

- 1 - Totally Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 – Neither disagree nor agree
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Totally Agree

Answer according to your opinion.

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Totally Agree
1. It is the genitals that define what it means to be a man or a woman.					
2. What society determines as appropriate behavior based on the sex assigned at birth is not always what each person wants.					
3. There are only two types of sexual orientation: heterosexuality and homosexuality.					
4. Equality between people, regardless of their sex, is an indicator of social development.					
5. The more we encourage sexual freedom, the more we encourage people to engage in unsafe sexual behaviors.					
6. In recent years, Portugal has become a fairer country for people who are part of more vulnerable social groups (e.g., Roma people, immigrants, and refugees).					
7. A discriminação face a pessoas LGBTQIA+ é uma clara violação dos Direitos Humanos.					
8. Gender-based violence is only that which occurs against girls/women.					
9. People who witness a situation of violence in an intimate relationship can also be affected by it (e.g., fear, feeling of being unprotected, insecurity).					
10. It is only when there is sexual violence that we are dealing with gender-based violence.					
11. Gender-based violence is a crime, and whoever watches it must report it.					
12. Survivors of violence in the family, at work or at school have free and specialized support services (e.g., psychological, legal) at their disposal.					
13. Excluding someone because that person does not identify with a binary gender (e.g., male/female) is a form of gender-based violence.					
14. Some cultural practices can be a form of violence against women (e.g., female genital mutilation, and forced marriages).					

15. People who suffer violence in an intimate relationship are being survivors of a crime.					
16. In order for there to be sexual violence, it has to be physical.					
17. Sexual violence can be practiced by known and/or unknown people.					
18. No one has the right to touch another person without their consent.					
19. Bullying is a crime and must be reported.					
20. Each person must identify and accept themselves as a man, woman, or other, regardless of organs sexual organs they had at birth.					
21. Young people should be able to act as they want in their sex life and define their sexuality as they see fit.					
22. Young people should be able to explore different sexual experiences, as long as these are informed, consented and mutually agreed.					
23. A person can express their sexuality in an open and positive way, even if they choose not to have sex.					
24. Each person's sexuality concerns only themselves.					
25. People who do not behave according to their sex assigned at birth are socially discriminated.					
26. If I don't correspond to what is expected of me, as a boy or as a girl (e.g., clothing, interests), I feel like I will disappoint the people I care about.					
27. People who are survivors of violence because of their sexual orientation contribute to this by challenging sexual and gender norms.					
28. We can change someone's violent behavior by being patient and giving the other person time to change.					
29. Encouraging a person to assume a male or female identity is a way to protect them from Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.					
30. Intimate relationships that are based on equality make people feel happier.					
31. It is normal, in an intimate relationship, to go through the partner's personal things without their authorization (e.g., E-mail account, social media profile, coat pockets, cell phone, wallet, diary).					
32. If I tell an adult that I am experiencing violence in an intimate relationship, it will help me feel better.					
33. Psychological violence is less serious than physical violence.					
34. Family members have the right to beat and treat each other badly.					
35. Insults among young people are just a joke.					
36. When violence occurs at home, no one should interfere.					
37. It is more serious for a woman to hit a man than for a man to hit a woman.					
38. I treat people the same, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.					
39. In my daily life, I behave in a way that makes me feel good, without worrying whether my behavior will be considered boy or girl.					
40. I express my opinion even when it differs from my peers, family members and/or teachers.					
41. I can distinguish situations where young people insult each other just for fun from situations where the insults are serious.					
42. I feel good about my sexual orientation.					
43. I have difficulty understanding perspectives that differ from my own.					
44. I am able to accept and respect other people's opinions on topics related to sexuality, even when they are different from mine.					

45. When I disagree with someone, I am able to hear their point of view.					
46. I can clearly distinguish between appropriate and abusive touching and caressing.					
47. I can understand what other people are feeling.					
48. In my relationships with other people, I can avoid behaviors that I dislike (e.g., touching, and caressing).					
49. I have a hard time dealing with people who fall in love with people of the same sex.					
50. In romantic relationships, I am able to express myself when my needs are not considered.					
51. When I don't feel comfortable doing something, I am able to say no.					
52. I am capable of hitting my boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she behaves inappropriately.					
53. I spend more time avoiding my problems than solving them.					
54. I make decisions too quickly.					
55. I can't help but argue with people when they disagree with me.					
56. When I witness a situation of violence, I tend to walk away.					
57. People living with HIV are obliged to disclose their HIV status to their sexual partners.					
58. Preventing pregnancy is the responsibility of girls.					
59. In a trusting relationship, it is not necessary to use a condom.					
60. In a couple, if one of the members tries to pressure the other to have sex and the other doesn't want to, it's important that the unwilling partner gives in/accepts for the good of the relationship.					
61. Young people should be able to act as they want in their sex life and define their sexuality according to their own choices.					
62. It cannot be said that there has been rape if a sex worker is forced to have sex against their will because they were just doing their job.					
63. It is perfectly acceptable to address a person according to their apparent gender, rather than using the pronouns (e.g., he/she) that this person prefers for themselves.					

Qualitative Study

- Interview script
- Focus group script

Data collection:

- Presential

INTERVIEW SCRIPT
STUDENTS

A. Gender Equality

1. In your opinion, how would you explain what a person's gender is? How can we know what is the gender of a person? And what do you think we mean when we talk about gender equality?

[if the student does not know how to answer, present a definition, explaining what it is]

2. From your point of view, and in general, is there gender equality?

[if so]

- 2.1. In what situations and contexts do you consider that gender equality is manifested? I would like you to give me some examples of situations you have experienced or know that you think are good examples of gender equality.
- 2.2. What do you understand by sexual and gender diversity?

[if not]

- 2.3. In what situations and contexts do you consider that gender inequality manifests itself? Who is affected? Why do you think this happens? And how could we change it? *[even if the interviewee does not answer everything, ask again about the topics not covered]*
- 2.4. What do you understand by sexual and gender diversity?

3. From your point of view, is there gender equality in your school context?

[if so]

- 3.1. In what situations? What aspects or characteristics of these situations are indicators of gender equality?
- 3.2. Why do you think these situations exist in your school? And what do you think sustains/maintains it?
- 3.3. What do you consider to be the consequences and impacts of gender equality in the school context?
- 3.4. What do you think your school's role should be in promoting gender equality? I would like you to give me some concrete examples of what your school does or could do.
- 3.5. What do you consider to be your role in promoting gender equality? I would like you to give me some concrete examples of what you do or could do to contribute to gender equality.

[If not]

- 3.6. In your opinion, how and where does gender inequality manifest itself in your school?
Who does it affect?
- 3.7. Why do you think it exists at your school? And what do you think sustains/maintains it?
- 3.8. What do you consider to be the consequences and impacts of gender inequality in the school context?
- 3.9. What do you think your school's role should be to prevent and tackle gender inequality?
Can you give concrete examples of what your school does or could do?
- 3.10. What do you consider to be your role in promoting gender inequality? I would like you to give me some concrete examples of what you do or could do to contribute to gender inequality.

B. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

4. Now I would like to ask you a few questions about Sexual and Gender-Based Violence among young people.

- 4.1. In your opinion, what is Sexual and Gender-Based Violence among young people? And in what ways can it manifest itself, that is, what signs do we see that there is violence?
[if the student does not know how to answer, present a definition, explaining what it is]
- 4.2. In what contexts, situations, or dynamics do you consider Sexual and Gender-Based Violence to exist? Have you seen situations that you consider to be Sexual and Gender-Based Violence? Can you tell us about some of these situations?
- 4.3. Do you consider that there is a profile of survivors and aggressors? And if so, how do you characterize these profiles? [e.g., ask whether the fact that people are transgender, gay, or queer makes them a survivor]
- 4.4. What do you consider to be the impacts and consequences of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence to be? (who is affected, what consequences it may have for survivors, perpetrators, for the school, ...)
- 4.5. What motivates young people to engage in Sexual and Gender-Based Violence behaviors?
- 4.6. What difficulties or challenges do you identify in the fight against gender violence?

5. Now specifying the school context, what measures do you consider to be useful in preventing and combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the school context?

[Note for 5.1., 5.2., 5.3.: ask only about the roles that were not mentioned in the previous question by the student]

- 5.1. What do you consider to be the role of the family in preventing and combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the school context?
 - 5.2. What do you consider to be the role of the school in preventing and combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the school context?
 - 5.3. What do you consider to be your role as a student in preventing and combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the school context?
 - 5.4. Do you know any programs/strategies the school implements regarding these themes (e.g., SPO/EMAEI, PES (Health Promotion and Education), autonomous programs, partnerships with external entities, such as Escola Segura, ONG's)? If so, I would like you to tell me a little about these programs/strategies.
 - 5.5. When you identify signs of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence that we talked about earlier [question 4.1.], how do you act? Who/where do you turn/can you turn to? Do you know of any specific service to support these situations?
 - 5.6. For example, do you think LGBTQIA+ students feel comfortable and safe at school? Do you think they can express their gender identity in the same way as anyone else at school? Why? Can you give me an example that happened at your school that helps us understand why you think this way?
- 6. Now focusing on the different subjects you have, and on the subject of Citizenship and Development in particular, what content do you remember having been covered in relation to gender equality, sexual and gender diversity, and/or Sexual and Gender-Based Violence at your school?**
- 6.1. How are these themes addressed in these classes (e.g., type of language: inclusive/non-inclusive; resources: videos/texts/games; the teacher's will/discomfort; strategies, exploration of values, role-play; teacher communication; address the consequences of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence; topics related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases are addressed; topics related to pleasure, well-being, communication and trust between partners in sexual relationships are addressed)? And how often? Would you like something to be different in the classes in which these topics are addressed? If so, what?
 - 6.2. What would you need to know more about these topics? And what other topics related to these would you like to see addressed? Do you consider that the topics covered in the school curriculum meet the needs of all students (e.g., LGBTQIA+; students with disabilities, Roma students or other ethnic minorities)?

- 6.3. How do you assess the impact of these contents (e.g., on school culture, on school governance, on the relationship with the community)?
- 6.4. How do you characterize the participation of students and families in the discussion of these themes?
- 6.5. Do you consider it important to address these topics? Why?
- 6.6. There are different ways of approaching sexuality education, one of which is a comprehensive approach to sexuality education. Do you know this type of approach? [if not, provide a definition] How do you think the way sexuality education is addressed in your school is or is not similar to this approach?
- 6.7. *(Ask only if the interviewee mentioned content covered in subjects)* In addition to the topics covered in the subjects, is gender equality and/or Sexual and Gender-Based Violence addressed in another way at your school (e.g., with initiatives, projects, posters, flyers)?
7. To whom or where a young person could ask for help or report a situation of gender inequality and/or Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, and why?

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

STUDENTS

1. Introduction of moderators and participants.
2. Appreciate the participation.
3. Present the discussion rules: remember confidentiality; there are no right or wrong answers; everyone has the right to intervene; everyone is entitled to their opinion, without judgment; all opinions are important and have value.
4. Instructions: Our meeting today aims to understand how you perceive topics of gender equality and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. We will present a set of situations for which we ask you to present solutions, discussing the essential arguments.
5. Vignettes:

A. Gender Equality

Vignette 1.

Teresa has dreamed of being a computer engineer since she was a little girl. One day she told her best friend, Luís, about her career dream. Luís asked her why she wanted to go into a boys' profession when a woman's role is to work at home and take care of the children.

What do you think Teresa would do after hearing Luís' comment?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; relationships; inclusion, respect, and tolerance; communication; decision making; student's role in promoting gender equality.

Vignette 2.

Ricardo always found the topics of his (girls) classmates' conversations interesting. At one of the breaks, he approached the group of girls and asked if he could join them. The other boys immediately started calling him "sissy" and laughing.

What do you think the girls' group would do when Ricardo asked them to join them?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; relationships; inclusion, respect and tolerance; communication; decision making; student's role in promoting gender equality.

Vignette 3.

In physical education class, the class was divided into mixed groups. When Joana was delegated to be captain of one of the teams, one of the boys left the gym saying: "No way! I don't accept being sent by a girl!".

What do you think Joana should do about this comment?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; comfort in expressing gender identity; relationships; inclusion, respect, and tolerance; communication; decision making; student's role in promoting gender equality.

B. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Vignette 4.

At the end of the physical education class, João was packing the material and gave it to the teacher. He noticed that João had painted nails and was wearing make-up. The teacher asked João if this was how a man should dress.

What do you think João would do after hearing the teacher's comment?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; inclusion, respect and tolerance; communication; decision making; Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (concepts and forms); social discrimination; beliefs about masculinity; intersectionality; role of schools, students and teachers in preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

Vignette 5.

Ana asked Sofia, her girlfriend, to give her the password for her Instagram account. She insists it's a way of showing her commitment to her. Ana doesn't mind giving out her password either, so it's only fair that she shares hers.

What do you think Sofia should do about her girlfriend's request?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; inclusion, respect and tolerance; communication; decision making; Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (concepts and forms); domestic violence (expansion to other forms of violence such as homophobia, dating violence, sexual violence,...);

beliefs about masculinity; intersectionality; intimate relationships; role of schools, students and teachers in preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence; support for survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

Vignette 6.

Teacher Martim dedicated one of his classes to exposing what discrimination based on gender is and how people who are survivors of discrimination suffer negative effects, not only at the time of aggression but during their lives. During the break, teacher Marta went to teacher Martim, who was still in the hallway talking to his students, and started complaining to him, saying that he didn't have the skills to be a teacher and that he should rethink his career because he is transgender.

What do you think teacher Martim would do in this situation?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: inclusion of gender equality in curriculum content; inclusion, respect and tolerance; communication; decision making; Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (concepts and forms; homophobia; transphobia); intersectionality; relationships; role of schools, students and teachers in preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence; support for survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

6. Conclusion and clarification of final doubts. Final thanks.

Appendix B.

Gender Equality in School Contexts: attitudes and knowledge of students and teachers

DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

- Teachers -

Quantitative study

Instruments included in the protocol:

- (1) Sociodemographic Data Questionnaire
- (2) Questionnaire: Gender equality in the school curriculum – Teachers' Perception
- (3) Questionnaire: Perception of knowledge and comfort in addressing gender equality in a school context – Perception of teachers
- (4) Questionnaire: Identification of needs - Perception of teachers

Data collection:

- Online questionnaires

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

TEACHERS

Age:				
Gender:	Feminine Masculine Non-binary I'd rather not answer			
Nationality:	Portuguese Other. Which one? How long have you lived in Portugal?			
Academic Qualifications:	Degree (pre or post Bologna) or Master (post Bologna) Master (pre Bologna) Doctorate			
Time of service as a teacher (in years):				
Time of service as a teacher at the current school (in years):				
Recruitment group:				
Subject(s) taught in the current academic year:	DISCIPLINARY LIST IN THE ONLINE FORM; maintain the possibility of selecting more than one.			
Teaching level:	2nd Cycle of Basic Education 3rd Cycle of Basic Education Secondary school Other: _____			
Current professional situation:	Part-time Full-time			
Type of professional bond:	School Cluster board Pedagogical area board Contracted (one-year contract) Substitute teacher			
Other roles currently held (in addition to teaching)				
Number of children	0 1 3 More than 3			
Did you receive training in gender equality and/or Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the last two years?	Yes No			
If you answered yes to the previous question, what type of action did you receive?		Never	Once	More than once
	Graduation course Training workshop Short session Short session at school Congresses / Conferences			
In your teaching activity, have you ever developed or been involved in promoting actions related to gender equality and/or Sexual and Gender-Based Violence?	Yes No			
If yes, what did this activity/action consist of?	Class(s) for students on the subject Lecture for students Training action for teachers Training action for non-teaching staff Other. Which one?			
What was your role in this activity(ies) / action(s)?	I was one of the proponents of the action I participated in the organization I was an active participant			

	I was an assistant Other. Which one?
--	---

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM TEACHERS' PERCEPTION

For each of the statements presented below, rate according to the following scale, choosing the one that best reflects your opinion.

- 1 – Disagree
- 2 - Neither disagree nor agree
- 3 – Agree
- 4- Don't know/ Does not apply

	1	2	3	4
1. The school should organize activities related to gender (e.g., gender identity and gender stereotypes).				
2. The school should organize activities related to sexuality (e.g., sexual and reproductive health, sexual orientation).				
3. The school should organize activities related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (e.g., dating violence).				
4. School and family should share responsibility in education for topics such as gender, sexuality and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.				

Response scale:

- 1 – Never or almost never
- 2 – Few times
- 3 – Sometimes
- 4 – Many times
- 5 – Always or almost always
- 6 – Don't know/ Does not apply

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. My school organizes information, debate and reflection activities for students related to gender:						
Gender identity						
Gender expression						
Difference between gender and sex						
Gender roles						
Gender-related stereotypes and prejudices						
Human rights and gender						
Culture, society and gender						
Values and gender						
Social inclusion						
2. My school organizes information, debate and reflection activities for students related to sexuality:						
Sexual orientation						
Body image						
Sexual and reproductive health						
Sexual and reproductive anatomy						
Sexuality and sexual behavior						
Human rights and sexuality						

Values and sexuality									
Culture, society and sexuality									
3. My school organizes information, debate and reflection activities for students related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:									
Respect for diversity (e.g., LBGTQIA+ people)									
Consent									
Domestic violence (e.g., dating violence)									
Privacy									
Body integrity									
Decision-making process									
Peer group influence									
Communication, refusal and negotiation skills									
Support networks									
Friendship, love and intimate relationships									
Family relationships									
4. I actively participate in promoting information, debate and reflection activities for students related to the following topics:									
Gender									
Sexuality									
Sexual and Gender-Based Violence									
5. I promoted activities related to gender within the scope of:									
Classes of the subject(s) I teach									
Activities related to projects implemented at school									
Class/school assemblies									
Discussion forums									
Youth Parliament									
Others (specify)									
6. I promoted activities related to sexuality within the scope of:									
Classes of the subject(s) I teach									
Activities related to projects implemented at school									
Class/school assemblies									
Discussion forums									
Youth Parliament									
Others (specify)									
7. I promoted activities related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence within the scope of:									
Classes of the subject(s) I teach									
Activities related to projects implemented at school									
Class/school assemblies									
Discussion forums									
Youth Parliament									
Others (specify)									
8. For the promotion of activities related to gender I had the collaboration of:									
School psychologist									
Other teachers									
Health centre professionals									
Safe School Agents									
Representatives of Community Associations (e.g., Associação para o Planeamento da Família, APF; Plano i, APAV – Associação de Apoio à Vítima, UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta)									
Others (specify)									
9. For the promotion of activities related to sexuality, I had the collaboration of:									
School psychologist									
Other teachers									
Health centre professionals									

Safe School Agents						
Representatives of Community Associations (e.g., Associação para o Planeamento da Família, APF; Plano i, APAV – Associação de Apoio à Vítima, UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta)						
Others (specify)						
10. For the promotion of activities related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, I had the collaboration of:						
School psychologist						
Other teachers						
Health centre professionals						
Safe School Agents						
Representatives of Community Associations (e.g., Associação para o Planeamento da Família, APF; Plano i, APAV – Associação de Apoio à Vítima, UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta)						
Others (specify)						

**PERCEPTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND COMFORT IN ADDRESSING GENDER EQUALITY IN A
SCHOOL CONTEXT
PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS**

For each of the statements presented below, rate according to the following scale, choosing the one that best reflects your opinion.

- 1 – Disagree
- 2 - Neither disagree nor agree
- 3 – Agree
- 4- Don't know/ Does not apply

	1	2	3	4
1. I have enough and adequate knowledge to address gender-related topics with students (e.g., LGBTQIA+; gender equality, gender identity).				
2. I have enough and adequate knowledge to address topics related to sexuality with students.				
3. I have sufficient and adequate knowledge to address topics related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence with students.				
4. I feel comfortable to discuss gender-related themes with students.				
5. I feel comfortable discussing topics related to sexuality with students.				
6. I feel comfortable discussing themes related to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence with students.				
7. In the subject I teach, I address topics related to gender, sexuality and gender violence.				

GENDER EQUALITY: TEACHERS' PRACTICES

Response scale:

- 1 – Disagree
- 2 - Neither disagree nor agree
- 3 – Agree
- 4- Don't know/ Does not apply

	1	2	3	4
1. In my practice, I encourage students to become critically aware of gender norms and roles.				
2. In my practice, I cultivate an environment of empathy so that young people can understand and respond to the reality of others (e.g., empathy and respect for LGBTQIA+ people).				
3. In my practice, I explore with students the dynamics of power and the impact of gender inequalities on experience and expression in relation to sexuality.				
4. In my practice, I implement activities that help students connect harmful gender norms and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, discrimination, and marginalization (e.g., forced marriages, forced pregnancies, female genital mutilation, limitations on clothing, education, employment and participation in public life).				
5. In my practice, I implement activities that allow students to explore the impact of social norms on LGBTQIA+ individuals, sex workers, and others who challenge sexual and gender norms and, as such, are at greater risk of experiencing violence, stigma and discrimination.				
6. In my practice, I implement activities that help young people to develop awareness, skills and abilities to transform harmful gender norms (e.g., through the application of sexual literacy, trust, personal agency, assertive communication, negotiation and display of equitable behaviors of gender).				
7. In my practice, I create a learning environment of respect for everyone's rights and of non-tolerance in the face of violence, discrimination and marginalization based on gender or sexual orientation.				
8. In my practice, I create a learning environment that reinforces models of gender equality (e.g., using inclusive language, and ensuring that young people with diverse gender identities and/or sexual orientations have equal opportunities to participate).				
9. In my practice, I explore with students the advantages of changing norms and fighting for social justice.				

IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS

TEACHERS

Considering the needs that you identify as a teacher in addressing the students with themes related to sexuality, gender, and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, classify each of the aspects listed below, according to the following scale, choosing the one that best translates your opinion:

- 1- No or little need
- 2- Some need
- 3- Much need
- 4- I don't know/does not apply

	1	2	3	4
1. Materials and resources to support activities.				
2. Time to plan and prepare activities and resources for students.				
3. Time to implement activities with students.				
4. Training to support the implementation of activities.				
5. Collaboration of other professionals (e.g., psychologists, nurses)				
6. Support to address the themes with the parents/legal tutors				
7. Others (specify)				

Qualitative Study

- Interview script
- Focus group script

Data collection:

- Presential

INTERVIEW SCRIPT TEACHERS

A. Gender Equality

1. In your opinion, what is/how do you characterize gender equality?

1.1. How do you think your students define/perceive gender and gender equality?

2. From your point of view, and in general, is there gender equality?

[If so]

2.1. In what situations and contexts do you consider that gender equality is manifested? Can you identify examples of situations you have experienced or know that you think are good examples of gender equality?

2.2. What situations and contexts do you think your students would consider to be gender equality situations?

[If not]

2.3. In what situations and contexts do you consider that gender inequality manifests itself? Who is affected? Why do you think this happens? And how could it be changed *[even if the interviewee does not answer everything, ask again about the topics not covered]*

2.4. What situations and contexts do you think your students would consider to be situations of gender inequality?

3. From your point of view, is there gender equality in your school context?

[If so]

3.1. In what situations? What aspects or characteristics of these situations are indicators of gender equality?

3.2. Why do you think these situations exist in your school? And what do you think sustains/maintains it?

3.3. What do you consider to be the consequences and impacts of gender equality in the school context?

3.4. What do you think your school's role should be in promoting gender equality? I would like you to give me some concrete examples of what your school does or could do.

3.5. What do you consider to be your role in promoting gender equality? I would like you to give me concrete examples of what (you) do or could do to contribute to gender equality.

[If not]

- 3.6. In your opinion, how and where does gender inequality manifest itself in your school?
Who does it affect?
- 3.7. Why do you think it exists at your school? And what do you think sustains/maintains it?
- 3.8. What do you consider to be the consequences and impacts of gender inequality in the school context?
- 3.9. What do you think your school's role should be to prevent and tackle gender inequality?
Can you give concrete examples of what your school does or could do?
- 3.10. What do you consider to be your role in promoting gender inequality? I would like you to give me some concrete examples of what you do or could do to contribute to gender inequality.

B. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

4. Now I would like to ask you a few questions about Sexual and Gender-Based Violence among young people.

- 4.1. In your opinion, what is Sexual and Gender-Based Violence among young people? And in what ways can it manifest itself, that is, what signs do we see that there is violence?
[if the student does not know how to answer, present a definition, explaining what it is]
- 4.2. In what contexts, situations or dynamics do you consider Sexual and Gender-Based Violence to exist? Have you seen situations that you consider to be Sexual and Gender-Based Violence? Can you tell us about some of these situations?
- 4.3. Do you consider that there is a profile of survivors and aggressors? And if so, how do you characterize these profiles?
- 4.4. What do you consider to be the impacts and consequences of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence to be? (who is affected, what consequences it may have for survivors, perpetrators, school, ...)
- 4.5. What motivates young people to engage in Sexual and Gender-Based Violence behaviors?
- 4.6. What difficulties or challenges do you identify in the fight against gender violence?
- 4.7. What kind of situations or contexts do you think young people would or would not consider Sexual and Gender-Based Violence?

5. Now specifying the school context, what measures do you consider to be useful in preventing and combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the school context?

[Note for 5.1., 5.2., 5.3.: ask only about the roles that were not mentioned in the previous question by the teacher]

- 5.1. What do you consider to be the role of the family in preventing and combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the school context? Do you feel that families support the teaching of content related to gender equality, sexuality, respect for LGBTQIA+ people, sex workers, ...?
- 5.2. What do you consider to be the role of the school in preventing and combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the school context? Do you feel that the school has a culture of gender equality, violence prevention and respect for LGBTQIA+ people, people from ethnic minorities, ...?
- 5.3. What do you consider to be your role as a teacher in preventing and combating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the school context?
- 5.4. What kind of support from the Government or the Ministry of Education for implementing these themes do you have access to? (Do you know any programs/strategies that the school puts into practice to work on these topics [e.g., SPO/EMAEI, PES (Health Promotion and Education), autonomous programs, partnerships with external entities such as Escola Segura, ONG's)? If so, I would like you to tell me a little about these programs/strategies.)
- 5.5. How comfortable and safe do you feel teaching about these topics? (explore if they feel threatened by some families, other teachers, religious organizations).

6. Now focusing on your role as a teacher within the school subjects you teach [ask to identify which ones], including Citizenship and Development if it's the case, what content do you address in relation to gender equality and/or Sexual and Gender-Based Violence?

- 6.1. How do you address these themes in classes (e.g., type of language: inclusive/non-inclusive; resources: videos/texts/games; teacher's will/discomfort; strategies: brainstorming, problem-solving, exploration of values, role-play; teacher communication; whether the consequences of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence are addressed; whether they address topics related to pleasure, well-being, communication and trust between partners in sexual relationships, reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases)? And how often? What would you like to do differently in class to address these topics? [if they don't address these topics in their subject, explore the reasons]
- 6.2. How do you assess the impact of these contents (e.g., on school culture, on school governance, on the relationship with the community)?

- 6.3. How do you characterize the participation of students and families in the discussion of these themes?
- 6.4. How would you describe your level of comfort/ease in addressing these topics?
- 6.5. How do you describe your skills or knowledge to address these topics?
- 6.6. What do you think your needs are (e.g., in terms of training; materials and resources; time; support from parents) to implement the curriculum in the field of sexuality education and gender equality? You can also identify the needs of other teaching colleagues.
- 6.7. What would be the ideal way to teach sexuality education in schools: in separate subjects or cross-curricular? And who would be responsible for teaching this topic?
- 6.8. Research has shown that a comprehensive approach to sexuality education appears to be more efficient in educating young people. Do you know/use this approach? [if they don't know, provide a definition] Can you tell us a little about how you use it in your classes?

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

TEACHERS

1. Introduction of moderators and participants.
2. Appreciate the participation.
3. Present the discussion rules: remember confidentiality; there are no right or wrong answers; everyone has the right to intervene; everyone is entitled to their opinion, without judgment; all opinions are important and have value.
4. Instructions: Our meeting today aims to understand how you perceive topics of gender equality and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. We will present a set of situations for which we ask you to present solutions, discussing the essential arguments.
5. Vignettes:

A. Gender Equality

Vignette 1.

Teacher Luísa witnessed a conversation in the school hallway: Teresa has dreamed of being a computer engineer since she was little, and told her best friend, Luís, about her career dream. Luís asked her why she wanted to go into a boys' profession, when a woman's role is to work at home and take care of the children.

What could teacher Luísa do after hearing Luís' comment?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; relationships; inclusion, respect, and tolerance; communication; decision making; teacher's role in promoting gender equality.

Vignette 2.

Professor Gabriel noticed that, during one of the breaks, Ricardo approached the group of girls and asked if he could join them. It turns out that he always found the topics of conversations of his (girls) classmates interesting. They accepted and continued to talk throughout the day. At the end of the day, the boys from Ricardo's class criticized his choice.

What could be the role of Professor Gabriel in this situation?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; relationships; inclusion, respect, and tolerance; communication; decision making; teacher's role in promoting gender equality.

Vignette 3.

In physical education class, the class was divided into mixed groups. When Joana was delegated to be captain of one of the teams, one of the boys left the gym saying: "No way! I don't accept being sent by a girl!".

What do you think the physical education teacher should do with this comment?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; comfort in expressing gender identity; relationships; inclusion, respect, and tolerance; communication; decision making; teacher's role in promoting gender equality.

B. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Vignette 4.

At the end of the physical education class, João was packing the material and gave it to the teacher. He noticed that João had painted nails and was wearing make-up. The teacher asked João if this was how a man should dress.

What would the student's reaction be to this comment?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; inclusion, respect and tolerance; communication; decision making; Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (concepts and forms; homophobia; transphobia); social discrimination; beliefs about masculinity; intersectionality; role of schools, students and teachers in preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

Vignette 5.

Ana asked Sofia, her girlfriend, to give her the password for her Instagram account. She insists it's a way of showing her commitment to her. Ana doesn't mind giving out her password either, so it's only fair that she shares hers. During the Citizenship and Development class, she shared this idea of hers with the teacher and was supported by her colleagues.

How can the teacher react?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: gender equality; stereotypes; social construction of gender and social norms; inclusion, respect and tolerance; communication; decision making; Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (concepts and forms; homophobia; transphobia); domestic violence; beliefs about masculinity; intersectionality; intimate relationships; role of schools, students and teachers in preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence; support for survivors of gender-based violence.

Vignette 6.

Teacher Martim dedicated one of his classes to exposing what discrimination based on gender is, and how people who are survivors of discrimination suffer negative effects, not only at the time of aggression, but during their lives. During the break, teacher Marta went to teacher Martim, who was still in the hallway talking to his students, and started complaining to him, saying that he didn't have the skills to be a teacher and that he should rethink his career because he is transgender.

What do you think teacher Martim would do in this situation?

Topics to be addressed by moderators during the discussion: inclusion of gender equality in curriculum content; inclusion, respect and tolerance; communication; decision making; gender-based violence (concepts and forms; homophobia; transphobia); intersectionality; relationships; role of the school, teachers and students in preventing gender-based violence; support for survivors of gender-based violence; needs and obstacles to the implementation of the gender equality approach in school curricula.

6. Conclusion and clarification of final doubts. Final thanks.

Appendix C.

Gender Equality in School Contexts: attitudes and knowledge of students and teachers

DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

- Parents/Legal tutors -

Quantitative study

Instruments included in the protocol:

- (1) Sociodemographic Data Questionnaire
- (2) Questionnaire: Perception of gender equality in the school curriculum – parents/legal tutors
- (3) Questionnaire: Perception of Sexual Education: parents/legal tutors
- (4) Questionnaire: Perception of knowledge and comfort in approaching gender equality in a family context – parents/legal tutors
- (5) Questionnaire: Identification of needs – parents/legal tutors' perception

Data collection:

- Paper questionnaires

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE
PARENTS/LEGAL TUTORS

Age:	
Gender:	Feminine Masculine Non-binary I'd rather not answer
Nationality:	Portuguese Other. Which one? How long have you lived in Portugal?
Academic Qualifications:	1st Cycle of Basic Education 2nd Cycle of Basic Education 3rd Cycle of Basic Education Secondary education Higher education
Profession:	
Work status:	Employed for someone else Self employed Retired Unemployed Other
Relationship with the student:	Mother Father Other. Specify:
Do you live with the student?	Yes No
Family structure:	Nuclear (parents and children) Extended (parents, children, grandparents, uncles) Reconstructed (couple in which at least one of the members has children from a previous relationship) Single parent Other
Household (number of people residing with the child)	2 people 3 people 4 people More than 4 people
Level of support (School Social support status):	Level of support A Level of support B Level of support C No support

PERCEPTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM
PARENTS/LEGAL TUTORS' PERCEPTION

For each of the statements presented below, rate according to the following scale, choosing the one that best reflects your opinion.

- 1 – Disagree
- 2 – Neither disagree nor agree
- 3 – Agree
- 4 – Don't know/ Does not apply

	1	2	3	4
1. The school should organize activities related to gender (e.g., gender identity and gender stereotypes).				
2. The school should organize activities related to sexuality (e.g., sexual, and reproductive health).				
3. The school should organize activities related to gender-based violence (e.g., dating violence).				
4. School and family should share responsibility in education for topics such as gender, sexuality and gender-based violence.				
5. I encourage my child to participate in school activities related to gender, sexuality and/or gender-based violence.				

PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL EDUCATION PARENTS/LEGAL TUTORS' PERCEPTION

A) For each of the statements presented below, rate according to the following scale, choosing the one that best reflects your opinion.

- 1 – Disagree
- 2 – Neither disagree nor agree
- 3 – Agree
- 4 – Don't know/ Does not apply

In your opinion, sexuality education (in or out of school):	1	2	3	4
1. Promotes activities to support families in the sexuality education of children and young people.				
2. Establishes partnership mechanisms, namely with the health services, that allow individual referral and guidance whenever necessary.				
3. It focuses on promoting protective and risk-preventing sexual behaviors, providing information on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and contraceptive use.				
4. Provides information, knowledge and awareness about the human, sexual and reproductive rights of young people so that they can make informed, conscious, responsible and autonomous choices about their own body and their sexuality and sex life.				
5. It promotes sexuality in a positive way, addressing topics such as pleasure, desire, happiness, empowerment, trust, consent, body positivity, self-determination, etc.				
6. It contributes to building and developing young people's capacities to recognize harmful social norms and social perceptions of hegemonic masculinity and to have the confidence to question, revisit and challenge these norms.				
7. It raises the awareness of young people to recognize situations of sexual and gender-based violence in its various forms and contexts and to understand its impact, urging them to take action against it.				
8. It promotes the safety of young people by providing information on how they can protect themselves and who they can ask for help (services, institutions, etc.).				
9. It builds a collective solidarity among young people, mobilizing them to advocate that they challenge themselves and change the behavior of powerful groups or institutions that deny them their rights and perpetuate violence and other abuses.				

B) Select whether you consider that sexuality education (in or out of school) INCREASES, MAINTAINS OR DECREASES the following effects:

- 1 – Increases
- 2 – Maintains
- 3 – Decreases
- 4 – I don't know

	1	2	3	4
1. Frequency of sex among teenagers				
2. Waiting time for adolescents to initiate sexual intercourse				
3. Adolescents' number of sexual partners				
4. Adolescents' risk behaviors				
5. Use of condoms or other contraceptive methods by adolescents				
6. Adolescents' decision-making ability to make informed decisions about their sexuality				
7. Violence in adolescents' intimate relationships				

C) Select how important each of the following sources of information is in your views on sexuality education (inside or outside school):

- 1 - Not important
- 2 - Reasonably important
- 3 - Important
- 4 - Very Important
- 5 - Extremely Important
- 6 - Don't know/Does not apply

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Traditional media (radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books)						
2. New social media (social networks)						
3. Other fathers/mothers						
4. Relatives						
5. Friends/colleagues						
6. Religious organizations						
7. Community Associations (e.g., Associação para o Planeamento da Família, APF; Plano i, APAV – Associação de Apoio à Víctima, UMAR – União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta)						
8. Others (specify):						

D) In your opinion, to what extent is it common in Portugal for young people to be supported:

- 1 – Nothing
- 2 – A little
- 3 – Very
- 4 – Don't know/Does not apply

	1	2	3	4
1. Critically reflect, revisiting, questioning and deconstructing gender norms and sexist and heteronormative attitudes that reinforce hostile masculinity and aggression.				
2. Understanding the root problems of sexual and gender-based violence in the context of patriarchal value systems that sustain unequal gender hierarchies of power, which often create an environment where this violence is tolerated and even considered acceptable.				
3. Identify the multifaceted, complex and often subtle manifestations of sexual and gender-based violence and how they develop in different contexts and are expressed by different perpetrators (such as partners, friends, family or community members, people who act on behalf of cultural, religious or governmental institutions).				
4. Recognize their right to be valued for who they are and to be treated with respect, but also to have a responsibility to value and respect others.				
5. Build the capacities to express one's sexuality freely and openly and to assert one's rights in order to achieve the maximum desired level of happiness, pleasure and general well-being.				
6. Build their skills and confidence to challenge, address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence and become agents of change in their own lives, relationships and communities.				

**PERCEPTION ABOUT KNOWLEDGE AND COMFORT IN ADDRESSING GENDER EQUALITY IN A
FAMILY CONTEXT
PARENTS/LEGAL TUTORS' PERCEPTION**

For each of the statements presented below, rate according to the following scale, choosing the one that best reflects your opinion.

- 1 – Disagree
- 2 - Neither disagree nor agree
- 3 – Agree
- 4- Don't know/ Does not apply

	1	2	3	4
1. I have enough and adequate knowledge to address gender-related topics with my child.				
Gender identity				
Gender expression				
Difference between gender and sex				
Gender roles				
Gender-related stereotypes and prejudices				
Human rights and gender				
Culture, society and gender				
Values and gender				
Social inclusion				
2. I have enough and adequate knowledge to address topics related to sexuality with my child.				
Sexual orientation				
Body image				
Sexual and reproductive health				
Sexual and reproductive anatomy				
Sexuality and sexual behavior				
Human rights and sexuality				
Values and sexuality				
Culture, society and sexuality				
3. I have enough and adequate knowledge to address topics related to gender-based violence with my child.				
Respect for diversity (e.g., LGBTI+ people)				
Violence in intimate relationships (e.g., dating)				
Sexual violence (e.g., what it is, what are the warning signs, where to report it, ...)				
Gender-based violence (e.g., against queer people, transgender people, ...)				
Consent and sexuality				
Privacy				
Body integrity				
Decision making process				
Peer group influence				
Communication, refusal, and negotiation skills				
Support networks				
Friendship, love, and intimate relationships				
Family relationships				
4. I usually approach my child with gender-related topics.				
5. I usually approach my child with topics related to sexuality.				
6. I usually approach my child with topics related to gender-based violence.				
7. I encourage my child to talk about gender-related topics.				

8. I encourage my child to talk about topics related to sexuality.				
9. I encourage my child to talk about topics related to gender-based violence.				
10. I feel comfortable talking to my child about gender-related topics.				
11. I feel comfortable to dialogue with my child on topics related to sexuality.				
12. I feel comfortable talking to my child about topics related to gender-based violence.				

IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS

PARENTS/LEGAL TUTORS' PERCEPTION

Considering the needs that you identify as a parent/legal tutor in addressing your child with themes related to sexuality, gender and gender-based violence, classify each of the aspects listed below, according to the following scale, choosing the one that best translates your opinion:

- 1- No or little need
- 2- Some need
- 3- Much need
- 4- I don't know/does not apply

	1	2	3	4
1. Teaching materials and support resources suitable for the family context				
2. Training on what and how to address these topics with adolescents in a family context.				
3. Time, in family routines, to address these topics.				
4. Others (specify)				

INTERVIEW SCRIPT PARENTS/LEGAL TUTORS

A. Gender Equality

2. In your opinion, what is/how do you characterize gender? And gender equality?

6.9. How do you think your child define/perceives gender and gender equality?

7. From your point of view, and in general, is there gender equality?

[If so]

7.1. In what situations and contexts do you consider that gender equality is manifested?

Can you identify examples of situations you have experienced, or know, that you think are good examples of gender equality?

7.2. What situations and contexts do you think your child would consider to be gender equality situations?

[If not]

7.3. In what situations and contexts do you consider that gender inequality manifests itself? Who is affected? Why do you think this happens? And how could it be changed
[even if the interviewee does not answer everything, ask again about the topics not covered]

7.4. What situations and contexts do you think your child would consider to be situations of gender inequality?

8. From your point of view, there is gender equality in your child's school context?

[If so]

8.1. In what situations? What aspects or characteristics of these situations are indicators of gender equality?

8.2. Why do you think these situations exist in your child's school? And what do you think sustains/maintains it?

8.3. What do you consider to be the consequences and impacts of gender equality in the school context?

8.4. What do you think your child's school's role should be in promoting gender equality? I would like you to give me some concrete examples of what their school does or could do.

8.5. What do you consider to be your role as a parent/legal tutor in promoting gender equality? I would like you to give me concrete examples of what (you) do or could do to contribute to gender equality.

[If not]

8.6. In your opinion, how and where does gender inequality manifest itself in your child's school? Who does it affect?

8.7. Why do you think it exists at your school? And what do you think sustains/maintains it?

8.8. What do you consider to be the consequences and impacts of gender inequality in the school context?

8.9. What do you think your child's school's role should be to prevent and fight promoting gender inequality I would like you to give me some concrete examples of what their school does or could do.

3.10 What do you consider to be your role as a parent/legal tutor to prevent and combat gender inequality? I would like you to give me concrete examples of how parents are involved in how schools approach and promote gender equality.

B. Sexual and gender based violence

9. Now I would like to ask you a few questions about Sexual and gender based violence among young people.

9.1. In your opinion, what is Sexual and gender based violence among young people? And in what ways can it manifest itself, that is, what signs do we see that there is violence?

9.2. In what contexts, situations or dynamics do you consider Sexual and gender based violence to exist? Have you seen situations that you consider to be Sexual and gender based violence? Can you tell us about some of these situations?

9.3. Do you consider that there is a profile of victims and aggressors? And if so, how do you characterize these profiles?

9.4. What do you consider to be the impacts and consequences of Sexual and gender based violence to be? (who is affected, what consequences it may have for victims, perpetrators, for the school, ...)

9.5. What motivates young people to engage in Sexual and gender based violence behaviors?

9.6. What difficulties or challenges do you identify in the fight against gender violence?

9.7. What kind of situations or contexts do you think young people would or would not consider as Sexual and gender based violence?

10. Now specifying the school context, what measures do you consider to be useful in preventing and combating Sexual and gender based violence in the school context?

[Note for 5.1., 5.2., 5.3.: ask only about the roles that were not mentioned in the previous question by the parent/legal tutor]

5.1. What do you consider to be the role of the family in preventing and combating Sexual and gender based violence in the school context? As a family, do you support the teaching of content related to gender equality, sexuality, respect for LGBTQIA+ people, sex workers, ...? And the young people's families in general feel that, in general, families support...

5.2. What do you consider to be the role of the school in preventing and combating Sexual and gender based violence in the school context? Do you feel that the school has a culture of gender equality, violence prevention and respect for LGBTQIA+ people, people from ethnic minorities, ...?

5.3. What do you consider to be your role as a parent/legal tutor in preventing and combating Sexual and gender based violence in the school context?

6. Focusing now on your role as a parent/legal tutor to address topics of gender equality and/or Sexual and gender based violence, what content do you usually cover?

6.1. For example, you often address: consequences of Sexual and gender based violence; pleasure, well-being, communication and trust between partners in sexual relations; reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases?

6.2. How do you assess the impact of these contents (e.g., on your child's behaviors at home and at school)?

6.3. How do you describe your degree of comfort/at ease to address these topics with your child?

6.4. How do you describe your skills or knowledge to address these topics?

6.5. How important do you think it is that the school addresses topics of gender equality, sexual and gender diversity, and/or sexual and Sexual and gender based violence? And why?