Identity Formation of Pre-Service Teachers. Relations with Training and Attitudes toward Cultural Diversity

Mercedes Álamo[1] & Vicente J. Llorent[1]

1) *University of Cordoba,* Spain

Abstract

The university years represents a pivotal period in the student's life, influencing decision-making and impacting their identity. The new experiences encountered during this phase may give rise to a certain identity crisis, allowing for a reconsideration of previously adopted commitments, and potentially influencing the development of future educators, with a special issue such as cultural diversity among others. This study aims to identify the identity status of prospective education teachers and analyse attitudes towards cultural diversity among students. The research design is quantitative, ex-post-facto, descriptive, and inferential. The incidental sample comprises a total of 378 students from the degrees in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education at the University of Córdoba (Spain). Of the total sample, being 74.03% female, with an average age of 20.64 (SD = 2.95). The results reflected that students in a mature status are those who exhibit higher scores in attitudes towards cultural diversity. In this context, the initial teacher training should consider identity as a factor to be taken into account for promoting positive attitudes towards cultural diversity, specifically emphasizing the development of responsible decision-making in the curriculum of Education degrees.

Keywords

Formación de la Identidad de los Docentes en Formación. Relaciones con la Formación y Actitudes hacia la Diversidad Cultural

Mercedes Álamo[1] y Vicente J. Llorent[1]

1) *Universidad de Córdoba,* España

Resumen

Los años universitarios suponen un periodo transcendente en la vida del alumnado, repercutiendo en la toma de decisiones y afectando a su identidad. Las nuevas experiencias vividas durante esta etapa pueden generar cierta crisis de identidad permitiendo una reconsideración de los compromisos ya adoptados, pudiendo incidir en la formación de los futuros docente. Este estudio pretende identificar cuál es el estatus de identidad de los futuros docentes de la educación y analizar las actitudes hacia la diversidad cultural del alumnado. El diseño es de tipo cuantitativo, *ex-post-facto,* descriptivo e inferencial. La muestra incidental ha sido de un total de 378 alumnos de los Grado de Educación Infantil y Primaria de la Universidad de Córdoba (España). Del total de la muestra el 74.03% son mujeres y la edad media de los participantes es de 20.64 (DT = 2.95). Los resultados reflejan que los estudiantes en estatus de madurez son aquellos que presentan una mayor puntuación en las actitudes hacia la diversidad cultural. En este sentido, la formación inicial del profesorado debe contemplar la identidad como un factor a tener en cuenta para la promoción de actitudes positivas hacia la diversidad cultural, concretamente se debe trabajar la toma de decisiones responsables en el currículo de los Grados de Educación.

Palabras clave

Actitudes, diversidad cultural, identidad, formación inicial, formación docente, universidad

Correspondencia Autores(s): Mercedes Álamo
Dirección de contacto: mmalamo@uco.es

I dentity has been a controversial subject in social sciences due to its educational, occupational and social repercussions on an individual's development. The process of creation of an individual's own identity is found throughout life as a transition towards adulthood (Zimmermann et al., 2012), but it is in adolescence where this "search for identity", as already mentioned by Erikson (1968), is found along with the involvement of family, society and of course, school, where the teachers have a direct responsibility.

Through the Erikson's theory (1950, 1968), Marcia (1966) developed four identity statuses (Identity achievement, Identity moratorium, Identity foreclosure and Identity diffusion), conditioned by two dimensions, such as exploration, defined as the active search before making a decision on any aspect of one's identity, and commitment, which adolescents adopt about an identity domain (Croccetti et al., 2008; Crocetti et al., 2010; Crocetti et al., 2012; Zacarés, et al., 2009). From the Marcia's theory, Meeus (1996) indicates that the person can continue to explore even after obtaining a firm commitment. In this sense, the process of identity formation is lifelong and subject to constant change Thus, a new dimension is added, named reconsideration of the commitment, where the person compares the commitments that have been adopted to his or her identity with other possible alternatives that could be more satisfactory (Crocetti, et al. 2023).

The results of these three dimensions of study (Crocetti, 2017) show a relationship with aspects of personality. In the dimension of commitments, a strong indication of the development of positive identity with fewer anxiety and depression problems (Campbell et al., 2018). The role of the parents has also been shown to be related to other personal characteristics (Sznitman et al., 2018) such as self-esteem, motivation (Llorent, et al., 2013) and academic expectations (Llorent, et al., 2015).

As for the in-depth exploration, it is a process of adaptation for the individual, and this characteristic it is associated with kindness, responsibility and being open to new experiences (Luyckx et al., 2006). But due to this adaptation, the individuals may not show clarity in their self-concept or an emotional stability. Also, in-depth exploration is positively related with symptoms of depression and anxiety (Crocetti et al., 2008).

Lastly, the reconsideration of commitments has an unfavourable relationship with self-concept, and this is why it has been shown that the individuals who seek new alternatives do not yet have a stable concept of self. This dimension has also been associated to individuals from disadvantaged families, due to the low confidence of the parents on their children (Campbell et al., 2018).

Aside from the addition of the new dimension to the study of identity, a new status of identity is added to those proposed by Marcia (1966), resulting in a total of five identity statuses (Crocetti et al., 2008; Luyckx et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2011): identity achievement, identity foreclosure, identity moratorium, search for moratorium and Identity diffusion.

First, identity achievement implies the end of exploration. In this status, the adolescent has taken on a series of commitments in some domain of identity (Croccetti, et al. 2010, 2012). These choices have been accepted after a long period of searching among the possible alternatives. The commitments adopted seem stable, and the interpersonal relationships seem serious (Schwartz, 2001), they are able to establish and reach realistic goals, besides being able to face the possible changes that may occur in their surroundings (Marcia, 1993, 1966).

Identity foreclosure is where the adolescent assumes a commitment not due to exploration, but due to learning from an attachment figure, such as the parents or another referent (Marcia, 1993). In this status, the adolescent has not gone through a period of crisis (Tesouro et al., 2013). These individuals tend to be somewhat authoritarian, do not have conflicts, and also idealize the figure of the parents (Marcia, 1967). These are people who are linked to present situations and show resistance to change, and it could be said that they live in a bubble, and if this bubble bursts, they could go into crisis (Schwartz, 2001).

Identity moratorium is a process of active search given the lack of commitments. In this status, the adolescent is in crisis (Marcia, 1993), also named torment or identity stress (Kidwell et al., 1995). Due to this, the individuals tend to remain in identity moratorium for less time than in the other statuses (Meeus et al., 1992). The identity moratorium is associated to critical thinking (Schwartz, 2001), given the generation of choices the individual faces when making a decision.

In the search for moratorium, the individuals who are found in this status review the commitments they have taken on, and they are able to do so from a reliable base, such as their current commitments (Crocetti et al., 2008).

Finally, identity diffusion. In this status, the individual has not taken on any commitment, but different alternatives have not been explored, so that the individual has not experienced crisis (Marcia, 1993). These persons seek to not commit, in order to avoid any situations that demand involvement. In summary, the diffusion of identity is reflected in people where they lack some basic aspect of the basic identity resulting in a psychological malfunction (Penner et al., 2019; Schwartz, 2001).

The background information that is found in the academic sphere about identity formation reveals that adolescents aged between 10 and 19 are found in the statuses of moratorium and identity foreclosure, although the identity diffusion decreases as related to age (Crocetti et al., 2008). As for the search for moratorium and identity achievement, the results are stable. As these two statuses are a clear sample of adulthood, it could be said that in adolescence, they will not be present; but they will appear in the next age range, defined as emergent adults, which is found at about the age of 20 (Crocetti et al., 2013).

Aside from age, sex is another study variable that could be utilized to understand how personal identity is developed. The studies by Meeus et al. (2012) indicate that it is more common to find women in statuses of identity achievement and foreclosure, while men tend to be found in statuses of moratorium, search of moratorium and diffusion. Thus, it could be deduced that women reach a maturation of identity sooner. The levels of education of both parents are also included, as the study by Llorent et al. (2015) indicates that the levels of education of the parents have an influence on the training of their children, which could impact their educational identity. The stability of identity, which must simultaneously be flexible, allowing individuals to adapt effectively to different contexts, including diverse people and groups (Crocetti et al., 2023). In this sense, classrooms exhibit such diversity; therefore, it is expected that future educators are in stable identity statuses that enable successful adaptation to any situation. On the contrary, the failure to make commitments, or only making some in a few areas, is related to social discrimination or prejudice (Crocetti et al., 2021). Along the same lines, it can be presupposed that identity may be related to attitudes, constituting a set of beliefs,

emotions, behaviours, and intentions that individuals have towards specific situations, people, or groups (Gómez-Labrador, 2021).

Several studies confirm that attitudes are a relevant factor for study due to their implications for academic performance, psychological and emotional well-being, self-efficacy, and student motivation (Glock et al., 2019). It has also been demonstrated that attitudes are linked to moral disengagement, as well as cognitive and affective empathy (Cabrera-Vázquez et al., 2022). On the other hand, studies conducted by Llorent and Álamo (2019) showed that the higher the initial teacher training, the higher the scores in attitudes toward cultural diversity. The positive effect demonstrated in various studies on fostering attitudes in future educators underscores the need for their development during initial teacher training (Civitillo et al., 2018). However, there is still a need to delve deeper into understanding attitudes toward cultural diversity to explore whether, in addition to received training, identity could be a factor influencing changes in attitudes toward cultural diversity.

Following the review of scientific literature, it is clear that there is a need for further progress in knowledge about initial teacher training, specifically about future teachers and the factors that may be influencing their training. The passage through university brings about many changes. During this stage, there is personal as well as social growth, where one becomes more aware of the society in which they live. These changes enable future educators to make decisions that they had not yet committed to and even reconsider those commitments they had already assumed. Furthermore, during the initial teacher training, new learning is being acquired that may be influencing the individual. Consequently, these learnings can lead to new commitments or changes in one's own attitudes. In this sense, it is necessary to delve deeply into the knowledge of the identity of future educators and their own attitudes to determine at what point they are in their maturity. In this context, this study aims to determine the identity status of students in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education university degrees. Additionally, it seeks to explore whether identity status correlates with students' attitudes toward cultural diversity. The following initial hypotheses are proposed. H1: More than 50% of students in the Early Childhood Education and Primary Education programs are in statuses indicative of maturity. H2: Mature statuses are associated with higher scores in positive attitudes toward cultural diversity compared to immature statuses. H3: Mature statuses exhibit low scores in negative attitudes toward cultural diversity, unlike those in statuses indicative of immaturity.

Method

Participants

The sample is composed by 378 subjects from the Faculty of Education at the University of Córdoba (Spain). Within the total sample, there is a majority of females (n = 268) compared to males (n = 94), and this gender imbalance remains consistent across this specific education degrees. The average age of this sample is 20.64 years old. (SD = 2.95). About 65.6% of the students were enrolled in the Primary Education Degree (*n* = 248), the other 30.2% were enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Degree (*n* = 114) and the 4.2% are postgraduate

(master's and other courses, $n = 16$). The individuals were studying in different academic years; 50.8% ($n = 184$) were in their first year, 168 (46.4%) were in their second, and only 9 subjects (2.5%) were in their third year. This small sample from the third year is due to these students having to retake some courses from their second year, therefore being included in the sampling during the sample collection conducted in the first and second years. The sample was classified according to the level of education of the father and the mother (see Table 1).

Table 1
Level of Education of the Father and Mother of University Students

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	FATHER	MOTHER
No formal education	10.1%	5.9%
Basic or primary education	42.7%	45.3%
Secondary education or Intermediate Level Vocational Training	23.3%	24.8%
University or High Level Vocational Training	23.8%	24%

Instruments

The instrument was composed by a series of sociodemographic questions (sex, age, study year, level of education of the father and level of education of the mother), the Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (U-MICS, Crocetti, et al., 2010) and the Attitudes towards Cultural Diversity scale (ADC from the Spanish denomination, Llorent and Álamo, 2019).

The U-MICS scale is composed by 13 items with a Likert type response type (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree), the items are gathered in three dimensions, where 5 items measure commitments, another 5 items measure in-depth exploration, and the last 3 measure reconsideration of the commitments. This scale allows for determining in what status of identity the individuals are found, depending on the results obtained from each dimension in two domains, such as the educational and relational domains. In previous studies (Llorent & Álamo, 2018), the psychometric properties of the U-MICS scale have been analysed, obtaining very good results in the educational domain ($\chi^2 = 170,230$ NNFI = 0.93 CFI = 0.94, GFI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.06, RMSEA = 0.07) and in the relational domain ($\chi2 = 208.103$; NNFI = 0.94, CFI = 0.94, GFI = 0.91, SRMR = 0.06, RMSEA = 0.08). On the other hand, reliability has brought good results on both scales (education domains $\alpha = .90$; relational domain $\alpha = .80$). *Identity achievement* status is determined by high scores on commitments and in-depth exploration, while low scores on reconsideration of commitments. Identity foreclosure will be seen to score moderately high on commitments, but low on in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitments. The search of moratorium should have high scores on all three dimensions. Identity moratorium should score low on commitment, medium on in-depth exploration and high on reconsideration of commitments. And finally, identity diffusion should score low on all three dimensions.

On the other hand, the ADC scale is composed of 28 Likert type items, where the response options range from 1 = completely disagree, to 5 = completely agree. The scale is composed by seven dimensions: Positive intentions, Negative intentions, Positive beliefs, Negative beliefs, Positive behaviours, Negative feelings and Support Capacity. The psychometric data

provided by Llorent and Álamo (2019) point to the good adjustment of the scale (χ^2 = 643.821 p < 0.001; NNFI = 0.94 CFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.92, SRMR = 0.05, RMSEA = 0.04) and good reliability (α = .88).

Design and Procedure

The research design is non-experimental, *ex post facto*, cross-sectional, quantitative, descriptive and inferential, constituting a survey study. The sample selection was carried out, for greater convenience and accessibility, through non-probabilistic sampling. Prior authorization was obtained from university teaching staff to access to the students of Primary Education Degree and Early Childhood Education Degree. Data collection was conducted by the researchers in university classrooms and lasted about 15-20 minutes. All participants were informed in advance of the study's objectives and were invited to collaborate, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. The study adheres to the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Data Analysis

A descriptive study was conducted on the total identity, extracting the five identity statuses to understand the characteristics of each of the resulting groups. From the total subjects analysed, 22 of them were lost, for a total of 340 subjects.

The creation of the five identity statuses was performed through cluster analysis, resulting in five groups. To name each of the statuses, the scores obtained in the commitments, in-depth exploration and the reconsideration of the commitments were taken into account.

A descriptive and inferential analysis of the data was conducted. In first place, the age was separated and categorized into three stages, the first of these was late adolescence, comprised by ages ranging from 18 to19, young adult, from 20-30 years of age, and lastly adulthood, from 31 to 50 years of age (Zacarés, 2009). Percentages, averages and standard deviation were utilized to describe the results. As for the inferential study, an ANOVA and a Welch's ANOVA were performed depending on the homogeneity of the variances and the post-hoc comparisons (Bonferroni or Games-Howell). The analyzes were performed with the IBM® SPSS® version 23 statistical program. Finally, effect size was determined using Cohen's d with 95% confidence intervals, calculated with the Campbell Collaboration Calculator.

Results

Socio-personal characteristics of the subjects according to the identity statuses are shown in Table 2. Most of the participants were found in the status identity achievement, followed by identity foreclosure and identity moratorium, search for moratorium and lastly by identity diffusion.

Table 2

Descriptive Results of the Five Identity Statuses

	Identity diffusion (N=6)		Identity moratorium (N=73)		Identity foreclosure (N=78)		Search for moratorium (N=70)		Identity achievement (N=124)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sex										
Man	5	5.6%	21	23.3%	18	20.0%	16	17.8%	30	33.3%
Woman	1	0.4%	52	19.9%	60	23.0%	54	20.7%	94	36.0%
Age										
Late adolescence	3	2.1%	30	21%	27	18.9%	35	24,5%	48	33.6%
Young adult	3	1.5%	42	21.3%	49	24.9%	31	15.7%	72	36.5%
Adulthood	0	0.0%	1	9.1%	2	18.2%	4	36.4%	4	36.4%
Degree										
Early Childhood Education	1	0.9%	20	18.3%	30	27.5%	17	15.6%	41	37.6%
Primary School Education	4	1.8%	51	22.6%	43	19.0%	51	22.6%	77	34.1%
Graduate (Master's and other courses)	1	6.3%	2	12.5%	5	31.3%	2	12.5%	6	37.5%
Study year										
1ˢᵗ year	3	1.8%	38	23%	33	20%	39	23.6%	52	31.5%
2ⁿᵈ year	2	1.2%	33	20.2%	39	23.9%	26	16.0%	63	38.7%
3ʳᵈ year	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	2	33.3%	3	50.0%
5ᵗʰ year	1	6.3%	2	12.5%	5	31.3%	2	12.5%	6	37.5%
Experience										
Yes	5	2.0%	50	19.6%	61	23.9%	46	18.0%	93	36.5%
No	1	1.3%	16	20.8%	14	18.2%	16	20.8%	30	39.0%
Father's level of education										
No formal education	2	5.7%	7	20.0%	7	20.0%	7	20.0%	12	34.3%
Basic/primary studies	2	1.4%	31	21.2%	30	20.5%	33	22.6%	50	34.2%
Secondary School	1	1.3%	20	25.0%	21	26.3%	10	12.5%	28	35.0%
Higher Education	1	1.2%	15	18.1%	17	20.5%	19	22.9%	31	37.3%
Mother's level of education										
No formal education	1	4.8%	6	28.6%	5	23.8%	5	23.8%	4	19.0%
Basic/primary studies	2	1.3%	33	21.3%	35	22.6%	29	18.7%	56	36.1%
Secondary School	2	2.3%	18	20.5%	17	19.3%	20	22.7%	31	35.2%
Higher Education	1	1.2%	16	18.6%	21	24.4%	16	18.6%	32	37.2%
Total		**1.7%**		**20.8%**		**22.3%**		**19.9%**		**35.3%**

**Note.* This academic year is intended for students who are enrolled in a degree.

The predominant sex in the upper levels of identity status was women, except for the cases of Identity diffusion and Identity moratorium, where there were more men than women. The progression of maturity with respect to age was perfectly mirrored in the statuses of immaturity. Each group of adults had a percentage that was very low as compared to the younger ones.

However, this was no longer the case in the Identity achievement status, where the percentages were very similar with respect to the other stages. As for the university degree studied, the Primary Education Degree, despite having the greatest part of the group in mature status, had a very significant percentage in the status of Identity moratorium, which denotes immaturity. In the Early Childhood Education Degree, the percentage of participants in the Identity foreclosure was very important. As for the group with a graduate degree (Master's or other), the data were not very representative, given the low number of participants. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find subjects who are immature after they have finished a university degree and when they are older in age.

As for the academic year they were enrolled in, there was a greater number of 1st year students who were found in statuses such as Identity diffusion, Identity moratorium and Search for moratorium. As for the Identity foreclosure and Identity achievement, 50% of the participants in these statuses were in their 2nd year of their Education Degree. In all the statuses of identity, the subjects attested to having been in contact with people from other nationalities, culture or religion. As for the level of education of the father, most of them had basic education. Lastly, the level of education of the mother was similar to that of the father, where the basic education was the most common result.

Other socio-personal characteristics of these students analysed were the attitudes towards cultural diversity. Table 3 shows how all the identity statuses showed significant results with all the dimensions found in the ADC scale.

Table 3
Attitude towards Cultural Diversity in the five identity statuses

ADC	Identity achievement M (DT)	Identity moratorium M (DT)	Identity foreclosure M (DT)	Search for moratorium M (DT)	Identity diffusion M (DT)	F
Negative Intentions	1.54 (.58)	2.05 (.81)	1.53 (.55)	1.92 (99)	3.6 (1.39)	[a]9.81**
Support Capacity	4.25 (.67)	3.86 (.88)	3.93 (.88)	4.25 (.59)	2.11 (1.45)	[a]6.73**
Positive Behaviors	3.98 (.77)	3.77 (.61)	3.64 (.71)	4.02 (.68)	2.56 (1.34)	[a]5.12**
Positive Intentions	3.52 (.92)	3.44 (.83)	3.13 (.82)	3.81 (.82)	2.92 (1.47)	[a]6.25**
Positive Beliefs	3.98 (.79)	3.68 (.73)	3.76 (.88)	4.07 (.68)	1.96 (1.45)	11.73**
Negative Beliefs	1.57 (.70)	2.00 (.95)	1.64 (.69)	1.92 (.97)	3.5 (1.15)	[a]7.12**
Negative Emotions	1.67 (.83)	2.09 (.92)	1.72 (.79)	1.95 (.99)	2.94 (1.95)	5.58**

Note. [a] Welch's ANOVA, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

The Games-Howell post-hoc comparisons have shown that there are significant differences in the Negative intentions, where the participants in Search for moratorium have higher scores

than those from Identity achievement (*d* = .50; 95% CI = .20 - .80) and Identity foreclosure (*d* = .49; 95% CI = .17 - .82). Likewise, the students in Identity moratorium had a higher score than those found in the Identity achievement status (*d* = .76; 95% CI= .46 – 1.05) and Identity foreclosure (*d* = .76; 95% CI= .42 – 1.09). In the dimension Support capacity, there were significant differences between Identity moratorium with Search for moratorium (*d* = .52; 95% CI= .18 – .85) and Identity achievement (*d* = .52; 95% CI= .22 – .81), where these last two statuses had higher scores than Identity moratorium. The differences between the means in Positive behaviours were found between Identity foreclosure (with a lower score) with Search for moratorium (*d* = .55; 95% CI = .22 – .87) and Identity achievement (*d* = .45; 95% CI= .17 – .74). As for Positive intentions, differences were again found between means in the Identity foreclosure status between Search for moratorium (*d* = .83; 95% CI= .49 – 1.16) and Identity achievement (*d* = .44; 95% CI= .15 – .73), where the Identity foreclosure still obtained a lower score with respect to the other two statuses. As for the dimension Negative beliefs, there were significant differences between Identity achievement with Identity moratorium (d= .54; 95% CI= .24 – .84) and Identity diffusion (*d* = 2.67; 95% CI= 1,79 – 3.55), where the participants in the status Identity achievement had lower scores as compared to the other two identity statuses.

The Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons showed, in the dimension of positive beliefs, that there were differences in the means between Identity diffusion and all the dimensions: Identity achievement (*d* = 2.44; 95% CI= 1.57 – 3.32), Search for moratorium (*d* = 2.79; 95% CI= 1.84 – 3.73), Identity foreclosure (*d* = 1.94; 95% CI = 1.06 – 2.82) and Identity moratorium (*d* = 2.15; 95% CI = 1.26 – 3.05). In this comparison, it is observed how the participants in the status of Identity diffusion, obtained lower scores in the positive beliefs. In this same dimension of the ADC scale, differences have also been found between the Search for moratorium, with a higher score than the Identity moratorium (*d* = .55; 95% CI= .22 – .89). Lastly, in the dimension of negative emotions, differences have been found between Identity achievement, Identity moratorium (*d* = .49; 95% CI= .19 – .78), and Identity diffusion (*d* = 1.41; 95% CI= .57 – 2.24). These differences show how the subjects who are found in the status Identity Achievement have lower scores that the other two identity statuses. Also, significant differences were found in negative emotions between Identity diffusion and Identity foreclosure (*d* = 1.35; 95% CI= .49 – 2.20). The participants who are found in the status Identity foreclosure have higher scores than with another status compared in negative emotions.

Discussion

The study has allowed us to reach the research aim, to identify the identity statuses of future teachers and provide information on their attitudes toward cultural diversity, categorized by the five identity statuses.

Firstly, it is observed that students mostly fall into mature statuses, such as identity achievement and moratorium exploration, confirming hypothesis 1. This result aligns with several studies where maturity is associated with age (Crocetti et al., 2008; Crocetti et al., 2013). University students around the age of 20, defined as emerging adults, have likely made decisions about their academic training, considering a future career as educators. However, a

significant number of individuals are in identity moratorium, where identity is not well-defined, indicating an exploratory phase. The percentage of participants in identity foreclosure was quite high at 22.3%, representing individuals who have made commitments due to parental influence, suggesting a formation process not personally chosen. This is interesting as it highlights that many students in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education programs may not be interested in becoming teachers but are pursuing university studies for various reasons. Finally, a lower percentage is evident in identity diffusion, which becomes less frequent in these age groups (Crocetti, 2017).

Furthermore, the data shows that individuals in mature statuses exhibit higher scores in positive attitudes toward cultural diversity. They also scored lower in negative attitudes, such as negative intentions, negative beliefs, and negative emotions. Participants in moratorium exploration demonstrated good results in almost all dimensions of the ADC scale, with low scores in negative aspects. This is interesting when participants are still exploring and have not yet committed to specific values. These results confirm hypotheses 2 and 3 and align with previous studies (Crocetti et al., 2021). Considering this, it is recommended to address attitudes toward cultural diversity in initial teacher training since students have a positive disposition towards change. Teaching them to adopt commitments can contribute to reducing prejudices and stereotypes. Conversely, individuals in immature statuses, such as identity moratorium and identity diffusion, scored lower in positive attitudes toward cultural diversity. These same statuses scored higher in negative aspects (Crocetti et al., 2021). However, the effect size analysis for identity diffusion was inconclusive due to the low number of subjects in this state. Despite their immaturity, addressing personal self-awareness and responsible decision-making regarding academic and professional life is essential.

The results and conclusions of the current study have political and didactics implications. The connections among the different dimensions of identity and of attitudes towards cultural diversity require to rethink some political issues of the training of pre-service teachers, linked to the curriculum. The curriculum of education degrees should emphasize these aspects to aid students in their individual development. Notably, the condition of identity foreclosure, where commitments are inherited, suggests a level of maturity due to learning to be mature. However, when faced with different realities in classrooms, anxiety may arise, and acquired commitments and attitudes may undergo crisis, as suggested by Schwartz (2001). Encouraging students to experience situations outside their comfort zone, such as internships in diverse contexts, can lead to a reconsideration of commitments and exploration of new commitments to exit immature identity statuses.

The presented work has limitations. The intentional convenience sampling resulted in a predominantly female sample, a common circumstance in educational research, cautioning against generalizing results. Expanding the study to other universities and degrees, using more representative sampling techniques, would be beneficial. The cross-sectional design allows only descriptive and inferential data interpretation. A potential future research direction is a longitudinal study tracking students from the start to the completion of their studies to explore changes in identities and attitudes toward cultural diversity over time. Additionally, comparing a class in the Faculty of Education with one in a non-Social Sciences-related program could provide valuable insights.

In conclusion, the training of future teachers is crucial for improving the education of new generations. The findings from this study underscore the importance of exposing university students to diverse experiences, fostering moments of commitment reconsideration. Incorporating innovative teaching methods in university classrooms not only empowers students but also enhances their awareness and commitment to their own education.

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