

Summary

Objective: To describe the value system and other elements of adolescents' identity (secondary students) as well as the relationship between young people and the educational centre, without distinction of sex.

Design: A descriptive field study with analytical components. Qualitative and Quantitative methodology.

People and methods

- *for the qualitative method:*

Teacher discussion groups (Timoneda Association); monthly sessions lasting two to three hours during 11 months.

Participatory observation groups with students; weekly meetings for one hour during nine months; three groups with 10 young people in each group.

- *for the quantitative method:* With the questionnaire YouthsVIP v.2, which includes a measurement of demographic characteristics, sexual role, perceived health, family roles, identity and preferences; it was constructed or adapted and validated for this study. Pilot test (n=200) and test-re-test (n=43)

- **Population:** Total sample of 1575 young people from three countries (Estonia: 588; England: 236; Spain: 751) and from 29 different secondary educational centres; trust > 95.5%.

Results: Age, from 14-16; 5,9% from other ethnic groups. Sexual role more defined in girls (46%), more undefined in males (62%) and a higher general preference for feminine characteristics. Perception of difficulties in physical (17.4%) and psychological health (13.3%). Family dysfunction perceived in 20.6% and related with health ($p < 0.01$). The category of identity most highly valued: personal, and the least: collective. Belonging to a family was the most highly valued item in Spain, which was different from other countries. The order of preferences: close relationships (the most highly valued), group leisure, individual leisure, differentiation/autonomy, social, tobacco/drugs and violence (the least valued)

Discussion: Demographic data extrapolated from the populations of origin; multicultural presence in the variable school, but that causes concern among teachers. Ambivalent sexual role, more in boys, as is common in this stage. Higher presence of new types of families which seems to be a stage of change; frequent perception of family dysfunction together with deficient physical and mental health, perhaps as a symptom of its expression. Crisis of the social components of identity (values) in favour of personal components. Higher interest in the family in Spain. Close and stable affective relationships are more highly valued, in fact above the characteristics which distinguish them as a group. These characteristics were ranked in second place. A social, political, or religious commitment; tobacco or drugs, and violence are the least valued items. The diffusion of violent behaviour in the media, its presence in daily life and a higher sensitivity toward it are possibly influential in the perception of not considering themselves to be violent.

Conclusions: Adolescents today prefer and are more worried about anything related to their closest relations: family, friends, school. In second place is that which differentiates them from the group. Finally, they have devalued the wider social context and deny their identification with the use of violence.