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## **Spaces Free of Violence: Key Role of Moroccan Women's in Conflict Prevention in Schools. A Case-Study**

This article analyses the involvement of Moroccan women in the process of implementing the dialogic model of conflict prevention and resolution. It explains the process of transformation of a school in an underserved area in Catalonia, seriously affected by the economic crisis, and with a foreign population totalling 85%, of mostly Moroccan origin. Through a case-study, elaborated following the precepts of the communicative methodology, we identify 1) some of the elements that promote the effective participation in school of Moroccan women, and we explain 2) the impact that the participation of these women has in the prevention and resolution of conflicts inside and outside the school's walls. The research with these women has allowed us to delve into the process of transformation that these women have promoted and how the egalitarian dialogue they have initiated has enabled this transformation. Moroccan women have found in the school and its dialogic organization a driver for the transformation of interactions. This study shows how from the school new dialogic spaces are open to the participation of all neighbours, and in which these women are involved to contribute to the improvement of coexistence both inside and outside the school.

Keywords: coexistence; school violence; participation; Moroccan women.

## **Introduction**

Moroccan women living in Europe have a very heterogeneous profile, yet they are a socially vulnerable group because of their gender, religion and immigrant status. Going beyond the description of their already known situation of vulnerability, this paper focuses on the identification of actions where they show their agency and the impact on themselves, their children and their communities. The research has been conducted in a school located in a neighbourhood at outskirts of a city very close to Barcelona seriously affected by the economic crisis and with a foreign population totalling 85%, of mostly Moroccan origin. This article shows the solidarity networks these women generate and the various strategies that help them achieve said impact, particularly in preventing and resolving violent situations among children in the school and the community.

To do so the paper explores the theoretical contributions that build the framework upon our analysis is made from different domains: the capacity of agency of Moroccan women (Keddie 2018) and the conditions for the empowerment process that allows these women to take an active role in society; the processes that explain school violence and the models that are showing to provide solutions to these problems are also reviewed. To continue with, the paper explains the methodology that our research employed to analyse in depth one school that has followed evidence-based strategies including the participation and lead of Moroccan women, to face and reverse a situation of conflict in school. The methodology section is followed by the results and their discussion. This section is divided into two large blocks. The first describes the process of implementing the community model of conflict resolution and prevention in school, based on scientific evidence. The second large block of results focuses on the positive impact that the involvement of Moroccan women has had on the entire process of

implementing this Dialogic Model of Coexistence (DMC, hereafter). This impact is evidenced through the participation of these women in the classrooms of the educational centre, along with the transfer of the coexistence agreements made by these women from their homes to the neighbourhood. Evidence is included of the accounts that the very protagonists of this transformation make focusing on the analysis of the Moroccan women and also including the insights of other participants such as teachers and children (Sohn et al. 2017). The discussion section allows to establish the links between what the literature has shown that works and how the particular case of this school shows the impact of this transformation. This paper ends with shedding light on the development of actions that capitalise all the resources in the community to efficiently address school violence creating safer neighbourhoods.

### ***Women's agency***

Gender specificity is present in the processes of creating prejudices that affect immigrant women and, especially, Muslims who, as Göle (2005) states, become the 'touchstone' of social and political problems. Authors such as Sen (1999) have discussed women's agency due to their great potential to improve an entire society. This author shows the abilities women have to escape situations of poverty by accessing the labour market and education, negotiating micro-credits and acquiring property rights. For example, women's access to training leads to an increase in their ability to take part in family decision-making. According with Sen's perspective, we conceive all women as active social agents who are the protagonists of social transformations worldwide, from very different cultures, origins and situations. This article explores the involvement of Moroccan women in an educational setting and their impact on improving coexistence and preventing bullying. Instead of secular society giving a

voice to these women, their capacity to choose, their religion or the way they dress is questioned, and they are often presented as passive, submissive and lacking personal or professional plans by racialized discourses regarding *laïcité*, post-feminism and neoliberalism (Rootham 2015). Nevertheless, new voices continue to join the European and global feminist debate bringing about changes in the theoretical direction of 21<sup>st</sup>-century feminism (Göle and Billaud 2012). Immigrant women living in Europe are part of the new voices of the ‘other women’ (Beck-Gernsheim et al. 2003) who, despite having been traditionally silenced, today demand to be considered.

### ***Conflict in the school facts and models addressing it***

School bullying is one of the greatest concerns about education in Europe and institutions like The Council of Europe have taken different actions to address this problem. In 2010 the Committee of Ministers already encouraged governments of member states to implement measures and policies tackling bullying based on the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education<sup>1</sup>. The concern is justified by the strong prevalence of the phenomenon in our schools and communities which can vary between 20-30% rates (Belgium, Estonia or Austria), and the below 10% rates (Denmark, Sweden, Croatia or Spain) (Downes and Cefai 2016).

Most of the literature on bullying build on its definition as a physical, verbal and relational behaviours, which involves one party having the intention to repeatedly hurt or harm another, within an uneven power relationship where the victim is unable to defend him/herself (Olweus 1999). In this paper, we will refer to: violence among school students inside and outside the classroom, also considering conflicts in the playground; and also outside of school (streets, parks), including: insults, ridicule,

isolation; fights, defamations, gossiping; and online harassment through social networks.

School conflict and bullying affect coexistence in schools but also can have earnest consequences for the mental and physical health as well as the academic performance of children and young people, leading in many cases early school leaving. A situation of bullying can lead victims to experience suicidal behaviours as well as other forms of self-harm, low self-esteem, anxiety and depression (Espelage and Swearer-Napolitano 2003) or it can make them even more vulnerable to fall in networks of radicalization (Aiello et al. 2018).

The contributions on school bullying prevention and intervention programmes conclude that they do not deliver the expected effectiveness (Swearer et al. 2010) due to the lack of theoretical grounding and adequacy to the particular diversity of the context where implemented. Among the factors that play a role in the overcoming of bullying behaviour, research highlights the importance of community participation, and specifically the regular communication between students, families, teachers and health care professionals (Fekkes et al. 2005). The coexistence conflicts and specifically those that occur in educational centres have been tried to be solved from different models (for instance disciplinary and mediating models). This article deepens on *dialogic model* and the results obtained in a school with a large majority of students of Moroccan origin. This model is based on the search of consensus and creation of norms of coexistence by the whole educational community through egalitarian dialogue, for the preventive socialization (Valls et al. 2008) and the treatment of conflicts; this allows, not only for the improvement of conflict resolution but also and specially for their prevention.

## **Methods**

This article presents the results of a case-study carried out in a public school with over 180 students in preschool and primary education (between 3 and 12 years old), located in a peripheral neighbourhood of a large Spanish city with 218,535 inhabitants, of which 15.3% are foreigners and with a current unemployment rate of 12.9%<sup>2</sup>. The neighbourhood has 1,570 inhabitants with the highest proportion of foreign population of the city, a 41.46% which together with the population of Spanish nationality and migrant origin exceeds 85%. For more than a decade now it has been strongly affected by the economic crisis, having reached the highest unemployment rate of the whole city (35.5%)<sup>3</sup>. The working population, mostly men, is working in especially precarious and unstable jobs such as in agriculture and construction, the most affected economic sector. Most of the inhabitants came from rural areas of Morocco, and less did come from Senegal and Romania; and others are Spaniards, most of them Roma. This context explains that 97% of the school's pupils are of immigrant origin.

A great diversity of nursery, primary and secondary schools especially in Spain and Latin America are implementing Successful Educational Actions (SEA, hereafter) (Flecha 2015) through the community participation project: Learning Communities<sup>4</sup>. Our analysis focuses on the impact of the participation of Moroccan women in implementing the DMC, defined as a SEA, at the educational centre where their children attend. This election is justified, first, because the Moroccan is the largest community of the neighbourhood in the school; and, second, because the women that belong to this group share certain characteristics that intersect and make them especially vulnerable to suffer social stigmatization by reason of gender, religion and level of studies. The evidence contributed about the improvement of the coexistence point out to these women as key agents in the process of transformation, and to the dialogic organization of the school as one of the elements that best explains their empowerment.

The situation of precarity that the population suffers is in direct contrast, as we will see, with the excellent academic results and of coexistence that the school gets, especially from the implementation of the DMC<sup>5</sup>.

To access meaningful and relevant information on Moroccan women's participation, we needed to understand beyond specific actions. The educational centre selected is a learning community whose trajectory of the academic improvement of its students has already been endorsed by the international scientific community (Flecha 2015). In 2014, the centre began specific training to tackle school bullying, based on the community participation they had been successfully developing for more than a decade and the scientific evidence for the conflict resolution and prevention implemented through the DMC, defined as a SEA. To add depth to this process, we decided to carry out a case-study in this school and the relatives of the students who participate most in their education: their mothers. Although diverse people participates in the DMC (students, teachers, families, neighbours and volunteers), the majority of the families that do so are Moroccan (due to the population composition of the school) women (due to the gender roles). Next, we describe the methodology of the case-study.

The methodology used is of a qualitative nature and has allowed us to analyse in depth the discourses and forms of participation of the women studied, active members of the educational community who implement the actions to overcome conflicts. The case-study has provided us with significant and relevant information, not representative. A communicative approach was developed for the collection and analysis of the information, due to its scientific recognition and socio-political impact (Soler-Gallart 2017). This methodology seeks to take a step further in the description and explanation of social problems and to contribute to social transformation. To achieve this goal, one of its most important characteristics is that it breaks from the presupposition of

interpretative hierarchy on the part of the researcher, which is replaced by the egalitarian dialogue between all those agents involved in the studied reality (researchers, investigated subjects, policy makers).

Prior to the specific field work, during 2015-2016 academic year, one of the authors participated in the training for conflict resolution and prevention directed to teachers and family members of the school, as well as in initial coexistence meetings. In this period, the fieldwork to be developed was systematized for the case-study: participating persons were selected for the in-depth interviews and so were the spaces where to conduct the communicative observations. The fieldwork was carried out in the school during the implementation of the DMC in the 2016-2017; and during 2017-2018, the results obtained were monitored through brief meetings and contact with students, mothers, teachers, the centre's management staff and the coexistence coordinator<sup>6</sup>.

We conducted in-depth interviews with 7 Moroccan mothers, 1 in-depth interview with the school director, and another one with the coexistence coordinator. The interviews with Moroccan women were either one-on-one or in group in other cases (2 or 3 people) due to the choice of the interviewees themselves that were encouraged to do so in whichever condition they felt more comfortable. In addition, 6 communicative observations were conducted in different spaces created especially for conflict resolution, in which students, mothers and the coexistence coordinator participate. As showed in Table 1, 23 Moroccan and Muslim women have participated in the observations described, most of them were mothers of the students and school volunteers. In spite of having similar profiles (as they come from rural areas in Morocco with primary education levels, or without them) there are differences such as age, the more or less proficiency in the language (Catalan or Spanish) or their degree of involvement in processes of family training (language, literacy and reading) offered by

the school. The following table details the information about the field work carried out where names have been anonymized:

Table 1. Techniques and profiles interviewed

Data collection technique	Type of activity and participant profiles
In-depth interviews	Yasmin (51 years old) with a son in the 5th grade of primary school and a volunteer since 2009 in school; and Fatema (35), with 3 children attending school (2 in primary and 1 in preschool).
	Nisrin (24), with 2 children in school (1 in preschool and the other in primary school) and a volunteer; Leyla (30), with 3 children, 2 in primary school and 1 graduate of the school; and Karima (28) with 2 children in primary school.
	Dounia (31), with a daughter in primary school and 2 other children in secondary school, both graduates of the centre. She has been a volunteer at the school for several years, and now participates in the mixed coexistence committee.
	Nora (25), with 3 children enrolled in the centre (2 in preschool and 1 in primary school). She is a volunteer at the school and, together with five other women in the neighbourhood, she is the founder of a recently created association.
	Coexistence coordinator (Laura).
	School director (Ines).

Communicative observations	Meeting of delegates (student representative of all courses): 15 boys and girls between 4 and 12 years old, 1 Moroccan mother (Samia) and the coexistence coordinator.
	Meeting of delegates: 15 boys and girls between 4 and 12 years old and 3 Moroccan women: 2 mothers of students (Nadia, Maryam) and a mother of a previous student (Radhiya), 1 volunteer and the coexistence coordinator.
	Meeting with the teachers of the centre to address the theme of coexistence: 11 female teachers and 1 male teacher.
	Meeting of coexistence with 4th-year students (9 years old) to discuss the conflicts of coexistence of the group inside and outside the classroom: 17 children, 16 Moroccan mothers, 1 father (South African), 2 university students in internships, a tutor, the coexistence coordinator, and a translator (Moroccan).
	Meeting of delegates of the 4th, 5th and 6th grades (9 to 12 years old): 8 children, 4 Moroccan mothers and the coexistence coordinator.
	Coexistence meeting with upper-cycle students in the dining room: 6 girls and 8 boys, 2 dining room monitors and the coexistence coordinator.

To collect data, the school management staff and the persons interviewed were informed about the use to be given to the data collected by the researchers. Likewise, consent forms were prepared for the adult informants and the necessary permits were obtained for the recording and use of the information provided by the minors.

## **Results and discussion**

The research conducted has allowed us to delve into the process of transformation that Moroccan women have promoted and the dialogue this process has enabled. In what follows, the evidence of this transformation is presented, intertwined with the explanation of what these women are doing.

Two types of results are explained: one concerning the dialogic organization (Flecha 2000) that takes place in the school studied and its effects on the participation of Moroccan women, and the other referring to the impact that participation is having on the prevention of violence. This aspect that appears in the analysis is the result of the procedure the school has followed to train for and implement the DMC. With this process, new, specific spaces have been created to detect and solve coexistence problems such as bullying.

### ***The DMC implementation process***

After an intense process of teacher training based on scientific evidence, in 2001, the school management began a process of transformation into a learning community, implementing different SEAs such as Interactive Groups (IG, hereafter) (Flecha 2015), Dialogic Literary Gatherings (Garcia-Yeste et al. 2018), and the educational participation of the community (Garcia-Carrion et al. 2018). This led to improvement in only a few years and remarkable academic results<sup>7</sup>. Since then, the school has been organized through work committees where participants take the lead in the management

of the school, such as parents, teachers, or volunteers. However, despite the improvement, there have continued to be conflicts of coexistence, even cases of bullying.

Teachers have detected the growing need to be trained in order to resolve and prevent conflicts, as they often find themselves without tools to deal with violent attitudes and, especially, harassment. This fact led them to consider specific training to implement the DMC. The school opened this training to the entire educational community, and especially to the families, who participated from the beginning in the work committees. Hence, Moroccan women in the study group, who have been traditionally silenced, have been able to access these spaces and make their voices heard. The DMC is based on scientific evidence and provides guidelines for the actions of teachers and families in the face of school violence. The dialogic training of the teachers of this school has focused on a scientific-based approach to violence and is open to community participation, so it is not unusual to find mothers present at them. This model has been implemented through the selection of a coexistence norm by the entire educational community. Thus, in 2015, the process of establish this norm was carried out. Implementation of the DMC was initiated by seeking the consensus of a single norm, clear and direct, that will affect important aspects of the students' daily life. This influence is why the children played a major role in its definition. The adults of the community also had an important role because they accompanied the students in the decision-making process regarding the norm, committing to intervene if it was not upheld. For there to be success in compliance, this rule should have characteristics that facilitated agreement. For example, it needed to connect with people of different ages and mentalities; it also had to give response to a behaviour which was possible to

eliminate; to have clear verbal support from society as a whole; and it had to be something that was repeatedly not complied with.

During the entire course, community members were in dialogue to agree and define their own norm, which the whole community would enforce. A mixed committee formed of students, relatives and teachers was created, which was responsible for initiating the debate process by making an initial proposal. The students discussed it in their classes, and the comments of each course were put forth during delegates' meetings, in which Moroccan mothers also participated. The norm was discussed in the faculty meetings and family assemblies. Over several months, changes and details requested by the students to avoid any ambiguity in 'their norm' were incorporated, until a final product was agreed upon. Today, this statement is posted in all spaces of the educational centre and reads as follows:

We must respect our comrades and all the people in the community. You cannot physically attack anyone: fight, hit, etc. You cannot attack orally: insult, criticize, lie about him or her, or threaten. You cannot force anyone to do something he or she does not want to do; nor discriminate based on any difference of religion, skin colour, or food. We must be good friends: we must defend the victim.

The Committee of the school's delegates gathers one representative from each classroom to jointly discuss the issues that are important in the school, such as 'the norm' and the way it is implemented. Nadia, a Moroccan mother participating in these meetings, explained the important role that the teachers play in the implementation of the norm and how much better the situation is at present because the current teachers are strict in its implementation: 'Now the two teachers they know what is happening and act

accordingly [to the norm]. Last year, it was a disaster with the other teacher [whom they explained did not understand what was happening in their class].’ (Nadia). Furthermore Ines, the school director, indicated the reduction of the disciplinary measures and the perception of improvement in the coexistence by professors, students and their families. According to the information provided by Ines, from the implementation of the DMC, the school has reduced to one third the number of physical and verbal aggressions; to less than half the 5-days expulsions (to another class or to home) and in 80% the dining-room expulsions. Besides, there is a greater identification of violence resulting of the training of the teachers on the basis of scientific evidence.

As the DMC was consolidating in the school, the educational community observed how it began to have an impact outside the centre (homes, parks, street). Our case-study has shown the key role that the Moroccan mothers have played in this process of transferring the DMC to other neighbourhood spaces, and it provides evidence of the importance of women’s agency indicated by Sen (1999). In the next section we address this issue.

### ***The role of Moroccan women in the impact of the DMC***

. The mothers of the students in the case-study school are, mostly immigrants, Muslim and they live in a context of strong social exclusion. They are especially vulnerable to be excluded from any form of participation, however, since the transformation of the school into a learning community, these women have participated in meetings, have been trained and are involved in the academic activities of their children. The context of dialogue generated by the dialogic organization of the school facilitates the participation of Moroccan women and the intergenerational dialogue between children and their families about problems like bullying, grooming, and other

risks they might face in the current society. For instance, it makes it possible to increase also the participation of male parents who have started to speak about the future of their children and the effects that social problems such as violence or radicalization can have.

. Monitoring of the norm takes place in the meetings of delegates to observe whether it is being applied and complied with. These women might take an active part or choose a more passive presence, but they are part of the decisions, discussions and agreements that are made in these meetings. In one of the sessions, children were discussing bullying, and some of them stated that it does not happen. Samia, a Moroccan mother, then clarified what it does happen and what they do about it: ‘In this school, [bullying] happens but rarely. We solve it between management and mothers, some mothers talk to each other, and it’s resolved. But, yes, bullying happens.’ (Samia) These women contribute to explaining the norm and what happens and how they function in the school, as well as to resolution – they act, they talk to Ines, the school director, they talk between themselves, and they solve the situation.

Gender roles that affect all societies make it usual to have the women assuming the roles of caring for their children. These women are, in general, those responsible for the children in the family, and they have incorporated the norm of coexistence into their daily lives. In the interviews, they explain that the commitment to enforcing the norm of coexistence has opened the possibility of discussing the problems of coexistence with their children and has also favoured searching for solutions with other families instead of having to defend their sons/daughters. This is what Karima expressed:

Because now if someone touches another student, they immediately go and tell “Teacher!” And also, now each family talks about this issue at home with their own children. Yes, this is what needs to happen, that all the mothers talk with

their children about what is right and what is wrong. Yes, mothers, they do it.  
(Karima)

Among the school's directors and staff, a perspective to increase the capacity of agency of these women has been developed. For instance, the creation of a women's association has been promoted. This space has a relevant function both as a dialogic space for these women – in which they discuss the reality in the school and with their children – and as a platform for involvement in socio-cultural activities in the neighbourhood. Nora, a participant in an activity of family training that takes place within the school and a school volunteer, explained how being active in the association is also facilitating the communication among mothers about their children and the school:

Before [the training], we talk about what happens with the children and then we talk about the association [...] about the children we talk a lot, outside, on the street, as we live in the same neighbourhood, we talk about it at the gate, in the school, on the phone. I talk with all the women in the school. (Nora)

The fact that this possibility was promoted by the school itself shows the expectations that are held concerning the possibilities of the families and what can be done regarding collaborations and community building around the school. Having the school open to the community is key for the mothers of the students to be able to extend their interactions with other members of the educational community. The transformation process of the school into a learning community in 2001 already showed that the neighbourhood dreamt that children could have a better education. This dream is still present and is the one that enables the creation of networks of solidarity among women but also among volunteers, teachers and neighbours.

### *Compliance with the norm within the classroom*

Among the various forms of participation of the women studied, their involvement as volunteers stands out for its strong impact on the application of and compliance with the norm among the students.

In the centre studied, Moroccan mothers are present in the classroom through IG, that consists of a reorganization of the classroom where the teacher distributes the students into 4 small heterogeneous groups, prepares 4 different instrumental activities and each group includes a volunteer assigned to one of the activities. The volunteer does not act as a teacher; instead, their role is to manage the interactions, ensure that the children help each other, and manage conflicts that arise according to the agreed-upon norm, always in collaboration with the teacher in charge. This turns them into role models for the children, which is impacting conflict prevention and resolution at the school. Dounia explained how their very presence ensures that there is hardly any conflict when they are present in the classroom, and that in some occasions when a conflict arises, the collaboration and dialogue between the mothers contributed to solving the problem:

When I enter, there are no conflicts; once in fifth, there was a conflict, my son quarrelled with another kid because he wanted to sit next to me [...]. The other child was furious, and in the end, they called his mother, who came, and they, we, the mothers spoke, yes, we spoke, and we sorted it out. (Dounia)

The involvement of Moroccan women in IG is a very important contribution for the consolidation of the norm. The classroom behaviour of children has improved, especially when they meet their mothers or the mothers of their classmates. This effect

has occurred in both preschool and primary education. Fatema is a volunteer in early childhood education for her 4-year-old son's class. She participated in the decision-making process of the norm of coexistence. She has recently decided to become involved in the IG of the 5th-grade class, where her eldest son is, after realizing that her presence improves the children's behaviour but also because it broadens her interaction spaces with other people:

Yes, yes, I love when I come to help ... because at home alone ... it's better here to look at people, to look at children, I go out to shop. We will talk and laugh [with other mothers], and it's good. (Fatema)

Nisrin and Leyla are also volunteer mothers who help two times per week at the school by participating in IG. They have also motivated their families to participate as well, even if on a short-term or occasional basis, and they note the good behaviour of the children when they are present in the classroom. Their participation is building new expectations for the children, who are aware of this. Nisrin said that she has the reputation of being very strict and demanding, and when she enters the classroom, children expect that she will make them work hard: 'Yes, I, well, the other children, when they see me, they say: Look! The mother of Omar will make us work, work, work. They all behave better, not only my son.' (Nisrin)

Our analysis makes these women visible as agents of great importance for the improvement of coexistence in the spaces in which they live and participate. Their involvement is motivated by the improvement of their children's relationships and made possible by the dialogic organization of the school. In the next section we show how they are transferring the school norm to their homes and from there to the whole

neighbourhood, creating new spaces for interaction that improve, in turn, the relationships between them and their families.

*Passing the norm from school to home and to the neighbourhood*

Mothers are talking more now to their children in school to encourage them to behave better. They confirmed to us that the norm is something that all participants in the school consider and that it is also implemented at home. ‘We have the norm in our head!’ says Yasmin. She has been a volunteer at the school since 2009 and associates the improvement in coexistence with the application of the norm and community participation. Importantly, when asked about her capacity to solve problems, she explained it as follows:

If you were not coming to school [participating], you would not know this, you would not have the confidence to talk to the other mothers, you feel...you can’t, you don’t know how she is going to react, and, ...and I know I can talk with her son and she is not going to be upset, and she also can talk with mine, and I will not say anything. (Yasmin)

Although this might be seen as an isolated reaction, Laura, the coexistence coordinator, observed a tendency of the mothers to involve themselves as a result of the process of addressing these issues through the whole-school process of implementing the norm. Laura explained that this has been the case in different situations and also with mothers and students of different ages, for instance mothers of pre-K children from the school not only stopped a quarrel between K-6 children on the street outside the school but also sought the cooperation of Ines, the school director, to tackle the issue of violence and take action.

Nora and Leyla also explained how this process has been useful for other mothers, who were challenged by conflicting situations with their children and are now finding ways to sort things out through dialogue. Nora also mentioned that since they discussed the issues of the norm, her daughter now talks with her much more frequently about what is happening in class:

Yes, talking with the mothers so that at the same time they talk with their children. Yes, indeed, this does happen, it happens. (Leyla)

Yes, much better, when something happens in school she explains the things to me, before she did not. Yes, this has happened (...) I also talk about things, of course. We have to collaborate, all of us, anything good or bad, we need to talk because otherwise... (Nora)

The women interviewed also talked about how the implementation of the DMC has changed attitudes. Concerning this, Dounia explained that she has really noticed a change, especially in her son's class, which has even facilitated the children reporting a case of harassment that had lasted for 3 years, even though the harasser was a member of the class:

I notice that this year is much better. Yes, yes, because of the norm and also the teachers because now always when there is a problem, they do not pass it off, they always try to solve it, they stop the class if something happens and talk about it ...it happened with a girl in the K5 class that started the harassment in K-2, and we did not know it until this year. (Dounia)

This action is viewed as a clear result of implementing the norm. The actions conducted within the framework of the intensive labour to implement the norm are acknowledged by mothers and staff as having had a highly relevant impact on the life of some children

in school as well as on overall coexistence. During the interviews, mothers explained a case of bullying that they tackled to jointly discover a solution. Their role was very important in identified and stopping this situation outside of the school and took action by explaining it to the school's directors so that consequences could be established. In what follows, Nisrin explained how they solved it:

The children were hitting another child, and that is very wrong [...] Yes, of course, we did something, we knew, and then we went to speak with the teachers so that they could speak with the children. Besides, we as a families' association, we went up and talked about it. We met and discussed about it. Then, the school spoke with all the children, and there were consequences for them. (Nisrin)

As a result of the implementation of the DMC, teachers, volunteers and families talk about how to act. They discuss the importance of not trivializing the problems that children explain to them in search of support and of not justifying conflicts or looking the other way; instead, they seek to position themselves to defend the victim and seek support from other people in the community. Mothers know the norm and apply it in situations of conflict, and they talk more with their children and know how to intervene. These mothers are very aware and are resolute in acting in cases of fights in the street, for instance. They also discuss the fact that there are children who respect other mothers more than their own mothers. Leyla's response makes explicit the change in attitude and the involvement of these women, who have become role models for children in the neighbourhood thanks to their participation in the school and their commitment to the agreed norm: 'What would you do if you find a conflict in the street? (Interviewer); I would talk about it with them, I wouldn't just leave them.' (Leyla)

Interestingly, the issue arose that these women choose to act even in cases where they know their husbands would not. Karima, another mother present in the collective interview, mentioned the following: ‘Yes, I also act. Sometimes I say something when I see children on the street, and I tell them something, and my husband says...it’s ok, you don’t need to say anything. But yes, I do [firmly].’ (Karima)

The women studied are fulfilling their commitment to apply the norm: they intervene in conflicts and seek the collaboration of teachers. The climate of respect and support that increasingly permeates the environment also contributes to the transformation of their interactions and those of their children. With their involvement as volunteers, they help the community comply with the norm and reinforce their link with the teaching staff. They have incorporated the educational community’s norm of coexistence into their daily lives and are transferring it to their families. And they are also creating networks of solidarity with other women through training spaces and associations, essential supports to overcome any situation of violence.

## **Conclusions**

This article provides relevant information and gives visibility about the key role of Moroccan women in conflict prevention. The solution to violence can be found in a community model that includes all voices and provides evidence-based guidelines for successful intervention regarding conflicts that occur inside and outside educational centres.

The dialogic organization of the school studied gives priority to the participation of different members of the community, most of them women’s, making egalitarian dialogue the core tool that contributes to these results. Our paper explains how this is

achieved and the effects it has in improving the relations within the school and beyond its walls. The fact that families are present and active in relevant decision-making processes in the school has facilitated Moroccan women's participation in the implementation of the DMC and explains how conflict resolution has been possible in this context.

Moroccan mothers participate in the coexistence committee, together with the teaching staff and students. This space provides a place to talk about the problems that occur in the school, seek solutions together and attempt to reach agreements and commitments that resolve them. However, the conflicts in the school are often transferred to the neighbourhood, and at the same time, the problems that the children experience outside the school are transferred to the classroom in the form of ridicule, insults and, sometimes, result in bullying. It is in this context that the women interviewed become effective agents to promote coexistence in the neighbourhood.

The families extend the norm beyond the school, also implementing it at home and the neighbourhood. The women interviewed demonstrate a great capacity for transmitting the agreed-upon norm of coexistence to the different spaces, beyond the walls of the school. They assume this norm as their own and apply it in their daily spaces with great coherence, to the point of intervening to stop a fight even if their children are not involved. These women become leaders of conflict prevention providing evidence of their agency and capacity of transformation. In spite of the strong social exclusion they suffer, they become role models for their children and for other women and their own community. Their commitment to the norm has led them to break the silence that often surrounds the aggressors and further harms the victims. They talk about what happened with other relatives of the students, especially other mothers, and they also discuss about this with the teachers even though the conflict may have

occurred outside of school, generating a feedback loop, a community collaboration that is becoming the tight support network that every victim of violence needs.

The key can be found in the transformation of the school into a learning community. This fact implied a change in the type of organization becoming a school open to the community that implements actions supported by the international scientific community. The school then becomes part of the whole community and these women see in it an opportunity to train and participate just as it happened in the process explained above. The women studied, feel the coexistence norm as their own because they have participated in its process of definition, improvement and implementation.

The shared desire of improving their children's education for them to have a better future is their shared bond, one that gives meaning to all the persons that participate in the school. This becomes an open door that allows to establish strong networks of solidarity among women but also among people who are very diverse in beliefs, ideologies, professions or levels of education.

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the Council of Europe.

<sup>2</sup> Catalan Institute of Statistics, Catalan Government, 2018 : <https://www.idescat.cat/>

<sup>3</sup> Terrassa City Council, Service of Studies and Observatory of de City. Basic city indicators by district 2019: <https://www.terrassa.cat/servei-estudis>

<sup>4</sup> Schools as 'Learning Communities': <http://utopiadream.info/ca> and <https://www.comunidadedeaprendizagem.com/>

<sup>5</sup> The school studied received the first prize of “Education 2018” awarded by the ‘Economic Circle Funds’ and ‘La Caixa Foundation’: <https://www.cercleeconomia.com/premis/8638/>

<sup>6</sup> The coexistence coordinator is a teacher at the school in charge of veiling, as well as of the smooth implementation of the mixed committees, meetings of the class delegates, content coordinators in and out of the classrooms, and support for teachers.

<sup>7</sup> Between 2001-2006, the school increased the proportion of students achieving basic reading comprehension skills from 17% to 85% as a result of SEAs. Up to the year 2017-2018 the school has improved these results and achieved a position in performance above the average in Catalonia in Mathematics and Languages for the third year in a row.