

Review of the scientific literature on the impact of extending learning time with vulnerable groups

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ABSTRACT

The scientific literature provides evidence of the importance of increasing the academic level of adolescents from vulnerable groups to achieve better well-being and quality of life (INCLUD-ED, 2006–2011). There are so far no systematic reviews of the scientific literature on how the Successful Educational Action (SEA) “Extending learning time” is achieving this. This article fills this gap to have a better understanding of how extending learning time as an out-of-school intervention is achieving social impact. To this end, we have conducted a systematic literature review using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), in which seven studies have been selected that provide results on the implementation of this SEA with adolescents at risk of social exclusion. The results show that offering Successful Educational Actions during extending learning time contributes to the improvement of educational achievement by creating learning spaces that foster the development of personal and social skills that make it possible, managing to reduce the risk factors that increase vulnerability in adolescence.

1. Introduction

SDG 4 Quality Education proposed by the United Nations (UN, 2016) includes education as a fundamental right. At the same time, it is considered a key factor for the human and sustainable development of societies, and a mechanism for balancing social inequalities.

When referring to adolescence, new interpretations consider this life stage as a critical period due to high sensitivity to social processing (Blakemore and Mills, 2014). This means that vulnerable developmental contexts can impair their development, making them more susceptible to negative consequences that can affect their health and well-being (Patton et al., 2016). Out-of-school educational programs are a response to the educational needs of this age group out of the school hours by offering protective contexts for adolescents that provide meaningful learning opportunities for educational advancement (Mahoney et al., 2003; Morris, 2016), especially from contexts of vulnerability and risk of social exclusion (Broh, 2002; Peck et al., 2008).

Based on existing research on this topic, this article carries out a systematic review paying attention to the role of the Successful

Educational Action “Extension of Learning Time” identified by the European project INCLUD-ED. *Strategies for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from Education* (2006–2011) developed in the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Union. The extension of learning time is a successful educational action that consists of providing quality learning opportunities through devoting more time to instrumental learning outside class hours. They are based on the implementation of evidence-based actions that ensure their effectiveness by increasing academic performance and improving the educational level of the students who participate. They pay special attention to students from vulnerable groups by presenting themselves as activities that extend learning time, while including the figure of complementary adult support that facilitates additional learning opportunities to achieve academic progress. This, in turn, bridges the gap between different levels of peer learning, while simultaneously strengthening relationships between people in the community (Flecha, 2015).

The systematic review seeks to identify the impact that extending learning time has achieved when implemented with adolescents from vulnerable groups. The aim is to find out which benefits have been key to

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achieving educational improvement in the groups in which the successful educational intervention has been implemented. To this end, the article is developed in the following parts. The first part presents the theoretical background of the study. This is followed by the methodology used in the systematic review of the literature. Finally, the results of the study are presented together with a discussion of the results and some conclusions.

2. Literature review

2.1. Adolescence and vulnerability

Adolescence is the age group 10–19 years considered a unique stage of human development and an important time for laying the foundations for good health (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2023). It is considered a life stage with a high sensitivity to sociocultural cues from the environment, which makes it defined as a critical period that is particularly sensitive to the dynamics of social interactions in the environments in which adolescents develop (Blakemore and Mills, 2014).

Significant social development occurs during adolescence with changes occurring that affect behaviour, cognition, and emotion regulation (Leibenluft and Barch, 2021). This implies paying attention to the influence that socio-cultural cues in the environment can have on the adolescent's life trajectory, as they can motivate certain behaviours. Consequently, more research is needed to understand how to effectively assess the social impact of the surrounding context, that can have as a driver of many of the decisions adolescents make, paying special attention to behaviours that may involve risks, emotional relationships, etc. In the same way, adults become agents that can have a major impact on adolescents' social cognitive development and life trajectories by creating and maintaining the structures of the social environments in which they develop (Blakemore and Mills, 2014).

From the field of neuroscience, adolescence is considered a significant time in the functional development of the social brain (Blakemore, 2008), which, at this stage, has a significant impact on the development of the complex network that enable them to recognise others and assess their mental states, feelings and emotions. Functions that empower people to understand and interact, with important implications for the development of social skills. It is therefore a period in neural development in which environmental experiences profoundly shape the developing brain and interact with adolescents' behaviour, cognitive abilities, and social sensitivity. Making adolescence a time of opportunity to learn new skills and develop an adult identity.

At the same time, it warns that the influence of the environment can also have negative effects, explained by broader social structures such as inequality and poverty factors, which have negative consequences for adolescent health (Patton et al., 2016). Consequently, adolescence is situated as a social group vulnerable to social changes, which can lead to the risk of social exclusion. This is why young people are considered to be one of the main groups at risk of social exclusion, and therefore more vulnerable, as they are considered to be a group that has an "inherent vulnerability" intrinsic in the life process, which is reflected in the difficulties they experience in enjoying their rights" (Moro et al., 2021, p. 1). In contexts where there are enormous difficulties, young people are exposed to risks such as high rates of school failure and early school leaving unemployment, or a high risk of becoming involved in criminal activities or engaging in risky behaviours (Novkovska and Serafimovic, 2018). Therefore, a key aspect is to try to reduce them through actions that can improve well-being by reducing risk (Adger, 2006).

2.2. Out-of-School Programs, educational opportunities in out-of-school contexts

Out-school programs are developed after school or during the summer (Lauer et al., 2006), fulfilling the objective of responding to the needs of children and adolescents by offering new experiences that

provide adequate support for their development and promoting educational improvement. They are particularly important in vulnerable contexts, where the main aim of these programmes is to address inequalities in access to knowledge caused by social and economic disadvantage. However, some studies suggest that not all programmes have the same impact (Lauer et al., 2006).

In this line, it is identified that the programmes that promote the development of personal and social skills are identified as having an improvement in self-perception and attachment to school, positive social behaviours, school grades and academic achievement levels, and significant reductions in problem behaviours (Durlak et al., 2010). Similarly, programmes that foster connection with the environment by impacting improved school relationships achieve improvements in academic performance (Morris, 2016). Especially with disadvantaged students (Broh, 2002), by providing a setting in which students intensify social ties and help forge the link between families and schools.

Another aspect of after-school programmes that influences the benefits they bring is the age of participation, with the most significant improvements occurring during adolescence. A positive relationship has been found between involvement in after-school activities during adolescence and educational attainment in adulthood (Mahoney et al., 2003). This is attributed to the opportunities offered by the programmes to develop interpersonal skills and building plans, which promote positive outcomes that have a long-term impact on the future (Haghighat and Knifsend, 2019; Morris, 2016). This is crucial for adolescents entering secondary school at high risk of dropping out or failing out of school, knowing that regular participation in such programmes significantly increases the chances of graduating from compulsory secondary school and enrolling in university (Peck et al., 2008).

Another factor related to higher long-term educational attainment is continued and consistent participation in out-of-school educational programmes, with notable effects on improving social and cognitive adjustment, and especially significant with foster youth (Gairal-Casadó et al., 2022; Pinchover and Attar-Schwartz, 2018; White et al., 2018), which is associated with increased educational expectations (Haghighat and Knifsend, 2019) and decreased risk factors (Eccles et al., 2003).

2.3. INCLUD-ED, educational actions that transform the context

The EU 6th Framework Programme research project INCLUD ED, *Strategies for Inclusion and social cohesion in Europe from Education*, is widely recognised for the social, scientific, and policy impact it is achieving. It is the only social science programme selected as a success story among all EU Framework Programmes for research in all areas of knowledge, for its added value and innovation (European Commission, 2011).

INCLUD ED has shown that school failure and exclusion are not explained by the social characteristics of the context, but by the actions that are implemented in it (Flecha and Soler, 2013). An important milestone in overcoming inequalities has been achieved by researching, understanding, and interpreting diverse social and educational realities to delve deeper into how exclusionary actions affect the most vulnerable groups, while at the same time pointing out what type of educational provision contributes to overcoming it (Flecha, 2015). To this end, it identifies Successful Educational Actions recognised for demonstrating the achievement of social cohesion and the inclusion of all children and adolescents, regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnic origin (Flecha and Soler, 2013; García Carrión, 2012; López de Aguilera, 2021) or their specific learning needs (García-Carrión et al., 2018).

These are effective and transferable social and educational initiatives, as they are actions based on scientific evidence of social impact that reduce risk factors in highly vulnerable contexts and achieve educational improvements (Morlá et al., 2022). In line with a dialogical sociology based on a transformative approach that seeks to co-create theoretical contributions for social change to improve people's lives and societies (Flecha, 2022).

The scientific project **INCLUD ED (2006-2011)** has demonstrated improvements that respond to the indicators set by the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2016) and the European Union's 2020 targets. SDG 4 Quality education by influencing the proposed indicators and contributing to one of its targets such as equitable access to all levels of education and training for the most vulnerable. In the same way, the social impact of the Educational Successful Actions is a contribution to the goals of the European strategy in the field of education for 2030, by responding to two of the five strategies set. As, contributing to decoupling educational outcomes and achievements from social, economic cultural, or other personal circumstances. Success in achieving this goal strengthens European higher education. By opening up access to pre-university academic pathways for vulnerable groups, enabling access to higher education, it guarantees an improved quality of life (Orfield, 2022).

Successful educational actions are defined by their implementation inside and outside the classroom. Three stand out: interactive groups (educational action and learning environment based on the organisation of the classroom into heterogeneous groups of students with an adult volunteer who promotes interactions between peers), dialogic gatherings (educational action and learning environment based on the collective construction of meaning and knowledge through the reading and dialogue of the best cultural or scientific productions) and the extension of learning time (inclusive action and learning environment that offers high-quality learning activities and additional support outside school hours) (Flecha, 2015). Thus, in the literature review, we will consider those that have been implemented outside school hours and have been carried out with adolescents from vulnerable groups.

2.4. Objective and review question

The aim of the systematic literature review is to analyse one of the "Successful Education Actions" identified by INCLUD-ED (Flecha, 2015) with the proposal to answer the following research question: What is the impact of the Successful Educational Action "Extending Learning Time" to find out how the implementation of high quality educational actions implemented in more out-of-school hours and in other learning settings can bring educational factors benefits and reduce risks factors when implemented with young people from vulnerable groups?

3. Methods

The systematic review has been designed according to PRISMA standards (Tricco et al., 2018) to identify, organise and evaluate studies with a common objective. In this study, the review aims to systematise the existing information on studies that evaluate the impact of the Educational Success Action "Extension of Learning Time" for educational improvement in adolescents from vulnerable groups.

3.1. Search strategy

The systematic review was defined in accordance with internationally accepted criteria by including those features that should be present in all literature reviews, such as a) a clear statement of the objectives and questions to be addressed, b) the definition of inclusion and exclusion criteria, specified prior to the selection of articles, c) a comprehensive search of all articles identified as being of potential interest, d) specification of the selection process carried out, e) data analysis based on study searches, and f) presentation and synthesis of the results obtained.

3.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

To identify and select studies that have been published for this study, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were established and are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Type of studies	Empirical studies paper in Web of Science and Scopus	Theoretical studies
Population	Adolescents and vulnerables groups	People not vulnerables groups nor adolescent
Intervention	Successful Educational Actions (SEA), Dialogic Gatherings (as an SEA that could be implemented as part of the extension of learning time), Extending Learning Time	Interventions not identified as Successful Educational Actions
Comparison	Interventions implemented in Extending Learning Time, Extracurricular activities	Successful Educational Actions are implemented in school time
Outcome	Improvements contribute to success at school and to social cohesion	*Academic success and social cohesion have not improved

* Although this exclusion criterion is considered, it should be noted that the impact of Successful Educational Actions (Flecha, 2015) is positive, as by definition they all contribute to improvement.

3.3. Selection process

An Excel file was created with the selected articles to which the inclusion and exclusion criteria defined in Table 1 were applied. The search process was carried out on the Web of Science and Scopus platforms, as these are two databases that include journals indexed in two of the most widely recognised impact factors, the SSCI in Web of Science and the SJR in Scopus.

Based on the established inclusion criteria, the first part of the search selected terms that corresponded to the type of intervention and the population of interest for the study. In Web of Science, for the terms "adolescent" OR "vulnerable group" AND "Successful Educational Action" AND "Out-of-School programs" OR "Afterschool program" two studies were found. It was also interesting to search for Dialogical Literary Gathering, as it is a successful educational action that is also implemented as an action outside school hours, selecting those studies that analyse its implementation in the study population of interest. So for the terms *adolescent* OR *vulnerable group* AND "Dialogic Gatherings" 10 articles were found. Finally, a third search was carried out using the different nomenclatures that were found to be used to refer to the action that the study wanted to analyse. So, the third search included the terms "Extended Learning Time" OR "Successful Educational Actions" in which 49 articles were found. And in a final search using the terms "Extension of Learning Time" OR "Extending of Learning Time" OR "Successful Educational Actions") 15 articles were found.

Thus, the same terms were used for the In Scopus search. For the terms *adolescent* OR "*vulnerable group*" AND "*Successful Educational Action*" AND "*Out-of-School programs*" OR "*Afterschool program*" one article was found. For the terms *adolescent* AND "*dialogic gatherings*," four articles were found. For the terms *adolescent* OR "*vulnerable group*" AND "*Extending Learning Time*" OR "*Successful Educational Actions*" seven results were found. Finally, for the terms "*Extension of Learning Time*" OR "*Extending of Learning Time*" OR "*Extended learning time*" fourteen articles were found.

The combinations used in the search were no more than two terms, related to the inclusion criteria, as including a third would not return any search results.

A comprehensive search provided a total of 106 articles indexed in the Web Of Science and Scopus databases. From this initial search, 40 were selected based on the title and the abstract reading in Web Of Science, after discarding duplicates (n = 7). From the articles collected from this initial review, based on the abstracts and the review of their contributions, those studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria were eliminated (n = 26). Thus, 7 articles were presented and downloaded for an in-depth review (see Fig. 1 (Flow diagram)).

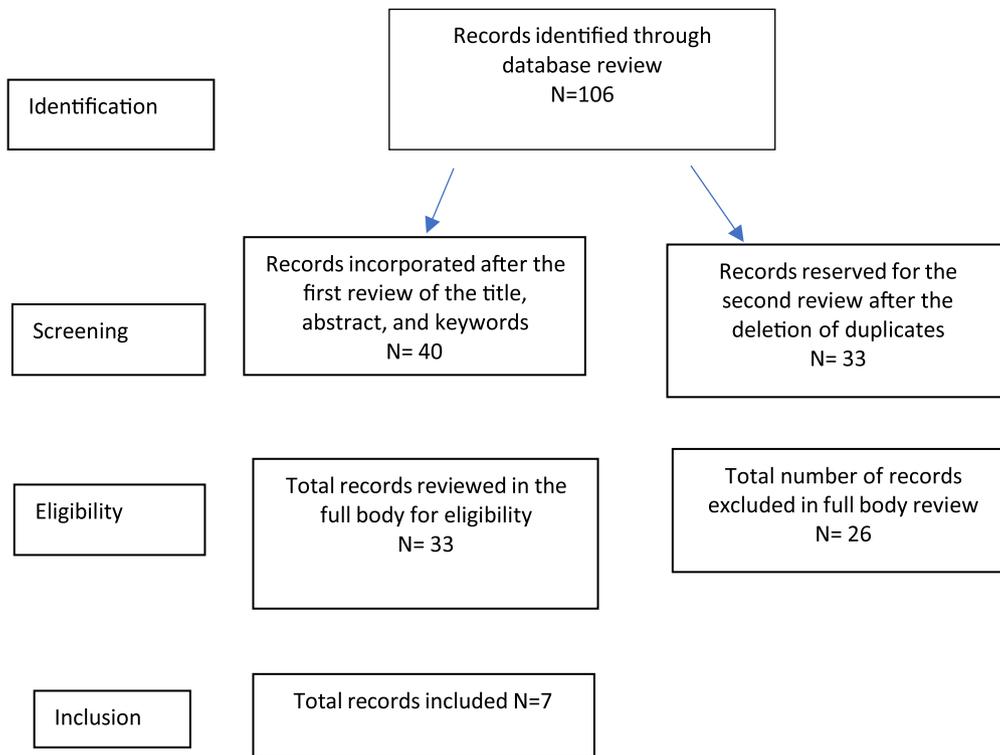


Fig. 1. Eligibility flow according to the PRISMA protocol.

3.4. Data analysis

A systematic analysis of the seven selected articles was carried out through an in-depth reading. A first analysis consisted of reviewing each of the articles in order to check whether they offered quality and valid information for the study. To this end, the methodology used in each study was analysed, the type of actions implemented and the characteristics of the groups of adolescents targeted by these interventions were analysed in detail, which revealed that the information provided by the studies was considered relevant to the study. Then, a table was created (see Table 3) in which a general description of the characteristics of the studies was included.

Concerning the actions that have been developed within the framework of the extension of learning time, four of the studies were dialogic gatherings of two different typologies. Two of them Dialogic Literary Gatherings, reading and discussing books from universal literature. And the other two Dialogic Feminist Gatherings, spaces for egalitarian dialogue to transform the language of desire to create non-violent relationships. Three others were scientific workshops. And another promoted the action learning space for school support. These are interventions that have been carried out with adolescents living in residential care institutions, students from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds, and girls with intellectual disabilities. All the participants took part voluntarily in these activities, which were carried out in environments close to their development context.

The results of each study were analysed in depth to identify the impact achieved in the learning, educational, and social cohesion of the extension of learning time (Flecha, 2015) in the group of adolescent participants. After this first phase of analysis, different categories were developed deductively from the scientific literature framing the study, and 14 sub-categories were defined inductively, which are shown in Table 2.

In the process of collecting evidence from each of the qualitative studies, they have been selected from the analysis of quotes from participants or other adults involved in the implementation of the actions carried out in the extension of learning time through the data provided

Table 2

Description of each category in the learning, educational, and social cohesion impact of the extension of learning time, and subcategories.

Category	Subcategories
Academic skills	Improvement of instrumental learning Improving academic performance Interest in further learning Improving knowledge of different disciplines Emerging academic expectations for the future
Respectful and safe environment	Promoting gender-based violence prevention socialisation Equality-promoting environments overcoming inequalities Safe contexts that generate friendship-promoting relationships based on trust and solidarity.
Group relations and empathy	Improving interpersonal relations Improvement of self-awareness Improved decision making Knowledge of the reality of others and development of empathy.

by each study on performance in the studies that are also included. This information has been collected in an Excel table in which each column corresponds to each of the studies in the systematic review, and each row to each of the categories set out in Table 2.

4. Findings

The purpose of this systematic review is to identify the impact of educational improvement of the extension of learning time for adolescents from vulnerable groups.

Table 3 summarises several of the characteristics of the 7 selected empirical studies that provide data on this impact. Concerning the characteristics of the participant groups, four studies show results with adolescence living in residential care institutions, two with students from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds, and one with girls with intellectual disabilities.

The literature review has identified several common components in the seven studies, such: 1) they develop high-quality educational

Table 3
Overview of study characteristics.

Study	Design	Context	Participants	
García-Yeste et al. (2017)	Case study	Dialogic Literary Gatherings	Spain	Adolescence living in residential care institutions
Salvadó et al. (2021)	Case study	Science workshops	Spain	Students with ethnic and cultural diversity and low-income families
Salceda et al. (2022)	Case study	Dialogic Literary Gatherings	Spain	Girls adolescence living in residential care institutions
Gairal-Casadó et al. (2019)	Case study	Science workshops	Spain	Adolescence living in residential care institutions
Rodríguez de Mello et al. (2021)	Case study	Dialogic Feminist Gatherings	Spain	Girls with intellectual disabilities
Salceda et al. (2020)	Case study	Dialogic Feminist Gatherings	Spain	Girls adolescence living in residential care institutions
Morlà-Folch et al. (2020)	Case study	Learning space for school support	Spain	Students of disadvantaged groups

activities based on scientific evidence of social impact, such as Successful Educational Actions; 2) their participation is voluntary, which requires a commitment from the participants; 3) the adults involved in the development of the activities fulfill a specific and defined role; 4) educational actions are developed in learning environments based on dialogical learning (Flecha, 2000).

The impact on learning, education, and social cohesion of the extension of learning time can be seen in two main results a) Improvement of educational achievement and b) reduction of risk factors that increase vulnerability in adolescence.

4.1. Improvement of educational achievement by developing personal and academic skills

Successful Educational Actions (Flecha, 2015), such as the extension of learning time, generate learning environments that make possible the development of personal skills that strengthen participants and help them to face their difficulties successfully that prevent educational and social exclusion. These are environments that, based on interactions of support and solidarity, become spaces for training personal skills that are effective in overcoming barriers, in some cases, as a result of discriminatory experiences that they may have suffered during childhood or adolescence. These spaces offer opportunities to acquire emotional skills that are useful in their day-to-day lives and their educational centers.

Is the case of the institutionalised adolescents participating in the successful educational action Dialogic Literary Gatherings programmed in their residential center. Dialogic Literary Gathering are a Successful Educational Action (Flecha, 2015) for collective creation of knowledge based on the reading of the classics of world literature. In this study, the educators at the residential centre, together with the participating adolescents, opted for reading *Oliver Twist* and offered reading support, especially to those who presented greater difficulties. The interactions fostered during the Dialogic Literary Gatherings among the participants

manage to create meaning in their lives, allow them to discover common concerns and interests and, for the first time, they have the opportunity to share experiences that until now had not occurred in the context of their reception center. This helps them to overcome personal situations, such as loneliness, or to reinforce feelings of community. The conversations triggered by the Dialogic Literary Gatherings have allowed the adolescents to have the opportunity to deepen their relationships and get to know each other better, increasing communication among them, as observed by one of their participants *"It is true that the gatherings allow us to express ourselves (...) I normally don't express it as I am afraid of how they will look at me"* (García-Yeste et al., 2017, p. 7).

This personal improvement influences a more positive self-perception, as observed in a group of girls participating in science workshops that take place in a context of equality that makes it possible for them to feel that anyone, whether boy or girl, has the same cognitive potential. These after schools workshops, led by noted researchers in fields as diverse as human palaeoecology, delved into fundamental aspects of human evolution during the Palaeolithic and Neolithic, Physics, Chemistry or the nature of science concept. The opportunity to be aware of one's potential is empowering, valuing effort and hard work as a requirement to achieve one's goals (Salvadó et al., 2021). As can be seen in this comment from one of the participants *"To become a scientist, I'll have to study hard and reach my best"* (Gairal-Casadó et al., 2019, p. 121). The approach to new challenges takes them away from the social exclusion to which their context of vulnerability can lead them.

Desirable personal changes are also achieved in adolescents' attitudes and feelings. The possibility of building quality relationships in contexts that prioritise positive interactions makes it possible for them to gain confidence and improve relationships, in turn achieving the overcoming of certain inhibitions manifested by adolescents (Salceda et al., 2022; Salvadó et al., 2021), and in which positive expectations that help overcome the low expectations held towards vulnerable groups (Morlà-Folch et al., 2020).

These improvements make it possible for positive references to emerge in the adolescents' context, which is key to overcoming many of the inequalities, as they are references among peers that generate expectations and support for a hopeful future (Salceda et al., 2022). The development of new personal skills also provides the courage to dare to make changes in the course of life and to reject what keeps them from their dreams, as observed *"But as you speak, you start to get more confidence and freedom to talk about whatever you want, and I think that has helped us a lot"* (Salceda et al., 2020, p. 7).

In the group of girls with intellectual disabilities, their participation in the space generated by the Dialogic Feminist Gatherings allowed them to raise their voices and denounce situations of abuse or violence that may be occurring in their daily lives. As one participant said, *"It is disrespectful to force a woman. She has to be free"* (Rodríguez de Mello et al., 2021, p. 7).

The analysis of the selected studies has also identified the benefits of extending learning time on academic skills by facilitating access to resources and supports that promote academic achievement and influence future academic decision making.

In the learning space, aimed at offering academic support to a group of adolescents from low socioeconomic status backgrounds (Morlà-Folch et al., 2020). These spaces were organised for children who accompanied their parents to regular assemblies organised by the PHA¹ because they had been evicted or had eviction orders against them from their homes. It was the families who decided that their children should be in quality spaces, and take advantage of the time. Support and high expectations are identified as promoting academic achievement in contexts where low expectations have predominated, as well as there is an improvement in academic results, as shown in this quote from a family

¹ Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca <https://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/>.

member “from the participation in the learning space, I have seen my child’s learning improve. Or this one from a participant “Coming here helps me improve grades and exams” (Morlà-Folch et al., 2020, p. 6). Thus, adolescents in the learning space improve the link with the context, which reinforces the sense of belonging to the educational institution, as the learning that takes place in this space is transferred to other educational contexts. These improvements enable adolescents to acquire a more active role in their learning process (Gairal-Casadó et al., 2019).

Dialogic Literary Gatherings improve instrumental skills such as communication skills, as they are spaces for training discursive and argumentative skills, vocabulary acquisition, reading improvement, and familiarisation with academic language (Garcia-Yeste et al., 2017; Salceda et al., 2022), which are considered predictors of academic success. In addition, participation in actions that move towards overcoming violence, such as Dialogic Feminist Gatherings, implies the elimination of important barriers to learning (Rodríguez de Mello et al., 2021; Salceda et al., 2020).

Voluntary participation in extending learning time is a reflection of adolescents’ school engagement, which can lead to improved adherence to the overall educational process, increased opportunities to build positive academic plans for the future, and influence their future academic decisions (Gairal-Casadó et al., 2019). Enabling adolescents to have higher educational aspirations and, consequently, higher academic achievement.

4.2. Reduce of risk factors that increase vulnerability in adolescence by creating scenarios that help develop social and emotional skills

The seven articles analysed in depth show that the environments generated in the extension of learning time foster a positive social climate that promotes inter-subjective relationships that develop non-cognitive skills, such as empathy and respect, identified as relevant to learning.

As stated by Garcia-Yeste et al. (2017), the environment of respect generated during the development of Dialogic Literary Gatherings made it possible to create a space in which adolescents could express their life experiences. This increased the opportunities to develop non-cognitive skills and feelings that provided new experiences and positive experiences that promoted emotional stability. These experiences helped the adolescents to face the reality of their lives with greater control and to fight for a better future, as one participant explains “This makes me think that we do not have to give in as we have everything; however, many times we give in unfortunately; this type of thing gives us further strength” (Garcia-Yeste et al., 2017, p. 7).

In the studies analysed, it is observed that the extension of learning time manages to develop optimal social skills, such as learning to listen, and express oneself with respect or to communicate emotions, which increases exposure to positive relationships and experiences among peers and adults. This has an impact on vulnerable adolescents who may have been excluded from this learning (Rodríguez de Mello et al., 2021), with a direct impact on reducing the risk factors to which adolescents may be exposed. In the case of the Dialogic Feminist Gathering with girls with intellectual disabilities, it allows them to recover their right to sexual education (Rodríguez de Mello et al., 2021) by being able to access knowledge that protects them from suffering gender-based violence in their affective and sexual relationships and achieves empowerment. As one of the participants expresses: “To be brave means to step firmly with your feet on the ground and to put your mind at ease, to say: ‘this is as far as I go, you are a bad guy’” (Rodríguez de Mello et al., 2021, p. 7). Similarly, the space created in the Dialogic Feminist Gatherings among girls living in a care centre became a support in their lives, as it was the tool that allowed them to transform the difficulties encountered in their lives into possibilities for change. Likewise, they acquired the feeling of having the right to dream of a better future, with the highest expectations, as one of the girls expressed: “By choosing a person who treats us well, who treats us with respect. We have to learn to

choose that guy and push the pimp one away” (Salceda et al., 2020, p. 11).

Similarly, among the adolescents in the learning space for school support, a change of attitude can be observed when facing what they consider to be complex learning. As one of the boys says: “I love it; the book is interesting, although a bit difficult. I had never read a book like this before” (Morlà-Folch et al., 2020, p. 6). This allows them to recover their academic sense (Gairal-Casadó et al., 2019; Garcia-Yeste et al., 2017; Morlà-Folch et al., 2020; Salvadó et al., 2021), as they feel more confident and secure to face new learning and see themselves as capable of it.

Improvements in social skills also have an impact on greater “political” engagement in adult life, as can be seen in the case of the young people who participated in the Dialogic Literary Gathering, where reading the classic *Oliver Twist* made them more sensitive to discrimination and inequality in their daily lives. As expressed by one of the boys “For instance, one evening while having supper, Alberto got annoyed because we wanted to throw the food away, and he made the point that Oliver would have eaten it” (Garcia-Yeste et al., 2017, p. 6). The opportunity to learn about realities close to their lives by reading this classic increased their ability to think about other people’s circumstances and improved their well-being. Especially in the case of institutionalised adolescents, sharing a similar situation offered them the opportunity to get to know each other better and empathise with each other, improving social cohesion. As one of the girls involved in the Dialogic Literary Gatherings explained: “I think that now, in our group home, we respect each other a lot, we are much more supportive and we have companionship when we need it” (Salceda et al., 2022, p.133).

On the other hand, it has been observed that when the extension of learning is applied with the aim of reducing risk factors for young people, it improves the optimisation of the resources available in the community. In the studies analysed, the actions implemented in the extension of learning time, adults have a concrete role, defined functions and play relevant role in the development of the interventions. They also fulfill the role of ensuring the promotion of learning-promoting interactions. This is observed in the different adult figures in the studies analysed, such as social educators in the institutionalised centres, teachers and family members in the special education centre, and scientists or volunteers in the learning space for school support.

It can be observed that the adults involved are diverse, since it is the adults in the context in which they are carried out who are involved in their development. This makes it possible to observe that it is possible to optimise the resources available in the context itself by involving the human resources of the environment itself. Maximizing the resources available in a given community can be a key to helping overcome the limitations that can be attributed to certain social contexts or families with fewer resources, which can act as a limiting factor in the development of children in socially disadvantaged contexts (Weiss et al., 2018). In this way, it is observed that the actions analysed also act as a compensatory resource in contexts at risk of social exclusion or in low-income environments. This situation is not considered as a reason to diminish the quality of the management of the adults involved in the development of the educational actions, but rather the opposite, which contributes to compensating these structural inequalities present in the context in which the actions are carried out.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The literature review showed that the strategy of extending learning time is an emerging practice, as only seven studies were found. Despite this, the benefits identified in each of these studies are considered to be significant, suggesting that it is important to continue to analyse the educational outcomes of successful extending learning time and to continue to promote its implementation.

Adolescents face specific barriers that may prevent them from receiving the care they need to grow and develop in good health (Patton et al., 2016). Studies are therefore needed to show how to create

conditions that ensure safe and supportive environments while providing opportunities that respond to their specific adolescent needs and rights. The successful educational action of extending learning time, despite being an incipient practice, presents consistent results, obtained from the systematic review carried out in this study. These improvements are supported by evidence on the impacts achieved from the analysis of seven selected studies, which shows the interest in continuing to analyse the results of this action as an effective response to the needs of adolescents from vulnerable groups.

The benefits of the study address different areas of adolescent development, achieving both personal and socioemotional as well as educational improvements that have an impact on improving their academic achievement as well as reducing the risk factors of vulnerable youth.

The high educational quality of the actions implemented in the learning extension developed in dialogic learning environments (Flecha, 2000), while reinforcing the supportive social links within the community environment in which young people develop, are detected as factors that have contributed to the impact achieved supported by the various evidence found. Firstly, by detecting that the actions have generated an enabling environment for the development of personal skills. This has had a positive impact on the adolescents involved, as it has been a driving force for transformation and overcoming difficulties. As well as, considering its direct repercussion in the reduction of risk factors that keep away from aggressive behaviours, delinquency, or drug consumption, at the same time that it achieves a greater diversification of interests. The acquisition of a commitment on the part of the participating adolescents is also identified, as these are voluntary activities. This implies the improvement of the social and cognitive adjustment of young people.

Second, being able to create a scenario that offers constant opportunities for social and emotional development, is another of the impacts identified in the systematic review achieved with the extension of learning time. The actions implemented are observed to generate contexts in which interactions continually flourish that increase learning opportunities among adolescents by offering the possibility of training interpersonal relationships that enhance support and solidarity. This makes it possible to deepen the social communication that favours the construction of more meaningful and lasting relationships in which friendship can develop or simply help to better connect in the community.

And, thirdly, personal and social development are aspects that make it possible to improve academic performance by becoming effective resources that help to overcome the educational discrimination they suffer due to their situation of vulnerability (Durlak et al., 2010; Lauer et al., 2006). Improvements that have an impact on increasing academic engagement, which makes it possible to promote new plans for the future concerning academic trajectories. Educational expectations generated in contexts of vulnerability play an important role in this impact, not only promoting equal participation in the construction of adolescents' learning but also making it possible to acquire meaning in their academic achievements, which in turn are transferred to other educational contexts.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. This work was supported by the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT) from the Spanish government (grant number FCT-20-15780).

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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