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Positive Youth Development in Contexts

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The Significance of Contexts in Positive Youth Development
Foreword

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Positive Youth Development (PYD; Lerner et al., 2021) has gained the attention of researchers and practitioners not only in the USA, from where the perspective originated, but in recent decades across Europe as well. PYD, based on relational developmental systems theory, focuses on young people's strengths and the importance of the contexts in which they interact. The relational developmental systems theory states that all aspects of human development are a function of the two-way interaction between the individual and their contexts (e.g., school, family, community, society; Overton, 2015). Accordingly, young people hold potencials that can support their optimal development when provided with suitable environmental opportunities (Porter, 2010). The principal assumption is that young people will develop positively when their strengths (internal assets) are aligned with the resources in their contexts (external assets). This alignment, if optimal, can lead to adaptive developmental regulations whereby thriving or positive youth outcomes (i.e., the 5Cs: competence, confidence, character, caring, connectedness) become more probable, and risky or problem behaviours (e.g., early school leaving, aggression, anxiety) less frequent. Moreover, youth who are thriving will engage in prosocial behaviours and contribute to their own development and the development of others in their contexts. The support mechanisms for positive development (internal assets, external assets) may vary across individuals and subgroups (e.g., youth with a migrant status, youth in transition, youth from different language backgrounds). This monograph investigates the mechanisms

that support young people's positive development across different contexts and subgroups, considering both international and Slovenian perspectives.

The book is divided into two sections: PYD in international contexts and PYD across contexts in Slovenia. The first section (*PYD in international contexts*) focuses on the interplay of developmental assets, the 5Cs, and youth outcomes (e.g., thriving indicators, risky behaviours). The first of the three chapters in this section written by Nag Delgado, Huang, and Wiium (*Positive Youth Development and Thriving in Norwegian Youth*) investigates and endorses the importance of both internal and external developmental assets for Norwegian youth to thrive. Written by Uka, Musliu, Mehmeti, Bajgora, and Isufi, the second chapter (*The effects of the 5Cs and Developmental Assets on Well-being and Satisfaction with Life among Youth in Kosovo*) explores and reports associations between the developmental assets and the 5Cs as well as well-being and life satisfaction in Kosovo. The section concludes with a contribution by Gomez-Baya, Martín-Gómez, Branquinho, Tomé and Gaspar de Matos (*Developmental Assets and Healthy Lifestyles among Spanish Youth*) that considers and confirms the role played by developmental assets in risky behaviours and healthy lifestyle among Spanish youth. Together, these three chapters contribute empirical evidence regarding the importance of developmental assets and the 5Cs in three European contexts. A review of PYD frameworks in the American context postulates that the 5Cs model of PYD is the most empirically supported framework to date (Heck & Subramaniam, 2009). However, concerns about the 5Cs model's generalisability outside of the USA created a need to explore the PYD perspective in non-US contexts, as often described in the scientific literature (e.g., Koller & Verma, 2017). These three chapters add to the generalisability of the PYD perspective since they are based on three European contexts. Further, these contributions add theoretical and practical value to the PYD perspective with comparable findings able to inform prevention and intervention programmes across countries and for a range of young people.

The second section on *PYD across contexts in Slovenia* concentrates on specific Slovenian contexts that may play an important role in positive youth development. The six chapters in this section cover two important contexts: the school context and the context of migration and language.

For the school context, Pivec's chapter (*Measuring Positive Youth Development in Slovenia with a Focus on Gender and School-Level Differences*) introduces the Slovenian context by analysing gender and

school-level differences in positive development after first presenting the PYD measures' psychometric properties in Slovenia. Reliable and valid measures of PYD are the first step in drawing valid conclusions and, in this respect, the article thus provides solid grounds for future research on PYD in Slovenia. The section continues with another chapter on the school context (*Preventing bullying: Peer Culture as the Crucial Developmental Context in Adolescence*), where the author Košir presents peer culture as a significant context while studying bullying and victimisation in the school setting. Further, Gradišek's article (*Character Strengths of First-year Student Teachers and the Five Cs of the Positive Youth Development Framework: A Mixed-methods Study*) considers young people's experiences during their transition to higher education in an innovative interplay of the PYD perspective and positive psychology. Earlier research (e.g., Eccles et al., 1993; Wentzel, 2009) suggests that youth during the transition period from one educational level to another are likely to find it difficult to establish new relationships and develop social support. Youth in educational transition face several challenges, such as integrating into a new school and engaging with new classmates. Gradišek's chapter presents several support mechanisms in the form of selected character strengths that may contribute to such young people's positive development.

The section on *PYD across Contexts in Slovenia* continues with three chapters on migration and language contexts. Migration status as a risk factor is linked with negative youth outcomes like difficulties at school (Strohmeier & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2008), communicative anxiety and lower linguistic competence (Sevinç & Dewaele, 2016; Sevinç & Backus, 2017) across various contexts. In this regard, Mlekuž's chapter (*Components of Positive Youth Development among Native Students and Students with an Immigrant Background in the Slovenian Educational Environment*) explores differences in the positive adaptation of immigrant youth versus non-immigrant youth in Slovenia, and highlights several areas of concern associated with greater difficulties for immigrant youth. To address some of these concerns, Lampret's review (*Contact-based Interventions to Reduce Ethnic Prejudice against Migrants and Ethnic Minorities in the School Context: A Systematic Literature Review)* of the existing literature on effective interventions for reducing ethnic prejudice against migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities in schools sets out the practical implications of implementing a successful intervention in schools. Finally, *Žmavc*'s article (*Mobilising the potential held by one's entire linguistic repertoire for positive youth*

development) combines theoretical perspectives on positive youth development and multilinguism to study how language as a context, especially languages that are primarily used, can impact youth development. The monograph concludes with two commentaries that discuss the significance of the national and international research presented in the nine chapters

Overall, this monograph offers a starting point for PYD research in Slovenia with clear links to the research in international settings. An overview is also provided of the complexities of the various contexts of Europe and Slovenia able to influence positive youth development. Thus, while the research reported in the monograph focuses on the Slovenian context, it is ambitious enough to also reach beyond the country's borders to include the international research community. In addition to novelty and innovation in a scientific context, the presented research is socially relevant, especially for its inclusion of immigrants and other young people at risk in the school and wider social contexts.

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Positive Youth Development and Thriving in Norwegian Youth

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Abstract

Positive youth development (PYD) focuses on positive qualities of youth and how such qualities can promote thriving as well as healthy development. PYD research on the association between developmental assets and thriving shows that young people who report numerous developmental assets also report many thriving indicators. However, to date little research has been performed in this field in Norway. Our study thus extends PYD research by investigating the associations between developmental assets and thriving among 591 Norwegian high-school students (55% girls). The participants' average age was 16.70 years (*SD* = .90). Findings from correlation analysis indicated that all eight developmental assets being examined correlated significantly with thriving, which was assessed as a composite variable reflecting good physical health, leadership, delayed gratification, overcoming of adversity, valuing of diversity, school success, and helping others. Still, regression analysis showed that only two of four internal assets (i.e., *commitment to learning* and *positive values*) and two of four external assets (i.e., *empowerment* and *constructive use of time*) remained significantly associated with thriving. The regression analysis also showed that developmental assets, along with the demographic variables: age, gender, and parents' educational level, accounted for 21% of the variance in thriving, while developmental assets alone accounted for some 19% of the variance. The findings suggest that developmental assets can provide a good

framework for promoting thriving and healthy development among young people in Norway. Yet, in this respect, more research is needed to better understand developmental assets and their influence in the Norwegian context.

Keywords: positive youth development, developmental assets, thriving, Norway

Pozitivni razvoj mladih in uspešnost mladih na Norveškem
Povzetek

Pozitivni razvoj mladih (PYD) se osredinja na pozitivne značilnosti mladih in na to, kako te značilnosti spodbujajo uspešnost mladih in zdrav razvoj. Raziskave po svetu poročajo o pomembni povezanosti med razvojnimi viri in uspešnostjo mladih. In sicer, mladi, ki poročajo o več razvojnih virih, poročajo tudi o več kazalnikih uspešnosti. Je pa tovrstnih raziskav na Norveškem manj. Pričujoča raziskava zapolnjuje to vrzel z raziskovanjem povezanosti razvojnih virov in kazalnikov uspešnosti na vzorcu 591 dijakinj in dijakov (55% deklet) iz Norveške. Povprečna starost dijakinj in dijakov je 16,70 let (SD = 0,90). Ugotovitve korelacijske analize so pokazale, da je vseh osem v raziskavo vključenih razvojnih virov statistično pomembno povezanih s kazalniki uspešnosti. Kazalniki uspešnosti so opredeljeni kot sestavljena spremenljivka, ki odraža dobro telesno zdravje, vodenje, odložitev nagrade, premagovanje stisk, sprejemanje raznolikosti, učni uspeh in pomoč drugim. V nadaljevanju je regresijska analiza pokazala, da sta le dva od štirih notranjih virov (tj. Zavezanost učenju in Pozitivne vrednote) in dve od štirih zunanjih virov (tj. Opolnomočenje in Konstruktivna raba časa) ostala statistično pomembno povezana z uspešnostjo. Regresijska analiza je pokazala tudi, da razvojni viri skupaj z demografskimi spremenljivkami: starostjo, spolom in stopnjo izobrazbe staršev pojasnijo 21% variabilnosti v uspešnosti, medtem ko razvojni viri sami pojasnijo približno 19% variabilnosti. Ugotovitve kažejo, da lahko razvojni vir predstavljajo dober okvir za spodbujanje uspešnega in zdravega razvoja mladih na Norveškem. Je za bolj poglobljeno razumevanje tako razvojnih virov kot njihovega vpliva v norveškem kontekstu potrebno več raziskav.

Ključne besede: pozitiven razvoj mladih, razvojni viri, uspešnost, Norveška

Adolescence is a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood characterised by biological, social, and cognitive changes/challenges. This is an important period in life in which individuals develop their identity, values

and interests while also searching for their place in society. Since adolescence is a period entailing many developmental changes, adolescents experience increased sensitivity to stressors (Steinberg, 2004). This makes adolescence a particularly vulnerable period when young people depend on receiving guidance and support from good role models in their immediate context to develop healthy. Research has long focused on what is wrong or missing in adolescents' development, emphasising risk factors and how to prevent them (Bowers et al., 2010; Scales et al., 2000). This deficit focus also appears to have coloured society's views and expectations of adolescents. However, studies that consider the positive aspects of youth development are gaining ground around the world. Early research has shown a link between developmental assets and thriving indicators in youth. We investigate this link among Norwegian youth in the present study.

Positive Youth Development and Developmental Assets

One of the theoretical frameworks that has concentrated on young people's positive perspective is Positive Youth Development (PYD), a developmental framework, which proposes that positive development is a function of an active interaction between the youth and their contexts like home and school (Lerner et al., 2011; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). This framework states that positive development among young people can be supported by developmental assets in five contexts – the individual, social, family, school, and community (Benson et al., 2007). Thus, developmental assets are the building blocks that young people need to grow into healthy, caring, and responsible adults. In addition, the experience of the assets is supposed to protect young people from engaging in risk behaviours (Benson, 2007).

There are 40 developmental assets in total, comprising 20 internal and 20 external assets (Benson, 2007). Internal assets, which reflect personal skills, values and competencies, comprise four categories: *commitment to learning* (i.e., understanding the importance of learning and believing in one's abilities); *positive values* (i.e., developing values that can facilitate good life choices); *social competencies* (i.e., the ability to effectively interact with others, make choices and master new situations); and *positive identity* (i.e., believing in self-value and feeling of having control over life). Similarly, external developmental assets, which are the positive experiences and qualities that parents, the school, friends, and the local community contribute to young people are divided into four categories: *support* (i.e., caring, appreciation and acceptance from people in youth contexts); *empowerment* (i.e.,

an environment that provides youth with a feeling of being valuable, safe and respected); *boundaries & expectations* (i.e., clear rules and consequences for behaviour, good role models, as well as encouragement and expectations of responsible behaviour); and *constructive use of time* (i.e., the opportunity to interact with peers and adults in leisure activities and to learn new skills). The assumption is that developmental assets increase the likelihood of positive development and thriving among youth, although they can also lower the likelihood of engaging in risk behaviours like substance abuse, crime, and violence (Benson, 2007).

Within PYD, thriving is typically defined as an indicator of healthy development in the absence of problematic behaviour and other signs of pathology (Scales et al., 2000). Benson (2007) proposed eight indicators of thriving: *school success*, *leadership*, *valuing diversity*, *physical health*, *helping others*, *delayed gratification*, *overcoming adversity*, and *resisting danger*. Specifically, these indicators reflect how much time youth spend at school and youth organisations or activities, the desire to get to know people from different ethnic backgrounds, motivation to do well at school, skills in planning and decision-making, experience of personal control, and self-esteem. While developmental assets may be defined as the foundation the individual needs to thrive, thriving indicators are signs that the individual is thriving (Benson & Scales, 2009). This shows whether young people have enough resources that can contribute to thriving within a certain context.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model describes how the different contexts in which an individual is immersed affect their development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Consistent with the model, an individual dynamically interacts with several contexts in their micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems. The current study mainly focuses on the micro- and mesosystem (containing peers, family, and school), which are the contexts the individual has direct contact with, and the interaction of these contexts. The exo- and macrosystems refer to the larger community and national contexts along with the programmes and policies that ensure the resources required for positive development. In line with the ecological model, the assets are mostly visible in the micro- and mesosystems, making it easier to assess and advance the development of young people's positive qualities.

Developmental Assets and Thriving

The significant role played by developmental assets in thriving or positive development was shown in earlier studies. In a study of first-year university

students in Ghana, Wiium (2017) considered the experience of developmental assets among students together with how the assets influenced thriving. While more than half the students had experienced all four internal assets, a similar share had not experienced several of the assets in *support* and *constructive use of time* (external assets). At least 56% reported possessing five indicators of thriving, with only 1.4% reporting they had all seven of Benson's (2007) thriving indicators that were being assessed. Regarding the associations between developmental assets and thriving among the university students in Ghana, correlation analysis revealed several positive associations between the two sets of variables, while only three of the internal asset categories (*commitment to learning*, *positive values* and *positive identity*) maintained their significance (although it was marginal for the first two asset categories) in multivariate analysis. The internal assets explained 21% of the variance in a composite variable reflecting the number of thriving indicators reported, while the external developmental assets did not have much effect and only explained 1%.

Similar findings emerged in a US study (Scales et al., 2000) where it was observed that the more developmental assets a young person had access to, the higher the probability that they would also report indicators of thriving. This was particularly evident for the thriving indicators of school success, overcoming adversity, physical health, and delayed gratification. Developmental assets contributed 10% to 43% of the variance in the thriving indicators. Other studies confirming the cumulative effect of the developmental assets on thriving or positive development include a study by Adams et al. (2018) in which developmental assets, internal assets in particular, assessed as one composite factor, were found to facilitate academic performance in youth living in Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa. Moreover, a recent study of Portuguese students found several developmental assets, including self-esteem, family support, planning and decision-making, sense of purpose, positive family communication, positive values of caring, youth valued as resources, school engagement, and relationship with other adults as important predictors of life satisfaction (Soares et al., 2019). These earlier studies indicate the significant role of developmental assets on positive youth development, a role the current study seeks to explore among Norwegian youth.

The Norwegian Context

With its individualistic culture, Norway emphasises values like personal growth, caring for others and the environment, and equality (Hofstede, 2011). This holds political implications in which after-school activities and economic support for families of children and youth are prioritised in Norway. School is also mandatory in Norway and free for all children aged 6–16 years. Young people aged 16–19 years have the right to study at high school for 3 years, and if a student does not have or cannot satisfactorily benefit from the ordinary education at school, they are entitled to special education regardless of the reason for the need (New in Norway, 2019).

The focus on the rights and welfare of young people is central in Norwegian politics, with this having led to a strong youth policy in Norway. This is seen in the child and youth protection act that recognises young people as society's children and the nation's future (St.meld. nr. 40 [2001-2002], 2002). Moreover, the national youth policy from 2002 seeks to support Norwegian youth through six priority areas: comprehensive prevention work, education, activities in spare time and in the community, support for children and youth with severe behavioural problems, follow-up of young criminals, and knowledge and research (Youth Policy: Norway, 2014). Youth work in Norway is decentralised to level of municipalities which are largely independent in their practical implementation of child and youth policy (Bergan, 2017). In addition, as an ally of EU, Norway has participated in the EU Youth Programme since 1994 and implemented the Action Programme, which builds on the EU Youth Programme for Non-Formal Learning (Bergan, 2017). The national focus and prioritisation on youth policy is able to lead to an increase in the availability of resources/opportunities in Norwegian youth contexts.

The Present Study

Previous research on developmental assets has mainly taken place in the USA, yet the research field is growing internationally. This enables research on PYD and developmental assets to take cultural differences into account. Consistent with Benson (2007), the asset-building community and asset-building society in youth contexts will determine the availability of developmental assets and thus the number of thriving indicators that young people report. An asset-building community and asset-building society indicate norms and behaviours as well as the programmes and policies that nurture developmental assets in various youth contexts (Benson, 2007).

Research on PYD in Norway is limited. The current study therefore provides an opportunity for the PYD perspective to be studied in a new context. The aim of our study is to examine the association between developmental assets and thriving indicators among Norwegian youth attending high school. In line with earlier studies, we hypothesise that the more developmental assets Norwegian youth experience, the more thriving indicators they will also report. Demographic factors like gender, age and parents' educational background have been found to influence youth thriving outcomes where parents' educational background can have a positive influence, while females as well as younger youth tend to report possessing more developmental assets (Davis-Kean, 2005; Drescher et al., 2012; Erola et al., 2016). Accordingly, these demographics were also considered in this study. It is expected that the presence of developmental assets, and a positive association with thriving, will inform programmes and policies about those assets that must be further nurtured and those that need to be maintained at healthy levels.

Method

Participants

The data used in the present study were collected from 591 Norwegian youth attending a public high school in Vestland County Council. While the school was selected through convenience sampling, students on all levels (levels 1–3) were eligible to participate in the study. The participants' age varied from 15–19 years, with an average of 16.70 years (SD = .90). Among the 586 young people who provided information on their gender, 326 were girls (55%). More than half the participants reported that the highest education of their parents was college or university, with 56.3% having a father with a higher education and 67.3% a mother with a similar educational level.

Materials

Developmental assets. The "Developmental Assets Profile" (DAP; Search Institute, 2016) was used to measure the number of assets experienced in various youth contexts. Participants indicated the extent to which they had experienced Benson's 40 developmental assets, which reflected four categories of internal assets and four categories of external assets. Sample items of the four categories of internal assets (*commitment to learning, positive*

values, social competencies, and *positive identity*) were related to how participants like to learn, take responsibility for what they do, develop friendship with others, and feel that they have control over their life and future, respectively. For the four categories of external assets (*support*, *empowerment*, *boundaries & expectations*, and *constructive use of time*), sample items were related to participants having a family that shows them love and support, being included in the family's chores and decisions, attending a school that enforces rules fairly and spending time every week in sports, hobby clubs or an organisation at the school or in the community, respectively. The 40 developmental assets were measured with 51 items since some assets that addressed different contexts were assessed separately for these contexts (e.g., support at home and support at school). Response categories for the developmental assets ranged on a Likert scale from (1) *Never or Rarely* to (4) *Almost always or Very often*. Cronbach's alpha, assessing the internal consistency of the asset categories, ranged from .73 to .86, except for one external asset category, *constructive use of time,* that had a Cronbach's alpha of .44. The Cronbach's alphas of the current study are similar to those reported in previous studies (e.g., Scales et al., 2000).

Thriving indicators (Search Institute, 2016). Eight indicators of thriving were measured – *good physical health*, *leadership*, *delayed gratification*, *overcoming adversity*, *valuing diversity*, *school success*, *helping others*, and *resisting danger*. In the literature, the focus has been on seven of the eight indicators, where the indicator *resisting danger* was omitted because it overlaps with the 'resistance skills' item in *social competencies*, one of the internal asset categories (Scales et al., 2000). Thus, in our study we only looked at seven thriving indicators. For *good physical health*, *leadership*, *delayed gratification*, and *overcoming adversity*, participants responded either 'yes' or 'no' to questions probing whether they had been a leader over the last 12 months, their interest in a healthy diet and exercise, their ability to save money, and their ability not to give up in difficult situations. *Valuing diversity* indicated that participants thought it was fairly important or very important for them to get to know other people with a different cultural/ethnic background; *School success* implied that participants had mostly obtained a 6 (the highest grade) at school; *Helping others* indicated that participants spent at least 1 hour helping friends or neighbours during a typical week. Cronbach's alpha of the seven indicators was only .35. However, because we were interested in how the developmental assets were associated with the number of thriving indicators reported (as investigated in

earlier studies, for example, Scales et al., 2000) we examined the indicators as a composite variable reflecting the number of thriving indicators reported by the participants. The low Cronbach's alpha is addressed as a limitation in the discussion section.

Demographics. As demographic variables, the participants were asked to provide information about their age, gender (male or female), and parents' educational level (i.e. no education, primary school, high school, technical or vocational school, and university).

Procedure

The data were collected in 2015. Informed consent was sought from and given by both the school and the participants, where they were informed of the study's purpose and procedures. The data collection was conducted during school hours and lasted around 40 minutes. The response rate was 70%. Participants had access to the questionnaire through the internal online system at the school. The questionnaire was translated from English to Norwegian by Semantix Translations Norway AS, a company specialising in interpretation and translation services. The study was approved by the Regional Committees for Medical and Health Research Ethics (REK) in Norway.

Data Analyses

The data analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). We performed a cross-tabulation analysis to look at the frequency distribution of thriving according to the demographic variables. Correlation analysis was carried out to examine the zero-order correlations between the demographics, developmental assets and thriving. Finally, a regression analysis was conducted to assess the influence of the developmental asset categories on thriving, while controlling for the demographic variables.

Eight composite variables that reflected the number of reported developmental assets for the four internal and the four external asset categories were created and used in the analysis. Response alternatives on a 4-point Likert scale for the assets were recoded to create these composite variables. The response alternatives (1) *Never or rarely* and (2) *Occasionally or Sometimes* were recoded as developmental assets absent (1), while (3) *Often* and (4) *Almost always or Very often* were recoded as developmental assets present (2). This recoding was undertaken to assess the extent to which

participants reported the assets. This means the composite variables reflect the number of assets reported in each asset category. Further, in descriptive analysis, parents' educational level was recoded to (1) *high school or less*, and (2) *More than high school*. Gender was assigned the values 1 (boy) or 2 (girl). Preliminary analyses were carried out to verify the linearity and normal distribution of the data. The majority of participants (97%) had missing data in only 3 cases or less. Missing data was handled through pairwise deletion, namely, a procedure that excludes participants from the analyses when data are missing and includes them when data are available.

Results

Thriving by Demographic Variables: Cross-Tabulation Analysis

In Table 1, a cross-tabulation analysis of the number of thriving indicators (7 in total) reported relative to the demographic variables is presented. The findings on gender showed that girls were more likely to report 4 or 5 thriving indicators compared to boys, while boys were more likely to report 6 indicators of thriving compared to girls (Table 1). In terms of age, about 42% who did not report any thriving indictor were aged 17 while most of the participants who reported 6 of the thriving indicators were aged 16. For the father's and mother's education, participants whose parents had more than a high school education were more likely to report the thriving indicators than those whose parents had less than a high school education. However, the chi-square value did not indicate any significant difference in terms of gender, age, or parents' education.

Correlation Analysis of Demographic Variables, Developmental Assets, and Thriving

Weak correlations ranging from .00 to .21 were observed between the demographic variables and the developmental assets as well as thriving. In addition, positive correlations between thriving and all eight asset categories were observed. The weak-to-moderate correlations of thriving were with *commitment to learning* ($r = .34$, $p < .01$), *positive values* ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), *social competencies* ($r = .32$, $p < .01$), *positive identity* ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), *support* ($r = .17$, $p < .01$), *empowerment* ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), *boundaries & expectations* ($r = .21$, $p < .01$), and *constructive use of time* ($r = .25$, $p < .01$) (Table 2).

Table 1: Cross-tabulation Analysis of Thriving and Demographic Variables of Norwegian Youth.

Demographic variables		Number of thriving indicators reported								Total
		0 n (%)	1 n (%)	2 n (%)	3 n (%)	4 n (%)	5 n (%)	6 n (%)	7 n (%)	N (%)
Gender	Male	17 (48.6)	22 (52.4)	34 (45.9)	67 (49.6)	58 (36.3)	40 (40.0)	21 (53.8)	1 (100.0)	260 (44.4)
	Female	18 (51.4)	20 (47.6)	40 (54.1)	68 (50.4)	102 (63.7)	60 (60.0)	18 (46.2)	0 (0.0)	326 (55.6)
	Total	35 (6.0)	42 (7.2)	74 (12.6)	135 (23.0)	160 (27.3)	100 (17.1)	39 (6.7)	1 (0.2)	586 (100.0)
Age	15	2 (6.5)	3 (7.5)	3 (4.5)	8 (6.5)	4 (2.8)	8 (8.9)	1 (2.9)	0 (0.0)	29 (5.5)
	16	9 (29.0)	17 (42.5)	19 (28.8)	42 (33.9)	73 (51.0)	38 (42.2)	21 (60.0)	1 (100)	220 (41.5)
	17	13 (41.9)	11 (27.5)	25 (37.9)	41 (33.1)	43 (30.1)	30 (33.3)	8 (22.9)	0 (0.0)	171 (32.3)
	18	7 (22.6)	8 (20.0)	16 (24.2)	30 (24.2)	23 (16.1)	12 (13.3)	5 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	101 (19.1)
	19	0 (0.0)	1 (2.5)	3 (4.5)	3 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	9 (1.7)
	Total	31 (5.8)	40 (7.5)	66 (12.5)	124 (23.4)	143 (27.0)	90 (17.0)	35 (6.6)	1 (0.2)	530 (100)
Father's education	High school or less	7 (22.6)	7 (18.9)	14 (24.1)	18 (15.0)	15 (10.8)	15 (16.1)	3 (8.3)	0 (0.0)	79 (15.3)
	More than high school	24 (77.4)	30 (81.1)	44 (75.9)	102 (85.0)	124 (89.2)	78 (83.9)	33 (91.7)	1 (100)	436 (84.7)
	Total	31 (6.0)	37 (7.2)	58 (11.3)	120 (23.3)	139 (27.0)	93 (18.1)	36 (7.0)	1 (0.2)	515 (100)
Mother's education	High school or less	6 (18.8)	2 (5.6)	12 (20.0)	22 (17.7)	18 (11.8)	19 (20.2)	2 (5.6)	0 (0.0)	81 (15.1)
	More than high school	26 (81.3)	34 (94.4)	48 (80.0)	102 (82.3)	135 (88.2)	75 (79.8)	34 (94.4)	1 (100)	455 (84.9)
	Total	32 (6.0)	36 (6.7)	60 (11.2)	124 (23.1)	153 (28.5)	94 (17.5)	36 (6.7)	1 (0.2)	536 (100)

Table 2: Correlation Analyses of Demographic Variables, Developmental Assets and Thriving.

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender	.01	.02	-.01	.14**	.16**	.21**	-.14**	.13**	.06	.14**	.02	.05
2. Age		-.13**	-.14**	-.08	-.11*	-.03	-.05	-.08	.03	-.15**	-.11*	-.12**
3. Father's level of education			.34**	.00	.04	.04	.03	.05	.05	.04	-.03	.10*
4. Mother's level of education				-.05	-.03	-.01	.04	.12**	.04	.08	.05	.02
5. Commitment to learning					.54**	.57**	.43**	.40**	.46**	.46**	.22**	.34**
6. Positive values						.65**	.38**	.31**	.34**	.41**	.18**	.36**
7. Social competencies							.47**	.35**	.43**	.48**	.17**	.32**
8. Positive identity								.36**	.51**	.39**	.23**	.27**
9. Support									.57**	.63**	.30**	.17**
10. Empowerment										.62**	.31**	.27**
11. Boundaries & Expectations											.30**	.21**
12. Constructive use of time												.25**
13. Thriving												-
Descriptive analysis												
Range	15-19	1-5	1-5	0-7	0-7	0-7	0-4	0-7	0-6	0-9	0-4	0-7
Mean (SD)	16.70 (.90)	4.42 (.93)	4.56 (.82)	5.51 (1.79)	5.50 (1.66)	5.90 (1.61)	2.68 (1.48)	4.84 (1.74)	5.13 (1.27)	6.85 (1.87)	1.73 (1.00)	3.37 (1.55)

Note. Gender: (1) male and (2) female – mean (SD): 1.56 (0.50); * p <.05; ** p <.01.

Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables, Developmental Assets, and Thriving

The regression analysis revealed a significant association between the asset categories and thriving, $F(12, 452) = 10.23$, $p < .001$. In model 1, the demographic variables, gender, age, and parents' educational level explained 2.3% of the variance in thriving ($R^2 = .02$). Including the developmental assets in model 2, the explained variance rose to 21.4%, indicating that the asset categories explained 19.1% of the variance in thriving. *Commitment to learning*

(β = .14, $p < .05$), *positive values* (β = .19, $p < .01$), *empowerment* (β = .13, $p < .05$) and *constructive use of time* (β = .17, $p < .01$) had a small yet significant influence on thriving (Table 3). Hence, the more participants reported these assets, the more they also reported the thriving indicators. For the demographic variables, age was observed to be a significant variable in model 1 (β = -.11, $p < .05$), where younger participants reported more thriving indicators than their older counterparts. In addition, father's educational level was marginally associated with thriving, while gender and mother's education did not show any significant association with thriving (Table 3).

Table 3: Regression Analyses of Thriving among Norwegian Youth: The Role of Developmental Assets.

Model		Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig.	95% CI of B	
		B	S.E.	β			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	5.83	1.51		3.87	.00	2.87	8.79
	Gender	.14	.14	.05	.98	.33	-.14	.42
	Age	-.19	.08	-.11	-2.36	.02	-.35	-.03
	Father's education	.38	.21	.09	1.78	.08	-.04	.79
	Mother's education	-.10	.21	-.02	-.48	.63	-.52	.32
2	(Constant)	2.32	1.44		1.61	.11	-.51	5.15
	Gender	-.00	.14	-.00	-.04	.97	-.28	.27
	Age	-.13	.08	-.08	-1.73	.09	-.28	.02
	Father's education	.34	.19	.08	1.77	.08	-.04	.72
	Mother's education	-.02	.20	-.00	-.09	.93	-.40	.37
	Commitment to learn	.12	.05	.14	2.46	.01	.02	.22
	Positive values	.18	.05	.19	3.32	.00	.07	.28
	Social competencies	.07	.06	.07	1.08	.28	-.05	.18
	Positive identity	.05	.06	.05	.94	.35	-.06	.16
	Support	-.07	.05	-.07	-1.27	.20	-.17	.04
	Empowerment	.15	.07	.13	2.08	.04	.00	.30
	Boundaries & Expectations	-.06	.05	-.08	-1.22	.22	-.16	.04

Model	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig.	95% CI of B	
	B	S.E.	β			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Constructive use of time	.26	.07	.17	3.67	.00	.12	.39

Note. S.E. – Standard Error; CI – Confidence interval.

Discussion

General Findings

Based on the theoretical framework and previous PYD research, the current paper explored the extent to which young people in Norway report developmental assets and examined the hypothesis that youth who experience more developmental assets would also report more thriving indicators. The results show that Norwegian youth reported more than 50% of the assets in each of the eight asset categories, except for *constructive use of time*. Moreover, all eight asset categories were positively related to the thriving variable in the correlation analysis, while in the regression analysis only four asset categories (*commitment to learning*, and *positive values* as internal assets, and *empowerment* and *constructive use of time* as external assets) maintained their significant association with thriving. Thus, our hypothesis on the developmental assets' cumulative effect on thriving or positive development was confirmed, although not for all of the asset categories. Nevertheless, due to the positive correlations that were observed among the asset categories, the influence of those categories that were no longer significant in the regression analysis may have been indirect through the asset categories that remained significant. For the demographic variables, age and father's education were significantly associated (albeit marginally) with thriving, where young participants relative to older counterparts, and participants who reported that their father had a high education compared to those who reported a low educational level for their father were more likely to report the thriving indicators.

Developmental Assets, Demographics and Thriving

Earlier studies in the USA (Scales et al., 2000), Africa (Adams et al., 2018), Europe (Soares et al., 2019) and Latin America (Manrique-Millones et al., 2021) examined and established the facilitating role played by developmental

assets on positive youth outcomes, such as thriving, academic performance, life satisfaction and mental well-being. The current findings concerning Norwegian youth are supported by these earlier studies. Moreover, our finding that *constructive use of time* significantly predicts thriving is consistent with findings reported by Cooper and colleagues (1999), who observed that after-school activities significantly predict adolescents' academic achievement, an important indicator of thriving. Our findings are therefore in line with both the PYD theoretical assumption and empirical evidence on the role of these assets in promoting youth development. While in Scales and colleagues' (2000) study, the developmental assets explained between 10% and 43% of the variance in the thriving indicators, in our study the developmental assets explained 19% of the variance in thriving, which was assessed as a composite factor reflecting the number of thriving indicators reported by Norwegian youth. While our explained variance falls within the range of Scales and colleagues, it appears from this previous study that some thriving indicators are better predicted by the assets than others. Further, the current findings indicate that thriving among young people in Norway is not only determined by developmental assets. More importantly, despite Norway's individualistic perspective, it appears that for young people both personal and contextual resources are significant facilitators of thriving.

That Norwegian youth reported over half the assets in all eight asset categories except for *constructive use of time* shows that Norway has what Benson (2007) labelled an asset-building society and asset-building community (i.e., the appropriate policies, programmes, norms, and practices). Thus, in line with the current findings, Norwegian youth contexts appear to be able to nurture and offer developmental assets that represent the resources/opportunities young people need to thrive. These are seen in the country's youth policy and initiatives on the local, national, and international levels (Bergan, 2017; Youth Policy: Norway, 2014) along with their strong focus on gender equality in rights and opportunities (Equality, 2014).

For the demographic factors, gender correlated with several of the asset categories, with girls reporting more assets than boys, except for *positive identity* where boys reported more assets. Still, gender and mother's education were not significant predictors of thriving in the multivariate analysis, while the significance of age and father's education was marginal. Although marginal, the significant role of fathers' education compared

to the non-significant influence of gender in the multivariate analysis is implied in the Norwegian Public Reports (Norges offentlige utredninger, 2019) that showed that parents' educational background had a greater effect on children's school performance than gender. As for age, the observation that younger participants reported more of the assets and thriving indicators than older participants has been consistently reported in prior studies (Benson et al., 1998; Scales et al., 2000; Wiium, 2017). One possible explanation for this age difference may be due to the positive correlations between age, maturity and independence such that, due to their maturity and search for independence, older youth may not have access to or find some assets as relevant compared to younger youth.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has some limitations that are worth mentioning. The data used in our study were cross-sectional, which implies we are unable to assess the developmental trajectories of the assets, and thus also unable to tell the variation or stability that may occur over time. In addition, we could not establish causation concerning the association between the assets and thriving, even though the theoretical argument that the assets facilitate thriving is supported by several empirical studies. Nonetheless, in future research, longitudinal studies could be carried out to address some of these limitations.

Another limitation is that the questionnaire we used was developed with American samples and might therefore not adequately capture all the resources and opportunities available to young people in Norway. For example, to measure *constructive use of time*, one item was whether youth went to a church or a mosque for at least 1 hour per week. This question might be less relevant for Norwegian youth because over the years Norway has become a secular country with ever fewer religious inhabitants, whereas worship services have seen a reduction since the beginning of the century (Statistics Norway, 2016). In addition, the low Cronbach's alpha of the composite variable *thriving* may indicate that thriving among Norwegian youth was not sufficiently assessed by some of the items that were studied. It is also possible that the young people's responses were affected by social desirability bias, whereby they tended to over-report more desirable developmental assets and thriving indicators. These limitations could be addressed in future studies by using qualitative methods to probe into the

actual assets and thriving indictors of youth, including those unique to the Norwegian context.

Finally, our sample was from one of Norway's largest cities, and might not fully represent the Norwegian youth population. A more representative and inclusive sample that involves youth from different geographical locations, diverse ethnicities and other backgrounds could be utilised in future research to tackle the limitations posed by the unrepresentativeness of our sample.

Implications and Conclusion

Despite the limitations of the study, the findings hold some implications for further research, policy, and practice. For research, the fact that PYD is a relatively new research topic in Norway means future research could build on the present study by exploring the resources/opportunities of diverse youth in Norway and assessing how these contribute to thriving and positive development over time. The research might also focus on demographic factors, such as gender, age, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, as well as other indicators of well-being, like mental health, which may prove essential for thriving. It might also be interesting to extend the research to other Scandinavian countries and examine how the youth in those countries are experiencing developmental assets. Given that Scandinavian countries are very politically and culturally similar, research on how the different countries' political priorities and initiatives are nurturing developmental assets may help to inform programmes and policies across the region.

Concerning implications for policy, the current study and earlier ones show that resources and opportunities positively influence thriving, academic performance, life satisfaction and mental well-being. Therefore, policy measures that ensure that all young people have access to developmental assets in their context must be given priority. A UNICEF report (Adamson, 2013) shows that Norway has taken many important steps to ensure thriving among its youth, although there is still much in Norway's youth contexts that could be improved.

As for practical implications, Benson and colleagues (2011) argued that resource-building programmes have a positive effect on the experience of developmental assets in youth. In one study, they observed that youth in Bangladesh had a 30% increase in assets after a 6–9-month resource-building programme, while in the Philippines a 12% increase in assets after a

3–9-month programme was detected. These earlier findings show that resource-building programmes are effective. Political initiatives and priorities aimed at youth in Norway can accordingly ensure that practices and norms in various youth contexts are nurturing all the resources and opportunities that young people need to thrive.

In conclusion, our study, like earlier ones, found a significant association between several developmental assets and thriving, which reflected good physical health, leadership, delayed gratification, overcoming adversity, valuing diversity, school success, and helping others. However, since PYD is a relatively new field of research in Norway it is important to continue the research on youth's developmental assets in order to explore their significant role in the thriving and healthy development of Norwegian youth. While it was found that youth in Norway have access to several of the developmental assets being assessed, it is important to explore assets that are also unique to the Norwegian context. Doing this within a longitudinal framework would provide insight into how the link between developmental assets and thriving develop over time. Policies and programmes that will foster developmental assets in various youth contexts are also called for since youth will not only thrive but will be placed on a healthy trajectory into adulthood.

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The effects of 5Cs and Developmental Assets on Well-being and Satisfaction with Life Among Youth in Kosovo

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Abstract

The basic models of Positive Youth Development (PYD)—the 5Cs (competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring) and developmental assets (internal and external assets) are considered crucial for many positive outcomes. To date, there are limited studies on 5Cs and developmental assets in the context of lower-middle-income countries (LMICs). The current study aimed to identify the effects of 5Cs and developmental assets in well-being and satisfaction with life among youth in Kosovo. In total, 916 students (66.7% females) with a mean age of 16.32 years old participated in this study. They completed several instruments that measured PYD 5Cs, internal and external assets, well-being, and satisfaction with life. In line with the PYD perspective, we found that internal and external assets were significantly correlated with 5Cs. Caring and character were not found to predict well-being and satisfaction with life, while the rest of 5Cs and both internal and external assets were shown to have a positive effect on well-being and satisfaction with life. Lastly, we discussed how these findings can contribute to developing new educational programs to increase students' academic performance and well-being. Specifically, we propose to enhance students' competence, connection, and confidence as these factors showed clearly bigger significant effects on well-being and satisfaction with life.

Keywords: Positive Youth Development, Developmental Assets, Satisfaction with Life, Well-being

Učinek 5 C-jev in razvojnih virov na dobro počutje in zadovoljstvo z življenjem med mladimi na Kosovu
Povzetek

Osnovni modeli pozitivnega razvoja mladih (PYD) - 5C-ji (kompetentnost, samozavest, karakter, povezanost in skrb) ter razvojni viri (notranji in zunanji viri) skupaj vodijo v številne pozitivne izide. Do danes so raziskave 5C-jev in razvojnih virov v kontekstih držav z nižjimi oz. srednjimi dohodki (LMIC) redke. Cilj te raziskave je bil ugotoviti učinke 5C-jev in razvojnih virov na dobro počutje in zadovoljstvo z življenjem med mladimi na Kosovu. Skupaj je v raziskavi sodelovalo 916 dijakinj in dijakov (66,7% deklet) s povprečno starostjo 16,32 let. Uporabili smo več pripomočkov, ki merijo 5C-je, notranje in zunanje vire, dobro počutje in zadovoljstvo z življenjem. V skladu s perspektivo PYD smo ugotovili, da so notranji in zunanji viri statistično pomembno povezni s 5C-ji. Pri tem Skrb in Značaj nista napovedovala dobrega počutja in zadovoljstva z življenjem, medtem ko se je pokazalo, da preostali C-ji, ter tako notranji kot zunanji viri pozitivno vplivajo na počutje in zadovoljstvo z življenjem. Nazadnje smo razpravljali o tem, kako lahko te ugotovitve prispevajo k razvoju novih izobraževalnih programov za povečanje učne uspešnosti in dobrega počutja dijakinj in dijakov. V tej smeri predlagamo predvsem spodbujanje kompetentnosti povezanosti in samozavesti dijakinj in dijakov, saj so ti pokazali očitno pomembne učinke na dobro počutje in zadovoljstvo z življenjem.
Ključne besede: pozitiven razvoj mladih, razvojni viri, zadovoljstvo z življenjem, dobro počutje

The ongoing debate about the most influential factors of well-being and satisfaction with life among youth have produced many interesting results. Although, there has been controversial findings, lately a well-established evidence suggests a compromise, pointing to the importance of both: intrapersonal competencies and environmental or contextual factors. Attempts to explain the complexity of the interaction between these two facets derived different theoretical approaches. The Positive Youth Development (PYD; Lerner et al., 2009) represents one of the most influential theory, suggesting that if adolescents establish mutually beneficial relations with peers and the institutions of their social world, they are more likely to thrive and experience a hopeful future distinguished by positive contributions to self, family, community, and civil society (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2009). A key defining feature of PYD is its consideration of the potential and capacity of each individual young person. All and sundry in

the face of adversity are viewed as strong and uniquely capable depending on their developmental stage, instead of merely being regarded as "inadequate" or "undeveloped".

A well-established evidence showed that the PYD framework is related to several positive outcomes such as mental and physical health, academic achievement and satisfaction, employment, life satisfaction, and overall adolescent well-being (Beck & Wiium, 2019; Catalano et al., 2019; Kozina et al., 2018; Soares et al., 2019; Shek & Chai, 2020; Zhou et al., 2020). To further investigate each of these relationships, models within the PYD framework were proposed. Some of the most widely used and successful PYD models include Lerner's 5Cs (Lerner et al., 2009) which consists of five factors (competence, confidence, connection, character and caring), and the Developmental Assets model (Benson, 2003) which consist of two high-order factors (internal and external assets).

Lerner's 5Cs model of PYD

Lerner's 5Cs model of PYD (Lerner et al., 2009) is built upon five factors: (1) *competence* (positive view of one's actions in a specific area, e.g. social, academic, cognitive, vocational skills), (2) *confidence* (internal sense of positive self-worth and self-efficacy), (3) *connection* (positive bonding with peers), (4) *character* (respect for societal norms, interpersonal values and skills, moral commitment), and (5) *caring* (a sense of empathy and sympathy for others). As each factor is operationalized differently, authors propose to treat each of the factors as independent (Lerner et al., 2009). Further, the literature points to different outcomes and effects regarding each C. For example, high levels of confidence and connection are negatively associated with anxiety and depressive symptoms (Holsen et al., 2016; Kozina et al., 2020). In contrast, caring is positively related to anxiety and depression, while competence and character showed a nonsignificant effect (Holsen et al., 2016; Kozina et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is found that character and confidence are positively associated with academic achievement (e.g. math achievement), while connection showed negative relation with the same outcome (Kozina et al., 2018). These relationships are attributed to the fact that character and confidence are solely measured by self-perceived competence and subjective values, whereas connection is measured by a combination of home, teacher, peer and neighborhood relationships (Kozina et al., 2018). In contrast to expectations that each of the five competencies will show a positive outcome, Årdal and colleagues (2017) found that

confidence, competence, and connection fully mediate the effect of perceived school empowerment on school satisfaction, while caring and character did not have a role. The justification of diverse findings led to the differences in the context in which the items were measured. Confidence, competence, and connection are school-context related, while items measuring caring and character are not particularly context oriented (Årdal et al., 2017). Thus, the types of measurements which are usually context-related, lead to difficulties in pinpointing the exact relationship type between 5Cs and outcomes. This can be applied for the contextual factors as well. As such, the context in which the 5Cs are measured should be taken into consideration and studies built upon the Lerner's 5Cs model of PYD framework should be conducted in different cultures to examine the effects of 5Cs and reach generalizability.

Developmental Assets of PYD

The Developmental Assets model focuses on integrating psychological and environmental strengths to enhance thriving and health outcomes among young individuals (Benson, 2003). As such, it consists of two high-order factors namely internal and external assets. Internal assets describe a young person's set of skills, competences and values, whereas the external assets express the contextual and relational features of a young person's environment (Benson, 2003). In addition, both internal and external assets are further divided into four factors each. Internal assets consist of: (1) commitment to learning, (2) positive values, (3) social competence, and (4) positive identity. While, external assets consist of (1) support, (2) empowerment, (3) boundaries and expectations, and (4) constructive use of time. This model is purposefully designed to guide community-based practices that strengthen the natural socialization of communities.

Just like the potential of 5 Cs, youth with higher number of developmental assets are shown to be more likely to experience thriving outcomes (Scales et al., 2000). Precisely, young individuals with higher levels of developmental assets are more likely to be successful at school, overcome adversity, maintain physical health, and delay gratification (Scales et al., 2000). In addition to that, youth programs that promote empowerment and positive identity among vulnerable individuals were associated with increased resilience overtime (Sanders & Mundford, 2014).

Also, in the same line with Lerner's 5Cs, it is shown that specific factors of developmental assets may have different effects on positive youth

outcomes. For example, both internal and external assets are shown to be good predictors of academic achievement (Beck & Wiium, 2019). But, when an in-depth investigation was conducted, it was found that some of the factors of internal assets such as commitment to learning and positive identity, and one of the factors of external assets like support were the only ones that showed a positive relationship with academic achievement (Beck & Wiium, 2019). However, according to Scales and colleagues (2006) all the factors of developmental assets have concurrent and longitudinal associations to students' GPA. Nonetheless, some of the factors reflecting adherence to norms of responsibility and connection to community showed larger effects on students' GPA overtime (Flynn et al., 2012; Scales et al., 2006). Further studies also showed consistent effects of the developmental assets on healthy behaviors (see Atkins et al., 2002; Benson et al., 1999), which were replicated in other cultures as well (see Uka et al., in press; Scales et al., 2000).

As both models (5Cs and developmental assets) have some similarities and since they are based on the same theory (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2009), an integrative approach model was proposed (Lerner et al., 2009; Overton, 2015). Thus, young people's development should be seen as an interaction between individuals' characteristics (internal assets) and context (external assets) which in turn may lead to an increase of positive outcomes such as 5Cs. In this direction, the 5Cs and developmental assets were found to have a bidirectional relationship, which may influence satisfaction with life and overall well-being (Soares et al., 2019; Zulling et al., 2011).

The effects of PYD on Life Satisfaction and Well-being

Although an integrative approach was proposed, each factor of such model should be treated as independent as well, due to their unique effects on outcomes (Lerner et al., 2009; Overton, 2015). To date, the existing literature points to a relationship between positive youth development and life satisfaction and well-being among adolescents. For example, high levels of character, confidence and connection were associated with higher levels of life satisfaction and contribution (Pilkauskaite-Valickiene, 2015). Similar findings were found from Zhou et al. (2020) that showed that the PYD attributes were positive predictors of life satisfaction and well-being and negatively predicted hopelessness. Furthermore, life satisfaction and well-being often were found to mediate the effect of the PYD attributes on different outcomes. For example, life satisfaction was found to mediate the effect of

PYD attributes on delinquent behavior (Zhu & Shek, 2020). All in all, the lack of PYD attributes usually leads to the experience and inability to cope with negative life events, which in turn affects life satisfaction (Zhou et al., 2020; Zhu & Shek, 2020).

Less ambiguous findings were found regarding the effects of the developmental assets on life satisfaction and well-being. Both types of assets (internal and external) explain a considerable amount of the variance of life satisfaction with individual assets being slightly stronger predictors (Soares et al., 2019). Specifically, internal assets like self-esteem, sense of purpose, plan and decision making, school engagement and positive value of caring, as well as external assets such as family support and communication, support from non-parent adults, and youth as resources are all meaningful predictors of life satisfaction among adolescents (Soares et al., 2019). However, some of the assets also showed a negative relationship with life satisfaction. For instance, assets like support from non-parent adults and future aspirations had a negative association with life satisfaction and overall mental health among college students (Zullig et al., 2011). This can be explained due to the less supportive nature of non-parent adult relationships that students encounter in their college years. Moreover, students have a hard time accommodating to the increasing competitive nature of the working world, which in turn affects their health and their satisfaction with life (Zullig et al., 2011).

Consistent positive effects of PYD framework on well-being and life-satisfaction was found when tested and piloted in different intervention programs (Bleck & DeBate, 2016). In recent years, an emerging number of youth programs have employed a PYD approach to their design in order to promote and foster bonding, competence, resilience, empowerment, and prosocial behaviors among youth (Catalano et al., 2004; Moore, 2017). Also, numerous meta-analyses provide evidence that PYD-based programs reduce violence and aggression, substance-use, school misbehavior, school dropout rates, and high-risk sexual behavior (Benson & Scales, 2009; Bonell et al., 2015; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). However, it should be noted that the most of the studies within the PYD framework have Western (e.g. Sanders & Munford, 2014; Sanders et al., 2015) and Asian (e.g. Shek & Chai, 2020; Zhu & Shek, 2020; Zhou et al., 2020) samples. As it is already established that context plays a crucial role within the PYD framework, it was recommended that future studies should consider culture as well, especially LMICs where research is scarce (USAID, 2016; Wiium & Dimitrova,

2019). To our knowledge, there are only a few studies that took into consideration other cultures and LMIC samples (e.g. Uka et al., in press).

Research Gap and Study Aim

The overall student's performance in Kosovo significantly lags behind major averages of the OECD countries (OECD, 2016, 2018). Thus, studies that lay the ground for PYD interventions —which were found to have long-term effects — in LMICs such as Kosovo are desperately needed. Although they are fundamental for adolescent's well-being, the lack of funds for research and training makes them unseen in the field of intervention, yielding negative outcomes. A new line of evidence from LMICs would be beneficial to further develop positive youth programs, focusing on positive socialization and developmental processes, assets and skills, rather than risks and problems and they could potentially allow youth to develop decision-making abilities. The assessment of modest existing programs in LMICs shows that most PYD programs can be applied to these countries, however, they require proper and rigorous examination for follow-up long-term outcomes (Catalano et al., 2019). Thus, with research regarding PYD programs and their effects on adolescent's life being modest, PYD interventions cannot be designed properly.

Therefore, we aimed to conduct a study that will contribute to the existing literature with a sample form LMICs such as Kosovo. Specifically, this study aimed to identify the effects of 5Cs (competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring) and developmental assets (internal and external assets) on well-being and satisfaction with life among youth in Kosovo. Although the literature confirms the monotonic positive relationship between these variables, we aim to extend the investigation in an understudied population, such as the youth in Kosovo. Moreover, using Path Models, the current study aims to identify which factor is the best predictor of well-being and life satisfaction, thus informing both policies and intervention. Based on the previous evidence, we hypothesized that 5Cs and development assets are correlated with one another. We also hypothesized that both internal and external assets will positively predict satisfaction with life and well-being. However, we expected similar findings as Årdal et al. (2017), thus hypothesizing that only three out of 5Cs (competence, confidence and connection) will predict significantly satisfaction with life and well-being.

Methodology

Sample

In this study 916 students (66.7% females and 33.3% males) participated with a mean age of 16.32 years old (SD = .99). All the participants were randomly chosen from six municipalities of Kosovo. From them, 34.7% were in the 11th grade, followed by 34.5% of the participants that were in the 10th grade and 30.8% of the participants that were in the 12th grade. The distribution of the participants between urban vs rural settlement was almost similar with 46.2% of the participants living in urban areas and 42% living in rural areas.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, we got permission from each author's institution to conduct this study as we do not have a specific regulation law for such studies in Kosovo. After getting the approval from the institutions, we then informed school principals, teaching staff, parents, and students about the purpose and methods of the study. Upon agreement by schools to take part in the study, parental and student consent was obtained. After that, every participant completed the study measures as an anonymous self-report questionnaire at their schools, during their regular school hours. Two well-trained psychologists administered data collection and informed/supported students when the questionnaire was being filled out in a group setting. Procedure of data collection per class took approximately 45 min.

Measures

The *Developmental Assets* Profile (DAP; Benson, 2007) was used to measure *the developmental assets*. The questionnaire examines the 40 developmental assets through targeted items for external assets which measures support (e.g. "I have a family that gives me love

and support") empowerment (e.g. "I feel valued and appreciated by others") boundaries and expectations (e.g. "I have a family that knows where I am and what I am doing") and constructive use of time (e.g. "I am involved in a sport, club, or other group"), and internal assets which measures commitment to learning (e.g. "I enjoy learning") positive values (e.g. "I think it is important to help other people") social competencies (e.g. "I plan ahead and make good choices"), and positive identity (e.g. "I feel I have control of my life and future"). Participants indicate their answers on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (*not at all or rarely*) to 4 (*extremely or almost always).*

Reliability coefficients of the asset categories ranged from $\alpha = .61$ to $\alpha = .82$ in our sample.

The short form of the PYD questionnaire (Geldhof et al., 2014) was used to measure the 5 competencies. The PYD questionnaire contains 34 items. A 5-point Likert scale is used to assess each item, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items that measure the 5Cs are Competence (e.g. "I do very well in my classwork at school"); Confidence (e.g. "All in all, I am glad I am me"); Character (e.g. "I hardly ever do things I know I shouldn't do"); Connection (e.g. "My friends care about me"); and Caring (e.g. "When I see another person who is hurt or upset, I feel sorry for them"). Reliability measures (Cronbach's alphas) of the 5Cs are adequate: Reliability coefficients of the PYD categories ranged from $\alpha = .64$ to $\alpha = .88$ in the Kosovar sample.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) was used to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction (not a measure of either positive or negative affect). This is a 5-item scale (e.g. "In most ways my life is close to my ideal"), which 7-point scale ranges from 7 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). The reliability coefficient on the present data was $\alpha = .84$.

The World Health Organization - Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5; Topp et. al., 2015) is a short self-reported measure of current mental well-being. The WHO-5 has been found to have adequate validity in screening for depression (e.g. "I have felt cheerful and in good spirit") and it is suitable for children aged 9 and above. Participants indicate their answers on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*at no time*) to 5 (*all of the time*). The reliability coefficient on the present data was $\alpha = .84$.

Analytic Strategy

Prior to analyzing the data, we conducted Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs) for each of the scales used in this study. Then, we estimated a path analysis which required several steps. The first step was to calculate the factor scores by calculating the mean score as suggested in the original papers. Then, the model was estimated by using the 5Cs of the PYD, and internal and external assets as the independent variable, and well-being and satisfaction with life as the outcome variables. Model fit was tested using the maximum-likelihood ratio-test statistics and indices of model fit, including the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the standardized root-mean square residual

(SRMR). RMSEA values of .06 or lower were considered to indicate an acceptable model fit. In addition, CFI values of .95 or above and SRMR values of < .08 were used to indicate an acceptable model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kelloway, 1998). The standardized regression coefficients were used as effect size measures, with $\beta < .10$ indicating a small effect, a β of $\approx .20$ a medium-sized effect, and $\beta > .30$ indicating a large effect (Gignac & Szodorai, 2016).

Results

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for all Study Variables.

	%	M	SD	Min	Max
Gender					
Female	66.60%				
Male	33.30%				
Age		16.32 years	0.99	14.00	19.00
14 years	0.80%				
15 years	23.60%				
16 years	30.40%				
17 years	33.10%				
18 years	12.00%				
19 years	0.10%				
Grade					
10th grade	34.50%				
11th grade	34.70%				
12th grade	30.80%				
Settlement					
Urban	46.20%				
Rural	42.00%				
Competence		3.60	0.66	1.50	5.00
Confidence		3.99	0.65	1.50	5.00
Character		3.85	0.60	1.00	5.00
Caring		4.24	0.75	1.00	5.00
Connection		3.80	0.63	1.00	5.00
Internal Assets		3.13	0.42	1.53	4.23
External Assets		2.86	0.38	1.55	3.84
Satisfaction with Life		5.21	1.25	1.00	7.00
Well-being		3.53	0.93	1.00	5.00

Results showed that three out of four scales used in this study showed acceptable model fit. Satisfaction with life scale showed a good model fit with only RMSEA above the criteria (χ^2 (5) = 53.40, p < .001, CFI = 0.972, RMSEA = 0.108, SRMR = 0.032) and so did the well-being scale (χ^2 (5) = 57.92, p < .001, CFI = 0.969, RMSEA = 0.113, SRMR = 0.040). Internal and external assets scale also showed good fit with RMSEA above the criteria (χ^2 (19) = 138.33, p < .001, CFI = 0.957, RMSEA = 0.083, SRMR = 0.039). On the other side, the 5Cs scale did not showed a good fit with CFI below .95. However, once some residuals were let to correlate, the model was close to being acceptable (χ^2 (503) = 1251.49, p < .001, CFI = 0.888, RMSEA = 0.046, SRMR = 0.059). Further, descriptive statistics for main demographic variables and each of the calculated factors used to estimate the path model are reported in Table 1. To find out the relationship between all variables included in the study we conducted a correlation analysis. Results showed that 5Cs of the PYD and the developmental assets (i.e. external and internal assets) were significantly related to one another. In this direction, external asset was strongly correlated with internal asset and this correlation was the highest (r = .749, p < .001). Next, all 5Cs were positively correlated with each other (rs = 505–098, ps < .005). Lastly, internal and external assets were positively correlated with the 5Cs (rs = 591–288, ps < .001). For the full correlation matrix, please see Table 2.

Table 2. Correlations with Confidence Intervals of the Independent Factors.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Competence	/					
2. Confidence	.51**	/				
	[.46, .56]					
3. Character	.23**	.34**	/			
	[.16, .29]	[.28, .39]				
4. Caring	.10**	.15**	.51**	/		
	[.04, .17]	[.09, .21]	[.46, .56]			
5. Connection	.37**	.45**	.47**	.39**	/	
	[.31, .43]	[.40, .50]	[.42, .52]	[.33, .44]		
6. Internal Assets	.29**	.41**	.58**	.44**	.54**	/

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
	[.23, .35]	[.35, .46]	[.53, .62]	[.38, .49]	[.49, .58]	
7. External Assets	.34**	.39**	.46**	.32**	.59**	.76**
	[.28, .39]	[.33, .44]	[.41, .51]	[.26, .38]	[.54, .63]	[.73, .78]

Note. **p = <.01, *p < .05

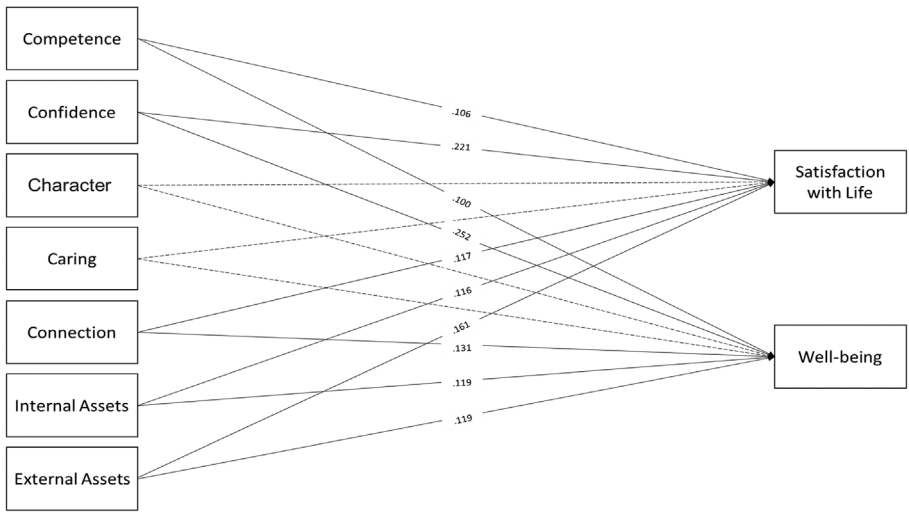

Figure 1. Prediction of satisfaction with life and well-being by the 5Cs of the PYD and internal and external assets. Note: Age, sex, grade and settlement were controlled for. Estimates provided are standardised coefficients. Solid lines indicate significant paths ($p < .05$). Dashed lines indicate non-significant paths ($p > .05$). Model fit: CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = 0.000, SRMR = 0.000. Residual terms, factor loadings, correlations between the independent variables, and variances are omitted for the sake of clarity.

To identify the influence of 5Cs and developmental assets on satisfaction with life and well-being we estimated a path analysis model. All the fit indices showed ideal scores. This model, as visualized in Figure 1, showed that three out of 5Cs together with both internal and external assets positively predicted satisfaction with life and well-being while controlling for one another. Confidence was the strongest predictor of the satisfaction with life ($\beta = .221$, $p < .001$) and well-being ($\beta = .252$, $p < .001$). This was followed by competence, which also showed significant effects on the satisfaction with life ($\beta = .106$, $p = .002$) and on well-being ($\beta = .100$, $p = .004$). The last one of the 5Cs that showed consistent significant effects was connection ($\beta = .117$, $p = .002$; respectively $\beta = .131$, $p = .001$). On the other side, character

and caring effects were found to be nonsignificant. Further, internal and external assets significantly predicted the two outcomes. The effects of internal assets on the satisfaction with life ($\beta = .116$, $p = .016$) and well-being ($\beta = .119$, $p < .016$) were quite small. Similar small effects of external assets on satisfaction with life ($\beta = .161$, $p = .001$) and well-being ($\beta = .119$, $p < .012$) were found.

Discussion

This study used Path Models to examine the effects of the 5Cs (competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring) of Positive Youth Development (PYD) and developmental assets (internal and external assets) on well-being and satisfaction with life among youth. Most of the studies worldwide have already confirmed that the PYD framework positively influences numerous positive outcomes such as mental and physical health, academic achievement, including life satisfaction and overall well-being (Beck & Wiium, 2019; Catalano et al., 2019; Kozina et al., 2018; Soares et al., 2019; Shek & Chai, 2020; Zhou et al., 2020). However, the PYD research in Southeastern Europe is relatively rare and to our knowledge this is the first study to specifically investigate the effects of an integrative approach consisting of Lerner's 5Cs (Lerner et al., 2009) and developmental assets (Benson, 2003) on well-being and life satisfaction in Kosovo. All that to provide evidence in a low- to middle-income country such is Kosovo. A country that is overcoming huge social transitions and in which youth values have changed over these 20 post-conflict years. Although speculative, both character and caring and the way how they were perceived among youth in Kosovo may have been prone to change. Thus youth in Kosovo tend to rely more on other values/assets.

Regarding our first hypothesis, we found moderate to strong correlations of 5Cs with the developmental assets. Such results confirm previous studies (see Lerner et al., 2009; Overton, 2015), thus providing strong evidence that these factors interact with one another in a bidirectional way across different settings and cultures. The set of factors constituting 5 Cs and developmental assets are considered pivotal for many positive outcomes, as such it was expected to correlate. Although, strongly correlated the results confirms that 5 Cs and developmental assets are independent factors, thus informing theories and practices in the field of PYD.

Based on the previous evidence, we also expected a positive relation between 5Cs and developmental assets in one hand and life satisfaction and

well-being on the other one. However, we also expected that not all of the 5 Cs will be significant predictors. The results confirmed our expectations, showing that competence, confidence and connection are related to both life satisfaction and well-being, but this is not true for character and caring. The findings are also in the same line with previous studies, which have shown that 5Cs differently predict the outcomes depending on the context they are measured (Årdal et al., 2017; Kozina et al., 2018). A detailed examination of the results provides evidence for an important debate about which factor remains the strongest and persistent contributor to positive youth development. Yet, the findings are diverse. For example, character was associated with higher levels of life satisfaction and contribution in other research (e.g. Pilkauskaite-Valickiene, 2015), but this was not true for the current study. Regarding the effects of caring, our findings confirm the "controversial" of such concept, since in other studies it was shown that high levels of caring among youth are associated with high levels of anxiety (Kozina et al., 2020). Totally different picture is provided for the developmental assets. Our study is just another contribution, which reconfirms that they are both (internal and external assets) significant predictors of life satisfaction and well-being, although with small effect sizes (see Soares et al., 2019; Zullig et al., 2011). All that being said, this is new evidence for a low- to middle-income country such as Kosovo, which is overcoming huge social transitions and in which youth values have changed over these 20 post-conflict years. Although speculative, both character and caring and the way how they were perceived among youth in Kosovo may have been prone to change. Thus, youth in Kosovo tend to rely more on other values/assets.

Although we extended research on the effects of PYD on well-being and satisfaction with life in an understudied population, the findings should be interpreted in light of some limitations.

The first limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the study design, which limits the clear conclusion of the direction of associations and does not allow to identify the leading factor. Thus, future longitudinal studies can help drawing the appropriate conclusions about the bidirectional relations over time. Also, adding qualitative measures (e.g., in depth questionnaires and interviews) would help informing better policies and interventions. Also, our findings are limited to high school populations. As such the findings are not generalizable to other age groups. Future studies with university students or even with older populations can provide evidence for

the stability or changeability of the relations between PYD, well-being and life satisfaction.

Practical Implications

Despite the limitations, these are fundamental findings to design intervention and educational programs, which promote better life satisfaction and well-being. As we argued that context is important, such programs in Kosovo are yet to be developed. To our knowledge, educational and other learning enhancing programs are not based on PYD or any similar framework. Therefore, based on our findings, we believe that programs for at least two target groups can be designed. First, we can promote 5Cs for students which in turn may lead to an increase in wellbeing and life satisfaction. Specifically, we propose to promote students' competence, connection, and confidence as these factors showed clearly bigger significant effects on well-being and satisfaction with life. Second, such programs can also be designed for teachers. As we already know, teachers play a crucial role in education. We believe that by promoting their internal and external assets, as well as their 5Cs, we can contribute to teachers' well-being and satisfaction with life. That can further lead to a sustainable educational system in which both students and teachers are more satisfied.

Conclusion

Based on this study findings, we conclude that both external and internal assets, as well as 5Cs play an important role in students' well-being and their satisfaction with life. Although these are cross-sectional findings and should be interpreted with caution, they showed that three out of 5Cs (confidence, competence, and connection) positively affected well-being and satisfaction with life. Further, both internal and external assets showed similar positive results. In conclusion, promising findings which can lead to practical implications were found.

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Developmental Assets and Healthy Lifestyles among Spanish Youth

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Abstract

Developmental assets may be defined as the internal and external resources within an individual's social ecology that predict positive outcomes. The present work aimed to examine the relationship between developmental assets and healthy lifestyles among Spanish youth. Data from the PYD Cross-national Project in Spain were collected through an anonymous questionnaire based on The Developmental Assets Profile and certain lifestyle indicators. The sample comprised 768 youth (M_{age} = 19.50, SD = 2.27; 60.5% female). Youth who reported having been drunk or having smoked in the last 30 days, and those who indicated they had inhaled a substance or consumed marijuana or another illicit drug over the previous 12 months were shown to have less of a commitment to learning, lower positive values, and fewer social skills. Further, participants who reported physical activity (at least 30 min) two or more times per week revealed greater empowerment, the constructive use of time, positive values, and a positive identity. Moreover, the consumption of at least one serving of fruit or vegetables every day was associated with more positive values. Gambling was related to lower scores for commitment to learning, social competencies, positive values, boundaries and expectations, and social support. The results suggest the need to design programmes to foster developmental assets and promote healthy lifestyles among young people.

Keywords: developmental assets, lifestyles, youth, Spain, cross-sectional

Razvojni viri in zdrav življenjski slog med mladimi v Španiji
Povzetek

Razvojne vire lahko opredelimo kot notranje in zunanje moči znotraj posameznikovega socialnega okolja, ki napovedujejo pozitivne razvojne izide. Namen raziskave je bil preučiti odnos med razvojnimi viri in zdravim življenjskim slogom španskih mladostnikov. Uporabljeni so bili podatki iz projekta PYD v Španiji, zbrani z uporabo anonimnega vprašalnika, ki temelji na Profilu razvojnih virov (The Developmental Assets Profile) in nekaterih kazalnikih življenjskega sloga. V raziskavi je sodelovalo 768 mladih ($M_{starost}$ = 19,50, SD = 2,27; 60,5 % žensk). Mladi, ki so v zadnjih 30 dneh poročali o pijanosti ali kajenju, in tisti, ki so v zadnjih 12 mesecih navajali vdihavanje snovi, uživanje marihuane ali drugih prepovedanih drog, so pokazali nižjo predanost učenju, nižje pozitivne vrednote in nižje socialne kompetence. Poleg tega so udeleženci, ki so dva ali večkrat na teden poročali o telesni aktivnosti (vsaj 30 minut), poročali o višji opolnomočenosti, konstruktivni izrabi časa, pozitivnih vrednotah in pozitivni identiteti. Poleg tega je bilo uživanje vsaj ene enote sadja ali zelenjave vsak dan povezano z bolj pozitivnimi vrednostmi. Stave so bile povezane z nižjo stopnjo predanosti učenju, nižjimi socialnimi kompetencami, nižjimi pozitivnimi vrednotami, pričakovanji in mejami ter nižjo socialno podporo. Rezultati kažejo, da je programe za krepitev razvojnih virov smiselno oblikovati vzporedno s promocijo zdravega načina življenja v obdobju mladostništva.
Ključne besede: razvojni viri; življenjski slogi; mladina, Španija; prečna študija.

Youth and adolescent psychology has chiefly focused on the study of emotional problems and risk behaviours, even though the transition to adulthood is better characterised as a process of growth and increasing one's competencies (Larson, 2000). Research on youth samples has thus traditionally taken a deficit-based approach, with its research findings marking interventions and policies based on coercive methods instead of the development of strengths (Geldhof et al., 2014). In the last few years, more research has studied the positive indicators of young people's adjustment to adulthood (Lippman et al., 2011). Because to date interventions that only addressed risks and vulnerabilities have shown a smaller impact, the promotion of young people's healthy development needs a strengths-based approach (Benson et al., 2006; Catalano et al., 2002; Kia-Keating et al., 2011).

In this vein, the Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory is a strengths-based approach to the developmental transition of young individuals to adulthood that argues the development of health and well-being is the outcome of the alignment of their internal strengths and contextual assets (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2003; Lerner et al., 2015). Derived from developmental systems theory, PYD considers the mutually beneficial interactions between the individual and the context to be adaptive regulations. Developmental Assets (DAs) theory was postulated within this relational, developmental systems meta-model to describe the individual and the contextual resources which may foster PYD (Scales, 2011; Lerner et al., 2015). DAs theory integrates the evidence-based resources that: a) relate to fewer risk behaviours (e.g. substance use or violent behaviour) and promote thriving and resilience; b) can be generalised across different social locations; c) foster a balance of the factors on both the ecological and individual levels; d) are available within the capacity of communities to promote their satisfaction; and e) young people are able to easily reach them (Benson et al., 2006; Benson et al., 2011). Two types of DAs exist: internal and external assets (Benson et al., 2011). External assets encompass support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Internal assets entail four categories: commitment to learning, positive values, social skills, and a positive identity. These internal and external assets are expected to be positively associated (Theokas et al., 2005) and consistent with the relational, developmental systems proposed by Lerner et al. (2011) to integrate individual-context interactions. These assets are cumulative for promoting PYD and for reducing risk behaviours, and can be developed by youth programmes and interventions in their developmental contexts (Benson et al., 2011).

Some studies examined the relationships between developmental assets, risk behaviours and indicators of thriving. Most research has been conducted in the USA. In a survey involving 6,000 adolescents from the USA, Scales et al. (2000) showed that developmental assets explained around half of the variance in a composite index comprising indicators of thriving, including school success, leadership, helping others, maintaining good health, delayed of gratification, valuing diversity and overcoming adversity. In other work, Leffert et al. (1998) concluded that risk behaviours (i.e. alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, risky sexual intercourse, depression, suicide, antisocial behaviour, violence, school problems, driving after consuming alcohol, and gambling), were related to less presence of developmental assets.

Scales (1999) reported a cumulative effect, such that a greater number of assets was associated with fewer risk behaviours and more indicators of thriving. Atkins and colleagues (2002) showed the protective effect of certain developmental assets on adolescent tobacco use in the USA, for example, future aspirations, responsible choices or use of time in organised groups or religion. Bleck and DeBate (2016) provided longitudinal evidence for associations between developmental assets and health behaviours in adolescents and youth from the USA. Direct associations were observed between developmental assets, substance use and physical activity. Further, French et al. (2001) showed that a positive identity is a developmental asset that is considerably strongly and negatively interrelated to binge/purge and weight-loss behaviours. Fulkerson et al. (2006) stated that developmental assets are positively associated with good eating habits (like family dinners) and negatively with high-risk behaviours. Schwartz et al. (2013) showed that community developmental asset was associated with more prosocial behaviours through its positive influence on having a mentor. Moreover, Galinsky and Sonenstein (2011) related developmental assets with greater sexual enjoyment among emerging adults. Valois and colleagues (2009) revealed that developmental assets are positively associated with life satisfaction in adolescents from the USA.

An international study using adolescent and youth samples from the USA, Japan, Lebanon, Albania, Bangladesh and the Philippines concluded that developmental assets could be adapted and used to study positive development in cultural settings other than the USA (Scales, 2011). This conclusion was recently supported by Soares et al. (2019) in a sample of Portuguese adolescents, highlighting the role of overall self-esteem, family support, planning and decision-making, and sense of purpose. In Spain, Gomez-Baya et al. (2021) showed a positive association between internal and external assets with the 5Cs of positive youth development. In Canada, Filbert and Flynn (2010) presented how young people's possession of more developmental assets was associated with more resilience, assessed by more prosocial behaviour, greater self-esteem, better educational performance, and fewer behavioural difficulties in a sample of First Nations young people in care. Kozina and Pivec (2020) studied cross-sectional relationships between developmental assets and bullying among students in Slovenia. They found that less empowerment predicted social bullying, while less constructive use of time was related to verbal victimisation. Less empowerment and less constructive use of time were also predictors of social victimisation. In Norway, Sahar et al. (2020) concluded that two internal assets

(i.e., positive values and social competence) and two external assets (i.e., support and boundaries and expectations) predicted a risk behaviour (e.g. drunkenness, violence and delinquency) in young people.

In Spain, National Health Survey data (INE, 2017) indicated that people aged 15–24 spent 66.28% of their time sitting down, while just 7.23% spent time walking and 1.58% performing activities requiring aerobic effort. Only 46.30% reported moderate to vigorous physical activity in leisure time. Concerning eating habits, 50.76% of young people aged 15–24 indicated daily consumption of fruit and 32.53% daily consumption of vegetables. With regard to substances, 47.86% had drunk alcohol in the last 2 weeks while 20.66% had smoked tobacco. The EDADES (2019) survey on alcohol and drugs in Spain revealed that 20.4% of the population aged 15–24 had consumed cannabis in the previous 12 months. Further, INJUVE (2019) showed that 18.3% of the sample aged 18–24 reporting problematic gambling.

The developmental assets' approach is based on the internal and external nutriments that constitute the basis for healthy development (Oliva, 2015). The provision of these assets in the transition to adulthood will encourage young people to follow a healthy lifestyle, which in turn will help them thrive. To our knowledge, no study to date using a sample of Spanish youth has examined how developmental assets may be the nutriments for a healthy lifestyle. Moreover, greater research is needed to determine whether a universal pattern of relationship exists between developmental assets and healthy behaviour, an issue not clearly addressed by recent literature. The aim of this research was to examine the association between developmental assets and different behaviours in youth lifestyles, such as the level of practice of physical activity, the consumption of fruit and vegetables, the consumption of alcohol and tobacco, the use of illegal drugs (i.e., marijuana, substance inhalation or others) and gambling. Building on previous research into thriving and developmental assets, we hypothesised that a healthy lifestyle (composed of the presence of particular protective behaviours and the lack of certain risky behaviours) was associated with higher scores for developmental assets, while unhealthy lifestyles were related to lower scores for such assets. Internal assets may provide a platform for facilitating the choice of protective behaviours, instead of risky ones, which may foster healthier personal development. External assets may also facilitate the availability and reinforcement of protective behaviours of health and well-being in adolescents and youth. Thus, developmental assets may

be the substrate which feeds the development of lifestyles that foster health and well-being.

Methods

Participants

The sample comprised 768 youth (60.5% female), aged between 17 and 29 (M_{age} = 19.50, SD = 2.27), and enrolled in seven institutes for upper secondary education (61.9%, M_{age} = 18.81, SD = 2.20) and three universities (38.1%, M_{age} = 20.63, SD = 1.90), in the region of Andalusia in southern Spain. Most participants were Spanish (95.8%), with most living with both parents, one parent, or other adults (90.4%). A convenient sampling procedure was followed to reach a heterogenous sample, with schools of different ownership (40% public, 60% private) and different habitats (40% rural, 60% urban). Concerning the level of studies, 43.1% of the sample were in their first or second year of a baccalaureate programme, 18.8% were enrolled in their first or second year of vocational training, whereas 38.1% were in their first two years of a university degree. In each educational centre, the participating classes were randomly selected.

Instrument and variables

The questionnaire included a scale on DAs and items for assessing lifestyles:

Developmental Assets. We used the Developmental Assets Profile validated by the Search Institute (Scales, 2011), after a back-translation from English to Spanish by native speakers with expertise in psychology. This questionnaire is composed of 58 items, distributed in 8 related subscales, 4 internal assets and 4 external assets. The dimensions of external assets were: support (7 items; e.g. "I have a family that gives me love and support"), empowerment (6 items; e.g. "I am given useful roles and responsibilities"), boundaries and expectations (9 items; e.g. "I have parents who urge me to do well at school/university") and constructive use of time (4 items; e.g. "I am involved in creative things such as music, theatre or other arts". Some statements were adapted to the academic level, depending on enrolment in university or high school. The dimensions of internal assets were: commitment to learning (7 items, e.g. "I am trying to learn new things"), positive values (11 items; e.g. "I am developing respect for other people"), social skills (8 items; e.g. "I am sensitive to the needs and feeling of others") and a positive identity (6 items; e.g. "I feel good about myself").

A four-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all or rarely* (1) to *extremely or almost always* (4) was offered to assess the items. Mean scores were calculated for each subscale, as well as the overall score for internal and external assets by adding the means in the respective dimensions (ranging from 4 to 16). Concerning the subscales of external assets, acceptable scores of reliability were detected for support (α = .79) and boundaries and expectations (α = .72), whereas low ones were observed for empowerment (α = .69) and especially for constructive use of time (α = .34). In the internal assets' dimensions, commitment to learning (α = .77), a positive identity (α = .76) and positive values (α = .72) presented acceptable internal consistency, while social competence showed a low value (α = .68). Previous research by Scales (2011) established good cross-cultural validity in adolescents and youth, and good factorial and convergent validity.

Lifestyles. To measure the different types of behaviours that may characterise the lifestyle of young people, we used some indicators from the Positive Youth Development cross-national project (Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019). These items assessed the level of physical activity ("I engage in physical activity, for at least 30 minutes, two or more times per week"), the consumption of fruit ("I eat at least one serving of fruit every day") and vegetables ("I eat at least one serving of vegetables every day"), alcohol use ("Have you consumed alcohol once or more in the last 30 days?"), drunkenness ("Have you been drunk once or more in the last 30 days?"), smoking ("Have you smoked a cigarette once or more in the last 30 days?"), substance inhalation ("Have you sniffed or inhaled substances to get high once or more in the last 12 months?", cannabis use ("Have you used marijuana once or more in the last 12 months?"), use of other illicit drugs ("Have you used other illicit drugs (e.g. cocaine, LSD, heroin, amphetamines etc.) once or more in the last 12 months?") and gambling ("Have you gambled with money once or more in the last 12 months?"). Dichotomic Yes/No response options were presented for each of these statements.

Data collection procedure

The present research uses Spanish data from the Positive Youth Development Cross-National project (Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019). This international project is based on a sample of over 10,000 youth (aged 16–29) in Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey), Africa (Ghana, Kenya, South Africa), Asia (China), Latin America (Brazil, Mexico) and New Zealand. In Spain, the

research followed a cross-sectional design with data being collected during April and May in 2017. The students anonymously completed a self-report measure, which required around 30 minutes, during normal class time in the presence of a previously trained research team member. This research was approved by the University of Huelva's ethics board. The ten high schools and universities contacted agreed to join in the research. All students agreed to participate and provided written informed consent, and parents' informed consent in the case of minors. The participants did not receive any reward for being involved in the study.

Design of the data analyses

Descriptive statistics were presented (i.e. mean and standard deviation) for the developmental assets and for the collective dimensions of internal and external assets. The frequency distribution was also examined for the behaviours reflecting lifestyles. We examined differences in developmental assets among participants who had reported various behaviours/lifestyles by performing Student t-tests. Cohen's d was shown for effect size. Means and standard deviation for developmental assets were presented for the dichotomic responses in each lifestyle behaviour. The statistical package JASP 0.14.1.0 was used.

Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics (i.e. mean and standard deviation) of developmental assets and the frequency distribution of lifestyles (i.e. the share answering "yes"). On the range of possible scores, the results indicated moderate scores for internal and external developmental assets. The mean score for internal assets was 11.98 (SD = 1.43), while 11.13 (SD = 1.58) was the mean for external assets, considering a range of possible scores from 4 to 16. Thus, higher values were observed for the internal assets, especially social skills and commitment to learning. Further, in the external assets' dimensions, the highest score was found for empowerment, while the lowest one was detected for constructive use of time, which was also the dimension with the lowest internal consistency.

Regarding lifestyles, less than 60% of the sample reported having engaged in physical activity for at least 30 min two or more times per week, and having eaten at least one serving of vegetables or fruit every day. With regard to alcohol use, three-quarters of the sample had consumed alcohol once or more over the previous 30 days, and around 40% had been drunk

once or more in the last month. Nearly 40% of the participants had smoked a cigarette once or more in the last month. Concerning illegal drugs, nearly one-quarter of the sample had used marijuana once or more in the last year, while around 4% had sniffed or inhaled substances or used other illicit drugs (e.g. cocaine, LSD, heroin, amphetamines etc.) once or more in the last year. Finally, 28% indicated that they had gambled with money once or more over the last year.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of developmental assets and frequency distribution of lifestyles.

Developmental assets	M (SD)
Support	2.94 (.55)
Empowerment	3.15 (.45)
Expectancies and boundaries	2.92 (.43)
Constructive use of time	2.13 (.61)
Commitment to learning	3.01 (.52)
Positive values	2.97 (.41)
Social skills	3.12 (.44)
Positive identity	2.87 (.55)
Internal assets	11.98 (1.43)
External assets	11.13 (1.58)
Lifestyles	**% Yes**
Physical activity	58.3
Fruit	58.9
Vegetables	59.6
Alcohol	75.9
Been drunk	40.2
Smoking	38.9
Betting	28.0
Inhalation	4.6
Marijuana	24.8
Other illegal drugs	3.8

Table 2 shows differences in scores for developmental assets by the level of physical activity, and the consumption of fruit and vegetables. Participants with an active lifestyle (performing physical activity for at least 30 min two or more times per week) showed higher scores for the constructive use of time, a positive identity, positive values, and empowerment, as well as higher scores for overall internal and external assets. Concerning fruit and vegetables, those who indicated their daily consumption presented greater means in positive values and in the overall dimension of internal

Table 2: T-tests of the mean scores for developmental assets by the level of physical activity, and the consumption of fruit and vegetables.

	Physical Activity				Fruit				Vegetables			
	Yes	No			Yes	No			Yes	No		
	M(SD)	M(SD)	t	d	M(SD)	M(SD)	t	d	M(SD)	M(SD)	t	d
Support	2.96(.54)	2.92(.57)	-1.16	-.09	2.94(.56)	2.95(.55)	.11	.01	2.95(.57)	2.94(.54)	-.22	-.02
Empowerment	3.18(.45)	3.10(.45)	-2.33*	-.17	3.13(.46)	3.16(.45)	.81	.06	3.16(.48)	3.13(.42)	-.83	-.06
Expectancies and Boundaries	2.94(.42)	2.88(.45)	-1.88	-.14	2.92(.44)	2.92(.43)	-.01	.01	2.94(.43)	2.89(.43)	-1.45	-.11
Constructive use of time	2.29(.58)	1.89(.58)	-9.18***	-.68	2.16(.61)	2.07(.61)	-1.96	-.15	2.16(.62)	2.07(.59)	-2.04*	-.15
Commitment to learning	3.02(.49)	2.98(.56)	-.99	-.07	3.03(.52)	2.97(.52)	-1.51	-.11	3.03(.54)	2.97(.51)	-1.62	-.12
Positive values	3.00(.40)	2.92(.44)	-2.78**	-.21	3.00(.41)	2.97(.52)	-2.87**	-.22	3.02(.41)	2.89(.41)	-4.09***	-.31
Social skills	3.14(.43)	3.09(.44)	-1.73	-.13	3.13(.44)	3.11(.43)	-.39	-.03	3.15(.44)	3.08(.42)	-2.11*	-.16
A positive identity	2.93(.53)	2.79(.58)	-3.50***	-.26	2.90(.55)	2.84(.56)	-1.44	-.11	2.89(.55)	2.84(.56)	-1.28	-.10
Internal assets	12.10(1.34)	11.81(1.52)	-2.57*	-.20	12.09(1.39)	11.83(1.46)	-2.31*	-.18	12.11(1.42)	11.80(1.42)	-2.81**	-.22
External assets	11.36(1.51)	10.81(1.63)	-4.63***	-.36	11.15(1.61)	11.11(1.55)	-.34	-.03	11.20(1.63)	11.03(1.52)	-1.34	-.10

Table 3: T-tests of the mean scores for developmental assets by the consumption of alcohol and tobacco, and the practice of betting.

	Alcohol last month				Been drunk last month				Smoking last month				Betting last year			
	Yes	No			Yes	No			Yes	No			Yes	No		
	M(SD)	M(SD)	t	d	M(SD)	M(SD)	t	d	M(SD)	M(SD)	t	d	M(SD)	M(SD)	t	d
Support	2.96(.55)	2.88(.57)	1.77	.15	2.95(.54)	2.94(.57)	.16	.01	2.91(.53)	2.96(.57)	-1.26	-.10	2.87(.56)	2.97(.55)	-2.14*	-.18
Empowerment	3.17(.44)	3.06(.49)	2.95**	.25	3.18(.44)	3.13(.46)	1.45	.11	3.15(.44)	3.14(.46)	.34	.03	3.13(.48)	3.15(.45)	-.61	-.05
Expectancies and Boundaries	2.92(.42)	2.91(.47)	.35	.03	2.88(.42)	2.94(.44)	-1.95	-.15	2.88(.43)	2.94(.43)	-1.85	-.14	2.84(.42)	2.95(.44)	-3.00**	-.25
Constructive use of time	2.14(.61)	2.06(.61)	1.47	.13	2.13(.60)	2.12(.62)	.35	.03	2.08(.60)	2.15(.61)	-1.65	-.12	2.17(.61)	2.10(.61)	1.40	.11
Commitment to learning	2.99(.52)	3.06(.53)	-1.51	-.13	2.93(.50)	3.06(.52)	-3.31**	-.25	2.94(.54)	3.05(.50)	-2.67**	-.20	2.86(.52)	3.06(.51)	-4.87***	-.40
Positive values	2.96(.41)	3.00(.43)	-1.10	-.10	2.91(.39)	3.00(.42)	-2.92**	-.22	2.90(.42)	3.01(.40)	-3.43**	-.26	2.88(.40)	3.00(.42)	-3.48**	-.29
Social skills	3.11(.44)	3.15(.42)	-.94	-.08	3.06(.45)	3.16(.42)	-2.97**	-.22	3.05(.45)	3.17(.42)	-3.78***	-.29	3.01(.46)	3.16(.42)	-4.26***	-.35
A positive identity	2.90(.54)	2.79(.58)	2.24*	.19	2.85(.54)	2.89(.56)	-.91	-.07	2.84(.58)	2.90(.54)	-1.37	-.10	2.93(.55)	2.85(.56)	1.69	.14
Internal assets	11.97(1.41)	12.02(1.47)	-.44	-.04	11.74(1.35)	12.14(1.45)	-3.66***	-.29	11.74(1.46)	12.13(1.39)	-3.48**	-.28	11.73(1.37)	12.08(1.44)	-2.94**	-.25
External assets	11.20(1.54)	10.91(1.70)	2.11*	.19	11.13(1.55)	11.13(1.61)	-.04	-.01	11.01(1.52)	11.21(1.62)	-1.57	-.12	11.03(1.53)	11.16(1.61)	-.96	-.08

Table 4: T-tests of the mean scores for developmental assets by the consumption of illegal drugs.

	Inhalation last year				Marijuana last year				Other illegal drugs last year			
	Yes	No			Yes	No			Yes	No		
	M(SD)	M(SD)	t	d	M(SD)	M(SD)	t	d	M(SD)	M(SD)	t	d
Support	2.72(.62)	2.95(.55)	-2.41*	-.42	2.82(.57)	2.98(.55)	-3.53***	-.30	2.76(.74)	2.95(.55)	-1.77	-.34
Empowerment	3.03(.65)	3.15(.44)	-1.56	-.28	3.11(.49)	3.16(.44)	-1.17	-.10	2.84(.63)	3.16(.44)	-3.59***	-.70
Expectancies and Boundaries	2.79(.48)	2.92(.43)	-1.65	-.30	2.83(.43)	2.95(.43)	-3.26**	-.29	2.64(.53)	2.93(.43)	-3.40**	-.68
Constructive use of time	2.36(.68)	2.11(.60)	2.32*	.40	2.08(.60)	2.14(.61)	-1.11	-.09	2.14(.67)	2.12(.61)	.13	.03
Commitment to learning	2.82(.75)	3.01(.50)	-2.10*	-.37	2.85(.43)	3.06(.50)	-4.81***	-.41	2.67(.64)	3.02(.51)	-3.49**	-.67
Positive values	2.69(.47)	2.98(.41)	-3.95***	-.71	2.85(.43)	3.01(.40)	-4.39***	-.38	2.69(.51)	2.98(.41)	-3.57***	-.70
Social skills	2.74(.45)	3.14(.43)	-5.08***	-.93	2.96(.43)	3.17(.43)	-5.94***	-.51	2.61(.47)	3.14(.42)	-6.41***	-1.26
A positive identity	2.82(.59)	2.88(.55)	-.55	-.10	2.83(.62)	2.89(.53)	-1.14	-.10	2.73(.71)	2.88(.55)	-1.43	-.27
Internal assets	11.06(1.35)	12.02(1.42)	-3.60***	-.68	11.52(1.32)	12.14(1.43)	-5.00***	-.44	10.75(1.49)	12.03(1.40)	-4.56***	-.91
External assets	10.87(2.04)	11.14(1.56)	-.88	-.17	10.85(1.59)	11.22(1.57)	-2.63**	-.23	10.02(2.04)	11.16(1.56)	-3.35**	-.73

assets. Those who reported the daily consumption of vegetables showed more constructive use of time and more social skills.

Table 3 presents t-tests of the mean scores for developmental assets by the consumption of alcohol and tobacco, and the practice of betting. First, the results indicated that young people who drank alcohol once or more in the last month had more empowerment and a stronger positive identity, as well as more overall external assets. However, those who had been drunk once or more over the last month or smoked a cigarette once or more in that period indicated a lower commitment to learning, positive values, and social skills, and lower scores for overall internal assets. Betting was associated with lower scores for commitment to learning, social skills, positive values, boundaries and expectations, and social support. Participants who reported they had been betting also showed lower scores in the dimension of internal assets.

Finally, Table 4 presents the results of the t-tests of the mean scores for developmental assets by the consumption of illegal drugs. The consumption of marijuana or another illicit drug, and the inhalation of substances, over the last year, was linked to lower scores for social skills, positive values and commitment to learning, as well as a lower overall average for the internal assets' dimension. Specifically, the use of marijuana and inhalation were associated with less support, while the use of marijuana or another illicit drug was associated with fewer boundaries and expectations. Less empowerment was detected among those who had used another illicit drug. More constructive use of time was paradoxically indicated by those who had reported substance inhalation. Concerning the overall scores for external assets, a lower average was observed among participants who reported having used marijuana or another illicit drug.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the associations between internal and external assets and lifestyles among young people; specifically, their physical activity, fruit and vegetable consumption, consumption of substances (alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, substance inhalation, others) and gambling. In line with our hypothesis, the greater presence of internal and external developmental assets was associated with a healthier lifestyle, with more health protective behaviours and less risk behaviours. In detail, an active lifestyle, involving the performing of physical activity for at least 30 min two or more times per week, was related to the more constructive use of

time, a positive identity, positive values, and empowerment. Positive values were also positively associated with the daily consumption of fruit and vegetables. The daily consumption of vegetables was also related to more constructive use of time and more social skills. In addition, having been drunk or having smoked in the last month was associated with less commitment to learning, fewer positive values and fewer social skills. Use of marijuana over the last year was associated with less support and fewer boundaries and expectations. Finally, betting in the last year was related to lower scores for commitment to learning, social skills, positive values, boundaries and expectations, and social support. These results are in harmony with previous studies, such as those by Leffert et al. (1998) and Atkins et al. (2002) in the USA and Sahar et al. (2020) in Norway. Thus, as indicated by Oliva (2015), developmental assets constitute the basis for young people's healthy development. The current findings provide evidence of the association between developmental assets and a healthy lifestyle (health protective behaviours and no risk behaviours) and point to assets as resources that may promote health in individuals' transition to adulthood. More research is needed to better understand the mechanisms that explain these interrelations between developmental assets and the development of a healthy lifestyle, composed by particular health protective behaviours and the absence of risky behaviours. More internal and external assets may respectively facilitate the choice of protective behaviours and their availability in developmental contexts, thereby leading to greater attention to one's own and others' health and well-being as individuals develop.

Some limitations of these results must be noted. Like with any cross-sectional study, the conclusions are only based on associations between the variables, and no causal inference may be drawn, nor as concerns the direction of the relationship. Future research is needed to explore the prospective links between developmental assets, lifestyle and health. Moreover, greater research is called for to explore the mechanisms at work in these relationships as well as the different developmental profiles by demographics, for example, different patterns by gender. Other limitations may arise from the use of self-report measures, which present subjective and perceived information and should be complemented with objective measures of assets in the community. The subscale of constructive use of time showed low internal consistency, which may influence the results, and needs further psychometric research to develop a more solid measure for Spanish samples. Regarding the data analysis strategy, although the analyses conducted

are appropriate for examining differences in developmental assets by lifestyles (assessed using dichotomic items), further examination would benefit from the use of multivariate regression-based analyses to study possible mediators and moderators, and from the design of a comprehensive structural equation model. Finally, other variables should be controlled, such as psychological adjustment and health conditions, personality traits or self-regulation. Future research could address the prospective relationships between developmental assets, lifestyles and physical/mental health by controlling for self-regulation, personality and demographics.

Despite these limitations, the results of this research suggest some implications for theory, policy and practice. Concerning the theoretical implications, health promotion among young people should integrate the construction of resilience with risk factors and the development of competencies and assets (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). The design of intervention programmes for young people must integrate the promotion of assets to complement the classic view of adolescents and youth solely focused on risks and vulnerabilities. Regarding policy, local policies designed to prevent risk behaviours may be complemented with actions to strengthen assets on both internal and external levels to make them more efficient. Policies to promote health and well-being should follow an integrated and positive conception of youth by considering both strengths and contextual resources, and putting evidence-based interventions into practice. Some implications for professional practice also arise from this study. Curran and Wexler (2017) revised programmes to promote PYD from an educational context. Three categories of interventions were included, i.e. curriculum-based, leadership development and student-based mentorship programmes. Regarding curriculum-based approaches, programmes were focused on the development of social and emotional competencies. Taylor et al. (2017) performed a meta-analysis of social and emotional learning programmes to promote PYD, concluding that these interventions were effective for improving a healthy developmental trajectory. In Spain, the Happy Classrooms Programme is a good example of intervention in positive education that has proven its effectiveness in building adolescents' character strengths (Arguis et al. 2010). As regards programmes focused on leadership and mentoring, one example is Portugal's Dream teens project aimed at promoting social participation and PYD (Branquinho et al., 2020). The authors conducted a participatory action-research programme which presented positive effects on personal development, feelings of social

support, and relationships. In Spain, the Healthy Universities Network was recently established to foster health and well-being within Spanish universities (REUS, 2018), while the Spanish Institute for Youth (2018) has started actions to enhance social participation and empowerment in youth by promoting international cooperation, youth associationism, youth creativity, the training of information agents, and the exchange of experiences.

In conclusion, the study presents evidence of positive relationships in Spain between developmental assets and healthy lifestyles, and reinforces the results obtained in other countries. Most research to date on developmental assets and their associations with health and well-being has been conducted with samples from North America and the current research results underline the importance of assets for healthy development also in a Spanish sample of youth. This study examined the associations between individual internal and external assets with several lifestyle behaviours, i.e. practice of physical activity, the consumption of fruit and vegetables, alcohol use, having been drunk, smoking, substance inhalation, cannabis use, use of other illicit drugs and betting. The results revealed different profiles of both internal and external assets that were associated with more physical activity and greater consumption of fruit and vegetables, as well as less risk behaviours (substance use and gambling). Thus, this research suggests the need to design programmes to foster developmental assets and to promote healthy lifestyles in order to support a healthy transition to adulthood.

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Measuring Positive Youth Development in Slovenia with a Focus on Gender and School-Level Differences

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Abstract

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach postulates that all young people possess strengths (internal assets) that, when combined with resources in their environment (external assets), can impact the extent to which they thrive as they develop during their whole lifespan. Moreover, if both types (internal and external) of these assets are present, positive youth development is shown by the presence of the 5Cs: competence, confidence, caring, connection and character. Since the PYD approach originates from and is well researched in the USA, all of the related measures were developed in that context. To determine whether the PYD model can be transferred for use in the Slovenian context, reliable and valid measures are foremost needed since some indicators of PYD might vary due to cultural and societal differences. The aim of this paper is to present the psychometric properties (reliability, validity) of PYD measures (i.e. internal, external assets, and the 5Cs of PYD) in Slovenia and to determine gender and school-level differences. We used the Developmental Assets Profile (Scales, 2011) and the short version of the Positive Youth Development Questionnaire (Geldhof et al., 2014b). Our sample consisted of 1,979 students (57.4% female; M_{age}=15.43) from lower and upper secondary schools in Slovenia. The results reveal that PYD can be partly transferred for use in the Slovenian context and that gender differences in particular exist in PYD. Implications for practice and guidelines for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Positive youth development, developmental assets, the 5Cs, school level, gender

Merjenje pozitivnega razvoja mladih v Sloveniji s poudarkom na razlikah v spolu in ravni izobraževanja
Povzetek

Pozitivni razvoj mladih predvideva, da imajo vsi mladi svoje potenciale (notranji viri), ki lahko v kombinaciji z viri v njihovem okolju (zunanji viri) vplivajo na njihove uspehe skozi celotno življenje. Če so viri (tako notranji kot zunanji) prisotni, se pozitiven razvoj mladih kaže v prisotnosti kompetentnosti, samozavesti, karakterja, skrbi in povezanosti (t. i. 5 C-jev). Pozitivni razvoj mladih izvira iz ZDA in je tam dobro raziskan, saj so bile vse mere razvite v tem kontekstu. Da bi lahko ugotovili, ali je model PYD prenosljiv v slovenski kontekst, moramo najprej imeti zanesljive in veljavne mere, saj se lahko nekateri kazalniki pozitivnega razvoja mladih razlikujejo zaradi kulturnih in družbenih razlik. Cilj tega prispevka je predstaviti psihometrične lastnosti (zanesljivost, veljavnost) vprašalnikov pozitivnega razvoja mladih (tj. notranji, zunanji viri ter 5 C-jev) v Sloveniji ter določiti razlike med spolom in šolskim kontekstom. Uporabljena sta bila Profil razvojnih virov (Scales, 2011) in kratka različica vprašalnika o pozitivnem razvoju mladih (Geldhof et al., 2014b). Naš vzorec je sestavljalo 1979 učencev (57,4 % deklet; $M_{starost}$ = 15,43) iz zadnjih razredov osnovnih šol ter prvih treh letnikov srednjih šol. Rezultati so pokazali, da je paradigmo pozitivni razvoj mladih mogoče delno prenesti v slovenski kontekst in da pri pozitivnem razvoju mladih obstajajo zlasti razlike med spoloma. Predstavljeni so predlogi za pedagoško prakso in smernice za prihodnje raziskave.

Ključne besede: pozitivni razvoj mladih, razvojni viri, 5 C-jev, raven izobraževanja, spol

Introduction

Over the last few decades, the way researchers have viewed adolescents has shifted, not simply as troublesome and sensation-seeking people but also as individuals with numerous resources and advantages, which can be supported by developing various prevention and intervention programmes throughout their entire adolescence. One paradigm that arose in response to the shift in the understanding of adolescents is Positive Youth Development (PYD; Lerner et al., 2005). PYD emphasises the importance of support and seeks to reduce behavioural problems while striving

to promote the competencies held by young people. Moreover, it describes youth development as the interaction of characteristics of adolescents and characteristics of their environment. Adolescent development is expected to be positive if their strengths (internal assets) are aligned with resources from their environment (external assets). If that is the case, this is likely to be reflected in indicators of PYD (i.e. the 5Cs) as well as not engaging in risky behaviour. Prosocial behaviour or an adolescent contribution to society are expected to be more strongly present (Lerner et al., 2005). This paradigm has been empirically tested primarily in the United States (e.g. Benson et al., 2011; Lerner et al., 2005), while in Europe it has only come to the forefront of research in the last decade (e.g. Beck & Wiium, 2019). In Slovenia, the model has yet to be fully tested, although individual connections between positive youth development and different phenomena have been confirmed, e.g. academic achievement (Kozina et al., 2019) and risky behaviours (Pivec et al., 2020).

Since only particular connections were examined in the Slovenian context, the rationale of this paper is to see whether the PYD model is transferable for use in that setting. To test this, we first required reliable and valid measures because some indicators of PYD may vary due to cultural and societal differences. Therefore, this paper aims to present the psychometric properties (reliability, structural validity) of PYD measures (i.e. internal, external assets, and the 5Cs of PYD) in Slovenia. Second, we look at possible gender and age differences with a focus on differences on the school level (i.e. lower secondary schools vs. upper secondary schools).

The Positive Youth Development Perspective

The PYD perspective is based on the Relational-developmental-systems paradigm (Overton, 2015), which concentrates on the important interplay of individual characteristics and contexts (e.g. school, family, community, society) where it especially stresses the importance of seeing adolescents as active agents of their society. Further, PYD is a strengths-based model, which highlights the plasticity of individual development and mutual individual ↔ context relationships. Through this lens, PYD focuses on enhancing young people's strengths that they themselves or other members from different contexts appreciate (i.e. family, peers, teachers, neighbours) (Lerner et al., 2019). The two most prominent models advocating youth positive development are Developmental Assets (DA; Benson, 2003) and the 5Cs of PYD (Lerner et al., 2005).

DA are divided into external assets and internal assets. External assets are defined as support (i.e. family support, positive family relationships, other relationships with adults, a caring neighbourhood, a good school climate, parental involvement in schooling), empowerment (i.e. community values, helping others), boundaries and expectations (i.e. family boundaries, boundaries within the school, boundaries within neighbourhoods, adult role models, positive peer influence, high expectations) and constructive use of time (i.e. creative activities, youth programmes, religious activities, time spent at home). Internal assets include a commitment to learning (i.e. motivation to succeed, learning commitment, regular completion of homework, connection to the school, reading for pleasure), positive values (i.e. care, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, self-control), social competencies (i.e. planning and decision-making, interpersonal competencies, cultural competencies, appropriate conflict resolution) and a positive identity (i.e. self-esteem, positive opinion about one's future) (Benson et al., 2011).

The 5Cs include competence, confidence, character, connection and caring (Bowers et al., 2010). Competence is a positive opinion about one's actions in specific areas (e.g. social competencies and academic achievement), while confidence is defined as an inner feeling of positive self-esteem and self-efficacy. Character is viewed as the possession of ethical standards that are consistent with social and cultural norms. Connection represents the intertwining of positive mutual relations of the individual with his or her important others, institutions and communities. Caring combines empathy and sympathy.

Both frameworks were well established in the past, where especially the 5Cs were recognised as the most empirically supported framework to date (Heck & Subramaniam, 2009). The two paradigms were first established and based on the theory and previous findings (i.e. Leffert et al., 1998; Lerner et al., 2005) and then specific questionnaires were created or adjusted to measure either DA or the 5Cs (Geldhof et al., 2014b; Syvertsen et al., 2019). The Search Institute formulated a questionnaire to assess young people's experiences and beliefs regarding 40 assets (i.e. the Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey; Leffert et al., 1998). They were first meant to serve as the basis for conversation and action and not as a measurement instrument (Syvertsen et al., 2019). However, later, expected connections with several positive outcomes (i.e. positive academic, social, emotional and behavioural outcomes) were confirmed (Benson et al., 2011) and

additional analyses were performed to examine the scales' reliability and validity (Scales, 2011). Recently, Syvertsen and colleagues (2019) undertook a theoretical and empirical examination of DA which in turn led to certain changes to the mentioned questionnaire (i.e. they removed some items or moved them to a different asset). In the last decade, another DA questionnaire has emerged for use in emergency settings (i.e. the 13-item Em-DAP; Scales et al., 2015). In the European context, it is hard to find studies that relied on the Developmental Assets Profile, which is used in the present study, even though a recent study conducted in Spain revealed the good factorial validity of the external and internal assets (Gomez-Baya et al., 2021).

Measurement invariance was considered for DA regarding grade and gender identity in the USA (Syvertsen et al., 2019). Configural, metric and scalar invariance were established for Positive identity, Positive values and a newly invented asset category called Mattering and belonging across grade. Further, configural and metric invariances were shown for Social competencies, Support, and Boundaries (a newly invented asset), and partial metric invariance was established for Academic engagement (a newly invented construct that includes Commitment to learning). Moreover, at least partial scalar invariances were established for gender identity for Positive values, Support, Mattering and Belonging (a newly developed construct in this study), Boundaries, Positive identity, and Social competencies. The metric invariance of Constructive use of time for gender identity was not examined since the mentioned authors removed this asset as it was examined as a collection of various extracurricular activities. Regardless, more research is needed in this area.

Alternatively, the measurement properties of the 5Cs model have been more thoroughly examined in the US context (e.g. Geldhof et al., 2014a). The first measure of the 5Cs consisted of over 80 items and was understood as a higher-order measure of PYD that comprised 5 first-order latent constructs (i.e. confidence, competence, character, caring, connection) (Lerner et al., 2005). The 5Cs were found to be a robust construct throughout early adolescence while scales differed for middle adolescents (Bowers et al., 2010). Later, the scale was shortened to 34 items (see Geldhof et al., 2014b) and applies to young people aged 10 to 18 years. The analyses suggested that a model without a higher-order PYD construct fitted the data worse than a model with 5 first-order latent constructs. Moreover, the bifactor model had the most appropriate fit, in which each item represents a lower-order construct and a more general construct. All the aforementioned studies

were conducted in the US context. Recently, the psychometric properties of the 5Cs were examined in European countries. In Ireland (Conway et al., 2015) and Spain (Gomez-Baya et al., 2021), a five-factor model provided a good fit to the data while in Norway (Årdal et al., 2018) the Cs were separated into two constructs: the efficacious Cs (consisting of competence, confidence, connection) and socio-emotional Cs (comprising caring and character). It is important to note that only in Spain has the short version of the PYD questionnaire (Geldhof et al., 2014b) been applied, suggesting that more research is needed to determine whether the questionnaire is applicable in Europe.

Measurement invariance testing was considered for the 5Cs in several studies, although no study included the short version of the PYD questionnaire (Geldhof et al., 2014b). In a European context but with a previous version of the PYD questionnaire (Lerner et al., 2005), Conway and colleagues (2015) examined measurement invariance for gender and age (early vs. late adolescence). They established partial scalar invariance for gender and scalar invariance for age.

Gender and school-level differences

PYD can serve as a useful framework for designing prevention and intervention programmes. To be able to do that, more needs to be known about possible differences between individuals and different contexts. Therefore, gender and school-level differences will be examined in this study to ensure that PYD principles are distributed properly. Still, current international gender, age or school-level comparisons regarding DA or the 5Cs are limited.

Existing studies of DA (Gomez-Baya et al., 2021; Leffert et al., 1998; Soares et al., 2019) reveal some gender differences in either 4 internal and 4 external assets or 40 DA overall. Gomez-Baya and colleagues (2021) show that females reported higher support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, commitment to learning, positive values, and social competencies while males reported a higher positive identity. There were no differences in constructive use of time. Even less is known about age or school-level differences in DA. Soares and colleagues (2019) confirmed that certain age and grade-related differences exist. The lower the school grade, the higher overall DA that were reported, while another study suggested that DA tended to decrease during lower secondary school and stabilised during upper secondary school (Leffert et al., 1998).

Even though one may find a considerable number of studies focused on gender, age or grade differences across the 5Cs, this topic still entails a research gap. Regarding gender differences in the 5Cs, females were found to report higher overall PYD scores than males (Phelps et al., 2009). Moreover, specific differences across the 5Cs were observed, such as that females reported more connection, character and caring, while males presented higher scores for confidence (Årdal et al., 2018; Conway et al., 2015). Gomez-Baya and colleagues (2019) found that males reported higher competence as well. As for age or grade differences in the 5Cs, some ambiguous patterns were observed. For instance, Gomez-Baya et al. (2019) did not detect any age differences across the 5Cs, whereas Conway et al. (2015) reported that younger adolescents (aged 11 to 15 years) showed higher caring, character and connection than older adolescents (aged 16 to 18 years). No differences were found for confidence and competence.

The Slovenian context

Slovenia is a small (population: 2.1 million) and newly-formed country (in existence for 30 years) located in Southern Central Europe, bordering Italy, Croatia, Austria and Hungary. In Slovenia, primary education is arranged as a single-structure (ISCED1 and ISCED2) 9-year compulsory school attended by students aged from 6 to 15 years. Upper secondary education (ISCED3) consists of 2- to 5-year non-compulsory school for students who have completed compulsory basic education, typically at the age of 15. Upper secondary education is divided into general education that includes 4-year gymnasium programmes, 4-year upper secondary technical education, 3-year upper secondary vocational education (with a possibility of continuing for 2 years in vocational/technical education programmes), and 2-year short, upper secondary vocational education (Taštanoska, 2017). In the 2020/2021 school year, 193,158 students were attending primary education and 73,854 students upper secondary education in Slovenia (SURS, 2021).

In Slovenia, mental health statistics reveal disturbing trends of high suicide rates in the general population (e.g. a suicide rate of 20 per 100,000 in the last decade; Roškar et al., 2020) and among Slovenian youth (above the European average; Jeriček Klanšček et al., 2018). Further, HBSC findings show that Slovenian students are more stressed because of school than their peers in other countries (Jeriček Klanšček et al., 2018). In fact, older adolescents (15–19 years) compared to younger adolescents (6–14 years) and

in girls compared to boys (Jeriček Klanšček et al., 2018) reported an increase in anxiety disorders from 2008 to 2014. While the majority of adolescents are satisfied with their lives (Jeriček Klanšček et al., 2018), these alarming trends call for additional support and research in the area of youth development. One possible systemic solution may be the PYD perspective and its tailored interventions.

The present study

PYD is a well-researched paradigm, albeit mostly in the USA. Therefore, the first aim of this study is to consider whether PYD can be extended for use in the Slovenian context. Since studies examining the psychometric properties of the Developmental Assets Profile and the short version of the PYD questionnaire are lacking, we consider the reliability and structural validity of both questionnaires in the Slovenian context. We hypothesise that the data will indicate a good fit for the two questionnaires because both have been proven to be psychometrically sound measures in the European context (Conway et al., 2015; Gomez-Baya et al., 2021). We hypothesise that the bifactor model of the 5Cs will have a better fit than a model containing 5 first-order factors. Further, we hypothesise that metric invariance will be (at least partly) established for gender and school level. The second aim of this paper is to examine differences in the assets and 5Cs across gender and school level (lower secondary schools vs. upper secondary schools). It is particularly important to consider possible gender and school-level differences to be able to efficiently tailor interventions according to students' needs as it is crucial that, before planning interventions, researchers gain as much information as possible to fully contextualise the interventions (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016). Thus, an in-depth examination of gender and school-level differences may provide additional information on how developmental assets and the 5Cs are distributed in each group and contribute to effective interventions. In line with previous studies (e.g. Årdal et al., 2018; Gomez-Baya et al., 2019; Gomez-Baya et al., 2021; Soares et al., 2019), we hypothesise that some gender and school-type differences will be detected in DA and the 5Cs. More precisely, females will score higher for support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, commitment to learning, positive values, and social competencies. Students from lower secondary schools will have more DA than students from upper secondary schools. As for the 5Cs, females will report higher scores for connection, character and caring than males, who will report greater confidence

and competence. Students from lower secondary school will report higher scores for caring, character and connection than upper secondary students. Moreover, the data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic and thus this situation will also be partly considered in the discussion.

Method

Participants

The sample included 1,979 participants from Slovenia (57.4% female, 42.5% male, 0.1% non-binary), aged from 13 to 19 (M = 15.34; SD = 1.19). The majority of participants were attending 20 different upper secondary schools (1,404 students; 70.8%); most being female (57.8%). The age of these students varied from 14 to 19 (M = 15.91; SD = 0.91). The other third of the participants were attending 21 different lower secondary schools (577 students; 29.7%) and were aged between 13 and 16 years (M = 13.96; SD = 0.38). Most of them were female (56.3%).

Measures

Developmental assets. The Developmental Assets Profile (Benson, 2003) was used to measure DA. It comprises 62 items evaluating young people's experience of DA. They are divided into internal and external asset categories. External assets refer to the family, peers, school and society. They include Support (e.g. "I have a family that gives me love and support"), Empowerment (e.g. "I feel valued and appreciated by others"), Boundaries and expectations (e.g. "I have friends who set good examples for me"), and Constructive Use of Time (e.g. "I am involved in creative things such as music, theatre or other arts"). Internal assets concern the individual and consist of Commitment to Learning (e.g. "I enjoy learning"), Positive values (e.g. "I tell other people what I believe in"), Social Competencies (e.g. "I accept people who are different from me") and a Positive Identity (e.g. "I am sensitive to the needs and feelings of others"). The participants expressed to what extent as certain item referred to themselves or their relationships with family, friends and other people in their contexts on a 4-point scale (1 = Not at all or rarely, 4 = Extremely or almost always). The original reliabilities for each construct were as follows: .80 for Support, .74 for Empowerment, .84 for Boundaries and expectations, .56 for Constructive use of time, .83 for Commitment to learning, .85 for Positive values, .79 for

Social competencies and .79 for Positive identity (Search Institute, 2005). The scales' reliabilities are presented in the Results section.

The 5Cs. The short form of the PYD questionnaire (Geldhof et al., 2014b) was used to measure the 5Cs (i.e. Competence, Confidence, Character, Caring, Connection). It contains 34 items with responses according to a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, for example). Sample items that measure the 5Cs are Competence (e.g. "I do very well in my classwork at school"); Confidence (e.g. "All in all, I am glad I am me"); Character (e.g. "I hardly ever do things I know I shouldn't do"); Connection (e.g. "My friends care about me"); and Caring (e.g. "When I see another person who is hurt or upset, I feel sorry for them"). The original reliabilities of the constructs were as follows: .73–.76 for Competence, .75–.82 for Confidence, .78–.82 for Character, .87–.90 for Caring, and .79–.83 for Connection (Geldhof et al., 2014b). The scales' reliabilities for the sample considered are presented in the Results section.

Procedure

The data were collected during the first wave of the following research project, which aims to investigate longitudinal pathways for positive youth development: *Positive Youth Development in Slovenia: Developmental Pathways in the Context of Migration*. Before the data collection began, the research was approved by the Committee for Ethical Research at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor and sampling was applied (all high school types were included according to the proportion of students that attend each type). All lower and upper secondary schools in Slovenia were then divided into two groups according to the number of additional hours of Slovenian language being offered to migrant students. Lower and upper secondary schools with the highest number of additional hours of Slovenian language for migrant students were invited to participate in the study. In the meantime, another group of lower and upper secondary schools that did not have any additional hours of Slovenian language for migrant students was randomly sampled and invited to participate in the study. When schools agreed to participate, additional sampling of the classes of upper secondary schools was performed. We randomly assigned the two classes per year that were to participate in the study. All classes from each participating lower secondary school were included in the study. After obtaining informed consent from their parents, the students responded either online or on paper due to the COVID-19 situation. The time was not

limited, and they were supervised by the school coordinator (teacher or school counsellor) who answered any questions if they had them.

Data analysis

After examining descriptive statistics, correlations and reliabilities using IBM SPSS Statistics 27, we considered the ESEM (Exploratory Structural Equation Modelling) model of DA and the CFA model of the 5Cs using Mplus (Version 8.6; Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2021) to examine the proposed models' structural validity. The full information maximum likelihood (FIML) algorithm was used to handle missing data and assess parameters in the model. Separate ESEM or CFA was conducted for each construct. If indicated by modification indices and justified by the content of the items, correlated errors were allowed between these items. ESEM was carried out for DA and CFA for the 5Cs. We applied ESEM to DA since the construct can be organised in two different ways (i.e. internal and external assets or as asset contexts: personal (self), social, family, school and community; Scales, 2011). This means that the DA factors are intercorrelated and thus ESEM can provide a better solution since it allows the pre-specification of target and non-target loadings, while all non-target loadings are close to 0 and are not fixed at 0 like with the CFA (Morin et al., 2015). The two possible solutions for DA (internal and external assets and asset contexts) will be included in the analysis to compare both models. In the initial CFA for the 5Cs, 14 pairs of the same-facet items were allowed to correlate (see Tirrell et al., 2019). Item loadings were interpreted according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2006), who suggested cut-off values ranging from 0.32 (poor), 0.45 (fair), 0.55 (good), 0.63 (very good) to 0.71 (excellent). Model fit was assessed with chi-squares, comparative fit indices (CFI), root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardised root-mean-square residual (SRMR), following recommendations by Hu and Bentler (1999) for a good fit: CFI > .95, RMSEA < .06 and the SRMR < .08. For an adequate fit, the following cut-off values were applied: CFI > .90, RMSEA < .08 and the SRMR < .08 (Hair et al., 1998).

After considering the psychometric properties of the two PYD measures, Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MGCFA) was applied using Mplus (version 8.6; Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2021) to estimate measurement invariance by gender and school level (i.e. construct, metric and scalar invariance) for each developmental asset and C of PYD separately. The series of multi-group models was compared to assess if the same

constructs were examined in each group. If partial measurement invariance was not achieved, some constraints were removed. A change in CFI (equal to or less than .01) was used as an indicator of measurement invariance since chi-square difference tests depend on the sample size (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

Finally, MANOVAs with a Bonferroni correction were used to compare groups or levels across gender and school. MANOVA was applied instead of univariate ANOVAs to avoid Type I error since only one instead of several tests are being conducted, meaning that MANOVA takes account of the relationship between the combinations of dependent variables, which is not possible in the case of a series of univariate ANOVAs, and MANOVA holds greater power for detecting an effect. Since only two participants defined themselves as non-binary, they were excluded from further gender analysis.

Results

After the descriptive statistics, the reliability analyses are outlined. The results of CFA and ESEM for each PYD measure together with measurement invariance across gender and school are then presented. At the end, differences across gender and school are described.

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics and correlations for the whole sample are presented to provide an insight into the data (see Table 1). The great majority of the variables are positively correlated, except for Confidence and Caring, which are not correlated with each other at all.

Exploratory Structural Equation Model (ESEM) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

In this section, ESEM results for the DA and CFA results for the 5Cs are presented.

The ESEM results showed an adequate fit for DA with 8 latent constructs (Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and expectations, Constructive use of time, Commitment to learning, Positive values, Social competencies, Positive identity): $\chi^2(1420) = 4701.37$, $p <. 001$, CFI = .922, RMSEA = .034, 90% CI [.033, .035], SRMR = .023. For Support, the majority of target loadings were fair ($ps < .001$), except for items that refer to support from

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations of the whole sample.

	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Support	3.12	0.54												
2. Empowerment	3.41	0.45	.64***											
3. Boundaries and expectations	3.12	0.46	.68***	.60***										
4. Constructive use of time	2.59	0.57	.44***	.41***	.43***									
5. Commitment to learning	3.04	0.46	.41***	.40***	.50***	.36***								
6. Positive values	3.21	0.41	.43***	.45***	.56***	.41***	.58***							
7. Social competencies	3.13	0.46	.43***	.43***	.54***	.37***	.54***	.71***						
8. Positive identity	2.99	0.60	.50***	.52***	.46***	.40***	.39***	.44***	.53***					
9. Competence	3.43	0.68	.40***	.41***	.35***	.41***	.27***	.31***	.38***	.56***				
10. Confidence	3.56	0.92	.46***	.47***	.36***	.34***	.27***	.27***	.32***	.75***	.62***			
11. Character	3.87	0.56	.27***	.29***	.40***	.26***	.49***	.67***	.60***	.33***	.26***	.22***		
12. Caring	4.01	0.76	.19***	.19***	.29***	.21***	.35***	.56***	.48***	.13***	.11***	.03	.61***	
13. Connection	3.75	0.65	.69***	.61***	.66***	.47***	.43***	.49***	.49***	.58***	.55***	.58***	.40***	.30***

Notes. *p < .05. **p < .01. **p < .001

other adults and neighbours. Almost all non-target loadings were poor. For Empowerment, almost all target loadings were almost fair (all exceeded .38; *p*s < .001), except for items that relate to self-perception and family decisions. Almost all non-target loadings were poor, except for two items that refer to school rules. The most troublesome of the DA latent constructs are Boundaries and expectations and Constructive use of time. Only two target loadings of items of Boundaries and expectations were almost fair (*p*s < .001). The other 6 Boundaries and expectations items' target loadings were poor. Non-target loadings varied between .01 and .82.

As for Constructive use of time, all of the target loadings were poor (below .21), indicating that both Constructive use of time and Boundaries and expectations are problematic constructs and should be probed into. For Commitment to learning, target loadings for 4 out of 7 items were higher than .36 (*p*s < .001). Almost all non-target loadings were poor. Only 6 out of 13 target loadings of Positive values were fair (*p*s < .001), indicating Positive values may be a problematic construct. Almost all non-target loadings were poor. Moreover, Social competencies appear to be questionable as well since only two target loadings were almost fair (higher than .42; *p*s < .001). Almost all non-target factor loadings were poor. As for Positive identity, almost all target loadings were higher than .52 (*p*s < .001) while only one item's target loading was poor (*p* < .05). All non-target loadings were poor.

The following correlated errors were included in the model. They were based on modification indices when they could be justified by the content: item 15 with 21 for Boundaries and expectations (both relate to school rules), item 35 with 36 for Positive values (both refer to being responsible) and item 56 with 57 for Positive identity (both are connected with strategies to deal with difficult situations). We examined a second ESEM model, which contained factors that refer to different contexts (i.e. personal (self), social, family, school, community). Even after including 12 modification indices (as justified by the content), the model did not show an adequate fit: $\chi^2(1579) = 6093.76$, $p <$. 001, CFI = .905, RMSEA = .038, 90% CI [.037, .039], SRMR = .031. Target loadings for the Personal factor varied from -.10 to .68 (*p*s < .001) while non-target loadings were poor. Target loadings for Social assets were poor (ranging from .15 and .46; *p*s < .001) and non-target loadings were also poor. As for Family assets, target loadings were from .24 to .61 (*p*s < .001) while non-target loadings were poor. Target loadings for School assets ranged from .07 to .67 (*p*s < .001) whereas non-target loadings

were poor. Community assets' target loadings were poor (the majority of *p*s < .001) and non-target loadings were poor as well. The model fit and low target loadings of context-related assets indicated that the solution with 8 factors was better.

CFA results showed an adequate fit for the 5Cs with 5 latent constructs (Competence, Confidence, Character, Caring, Connection): $\chi^2(503) = 3368.97$, $p <$. 001, CFI = .910, RMSEA = .054, 90% CI [.052, .056], SRMR = .063. For Competence, all factor loadings were fair (*p*s < .001). All factor loadings for Confidence were very good or even excellent (*p*s < .001). For Character, almost all factor loadings were fair (they were above .38; *p*s < .001), except for items referring to conduct behaviour. All factor loadings for Caring were good or very good (*p*s < .001). For Connection, all factor loadings were fair (*p*s < .001). In the CFA for the 5Cs, the 14 pairs of the same-facet items (in Competence, Confidence, Character and Connection) were allowed to correlate. Moreover, we applied a bifactor model that allows for items to simultaneously indicate each first-order factor and a general construct (i.e. PYD). The bifactor model of the 5Cs did not converge.

Reliability analyses

First, we examined the reliability of each scale for the whole sample. Since gender and school level are to be compared, we examined the internal consistencies for each group separately.

The Cronbach alphas of DA for the whole sample were adequate and varied from .70 to .82, except for Constructive use of time, which was only .43. Similarly, the reliabilities of DA except for Constructive use of time (males: .42; females: .45) according to gender were adequate and ranged from .69 to .82 for males and from .67 to .82 for females. The reliabilities of DA according to school level were from .70 to .84 for lower secondary school and from .68 to .82 for upper secondary school, except for Constructive use of time (lower secondary school: .44; upper secondary school: .42).

The Cronbach alphas of the 5Cs for the whole sample ranged from .73 to .92. The internal consistencies for gender were from .72 to .91 for males and from .70 to .92 for females. The reliabilities of the 5Cs according to the school level were adequate: for lower secondary schools, they varied from .76 to .92 and for upper secondary schools from .72 to 92.

Measurement invariance

Table 2 shows fit indexes of MGCFA of the DA. For gender, the configural invariance model indicated an adequate fit, meaning that similar patterns of observed and latent constructs across gender emerged. In the metric invariance model, in which factor loadings on latent variables were constrained to be equal across gender, the fit indices showed construct and metric equivalence across countries. In the scalar invariance model, in which variables were fixed to have the same intercept across gender, an adequate or good model fit was not achieved. Following the modification indices (means of items 33 and 31 were allowed to vary across gender), partial scalar invariance was attained. As for school level, the configural invariance model, metric invariance model and scalar invariance model indicated an adequate fit, meaning scalar invariance for school level of the DA was achieved.

Table 2. Measurement invariance models and goodness-of-fit indexes of multigroup analyses of developmental assets across gender and school types

Model	Model fit indices			
	χ^2 (df)	RMSEA	90% CI RMSEA	CFI
Gender				
Configural invariance	6333.25 (2840)	.035	.034–.036	.915
Metric invariance	7074.65 (3272)	.034	.033–.035	.908
Scalar invariance	7518.88 (3326)	.036	.035–.037	.898
Partial scalar invariance	7424.97 (3324)	.035	.034–.036	.900
School type				
Configural invariance	6349.89 (2840)	.035	.035–.036	.917
Metric invariance	7077.40 (3272)	.034	.033–.035	.910
Scalar invariance	7289.87 (3326)	.035	.034–.036	.906

Notes. χ2 = Chi-square; df = degrees of freedom; CFI – Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval

In Table 3, fit indexes of MGCFA of the 5Cs are presented. For gender, the configural invariance and metric invariance model indicated an adequate fit. In the scalar invariance model, in which variables were fixed to have the same intercept across gender, an adequate or good model fit was not achieved. Following the modification indices (means of item 33 were allowed to vary across gender and items 22 and 23 were allowed to correlate since it was justified by the content), partial scalar invariance was attained.

Regarding school level, the configural, metric and scalar invariance models showed an adequate fit.

Table 3. Measurement invariance models and goodness-of-fit indexes of multigroup analyses of the 5Cs across gender and school types

Model	Model fit indices			
	χ^2(df)	RMSEA	90% CI RMSEA	CFI
Gender				
Configural invariance	3881.53 (1006)	.054	.052–.056	.907
Metric invariance	3989.11 (1035)	.054	.052–.056	.905
Scalar invariance	4398.45 (1064)	.056	.055–.058	.893
Partial scalar invariance	3939.14 (1061)	.052	.051–.054	.907
School type				
Configural invariance	3406.22 (1006)	.050	.048–.051	.908
Metric invariance	3465.98 (1035)	.049	.047–.051	.907
Scalar invariance	3583.70 (1064)	.049	.048–.051	.903

Notes. χ2 = Chi-square; df = degrees of freedom; CFI – Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval

Differences in gender and school level

In this section, differences in DA and the 5Cs across gender and school type are presented. To examine these differences, MANOVA was employed.

Regarding gender, MANOVA revealed some significant differences among the constructs (Λ = 0.76; F = 48.51; p < .001; *partial* η^2 = 0.24). Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4. Pairwise comparisons with a Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons (mean differences were significant at the .05 level) were applied to examine differences across gender. Males reported higher Support (p < .001), Empowerment (p < .05) and a Positive identity (p < .001) whereas females reported higher Commitment to learning (p < .001), Positive values (p < .001) and Social competencies (p < .001). There were no gender differences in Boundaries and expectations and Constructive use of time. As for the 5Cs, males reported higher Competence (p < .001), higher Confidence (p < .001) and a higher Connection (p < .05) than females. On the other hand, females scored higher for Character (p < .001) and Caring (p < .001).

Table 4. The 5Cs by gender: MANOVA

Variable	Lower secondary school *M (SD)*	Upper secondary school *M (SD)*	*SS*	*df*	*F*
Support	3.18 (0.52)	3.08 (0.55)	4.61	1	16.00***
Empowerment	3.44 (0.44)	3.40 (0.47)	0.94	1	4.56*
Boundaries and expectations	3.10 (0.46)	3.14 (0.45)	0.62	1	3.02
Constructive use of time	2.58 (0.55)	2.59 (0.58)	0.01	1	0.02
Commitment to learning	2.95 (0.47)	3.11 (0.44)	12.86	1	61.94***
Positive values	3.13 (0.44)	3.27 (0.38)	9.18	1	55.16***
Social competencies	3.06 (0.47)	3.18 (0.44)	7.38	1	35.54***
Positive identity	3.14 (0.55)	2.88 (0.61)	33.10	1	95.73***
Competence	3.62 (0.65)	3.29 (0.66)	51.06	1	119.17***
Confidence	3.84 (0.82)	3.36 (0.94)	112.68	1	142.47***
Character	3.74 (0.59)	3.96 (0.51)	24.60	1	83.12***
Caring	3.74 (0.79)	4.22 (0.67)	108.58	1	205.43***
Connection	3.79 (0.65)	3.73 (0.64)	2.09	1	4.98*

Notes. SS: Sum of Squares; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Table 5. The 5Cs by school: MANOVA.

Variable	Lower secondary school *M (SD)*	Upper secondary school *M (SD)*	*SS*	*df*	*F*
Support	3.17 (0.52)	3.10 (0.55)	2.16	1	7.44**
Empowerment	3.41 (0.45)	3.41 (0.46)	0.01	1	0.04
Boundaries and expectations	3.13 (0.46)	3.12 (0.45)	0.02	1	0.09
Constructive use of time	2.70 (0.57)	2.54 (0.56)	10.47	1	32.87***
Commitment to learning	3.08 (0.48)	3.03 (0.46)	1.25	1	5.82*
Positive values	3.23 (0.44)	3.20 (0.41)	0.27	1	1.56
Social competencies	3.16 (0.47)	3.11 (0.46)	0.88	1	4.17*
Positive identity	3.06 (0.60)	2.96 (0.60)	4.22	1	11.70**
Competence	3.54 (0.71)	3.39 (0.66)	9.44	1	20.86***
Confidence	3.61 (0.93)	3.55 (0.92)	1.83	1	2.17
Character	3.89 (0.59)	3.86 (0.54)	0.51	1	1.65
Caring	4.02 (0.79)	4.01 (0.75)	0.01	1	0.01
Connection	3.82 (0.68)	3.72 (0.63)	4.08	1	9.74**

Notes. SS: Sum of Squares; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Regarding school level, we examined the differences between lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools. Once again, MANOVA

was employed to inspect these differences (see Table 5) ($\Lambda = 0.96$; $F = 6.10$; $p < .001$; *partial* $\eta^2 = 0.04$). We used pairwise comparisons with a Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons (mean differences were significant at the .05 level). Students from lower secondary schools reported higher Support ($p < .01$), Constructive use of time ($p < .001$), Commitment to learning ($p < .05$), Social competencies ($p < .05$) and a Positive identity ($p < .01$). There were no differences in Empowerment, Boundaries and expectations, and Positive values across school levels. Concerning the 5Cs, students from lower secondary schools reported higher Competence ($p < .001$) and a higher Connection ($p < .01$). There were no school differences in Confidence, Character and Caring.

Discussion

PYD perceives youth as engaged, flourishing individuals who can find support in their environment. The first aim of the present paper was to examine this perspective in Slovenia with a focus on the psychometric evaluation of two PYD-related measures: DA and 5Cs. Our second goal was to recognise the differences in gender and school level with a view to suggesting suitable interventions for each group observed.

Based on earlier research in the European context, we hypothesised the data would indicate a good fit for both questionnaires. After including some adjustments, an adequate fit for 8 first-order constructs of DA was established, although some target and non-target loadings were not acceptable since their loadings were poor. To our knowledge, just a few studies (i.e. Adams et al., 2018; Syvertsen et al., 2019; Wiium et al., 2019; Wiium et al., 2021) examined the measurement properties of the Developmental Assets Profile. Among these studies, only one study (Syvertsen et al., 2019) examined the psychometric properties in detail, which led to changing the questionnaire such that some items were removed or moved to another asset category. It must be noted that this study solely examined the CFA of each asset with some changes included, not the factor structure of the whole instrument. The factor loadings were comparable to those in our study despite the changes, except for Boundaries and expectations, Commitment to learning (which the authors named Academic achievement), Social competencies, and Positive values. Syvertsen and colleagues (2019) omitted Constructive use of time from CFA because it represents extracurricular activity participation and is not a psychological construct.

The reason for the lower factor loadings in our study may lie in the breadth of the DA constructs, for instance, support from neighbours is included under Support and is mixed with Support from parents, family and school. Support from neighbours in Slovenia may be perceived differently than in the USA, especially in larger cities where most young people do not know their neighbours. We suggest that in the future general support be divided into sub-categories that include family support and support from the community. Further, among other external assets, Boundaries and expectations and Constructive use of time were the most problematic constructs and should therefore be observed with extra care or differentially included in future studies. Boundaries and expectations refer to two different important things: to various agents who serve as role models or care providers (i.e. friends, teachers, neighbours) and established rules on various occasions (i.e. at home, in the school). We believe these items should be divided into two different categories of boundaries and expectations, and not considered as one factor. In addition, Constructive use of time seems to be questionable, as reported in other studies as well (Wiium et al., 2019) since items measuring several extracurricular activities, spending time with friends and parents are combined in this construct. We suggest that in the future these items be considered separately as they refer to specific activities and not to a psychological construct.

Among internal assets, the items Social competencies and Positive values did not meet the desired criteria, indicating these two constructs should be examined with particular care. As for Positive values, the items can be divided into three different categories: helping others in society or the community, being responsible for oneself, and showing respect for other people. Including several positive values in a single construct seriously affected the factor loadings and we therefore suggest that the three mentioned dimensions be studied separately in the future. Moreover, Social competencies also included different values and competencies. Especially problematic are three items that refer to avoiding bad habits or the bad influence of other people and making good decisions. These items may be included in a sub-category of Positive values that indicates responsibility for oneself. Further, other items of Social competencies comprised accepting other people, being sensitive to their needs and feelings, expressing emotions appropriately, and solving conflicts with others without causing harm. All of these items could be included in a single category – Social competencies.

For the 5Cs, an adequate model fit for 5 first-order constructs was achieved, indicating that this questionnaire is suitable for use in the Slovenian context, even though our hypothesis that the bifactor model would be the best solution was not confirmed. The 5 first-order factor solution has already been confirmed in the European context as well (Conway et al., 2015). Factor loadings in the present study were comparable to those in the original study or even higher (Geldhof et al., 2014b). Still, two items of Character seemed problematic as they had lower factor loadings (i.e. "I hardly ever do things I know I shouldn't do" and "I usually act in the way I am supposed to"). They refer to conduct behaviour and not to the social conscience, personal values or diversity values like other Character items. Both items also weakly indicated Character in the original study (Geldhof et al., 2014b). This indicates that the construct of Character should be probed into in future studies.

At least partial scalar invariance was achieved for DA and the 5Cs for gender and school level. This allowed us to compare both PYD constructs across gender and school level since it showed that any possible statistical group differences were not a consequence of differences in scale properties reflected by gender or school level. In general, the results reveal that students differ more by gender than by school level. As for DA, male students reported having higher Support, Empowerment and a Positive identity while female students had higher Commitment to learning, Positive values and Social competencies. No differences were displayed for Boundaries and expectations and Constructive use of time. The results are not completely in line with our hypothesis or previous studies (Gomez-Baya et al., 2021) since males in Slovenia reported having greater Support and Empowerment. Moreover, in other studies (e.g. Rueger et al., 2010) female students were more likely to report support from teachers, close friends, classmates and school personnel compared to males, although they did not differ in support from their parents. As for the school level, students from lower secondary schools reported higher Support, Constructive use of time, Commitment to learning, Social competencies, and Positive identity than upper secondary students. This is consistent with our hypothesis and previous studies (Soares et al., 2019), indicating that lower secondary students have at least higher scores on some of the DA than upper secondary students. It is important to note that the data collection was carried out at a time of the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were closed. Especially students from the first grade of upper secondary schools were worse off

than students in the other grades since they had only been at school for 1 month and were hence unable to establish supportive relationships with their classmates, teachers or participate in a new extracurricular activity.

Male and female students differed in all the 5Cs because male students reported higher Competence, Confidence and Connection while female students scored higher for Character and Caring. These findings are partly consistent with previous results as most existing studies (Årdal et al., 2018; Gomez-Baya et al., 2019) reported that female students scored higher for Connection than male students. Regarding Caring, several studies showed that females have greater empathy than males (Van der Graaff et al., 2014) and that females score higher for character strengths than male students (Ruch et al., 2014). Like school-level differences in DA, differences among lower secondary students and upper secondary students were only revealed in Competence and Connection. Lower secondary students scored higher for Competence and Connection. Other studies (Conway et al., 2015) showed that younger adolescents reported higher Caring, Character and Connection, which means our findings are partly consistent with previous findings. As the findings are comparable to Support and Commitment to learning from DA, it is once again important to note that upper secondary students perceived less Support and Connection. This suggests that they might be overlooked by their peers due to not seeing (or even not being acquainted with) their classmates or their teachers were not paying enough attention to them or maybe they did not have a good relationship with their family or were unable to look for support in their community due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Further, additional research is needed to understand particular differences in Competence, Connection, Commitment to learning, Social competencies and Positive identity to recognise the possible effect of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Overall, Slovenian adolescents reported high DA and the 5Cs regardless of gender and school type since most of the constructs of DA score higher than 3 on a scale of 1–4, indicating they mostly stated that they experience all assets often. The only exception is Constructive use of time where we must stress that it was almost impossible to be involved in extracurricular activities or to spend time with one's friends because of the COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, almost all scores for the 5Cs were higher than 3.5 on a scale of 1–5 (except for Competence). These findings indicate that most young Slovenians are on a good and stable path towards their future despite school transitions, the pandemic, or other unpleasant events in their life.

Strengths and Limitations

Our study relied a large sample of Slovenian adolescents from various lower or upper secondary schools, which enabled us to carefully examine PYD constructs transferred to the Slovenian context. On the other hand, our study has some limitations. It merely only involved DA and the 5Cs, therefore only structural validity was examined. Further, just one wave of the research project was included in the analysis, hence we were unable to focus on the longitudinal pathways of PYD constructs. Some constructs (i.e. Boundaries and expectations, Constructive use of time, Social competencies) should be examined with extra care due to their low reliability or factor loadings.

Implications for future research and practice

Based on our limitations, we suggest that additional variables (e.g. prosocial behaviour, risky behaviour, anxiety) be included in future analysis to ensure the convergent validity of both instruments. In addition, the revised version of the Developmental Assets Profile (Syvertsen et al., 2019) could be tested in the Slovenian context or the short 13-item version of the Developmental Assets Profile designed for emergencies could be applied (Scales et al., 2015). Since we did not concentrate on the connection between DA and the 5Cs, future studies should consider this relationship as well. Future studies should also apply person-centred methods to compare different profiles of PYD constructs and examine differences among them.

Finally, one aim of this study was to examine gender and school-level differences to enable us to prepare efficient and tailored prevention or intervention programmes. In particular, the findings reveal gender differences and thus some gender-specific prevention or intervention programmes should be applied. Since Benson et al. (2011) suggested that assets can be used to foster PYD outcomes (e.g. the 5Cs) and reduce risk behaviours, we will combine DA and the 5Cs in order to suggest effective interventions. Males reported higher Support and Connection, which might indicate that family, peer or teacher support is needed for females. Higher peer and teacher support can be achieved through social games in the case of peers and additional time for personal communication with the teachers. Moreover, females scored high for Character but low for Empowerment, which may indicate they need extra opportunities to help others as can be gained by tutoring others, several voluntary practices and so on. Further, a Positive identity and Confidence may go hand in hand for females too,

thereby making it important to ensure enough opportunities to boost their self-perceptions and good feelings about their future. Another ambiguous finding was that females scored higher for Commitment to learning and Social competencies, but lower for Competence. The reason for this might lie in athletic competence, which is included in Competence, indicating that females should be encouraged to find a sport they enjoy. Males reported lower Positive values and Character, which suggests they should be included in several activities that allow them to boost their character strengths (i.e. to identify their signature strengths, exercise their strengths). Males should also be included in some form of social and emotional learning programme to increase their Social competencies and foster empathy.

Since there were only minor differences across DA and the 5Cs with respect to school level, suggesting that lower secondary students are slightly better off than upper secondary students, the latter should be involved in a comprehensive intervention that includes the whole classroom. Especially first-grade students in upper secondary schools should be properly welcomed in their new school and be allowed to spend some quality and bonding time with their classmates and their teachers without focusing on learning. When positive bonds are established among them, they should become more satisfied with themselves (i.e. a higher Positive identity) and connected to their peers, schoolmates and teachers.

Conclusions

The present study aimed to consider the psychometric properties of two PYD-related questionnaires in the Slovenian context and examine gender and school-level differences in developmental assets and the 5Cs. The results show that both PYD-related questionnaires can be used in the Slovenian context, although several recommendations are provided for the Developmental Assets Profile due to the lower factor loadings for certain constructs. At least partial scalar invariance was established for gender and school level, indicating that the differences between them were not a consequence of the measures. Male and female students differed in several developmental assets (i.e. Support, Empowerment, Positive identity, Commitment to learning, Positive values, Social competencies) and all 5Cs. Fewer differences were examined between lower and upper secondary school students as they differed in some developmental assets (i.e. Support, Constructive use of time, Commitment to learning, Social competencies, and Positive identity) and only 2 of the 5Cs (i.e. Competence and

Connection). These differences indicate that youth may benefit from targeted interventions that allow them to establish nurturing relationships and to stay on a good and stable path towards their future.

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Preventing bullying: Peer culture as the crucial developmental context in adolescence

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Abstract

Bullying is a phenomenon inevitably embedded in a group context; it is defined by and reflects the broader classroom peer dynamics. The present article aims to review and synthesise current scientific conceptualisations and findings regarding bullying dynamics in adolescence. The multi-level nature of factors that contribute to bullying is presented with emphasis on classroom-level factors. The characteristics of peer groups as students' crucial developmental contexts that co-determine the dynamics of bullying are presented. In addition, the special relevance of classroom factors of bullying in the Slovenian school system is explained. As also emphasised in the PYD perspective, it is argued that bullying can only be understood by investigating the interaction of characteristics of the individual with the characteristics of students' classrooms as their primary reference group.

Keywords: peers, bullying, classroom characteristics, prevention, inclusive peer culture

Vrstniška skupina kot ključni razvojni kontekst v mladostništvu: prikaz na primeru preprečevanja medvrstniškega nasilja

Povzetek

Medvrstniško nasilje je pojav, ki je neizogibno vpet v skupinski kontekst, saj je določen s širšo razredno dinamiko in jo obenem odraža. Namen prispevka je povzeti in povezati sodobne znanstvene opredelitve in ugotovitve,

vezane na dinamiko medvrstniškega nasilja v mladostništvu. S poudarkom na dejavnikih na ravni razreda prikažemo večnivojsko naravo dejavnikov medvrstniškega nasilja ter opredelimo tiste značilnosti vrstniških skupin kot ključnih razvojnih kontekstov mladostnikov, ki sodoločajo razvoj dinamike medvrstniškega nasilja. Ob tem še dodatno relevantnost usmerjanja pozornosti na dejavnike medvrstniškega nasilja na ravni razreda utemeljujemo s posebnostmi slovenskega izobraževalnega sistema. Zaključimo, da je za celostno razumevanje medvrstniškega nasilja ključno preučevanje interakcij med individualnimi značilnostmi učencev in značilnostmi razredov kot ključnih referenčnih skupin v obdobju šolanja, kar je tudi ena ključnih predpostavk modela pozitivnega razvoja mladih.
Ključne besede: vrstniki, medvrstniško nasilje, značilnosti razreda, preventive, vključujoča vrstniška kultura

Introduction

Bullying, defined as aggressive, goal-directed behaviour that harms another individual within the context of a power imbalance (Volk et al., 2017) is a complex phenomenon that is inevitably embedded in a group context since it reflects the nature of peer relationships within the classroom or in any other peer group. In addition, bullying reflects school-level attitudes, skills and policies associated with the enhancement of an inclusive peer culture and bullying prevention. This means that the classroom- and school-level factors of bullying are crucial to a comprehensive understanding of bullying that provides the scientific background to bullying prevention. The present article reviews the results of studies that investigated the school- and classroom-level factors of bullying in Slovenia and abroad and places them in the context of the PYD model. Further, the role of an inclusive school- and classroom-level culture in bullying prevention is justified. As crucial developmental contexts for students, the peer group characteristics that co-determine the dynamics of bullying (and thereby bullying prevention) are presented. The main aim of this review is to outline current scientific conceptualisations and findings concerning bullying dynamics in adolescence and to highlight the role of systematic efforts in creating inclusive developmental contexts for adolescents and enhancing the stage–environment fit (Eccles et al., 1993) of adolescents' educational experiences.

Bullying: a brief overview

Peer relationships are strong sources of joy, support and satisfaction yet also distress in all periods of schooling. During adolescence, the importance and impact of experiences in the peer context for students' well-being increases. The experience of peer victimisation is one of the biggest sources of distress that can happen within a peer context. Since bullying comes in many forms and the experience of the victim is the key criterion to determine whether an imbalance of power exists between perpetrator and victim, bullying can prove very difficult to recognise (Salmivalli et al., 2011). Understanding bullying as a phenomenon that reflects and co-shapes peer dynamics in the classroom can significantly enhance efforts to prevent and efficiently cope with bullying.

Bullying refers to a wide range of behaviours traditionally categorised as three distinct forms: physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, pushing), verbal (e.g. name-calling, threats) and relational bullying (e.g. social exclusion, spreading rumours) (e.g. Marsh et al. 2011; Menesini and Salmivalli 2017; Salmivalli et al., 2000). Recently, although cyberbullying has been added to this categorisation, scientific consensus on whether cyberbullying may be regarded as a distinctive form of bullying is still missing because this form of bullying contains many characteristics of verbal and relational bullying. Cyberbullying is typically defined as aggressive, intentional behaviour of a group or individual using electronic forms of contact over an individual who cannot easily defend him- or herself (Smith et al., 2008). The perpetrator can act anonymously, making it more difficult for the victim to report cyberbullying (DePaolis & Williford, 2015). In addition, since cyberbullying is not limited to certain peer contexts, it can occur at any time of day or night (Kowalski et al. 2018); the audience can hypothetically be much larger than with traditional bullying (e.g. Nocentini et al., 2010). Yet, it should be noted that traditional bullying is a strong predictor of cyberbullying (e.g. Kowalski et al., 2014; Peras, 2019). This makes it reasonable to assume that prevention and intervention efforts in the area of traditional bullying by shaping an inclusive peer culture also help to prevent cyberbullying.

The term bullying refers to both bullying behaviour and victimisation; current conceptions of bullying consider victimisation and bullying behaviour as orthogonal dimensions (Menesini & Salmivalli 2017; Sanders & Phye 2004), whereas students can be high or low in both dimensions. Students low in both dimensions are conceptualised as bystanders and recognised as significant participants in the dynamics of bullying.

Unlike initial conceptualisations that described bullying as an event usually occurring in a bully–victim dyadic relationship, typically in private or secret settings, contemporary studies (e.g. Bouman et al., 2012; Craig et al., 2000) show that bullying is mostly a public event with many participants; its influence reaches far beyond the relationship of bully and victim. The behaviour of bystanders (usually classmates) plays an important role in the occurrence and maintenance of bullying: their responses in bullying situations hold the potential to either prevent the bullying or intensify it. Students who bully are often motivated by the social power and status they gain from bullying (Olthof et al., 2011; Salmivalli, 2014). The reactions of peers as bystanders in bullying situations are those determining whether popularity and social status in the group can be achieved with the strategic use of bullying behaviour.

The contextual factors as predictors and moderators of bullying

Understanding the factors that predict bullying is crucial if we are to ensure the design of effective bullying prevention and intervention strategies. Victimisation and bullying behaviour are complex phenomena with a broad variety of factors that influence the probability of an individual being involved in the bullying process as either a victim or perpetrator. Previous studies (see Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017) indicated that the level of an individual's victimisation and bullying behaviour may be predicted by various factors appearing on different levels – school, classroom and individual. Some students' individual characteristics, such as internalising problems and lack of peer support, were found to increase their vulnerability to victimisation (Cook et al., 2010; Kljakovic and Hunt, 2016, Košir et al., 2020). Among individual-level predictors of bullying behaviour, a strong desire for power and status and high perceived popularity has been consistently reported (Caravita et al., 2012; de Bruyn et al., 2010; Košir et al., 2020; Olthof et al., 2011; Sijtsema et al., 2009).

Further, the school environment can also significantly determine the frequency and intensity of bullying; certain school- and classroom-level characteristics were found to predict victimisation and bullying as well as moderate the relationship between individual-level characteristics and victimisation/bullying. Studies that have investigated the school-level factors of bullying provide quite diverse data on the share of variance in bullying explained by differences between schools (e.g. up to 2% in a sample of American adolescents, Bradshaw et al., 2009; 9%–15% in a sample of Israeli

adolescents, Khoury-Kassabri et al., 2004; 2%–3% in a sample of Finnish adolescents, Saarento et al., 2013). Among school-level characteristics, the school climate with unclear disciplinary procedures and a higher proportion of boys at school (Khoury-Kassabri, 2004; Ma, 2002) were found to increase victimisation, whereas a positive school climate and a higher level of parental involvement (Ma, 2002) as well as students' perceptions of teachers' disapproving attitudes toward bullying (Saarento et al. 2013) were found to work as protective factors. The results of a study that investigated the predictors of victimisation and bullying on a large sample of Slovenian adolescents (Košir et al., 2020) revealed no significant differences between schools in levels of victimisation or bullying behaviour. Similarly, secondary analyses of data obtained in the international studies TIMSS 2011 and TIMSS 2015 indicated that only a small amount of variance in victimisation could be explained by the differences between schools (18%–4%); this amount is smaller for older students (Košir & Japelj Pavešič, 2020). It was also found that school size and the degree of problematic behaviour at school as reported by school principals do not predict victimisation.

Investigating the classroom-level factors of victimisation and bullying seems more promising. Previous studies (e.g. Garandeau et al., 2014; Košir et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2020; Saarento et al., 2013) showed that classroom-level factors (i.e. antibullying attitudes, teacher attitudes, outcome expectations when defending victims, strong classroom hierarchies) mostly explain around 10% of the variance in performing and experiencing bullying. These studies have identified certain classroom characteristics that predict bullying and victimisation. Among protective factors, classroom attitudes that do not approve of bullying and students' perception of disapproving teachers' attitudes toward bullying (Saarento et al., 3013) were reported. The expectation of negative social consequences when defending victims (Saarento et al., 2013), strong classroom pro-bully norms (Košir et al., 2020) and more salient classroom status hierarchies (Garandeau et al., 2014) were found to increase bullying and/or victimisation.

However, it is very likely these data underestimate the role of the classroom-level factors of bullying since some characteristics of classroom social dynamics are also characteristics traditionally viewed as being as students' individual characteristics (i.e. social acceptance, popularity), even though they are determined by the classroom's functioning. Thus, students' individual characteristics that are related to their peer relations should be regarded as characteristics that partly reflect the relationships and social

processes in the peer group. The dimensions of constructs that reflect a student's position in a peer group provide information about the extent to which the student is (dis)liked or perceived as popular by the peer group members (Buhs and Ladd, 2001). While this is an individual measure, it depends on how the individual is evaluated by members of the reference group. Measures that assess students' peer relations based on peer nominations hence always also reflect the individual–group relationship (Cillessen, 2011b). In addition, this is partly true for self-report measures of students' peer relations as well (e.g. self-perceived peer support) as students' peer relations are established as an interaction between the characteristics of an individual and a group.

Understanding the relationship between the characteristics of classrooms as students' primary peer contexts and their individual characteristics is therefore essential if bullying prevention is to be effective. In the subsection below, the role of classroom context in bullying dynamics is described and explained, also regarding the specifics of the Slovenian school system.

The classroom as the central peer context for bullying

The classroom environment provides the main developmental context for students' social and emotional learning. Within the classroom, students compare themselves, establish relationships, form smaller groups, build their social position, as well as perform, experience and observe bullying (Pouwels et al., 2018). The findings showing that bullying is likely to be related to high popularity are particularly noteworthy since popular students are more likely to be regarded as models of adequate social functioning and as socially competent and can therefore act as significant socialising agents in students' social learning (*the popularity effect*; Cillessen, 2011a). This confirms that for effective bullying prevention it is essential to understand the relationship between the characteristics of classrooms as students' primary peer contexts and students' individual characteristics.

This is particularly important in the transition to adolescence – a developmental period that is – besides considerable changes in students' cognitive, social and emotional functioning – characterised by significant qualitative changes in the social dynamics of bullying (Yeager et al., 2015). Alongside changes in the manifestation of bullying (an increase in relational and cyberbullying and a decrease in physical bullying), the changes in the underlying reasons for bullying and in the peer social dynamics that enable and

maintain bullying are decisive in the transition to adolescence. The reasons for bullying behaviour and for bystanders' responses that maintain and enhance the bullying dynamics can usually be explained by changes in students' social motivation (high aspirations for popularity, power, and social status; see, e.g., van den Broek et al., 2016). Students who do not conform to the classroom norms can thus become victims of chronic bullying. Due to the growing influence that bullies have on bystanders, students who experience bullying become ever more socially isolated. Therefore, they suffer not only from bullying but also from social isolation and a lack of support within the classroom. This frequently leads to endorsing characterological self-blaming attributions – attributing victimisation to internal, uncontrollable and stable causes (i.e. self-blaming, attributing bullying experiences to the type of persons they are). Such attributions further add to the distress of the victimised and contribute to the continuation of victimisation (Juvonen & Schacter, 2017). Such self-blaming attributions are more likely at schools with a lower level of overall victimisation; at schools with higher levels of victimisation, victims more likely attribute their bullying experiences to more controllable and less stable factors (e.g. 'being in the wrong place at the wrong time'; Schachter & Juvonen, 2015). This finding again illustrates how bullying experiences (in this case, the social cognitions of victims) are embedded in the social context since they depend on the normativity of the experience in a certain environment (Juvonen & Schacter, 2017). It is also consistent with the findings that classroom reductions in the share of victims who followed effective interventions can be harmful to students who remain victimised, as indicated by the increased depression and social anxiety among these stable victims (Garandeau et al., 2018).

In adolescents, the proportion of students who bully others and their reinforcers and assistants is higher than in childhood, while the share of those who defend victims drops (Pouwels et al., 2018). These findings are consistent with the predominant conceptualisation of bullying as goal-directed behaviour. In adolescence, social goals like peer status and popularity become increasingly important (e.g. LaFontana & Cillessen, 2010). The more important these goals are for students, the more likely they use bullying behaviour or support such behaviour in popular bullies (e.g. Caravita & Cillessen, 2012; van den Broek et al., 2016). This means the main reason that bystanders are more tolerant of bullying during adolescence is the importance of being acknowledged by one's peers in this period. To fully understand bullying during adolescence, it is hence vital to understand the perspective held by bullying bystanders.

Being a bystander of bullying

Merely witnessing bullying is distressing; Nishina & Juvonen (2005) report that students who had observed bullying over several days reported increased levels of anxiety and negative attitudes toward school. Yet, if bullying bystanders can therefore understand the victim's perspective and distress, why do only intervene in a small number of cases? Reasons for bystander passivity established in existing studies (e.g. Pöyhönen et al., 2010; Sentse et al., 2007) were mostly a fear of retaliation or threat to one's own social position and low self-efficacy for defending victims. Standing up for a victimised student and thus opposing the bully who is usually highly popular and influential involves social risk because it jeopardises the intervening student's own status. Therefore, observers tend to remain passive (*bystander passivity*). Perceiving that their peers are also remaining passive further reinforces their own passive attitude since students misinterpret this passivity – as if their peers approve the bullying. This reinforces the (non)response of the whole group (*pluralistic ignorance*; Miller & Prentice, 1994) and enhances the bullying dynamics (Sandstrom et al., 2012). Another cognitive process that can account for the 'chronification' of bullying group dynamics is the phenomenon of *moral disengagement* (Bandura, 2002), defined as a cognitive mechanism whereby students convince themself that a behaviour that is contrary to their own moral standards is acceptable (Meter & Bauman, 2018). This includes blaming the victim (»She deserved it!«), minimising the impact of bullying (»It's no big deal, it didn't really hurt them!«), displacing the responsibility (»It wasn't just me!«) etc. It is thus a socio-cognitive mechanism that enables students (bullies and the bystanders) to shut down any self-sanctions that would normally accompany the violation of one's own's moral standards (e.g. feelings of shame, guilt and negative self-evaluations). An association between moral disengagement and bullying behaviour was found in many studies (e.g. Gini et al., 2014; Meter & Bauman, 2018; Runions et al., 2019); however, recently, researchers have also been able to confirm a relationship between moral disengagement and bystander passivity (e.g. Bussey et al., 2020; Thornberg et al., 2020).

The bullying classroom dynamic described above is not only unfavourable for the students who experience bullying; it is a problem for all students since it supports the learning of patterns of social behaviour that are exclusive and is hence completely the opposite to an inclusive school and classroom culture. The school or classroom environment represents a

key context for the social and emotional learning of all students. It holds the potential to considerably shape the social behaviour of adolescents and, considering their developmental needs, supports behaviours that enable them to achieve their social goals in ways that do not involve bullying. Creating inclusive classroom contexts seems especially important in the Slovenian school system because students usually spend the entire period of elementary school (i.e. 9 years of schooling) in the same classroom environment. Potentially unfavourable social dynamics in the class peer group can therefore represent a very stable adverse developmental context.

The classroom as a developmental context in Slovenia's school system

The transition to adolescence is a developmental period characterised by declines in students' academic engagement (e.g. Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Pintrich & Schunk 2002) and in changes in their social functioning (Yeager et al., 2015). Many previous studies (see Roeser et al., 2000, for a comprehensive review) investigated the contextual factors that can contribute to changes in the academic and social behaviour of students as they transition to adolescence. These changes have been partly attributed to the transition to a new educational level (e.g. Eccles et al., 1993; Wentzel, 2009). Eccles et al. (1993) explained students' school adjustment using the term stage–environment fit. This concept derives from the model of person–environment fit theory in that it proposes that individuals do best in settings in which they fit well with the norms and aggregate characteristics of students and do less well in settings in which they are an outlier. It is also consistent with the relational developmental system theory (Overton, 2015), which emphasises the interplay of individual characteristics and contexts while arguing that students' behaviour and developmental outcomes should be studied as a product of the two-way interaction between the individual and their environment.

Given that contemporary conceptualisations of bullying strongly emphasise that the dynamic interplay of the characteristics of both the context and individual students is crucial for understanding the dynamics of bullying, studies investigating bullying within the PYD framework are surprisingly scarce. A basic assumption of the PYD model is that students will develop positively when their strengths are aligned with the resources in their social contexts (Lerner, 2017) and that this positive development will be reflected in more positive outcomes (e.g. intervening as a bystander in

bullying situations) and in less unwanted or risky behaviours (e.g. using bullying to gain social power, reinforcing bullying as a bystander).

The studies that have considered bullying in the PYD framework have shown that students reporting higher levels of internal and external assets also reported lower levels of both bullying perpetration and victimisation (Benson & Scales, 2009; Fredkove et al., 2019), indicating that developmental assets could work as protective factors for bullying involvement. In addition, the protective role of some internal (e.g. social competence, positive identity; Tsaousis, 2016; Zych et al.., 2019a)there are still many gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed. Research on protective factors and effective interventions is still in its relatively early stages. This systematic review of meta-analyses on protective factors against bullying and cyberbullying was conducted to synthesize knowledge and discover the most important community, school, family, peer and individual protective factors. After systematic searches and the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria, 18 meta-analyses with 128 effect sizes were included and analyzed. Forest plots were constructed and median effect sizes were calculated for each group of protective factors. Self-oriented personal competencies were the strongest protector against victimization. Low frequency of technology use protected from involvement in cyberbullying. Good academic performance and other-oriented social competencies were the strongest protective factors against perpetration. Positive peer interaction was the strongest protective factor against being a bully/victim. These findings can be useful to improve anti-bullying programs, policy and practice. Bullying perpetration and peer victimization has long been considered an important social and clinical problem. Children and adolescents who are bullied are at increased risk for mental health problems. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and bullying behavior (i.e. perpetration and peer victimization and external resources (e.g. peer and teacher support; Holt & Espelage, 2007; Košir et al., 2020) has been found in studies that investigated these resources from theoretical perspectives other than PYD model. The same holds for the indicators of positive youth development that have been examined relative to bullying: care could also be conceptualised as empathy (Zych et al., 2019b), connection as peer support and friendships (Kenrtich et al., 2012, Košir et al., 2020) and competence as both academic and social competence (Jenkins et al., 2016).

In many countries, the transition from childhood to adolescence corresponds with the transition to a new level of education (from elementary

to lower secondary school level), which implies entering a completely new school environment. Eccles and Roeser (2011) relied on the concept of stage–environment fit to explain changes in students' academic and social functioning since most junior high schools are larger than elementary schools, and instruction is more likely to be organised departmentally. On the lower secondary education level, students are typically taught by many different teachers, which makes establishing close teacher–student relationships more difficult. This then substantially weakens teachers' influence and their ability to detect students' academic and/or social difficulties early on (e.g. Lee & Smith, 2001). Moreover, students enter a new peer system that is likely to develop different, context-specific norms and collective values. Using the concept of stage–environment fit, Eccles and Roeser (2011) analysed relevant research findings concerning how: (1) teachers, curricular tasks, and classroom environments; (2) aspects of the school as an organisation; and (3) district policies and practices can play an instrumental role in adolescents' intellectual and social-emotional development.

However, the Slovenian school system is specific because elementary and lower level secondary education is organised at the same school (called basic school) from the age of 6 until the age of 15. Compulsory basic education in Slovenia is organised as a single-structure (ISCED 1 and ISCED 2), 9-year basic school attended by pupils aged 6 to 15 years (Taštanoska, 2017). Thus, in our school system, emerging adolescents do not transit to another school. Nevertheless, their school experience gradually changes; from years 1 to 3, students are generally taught most subjects by their class teachers. In the fourth year of elementary education, teaching and school subject responsibilities gradually become divided among teachers, although in fourth and fifth grades the class teacher still teaches most subjects. During the whole elementary and secondary schooling period, a class teacher is assigned to every class. This class teacher teaches the students at least one subject. Accordingly, the transition on the lower secondary level is more gradual for Slovenian students. They experience changes in their teacher–student relationships and curricular tasks; nonetheless, this occurs in the context of their peer classroom environment. In Slovenian elementary schools, the law stipulates a maximum of 28 pupils per class. The average actual class size in 2018/2019 was 21 pupils (ISCED 1 and ISCED 2) (Taštanoska, 2020). This peer environment usually remains the same or its main structural characteristics are quite stable (although, of course, the psychosocial processes in peer relations change over the 9 years of schooling). Thus, creating

inclusive classroom contexts seems especially important in the Slovenian school system as students usually spend the entire period of elementary school (i.e. 9 years) in the same classroom environment. Potentially unfavourable social dynamics in the class peer group (e.g. the aggressive popularity norms which enable a chronic bullying process; Laninga-Wijnen et al., 2019) can therefore create a very stable adverse developmental context.

Conclusions and implications

Studies that have investigated the factors of bullying behaviour in adolescence reveal that it is crucial to address the interaction between the aspirations of bullies and the characteristics of the peer environment that support the functionality of aggressive and bullying behaviour for gaining control over others (Rodkin et al., 2015). A comprehensive understanding and the sensitive addressing of students' social motives and the psychosocial characteristics of class contexts are thus very important while designing efficient preventive and intervention programmes for adolescents. Bullying can only be understood by investigating how the characteristics of the individual interact with the characteristics of students' classrooms as their primary reference group. This framework is consistent with the PYD perspective and is crucial for designing interventions for promoting inclusive classroom environments that enable all students to recognise their social needs and motives as valid and acceptable and teach them to aspire towards them in a respectful way. Such classroom environments are likely to prevent the development of aggressive popularity norms and thereby help adolescents to develop positive social behaviour. In addition, interventions should empower teachers to support adolescents' social and emotional learning and to moderate their peer relationships. In this respect, positive youth development programmes focused on establishing close relationships, encouraging resilience to negative (peer) influences, promoting social, emotional, cognitive and moral competence, encouraging self-determination and a clear identity, encouraging self-efficacy and endorsing prosocial norms (see e.g. Bonell et al., 2016; Catalano et al., 2004) seem especially relevant. Finally, future studies should address the effects of comprehensive bullying prevention and intervention programmes that would consider the developmental needs of adolescents and the developmental specifics of adolescents' peer groups in the Slovenian school system context.

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Character strengths of first-year student teachers and the 5 Cs of the Positive Youth Development framework: A mixed-methods study

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Abstract

The Positive Psychology and Positive Youth Development frameworks conceptually overlap noticeably, such as their orientation to a thriving continuum, yet they vary in certain respects like their theoretical backgrounds and focus on different populations. The VIA (Values in Action) Classification of character strengths and virtues constitutes an important research topic in positive psychology. Character strengths are defined as positive personality traits that are morally valuable; they can be systematically developed and contribute to various positive outcomes. The theoretical framework of Positive Youth Development is operationalised by the 5 Cs: Competence, Confidence, Character, Caring and Connection. The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between character strengths and the 5 Cs of the Positive Youth Development framework given that this relationship has yet to be studied empirically. The sample consisted of 130 first-year Slovenian student teachers, mostly female (just 2 males). The participants' average age was 19.51 years. First-year students face two distinct transitions (developmental and educational), meaning they need support during this period. Mixed-methods were used in the study; quantitative (correlational analysis) and qualitative analysis (content analysis of students' written responses to open-ended questions). The results show that 12 out of 24 character strengths relate to the 5 Cs: Love, Kindness, Fairness, Teamwork, Humour, Gratitude, Spirituality, Judgement, Self-regulation, Prudence, Perseverance

and Curiosity. These strengths can therefore be used to promote the positive development of first-year students. A possible strategy for successfully overcoming the transition period entails identifying, developing and using students' character strengths so that they may experience positive personal and professional development in the direction of the 5 Cs.

Keywords: Positive psychology, character strengths, VIA Classification, Positive youth development, 5 Cs, first-year students, transition

Vrline študentov prvega letnika pedagoških smeri v odnosu do »5 C-jev« iz teoretičnega modela Pozitivni razvoj mladih

Povzetek

Pozitivna psihologija in Pozitivni razvoj mladih sta kot dva različna teoretična modela za preučevanje pozitivnih vidikov življenja v več pogledih sorodna, a se v nekaterih tudi razlikujeta. Oba poudarjata pomembnost pozitivnega delovanja človeka in razvijanja njegovih potencialov, pri čemer so v modelu Pozitivni razvoj mladih v ospredju mladostniki kot izbrana razvojna skupina. Klasifikacija vrlin predstavlja pomembno raziskovalno področje znotraj pozitivne psihologije. Vrline so opredeljene kot pozitivne lastnosti, ki so moralno cenjene. Z njihovim sistematičnim razvijanjem lahko prispevamo k številnim pozitivnim vidikom posameznikovega delovanja, počutja in doživljanja. Pozitivni razvoj mladih je glede na angleško pojmovanje opredeljen s t.i. »pet C-ji«: kompetentnost (Competence), samozavest (Confidence), značaj (Character), skrb (Caring) in povezanost (Connection). Cilj raziskave je bil preučiti odnos med vrlinami in petimi C-ji iz modela Pozitivni razvoj mladih, saj ta empirično še ni bil raziskan. V raziskavi je sodelovalo 130 študentov prvega letnika pedagoških študijskih programov. Povprečna starost udeležencev je bila 19.51 let, v vzorcu so prevladovale ženske (bila sta le dva moška udeleženca). Na podlagi kvantitativne (korelacijska analiza) in kvalitativne analize (metoda analize vsebine pisnih odgovorov študentov) smo ugotovili, da lahko dvanajst izbranih vrlin (od skupno 24) pri študentih prvega letnika pozitivno prispeva k njihovemu osebnostnemu razvoju na področju petih C-jev. Te vrline so: ljubezen, prijaznost, poštenost, sodelovanje, humor, hvaležnost, duhovnost, kritično mišljenje, samouravnavanje, preudarnost, vztrajnost in radovednost. Študenti prvega letnika se soočajo z dvema različnima prehodoma hkrati (razvojnim in izobraževalnim), zato v tem obdobju potrebujejo podporo. Pomembno je, da znajo študenti prepoznati, razvijati in uporabljati svoje

vrline, saj lahko te prispevajo k osebnostnemu in strokovnemu razvoju v smeri ciljev modela Pozitivni razvoj mladih.

Ključne besede: pozitivna psihologija, vrline, VIA klasifikacija vrlin, pozitivni razvoj mladih, 5 C-jev, študenti prvega letnika, obdobje prehoda

Introduction

Positive Psychology and the VIA Classification of character strengths

The last two decades have seen a growing body of research on topics that promote the importance of positive aspects of life, such as flourishing and well-being, arising from the relatively new discipline of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology focuses on the study of positive individual traits, positive subjective experiences and positive institutions that facilitate positive experiences and positive traits (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). One of the largest projects in positive psychology involved development of the VIA[1] Classification of character strengths and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Character strengths are defined as positive personality traits that are morally valuable (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). They constitute the "good character" needed for individuals and societies to thrive (Park et al., 2006). The VIA Classification contains 24 character strengths that are manifest reflections of six higher-order virtues (McGrath, 2015) considered to be universal in time and place: Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence. The VIA Classification is as follows (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; we list *virtues* in italics and their corresponding character strengths; in square brackets, we add some synonyms to assist understanding of particular character strengths): *Wisdom and Knowledge* (Creativity, Curiosity, Judgement [critical thinking], Love of learning, Perspective [wisdom]; *Courage* (Bravery, Perseverance, Honesty [authenticity, integrity], Zest [enthusiasm, vitality]); *Humanity* (Love [capacity to love and to be loved], Kindness [generosity], Social Intelligence); *Justice* (Teamwork, Fairness, Leadership); *Temperance* (Forgiveness, Modesty [humility], Prudence, Self-regulation); *Transcendence* (Appreciation of beauty and excellence, Gratitude, Hope [optimism], Humour [playfulness], Spirituality [religiousness]).

1 While VIA originally stood for "Values in Action", it is today used as an acronym associated with the VIA Institute on Character (McGrath, 2015).

The hierarchical model of character strengths and virtues was based on cultural considerations with the authors recognising that empirical studies could lead to a different model being proposed (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Numerous empirical studies on the latent structure of self-reported character strengths followed, extracting 3–5 factors with a considerable overlap in their factors (McGrath, 2015). When people employ their character strengths, they use their natural capacities to fulfil their potential and achieve their goals, which should lead to positive outcomes like achievements and well-being (Linley & Harrington, 2006). There is growing evidence that certain character strengths can buffer the negative effects of stress and trauma and that character strengths help young people thrive (Park, 2004). Many youth development programmes use interventions aimed at building specific character strengths (e.g. Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004). The Aware-Explore-Apply (A-E-A) model was proposed to describe how strengths-based approaches lead to positive outcomes (Niemiec, 2013): individuals (1) build up knowledge of their strengths (aware); (2) explore how their character strengths relate to valued outcomes in their past and current experiences; and (3) use their character strengths in their everyday lives (apply). In the higher education context, this gives students opportunities to apply their strengths in the processes of learning, intellectual development, and personal excellence (Louis, 2011). In sum, the VIA Classification is a 'common language' for describing personality traits that "1. reflect our personal identity; 2. produce positive outcomes for ourselves and others (e.g., well-being, positive relationships, achievement); and 3. contribute to the collective good" (Niemiec, 2018, p. 2).

The Positive Youth Development Framework

Alongside the Positive Psychology framework, the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework (Lerner, 2007) has emerged independently. Both frameworks are primarily oriented to a thriving continuum – shifting the focus away from deficits, even though PYD focuses almost exclusively on adolescence (Tolan et al., 2016). The PYD perspective is based on developmental systems theory. It emphasises that positive development and thriving can occur when young people's strengths are systematically aligned with positive resources that promote their growth (Lerner et al., 2005). The 5 Cs Model of PYD is the most empirically supported framework to date (Heck & Subramaniam, 2009). It stresses the strengths of adolescents and enables youth to be seen as resources waiting to be developed (Bowers

et al., 2010; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The positive development that results from aligning young people's strengths and positive, growth-promoting resources in the ecology of youth can be operationalised with the "5 Cs": *Competence* refers to having a positive view of one's actions in domain-specific areas, e.g. social, academic, vocational; *Confidence* means having an internal sense of positive self-worth and self-efficacy; *Character* encompasses respect for social and cultural rules, standards of correct behaviour, a sense of right and wrong; *Caring* means having a sense of sympathy and empathy for others; *Connection* refers to having positive bonds with people and institutions (Lerner et al., 2005).

These domains are interactive and adolescents need healthy development in all domains (Dukakis et al., 2009). Although the 5 Cs were formulated with a focus on measuring and explaining adolescent development, they were not meant to be limited to this developmental period (Lerner et al., 2005; Tolan et al., 2016).

Comparison of the Positive Psychology and Positive Youth Development frameworks

A comparison of the Positive Psychology (PP) and PYD frameworks shows the aim of each framework is the thriving of individuals (concentrating on adolescents in PYD) and society. Both recognise the role of individuals' (character) strengths that can be developed and promoted to achieve valuable outcomes like well-being, achievements and, finally, a contribution to society. Park (2004, pp. 40-41) emphasised that in the PP framework, one can find "a comprehensive scheme for understanding and promoting positive youth development" whose goal is to "build and strengthen assets that enable youth to grow and flourish throughout life". The PYD framework (Lerner, 2007) is based on developmental systems theory and puts greater emphasis on the role of the growth-promoting resources in the ecology of youth. While PP seeks to understand, describe and promote positive human experience, PYD promotes optimal human development with intentional efforts to enhance young people and their interests, skills and abilities (Tolan et al., 2016). Noting the evident common aspects in each framework, we speculated that the theoretical and practical aspects of the VIA Classification of character strengths, namely the core theme in PP, could provide a new perspective for understanding the possible pathways leading toward young people's positive development by achieving the 5 Cs of the PYD. To the best of our knowledge, no empirical study thus far has

combined both frameworks, making this the first study to integrate character strengths and the 5 Cs and to explore their relationship.

The developmental context of transition

First-year university students are a special group of youth because they are experiencing two distinct transitions at once: the developmental transition between late adolescence and emerging adulthood, and the transition in levels of education from upper secondary school to university. Transitional periods are potentially risky periods with a possible decline in academic achievement and adaptive behaviours (Eccles et al., 1993). While moving from one level of education to another, adolescents often find it difficult to establish new relationships and obtain social support from their teachers and peers (Eccles et al., 1993). The transition to university can be stressful as it requires adjustment to a new social and academic environment (Eccles et al., 1993; Fischer, 1994). For first-year students, successful integration into a new social and intellectual life is of great importance – when students find their interactions meaningful and rewarding, they increase their learning efforts (Tinto, 1993). This transition is also important for later academic success, such as in the longitudinal study by Tinto (1993) where the majority of non-progressing students attributed their reasons for dropping out to their first-year problems. Therefore, we should investigate the support mechanisms or strategies that can contribute to the 5 Cs of the PYD of first-year students in order to promote their positive development.

Aims of the study

The study aimed to examine the relationship between the character strengths of first-year university students (student teachers) and the 5 Cs of the Positive Youth Development framework from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. To our knowledge, no previous study has examined the character strengths–5 Cs relationship. Therefore, the goal was to determine which character strengths are related to Competence, Confidence, Character, Caring and Connection (1) using correlational analysis, and (2) according to students' responses to open questions after having had the theory of character strengths introduced to them. The results provide insights into the overlap of these two theoretical frameworks.

Method

Participants

The study participants were 130 first-year students in different study programmes at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education: preschool education (n = 59), social pedagogy (n = 25), special and rehabilitation pedagogy (n = 29) and speech and language therapy and surdo-pedagogy (n = 17). There were only two male students in the sample. The sample reflects the typical gender structure in Slovenian educational study programmes and the two male students were therefore not excluded from the sample. The participants' average age was 19.51 years (SD = 0.66). In Slovenia, tertiary education consists of short-cycle higher vocational education (post-secondary education) and higher education; study programmes take 2 to 6 years (Taštanoska, 2019). Slovenia is involved in the Bologna Process. Higher education is organised in three study cycles (professional and academic undergraduate study programmes, postgraduate master's study programmes and doctoral study programmes). Participants in our study were first-year university students of the 3- or 4- year programmes of the first cycle (undergraduate) study programmes.

Instruments

Character strengths

Character strengths were measured using the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS; Peterson et al., 2004), which consists of 240 items. Each of the 24 character strengths is assessed by 10 items on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = not at all like me to 5 = completely like me). Example scales with corresponding items are: Kindness (e.g. "I enjoy being kind to others", Love (e.g. "I am always willing to take risks to establish a relationship"), Fairness (e.g. "I always admit when I am wrong"), Perseverance (e.g. "I never quit a task before it is done"), Teamwork (e.g. "I work at my very best when I am a group member"). In general, the scales show good internal reliability, test–retest reliability, and validity (Park et al., 2006; Ruch et al., 2010). In our sample, reliability coefficients range from .63 (Self-regulation) to .87 (Creativity). The Slovenian translation (Gradišek, 2014) of the VIA-IS was used.

The 5 Cs

The 5 Cs were measured using the PYD short-form questionnaire (Geldhof et al., 2014). It consists of 34 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (22 items) or from 1 = not important to 5 = extremely important (4 items) or from 1 = not at all like me to 5 = very much like me (8 items)). The items measure five scales – the 5 Cs: Competence (6 items, e.g. "I do very well in my class work in my school"), Confidence (6 items, e.g. "I am happy with myself most of the time"), Character (8 items, e.g. "Accepting responsibility for my actions when I make a mistake or get into trouble"), Caring (6 items, e.g. "When I see someone being taken advantage of, I want to help them"), and Connection (8 items, e.g. "My friends care about me"). The questionnaire is psychometrically adequate (Geldhof et al., 2014). The reliabilities of the scales in the present sample were satisfactory with reliability coefficients as follows: .68 (Competence), .73 (Confidence), .56 (Character), .75 (Caring) and .72 (Connection). Kozina et al. (2019) reported slightly higher reliabilities for the Slovenian version of the questionnaire for high school students (.67, .89, .67, .81, .77) and an adequate fit of the 5-factor structure.

Character strengths and the 5 Cs

Participating students were asked five open-ended questions to collect their insights concerning how their character strengths might help them achieve the 5 Cs: Competence ("Which character strengths (and how) might help you perceive your actions as positive to feel competent in different domains – social, academic and vocational?"), Confidence ("Which character strengths (and how) might help you be more satisfied with yourself, feel self-worth and self-confidence?"), Character ("Which character strengths (and how) might help you act according to social norms, be aware of right and wrong, take responsibility for your actions?"), Caring ("Which character strengths (and how) might help you develop or enhance your empathy and caring for others?"), and Connection ("Which character strengths (and how) might help you build and maintain positive relationships with others – on both individual and institutional levels?").

Procedure

As part of the tutorials at the university, the students participated in a workshop on character strengths. Prior to the workshop, they completed the VIA-IS questionnaire. During the 90-minute (online) workshop,

students were introduced to theory about character strengths and the VIA Classification, identified their signature strengths and reflected on their results. They discussed the practical implications of engaging their character strengths in their private and professional lives and reflected on how the workshop had contributed to their professional development. After the workshop, they were asked to complete the PYD questionnaire and answer the open-ended questions. Participation was voluntary. Students provided their student ID numbers in order to link their pre- and post-workshop responses, but the data were considered to be anonymous. In March 2020, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic forced the study process in higher education in Slovenia to shift from the face-to-face to online form. In the 2020/2021 academic year, first-year students – the participants in our study – attended lectures in person for only the first 2 weeks in October 2020, before the study process again shifted to the online form and then remained there until the end of the academic year. The study took place in March 2021, during the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. All study-related activities (the workshop and completing the questionnaires) were therefore carried out in an online form.

Results

Results of the quantitative analysis

Descriptive statistics (*M, SD*) and Pearson's correlations between the character strengths and the 5 Cs are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlations of the VIA-IS scales and 5 Cs.

	M	SD	Competence	Confidence	Character	Caring	Connection
Fairness	4.32	0.44	.20*	.05	.41**	.30**	.19*
Kindness	4.29	0.40	.19*	.11	.32**	.36**	.37**
Teamwork	4.18	0.45	.33**	.29**	.35**	.39**	.42**
Leadership	4.17	0.45	.33**	.08	.41**	.31**	.26**
Gratitude	4.17	0.50	.16	.34**	.27**	.29**	.21*
Love	4.14	0.51	.31**	.38**	.13	.22*	.46**
Honesty	4.08	0.44	.16	.27**	.24**	.12	.14
Humour	4.07	0.55	.35**	.22*	.19*	.17*	.38**
Appreciation of beauty	4.05	0.51	.12	.19*	.45**	.24**	.11

	M	SD	Competence	Confidence	Character	Caring	Connection
Curiosity	3.96	0.53	.32**	.24**	.35**	.14	.16
Zest	3.92	0.56	.46**	.51**	.29**	.14	.39**
Judgement	3.91	0.49	.12	.15	.39**	.08	.10
Modesty	3.81	0.60	-.11	.06	.18*	.40**	.14
Hope	3.80	0.64	.30**	.61**	.21*	.10	.31**
Perseverance	3.79	0.60	.32**	.36**	.28**	.15	.44**
Social intelligence	3.77	0.50	.52**	.36**	.35**	.15	.29**
Creativity	3.75	0.65	.19*	.03	.24**	.25**	.16
Perspective	3.73	0.47	.37**	.37**	.42**	.13	.22*
Forgiveness	3.72	0.56	.16	.25**	.26**	.20*	.18*
Prudence	3.67	0.53	-.02	.17	.36**	.32**	.21*
Spirituality	3.58	0.84	.24**	.35**	.19*	.04	.09
Bravery	3.54	0.53	.31**	.23**	.31**	.10	.20*
Self-regulation	3.51	0.51	.36**	.26**	.35**	.14	.37**
Love of learning	3.37	0.62	.06	.05	.35**	.02	-.03
Competence	3.37	0.59	1	.45**	.11	-.03	.38**
Confidence	3.87	0.52	.45**	1	.30**	-.01	.36**
Character	4.10	0.38	.11	.30**	1	.30**	.30**
Caring	4.44	0.48	-.03	-.01	.30**	1	.34**
Connection	3.94	0.55	.38**	.36**	.30**	.34**	1

Notes. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$.

Students showed the highest scores for the character strengths of Fairness, Kindness, Teamwork, Leadership, Gratitude, Love, Honesty, Humour, and Appreciation of beauty (mean scores above $M = 4.0$). The lowest-rated character strengths were Spirituality, Bravery, Self-regulation, and Love of learning.

The majority of character strengths showed significant positive correlations with the 5 Cs. Social intelligence, Zest, Perspective, Self-regulation, Humour, Teamwork and Leadership showed the highest correlations with Competence. Confidence correlated most strongly with Hope, Zest, Love, Perspective, Perseverance, Social intelligence, Spirituality and Gratitude. Character correlated most strongly with Appreciation of beauty, Perspective, Fairness, Leadership, Judgement, Prudence, Self-regulation, and Love of learning. Caring correlated most strongly with Modesty, Teamwork, Kindness, Prudence, Leadership and Fairness. Connection correlated most strongly with Love, Perseverance, Teamwork, Zest, Humour,

Kindness, and Self-regulation. Only Teamwork and Humour correlated significantly with all 5 Cs. Fairness, Kindness and Leadership correlated with all Cs, except Confidence. Similarly, Gratitude and Forgiveness correlated with all Cs, except Competence. Several character strengths showed no significant correlations with Caring: Zest, Hope, Perseverance, Social intelligence, Perspective, Bravery and Self-regulation, whereas they correlated significantly with the four other Cs. Love correlated with all Cs, except Character. Two intellectual character strengths, Love of learning and Judgement, correlated only with Character.

Results of the qualitative analysis

Participants were asked to name and describe character strengths that could help them achieve each of the 5 Cs. The frequencies of all character strengths listed were evaluated and divided by the number of participants ($N = 130$); results are presented in Table 2. Students could name various character strengths that relate to each of the Cs, meaning the sum of *f*% exceeds 100%. In addition, some students' quotes are presented to illustrate how students perceive the role of character strengths in achieving the 5 Cs.

Table 2: Perceived contribution of character strengths (in f %) to Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection and Caring, according to the students' responses.

	Competence (f %)	Confidence (f %)	Character (f %)	Connection (f %)	Caring (f %)
Kindness	42.31	20.00	4.62	56.92	61.54
Love	34.62	36.92	2.31	46.15	52.31
Fairness	33.08	7.69	74.62	29.23	18.46
Perseverance	31.54	12.31	3.08	6.92	6.15
Teamwork	30.77	2.31	3.85	28.46	2.31
Humour	27.69	11.54	0.00	32.31	3.85
Honesty	25.38	13.85	13.08	21.54	13.08
Judgement	23.08	3.85	34.62	4.62	0.00
Gratitude	18.46	30.00	2.31	17.69	19.23
Creativity	16.92	3.85	0.77	6.15	0.77
Curiosity	16.92	3.85	0.77	10.00	3.08
Leadership	15.38	4.62	2.31	9.23	0.00

	Competence (f %)	Confidence (f %)	Character (f %)	Connection (f %)	Caring (f %)
Love of learning	14.62	0.00	1.54	1.54	0.00
Social intelligence	14.62	2.31	10.00	18.46	19.23
Forgiveness	11.54	7.69	6.92	14.62	15.38
Hope	10.77	12.31	0.00	5.38	6.15
Zest	10.00	3.08	3.08	7.69	4.62
Perspective	7.69	0.77	6.15	6.15	11.54
Bravery	7.69	20.77	12.31	10.00	0.00
Beauty	7.69	15.38	0.00	6.15	5.38
Modesty	5.38	10.00	2.31	10.00	7.69
Prudence	5.38	4.62	19.23	3.08	4.62
Self-regulation	4.62	9.23	16.92	3.85	1.54
Spirituality	3.08	16.15	5.38	1.54	5.38

Note. F % was calculated according to the number of participants (N = 130)

Competence

Students indicated they could mainly use their strengths of Kindness (42.3%), Love (34.6%), Fairness (33.1%), Perseverance (31.5%), Teamwork (30.8%), Humour (27.7%), Honesty (25.4%) and Judgement (23.1%) to perceive their actions as positive and to feel competent in different domains (social, academic, vocational) – these were the most common responses, related to Competence. The least frequent responses were related to Modesty and Prudence (both 5.4%), Self-regulation (4.6%) and Spirituality (3.1%) (Table 2).

Kindness was a character strength most frequently mentioned in the context of Competence, mostly in relation to the social domain, e.g. *"It is important for me that people feel comfortable around me";* but also in the vocational (work) domain, e.g. *"Kindness is important for ensuring good relationships at work – you build positive social interactions with colleagues and they can rely on you"*. Some students emphasised the interplay of Kindness and Love: *"When you are kind, you get a nice response from others and that makes you feel accepted by those you know and those you don't. And love helps you maintain caring relationships with those closest to you"*. However, the character strength of Love can also independently contribute

to Competence according to the students, e.g. *"I feel good and also do well when I feel that I have good relationships with others, when they can rely on me and I can rely on them"*.

Fairness was identified as a strength that can help "*resolve conflict and establish compromise*". Students were aware that *"if you achieve something when you are fair, you should be proud of yourself and your success"*. The students' responses reveal Perseverance as an important character strength for all three domains of Competence: *"It helps me not to give up in my relationships with friends and colleagues at work even when there are difficulties"*. In the academic domain, Perseverance helps students *"set a certain study goal and persevere until it is achieved"*.

Confidence

According to the students, the character strengths that can help them the most to be more satisfied with themselves, to feel self-worth and self-confidence were Love (36.9%), Gratitude (30.0%), Bravery (20.8%), Kindness (20.0%), Spirituality (16.2%) and Appreciation of beauty (15.4%). The least recognised strengths, related to Confidence, were Social intelligence and Teamwork (both 2.3%), Perspective (0.8%) and Love of learning (no mentions) (Table 2).

Students indicated that, in the context of Confidence, they found the role of Love (36.9%) important, especially *"love of self"*. This character strength helps them to *"love [themselves] as [they] are"* because "*if you love yourself, you can love others*". However, they also recognised the role of Love in relationships with others: *"If I saw that I was as important to my closest people as they are to me, it would make me more satisfied with myself"*.

The second most commonly identified character strength in relation to Confidence was Gratitude, which can help students *"notice more things [they are] grateful for in life and consequently notice more of [their] successes and begin to appreciate [themselves] more"*. Students acknowledged the important role of Gratitude while faced with negative thoughts about themselves, e.g. *"when I'm stuck with negative thoughts about my body and my weight, I remind myself that my body keeps me alive and healthy, gives me energy so I can run or do something else. And then I become grateful and loving of myself"*.

Bravery was also identified as an important character strength for building students' self-confidence – it helps them 'activate' their inner strength: *"Courage would help me to dare to say, try and do more things"*.

Students sometimes use the courage they already possess: "*Courage helps me show my confidence and self-worth*".

Kindness was identified as a strength with positive effects in terms of Confidence when used towards others*: "Kindness gives me a sense of accomplishment – I feel very good when I know that I am positively influencing the people around me with my friendly attitude*"; or towards students themselves as "*being able to accept [themselves] as [they are] and not be too hard on [themselves]*".

The role of Spirituality in building students' self-esteem was identified as a character strength that helps students "*make [their] life meaningful and valuable in both difficult and easy situations*". The character strength Appreciation of beauty and excellence was mentioned in the way with respect to helping the students "*realise that small and simple things can make [them] happy and fulfilled*".

Character

Character strengths that can assist the students to act in line with social norms, be aware of right and wrong, and take responsibility for their actions were Fairness (74.6%), Judgement (34.6%), Prudence (19.2%) and Self-regulation (16.9%), according to their responses. The least frequently mentioned character strengths related to Character were Love of learning (1.5%), Creativity and Curiosity (both 0.8%), while Appreciation of beauty, Hope, and Humour were not mentioned (Table 2).

Fairness was the most frequently mentioned character strength in relation to Character – nearly three-quarters of the students in the sample recognised its role. The role of Fairness in achieving Character was identified as: "*It is important to ask ourselves if we have done something right or wrong and that we take responsibility for our actions*". Students use Fairness when they "*try to act fairly, treat everyone the same*" and "*act in accordance with social norms*". They could use Fairness more when they "*should admit that [they] did something wrong, regardless of the consequences*".

Judgement was also identified as important for achieving Character: "*being able to define what is right and wrong and what is expected of me*". One student described the interplay of Judgement, Self-regulation and Fairness for achieving Character: "*Critical thinking is necessary for deciding what to do in certain situations. Self-control is required to control what we will or will not do. And fairness helps us admit our mistakes and accept consequences, and in this process we learn a lot*".

Caring

Caring refers to developing or fostering one's empathy and caring for others. Students responded that the following character strengths play an important role in feeling and showing empathy: Kindness (61.5%), Love (52.3%), Social intelligence, and Gratitude (both 19.2%), Fairness (18.5%), and Forgiveness (15.4%). Judgement, Love of learning, Bravery and Leadership were not mentioned in relation to Caring (Table 2).

The role of Kindness in developing empathy was evident*: "We must always be kind to a person – even if we know someone very well, we never know the whole story"*. Students are aware of the importance of *"respecting others, being kind and understanding", "listening to another person, helping"*.

The character strength of Love was also regarded as significant for empathy: *"Love is necessary to show caring and promote empathy because you need love to care about people and their mental health. Love also allows you to get to know a person and build an emotional connection with him or her"*.

According to the students, the character strength of Social intelligence plays an important role in fostering empathy because it helps us *"see the motives of others' actions, understand them better, and consider what we would do in a similar situation"*.

In addition, the role of Gratitude was recognised: *"We must always be grateful for being surrounded by loving people and helping those who are not"*.

Connection

The students were asked which character strengths help them build and maintain positive relationships with others on an individual and institutional level. With regard to Connection, they identified Kindness (56.9%), Love (46.2%), Humour (32.3%), Fairness (29.2%) and Teamwork (28.5%) as the most important character strengths. Prudence (3.1%), Self-regulation and Spirituality (both 1.5%) were the least mentioned character strengths related to Connection (Table 2).

The role of Kindness in relation to Connection was described as "*making others feel comfortable around [us] when [we are] kind"* and helping relationships to improve: *"People appreciate it when you are there for them and are willing to help them; this builds good relationships"*.

The character strength of Love is necessary for building and maintaining positive relationships with others: *"When you find relationships with others important, you invest more time and effort and they improve"*.

Humour plays an important role in positive relationships because *"with humour we create a positive atmosphere which positively affects everyone"*.

Comparing the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses

A comparison of the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analyses will enable us to conclude with greater certainty which character strengths add the most by way of achieving each of the 5 Cs in the PYD framework. Table 3 provides an overview of the results of both analyses. In the last column (overlap), character strengths showing at least moderate correlations ($r > .30$) and mentioned by at least 15% of the participating students are highlighted.

Table 3: Comparison of results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

	Quantitative analysis ($r > .30$)	Qualitative analysis ($f\,\% > 15\%$)	Overlap
Competence	Social intelligence, Zest, Perspective, Self-regulation, Humour, Teamwork, Leadership, Curiosity, Perseverance, Love, Bravery, Hope	Kindness, Love, Fairness, Perseverance, Teamwork, Humour, Honesty, Judgement, Gratitude, Creativity, Curiosity	Love Perseverance Teamwork Humour Curiosity
Confidence	Hope, Zest, Love, Perspective, Perseverance, Social intelligence, Spirituality, Gratitude	Love, Gratitude, Bravery Kindness, Spirituality, Appreciation of beauty	Love Gratitude Spirituality
Character	App. of beauty, Perspective, Fairness, Leadership, Judgement, Prudence, Self-regulation, Love of learning, Curiosity, Social intelligence, Teamwork, Kindness, Bravery	Fairness Judgement Prudence Self-regulation	Fairness Judgement Prudence Self-regulation
Caring	Modesty, Teamwork, Kindness, Prudence, Leadership, Fairness, Gratitude ($r = .29$)	Kindness, Love, Social intelligence, Gratitude, Fairness, Forgiveness	Kindness Gratitude Fairness
Connection	Love, Perseverance, Teamwork, Zest, Humour, Kindness, Self-regulation, Hope	Kindness, Love, Humour, Fairness, Teamwork, Honesty, Social intelligence, Gratitude	Love Kindness Teamwork Humour

According to the findings, Competence can be promoted by developing Love, Perseverance, Teamwork, Humour and Curiosity; Confidence through Love, Gratitude and Spirituality; Character through Fairness, Judgement, Prudence and Self-regulation; Caring through Kindness, Gratitude and Fairness; and Connection through Love, Kindness, Teamwork and Humour.

Discussion

The Positive Psychology and Positive Youth Development frameworks share a considerable theoretical overlap. Peterson & Seligman's (2004) theory of character strengths, originating from the Positive Psychology framework, highlights the importance of developing, fostering and using one's character strengths in order to achieve positive outcomes for self and others and to contribute to the collective good (Niemiec, 2018). "Contribution", however, is also considered "the sixth C" in the Positive Youth Development framework, meaning that when young people manifest all 5 Cs over time they are more likely to contribute to themselves, the family, community and society, and therefore less likely to engage in risk behaviours (Lerner, 2007).

Our research findings show that identifying, developing and using character strengths may be a good strategy for promoting the 5 Cs of the Positive Development framework in first-year students, which could later manifest in their active engagement in and contribution to society. Using quantitative and qualitative analyses, we conclude that the following 12 character strengths are associated with one or more of the 5 Cs: Love, Kindness, Fairness, Teamwork, Humour, Gratitude, Spirituality, Judgment, Self-regulation, Prudence, Perseverance and Curiosity (Table 3). Their roles in promoting specific Cs are presented below.

Love is, according to our findings, important for promoting *Competence, Confidence* and *Connection*. Love is a character strength often typical of student teachers (Gradišek, 2012) who find it easy to use in everyday life, e.g.: *"I really enjoy showing love, showing people that I listen to them, I try to give them advice, help them understand, comfort them, cheer them up, and show them that I care with my actions, not just words"*. As such, it helps them feel competent and able to accomplish what is needed because this is required for having effective interactions with other people and social institutions (Lerner, 2007). Love is primarily associated with the social domain of Competence in the form of reciprocal relationships that serve as positive feedback in well-established relationships. In relation to Confidence,

self-love was highlighted in the students' responses as they recognised the need to value themselves and their qualities more, which they perceived as a foundation for building loving relationships with others. Connection is an indicator of positive youth development that chiefly focuses on relationships (Lerner, 2007) and thus it is unsurprising that Love can serve as a pathway to promoting Connection. As one student wrote, *"when we are loving, positive, open, and smiling, others accept us more easily"*.

Kindness is important for promoting *Caring* and *Connection*. Kindness is another character strength that is usually highly expressed by student teachers (Gradišek, 2012), for example*: "I always like to do someone a favour, it is never difficult for me to help"*. Kindness indicates the orientation of the self towards the other and is manifested in the tendency to help others, be generous, compassionate and caring (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This makes it no surprise that it contributes to Caring, which is composed of empathy (the ability to feel another's pain) and sympathy (feeling bad when another person is suffering), but also refers to someone who has a "big heart" and is "kind, who listens, who always seems to know the right thing to say or offer, who seems genuinely interested in us" (Lerner, 2007, p. 166). Kindness is also relevant for Connection – it places emphasis on the well-being of others and thereby prevents the possibility of Connection being used selfishly or manipulatively (Lerner, 2007). Kindness has a reciprocal effect: *"If you are kind to someone, he or she is likely to be kind to you and the relationship will grow. If love is then added to that – even better!"*.

Fairness is important for promoting *Character* and *Caring*. Fairness and Character clearly overlap. Fairness, by definition, is the product of moral judgement, the process "by which people determine what is morally right, what is morally wrong, and what is morally proscribed" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 392). Similarly, Lerner (2007) recognises people of character as those who have a clear and consistent sense of right and wrong and who treat everyone with equal consideration, meaning that everyone has equal opportunities. The students also acknowledged this congruence of the two concepts, as evident in one response: *"By definition, fairness tells me not to praise myself for the actions of others, not to cheat, or to discriminate between people. If I don't behave according to the rules, I'm willing to admit it and take responsibility because that's fair"*. In terms of the role of Fairness in promoting Caring, students recognised that Fairness is important for empathy, for treating people fairly and equally – *"to be able to care for others, we need to be fair to others and to ourselves"*.

Teamwork can be useful for promoting the *Competence* and *Connection* of first-year students. The character strength of Teamwork, defined as "a feeling of identification with and a sense of obligation to a common good that includes the self but stretches beyond one's own self-interest" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 370) was identified by the students as important for both academic competence (e.g. collaborating on team projects at university) and vocational competence (e.g. working with diverse co-workers at work in the future). Its role in Competence is illustratively described here: "*Work [in teams] is easier and the results are better*". The important role of teamwork was also shown in relation to Connection, mainly in students' involvement in various organisations (the institutional level of Connection).

Humour was identified as a character strength able to promote the *Competence* and *Connection* of students. This character strength describes the ability to make others smile or laugh and involves a light-hearted outlook on adversity (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The students recognised that "*humour can help [them] resolve conflict because it makes a situation less tense and can provide a new perspective on the problem*" and thereby positively impacts their Competence. In terms of Connection, humour *"adds a special touch to relationships",* creates a positive atmosphere, with this positively impacting relationships on both individual and organisational levels.

Gratitude was found to be important for promoting *Confidence* and *Caring*, and *Spirituality* for promoting *Confidence*. Gratitude has been defined as a "sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 554), which may be a tangible benefit from another person or a moment of special, peaceful bliss. We feel and express gratitude when we value something or someone and feel a sense of goodwill toward that person or thing. Spirituality refers to "beliefs and practices that there is a transcendent (nonphysical) dimension of life" that influence "the kinds of attributions people make, the meanings they construct, and the ways they conduct relationships" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 600). Students described how Gratitude helps them appreciate more of what they have – their possessions, qualities, loving relationships, opportunities in life, acts of kindness they receive from others – with all of this impacting their Confidence and Caring. Spirituality, in contrast, helps them find their calling and purpose, making their lives meaningful and them feel worthy.

Judgement, Self-regulation and *Prudence* are important for promoting *Character*. Lerner (2007) highlights that people of character know the

importance of respecting the balance between serving oneself and acting selflessly for the benefit of others. Here, the role of Self-regulation is indirectly recognised. For people of character, a moral compass is necessary and Judgement can assist them to make difficult decisions about what is right and wrong. These decisions should be made with Prudence, a strength of character that is a "form of practical reasoning and self-management that helps to achieve the individual's goals effectively" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 478). In the students' words, it is important for them to be able to define what is right and wrong, decide what to do in certain situations (Judgement), restrain themselves from doing the wrong thing (Self-regulation), and think before taking actions so as to later avoid regretting it (Prudence).

Perseverance and *Curiosity* can be used for promoting *Competence*. The benefits of perseverance are widely recognised – it increases the chances of achieving difficult goals and is usually necessary for success. It can also improve one's skills and resourcefulness (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), where its intertwining with Competence is evident. The students recognised the role of Perseverance in all three domains of Competence as it helps them maintain good relationships with friends (social domain), accomplish their study goals and successfully meet deadlines (academic domain), and they see it as an important strength for their future work (vocational domain). The role of Perseverance in students' Competence is clearly described here: *"If I set goals and am very persistent in achieving them, sooner or later I will succeed. And when I achieve my goals, I feel positive in different areas"*. Curiosity is one's "intrinsic desire for experience and knowledge" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 125) and important for Competence. Students with greater curiosity learn better, engage and perform better in academic settings, feel more positive emotions, and report having more satisfying school experiences and relationships with teachers (for a review, see Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Students expressed that Curiosity helps them learn better, improve their general knowledge and obtain more experience in different domains.

Conclusions

'A life well-lived' can be encouraged by identifying, developing and using individual character strengths (Seligman, 2002), with the findings of the present study showing that fostering and developing particular character strengths is a promising strategy for promoting the 5 Cs of the PYD

framework in first-year student teachers. Certain intervention strategies should be developed for fostering specific character strengths to promote positive development. Moreover, student teachers should identify their own character strengths in order to become aware of them, especially their "signature strengths" – those they possess, celebrate and frequently exercise; and feel fulfilled and excited while engaging them (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Student teachers should be encouraged to reflect on how they can harness their signature strengths to achieve positive development following the proposed Aware-Explore-Apply model (Niemiec, 2013). One student's insight holds considerable meaning: "*When I am aware of my character strengths, it increases my self-confidence. I become happier when I realise that I am using my strengths in a good way, such as doing something good, taking care of my loved ones, or volunteering. It makes me happy when I get a kind response from others, when others notice my kindness, and when I notice that my actions have positive consequences*".

PYD interventions stress the role of matching young people's needs and skills with the support and opportunities provided by their setting (Tolan, 2014). This casts a spotlight on university teachers, who are important sources of potential support for first-year student teachers who need to integrate into a new ongoing social and intellectual life (Tinto, 1993). Further, university teachers are important role models for student teachers. Our society needs teachers who lead fulfilling lives, are satisfied, feel that teaching is a calling and are aware of their impact on generations of students. Namely, teachers' professional development begins in their first year of studies, a period crucial to shaping teachers' future professional role. Only student teachers who are systematically supported and encouraged during this period will experience positive personal and professional development; with this in turn leading to them making a positive Contribution – the sixth C – to themselves, society and their future students.

Some limitations of the study should be acknowledged. This study was exploratory in nature and aimed to examine the relationship between two theoretical frameworks that overlap in several respects. The students were not introduced to the PYD framework before completing the PYD questionnaire, in which they assigned particular character strengths to the 5 Cs categories. Prior knowledge of PYD might have influenced their responses about the character strengths–5 Cs relationship, yet we wanted to explore the intuitive congruence between the two concepts. The 5 Cs were described very briefly, suggesting that broader definitions of the Cs may

provide increased understanding of the indicators of PYD. The reliability of the Character subscale in the PYD short-form questionnaire was also quite low, meaning that findings on this subscale should be interpreted with caution. Moreover, certain items in the PYD short-form questionnaire might affect the reliability coefficients. For example, the item "I have a lot of friends" reflects having positive relationships with others on the individual level and could therefore (also) measure Connection, not (just) Competence. Finally, when interpreting the results one should note the data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have impacted the participants, albeit all participants shared this unusual context.

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Components of positive youth development among native students and students with an immigrant background in the Slovenian educational environment

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Abstract

Several studies (Fuligni, 2004; Lerner et al., 2015; Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019) show that a positive youth development model with the 5Cs (competence, confidence, character, connection, caring) effectively promotes positive aspects of adolescents' development. Adolescence is a period of accelerated physical, intellectual and emotional development that can be very stressful for the young, but even more so for young immigrants who confront several other obstacles connected to their background (e.g. discrimination, finding new friends, the language barrier etc.). The present paper examines the differences between native and immigrant students (first- and second-generation) within Slovenia's educational environment in self-assessed competencies, characteristics and skills based on the 5Cs of the PYD model to determine that environment's success in providing the optimal conditions for immigrant students' adaptation. Students' self-assessed competencies between the groups were analysed on the Slovenian national PISA 2018 sample using the IEA International Database Analyzer (IEA IDB Analyzer). The results reveal the Slovenian environment does not provide optimal conditions for immigrants' adaptation and detected three areas in which Slovenian students need greater support: (1) first- and second-generation immigrants' self-efficacy; (2) second-generation immigrants' connection to their family, peers and teachers; and (3) native students' attitudes toward diversity. While this paper's findings are only preliminary, they may

serve as a starting point for further research in finding effective ways to support positive youth development.

Keywords: immigrant background; positive youth development; PISA 2018; educational policies; Slovenia

Kazalniki pozitivnega razvoja mladih med učenci, pripadniki večinskega prebivalstva, in učenci priseljenci znotraj slovenskega izobraževalnega okolja

Povzetek

Številne študije (Fuligni, 2004; Lerner et al., 2015; Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019) so pokazale, da model kazalnikov pozitivnega razvoja mladih 5C (kompetentnost, samozavest, značaj, povezanost in skrb) učinkovito spodbuja pozitivne vidike razvoja mladostnikov. Mladostništvo je obdobje pospešenega telesnega, intelektualnega in čustvenega razvoja, ki je lahko zelo stresno za mlade, še posebej pa za mlade priseljence, ki se hkrati soočajo še z drugimi ovirami, povezanimi z njihovim ozadjem (npr. diskriminacija, iskanje novih prijateljev, neznanje jezika itd.) Prispevek se osredotoča na razlike v samooceni kompetenc, značilnosti in veščin kazalnikov pozitivnega razvoja mladih med učenci, pripadniki večinskega prebivalstva, in učenci priseljenci prve in druge generacije, v kontekstu slovenskega izobraževalnega okolja, njegov namen pa je ugotoviti, na katerih področjih učenci potrebujejo več podpore pri zagotavljanju optimalnih pogojev za vključevanje učencev migrantov. Razlike v samooceni kompetenc med skupinami učencev smo analizirali na nacionalnem vzorcu mednarodne raziskave PISA 2018 s pomočjo programa IDB Analyzer. Rezultati so pokazali, da slovensko okolje ne zagotavlja optimalnih pogojev za uspešno vključevanje migrantov in opozarjajo na tri področja, kjer učenci potrebujejo več podpore: (1) zaznava samo-učinkovitosti učencev priseljencev prve in druge generacije, (2) povezanost učencev priseljencev druge generacije z družino, vrstniki in učitelji ter (3) odnos učencev, pripadnikov večinskega prebivalstva, do raznolikosti. Čeprav so rezultati preliminarni, pa služijo kot temelj nadaljnjega raziskovanja tega področja ter iskanja načinov za podporo pozitivnega razvoja mladih.

Ključne besede: imigrantsko ozadje, pozitivni razvoj mladih, PISA 2018; izobraževalne politike; Slovenija.

Adolescence is a period in which young people experience great changes (physical, cognitive, social, emotional, interpersonal), which put them under considerable stress. Such pressure is even greater for young people

with an immigrant background since they face several other obstacles like discrimination, learning a new language, finding money for survival, and creating new social networks (Wigfield et al., 2006). As a result, such adolescents might feel socially isolated and even drop out from school (Correa-Velez et al., 2017). However, the very difficult circumstances these students face might also lead them to develop a more flexible personality and thereby strengthen their well-being (Fuligni, 2004; Quintana et al., 2006). Many studies focus on the educational gap between native students and students with an immigrant background in terms of academic achievement (Levels et al., 2008; Schleicher, 2015; Schnepf, 2007). Still, not many studies have considered differences between immigrant and native students in other dimensions of personal development and well-being like self-awareness, cognitive flexibility, and resilience.

The main aim of this article is therefore to explore differences in the personal resources and developmental assets of native and immigrant 15-year-old students in Slovenia. First, the theoretical background on positive youth development relative to immigrant status and the context of Slovenia's educational environment are presented. The paper then tries to connect and explain elements of positive youth development and differences in personal resources and developmental assets between native and immigrant students in Slovenia's educational environment.

Immigrant background as a framework for positive youth development

It is not completely clear whether an immigrant background is a risk factor in terms of personal development, acculturation and overall psychological well-being since several studies (Brough et al., 2003; Correa-Velez et al., 2017; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017) in this field show mixed results. On one hand, these students often come from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, face discrimination and racism, are socially isolated and more often diagnosed with mental health problems (Correa-Velez et al., 2017; Fazel et al., 2005). On the other hand, these children may develop a certain level of adaptability and flexibility skills, such as establishing friendships with individuals from diverse backgrounds, learning new languages, forming new identities which can quickly shift the norms and values of original and adopted countries, and develop ways to manage their emotions. Moreover,

first-generation immigrant students[1] often even demonstrate optimism for the future despite their sometimes very troubled past (Brough et al., 2003; Nunn et al., 2014).

The phenomenon whereby first-generation immigrants' adaptation is more successful than that of second-generation immigrants and even natives is called the "immigrant paradox" and (Garcia-Coll & Marks, 2012) has mostly been explored in the USA and Canada, less so in Europe (Dimitrova et al., 2017). The phenomenon of immigrants displaying more adaptation problems and less favourable outcomes (e.g. higher rates of psychological problems, school difficulties and disruptive behaviours) compared to natives is named "migration morbidity" (ibid.). Both phenomena were explored in a research review of 102 studies conducted in 14 European countries by Dimitrova and colleagues (2017). Even though the review provided mixed results for paradox and migration morbidity, it confirmed that immigrant youth's successful adaptation depends on three aspects: (1) close family and peer relationships, classmate support and supportive neighbourhoods; (2) perceived discrimination; and (3) adoption of both the host and their own ethnic culture, while at the same time keeping a strong ethnic identity and maintaining their culture.

While exploring young immigrants' positive youth development, the questions of who adapts successfully and what are the preconditions for success remain unanswered (Motti-Stefanidi, 2017). One model which effectively promotes positive aspects of adolescents' development and is used by several researchers to explore this area is the 5Cs of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) model (Fuligni, 2004; Kozina & Pivec, 2020; Lerner et al., 2012, 2015; Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019). Although a number of models of positive youth development exist, the 5Cs model is the most empirically supported and most commonly used as the framework for programmes supporting positive youth development (Heck & Subramaniam, 2009). Due to its flexibility in various contexts, in the present study this model was chosen as a framework to explore differences in perception of the 5Cs between native students, second-generation immigrants and first-generation immigrants in Slovenia.

PYD emphasises the importance of identifying and supporting strengths rather than preventing or treating deficits, which proves to be

1 First-generation immigrant students are foreign-born students whose parents are foreign-born as well, whereas second-generation immigrant students are born in the country of destination, while their parents are foreign-born.

a more effective way of enhancing positive development and resilience (Masten, 2014). It focuses on the positive, instead of the negative, resources that adolescents possess that can optimise their well-being, personal development and life experiences if they are strengthened, applied and supported appropriately (Lerner et al., 2015).

Benson (2006) classified personal resources as developmental assets and divided them into two larger groups: internal and external assets. Internal assets include positive values, social competence, a commitment to learning and a positive identity, whereas external assets comprise support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations. Lerner et al. (2015), on the other hand, propose five indicators of positive development known as the 5Cs of PYD (competence, confidence, connection, character, caring) that are assumed to be interrelated. They reflect Benson's developmental assets and are defined as follows (Bowers et al., 2010):

- *Competence* is understood as a positive view of one's actions in specific areas, such as social, academic, cognitive and vocational settings.
- *Confidence* is defined as an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy, a positive identity and one's global self-regard, as opposed to domain-specific beliefs.
- *Connection* refers to positive relationships and bonds between the individual, people and institutions. These relationships and bonds are bidirectional and encompass exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship.
- *Character* includes respect for societal and cultural rules, awareness and internalisation of standards of appropriate and correct behaviour, a sense of morality and integrity.
- *Caring* represents a sense of sympathy and empathy for others and the ability to see beyond oneself.

It is assumed that the individual interacts with their surrounding social environment through their resources and characteristics. These interactions go both ways and affect an individual's personal development and functioning (Lerner, 2007).

Students with an immigrant background in the Slovenian educational environment

Many students in Slovenia with an immigrant background belong to the ethnicities of the countries of former Yugoslavia. In most cases, these students and/or their parents are economic migrants and/or refugees who came to Slovenia during the war in the Balkans and then remained (Ribičič, 2004; Vižintin, 2014). In recent years, however, the number of refugees coming to Slovenia from the Middle East (EMN, 2017) has been growing as well. In general, immigrant students come from families with a lower socioeconomic status (Cankar & Zupanc, 2020).

Slovenia has only become a country of immigration in the last few decades and thus still struggles to establish the appropriate mechanisms for promoting a supportive environment for newcomers. In Slovenia, immigrants enjoy equal rights, but not equal opportunities. The Slovenian approach to integration negatively affects attitudes toward immigrants such that they are seen as strangers, not as equals. In addition, education is one area where the social integration of migrant students is not sufficiently supported (MIPEX, 2019). First-generation immigrant students are granted basic rights to compulsory education and several support mechanisms, such as learning of the Slovenian language and additional professional assistance (e.g. remedial classes, individual learning support, and tutoring). Moreover, a two-stage model with introductory and follow-up workshops during the adaptation period are in place for newly arrived immigrant students (Mlekuž & Vršnik Perše, 2019). There are also several very effective good practices at schools and different national and international projects, funded by the government, which offer support for immigrant students, their parents and their teachers (Gril et al., 2021; Mlekuž & Vršnik Perše, 2019; Vižintin, 2017). These support measures are meant for first-generation and not second-generation immigrant students.

It is observed that students with an immigrant background (first- and second-generation) more commonly enrol in short upper secondary vocational education programmes and less commonly in the more socially desirable upper secondary vocational education programmes (Cankar & Zupanc, 2020; Skubic Ermenc, 2015). Further, a longitudinal survey of students' achievements at national tests reveals that first-generation immigrant students achieve lower scores in mathematics than second-generation immigrant students and both groups of students achieve lower scores than native students. This is true even when the results are controlled for

students' socio-economic status (Cankar & Zupanc, 2020). First-generation immigrant students are even frequently considered as students with special needs (Skubic Ermenc, 2015).

Besides institutional discrimination in education, first- and second-generation immigrant youth of an ex-Yugoslavian ethnicity face prejudice, stereotypes and ethnic discrimination in the spheres of work, social and political participation, access to the media and everyday life, all strongly embedded in Slovenian society (Kralj, 2008, 2014). Moreover, since 2015 prejudice against refugees and Muslims has been becoming stronger (Faces of Migration, 2020). The ICCS 2016 and PISA 2018 survey results show that Slovenian students hold less favourable attitudes to immigrants than the international averages in both surveys (Klemenčič et al., 2019; Pedagoški inštitut, 2020).

Research into the personal or developmental assets of immigrant students (compared to native students) in Slovenia is very scarce, with only three being found:

First, the results of a survey (Slodnjak et al., 2002) among Slovenian adolescents and refugee students from Bosnia showed that Slovenian students had lower self-esteem and greater feelings of inadequacy in the academic field, they did not feel loved and more often expressed suicidal thoughts. Bosnian refugees were more often sad, worried about the future and physical pain, yet their achievements were not lower than the native students' nor did they engage in externalising behaviour more than their native peers.

Second, a case study was conducted at a high school centre in Velenje concerning ethnic identity and language use among all students (Peer & Medica, 2017). During the interviews, while students with an immigrant background were less prone to answer the questions about their ethnic identity, had no problems answering which languages they spoke, and chose to speak in the Slovenian language if a Slovenian was present. The authors speculated that the question on ethnic identity was closely connected to the fact that for students with an immigrant background their non-Slovenian ethnic identity was mostly developed and maintained in private life, whereas public life was generally connected to a Slovenian ethnic identity. Further, by choosing to speak in the Slovenian language the students with an immigrant background expressed a level of pragmatism, showing flexible and innovative identities.

In the third study, a Slovenian sample of students formed part of a larger sample of students from 29 European countries (Delaruelle et al., 2021). The results reveal that first- and second-generation immigrants reported higher levels of life dissatisfaction and psychosomatic symptoms than their native peers. The results varied across schools and countries. Further, the results also showed that social capital, peer and family support provided better protection against poor mental health for students with an immigrant background.

It can be seen that even if Slovenia's educational environment does provide equal rights and language learning and learning support to first-generation immigrant students, it is lagging behind in successful inclusion and in providing equal opportunities for all students with an immigrant background. It can also be observed that intercultural dialogue in the school environment between the majority population and immigrant students is missing (Vižintin, 2014, 2017). With high levels of discrimination, the social environment does not favour students with an immigrant background and only permits the expression of a non-native ethnic identity in the private sphere of an individual's life.

Aim of the study

The focus of this paper is the positive development of adolescent students with an immigrant background in Slovenia. The paper examines the outcomes of native and immigrant students (first- and second-generation) as defined by the PISA survey[2] in self-assessed competencies, characteristics and skills based on the 5Cs of the PYD model in the context of Slovenia's educational environment. The overall goal of the paper is to determine which personal resources students with an immigrant background possess in comparison to their native peers. More specifically, this paper seeks to explore the differences in means of self-reported indicators of the 5Cs between native students, second-generation immigrants and first-generation immigrants included in the Slovenian PISA 2018 survey. Since Slovenia's educational environment does not provide optimal conditions for the adaptation of immigrant youth, as defined by Dimitrova et al. (2017), we expect

2 *Native students:* student and at least one parent born in the country of assessment; *First-generation immigrant students:* student and both parents born outside the country of assessment; *Second-generation immigrant students:* student born in the country of assessment, the student's parent(s) born in another country (OECD, forthcoming-a).

the analysis will expose mixed results with a certain level of migrant morbidity for Slovenian students with an immigrant background.

Method

Participants

The current study uses the Slovenian PISA 2018 student representative sample that involved 6,401 students aged between 15 and 16 years. The study focuses on the PISA sample of 15-year-old students regardless of their grade levels and the type of institution they were enrolled in and whether they were enrolled in full- or part-time education. Regarding the sample, 49% of the students were female and 51% male, with a mean age of 15 years and 8 months. Their average achievement score for the PISA cognitive reading test was 495 points, which is above the OECD average of 487 points. First- and second-generation immigrant students represented just 9% of the whole sample of students (see Table 1).

Table 1: Sample characteristics by native and immigrant background.

Background	N	Gender	
		Female % (s. e.)	Male % (s. e.)
Native	5,730	49 (0.48)	51 (0.48)
Second-generation immigrants	250	45 (3.68)	55 (3.68)
First-generation immigrants	323	49 (3.38)	51 (3.38)

Note: s. e. – standard error

Instruments and included variables

Each sampled student answered a cognitive test and a background questionnaire. Since PISA is a large-scale comparative study, the background questionnaires undergo a thorough quality assurance process (review by the countries, cognitive labs, linguistic translatability assessment, centralised transfer of trend material, negotiation of adaptations and linguistic verification), which provides for the data's comparability across countries and different cultural contexts. This assures the constructs used can be applied to other cultures and that different cultural contexts are considered (OECD, forthcoming-d).

PISA 2018 focused on reading competence, although it also assessed mathematics and science competencies. In addition, the 2018 PISA cycle included an evaluation of students' global competence (their ability

to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others) (OECD, 2019).

For the purposes of this analysis, we used several scales derived from items in the PISA 2018 background and global competence questionnaire[3] (OECD, 2017) to describe each component in the 5Cs model. The selection of the PISA scales and their attribution to the 5Cs was based on definitions of each of the 5Cs (Bowers et al., 2010). Students' immigrant background was used as a grouping variable. All scales used were constructed using the IRT (*item response theory*) scaling methodology and transformed to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1 across OECD countries (OECD, forthcoming-a). Cronbach's alphas are reported for the whole sample and for three student groups in Table 2.

Immigrant background. Students were asked in which country they and their parents were born. They needed to answer this question for themselves, their mother and their father. Answers were then recoded into three categories: native students, second-generation immigrants, and first-generation immigrants (OECD, forthcoming-a).

Competence

Self-concept of reading: Perception of competence. Students were asked how strongly (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree) they agreed with three statements (e.g. I am a good reader; I read fluently, etc.) about their reading competence and their text comprehension.

Perception of the difficulty of the PISA test. Students were asked about their level of agreement regarding three statements on the difficulty of the reading tasks presented to them in the PISA test they had taken previously (e.g. Many texts were too difficult for me; There were many words I could not understand, etc.). Students answered on a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree).

Self-efficacy regarding global issues was measured with a six-item question on how easy the students thought it would be for them to explain or discuss several topics on global issues (e.g. climate change, economic crises, refugee crisis etc.) Students answered on a 4-point Likert scale (I couldn't

3 The questionnaire is available at the following link: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/2018database/CY7_201710_QST_MS_STQ_NoNotes_final.pdf
For more information, also see the Technical report at the following link: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/pisa2018technicalreport/PISA2018_Technical-Report-Chapter-16-Background-Questionnaires.pdf

do this; I would struggle to do this on my own; I could do this with a bit of effort; I could do this easily).

Confidence

Resilience. Students were asked how strongly (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree) they agreed with five statements on their capacity to successfully deal with and recover from stressful situations (e.g. I usually manage one way or another; I feel that I can handle many things at a time, etc.).

Eudaemonia: meaning in life. Students were asked how strongly (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree) they agreed with three statements concerning the meaning of their life (e.g. My life has a clear meaning or purpose; I have discovered a satisfactory meaning in life, etc.).

Cognitive flexibility/adaptability. Students were asked how well the six statements on their capacity to adapt their behaviour to unusual situations, which also included intercultural situations, described them (e.g. I can deal with unusual situations; I can adapt easily to a new culture, etc.). The students answered on a 4-point Likert scale (very much like me; mostly like me; somewhat like me; not much like me; not at all like me).

Connection

Teacher support in test language lessons was measured with a four-item question on how often teachers offered support to students in Slovenian language lessons (e.g. The teacher shows an interest in every student's learning; The teacher gives extra help when students need it, etc.). Students answered on a 4-point Likert scale (every lesson; most lessons; some lessons; never or hardly never).

Perception of co-operation at school. Students were asked to assess how true four statements on cooperation among students were for their school (e.g. Students seem to value cooperation; It seems that students are cooperating with each other, etc.). Students answered on a 4-point Likert scale (not at all true; slightly true; very true; extremely true).

Parents' emotional support perceived by the student. Students were asked to assess to what extent they agreed (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree) with three statements about their perceived emotional support from their parents (e.g. My parents support my educational

efforts and achievements; My parents support me when I am facing difficulties at school, etc.).

Subjective well-being: Sense of belonging to school. Students were asked to assess to what extent they agreed (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree) with six statements on their sense of connection and belonging to school (e.g. I make friends easily at school; I feel like I belong at school, etc.).

Character

Student's attitudes towards immigrants was measured with a four-item question on the level of agreement with statements about immigrants' civic rights (e.g. immigrants should have the same opportunities for education, the opportunity to vote in elections, the same rights as everyone, etc.). Students answered on a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree).

Respect for people from other cultures. Students were asked to assess how well five statements on respect for people from other cultures in terms of equality, respect for their values and their valuing of the expression of their cultures described them (e.g. I respect people from other cultures as equal human beings; I respect the values of people from different cultures, etc.). Students answered on a 5-point Likert scale (very much like me; mostly like me; somewhat like me; not much like me; not at all like me).

Global-mindedness was defined as a worldview in which one sees oneself as connected to the world community and feels a sense of responsibility towards its members (OECD, forthcoming-a). It was measured with a six-item question where students needed to answer to what extent they agreed with several statements describing the sense of activism and responsibility for different issues in the (world) community (e.g. poor living conditions; companies that are known to provide poor workplace conditions; the global environment, etc.). Students answered on a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree).

Caring

Perspective-taking. Students were asked to assess how well five statements on how far a student takes the perspective of others in different situations (e.g. to look at everybody's side of a disagreement, to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective etc.)

described them. Students answered on a 5-point Likert scale (very much like me; mostly like me; somewhat like me; not much like me; not at all like me).

Awareness of intercultural communication. The students were asked to imagine themselves in a situation where they are talking in their native language to people whose native language is different from theirs. They were then asked to what extent they agreed with the statements on their observations and monitoring of the conversation (e.g. observing the reactions, checking the understanding, giving concrete examples), on how careful they are while expressing their meanings (e.g. listening carefully, choosing words carefully) and on the success of their management of communication breakdowns (e.g. using other means of communication when a problem with communication arises). Students answered a seven-item question on a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; strongly agree).

Procedure

PISA uses a two-stage stratified sampling design. In Slovenia, in the first stage all schools and educational programmes with 15-year-old students enrolled are included by default and thus 302 secondary education institutions, 43 basic school institutions and 2 adult education intuitions were sampled (Pedagoški inštitut, 2019).

In the second stage, around 42 15-year-old students within each school included were sampled. Students within the school were sampled with equal probability from the list of all eligible students at school. When there were fewer than 42 eligible students at a school, all 15-year-old students at the school were sampled. These sampling procedures ensured the representativeness of the test population. It took approximately 35 minutes for students to respond to the student background questionnaire (OECD, forthcoming-b).

Ethical review and approval was not required since public databases of the PISA 2018 assessment were used in the study. Written informed consent to participate in the study was provided by the participants' legal guardians or next of kin. Data collection for OECD-PISA studies is the responsibility of governments in the participating countries.

Table 2: Cronbach's alphas for the whole sample and by student groups.

	Cronbach's alpha			
	Whole sample	Native students	First-generation immigrants	Second-generation immigrants
Competence				
Self-concept of reading: Perception of competence	0.79	0.79	0.79	0.73
Perception of the difficulty of the PISA test	0.87	0.86	0.89	0.86
Self-efficacy regarding global issues	0.88	0.88	0.90	0.86
Confidence				
Resilience	0.80	0.80	0.78	0.83
Eudaemonia: Meaning in life	0.89	0.89	0.91	0.92
Cognitive flexibility/adaptability	0.83	0.84	0.84	0.83
Connection				
Teacher support in test language lessons	0.85	0.85	0.86	0.87
Perception of co-operation at school	0.89	0.91	0.92	0.92
Parents' emotional support perceived by the student	0.85	0.85	0.89	0.84
Subjective well-being: Sense of belonging to school	0.80	0.80	0.82	0.81
Character				
Student's attitudes to immigrants	0.86	0.85	0.92	0.92
Respect for people from other cultures	0.94	0.94	0.95	0.94
Global-mindedness	0.83	0.82	0.88	0.83
Caring				
Perspective-taking	0.83	0.83	0.84	0.84
Awareness of intercultural communication	0.90	0.90	0.93	0.91

Statistical analyses

Data were analysed using the statistical programme IEA IDB Analyzer (Version 4.0.39). Due to the two-stage sampling in the study, this programme uses individual student weights (W_FSTUWT) and sample weights. In this way, it can properly assess the standard parameter errors in the population using the Bootstrap method (OECD, forthcoming-c). The results were computed using "correlations" and "percentage and means".

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for the 5Cs' variables.

		Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Competence																
1	Self-concept of reading; Perception of competence	0.09 (0.91)														
2	Perception of the difficulty of the PISA test	-0.02 (0.96)	-0.34													
3	Self-efficacy regarding global issues	-0.10 (0.99)	0.25	-0.21												
Confidence																
4	Resilience	-0.05 (0.97)	0.26	-0.17	0.27											
5	Eudaemonia: Meaning in life	0.03 (0.98)	0.10	-0.04	0.14	0.45										
6	Cognitive flexibility/adaptability	0.00 (0.89)	0.23	-0.19	0.24	0.37	0.21									
Connection																
7	Teacher support in test language lessons	-0.61 (1.03)	0.05	-0.04	0.02	0.09	0.11	0.10								
8	Perception of co-operation at school	-0.03 (0.96)	0.17	-0.14	0.18	0.24	0.21	0.18	0.15							
9	Parents' emotional support perceived by student	-0.03 (0.98)	0.21	-0.16	0.16	0.28	0.26	0.17	0.14	0.27						
10	Subjective well-being: Sense of belonging to school	-0.11 (0.84)	0.21	-0.20	0.11	0.33	0.28	0.23	0.10	0.28	0.25					
Character																
11	Student's attitudes to immigrants	-0.05 (0.92)	0.13	-0.08	0.13	0.13	0.04	0.10	0.08	0.18	0.18	0,09				
12	Respect for people from other cultures	-0.03 (0.96)	0.20	-0.17	0.12	0.12	0.03	0.31	0.10	0.19	0.24	0,13	0.40			
13	Global-mindedness	-0.10 (0.95)	0.15	-0.06	0.20	0.16	0.11	0.13	0.06	0.22	0.18	0,10	0,31	0,19		
Caring																
14	Perspective-taking	0.05 (0.94)	0.10	-0.12	0.11	0.15	0.08	0.42	0.08	0.16	0.14	0,08	0,18	0,37	0,17	
15	Awareness of intercultural communication	-0.19 (0.95)	0.24	-0.18	0.23	0.25	0.10	0.19	0.07	0.19	0.23	0,10	0,23	0,26	0,26	0,21

Note: Data were weighted with a Final trimmed nonresponse adjusted student weight (W_FSTUWT). All correlation coefficients in the table are statistically significant. Missing values were excluded from the analysis.

To compute differences between groups, the IDB Analyzer uses a t-test taking sample dependency into account (IEA, 2016). Since the IDB Analyzer cannot perform a Bonferroni correction, it was not included in the analysis.

Results

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations and Pearson correlation coefficient for the variables used in the analyses. All variables are significantly correlated in the expected way. Namely, all variables are positively correlated, except for the *Perception of the difficulty of the PISA test*, which is negatively correlated to all the other variables.

In Table 4, the means and standard deviations of the scales used by the student groups organised by the 5Cs are presented.

The results (see Table 4) show first-generation immigrants reporting lower levels of reading competence than native students. Similarly, first-generation immigrants believed the PISA test was more difficult than native students and second-generation immigrants did. On the other hand, there were no significant differences in the assessment of self-efficacy regarding global issues between native students and first-generation immigrants, although second-generation immigrants assessed their self-efficacy regarding global issues as significantly lower.

There were no significant differences between the student groups in assessing their capacity to pass through difficult situations and their self-assessed meaning in life. However, there was a significant difference in the self-assessment of cognitive flexibility/adaptability between first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants, where first-generation immigrants reported greater flexibility and adaptability in dealing with challenging or difficult situations (intercultural situations included) (see Table 4).

Second-generation immigrants reported the lowest perception of support from their teachers in their Slovenian language lessons as opposed to their native and first-generation immigrant peers. First-generation immigrants, on the other hand, reported the highest perception of support from their teachers in Slovenian language lessons, even higher than the native students. Similarly, second-generation students also reported the lowest perception of cooperation at the school, which is lower than the native students' perception. Yet, the first-generation students' perception of cooperation at the school does not differ from either native students' or second-generation immigrants' perception. Similarly, second-generation

Table 4: Comparison of means and standard deviations by immigrant background by the 5Cs.

Scale	Native (1)	Second-generation immigrants (2)	First-generation immigrants (3)	Significant differences between groups
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	
Competence				
Self-concept of reading: Perception of competence	0.10 (0.91)	0.02 (0.92)	-0.08 (0.94)	1>3
Perception of the difficulty of the PISA test	-0.05 (0.94)	-0.02 (1.05)	0.41 (1.04)	1<3 2<3
Self-efficacy regarding global issues	-0.09 (0.98)	-0.30 (1.08)	-0.23 (1.11)	1>2
Confidence				
Resilience	-0.05 (0.96)	-0.03 (1.06)	-0.03 (1.05)	/
Eudaemonia: meaning in life	0.02 (0.98)	0.09 (1.03)	0.12 (1.01)	/
Cognitive flexibility/ adaptability	-0.01 (0.88)	-0.05 (0.92)	0.12 (1.00)	2<3
Connection				
Teacher support in test language lessons	-0.62 (1.02)	-0.72 (1.14)	-0.44 (1.07)	1<3 2<3
Perception of co-operation at school	-0.01 (0.96)	-0.28 (1.04)	-0.11 (1.01)	1>2
Parents' emotional support perceived by student	-0.01 (0.97)	-0.30 (1.01)	-0.14 (1.00)	1>2
Subjective well-being: Sense of belonging to school	-0.10 (0.84)	-0.08 (0.80)	-0.28 (0.94)	1>3 2>3
Character				
Student's attitudes to immigrants	-0.08 (0.91)	0.20 (1.04)	0.32 (1.04)	1<2 1<3 2<3
Respect for people from other cultures	-0.05 (0.96)	0.10 (0.97)	0.23 (0.96)	1<3
Global-mindedness	-0.09 (0.94)	-0.11 (1.00)	-0.25 (1.09)	/
Caring				
Perspective-taking	0.05 (0.93)	0.09 (1.02)	-0.01 (1.10)	/
Awareness of intercultural communication	-0.19 (0.94)	-0.17 (0.99)	-0.20 (1.08)	/

Note: Data were weighted with a Final trimmed nonresponse adjusted student weight (W_FSTUWT). The statistical difference between groups is computed using the t-test, where $|t| > 1.96$ applies for statistically significant differences. Missing values were excluded from the analysis.

immigrants reported the lowest parental emotional support among the three groups of students, although the difference is significant only for native students' perception. On the other hand, first-generation students reported the lowest sense of belonging to the school, whereas there were no significant differences in the sense of belonging to the school among the second-generation immigrants and native students (see Table 4).

As may be seen in Table 4, native students reported the most positive attitudes to working hard to achieve success at school and later in life (attitude to school: learning activities) among the three student groups, where the difference is significant only for first-generation immigrants. First-generation immigrants also have the most positive attitudes to immigrants among all three groups (the difference is significant for all three groups). Moreover, this group of students also reported the highest respect for people from other cultures (the difference is significant only in comparison to native students). There are no significant differences in global-mindedness, which means there are no differences in students' connectedness to the world community and their sense of responsibility to its members.

There are no significant differences in the self-reported scales of the caring construct between the three student groups (see Table 4).

In general, first- and second-generation immigrants assess their own competence as lower than their native peers. In terms of confidence, there are no differences between the students, except in cognitive flexibility/adaptability, where first-generation immigrants reported greater flexibility/adaptability than second-generation students. In terms of connection, second-generation immigrants reported the lowest levels of connection with their teachers, peers and parents than their peers, although first-generation immigrants reported the lowest levels of belonging to the school among the three groups. As for character, first-generation immigrants show the most positive attitudes toward diversity among the three groups.

Discussion

Although, as expected, the analysis showed mixed results for the 5Cs, it is possible to draw certain common conclusions. Significant differences were found among native students, first- and second-generation immigrants in the self-assessed 5Cs' indicators that reveal interesting aspects of adolescents' development in the light of an immigrant background.

For example, the results for the competence component showed first-generation immigrant students assess the PISA test as more difficult

than their peers do. One reason for this might be that the PISA 2018 test focused on reading comprehension of Slovenian texts, which is not a language in which immigrant students are proficient. The PISA results generally reveal that the gap between immigrant and native students is larger in reading achievement than in mathematics or problem-solving and associate this gap with the language barrier (Schleicher, 2015). Moreover, the lower perception of self-efficacy (self-efficacy regarding global issues, self-concept of reading) among students with an immigrant background in our survey could be attributed to the extent that other students with a similar background and their own struggles at school are observed because students with an immigrant background in Slovenia do not thrive compared to native students with respect to academic achievements.

There were no significant differences among the student groups concerning resilience and meaning of life. Still, the PISA 2018 results show that on average immigrant students are more resilient (OECD, 2019a) and express a weaker purpose in life than native students (OECD, 2019b). Nonetheless, first-generation immigrants express higher levels of cognitive flexibility/adaptability than their second-generation immigrant peers, which may be explained by the fact that first-generation immigrant students were directly exposed to two cultures, while their second-generation peers have grown up in Slovenia and thus had only indirect exposure to their cultural heritage. As shown in Peer and Medica's (2017) case study, the development and maintenance of immigrant students' non-Slovenian cultural identity are limited to the private sphere of their lives. This might affect their level of cognitive flexibility (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006).

As regards connection, Slovenian second-generation immigrants show the most concerning results. Their perception of teacher support, parental emotional support, and co-operation among students at the school is the lowest among all three student groups, which might indicate some level of social alienation. These results are even more concerning in the light of Wortley's (2009) findings that social alienation is a risk factor associated with immigrant youth criminality and Silber and Bhatt's (2007) process model of radicalisation where social alienation is one of the triggers for the pre-radicalisation phase.

First-generation immigrants, on the other hand, express the highest perception of teachers' support in Slovenian language lessons, which may be attributed to their poorer comprehension of the Slovenian language and the fact these students are entitled to different forms of support as part of

the country's educational policies (Mlekuž & Vršnik Perše, 2019). At the same time, these students express the lowest sense of belonging to school, which might be a due to discrimination and prejudice within the school environment and in wider Slovenian society.

On the contrary, as concerns the character component, it is the native students who come into the limelight by expressing the lowest levels of openness to multiculturalism given that their attitudes to immigrants and respect for people from other cultures are the least favourable among the three student groups. These findings confirm the general attitudes toward immigrants and diversity in Slovenia (Klemenčič et al., 2019; Kralj, 2008, 2014; Pedagoški inštitut, 2020). Several studies have corroborated the view that negative attitudes toward immigrants and other cultures are generally considered to be the origin of discriminative behaviour, bullying and harassment targeting immigrant students, which then affect such students' academic performance, motivation and well-being (Dessel, 2010; Glock, 2016), thereby making it important to shift students' attitudes to immigrants in the direction of being more open to diversity and multiculturalism.

We may conclude that the results regarding immigrant students' successful adaptation to the Slovenian environment are mixed and slightly inclined to migration morbidity, especially in the area of competence and connection, where the second-generation immigrant students are at a loss. These results also confirm that the Slovenian environment and policies do not provide the optimal conditions (as described by Dimitrova et al., 2017) for immigrant students' successful adaptation and point to the high level of discrimination, the lack of opportunities for immigrants to keep a strong ethnic identity, and their weak relational support at school and home.

Limitations and Recommendations

All things considered, we must bear in mind that this study was intended to be a preliminary one and, as such, is limited to use of the PISA background questionnaire whose primary function is not to test the PYD 5Cs. To gain data more in line with the components of the PYD 5Cs, the 5Cs questionnaire should be used to ensure comparability with similar studies relying on this instrument. Further, the Slovenian version of the PISA 2018 questionnaire did not specifically ask in which country an immigrant student's parents were born, meaning no control for country of origin was possible. This opens up new avenues for research on this topic based on differences among immigrant youth as well. It would also be interesting

to explore how these 5Cs indicators predict risky behaviours and/or student achievement and whether in addition differences exist among these student groups in this area. Moreover, this paper should be regarded as a starting point for further research on the topic, especially in those areas where students in Slovenia need greater support, and thus as a platform for developing suitable and effective educational policies and effective PYD programmes for youth in the field of including immigrants in Slovenian society and their adaptation. Since the PISA 2018 database was used an international perspective, the paper could also be explored to shine a light on differences among young immigrants throughout European Union or OECD countries.

Conclusion

In this paper, differences between immigrant and native students' personal resources in terms of PYD were explored. The research's main aim was to identify differences in indicators of the 5Cs between native students, second-generation immigrants and first-generation immigrants to detect areas in need of special attention. Like with other surveys in this field (e.g. Dimitrova et al., 2017), while the results are mixed and somewhat inconclusive we can still highlight three areas where Slovenian students need more support: (1) first- and second-generation immigrants' self-efficacy; (2) second-generation immigrants' connection to their family, peers and teachers; and (3) native students' attitudes toward diversity. Given that all of these areas are interconnected, it is essential to support the weaker ones, which should also bring a positive effect to other areas and the well-being of all Slovenian students.

Nevertheless, considering the limitations on comparing the native and immigrant student groups, this paper's findings are merely preliminary and should only be seen as a starting point for further research on the topic, particularly in those fields where immigrant students need greater support. Such research would facilitate the identification of effective ways to support the positive youth development of adolescents with an immigrant background and to develop policies that ensure immigrants' optimal adaptation into the Slovenian education system and broader society.

To conclude, immigrant students' positive youth development depends on numerous factors, many of which are not fully controllable or easily defined. This makes it vitally important to further explore this field and bring attention to those aspects of youth development we can support

and practices we can spread to the system level to thereby provide students with a platform on which they can thrive and develop to their full potential. The SIRIUS report concluded that the successful inclusion of immigrant students in Slovenian schools shares four common characteristics stemming from good practices, which may serve as guidance (Gril et al., 2021). Namely, to reduce discrimination and strengthening ethnic identity (1) multilingualism in schools should be recognised and considered. To strengthen relational support, (2) the entire school staff should be involved in Slovenian language classes for immigrants, which should be part of regular classes; (3) partnerships with the local environment; and (4) an open relationship of mutual trust and acceptance between all school stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, local community), which allows for responsiveness and adaptability to different situations should be established.

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Contact-based interventions to reduce ethnic prejudice against migrants and ethnic minorities in the school context: A systematic literature review

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Abstract

Positive intergroup contact with peers at school is a crucial factor in the successful integration of migrant and ethnic minority children and adolescents into the local community. Yet, in most cases it is seldom achievable due to prejudice expressed towards ethnic outgroups, which constitutes an important risk factor for social isolation, academic failure, emotional distress, and behavioural problems of children with a migrant or refugee background. Interventions involving intergroup contact have been proven to be the most effective among prejudice-reducing interventions. This article provides a review of the literature on contact-based interventions aimed at reducing ethnic prejudice against migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities in primary and secondary schools. It describes different types of intergroup contact-based interventions – direct, extended, vicarious and imagined – and provides the newest findings on their efficacy. Results are provided for the general factors that influence the effectiveness of interventions for reducing ethnic prejudice in the school context: the age of participants, their ethnic status, the administrator of interventions, the length of interventions, the number of interventions and type of outcome (affective, cognitive, behavioural). At the end, practical implications for performing a successful intervention to lower ethnic prejudice using direct or indirect contact in primary and secondary schools are provided.

Keywords: prejudice reduction, children and adolescents, ethnic prejudice, intergroup contact, systematic literature review

Sistematični teoretični pregled intervencij za zmanjševanje etničnih predsodkov do migrantov in etničnih manjšin, zasnovanih na medskupinskem kontaktu, v šolskem kontekstu
Povzetek

Pomemben dejavnik uspešnosti integracije vse številčnejših otrok migrantov in pripadnikov etničnih manjšin v obstoječo skupnost predstavljajo pozitivni medskupinski odnosi v šoli, ki pa so pogosto oteženi zaradi predsodkov do tujih etničnih skupin s strani otrok iz lokalne skupnosti. Predsodki s strani lokalnega okolja za otroke begunce in migrante predstavljajo pomemben dejavnik tveganja za socialno izolacijo, učno neuspešnost, čustvene stiske in vedenjske težave. Intervencije, zasnovane na medskupinskem kontaktu, so se pokazale kot najbolj učinkovite med intervencijami za zmanjševanje etničnih predsodkov. Pričujoč članek obsega pregled študij, ki so izvedle intervencije, zasnovane na medskupinskem kontaktu, z namenom zmanjševanja predsodkov do beguncev, migrantov in etničnih manjšin v osnovnih in srednjih šolah. Povzema izsledke o učinkovitosti posameznih različic medskupinskega kontakta (neposrednega, razširjenega, posrednega in namišljenega) ter najnovejša odkritja glede splošnih dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na učinkovitost intervencij v šolskem kontekstu, kot so starost udeležencev, njihova etnična pripadnost, izvajalec intervencije, dolžina intervencij, število intervencij ter vrsta merjenih izidov (afektivni, kognitivni in vedenjski). Na koncu so navedeni praktični napotki za izvedbo uspešne intervencije z namenom zmanjševanja etničnih predsodkov s pomočjo neposrednega in posrednega kontakta v osnovnih in srednjih šolah.

Ključne besede: zmanjševanje predsodkov, otroci in mladostniki, etnični predsodki, medskupinski kontakt, sistematični teoretični pregled

Introduction

The ongoing armed conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq of recent years have prompted mass migrations to countries with an ethnically homogenous population in Europe and elsewhere. Between 2013 and 2017, the number of migrants in OECD countries tripled from 2 to 5.9 million (UNHCR,2018), with up to 23% of the 1.2 million asylum-seekers in 2016 being aged less than 13 years (Eurostat, 2017). These children attend school in their host country as part of the integration process in the hope of learning the local language, adapting to the new culture, and developing a relationship with the local community.

Supportive intergroup relations are a crucial factor in the successful integration of migrant and ethnic minority children and adolescents into the local community, which is often negatively impacted by prejudice against ethnic majority children (Correa-Velez et al., 2015). Exposure to ethnic prejudice creates an important risk factor for various societal, emotional, behavioural and academic outcomes for the victim. It has been linked to externalising behaviour, such as physical violence and promiscuity, and internalising behaviour like suicidal tendencies (Tobler et al., 2013), depression and anxiety (Benner & Graham, 2013). It can also lead to hazardous behaviour like substance abuse, which is primarily used as a coping mechanism to reduce emotional distress (Gibbons et al., 2010). This can be said for ethnic minorities in general, as they are commonly subjected to discrimination, which puts them at risk of marginalisation by the majority community (Dustmann & Preston, 2001). The victims of ethnic prejudice are often socially isolated and bullied, either physically or verbally (Brenick et al., 2019) and are also more prone to lower academic performance, perpetual truancy, and termination of their education (Benner & Kim, 2009). Migrants and refugees are already at risk for academic failure since only 23% enter secondary school compared with 84% of all young people (UNHCR, 2018), which is largely due to not achieving the learning standards of the host country, leading to less classroom participation (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Research shows that when negative implicit beliefs about ethnic minority members as being less intelligent and capable are held and expressed by teachers and other students this can promote learned helplessness and reduce the motivation to learn among ethnic minority students (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Ethnic minority students tend to perform significantly below their native peers, with this difference being the most pronounced in highly developed European countries like the Netherlands, Germany and France (Brind et al., 2008). They are more likely to be absent from school, more likely to be expelled, not finish high school and are less likely to continue with their education (Richardson, 2018).

Relationships with ethnic majority classmates are vitally important because as they can worsen the already vulnerable position of migrants and ethnic minorities in the school system, adding to previously present ethnic discrimination in education, or can help to provide a safe learning environment that helps them cope with the host country's learning standards and to develop their academic potential.

Contact-based interventions aimed at reducing ethnic prejudice

The negative consequences of ethnic prejudice for the victims and consequently for society have prompted scientists to research ways of reducing negative attitudes to ethnic outgroups. Findings have led to empirically informed interventions. The most widely effective of these are contact-based interventions (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), which are based on the hypothesis that contact between members of different ethnic groups can, in certain conditions, reduce ethnic prejudice against the outgroup and lead to positive intergroup relations (Allport in Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

In general, school seems quite a perfect place to start tackling prejudice since the large majority of interventions in this context have been effective, irrespective of their theoretical background (Ülger et al., 2018). Contact-based interventions tend to be particularly effective in schools given that the conditions for effective prejudice-reducing intergroup contact can easily be fulfilled. These conditions are: a) equal social status of both groups; b) a uniform goal; c) interdependence among the groups; and d) expressed support from authorities/the institution (ibid.). Students share the status of a class member, while the interaction among them is often facilitated by the teacher or the institution. Tasks that demand cooperation among different groups to achieve a common goal are a frequent way of learning in primary and secondary schools, meaning they can easily be implemented as interventions and have been very successful at reducing prejudice against outgroups (Paluck & Green, 2009).

Despite their effectiveness, direct contact-based interventions are not commonly implemented in school settings (ibid.) as their implementation can cause significant logistical problems, especially in the case of ethnic segregation or an imbalance in the number of ethnic outgroup members. Gathering enough ethnic minority students can be time-consuming and impractical. Moreover, prejudice should be addressed before direct intergroup contact occurs since even a brief exposure to stigmatisation can bring significant negative outcomes for the victim (Brenick et al., 2019).

For this reason, research has started to focus more on interventions, using indirect intergroup contact (i.e. contact that does not require the physical presence of members from one of the groups), proposing that merely observing or knowing about intergroup contact is enough for prejudice reduction (Wright et al., 1997). Three different approaches have developed from the initial idea, presenting a viable alternative to direct contact: vicarious, extended and imagined intergroup contact. Vicarious intergroup

contact supposes that observing positive intergroup relations among members of the ingroup and outgroup leads to an improved attitude towards the outgroup. It has mostly been implemented as story-reading about friendships among the members of different ethnic groups (e.g. Cocco et al., 2021). Extended intergroup contact assumes that mere information about an ingroup member's close relationship with an outgroup member can lead to an improved attitude towards the outgroup, which has similarly been implemented as story-reading, although the story mainly focused on the relatable ingroup character having a close friendship with a member of the stigmatised group (e.g. Cameron & Rutland, 2006). Imagined intergroup contact is the newest empirically proven type of contact-based intervention (Miles & Crisp, 2013) and proposes that mere thinking about positive intergroup contact leads to an improved attitude towards the outgroup. In the school context, imagined contact has mostly been implemented as researcher-administered visualisation exercises (e.g. Cameron et al., 2011).

In recent years, scientists have started researching new ways to tackle ethnic prejudice given that ethnic diversity in school classes is ever growing due to mass migration and the civil wars in the Middle East. The focus had shifted from reducing prejudice against African and Latino Americans in the USA (Brewer, 1999) to tackling the stigmatisation of migrants and refugees moving from the Middle East to ethnically homogenous countries in Europe and elsewhere around the world. The context of reducing prejudice against migrants is different, as ethnic majority children typically have no former experience with this ethnic group. This also applies to ethnic minorities in countries with a high level of segregation, such as Israel where Palestinians and Israeli Jews live in highly homogenous and ethnically segregated areas, thus leaving them without many opportunities for intergroup contact (Falah, 1996). This issue is especially pressing for migrant and refugee youth as they are an especially vulnerable group, having no knowledge of the language and cultural features of the host country. Therefore, a review of the current literature, focusing on preventing prejudice against migrants, refugees, and ethnic minorities living in highly segregated areas, is in order.

Past reviews mostly focused on direct contact-based interventions to reduce prejudice in general (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), interventions to reduce ethnic prejudice of children below 8 years of age (Aboud et al., 2012), interventions to reduce the prejudice of children and adolescents (Beelmann

& Heinemann, 2014) and interventions to reduce prejudice in children and adolescents in educational contexts (Ülger et al., 2018).

In contrast, the present study focuses narrowly on contact-based interventions aimed at reducing ethnic prejudice against refugees, individuals with a migratory background and other ethnic minorities in primary and secondary school. The review only encompasses contact-based interventions since they were initially meant to tackle ethnic prejudice and have been shown to be the most effective in a variety of different settings (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), while also concentrating on implementation in school contexts because this is the primary source of intergroup contact for children and adolescents (Ülger et al., 2018).

According to the aim of the present literature review, we explored the following questions:

1. Are contact-based interventions effective in reducing prejudice against refugees, individuals with a migratory background, and other ethnic minorities in the school context?
2. Do contact-based interventions vary in their effectiveness in reducing ethnic prejudice, depending on the type of intergroup contact?
3. Which characteristics of the contact-based interventions add to their effectiveness in reducing ethnic prejudice in the school context?
4. On which aspects of ethnic prejudice do contact-based interventions have the greatest effect? Does the effect depend on the type of intergroup contact?

Method

Search strategy

The search strategy consisted of identifying relevant articles in the multidisciplinary databases Scopus, Web Of Science and Google Scholar, as conducted on 15.6.2020. Search terms were partly based on the PICOS inclusion criteria (Richardson et al., 1995). Articles had to be related to ethnic prejudice (prejudice, discrimination, xenophobia, "ethnic prejudice", bias, attitude) or prejudice against ethnic minorities (migrants, immigrants, refugees, "ethnic minority"), they had to be based on intergroup contact (contact, "intergroup contact", "vicarious contact", "imagined contact",

"extended contact") and were implemented in the school context (school, pupils, students, teenagers, adolescent*, child*, "primary education", "secondary education", "high school"). We used Boolean operators to combine and limit our search.

Searches were conducted based on title words, keywords and the abstract. The flow diagram below shows the literature search process (Fig. 1). First, we entered our search terms and limited our search by adjusting parameters to only include empirical studies written in the English language. We then merged the three databases and excluded duplicates. Article eligibility was assessed by the researcher, first based on the title, then on the abstract, according to the inclusion criteria. The collecting and reporting of results was done according to the PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009).

Inclusion criteria

Interventions had to meet the following criteria to be included in the study:

1. The research was written in English.
2. Sufficient data were provided to enable effect-size calculations.

The PICOS inclusion criteria:

3. Population: The target group was young people attending primary and secondary school, aged between 6–18 years.
4. Intervention: The study included a standardised contact-based intervention (i.e. direct, extended, vicarious, imagined) aimed at lowering ethnic prejudice against refugees and individuals with a migratory background, implemented in the school context.
5. Comparison: The intervention involved a comparison of a control and an experimental group.
6. Outcome: Cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of ethnic prejudice were measured.
7. Study: The research had an experimental design.

Coding procedure

Suitable articles were subjected to a recording procedure. Relevant information about each intervention was recorded: the country of implementation, type of intervention, ethnic status of the target group, age of participants, administrator of the intervention, number of sessions, duration

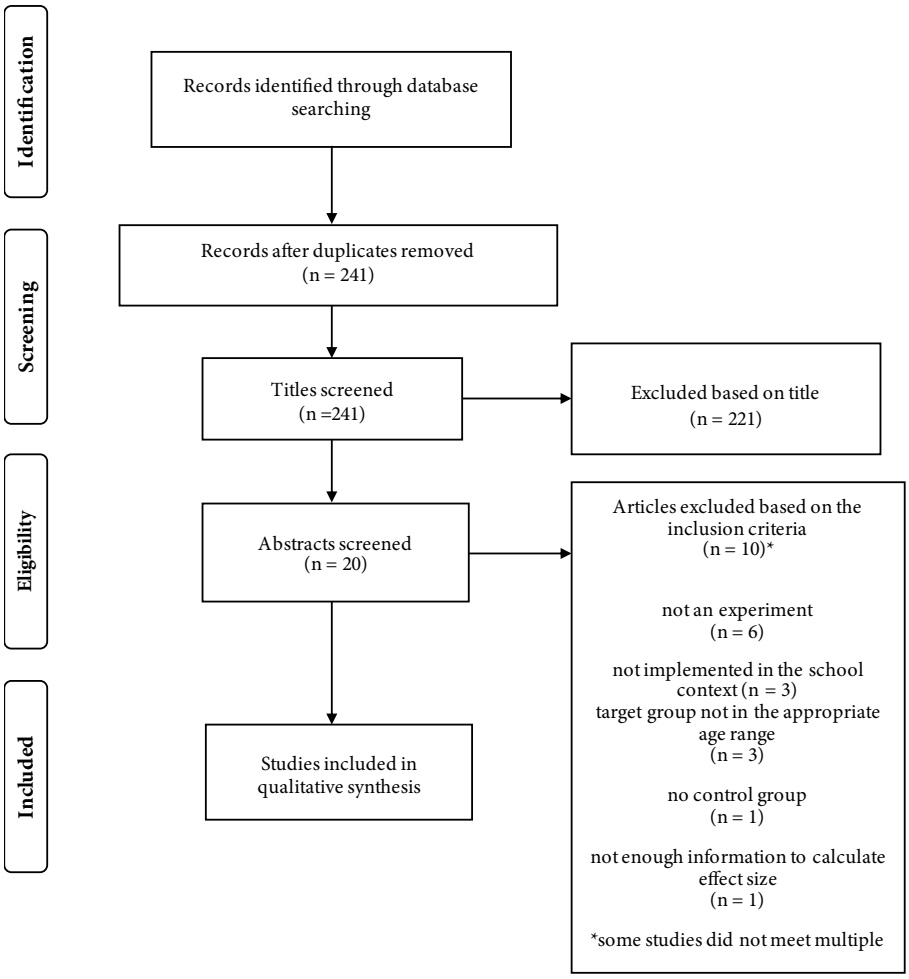

Figure 1. Flow diagram for the inclusion/exclusion of studies.

of the intervention and outcomes of the intervention. Ethnic status of the target group was coded as ethnic majority and mixed if some participants were of the ethnic majority and some of the ethnic minority. No intervention solely included members of an ethnic minority and thus we excluded the category. Studies were also coded based on the participants' age. For studies involving participants from multiple age categories, mean age was taken as a defining parameter. We categorised outcomes in three categories based on prejudice components (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014): cognitive (i.e. expectations of outgroup members), affective (i.e. a negative affect

that accompanies cognitive appraisal) and behavioural (i.e. negative behaviour towards members of the outgroup) (Brown in Brenick, et al., 2019). Cognitive outcomes included stereotypes and attitudes towards the outgroup, perceived similarity with the outgroup, and perceived importance of future contact with the outgroup. Affective outcomes included negative emotions, intergroup anxiety, and fear of rejection by members of the outgroup, while behavioural outcomes included intentions of making intergroup contact, intentions to help an outgroup member, readiness for social intergroup contact, propensity to discriminate, and intention to self-disclose to outgroup members. Some studies are included in multiple categories since they include more than one age group, type of intervention, or outcome of intervention. A description of the studies is given in Table 2.

Computation and testing of effect sizes

For each measured outcome, Cohen's *d* was provided either from the article or was calculated from the sample size, mean and standard deviation of the control and experimental group with *Psychometrica* (Lenhard & Lenhard, 2016). We calculated the mean effect size and 95% confidence interval for every category recorded. Every reported effect size that fit a certain category was included in the calculation of the mean effect size and 95% confidence interval. The number of effect sizes (*n*), mean effect size (*d*+) and 95% confidence interval were reported for each researched category. Results were interpreted according to Cohen (in Lenhard & Lenhard, 2016), with values less than 0 denoting an adverse effect, 0 to 0.1 a negligible effect, 0.2 to 0.4 a small effect, 0.5 to 0.7 a moderate effect and 0.8 to 1.0 a large effect. Positive effects ($d > 0$) were regarded as successful intervention implementation and an attitude improvement towards ethnic outgroups, while negative effects of interventions ($d < 0$) were regarded as an ineffective or detrimental effect on prejudice or related outcomes.

Assessment of article quality

A quality assessment was performed using an adapted version of Joanna Briggs checklist for Randomized Control Trials (Tufanaru et al., 2017). We excluded criteria which required the blindness of intervention administrators (5th criterion), intention to treat analysis (9th criterion) and appropriateness of the RCT design depending on the patients' condition (13th criterion), because they only applied to RCT interventions in medical research. Other criteria were adapted to assess the quality of psychological research.

We assessed research design according to 10 criteria: randomisation for assignment of the participants to treatment groups, concealed allocation of the participants to conditions, similarity of groups at the baseline, blindness of the participants to group assignment, blindness of the outcome assessors to group assignment, identical treatment of the groups other than intervention, completeness of the follow-up, identical outcome measurement for groups, sufficient reliability of the measures ($\alpha > 0.75$) (Bucik, 1997) and the use of appropriate statistical analysis procedures. A point was given for each criterion met, meaning a particular article could achieve a total of 10 points. The assessment of article quality is presented in Table 2.

Results and discussion

In this section, the combined results of the studies included in the systematic review are presented. The section is divided into multiple subchapters according to the research questions set out written in the introductory part of this paper. First, we provide results concerning the general effectiveness of contact-based interventions and compare the effectiveness of direct and indirect contact interventions. Our focus then shifts to the characteristics of interventions that were shown to be important contributors to their effectiveness. We compare the effectiveness of interventions depending on characteristics of the target group, namely the participants' ethnic status and age. Below, we focus on relevant characteristics of the intervention itself and compare effectiveness as regards the intervention administrator, the duration, and the number of sessions. Finally, we compare the interventions' participants with respect to different types of outcomes.

Effectiveness of contact-based interventions

According to the results, contact-based interventions had on average a small-to-moderate positive effect on prejudice and related outcomes (see Table 1), which is in line with the average effect sizes in a meta-analytic review by Ülger et al., 2018 ($k^1 = 19$, $d+= 0.46$, 95% CI [0.23, 0.68]). All studies reported having at least one significant effect between or within groups over time, while 8 of 10 reported significant effects on most outcomes. Two studies with mostly non-significant results ($n = 8$, $d+= 0.05$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.09]) were of lower research quality (see Table 2, namely Liebkind et al., 2013; Vezzali et al., 2018), again proving methodological quality to be

1 Number of studies included in the meta-analysis by Ülger et al. (2018)

Table 1: Effectiveness of interventions based on different parameters.

		n	d+	95% CI
Contact-based interventions*		42	0.48	0.37, 0.60
Types of contact-based interventions				
	Direct contact-based interventions	6	0.82	0.66, 0.99
	Indirect contact-based interventions	34	0.37	0.26, 0.48
Types of indirect contact-based interventions				
	Vicarious contact-based interventions	13	0.22	0.09, 0.35
	Extended contact-based interventions	13	0.31	0.16, 0.46
	Imagined contact-based interventions	8	0.72	0.50, 0.93
Ethnic status				
	Ethnic majority group members	24	0.43	0.32, 0.54
	Mixed ethnic group members	14	0.35	0.15, 0.55
Age of participants				
	Less than 9 years	11	0.52	0.36, 0.68
	Between 9-11 years	14	0.77	0.57, 0.98
	Above 12 years	8	0.05	0.01, 0.09
Administrator of intervention				
	Teacher	5	0.07	0.01, 0.13
	Researcher	20	0.41	0.28,0.54
	External colleague	4	0.76	0.57, 0.95
	Student	5	0.19	0.00, 0.37
Number of sessions				
	1 session	5	0.09	0.06, 0.12
	3 sessions	17	0.66	0.45, 0.87
	6 sessions	13	0.31	0.27, 0.35
	12 sessions	4	0.76	0.56, 0.95
Length of sessions				
	Less than 20 min	12	0.3	0.15, 0.46
	20 to 60 min	12	0.76	0.48, 1.04
	2 to 4 hours	6	0.65	0.46, 0.85
Direct contact intervention outcomes				
	Cognitive	2	0.93	0.83, 1.02
	Affective	1	0.78	/
	Behavioural	3	0.77	0.43, 1.10
Indirect contact intervention outcomes				
	Cognitive	14	0.42	0.25, 0.59
	Affective	3	0.05	0.02, 0.08
	Behavioural	14	0.36	0.29, 0.43

Note. n = number of calculated effect sizes. d+ = mean effect size. 95% CI = 95% confidence interval for calculated mean effect size. *Results include all calculated intervention effect sizes.

significant for an intervention's effectiveness (Aboud et al., 2012; Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014; Ülger et al., 2018).

Effectiveness of direct and indirect contact-based interventions

We excluded one condition of the study by Vezzali et al. (2015a) from the analysis as subjects were simultaneously exposed to direct and indirect contact. Most direct intergroup contact conditions reported large effects on prejudice and related outcomes, while indirect intergroup contact conditions generally had small effects (see Table 1). These results are in line with the findings of Christ et al. (2010) that direct contact may have a bigger effect on prejudice reduction as it always leads to indirect contact through the observation of contact between ingroup and outgroup members. Similarly, a field study found that long-term direct contact had a positive effect on attitudes towards minority children, while extended intergroup contact had no long-term effect (Feddes et al., 2009).

Vezzali et al. (2015a) explicitly compared intervention effectiveness based on the directness of contact in which they compared the effectiveness of direct and imagined contact conditions. Imagined intergroup contact condition had a slightly bigger effect on cognitive and slightly smaller effect on behavioural outcomes than the direct contact condition, although the differences were not significant. The results show that imagined contact has similar effects on prejudice and related outcomes as direct contact while, when applied simultaneously, both types of contact have an additive effect.

The findings of other studies show that indirect contact interventions could have comparable effects, but might be more prone to ineffectiveness if the quality of the administration is low and optimal conditions are not provided, especially in the case of extended and vicarious contact (see paragraph 3.1.2 below). This difference in effect could also be due to not having a representative sample for direct contact interventions since the two studies that investigated the effects of direct contact interventions were of very high methodological and general administration quality, which could contribute significantly to their effectiveness (Ülger et al., 2018). It might also be possible that direct contact is instantly effective while indirect contact effects are apparent only after some time has passed (Christ et al., 2010). Since the follow-up was done after a relatively short time (for most studies after 3 weeks), indirect contact interventions may seem to have less effect than direct contact interventions.

Effectiveness of different indirect contact interventions

Analysis of effectiveness for different indirect contact conditions shows extended intergroup contact having small-to-moderate effects, imagined intergroup contact having moderate-to-large effects, and vicarious intergroup contact mainly having negligible-to-small effects (see Table 1).

The results show that imagined and extended contact can both be highly efficacious if research is high in methodological quality and implements other factors supposedly connected to effective implementation (e.g. the age appropriateness of the intervention) (Ülger et al., 2018). The imagined contact interventions included in this review are high in quality, while the extended contact interventions' quality varies, which could contribute to such differences. A meta-analysis of 70 studies measuring imagined contact intervention effects reported a small effect on prejudice and related outcomes ($d+ = 0.35$) (Miles & Crisp, 2013), suggesting our sample of interventions was particularly efficacious. Nothing could be deduced about vicarious contact interventions as this was implemented by only two studies of low methodological quality, which might add to its ineffectiveness (Aboud et al., 2012; Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014; Ülger et al., 2018).

Another possible explanation is that extended and vicarious contact interventions are simply more prone to being ineffective if certain conditions are not met, such as perceived prototypicality of ingroup and outgroup peer models or group salience (Brown & Hewstone, 2005). Accordingly, the results of Liebkind et al. (2013) show that vicarious contact intervention effectiveness is related to the perceived group prototypicality of characters from the story. Imagined contact may be more efficacious as participants are naturally exposed to their own prototypical representations of outgroup members during visualisation, meaning that this condition is automatically met.

Factors influencing the effectiveness of contact-based interventions

Characteristics of the target group: ethnic status

None of the interventions focused solely on ethnic minority students, which led us to compare interventions with only ethnic majority participants against interventions with participants of ethnic minority and majority group memberships. Interventions with members of the ethnic majority reported small-to-moderate effects, while interventions with ethnically-mixed participants reported small effects (see Table 1.). This is in line with Ülger et al. (2018) who reported similar effect sizes for participants

of ethnic majority (k^2 = 40, d+= 0.40, 95% CI [0.17, 0.64]) and minority (k^2 = 7, d+= 0.23, 95% CI [-0.06, 0.52]) groups.

Three studies included ethnic minorities. The sample of Berger et al. (2016) was comprised of 50% ethnic minority students native to their country of residence. Intervention effectiveness did not differ significantly depending on the participants' ethnic status, although a slightly bigger reduction of the propensity to discriminate for ethnic majority students was reported compared to ethnic minority students right after the intervention. Recently migrated participants or participants with a migratory background comprised approximately 26% of the sample in Liebkind et al. (2013) and Vezzali et al. (2018). Both found ethnic status to be unrelated to intervention effectiveness.

Contact-based interventions can be effective regardless of the participants' ethnic status, yet the results show a slightly bigger effect of interventions on ethnic majority students. This difference may be explained by ethnic minority children already having favourable attitudes towards ethnic majority members. Yet this proposed explanation cannot be applied to the results of an intervention executed in an Israeli-Palestinian context (i.e. Berger et al., 2016) because studies have shown that Palestinians, an ethnic minority, hold similar negative beliefs towards ethnic majority members, Israeli Jews, as they have toward them (Bar-Tal, 1996; Brenick et al., 2010).

Another explanation of the general results may be that this effect is due to most interventions' primary focus on altering the prejudice of ethnic majority children (Aboud et al., 2012). In most studies, prejudice expressed by ethnic majority members towards stigmatised ethnic groups was the primary target of the intervention, as reflected in the selection of the participants (see Table 1), structure and content of the intervention (e.g. leading discussions on the topics of refugees and explaining their cultural specifics). Subsequently, not much attention was given to measuring and reducing any potential negative beliefs of ethnic minorities towards ethnic majority members. Again, this cannot be said for the intervention described by Berger et al. (2016) since prejudice on both sides was addressed equally and both groups were treated as equals (e.g. speaking in the native languages of both communities). Still, nothing of substance can be said since the sample size for mixed ethnic group participants was too small, even though most studies found that ethnic status is not a significant predictor of intervention effectiveness.

2 Number of studies included in the meta-analysis by Ülger et al. (2018)

Characteristics of the target group: cognitive development and age

We excluded the Cameron et al. (2006) study from our analysis of effect sizes because not enough information was provided to calculate the effect sizes for different age groups. The results show that the interventions have small-to-moderate effects on children under 9 years of age, on participants aged 9–11 years moderate-to-large effects and on participants over 12 years negligible effects (see Table 1).

Interventions seem to have been the most effective when they involved children aged 9 to 11. The biggest effects were obtained for 8- to 10-year-olds (Berger et al., 2016; Vezzali et al. 2015a), which is in line with findings from developmental psychology that show children in the transition from middle to late childhood are particularly susceptible to their social environment. This developmental period may represent a crucial point in the development of prejudice as negative attitudes significantly increase/decrease depending on intergroup contact opportunities (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011).

Two of the studies included in the systematic analysis specifically measured differences in intervention effectiveness based on the participants' age. Cameron et al. (2006) found younger children (5- to 8-year-olds) hold significantly more positive attitudes and behavioural intentions towards the outgroup than the older children (9- to 11-year-olds). However, attitudes were only measured after the children had received the intervention, so it may be a case of younger children initially having more positive attitudes towards migrants than an age-related difference in intervention effectiveness.

Cameron et al. (2007) also found that younger children (6- to 8-years-old) have more positive behavioural intentions than older children (9- to 11-years-old), albeit the effects were not significant. The intervention had a similar effect on behavioural outcomes for older and younger children. The effect of multiple classification skills on prejudicial attitudes was also tested that might contribute to prejudice reduction among older children. Theory proposes that multiple classification enables children to perceive individual characteristics of ethnic outgroup members and their similarities with the ethnic ingroup and increases their capacity to remember information inconsistent with their expectations, such as positive experiences with stigmatised group members (Aboud et al., 2012). Still, the study found no effect of multiple classification skills training on prejudicial attitudes, suggesting that prejudice reduction may be independent of cognitive development in

children. This indicates that contact-based interventions may be effective for both age groups.

Interventions seem mostly to have had no effect on teenagers, perhaps because of an unrepresentative sample, lower research quality and the lack of optimal conditions for effective intervention execution (i.e. an intervention administered by untrained teachers and students, non-standardised research conditions) (Ülger et al., 2018) or it could be attributed to the participants' age. Prejudice might be less malleable in adolescence (Augoustinos & Rosewarne, 2001), making prejudice-reducing interventions less effective. Yet, other findings indicate successful contact-based interventions can be administered to an adolescent population (e.g. Tropp & Ramiah, 2017).

Characteristics of intervention implementation: administrator of the intervention

We excluded Vezzali et al. (2015a) from this analysis since who administered the intervention is not specified. When the administrator was a teacher, the intervention produced negligible effects, while interventions administered by researchers as the administrator produced small-to-moderate effects. Interventions produced moderate-to-large effects when administered by external colleagues and negligible-to-small effects when administered by students (see Table 1).

Teachers conducted an intervention in only one study (Vezzali et al., 2018) that produced no effect on outcome measures, which is consistent with several metanalyses that found no effect for teacher-administered interventions (Aboud et al., 2012; Ülger et al., 2018). Such results may be attributed to the lack of sufficient training for intervention execution because it was not specified if the teachers had even received training or perhaps standardisation was lacking since teachers sometimes do not perceive it to be of primary importance or cannot follow the exact procedure due to time restrictions (Stains & Vickrey, 2017). Still, not much can be speculated given that only one study of this kind was included in the review.

Similar effects were observed for interventions administered by students, who had purportedly received training in both studies (Liebkind et al., 2013; Vezzali et al., 2015b), although this is not explained in detail.

When researchers conducted the intervention, no specific trend was observed since the effects varied in size. Administrators have been the authors of the study (Cameron et al., 2006, 2007), assistants to the study's

authors (Vezzali et al., 2011) or were not explicitly defined (Stathi et al., 2014; Vezzali et al., 2014). Interventions administered by researchers might be more effective because of the greater standardisation procedure and expertise, but also since they represent a novelty in the classroom and remind participants of their participation in the experiment, which could induce socially desirable behaviour and perhaps even lead to inflated intervention effects (Kintz et al., 1965).

Interventions were the most effective when carried out by experienced and trained external administrators (i.e. Berger et al., 2016). Administrators were chosen based on their experience of leading interethnic groups and received 2 days of training on prejudice formation and contact theory prior to the intervention starting.

Interventions were the least effective when the training was not specified or only briefly mentioned (Liebkind et al., 2013; Vezzali et al., 2015b; Vezzali et al., 2018), which allows us to assume it was less structured and unsystematic.

Characteristics of intervention implementation: duration and number of sessions

The results show that on average interventions entailing 12 sessions produced moderate-to-large effects, those with 6 sessions small effects, those with 3 sessions moderate-to-large effects and finally those with just 1 session negligible effects (see Table 1).

Interventions were the most effective when the number of sessions was greater, although the results also show that a smaller number of interventions can have similar effects (e.g. Vezzali et al., 2011, 2015a). Effective prejudice-reducing interventions must be well integrated into the school culture to ensure that students are perpetually exposed to diversity acceptance norm (Cotton in Ülger et al., 2018). Accordingly, contact-based interventions with more sessions are shown to be more effective as they demand the school's stronger commitment to reducing prejudice (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014).

While comparing the session lengths, we excluded the studies by Stathi et al. (2014), Vezzali et al. (2014) and Vezzali et al. (2018) because they did not provide such information. On average, interventions with sessions of 2 to 4 hours produced moderate-to-large effects, interventions with sessions of 20 to 60 min produced moderate-to-large effects, and interventions with sessions of less than 20 min small effects (see Table 1). The smallest

effects were reported for interventions with sessions lasting less than 20 minutes, while sessions of a moderate length produced the largest effects. The relationship between intervention effectiveness and session length may be described as an inverted-U curve whereby interventions of a moderate duration (30–60 min) are the most effective. Shorter sessions may impose serious time constraints on the administrators, forcing them to rush through the whole intervention procedure. Not enough time is then given for adequate instruction, while students may not have sufficient time to properly finish a given task. Longer sessions might not contribute to intervention effectiveness due to the fatigue of participants and intervention administrators, causing them to lack in concentration and motivation.

However, the results cannot be generalised as one study with three 1-hour-long sessions (Vezzali et al., 2015a) recorded many large effects, which outweighed the effect sizes of the other studies in the analysis. If we were to exclude this study, three-session interventions would report predominantly small effects and 30- to 60-minute interventions would mostly report negligible positive effects. Still, a linear trend can be observed in terms of the number of sessions since the effectiveness of interventions increases with their number.

Interventions seem to be most effective when they have multiple sessions and are moderate in length. This is in line with the findings of Ülger et al. (2018) that longer interventions with multiple sessions effects are statistically significant, while short one-off interventions effects are statistically non-significant. Yet, only one of the latter was included in our review, which makes it impossible to generalise the findings. Negligible effects might also be due to the poorer methodological quality of a study (see Table 1). Nevertheless, our results indicate that frequent and long-term direct or indirect exposure to members of an ethnic outgroup can more effectively reduce prejudice since the likelihood of positive interactions and experiences with members of the outgroup has increased (Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

Outcomes of contact-based interventions

Direct contact interventions had moderate-to-large effects on behavioural outcomes (i.e. propensity to discriminate, intention to help an outgroup member), large effects on cognitive outcomes (i.e. negative stereotypes) and a moderate effect on affective outcomes (i.e. negative emotions towards the outgroup) (see Table 1).

Direct contact produced a smaller effect on a negative affective outcome compared to behavioural and cognitive outcomes, which contradicts the findings of a meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) that interventions based on direct contact are expected to produce the largest effects on negative affective outcomes. However, only one measurement of a negative affective outcome for direct contact interventions was included in the analysis, and thus we cannot generalise our findings.

Consistent with the results of Paolini et al. (2007), our analysis shows direct contact interventions produce moderate effects on behavioural outcomes even after a longer period of time, as Berger et al. (2016) reported significant positive effects on behavioural outcomes (i.e. number of intergroup friendships) 15 months after the intervention.

Indirect contact-based interventions produced small-to-moderate effects on cognitive outcomes, small effects on behavioural outcomes, and negligible effects on affective outcomes (see Table 1). This is consistent with Paolini et al. (2007) who state that indirect contact interventions could have a greater effect on cognitive outcomes than behavioural and affective ones.

Direct contact interventions produced larger effects on all three types of outcomes, which is consistent with Turner et al. (2007). A particularly large difference in effect can be seen for affective outcomes, which may indicate that direct contact is particularly efficacious at reducing affective aspects of prejudice, as reported by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006). Still, these differences cannot be generalised because the number of studies that conducted a direct contact intervention was extremely small.

Limitations and directions for future research

Several prominent limitations of this review should be addressed. First, we investigated a limited amount of potentially relevant factors that contribute to intervention effectiveness. Intervention effectiveness might also vary depending on the cultural environment and specifics of the intergroup contact (Ülger et al., 2018). Not all interventions included in the present paper can be compared with each other as they were executed in quite different cultural settings, which explains why some of our results may be deemed inconclusive. The study by Berger et al. (2016), for example, stands out from the other studies included as the ethnic minority group (i.e. Palestinians) is native to Israel while the other studies mostly focused on reducing prejudice against recently migrated ethnic minorities. Conducting an intervention in such a setting may require a different approach from the rest

as prejudice towards the other group might be more ingrained in people's cultural identity and stem from traumatic experiences such as armed confrontations during the Israel–Gaza conflict in 2014 and in May of this year (Bilefsky, 2021).

Second, the qualitative analysis considered a small sample of studies as only 10 prejudice-reducing interventions met the inclusion criteria. If we were to compute only one effect size for each treatment group, we would be unable to calculate the mean effect size and confidence intervals, which meant we had to violate the assumption of independence between effect sizes. Consequently, we could only speculate on the differences in intervention effectiveness. The number of studies included was so small that the one intervention with many significant results might have overshadowed the results of the other interventions. Third, publication bias (i.e. the risk of reporting only statistically significant results) was not evaluated. Since two of the ten studies recorded mostly non-significant results, we estimate that the risk of publication bias in this research area is low. Lastly, there remains the possibility not all suitable studies were included in the review because articles were drawn from just three databases.

The interventions included in this review were conducted almost exclusively in Italy and Great Britain and by the same sets of researchers, which makes it difficult to generalise the findings to all cultural settings. The optimal ways to reduce ethnic prejudice might depend on the cultural environment and specifics of the intergroup contact (Ülger et al., 2018). Thus, future studies could be conducted in other European countries, like for example Germany, that in 2016 recorded the biggest influx of migrants into Europe (Eurostat, 2017) or Turkey, among non-European countries (Canefe, 2016). Only one study that was included (i.e. Berger et al., 2016) explored ways of tackling the prejudice of ethnic minority students. Reducing prejudice among members of ethnic minorities should not be overlooked as that could help increase their motivation to engage in contact and subsequently lead to more frequent intergroup contact (Glasford & Dovidio, 2011). Further research should also find ways of successfully conducting interventions involving the adolescent population and assessing the long-term effects of indirect contact interventions (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Christ et al., 2010).

In the future, studies should also consider more behavioural measures, especially measures of actual behaviour (e.g. intergroup friendship 1 year after the intervention like in Berger et al. (2016)), instead of hypothetical

behaviour. Just one study (Vezzali et al., 2011) measured implicit attitudes towards an outgroup. Findings show that prejudicial attitudes become more implicit with age (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011), thus measures of implicit prejudice should be used more often in future studies, especially those with older children and adolescents.

Conclusions and practical implications

In the present paper, we reviewed ten studies that conducted contact-based interventions to reduce ethnic prejudice against migrants in the school context. Our study is among the first to consider the recent shift in prejudice prevention research that specifically focuses on the current issue of reducing prejudice to facilitate the integration of migrants, refugees and other ethnic minorities into existing communities. This review is also one the first to address differences in effectiveness depending on the type of indirect contact. Given that indirect contact interventions are much less logistically demanding and can be carried out preventively in schools even before migrants are included in the educational process, our findings hold important implications for the widespread implementation of indirect contact interventions in European schools.

The review findings provide valuable suggestions for conducting an effective prejudice-reducing intervention in the school context. The decision on whether to perform a direct or indirect contact-based intervention should be based on opportunities to include members of the ethnic minority and the type of outcomes intended to be achieved. A direct contact intervention is appropriate if migrants and ethnic minority students are already enrolled in an educational institution and there is a need to reduce negative feelings associated with an outgroup (e.g. fear of the outgroup) and to create long-lasting behaviour change (e.g. intergroup friendships, reduction of discrimination). An indirect contact intervention is appropriate when gathering enough ethnic minority students is impossible and there is a need to reduce negative beliefs and stereotypes in ethnic majority children before the initiation of intergroup contact. Extended and vicarious contact should only be implemented in highly controlled and standardised interventions since their effectiveness relies on certain conditions that may prove hard to achieve (e.g. perceived typicality of ethnic group members in a story) (Liebkind et al., 2013). Imagined contact interventions have fewer requirements that are typically easier to fulfil (e.g. variability in imagined scenarios to generalise the effect) (Miles & Crisp, 2013), which makes them

the best to implement in practice. Intervention administrators should be given systematic training before the intervention starts and, if possible, be experienced in leading workshops for ethnically diverse groups. As many sessions as feasible should be included while still considering the intervention's time-efficiency. Individual sessions should be long enough so as not to impose time constraints on the administrators and participants, while still short enough to not risk the participants' fatigue and loss of attention. We recommend that sessions last 20–60 min or longer, although participants' age and task complexity must be taken into account.

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Appendix

Table 2: Description of the interventions included in the systematic literature review.

Authors (year of publication)	Country	N	Intervention	Setting	Sample characteristics Age; Ethnic status*	Intervention implementation Administrator; Number and duration of sessions	Study limitations	Research quality by Tufanaru et al. (2017)
Berger et al. (2016)	Israel	322	DC	Conflict between two native ethnic groups Israeli-Jews (80% of the population) and Palestinians (20% of the population), living in highly segregated communities in Jaffa	8-9 years old; Ethnic majority and minority (50%)	External colleagues; 12 sessions (2x month); 4 hours	Parents notified of research aim.	9
Cameron et al. (2007)	GB	198	EC	Tensions between the majority white British community and ethnic minority immigrants and refugees	6-8 and 9-11 years; Ethnic majority	Researcher; 6 sessions (1x week); 15-20 min	No info. on age structure for each condition, participants, and assessors' blindness of condition assignment	7

Authors (year of publication)	Country	N	Intervention	Setting	Sample characteristics Age; Ethnic status*	Intervention implementation Administrator; Number and duration of sessions	Study limitations	Research quality by Tufanaru et al. (2017)
Cameron et al. (2006)	GB	253	VC	Discrimination against immigrants by the majority community in southern England, one of refugees' major ports for entering the country	5-8 years and 9-11 years; Ethnic majority	Researcher; 6 sessions (1x week); 15-20 min	No info. on participants' blindness of condition assignment, measure (PRAM II) not suitable for children older than 9 years	8
Liebkind et al. (2013)	Finland	797	EC	Ethnic diversity in the capital area of Finland, with a high share of the population with an immigrant background, especially from Russia, Estonia and Somalia	13-19 years (M = 15 years); Ethnic majority and minority (26.9%)	Social psychology students; 3 sessions (1x week); 45 min	Randomisation only on class level, no info. on age and ethnic structure in each condition, no info. on participants' and assessors' blindness of condition assignment, no info. on reliability of the measures	5
Stathi et al. (2014)	GB	129	IC	Increasing number of Asians immigrating to urban areas of South-East Great Britain	7-9 years; Ethnic majority	Researcher; 3 sessions (1x week)	No info. on participants' and assessors' blindness of condition assignment	8
Vezzali et al. (2011)	Italy	44	IC	Increased influx of immigrants from Africa to Italy, leading to increased cultural diversity in schools	9-10 years; Ethnic majority	Researcher; 3 sessions (1x week); 30 min.	No info. on participants' and assessors' blindness of condition assignment	8
Vezzali et al. (2018)	Italy	485	VC	Cultural diversity in northern Italy, with a high share of the population with an immigrant background from Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia	14-22 years (M = 17 years); Ethnic majority and minority (26.2%)	Teacher; 1 session	No info. on age and ethnic structure in each condition and participants' blindness of condition assignment. Teachers notified of research condition; intervention procedure not standardised.	6

Authors (year of publication)	Country	N	Intervention	Setting	Sample characteristics Age; Ethnic status*	Intervention implementation Administrator; Number and duration of sessions	Study limitations	Research quality by Tufanaru et al. (2017)
Vezzali et al. (2015a)	Italy	200	IC + DC	Increasing number of immigrants in Italy during the height of the European refugee crisis	8-10 years; Ethnic majority and minority (25.5%)	3 sessions (1x week); 1 hour	No info. on ethnic structure in each condition, participants', and assessors' blindness of condition assignment.	7
Vezzali et al. (2014)	Italy	34	EC	Increased cultural diversity in northern Italy at the start of the European refugee crisis	10 years; Ethnic majority	Researcher; 6 sessions (1x week)	No info. on randomisation, participants', and assessors' blindness of condition assignment. Low re-test reliability of the measure.	6
Vezzali et al. (2015b)	Italy	120	EC	Increasing number of immigrants in Italy during the height of the European refugee crisis	8 years - 14 years; Ethnic majority	Students; 3 sessions (1x week); 2 hours	Randomisation only on class level. No info on sample characteristics in each condition, participants', and assessors' blindness of condition assignment.	6

Note. GB = Great Britain; DC = direct contact; EC = extended contact; VC = vicarious contact; IC = imagined contact. * Percentages shown in brackets denote the share of ethnic minority members participating in the study.

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Citations marked with an asterisk indicate studies included in the systematic review.

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Mobilising the potential held by one's entire linguistic repertoire for positive youth development

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Abstract

In the article, we discuss the role played by language and multilingualism as relevant contexts for promoting a positive youth development perspective (i.e., PYD). Today, multilingualism is generally seen as individuals' mastering of a complex linguistic repertoire associated with cognitive, social, personal, academic and (expected) professional benefits (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2017). Europe's education policies identify multilingualism as one of the main pillars of global and multicultural education. EU institutions therefore encourage the member states to develop new "multilingual and whole-school approaches that equally include the language of schooling, foreign languages and home languages of students across all school subjects, curriculum, as well as involving parents and the wider school community in their learning process" (Staring & Broughton, 2020, p. 17). In the article, we present contemporary notions of multilingualism that underpin relevant EU recommendations to integrate multilingual approaches in education. We also search for points of intersection that could establish possibilities for conceptualising the language context of PYD with theories of multilingualism and its various dimensions in the school environment (especially those of the language of schooling, first language, foreign languages) with emphasis on students with an immigrant background.[1]

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Keywords: multilingualism, PYD, the language of schooling, language anxiety, migrant education

Spodbujanje posameznikovega celotnega jezikovnega repetoarja kot potencial za pozitivni razvoj mladih
Povzetek

V prispevku raziskujemo vlogo jezika, pri tem zlasti večjezičnosti kot relevantnega konteksta v okviru paradigme pozitivnega razvoja mladih (PYD). Večjezičnost danes v splošnem razumemo kot posameznikovo obvladovanje kompleksnega jezikovnega repertoarja, ki se tesno povezuje s kognitivnimi, družbenimi, osebnostnimi, pa tudi z učnimi in (pričakovanimi) poklicnimi koristmi (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2017). Evropske izobraževalne politike opredeljujejo večjezičnost kot enega glavnih stebrov globalne in multikulturne vzgoje in izobraževanja. Zato ni naključje, da institucije v okviru Evropske unije svoje članice spodbujajo k razvijanju novih "večjezičnih in vsešolskih pristopov, ki kot enakovredne v učni proces vključujejo učne in tuje jezike, skupaj z jeziki družinskega okolja, ki jih govorijo učenci in dijaki, na ravni vseh učnih predmetov ter kurikula, kot tudi z vključevanjem njihovih staršev in širšega šolskega okolja" (Staring & Broughton, 2020, p. 17). V prispevku orišemo aktualna sodobna pojmovanja večjezičnosti, na katerih so utemeljena relevantna priporočila Evropske unije za vključevanje večjezičnih pristopov v vzgojo in izobraževanje. Na tej podlagi v nadaljevanju iščemo možne stične točke, ki bi lahko omogočile konceptualizacijo jezikovnega konteksta v okviru paradigme pozitivnega razvoja mladih s teorijami večjezičnosti in njenih različnih dimenzij v kontekstu šolskega okolja (zlasti učnega, prvega in tujih jezikov) s poudarkom na učencih in dijakih s priseljenskim ozadjem.

Ključne besede: večjezičnost, pozitivni razvoj mladih, učni jezik, jezikovna anksioznost, izobraževanje priseljencev

Introduction

The article reflects the possibilities of interdisciplinary research combining certain multilingual perspectives from the sociolinguistics field with positive youth development (PYD). This line of research has yet to be considered on its own and in the article we wish to outline the scope of the language context within the PYD model by indicating certain key features of multilingualism and its research while also tackling two fundamental questions along the way:

1. What can multilingualism, its research, and implementation in education gain by exploring perspectives like PYD?
2. Which topics, issues and findings in the field of multilingualism are relevant for shaping models and practical interventions that enable adolescents' strengths to be identified and promoted, ones that would not normally be expected, and thereby change the view often reflected in traditional assumptions on the role held by positive youth development.

Our research forms part of a larger project *Positive Youth Development in Slovenia: Developmental Pathways in the Context of Migration (PYD-SI Model)*, whose principal aim is to investigate the longitudinal pathways for positive youth development. The project focuses on identifying individual and contextual factors that promote positive outcomes on the levels of the individual, school and society able to prevent risky or problem behaviour. By recognising language as one such specific context in the PYD-SI Model, we try to bring attention to the role of multilingualism in both education and in the design of prevention programmes that assist young people to more successfully develop their self-image and become aware of cultural and linguistic diversity while strengthening their role in the community (e.g., home, school). In this process, their plurilingual communication competence also plays an important part, understood here as both a composite competence of an individual's knowledge and experience with different languages and cultures, and a fundamental means of making meaning and establishing relationships with others (Coste et al., 2009, p. 11).

Multilingualism: some conceptualisations and contemporary research

Multilingualism is a phenomenon as old as humanity. It is also a fundamental concept that has always defined Europe in social, cultural and political terms (Burke, 2004). The global political situation coupled with economic and technological development, which have stimulated global (transnational) mobility in the 21st century, have put multilingualism at the forefront of different political, social and educational contexts (Cenoz, 2013b, p. 4). These contexts make multilingualism an essential element in the everyday life of individuals, where an individual's mastering of a complex linguistic repertoire is associated with their cognitive, social, personal,

academic and professional benefits (Herzog-Punzenberger et al., 2017, p. 8).[2] Compared to the role of multilingual practices in history, contemporary multilingualism is more visible and valued since it has become a much more global and diverse phenomenon. It is spread across different parts of the world, social classes, professions, and socio-cultural activities (Comanaru & Dewaele, 2015). Further, due to technological development, multilingualism is no longer limited to oral or written forms of communication and language use but has evolved to become an instantaneous and multimodal practice that routinely takes place over vast distances and, in large part, also in virtual space (Aronin & Singelton, 2008; Cenoz, 2013b).

Definitions: from multilingualism and plurilingualism to translanguaging

Contemporary multilingualism is thus necessarily viewed as an interdisciplinary and multidimensional research topic that may be approached from different perspectives and disciplines, such as linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and education complete with its contexts and research fields like pedagogy, didactics, education policies etc. Consequently, the term has attracted many definitions that have changed through time according to the shift in the trajectory of research of bi- and multilingualism, particularly marked by the normative perspective, and transformed from a monolingual to a bi-/multilingual norm. Moreover, the standard views of multilingualism as a psychologically and socially harmful phenomenon very commonly found in the early days gradually evolved into the contemporary general acknowledgement that multilingualism is a continual, dynamic ability to command two or more languages, which comprises demonstration of certain minimal level of competence in speaking, listening, reading and writing, with a positive social connotation. Namely, the ability to master two or more languages has been recognised as bringing "opportunities not only to the individual but also to the society as a whole" (Wei et al., 2002, p. 3). Correspondingly, several dimensions are stressed in definitions of multilingualism, such as the individual and social dimension of multilanguage use, the question of language proficiency

2 Here, we have in mind Gumperz's concept of *repertoire* (1964), which also gave rise to the notion of a *plurilingual repertoire* within ECML research, which is summarised as the »totality of linguistic, sociolinguistic, metalinguistic and (socio)cultural knowledge related to several languages (and their varieties and registers), mastered at different degrees and for different use, that is available to an individual in an (exolinguistic) communicative and interactive situation« (Chen & Helot, 2018, p. 170).

in the multilingual context, and the role of the number of languages (two or more) in use in society or by the individual (e.g., Cenoz, 2013b; Dewaele, 2016; Kemp, 2009). For example, a social situation is foregrounded in societal multilingualism, which "conveys the ability of societies, institutions, groups, and individuals to have regular use of more than one language in their everyday lives over space and time" (Franceschini, 2011, p. 346). On the other hand, in individual multilingualism, a person's ability to use two or more languages in different communicative situations with various degrees of competence is emphasised (Cenoz, 2013b, p. 5). The social and individual dimensions cannot be neatly separated. While observing multilingual practices, other subdimensions can also be distinguished, such as *additive* and *subtractive multilingualism* (Lambert, 1974) where the individual's linguistic repertoire is connected to the social context and refers to the formal interventions of languages added or subtracted from a person's repertoire due to the specifics of the education system or immigration.

Within the (European) social context, it is essential to mention the European Commission's education agenda where multilingualism is seen as a critical pillar of education that enables better integration into Europe's social, learning and professional processes. Further, in the context of language learning the multilingual perspective shows the importance of valuing linguistic diversity as one of the constitutive notions of Europe and as a result of the recent migration processes and increased within-EU mobility (2019). The European Commission and the Council of Europe are the two central European institutions when it comes to issuing education policies. With resolutions and policy guides, they encourage their member states to develop new "multilingual and whole-school approaches that equally include the language of schooling, foreign languages and home languages of students across all school subjects' curriculum, as well as involving parents and the wider school community in their learning process" (Staring & Broughton, 2020, p. 17). In the Council of Europe's *Guide for developing and implementing plurilingual and intercultural education* (Beacco et al., 2016; henceforth *Guide*), two separate concepts (i.e., *multilingualism* and *plurilingualism*) are defined, which broadly correspond to the societal and individual dimensions.[3] According to the *Guide*, the difference between multilingualism and plurilingualism is seen multilingualism's reference "*to the*

3 They originate from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001, 2018, 2020), an essential document for language education in Europe that provides a basis for elaborating language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks etc.

presence of several languages in a given geographical area, regardless of those who speak them. In other words, the presence of two or more languages in an area does not necessarily imply that people in that area can use several of them; some use only one" (Beacco et al., 2016, p. 20, emphases are ours). In contrast, plurilingualism or plurilingual competence is defined as "the ability to use *a plural repertoire of linguistic and cultural resources* to meet communication needs or interact with people from other backgrounds and contexts, and *enrich that repertoire* while doing so" (Beacco et al., 2016, p. 20, emphases are ours). The notion of plurilingual repertoire centres solely around language use and places the issue of language proficiency in the background. It consists of "*resources* which individual learners have acquired in *all the languages they know or have learned*, and which also relate to *the cultures associated with those languages* (languages of schooling, regional/minority and migration languages, modern or classical languages)" (ibid., emphases are ours). Such a perspective is essential because it acknowledges the value of developing an individual's plurilingual repertoire and does not focus solely on learning a specific language as the main factor in enabling communication. A plurilingual perspective supports the use of an individual's idiolect in institutional settings, where a particular dominant language(s) typically prevails.

Definitions of multilingualism and plurilingualism often reveal an overlap. When an individual's knowledge and ability to master (three or more) different languages (as opposed to monolingualism and bilingualism) are characterised in the scholarly literature published in English, they are semantically equal, except that 'multilingualism' is in this sense used especially in the American environment (e.g., Garcia, 2009), while 'plurilingualism' emerged largely from linguistic and intercultural conceptualisations proposed by the Council of Europe and the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) established at the Council of Europe (e.g., Coste et al., 2009). In particular, French linguists strictly distinguish multilingualism as the coexistence of several languages in society from plurilingualism, which puts the individual at the forefront and relates to his/her life experiences with different languages and cultures (Grommes & Hu, 2014; Chen & Helot, 2018).

Having radically changed how language learning and teaching practices have traditionally been conceived, another current perspective in

multilingualism and bilingual education is *translanguaging* (Garcia & Wei 2014).[4] By focusing on speakers and their communication practices, translanguaging is concerned with the notions of code-switching (i.e., switching back and forth between two languages as autonomous and separate systems), especially code-meshing (i.e., mixing different local, vernacular, colloquial and world dialects of one language), yet stands apart from them in terms of its solid reference to the diverse bi-/multilingual language use of all actors in the pedagogical process, one which rises above the monoglossic perspective of the separate existence and use of two languages. Garcia (2009), who broadened the scope of the term, sees translanguaging as a process involving multiple discursive practices and refers to the complex language practices of individuals and communities and the pedagogical approaches to integrating these practices in formal school settings. When perceived as the standard and socially non-problematic mode of communication, translanguaging allows speakers to freely use the entire linguistic repertoire of their idiolects at any time, "without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 283).

García and Kano remind us that translanguaging in education should be seen as:

> a process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that include ALL the language practices of ALL students in a class to develop new language practices and sustain old ones, communicate and appropriate knowledge, and give voice to new sociopolitical realities by interrogating linguistic inequality. (García & Kano 2014, p. 261, capitalised emphases by authors)

We believe this is a key aspect because such practices promote a deeper understanding of the learning content, which improves when the individual's whole linguistic repertoire is activated in the pedagogical process (Cenoz, 2013a). Further, introducing translanguaging practices into the classroom (or whole school environment) also establishes a new relationship

4 The term translanguaging was coined in Welsh by Cen Williams. It referred to a pedagogical practice of deliberately changing the language of input and output to increase understanding and augment one's activity in both languages. The idea of translanguaging was further developed to the idea of the general communicative practice of multilinguals (see Garcia & Wei, 2014).

in the social hierarchy of languages between the weaker language and the more dominant one. In education, the dominant language is the language of instruction (i.e., the language of schooling), which is usually also the language of school management. In many situations, the language of instruction is also the national language or an official regional language (i.e., the majority language). There are also languages with the dominant connotation that are a part of school curricula as additional languages (i.e., foreign languages – modern and ancient) and are recognised as socially more prestigious (Lambert, 1974) by the society and community due to various differently motivated ends. The weaker language/s, on the other hand, is/are usually the language/s of domestic communication (i.e., languages used at home) as well as the language/s acquired in early childhood.

Within translanguaging practices, the weaker language formally attains an equal (social) position as one of the constitutive languages in education and is explicitly designated and perceived as an asset (of the individual and community) and not as a weakness, burden or impediment to the pedagogical process and its actors. This circumstance holds profound social justice implications for the education of bilingual students. Whereas monolingual students are usually allowed the full use of their linguistic repertoire in assessment and learning, bilinguals are seldom permitted to do so, thereby keeping them silent and unengaged in teaching and assessment activities (Garcia & Lin 2016, p. 6).

In this contribution, we want to reflect on the language context within the PYD perspective mainly in terms of the societal and individual dimensions of multilingualism; thus, we use the terms *multilingualism* and *multilingual individuals* generically while referring to the use of two or more languages (including bilingualism).[5] While referring to the specific language competence of individual or educational/school approaches and

5 We are aware that many different terminologies about the languages that people speak in different social situations establish relationships between individual languages and reflect value views on languages and language education. One of the most common terminologies is L1, L2, L3 ... (i.e., first, second, third language) and denotes a sequential order of acquisition terminology but becomes problematic in simultaneous bilingual or trilingual acquisition cases. Dewaele (2010) proposes a terminology of L1 (the language of the first contact) and LX languages (languages of the multilinguals learnt after an L1); others suggest »additional languages« for those that are not connected to the initial socialisation of the speaker (Douglas Fir Group, 2016) or even reject the notion of L1 and L2 with the idea of the speaker's linguistic repertoire that consists of different features F(n) and belongs to the speaker's one (and not two) language system (Garcia & Wei 2014). In the article, we use the LI, L2 … LX notions while referring to the initial and additional languages.

teaching practices that focus on developing a student's plurilingual repertoire, we employ as synonyms the terms *plurilingual* or *multilingual competence*, *language multi-competence* and *plurilingual approaches*, as well as *translanguaging* and *translanguaging practices*. The plurilingual approach to learning is inevitably connected to the notions of pluriculturality (i.e., the ability to participate in different cultures) and interculturality (the ability to experience otherness and diversity) as defined by the *Guide* (Beacco et al. 2016, p. 20) in the context of acquiring several languages. The development of plurilingual and intercultural awareness has become a leading educational goal of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2019) and a fundamental principle of language education policies, whereas translanguaging practices in education have primarily been used in the USA and in Asia (Garcia & Wei, 2014) and have recently also found a place in European research on multilingualism in education (Cenoz, 2009). Apart from developing language competencies and raising questions about the key role of languages in education, both approaches emphasise the role of education in the respect of cultural diversity and for ensuring social equity (cf. Beacco & Byram, 2007). However, at the moment, the importance of integrating plurilingual approaches with education for democracy is stressed particularly in Europe (e.g., *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, 2020).

The contemporary study of multilingualism and why interdisciplinary research is relevant

We now briefly demonstrate the diversity in the contemporary study of multilingualism by summarising the approaches and findings found in Cenoz (2013b, pp. 7–10).[6]

Divided into two main groups and based on the individual and societal dimensions of multilanguage use, the author underlines the following areas of the modern study of multilingualism as particularly important.

Individual dimensions in the study of multilingualism involve: 1) *the cognitive outcomes of multilingualism* (e.g., positive effects of bi-/multilingualism on metalinguistic awareness and cognitive development, positive effects through lifespan such as the age-related decline in episodic

6 For each perspective in the field of study, the most influential authors are presented as well. We do not mention them here because we want to show the thematic breadth of multilingualism's treatment rather than individual directions. Later, when specific areas are mentioned, we name the relevant authors and their research.

memory); 2) *the relationship between language and thought in multilinguals* (e.g. acquisition of additional languages and different factors that affect a person's thinking, perceptions, inner speech, and gesturing); 3) *multilingual language processing* (e.g., the mechanisms involved in comprehension and the productions of two or more languages, mental representations of the multilingual lexicon); 4) *the multilingual brain* (e.g., the study of characteristics of bilingual processing); and 5) *cross-linguistic interaction* (e.g., the complexity of code-switching).

Societal dimensions of multilanguage use are usually described in terms of: 1) *social construction* (e.g., languages as a set of resources and their socio-political implications); 2) *multilingual identities* (e.g., the individual's language choices from among the available linguistic resources as an act of his/her identity); 3) *multilingual practices* (e.g., various language practices in different contexts, such as pre-colonial and post-colonial non-Western contexts, language boundaries in urban contexts etc.); and 4) *multilingualism and multimodality* (e.g., language choices in the context of multimedia technology, communication channels, multimodal literacy).

Many areas of the contemporary study of multilingualism (on the individual and societal levels) often address multilingual phenomena in three highly relevant socio-historical macro contexts: *globalisation*, *migrations*, and *new technology-based communication techniques*. Particularly in the last 20 years, these contexts represent the universal social conditions that significantly influence multilinguals and their language choices while also affecting/shaping the general (societal) attitude to languages and their role in various micro contexts like education, research, media and politics as well as everyday communication practices in various professional and private settings.

Almost all of these perspectives bring valuable insights that can and should be considered while addressing the context of education. Yet, results stemming from research that combines methodologies and epistemologies from applied linguistics and social psychology are equally (if not more) significant for better understanding and acknowledging the role multilingualism plays in the context of inclusive education in the 21st century. Namely, a combination of diverse qualitative and quantitative approaches (see Comanaru & Dewaele, 2015) adds to understanding of a range of aspects of multilingualism. It can provide ideologically less burdened, evidence-based and sound arguments for going beyond the monolingual perspective and a solid basis for developing policies and practices that can

truly bring about the multilingual paradigm shift in the school environment. On the individual level, this shift unequivocally and explicitly defines the individual's entire language repertoire as an asset with cognitive, emotional, and personality development benefits. On the level of society, the shift regulates the school environment and pedagogical process by recognising this asset and ensuring an equal position for all languages as resources in the pedagogical process.

Results from interdisciplinary research combining social psychology and applied linguistics show that bi-/multilingualism does not affect intelligence but positively affects the metalinguistic awareness and cognitive development of children (Barac & Bialystock, 2011) and holds advantages by way of creative behaviour and divergent thinking (Kharkhurin, 2008, 2010). These studies also show that, compared to monolinguals, bi-/multilingual teenagers and adults typically score higher for openness/open-mindedness, cognitive and cultural empathy, social initiative, suffer less from foreign-language anxiety, and see themselves as generally more competent in communication (Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009; Dewaele & Wei 2012). This supports the perspective that multilingualism is a complex *multi-competence*, which qualitatively differs from the competence of monolingual speakers and affects the shaping of personality (Cook 1992, Dewaele, 2016). On the societal level, this perspective offers a view of multilingualism not only as a phenomenon inextricably connected to one's identity but is a significant aspect in different social contexts. Such contexts range from construction and negotiation of identity through language in different social interactions to the various issues related to acknowledging the diverse multilingual and multicultural background of multilinguals in different micro contexts like education, professional and private life, and active citizenship.

It is important to mention a developing interdisciplinary research perspective in multilingualism that connects applied linguistics with positive psychology. In a 2014 article, Mercer and MacIntyre introduced the field of positive psychology (PP) and the implications it holds for research into the practical, human and social dimensions of language learning, notably of second language acquisition (SLA). The general idea of PP that it is vital to study how people thrive and flourish as well as how to increase their (character) strengths and virtues becomes relevant when these elements are studied in the context of institutions, such as classrooms, schools, and language policies that explicitly enable the expression and development of strengths (Mercer & MacIntyre, 2014). This new holistic view of foreign

language learning was inspired by PP in the sense that it moved away from a sole focus on negative emotions (i.e., foreign-language classroom anxiety – FLCA) and also included learners' positive emotions (i.e., foreign-language enjoyment – FLE,) as an essential part of the language learning process (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2017; Dewaele & MacIntyre 2014; Resnik & Dewaele 2020).

Multilingualism in the migrations context – some points to consider

The global political and economic development over the last 25 years, which has given ever more social, political or economic reasons for people to leave their home country, has made studies on acculturation become particularly relevant, with a number of approaches and models emerging to investigate "the way people accommodate the heritage and the mainstream culture in which they are immersed" (Panicacci & Dewaele, 2017, p. 4). As mentioned, the context of migration is also one of the three socio-historical macro contexts in contemporary multilingualism research that study various processes and factors in immigrants' re-socialisation in a new (i. e., host/majority) language and culture, and how they shape their personalities and identities. In complex processes of negotiating their multiple cultural identities (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005), immigrants' multiple-language use plays an essential role in terms of linguistic preferences in their everyday interactions within the host/majority language speaking community and expressing emotions (Panicacci & Dewaele, 2017). The need to adapt (i.e., learn new skills and absorb new information) to a new environment combined with the experience of loss, cultural differences and problems of constructing social networks within the majority and ethnic groups can cause different behaviour and emotional difficulties (e.g. low esteem with higher depression and anxiety among migrant children (Diler et al., 2003), which among others also manifest as communicative anxiety and a negative influence on linguistic competence. Studies of language anxiety in the immigrant context (Sevinç & Backus, 2017, Sevinç & Dewaele, 2016;) reveal its linguistic and socioemotional complexity, ranging from immigrants' identity issues created by linguistic difficulties and their insecurity of knowledge and use of either the majority language (ML) or the heritage language (HL), and are closely linked to linguistic and social inequality as well as perceptions of native-likeness, sense of belonging, and social exclusion regarding the ethnic and local (i.e. mainstream) community.

On the other hand, studies investigating the impact of bicultural identity, bilingualism and social context found beneficial psychological outcomes of bilingualism (Chen et al., 2008). Panicacci (2019) combined psychological and linguistic variables in her study on the link between the languages migrants use in private and emotional domains and their sense of belonging to the heritage and the host culture. Supported by an extensive overview of previous research of acculturation processes, emotion expression, and language perception, the results show that it is not the portion of life spent in the country that helps boost migrants' acculturation level to the host country but their emotional, affective, mental and linguistic engagement with the local community. One of the crucial roles in this identity-reshaping process is played by language use, which tends to entail a hybrid of different languages (L1 and LX) and cultures. When a specific language (L1 or LX) is used in a communicative situation, it helps migrants either maintain a solid connection with their cultural roots or develop a new affiliation for the new culture. In the complex puzzle of hybrid migrant identities, cultural orientations, and life situations, Panicacci's research shows that both (or more) languages are used for expressing emotions (not only L1 as the ordinary language of the heart) and even considering LX a dominant and emotional language does not necessarily cause migrants to disengage from their heritage.

For a paradigm shift in the perspective of social change that is brought by the immigration and acculturation and shapes the personality of young people as well, the research "Third Culture Kids" (TCKs) or "Cross-Cultural Kids" (CCKs)[7] is also relevant by showing the potential in the development of young immigrants' own unique life patterns due to the complexity of their life experiences. In a study of links between multilingualism, multiculturalism, acculturation, and the personality profiles of TCKs, Dewaele and Oudenhoven (2009) discovered that out of 79 teenagers in London, those who had been born abroad and spent their childhood in London (i.e., TCKs) scored significantly higher for Openmindedness and Cultural Empathy and significantly lower for Emotional Stability as measured by the

7 The concept was introduced from sociology by Useem and Useem (1967) and extended by Pollock and Van Reken (2001): "A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture may be assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is [often] in relationship to others of similar background" (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001, p. 19).

Multicultural Personality Questionnaire developed by van Oudenhoven and van der Zee (2002). Based on the results, which suggested that specific personality dimensions of young teenagers are linked to their multilingualism and multiculturalism, the authors contend the low emotional stability of TCKs might be connected to the stressful process of linguistic and cultural acculturation. The results also show that the immigration experience of fitting in makes TCKs stronger, more open-minded and unprejudiced. The need to develop an awareness of different cultural norms and values might come from the realisation that their values and attitudes may not be shared by the people around them (Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009, p. 14). In addition, the authors suggest the need to change our way of looking at language knowledge in the immigrant context:

> Rather than focusing on aspects in which the acculturating group is expected to be 'deficient' compared to control groups, a more global description of the acculturating group is needed, including variables in which it may score better than the control group. In other words, by focusing exclusively on the pain, researchers have omitted to consider the potential gain of TCKs. (Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009, p. 7)

The research approach that focuses on the individual's strengths and virtues and understands bi-/multilingualism as an asset in personal development is close to the PYD research of the strengths of immigrant adolescents (Forman et al., 2009). We believe that the idea of recognising immigrants' potential for positive development, together with bilingualism, biculturalism and integrated identities "as assets to their communities and bases of their positive contributions to civil society" (Lerner et al., 2012, p. 317), creates the possibility of collaborative research between PYD and multilingualism studies.

PYD and language context – the relevance of studying multilingualism for the research into thriving

The connecting of multilingualism with the field of psychology, including positive psychology, is therefore not new. In particular, the association of social psychology with research in L2 points to several possibilities within thematic links, such as teaching and learning of language, motivation and cognitive development, or multilingualism and emotions (Dewaele et al., 2019). In our review of the literature, multilingualism in the PYD perspective

has not been explicitly addressed within its models and approaches (see, for example, Benson et al., 2006; Shek et al., 2019). The significance of the language(es) can be found in studies on thriving among immigrant youth. In these studies, bilingualism is seen as part of a trans/-bicultural and integrated identity without emphasis on the specifics of the language used in acculturation processes (Lerner et al., 2012). Moreover, some intervention programmes in the USA focus on refugees and immigrants, expressly mentioning the category of language and conceptual bases that seem to originate in translanguaging. Working with youth in these programmes is based on a conceptualisation of the four unique adolescent immigrant assets, which involve: 1) the protective strengths of values of the family's culture of origin; 2) bilingualism as an asset in an increasingly global world; 3) migration-related struggles of the family as a means of adolescents' empowerment due to their quicker language adaptation; and 4) balancing the two cultures as a source for developing resiliency, flexibility and skills to assess human interactions (Morland et al., 2006/2009; Easter & Refki, 2004).

However, the holistic view of the languages, which embodies the theoretical study of multilingualism, has not been included in the theory, research and applications of the PYD perspectives. This would mean including in the PYD model the multilingual perspective of language context, where multilingualism results in individuals' multi-competence with broader effects than knowledge of the language itself (Dewaele, 2016). According to Cenoz (2013a), such a perspective has three main dimensions: 1) the multilingual speaker (the use of all languages at the individual's disposal as a resource with dynamic proficiency according to their communication needs); 2) the whole linguistic repertoire (i.e., the hybridity of communication with soft boundaries between linguistic resources); and 3) the social context (i.e., the interaction between multilingual speakers and the communicative context).

This article does not aim to theoretically and empirically place multilingualism in PYD, but to trigger interest in the study of PYD from the multilingual perspective with possible investigations of the language context's relevance relying on concepts of the individual's language repertoire and self-perceived language multi-competence (i.e., plurilingual competence) and perceptions of languages for the empirical study of positive youth development, and the connection between how the languages are perceived and different PYD contexts (e.g. school, immigrations).

To establish a solid (theoretical and methodological) nexus between language context and the PYD perspective, theoretical and empirical bases of the study of multilingualism should be considered (e.g., Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2001–2003; Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009; Dörnyei, 2007; van Oudenhoven & van der Zee, 2002). The combined approach of incorporating linguistic variables in the PYD research design as part of a sociobiographical questionnaire or as an independent contextual element might include questions about oral and written proficiency in different languages, the frequency and specific contexts/situations of language use, perception of languages like language dominance and emotionality, emotion expression, and language anxiety. Further, quantitative findings should be supported with qualitative research (e.g., interviews) since that may provide valuable in-depth comments. Thus, it can better reveal the interconnections between the individual's self-perceived language multi-competence, their perceptions, motivations and attitudes, and the specifics of their language use in various groups or with individuals (parents, family, peers, classmates, teachers, adults, migrant/non-migrant background etc.) in different social contexts (e.g., home, school, free-time activities, community engagement).

The existing interdisciplinary connections between social psychology and multilingualism already extensively highlight the social, cognitive and emotional aspects of language use, which might be necessary for the holistic approaches within PYD models such as Lerner's 5/6Cs and Benson's 40 developmental assets. Since these two perspectives provide one of the main conceptual bases for the PYD-SI model, identifying points of intersection that allow the possibility for linking language context with contexts and indicators of the thriving and multilingualism's individual or societal dimensions might be helpful.

PYD is framed by the relational developmental systems model of human development (Overton, 2015), whereby mutually significant relations between the individual and their multiple contexts constitute the fundamental process of human development across the lifespan. Based on the assumption that all young people have strengths, the PYD perspective "seeks to identify the individual attributes of youth that, when coupled with resources for healthy growth present in their social ecologies (e.g. their families, school, faith institutions, or community-based youth programs), lead to thriving (i.e., to well-being and health) across the adolescent decade" (Lerner et al., 2012, p. 307). In such interaction, the role of contexts as

developmental assets (Benson et al., 2011) is usually emphasised, while the *5Cs/6Cs* outcomes or indicators of positive youth development outcomes (Lerner et al., 2005) are also recognised. *The forty developmental assets* (Benson, 2003, pp. 198–199) which can facilitate positive youth outcomes pertain to social relationships, interactions, experiences, and developmental processes. In four main categories, they are divided into 20 *external assets* (i.e., environmental, contextual and relational features of socialising systems) and 20 *internal assets* (i.e., skills, competencies and values). The *external asset categories* include *support* (family support, positive family relationships, other relationships with adults, a caring neighbourhood, a favourable school climate, parental involvement in schooling), *empowerment* (community values, helping others, security), *boundaries and expectations* (those within the family, those within school, those within neighbourhoods, adult role models, positive peer influence, high expectations) and *constructive use of time* (creative activities, youth programmes, religious community, time spent at home). The *internal asset categories* cover *commitment to learning* (motivation to succeed, learning commitment, homework, connection to the school, reading for pleasure), *positive values* (care, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, self-control), *social competencies* (planning and decision-making, interpersonal competencies, cultural competencies, appropriate conflict resolution), and *positive identity* (self-esteem, positive opinion of personal future). When youth's strengths are aligned with developmental assets, the positive development that results can be operationalised by the "Five Cs"/5Cs – *Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character and Caring* (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 721). *Competence* represents a positive view of one's actions in domain-specific areas, including social, academic, cognitive and vocational ones. Social competence pertains to interpersonal skills (e.g., conflict resolution), cognitive competence to cognitive abilities (e.g., decision making), academic competence to school grades, attendance, and test scores, whereas vocational competence involves work habits and career choice explorations, including entrepreneurship. *Confidence* is defined as an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy, one's global self-regard, as opposed to domain-specific beliefs. *Connection* denotes an individual's positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in bidirectional exchanges between the individual and their peers, family, school and community, in which both parties contribute to the relationship. *Character* represents a person's respect for societal and cultural rules, the possession of

standards for correct behaviours, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity. *Caring* indicates a sense of sympathy and empathy for others. In addition, it has been shown that when adolescents manifest these 5Cs over time, they also contribute to self, family, community, and civil society (i.e., *Contribution* as the sixth C; see Lerner et al., 2005). The link between the two constructs of PYD and specific areas of multilingualism can be specified as a study of the relevance of linguistic factors in the understanding of the strengths and productivity of adolescents. Since language diversity nowadays represents an omnipresent and particularly visible social phenomenon (Aronin & Singleton, 2008) and is also an inevitable part of the educational process (i.e., as a communication practice and learning topic of non-formal and formal educational settings), the use of at least two or multiple languages represents a large part of the socio-cultural environment and different kinds of the interaction of youth. Adolescents in their life span can at the same time communicate with parents, family, teachers, peers, friends, advisers, trainers etc. in their first languages, languages of schooling, languages of environment. In school or as part of informal activities, they also learn more than one language, ranging from their first languages, languages of schooling, languages of the environment, to foreign languages. Further, the languages adolescents use or learn at a very different level of proficiency and regarding which they have different perceptions and emotional attitudes to establish part of a wider dynamic socio-cultural hierarchy. They are thus constantly subjected to social foregrounding and backgrounding as elite, nationally, culturally desired, and expected languages or, in contrast, by being marginalised and, due to socio-political reasons suppressed, they are socially or culturally (e.g., as an implicit part of educational policies) seen as less important languages. These individual and social contexts of language use reshape youth's cultural identity and affect their personality and cognitive abilities. They also enable the development of a variety of individuals' linguistic repertoires, as demonstrated through their dynamic multilanguage competence as a means of interaction in diverse communicative situations. From this perspective, the research into plurilingual repertoires, language multi-competence, translanguaging as an inclusive educational practice, different aspects of language anxiety as well as studies that investigate the role of emotions and feelings in (foreign) language could be linked to the study of PYD's developmental assets and 5Cs within constructs that relate to social relationships, interactions, experiences, and developmental processes.

Since interdisciplinary studies of multilingualism shed light on different (micro and macro) social contexts of language use (e.g., Cenoz 2013b; Comanaru & Dewaele, 2015; Kramsch, 2010) as well as empirically investigate multilingualism's positive impact on individuals' social activation, emotionality, and personal development (e.g., Dewaele & Pavlenko 2002–2003; Panicacci, 2019; Resnik & Dewaele, 2020), the study of their connection to the external and internal assets might reveal the impact of the individual's (multi)language competence on their overall experience with the resources for positive development and also give better insight into the availability of contextual resources to young people. For instance, school environments that successfully incorporate translanguaging and plurilingual practices in their inclusive approaches (e.g., Beacco et al., 2016; Garcia, 2009) might be recognised by youth as institutions that offer more support and empowerment. The self-perceived multi-competence of youth as one of the elements of greater confidence (Dewaele, 2016) could be linked with their experience of commitment to learning and positive values. Different aspects of language anxiety (i.e., heritage, majority, foreign-language anxiety) might be linked to young people's experience with boundaries and expectations as well as positive identity with a special focus on migrant (Sevinç & Backus, 2017; Sevinç & Dewaele, 2016), school (Dewaele et al., 2017), family and community contexts (Panicacci, 2019). Similarly, within the 5Cs, research on the cognitive outcomes of multilingualism (Barac & Bialystock, 2011; Kharkhurin, 2008, 2010), the role of positive emotions in language anxiety (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2019; Dewaele & MacIntyre 2014; Resnik & Dewaele 2020), the effect on individuals' personality in terms of open-mindedness, cultural empathy, and emotional stability (Dewaele 2016; Dewaele & Wei 2012) and the value of individuals' multilingual/multicultural identity for the community (Wei et al., 2002) may point to several indicators of positive development.

The migrant context might be particularly interesting for the study of positive youth development that incorporates multilingualism research. In the PYD – SI MODEL, migration status is identified as a risk factor related to negative youth development outcomes (e.g. risky or problem behaviour, emotional difficulties, problems with school functioning) and often come as a result of the interplay between external and internal factors in adolescents' processes of acculturation as well as adjusting to the individual and social transitions of their age period (Strohmeier & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2008; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). However, PYD

studies that focus on the thriving of immigrant youth and stress the importance of immigrants' multilingual and multicultural skills as a resource for their new communities (Lerner et al., 2012), combined with studies that consider multilingualism in the context of immigrants (e.g. Cenoz 2013a; Dewaele & Stavans, 2014; Panicacci 2019; Sevinç & Backus, 2017; Sevinç & Dewaele, 2016) might open up prospects for the study of language context with the positive youth development. Particularly when connecting the experience of developmental assets or positive outcomes with the findings of interdisciplinary research on immigrant adolescents, which show the positive effects of multilingualism/multiculturalism on personal development (e.g., Dewaele & Oudenhoven, 2009), we might see the intersection of findings that point in the same direction: ones that confirm the presence of strengths in immigrant youth arising from the specificity of their individual and social context, as determined by their multilingual/multicultural identity and formed in the acculturation process.

Below, we present two tables that provide an overview of the main areas of intersection between the two PYD perspectives (developmental assets and the 5Cs) and the main findings from the study of multilingualism. The label *Dimensions of multilingualism* represents its holistic conception from sociolinguistic research that moves beyond the sole linguistic realm and sees language multi-competence as the result of the dynamic growth of individual multilingualism, which "affects not just an individual's cognition but also that individual's personality" (Dewaele, 2016, p. 2). From this perspective, we indicate points of intersection where we believe the 'speaking/using' of multiple languages (i.e., language knowledge, language use, self-perceived language proficiency) as a variable might become relevant for the study of the strengths of all youth and the fostering of their positive development.

Table 1: Intersections of developmental assets and multilingualism research.

External Categories	Dimensions of multilingualism
1. *Support* 2. *Empowerment* 3. *Boundaries and expectations* 4. *Constructive use of time*	- The benefits of an individual's dynamic use of a plurilingual repertoire in different social contexts - Translanguaging practices and plurilingual approaches as part of a multilingual/multicultural school environment - Plurilingual competence as a means of social activation - Language anxiety and the role of positive and negative emotions in foreign-language learning and teaching (FLA) - The role of language anxiety in the acculturation process (MLA, HLA)
Internal Categories	**Dimensions of multilingualism**
1. *Commitment to learning* 2. *Positive values* 3. *Social competencies* 4. *Positive identity*	- Effect of multilingualism on personal development (e.g., open-mindedness, cultural empathy, emotional stability) - Effect of multilingualism on self-perceived communication and interactive skills - The role of multilingual/multicultural identity in society

Table 2: Intersections of the 5Cs and multilingualism research.

5/6 Cs	Dimensions of multilingualism research
1. *Competence* 2. *Confidence* 3. *Connection* 4. *Character* 5. *Caring* 6. *Contribution*	- Cognitive outcomes of multilingualism - Perception of languages and emotion, language anxiety - Effect of multilingualism on personal development (e.g., open-mindedness, cultural empathy, emotional stability) - Individual multilingual/multicultural identity as an asset to the community

Conclusion

In this chapter, we tried to outline the relevance held by language context for positive youth development with a focus on multilingualism, which embraces a holistic view of languages in terms of the individual or societal dimension. Multilingualism is a phenomenon that has attracted research attention in the last 20 years and is becoming a vital part of critical social agendas such as migration, education, democratic culture, and as an individual multi-competence for everyday interactions.

After considering the interdisciplinary research on multilingualism's positive influence on cognitive development, empathy, social initiative, and

foreign-language anxiety, as well as studies that investigated the role played by emotions and feelings in (foreign) language learning, including the PP perspective, we proposed some points of intersection with the PYD perspective as well. More attention to language context could extend the PYD approach's usefulness to help better understand the strengths of the young people, especially those with an immigrant background.

In the first part of the article, we described the main aspects of multilingualism, the complexity of the concept on the levels of scope, terminology and its successful integration with research in the social psychology field. At the same time and via the concept of translanguaging and plurilingualism, we also outlined multilingualism's involvement in education, chiefly as a basis for inclusive education. Although the school environment, at least in Slovenia, is often still perceived as monoglossic with Slovenian as both the language of schooling and the majority language, the presence of different languages at school (as a learning content or means of communication) and the growing number of students with an immigrant background proves that we cannot speak of a monolingual environment. Policies and practices that only aim to ensure optimised conditions for the language of schooling and the language of the majority, while acknowledging other languages merely at the level of elite multilingualism (i.e., languages that hold socio-cultural significance in the educational context), will inevitably exclude a large share of the population for these speakers to be able to mobilise their entire language repertoires to successfully acquire knowledge and skills, interact better and positively contribute to civil society – as interdisciplinary research on multilingualism's benefits clearly shows. Nevertheless, this paradigm shift can only happen when we recognise and systematically support the existence of a plurilingual repertoire in the school environment when we adopt the multilingual classroom as the norm. From a global perspective, Christine Hélot and Muiris Ó Laoire explain what this means for language policy:

> Adopting the multilingual classroom as the norm means acknowledging diversity and changing identities in migration contexts, recognising the potential of the multilingual classroom ecology in language education, transcending the traditional socio-cultural barriers in the implementation of a multilingual curriculum, defending the positioning of teachers' policies, exploiting students' metalinguistic awareness at the pedagogical level

> and redefining power relations in the case of minority languages in the language constellation. (Hélot & Laoire, 2001, p. XVIII)

We include this long passage above because it underlines the idea of recognising the potential of the school environment/context, which is also the focus of the PYD perspective and was presented in part two of this article. It seems that the addition of a multilingualism perspective can contribute to PYD precisely by revealing the perhaps hitherto overlooked dimension of the linguistic potential of youth. In addition, the contextualisation of the PYD model with plurilingual and translanguaging practices might offer a valuable tool to help teachers and learners become aware of their strengths and develop efficient strategies for expanding and using their language repertoires, which may help them in educational settings to improve their teaching and learning.

In the second part of the article, we indicated the points common to both areas and showed the potential of a collaborative approach by presenting intersection of concepts and research results. While many issues remain unsettled as to how to properly link multilingualism and PYD, especially on the methodological level, this was not the paper's purpose. Nevertheless, the interdisciplinary multilingualism research already shows the language context is significant for investigating the strengths of immigrant youth as part of their multilingual/multicultural identities. By understanding language characteristics as an asset, the significance of multilingualism should be indicated in the framework of socially just policies or prevention programmes with the development of a multilingualism-friendly environment as one of those fostered conditions that promote adolescents' attributes of thriving. As Jean-Marc Dewaele, who have we referred to many times, writes below about the line of extensive research on the connections between multilingualism and personality:

> In short, it seems that learning a foreign language tends to make you a better person, more creative, more open-minded, more empathic, more emotionally stable, more sociable, more likely to enjoy foreign language classes, better equipped to learn new languages and less anxious in communication. (Dewaele, 2016, p. 13)

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Exploring the Positive Potentials of Diverse European Youth: What Makes Individual and Contextual Thriving Possible?
Commentary

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Exploring the Positive Potentials of Diverse European Youth: What Makes Individual and Contextual Thriving Possible?

Many of today's young people are questioning the status quo as it relates to the care of our planet and its future, as well as actualizing in deeds and not just words greater equality among people. The study of adolescence today also needs a focus that can capture the present generation's unique strengths and vast potentials to deliver on what prior generations have only been able to just begin to talk about and have long struggled to realize. Since the 1990s, the study of adolescence has built up the concepts, tools, and knowledge that have shifted our conception about adolescents away from an expectation of inherent problems, danger and dysfunction to a refocusing on the whole person, which demands a vigorous investigation into the positive potentials of youth collectively as a generation and as diverse individuals on their own terms (Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019).

The chapters in this book are at the forefront of the contemporary study of adolescence, which is more holistic and contextualized than in the past (e.g., Desie, 2020; Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019). This book provides novel and valuable insights into the specific instances in which young people not only just survive and adapt but also thrive. Chapters within this book offer several examples of the strengths of young people (i.e., positive youth development, PYD) in terms of empirical evidence about PYD from youth living in Norway, Kosovo, Spain, and Slovenia (see Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and

7). For example, in Chapter 1, a study with adolescents in Norway indicated that internal and external assets were connected to thriving indicators. Being committed to learning, having positive values, as well as experiencing empowerment and spending time in organized activities were particularly important to thriving in this study which is situated in the wider youth development context of Norway (e.g., adolescents growing up amidst socio-cultural values that emphasize individual accomplishment, equality, rights of youth, care for others and the environment; see Chapter 1). These empirical examples from different regions of Europe are also complemented by commentaries and reviews that are highly relevant to the contemporary European context of youth development as a whole (see Chapters 5, 8, and 9).

What Does It Mean to Thrive?

This book is about the positive potentials of young people in Europe, but what does it really mean to thrive for today's young person living in Slovenia, Kosovo, Spain, or Norway, or in other parts of Europe? From the standpoint of psychology as a discipline, for humans of all ages, thriving is considered to involve individuals accomplishing developmental and/or socio-cultural tasks (i.e., these can be considered as indicators of performance), as well as experiences of subjective states that could include feeling good about oneself or happiness about one's life (Brown, Arnold, Fletcher, & Standage, 2017). Thus, thriving represents a state of being as well as process of change; and that both accomplishment/performance and positive subjective feelings/experiences are present when people thrive (Brown et al., 2017). Thriving can occur across time and within interconnected contexts of development, such as at home, school, in one's neighbourhood and culture. Further, that thriving can be experienced across several domains of one's life or can be limited to a particular life domain(s), and can be experienced at any time and is not tied necessarily to adverse events (Brown et al., 2017).

This conceptualization implies that how thriving presents itself across individuals can differ and is closely tied to and has meaning within the context of one's life. The findings of several of the chapters in book are consistent with the heterogeneity of PYD when it is studied across contexts, in varied parts of the world (e.g., Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019). There are commonalities (e.g., consider findings in Chapters 1 and 3, on the importance of commitment to learning and positive values), but there is also likely to be

differences and a need for testing the character and intensity of how PYD presents itself one relative to another setting for youth development (e.g., see Chapter 4). Some of the chapters in this book directly address what thriving can be like for youth who are living in different parts of Europe (e.g., see Chapters 1, 2, 3). In these cases, thriving is conceptualized in ways that are consistent with main theoretical views of PYD such as those put forward by Benson and Scales (2009), namely thriving indicators such as school success, maintenance of physical health. Other works in this book focus on the feeling/subjective experience part of thriving, such as youths' view of their own well-being and life satisfaction.

Yet, thriving does not happen in a vacuum. Thriving involves a dynamic and reciprocal interplay between individuals and their contexts, as people move towards desired goals (Lerner et al., 2013). Thriving is well explained from the vantagepoint of several different developmental systems perspectives (e.g., Magnusson & Mahoney, 2003; Overton, 2015), in which individuals (including youth) are active agents in the world, with in some cases altruistic and prosocial capacities, and have the possibility to move their own life trajectory in beneficial directions, while also interacting in a bidirectional manner with the contexts that provide opportunities for personal growth (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000; Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011; Lerner, 1984).

Given the dynamic nature of development in context, youth who have abundant opportunities to thrive within their contexts are likely to be committed and involved civically which contributes to the social good (Lerner et al., 2013). There is thus a striking interplay between adolescents and their contexts which makes both individual and contextual thriving possible. By reading about the numerous examples in the various chapters in this book, the reader learns vital information about the conditions that make it more or less likely that young people will thrive, and how the socio-cultural and other developmental contexts come into play as young people develop. In sum, the focus of this book overall is rightly on documenting thriving as well as individual and contextual assets that make thriving more likely.

This book also provides ample examples of the complexity of what is meant, when we talk about the context of youth development. Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) where proximal processes, the individual in all of its complexity, as well as micro and macro contexts in the wider current of time/history (i.e., the PPCT-model) simultaneously influence human development, youth

thriving would have an impact across contexts. While micro contexts contain close systems such as family and school, macro contexts refer to wider and more distal systems that involve for example the political situation, economy, and the society as a whole. Thus, the context is an important actor with bearing on young people's development, involving the developmental assets (individual and contextual) which provide youth with possibilities to thrive (Wiium & Dimitrova, 2019).

Further, the synergy between context and thriving is not simple. Depending on the cultural, political, and economic situation within the macro context, thriving could be more, or less straightforward. Cultural, political as well as economic systems have importance to young people's goals, motivations, and developmental and life prospects. The contextual assets available that could serve as a life line towards thriving could be plentiful or in short supply. Indeed, young people living in low- and middle-income countries (LAMICs) often have fewer opportunities and resources to achieve their goals, given the precarious situation and limits on socioeconomic development in many countries (United Nations World Youth Report, 2020). For example, in a study of Egyptian and Roma adolescents living in Albania, participants perceived an overall low availability of developmental assets, which in turn was viewed as posing additional challenges to participants' development (Miconi et al., 2021). Lack of developmental assets was particularly evident during the time period in which this study was conducted, namely during the Covid-19 pandemic, which was viewed as compounding pre-existing structural issues such as high unemployment and discrimination, and local challenges experienced by participants such as violence in their neighbourhoods and/or schools (Miconi et al., 2021).

Innovations and the Call for Interventions and Generative Policy

In terms of innovations, chapters in this book represent important advances on several different fronts. Several chapters are forward looking, for example, in terms of conducting the theoretical/empirical work that is vital to advancing the PYD field, such as including different theoretical constructs/measures and traditions together within the same study (e.g., see Chapters 2 and 4). Other chapters add novel aspects of positive development that have been overlooked in the existing predominant frameworks of PYD (e.g., see Chapter 6 in regards to its consideration of humor and gratitude; see

Chapter 8 which expands the PYD construct of contact/connection, but in the context of interventions aimed at reducing ethnic prejudice in schools). While still other chapters expand our understanding of the ways that PYD can be measured using various tools (e.g., Chapter 4) and how pre-existing, large scale and well-established youth surveys such as the Programme for international student assessment (PISA; OECD, 2021; see Chapter 7) can be leveraged to study PYD.

In order for youth to thrive, actions from society are needed. Working with interventions for youth and their contexts that would make young people oriented toward thriving is vital, and this type of next step in the PYD field, and such efforts can build off of the knowledge presented in this book. PYD interventions can foster strengths and positive potentials as the sole goal of intervention, boosting strengths for their own sake. Yet, we see in several cases that problems and strengths can but do not always have to intersect (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). What are the strengths and potentials linked to both thriving and the reduction of problems? This is vital knowledge that will advance the study of adolescence into the future (Brooks-Gunn & Roth, 2014).

Further, young people themselves are key actors in the dynamic system of human development. Working systematically to build on and support the internal assets of youth and to create asset rich contexts is a wise investment in the current new generation of young people who will face substantial, future globally shared challenges (e.g., climate change, sweeping changes in technology). Well informed and authentically generative social policy, context and individual oriented PYD interventions that foster strengths as well as have the potential to reduce problems are vitally important so that there can be a successful interplay between youth and their contexts and, above all, support young people so that many more individuals can thrive and act in an empowered and beneficial way that leads to the long-term well-being of our global community, well into the future.

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Positive Youth Development: Implications of Research for European Policy and Practice

Commentary

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This book is about making a better world. The discussion within is guided by positive youth development (PYD), a relatively well-established and studied approach in the United States of America yet still an emerging one in Europe. Sharing certain common grounds with positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and based on Relational Development System Theory (Lerner, 2007), this unique approach stresses the importance of the two-way interaction of internal (individual) and external (social, family, school, community) development assets for developing the "5Cs" (competence, confidence, character, connection, caring), which together maximise their positive life outcomes (e.g. prosocial behaviour, contribution) and minimise negative life outcomes (e.g. early school leaving, aggression, anxiety). In the PYD perspective, adolescents should not be treated as the source of trouble but as human beings holding considerable potential to become active co-creators of the world of the future.

This book is about research. By comprehensively considering research on PYD from around the world, it pinpoints the research gap in the field in the wider European context and particularly in Norway, Slovenia, Kosovo and Spain. Due to the PYD framework's US origins, the book emphasises the testing of the PYD questionnaires and confirming of their validity in the respective European cultural contexts. Results of several empirical studies conducted re-affirm the need to study the PYD model across different cultures (e.g. different levels of the 5Cs and the different roles they play

in different national contexts) as well as the overall significance of development assets for PYD (e.g. bullying in the school environment as a negative external development asset) and its varying roles for adolescents from different backgrounds (e.g. gender, migrant status). The book convincingly demonstrates that further research is needed for PYD to be fully understood, meaningfully implemented in European practice, and appropriately supported by policy.

This book is about practice. Although PYD is a standalone and well-rounded perspective, its main advantages are its openness to related perspectives and adaptability to different contexts. Thus, as shown in the book, its goals can be achieved through various interventions, including the development of social and emotional learning. While the school environment (and the relationships within it) is an important developmental asset, teachers' social and emotional competencies should not be overlooked in this regard. The PYD understanding of adolescents – as human beings possessing several strengths and potential and not as sources of several deficits and troubles – chiefly calls for the implementation of prevention and intervention and less so compensation approaches in practice (also see Geldhof et al., 2014). The particular needs of specific groups of adolescents (e.g., gender, age, migrant status, type of school) indicate they may benefit from targeted and tailored interventions that would allow them to establish nurturing relationships and stay on a good and stable path towards their future.

This book is about policy. In Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, an individual dynamically interacts with several contexts in the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-systems. Policies may be understood as the exo- and macro-systems, which support PYD. Consistent with Benson (2007), the asset-building community and asset-building society depend on policies which will determine the availability of development assets and, hence, the number of thriving indicators that youth report. This makes it crucial that policies are established which nurture developmental assets in various youth contexts (Benson, 2007). Considering adolescents as whole-personalities and the several developmental assets that support their development, a cross-sectoral policy approach to PYD is required. An approach coordinated among several sectors (e.g. education, youth, social care, health) should support the building of effective policies as well as appropriate norms and behaviours, which will support PYD in broader society. In this respect, the cooperation of policy, research and practice is of particular need for

developing evidence-based policies grounded on theoretically based models and longitudinal empirical support.

This book is about PYD in Europe. National policies supporting PYD can draw on several existing mechanisms of European cooperation. A comparative policy study, examining how various countries in Europe support different developmental assets, might be a useful source in this sense. Still, the development of national policies should carefully consider their own national cultural, political and structural context, as well as the general state of well-being in the country. Also beneficial might be longitudinal research that looks at the impact of particular public policies (such as the exo- and macro systems) on PYD. As concerns EU cooperation in the field of education, the concept of PYD is not explicitly evident. However, the research reveals that its recognised positive outcomes are closely contributing to genuine EU priorities like the personal, social and professional fulfilment of all citizens whilst promoting democratic values, equality, social cohesion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue and concrete goals such as reducing low-achievement and early school leaving (Council of the EU, 2021). Coherence with the PYD perspective is also seen in the Personal, social and learning to learn key competence as one of the eight key competencies for lifelong learning (Council of the EU, 2018). In addition, the PYD understanding of adolescents as a group with distinct developmental needs and potential is close to the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals where social inclusion is defined as a process of decisions and practices that accept diversity and create a sense of belonging based on the belief that each individual has meaning, potential and the need to be respected. As part of striving for social inclusion in the education system, the equality of educational opportunities, namely, a necessary condition for all citizens in modern societies to have equal opportunities for success in life, should be assured (UNESCO, 2020). Altogether, the evidence shows that even though PYD is under-represented in European research and policies, with appropriate contextualisation, it can be understood as an important measure for realising current and future educational goals across Europe.

To conclude, given the recognised paucity of research on PYD in Europe, this book provides unique, comprehensive and international comparative insights into the field. Its particular strength is the combination of rigorous empirical research conducted in various countries and the investigation of the role different PYD developmental assets play in youth outcomes. By presenting a systematic review of existing studies and original

research findings, it convincingly shows the importance of PYD and the responsibility of research, practice and policy to support adolescents on their way towards becoming successful adults, contributing to a better European society and a better world.

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