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## Coping with diversity in classrooms: predicting Intercultural Self-Efficacy in mandatory education teachers

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### Abstract

The social integration of immigrants into educational settings is an important challenge for host societies. In this context, teaching skills for managing multiculturalism in the classroom are becoming increasingly necessary. Even though several studies have discussed the role of Self-Efficacy in teacher management, only a few have addressed the specific component of teachers' Intercultural Self-Efficacy. The present study analyzed the relative contribution of sociodemographic, occupational, and psychosocial variables in predicting the variance of the Intercultural Self-Efficacy of active teachers throughout Spain. Participants were active teachers from different educational levels ( $n = 435$ ). A self-administered online questionnaire was used to measure sociodemographic (sex and age), occupational (teaching experience and training in multicultural education), and psychosocial variables (Pro-Diversity Beliefs, Intercultural Sensitivity, Stereotypical Attributions about migration, Acculturation Expectations, and Intercultural Self-Efficacy). Results showed that the main predictors of Intercultural Self-Efficacy were age (the older, the higher the Self-Efficacy), having had some training in intercultural competencies, possessing high Intercultural Sensitivity, professing Pro-Diversity Beliefs, and having positive expectations that migrants can maintain their culture (Cultural Preservation Expectation). The results are discussed, considering the need to promote teacher training in intercultural competencies for the better management of cultural diversity in the classroom.

**Keywords** Teachers · Intercultural Self-Efficacy · Interculturality · Immigration

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## **Introduction**

Migration significantly impacts intergroup relations, presenting challenges and opportunities for host societies (Tovar-Gálvez, 2021). In Spain, where approximately 13% of the population is foreign nationality (INE, 2023), the educational sector is experiencing a notable increase in immigrant students, making it one of the regions with the highest classroom diversity (Eurydice, 2019). This demographic shift calls for effective strategies for inclusion, as social integration policies alone have not fully overcome barriers, such as prejudice and discrimination (Contreras, 2021; Terzakis & Daskalopoulou, 2021).

The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2018) highlights that, while many teachers are aware of classroom cultural diversity, this awareness does not always translate into effective management skills. Intercultural Self-Efficacy -teachers' confidence in their ability to manage multicultural classrooms (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2007) is crucial for fostering inclusive educational environments. However, research on this topic is limited, particularly in Spanish-speaking contexts (Bueno-Álvarez et al., 2022; Jiménez & Fardella, 2015).

This study aimed to fill this gap by examining how sociodemographic, occupational, and psychosocial variables predict Intercultural Self-Efficacy among teachers in Spain. Understanding these predictors is vital for developing targeted training programs that effectively enhance teachers' abilities to manage cultural diversity in their classrooms, aligning with the broader goals of reducing inequalities and promoting inclusive education.

### **Cultural diversity in education**

In the European context, the European Union (EU) recognizes the defense of cultural diversity as an ethical imperative. The European Commission (2020) outlined an

action plan defining three priority axes for the social integration of the immigrant population into educational systems: a) integrating newly arrived migrants into mainstream educational structures as soon as possible, b) avoiding underachievement among migrants, and c) preventing social exclusion and promoting intercultural dialogue. However, events such as the COVID-19 pandemic or Brexit have opened the debate on social integration and interculturality (Blomberg, 2020). As shown by European research, immigration issues are among the top situations of polarization (Simon & Beaujeu, 2018).

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) provides a quantitative assessment of migrant social integration policies in various countries using a series of indicators covering eight key areas: labor market mobility, family reunification, education, political participation, permanent residence, access to nationality, combating discrimination, and health. It provides an indicator on a scale ranging from 0 to 100, showing the degree of compliance with normative standards for the equal treatment of national and immigrant citizens. Based on this information, the education index in Spain reached a score of 43 out of 100, showing one of the lowest scores in the region and evidencing the need for more interventions in this area. Furthermore, as indicated by Pasetti and Cumella (2020), there are no norms in the Spanish educational system that specifically regulate the conditions of access for the migrant population, which often hinders their academic trajectory.

According to data from the TALIS report (Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2019), approximately 31% of primary school teachers and 25% of secondary school teachers in Spain work in centers where more than 10% of the student body has a migrant background. Less than 60% of teachers reported high self-efficacy in facing the challenges of multicultural classrooms. In the 2021-2022 academic year, 882,814 students of foreign nationality were enrolled in the Spanish education system,

which represents an increase of 34,301 students (4.04%) compared to the previous academic year. Of these students, approximately 78.2% were enrolled in public schools and 21.8% in private schools (Valdés & Sancho, 2022). These data indicate a significant increase in the immigrant population and highlight the need to further investigate teachers' preparation and sense of intercultural efficacy. The distinction between public and private schools could be important because how a school approaches diversity is important for teachers' self-efficacy. Some recent studies (i.e., Konings et al. 2023; Schwarzenenthal et al. 2023; Ulbricht et al. 2022) underscore the importance of contextual factors and targeted professional development in fostering teachers' capacities to manage cultural diversity effectively.

### **Teachers' Intercultural Self-Efficacy in the Classroom**

According to Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977), Self-Efficacy refers to an individual's assessment of their ability to perform a specific action. It is usually understood as a perception of competence rather than an actual level of competence. Based on this idea, teachers' Self-Efficacy has been defined as "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 22).

Self-efficacy is a key factor influencing teachers' professional behavior, pedagogical practices, and their capacity to create positive and effective classroom dynamics (Durksen et al., 2017; Martínez et al., 2017; TALIS, 2018; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Importantly, teachers' Self-Efficacy is considered one of the key beliefs influencing actual teaching behaviors (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2007; Ulbricht et al., 2022; Von Suchodoletz et al., 2018). For example, it has been observed that more self-efficacious teachers are less likely to experience burnout and stress and are more satisfied in their profession (Glock et al., 2019; Gutentag et al., 2018). In addition,

teacher`s Self-Efficacy is positively associated with higher job satisfaction and commitment (Mostafa & Pal, 2018) and student motivation and achievement (Holzberger et al., 2013; Kim & Seo, 2018; Wang et al., 2014).

In a culturally diverse school setting, teachers' Intercultural Self-Efficacy can be understood as their perception of their ability to manage intercultural classrooms. Relevant capacities in this task include, for example, creating culturally sensitive materials, facilitating inclusive environments, and influencing school climate in a positive way for intercultural contact, respect, and appreciation (Banks & McGee, 2015; Gay, 2002). However, the literature shows that teachers do not always feel prepared to face the challenges of interculturality in education (Farmer et al., 2019; Hinojosa & López, 2018; León et al., 2007; Romijn et al., 2020).

Over the past three decades, research has found that the influence of internal teacher factors on Self-Efficacy is moderated by variables such as the subject they teach, experience, prior training, gender, and the type of preference for student-directed teaching and innovative assessment (Ross et al., 1996). In this regard, when facing intercultural education, it is necessary to go beyond the implications of cultural differences and explore what factors interact with one's perception of skills and knowledge for culturally responsive pedagogy (Carter-Thuillier et al., 2022). It has been observed that teachers' Intercultural Self-Efficacy in diverse educational settings is sensitive to context (Hinojosa & López, 2018). For example, Bertoret (2009) showed that lower perceived student diversity was linked to higher Self-Efficacy among Spanish primary and secondary teachers. Meanwhile, Geerlings et al. (2008) found that teachers feel somewhat less self-efficacious with ethnic minorities than with majority students.

Overall, studies in this line of research suggest that perceived intercultural self-efficacy might be positively associated with intercultural training, both past experiences and interest in training, positive attitudes toward diversity, and cultural sensitivity. Thus, the following hypotheses emerge from the literature. Intercultural Self-Efficacy would be associated with prior intercultural training experiences (H1) and interest in receiving intercultural training (H2). Previous experience and specific training in multicultural contexts strengthen Intercultural Self-Efficacy, as teachers feel more prepared to manage cultural diversity in the classroom (Ross et al., 1996; Farmer et al., 2019). Interest in receiving training is linked to a greater willingness to implement inclusive practices, addressing the need for teacher preparation given the increase in immigrant students in Spain (Ulbricht et al., 2022; TALIS, 2018). Additionally, a positive association is expected between Intercultural Self-Efficacy and positive attitudes toward diversity (H3) and cultural sensitivity (H4). Positive attitudes toward diversity enable teachers to create sensitive materials and promote inclusive school climates, which enhances their self-efficacy in managing multicultural classrooms (Banks & McGee, 2015; TALIS, 2018). Cultural sensitivity improves teachers' ability to implement responsive pedagogies, while lower perceptions of diversity can reduce their self-efficacy in multicultural contexts (Geerlings et al., 2008; Carter-Thuillier et al., 2022).

### **The role of Acculturation Expectations in culturally diverse contexts**

Acculturation is a process of change that occurs when individuals or groups from different cultural contexts come into contact, resulting in cross-cultural learning and adaptation that, in turn, is accompanied by transformations in personal and social domains such as values, attitudes, behaviors, personal identity, and cultural identity (Berry & Ward, 2016). Modes of acculturation have different meanings and implications for people depending on the power dynamics, contexts, and circumstances of interaction between

cultural groups. For example, in migratory contexts, the demands for change and adaptation of members of the host society are not the same as those of migrant populations. When trying to capture the attitudes of the host community members towards these issues, the concept of "Acculturation Expectations" has often been used to define how host society members prefer immigrant groups to adapt to their society (Berry, 2006; Berry et al., 2022; Smith-Castro et al., 2021). Various models of acculturation suggest that when two cultural groups come into direct contact, members of those groups develop strategies of acculturation based on two broad dimensions: a) the degree to which individuals consider it essential to maintain their cultural identity, and b) the degree to which individuals consider it essential to actively participate in social interactions with other cultural groups. From here, four strategies emerge: (1) *Multiculturalism or Cultural Preservation* is the expectation that the distinctive heritage culture of all groups in a society should be maintained, respected, and actively promoted; (2) *assimilationism* is the expectation that migrants should give up their cultural peculiarities and assimilate into the host society; (3) *segregationism* is the notion that the "coexistence" of groups with different ethnic citizenship is only possible if the groups live separately; and (4) *exclusion* reflects the rejection of both cultural preservation and social interaction and participation, forcing immigrants into marginalization (Berry & Sam, 2013).

These expectations have been widely studied in several contexts, evidencing that members of multicultural societies tend to expect immigrants to adopt primarily multiculturalism and, secondarily, assimilation or separation strategies (Berry et al., 2022; Smith-Castro et al., 2021, 2023). Nonetheless, there are some noteworthy exceptions in which separation or assimilation is preferred over cultural preservation (González et al., 2010). In the present study, the focus has been on the Acculturation Expectations held

by members of the host society towards immigrant students (for a review, see Smith-Castro et al., 2023).

Research suggests that psychosocial variables such as stereotypes, prejudice, social identity, perceived similarity, and perceived threat significantly affect the orientations and beliefs relevant to acculturation (Cuadrado et al., 2018). Specifically, stereotypes have been observed to contribute to the generation of negative attitudes toward immigrants and can fuel discrimination and exclusion (López-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Likewise, it has been observed that prejudices and stereotypes are constructed and modified by personal experiences, motivational states, and social beliefs (Findor et al., 2020).

As observed by Kotzur et al. (2020), people who serve the migrant population (such as teachers) can benefit from becoming aware of their own beliefs about immigration, which allows them to enhance new positive experiences of diversity and interculturality. Previous studies indicate that favorable attitudes toward cultural diversity and the belief in the benefits of cultural diversity for society increase people's willingness to engage in intercultural contact (Kauff et al., 2019), which favors more harmonious acculturation processes.

In the educational context, it has been observed that the type of acculturation teachers expect their students to adopt influences their identity development (Choi et al., 2016), school performance (Tam & Freisthler, 2015), and adaptation (Tran & Birman, 2019). Other studies, such as that by Makarova and Herzog (2013), have shown a correlation between teachers' acculturation preferences and the tendency to punish students. In addition, Makarova et al. (2019) identified teaching practices (e.g., content, methods, communication) as risk factors for the acculturation process of students.



Concerning the relationship between attitudes towards immigrants and Intercultural Self-Efficacy in educational contexts, Gutentag et al. (2018) found that teachers who perceive immigrant students as an opportunity for personal growth and enrichment and not as a problem present lower attrition and higher self-efficacy related to immigration. Mera-Lemp et al. (2021) showed that high levels of Intercultural Self-Efficacy occur when teachers have low levels of prejudice. Studies have also indicated that the school context highly influences these attitudes and practices (Horenczyk & Tatar, 2002). Specifically, research suggests that teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism reflect and are affected by the degree to which multiculturalism is present in the culture, national policies, and institutional orientations of the schools in which they work.

In summary, previous studies suggest that intercultural Self-efficacy might be positively related to strong support for Cultural Preservation but negatively associated with Negative Stereotypes, Forced Assimilation, and Separation. This literature suggests the following hypotheses. Intercultural Self-Efficacy will be associated with strong support for Cultural Preservation (H5). Support for cultural preservation enhances Intercultural Self-Efficacy by fostering inclusive practices and valuing students' cultural backgrounds, which strengthens teacher-student relationships (Berry & Sam, 2013; Makarova & Herzog, 2013). Also, Intercultural Self-Efficacy will be negatively associated with Negative Stereotypes (H6), Forced Assimilation (H7) and Separation (H8). Negative stereotypes reduce Intercultural Self-Efficacy by fueling prejudice and limiting teachers' ability to manage diversity effectively. Teachers with fewer stereotypes show higher efficacy (López-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Mera-Lemp et al., 2021). Forced assimilation undermines Intercultural Self-Efficacy by rejecting cultural maintenance, which hinders teachers' capacity to create inclusive environments (Berry & Sam, 2013;

Smith-Castro et al., 2023). Separation strategies lower Intercultural Self-Efficacy by isolating cultural groups and limiting opportunities for intercultural dialogue and inclusion (Berry et al., 2022; Gutentag et al., 2018).

## **Overview of the objectives and hypotheses**

The present study addresses the influence of sociodemographic, occupational, and psychosocial variables on the Intercultural Self-Efficacy of teachers of mandatory education in Spain. Specifically, it analyses the relative contribution of gender, age, type of school, teaching experience, intercultural training, and teachers' attitudes and beliefs about immigration and immigrant acculturation in explaining the variance of teachers' Intercultural Self-Efficacy. Considering the theoretical foundations of the study and previous research results, the hypotheses guiding this research are as follows: Intercultural Self-Efficacy will be positively associated with intercultural training, both past experiences (H1) and interest in training (H2), positive attitudes toward diversity (H3), cultural sensitivity (H4), and strong support for Cultural Preservation (H5). On the other hand, Intercultural Self-Efficacy will be negatively associated with Negative Stereotypes (H6), Forced Assimilation (H7) and Separation (H8).

Because research results on the associations of Intercultural Self-Efficacy with sociodemographic variables are inconclusive, no hypotheses on these variables have been advanced. However, these were systematically included in the models as control variables.

## **Method**

This study is part of the research project DiverProf, which analyses the attitudes and perceptions of mandatory education teachers and teaching and education university students in Spain towards acculturation and interculturality (see more about the project in <https://diverprof.es/>)

## Participants and procedure

As part of the project mentioned above a sample of 661 teachers and university students of the primary and secondary levels in Spain voluntarily completed the online questionnaire. Participants were recruited via social media platforms, and emails were sent to 44,120 mandatory primary and secondary schools in Spain and 83 universities in the country (Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2020). The survey was assembled on the QuestionPro platform and kept open from March to June 2023.

In the present study, only active teachers who responded to 85% of the questionnaire and adequately answered an attention control question in the middle of the survey were considered. The 85% threshold indicated that the participants completed all variables pertinent to this study. The remaining 15% of the questionnaire included questions about their students' cultural backgrounds and an open-ended question asking for feedback. The control question was: "If you are reading this item, please select option 3."

Thus, the sample for the present analysis consisted of 435 active teachers (69% female). The mean age was 40.37 ( $SD = 12.54$ ), ranging from 22–71 years). Seventy-six percent worked in public schools, whereas 24% worked in private or subsidized schools. Teaching experience varied between 1 and 41 years, with a mean of 16.50 ( $SD = 10.40$  years). Regarding training in intercultural competencies, 52% reported not having received any training, while 54% were interested in having it. The statistical software G\*Power (Erdfelder et al., 1996) indicated that this sample size would allow the detection of an effect  $f^2 \geq .067$  in a multiple linear regression analysis, assuming an alpha error of .05 and 90% power.

Ethical approval was provided by the Institutional Review Board of the competitive call for Proyectos Propios de Investigación UNIR 2022 of the Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (UNIR), with the code PP-2022-06 and PI:081/2022. The first

screen of the online questionnaire included an Informed Consent. All the teachers in this study agreed by clicking the respective option to access the rest of the questionnaire.

### **Instruments and measures**

The online questionnaire was composed of several scales and a module of sociodemographic variables, as detailed below. All measures are described in Appendix A. All items are rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree/not at all) to 5 (strongly agree/very much).

*Pro-diversity Beliefs.* The measure developed by Kauff et al. (2019) was used to assess the degree of acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity in society. The scale has five items ( $\omega = .93$ ), with higher values indicating higher cultural diversity. An example is, "*A diverse society functions better than one that is not.*"

*Intercultural Sensitivity.* A reduced version of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale by Wang & Zhou (2016) in its Spanish adaptation by Segura-Robles and Parra-González (2019) was used to measure participants' sensitivity to and awareness of cultural differences. It consists of 15 items ( $\omega = .85$ ), with higher values being indicators of greater intercultural sensitivity. An example item is: "*I think I can relate to people from a different culture than my own*".

*Stereotypical attributions.* An index based on López-Rodríguez et al. (2013) was used to measure the degree of stereotypical attributions toward immigrants as a social group. It consists of 8 items ( $\omega = .90$ ), with four items tapping negative characteristics (e.g., *malicious*) and four measuring positive traits (e.g., *honest*). Once the positive traits were reverse-coded, the average of the eight items was obtained, whereby the higher the score, the more negative the attribution.

*Acculturation Expectations.* The Acculturation Expectations Scale developed by Smith-Castro et al. (2021) measures teachers' expectations of how immigrant groups

should adapt to the host society. The scale has 18 items measuring three acculturation expectations: a) cultural preservation (six items,  $\omega = .87$ ), "*Each group preserves its traditions and customs*", b) forced assimilation (six items,  $\omega = .88$ ), "*They adopt Spanish traditions and customs*", and c) separation (six items,  $\omega = .93$ ), "*They live a little apart from us*". The higher the score, the higher the endorsement of each expectation.

*Intercultural Self-Efficacy.* Based on the questions used in the TALIS report (2018), five items were used to assess the self-perception of teacher efficacy in managing the intercultural classroom (Authors) ( $\omega = .90$ ). An example of an item is "*I can adapt my teaching methodology to the cultural diversity of the student body*". As with the previous scales, higher values indicate higher levels of perceived Self-Efficacy in managing an intercultural classroom adequately.

*Sociodemographic data.* Age (i.e., year of birth), sex (male, female, or prefer not to disclose), type of school (private, subsidized, or public), years of teaching experience, previous training in intercultural competencies (yes or no), and interest in having intercultural training (yes or no) were registered.

### **Analytic strategy**

The analyses were carried out with the software Jamovi, version 2.3.28 (the jamovi project, 2022). Descriptive, psychometric, and simple correlation statistics were calculated for all variables under study as part of the preliminary analyses to detect extreme cases or violations of assumptions (multicollinearity, for example). Following recommendations by several authors to use polychoric correlation-based versions of reliability coefficients for ordinal items, we calculated McDonald's  $\omega$  coefficients to estimate the internal consistency of the scales (Gadermann et al., 20123; Vizioly & Pagano, 2022).

The primary analysis consisted of a hierarchical multiple regression for the Self-Efficacy Scale scores as the dependent variable. Following recommendations by Davis (1985) in the first model, the control variables age and gender were simultaneously entered. In the second step, the distal background occupational predictors were entered, i.e., type of school, teaching experience in years, training in intercultural competencies, and interest in training on intercultural competencies. In the last step, the proximal attitudinal variables were included, i.e., Pro-Diversity Beliefs, Intercultural Sensitivity, Negative Stereotypes, and Acculturation Expectations (Cultural Preservation, Forced Assimilation, and Separation). Gender, type of school, training in intercultural competencies, and interest in intercultural training were coded with the Dummy method Gender (males = 0, females = 1), Type of school (private = 0, public = 1), Interest in intercultural training (No = 0, Yes =1).

## **Results**

Table 1 presents mean scores, standard deviations, and McDonald's Omegas internal consistency coefficients of all the variables under study. The Pro-Diversity Beliefs, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Intercultural Self-Efficacy measures had the highest mean scores, followed by the Cultural Preservation Scale. In contrast, the measures of Forced Assimilation, Separation, and Negative Stereotypes had the lowest scores. All measures had adequate internal consistency coefficients of .85 and above.

**Table 1***Descriptive and psychometric statistics for the main variables*

Variable	Mean (SD)	ω
Pro-Diversity Beliefs	4.21 (.89)	.93
Cross-cultural Sensitivity	4.16 (.44)	.85
Negative Stereotypes	1.92 (.744)	.90
Cultural Preservation	3.37 (.90)	.87
Forced Assimilation	2.47 (.83)	.88
Separation	1.85 (.97)	.93
Intercultural Self-Efficacy	4.08 (.78)	.90

*Note.* Scale's scores ranged from 1 to 5.**Correlations between the variables under study**

Table 2 presents a matrix of simple correlations for all variables, showing moderate to high correlations among most variables in the expected direction. Due to space constraints, this preliminary analysis focuses on the association between the dependent variable and its potential predictors. In the case of sociodemographic and occupational variables, Intercultural Self-Efficacy was positively associated with age ( $r = .20, p < .001$ ), years of teaching experience ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ), having had training in intercultural competencies ( $r = .12, p < .05$ ), and having an interest in intercultural training ( $r = .17, p < .01$ ). Regarding psychosocial factors, scores on Intercultural Self-Efficacy presented positive associations with scores on Pro-Diversity Beliefs ( $r = .48, p < .001$ ), Intercultural Sensitivity ( $r = .46, p < .001$ ), and Cultural Preservation Expectation ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ). On the other hand, Intercultural Self-Efficacy was negatively associated with Negative Stereotypes ( $r = -.33, p < .001$ ).

**Table 2***Simple correlations between the variables under study.*

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Sex (0 = male, 1 = female)	-.03	-.08	.04	.02	.14*	.16**	.03	-.12*	.15**	-.20***	-.01	.04
2 Age in years		-.19***	.77***	-.06	-.17**	.06	.05	-.00	.10	.29***	.24***	.20***
3 Type of school (0 = private, 1 = Public)			-.12*	.09	.05	-.06	-.07	.06	-.02	-.06	-.01	.03
4 Teaching experience in years				.02	-.13*	.04	-.00	-.03	.07	.20***	.15**	.13*
5 Training in intercultural competencies (0 = no, 1 = yes)					-.03	-.00	-.02	-.08	.00	-.01	.07	.12*
6 Interest in intercultural training (0 = no, 1 = yes)						.26***	.13*	-.20***	.06	-.21***	-.09	.17**
7 Pro-Diversity Beliefs							.41***	-.51***	.36***	-.22***	-.13*	.48***
8 Intercultural Sensitivity								-.35***	.25***	-.06	-.22***	.46***
9 Negative Stereotypes									-.21***	.20***	.21***	-.33***
10 Cultural Preservation										-.20***	.16**	.30***
11 Forced Assimilation											.29***	-.02
12 Separation												-.03
13 Intercultural Self-Efficacy												

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



### **Predictors of Intercultural Self-Efficacy**

Table 3 presents the results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, with Intercultural Self-Efficacy as the dependent variable. The first model, in which teachers' gender and age were entered, was statistically significant,  $F(2,308) = 7.021, p = .001$ , explaining 4% of the variance in Intercultural Self-Efficacy. Within this model, age was the only significant predictor ( $\beta = .21, p < .001$ ). The second model, which added occupational variables into the equation, was also statistically significant,  $F(6,304) = 6.441, p < .001$ , explaining 11% of the variance of Intercultural Self-Efficacy, with a significant increase in the explained variance of 7%,  $\Delta F(4,304) = 5.926, p < .001$ . Among the predictors included in this model, age continued to present a significant regression weight ( $\beta = .33, p < .001$ ), along with interest in obtaining intercultural training in the future ( $\beta = .22, p < .001$ ), and having had training in intercultural competencies ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ). Finally, the model that included attitudinal variables was highly significant,  $F(12,298) = 16.087, p < .001$ , explaining 39% of the variance and presenting a statistically significant increase in the percentage of explained variance of 28%,  $\Delta F(6,298) = 22.944, p < .001$ . In this model, age ( $\beta = .23, p < .01$ ), having received cultural competency training ( $\beta = .13, p < .01$ ), and working at a private school ( $\beta = -.10, p < .05$ ) were significant. Within the new predictors included in the model, Pro-Diversity Beliefs ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ), Cultural Sensitivity ( $\beta = .30, p < .001$ ), and Cultural Preservation Expectation ( $\beta = .11, p < .05$ ) were statistically significant.

**Table 3**

*Summary of hierarchical multiple regression analysis for Cross-Cultural Self-Efficacy*

Predictors	B	EE	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	95% CI for B	
						LI	LS
Step 1							
Sex (0 = male, 1 = female)	.07	.01	.04	.78	.436	-.11	.26
Age in years	<b>.02</b>	<b>.00</b>	<b>.21</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.01</b>	<b>.02</b>
$R^2 = .04$							
$F(2,308) = 7.21^{***}$							
Step 2							
Sex	.04	.09	.02	.428	.669	-.15	.23
Age in years	<b>.03</b>	<b>.01</b>	<b>.33</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.01</b>	<b>.04</b>
Type of school (0 = private, 1 = Public)	-.11	.10	-.06	-1.11	.269	-.31	.09
Teaching experience in years	-.01	.01	-.09	-1.09	.278	-.02	.00
Training in intercultural competencies (0 = no, 1 = yes)	<b>.24</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>2.58</b>	<b>.010</b>	<b>.06</b>	<b>.42</b>
Interest in intercultural training (0 = no, 1 = yes)	<b>.39</b>	<b>.10</b>	<b>.22</b>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.19</b>	<b>.59</b>
$R^2 = .11$							
$F(6,304) = 6.441^{***}$							
$\Delta R^2 = .07$							
$F$ for the $\Delta R^2(4,304) = 5.93^{***}$ .							
Step 3							
Sex	-.05	.08	-.03	-.57	.571	-.20	.11
Age in years	<b>.02</b>	<b>.01</b>	<b>.23</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>.003</b>	<b>.01</b>	<b>.03</b>
Type of school (0 = private, 1 = Public)	<b>-.18</b>	<b>.08</b>	<b>-.10</b>	<b>-2.11</b>	<b>.036</b>	<b>-.35</b>	<b>-.01</b>
Teaching experience in years	-.00	.00	-.05	-.68	.496	-.01	.01
Training in intercultural competencies (0 = no, 1 = yes)	<b>.22</b>	<b>.08</b>	<b>.13</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>.006</b>	<b>.06</b>	<b>.37</b>
Interest in intercultural training (0 = no, 1 = yes)	.16	.09	.09	1.86	.063	-.01	.34
Pro-Diversity Beliefs	<b>.24</b>	<b>.05</b>	<b>.28</b>	<b>4.76</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>.34</b>

Intercultural Sensitivity	<b>.53</b>	<b>.09</b>	<b>.30</b>	<b>5.62</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.34</b>	<b>.71</b>
Negative Stereotypes	-.06	.06	-.06	-1.05	.293	-.17	.05
Cultural Preservation	<b>.10</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.11</b>	<b>2.14</b>	<b>.033</b>	<b>.01</b>	<b>.19</b>
Forced Assimilation	.05	.05	.05	.99	.325	-.05	.15
Separation	.00	.04	.01	.13	.900	-.09	.09

$R^2 = .39$

$F(12,298) = 16.087***$

$\Delta R^2 = .28$

$F$  for the  $\Delta R^2(6,298) = 22.944***$ .

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\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ \*\*\*

## Discussion

Spain's increasing classroom diversity, driven by a growing immigrant student population (13% of the population is foreign), presents significant challenges for social and educational integration. Teachers' ability to cope with an intercultural classroom is a key factor to be considered. Intercultural Self-Efficacy has been associated with different variables that influence the pedagogical practices and the quality of the teaching (TALIS, 2018). In Spain, even though teachers are highly aware of cultural inclusion, this awareness is not necessarily reflected in better skills and abilities for managing a multicultural classroom (Alarcón-Leiva et al., 2020).

Building on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory and its applications (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Zee & Koomen, 2016), the present study focused on demographic, occupational, and psychosocial factors that might shape teachers' Intercultural Self-Efficacy. Specifically, it was hypothesized that higher levels of Intercultural Self-Efficacy will be predicted by intercultural training, both past experiences (H1) and interest in training (H2), positive attitudes toward diversity (H3), cultural sensitivity (H4), and strong support for Cultural Preservation (H5), while Negative Stereotypes (H6), Forced Assimilation (H7) and Separation (H8) will predict low levels of Intercultural Self-Efficacy.

In testing these hypotheses our study highlighted several factors that contribute to shaping Intercultural Self-efficacy among teachers. To discuss these findings, we organize this section along three major lines: First, we discuss the theoretical implications of the results. Second, we elaborate on the practical implications of our data. Third, we describe some limitations and recommendations for future research and summarize the key conclusion of the study.

## **Theoretical implications**

Our data indicate that the teachers in our sample generally had positive attitudes toward their own ability to manage culturally diverse classrooms, held positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, showed low levels of negative stereotypes, and rejected assimilationist and segregationist ideologies. However, there is a relevant variability in Intercultural Self-Efficacy, which is explained by specific sociodemographic, occupational, and psychosocial variables. In general, our results are in line with previous studies that identified variables such as experience, previous training, gender (Ross et al., 1996), attitudes (González & Ramírez, 2016), stereotypes (León et al., 2007), prejudices (Níkleva & Rico-Martín, 2017), personal experiences (Findor et al., 2020), motivational states (Kotzur et al., 2020), and social beliefs (Vallejo-Martín et al., 2021).

In support of all our hypotheses, our data showed that high levels of teacher Intercultural Self-Efficacy were significantly predicted by increasing age, more intercultural training (H1 and H2), type of school, positive attitudes toward diversity or Pro-Diversity Beliefs (H3), high levels of Cultural Sensitivity (H4), and strong support for the expectation of Cultural Preservation (H5). In contrast, low levels of Intercultural Self-Efficacy were found to be significantly predicted by high levels of Negative Stereotypes (H6) and strong support for expectations of Forced Assimilation and Separation (H7 and H8) (See also Berry & Ward, 2016; Gutentag et al., 2018; Kauff et al., 2019; López-Rodríguez et al., 2020).

Among the demographic variables (age was the strongest predictor of Intercultural Self-Efficacy and was also associated with more years of teaching experience. This result might reflect an important principle of Self-Efficacy Theories, according to which the first and most influential source that individuals turn to when gauging their self-efficacy is mastery experience, that is, their past experiences of successes and failures (Bandura,

1997). However, age might also be negatively related to Self-Efficacy. For instance, in occupational contexts, age has been observed as one of the obstacles for older employees to engage in work activities and has been associated with poor performance, stress, and, therefore, lower self-efficacy (Paggi & Jopp, 2015). Thus, the specific nature of the association between age and Intercultural Self-Efficacy depends on several factors, including the particular context and the specific domain of Self-efficacy. Future studies would benefit from employing longitudinal designs for a better understanding of this relationship.

Among the occupational variables, previous training remained a significant and strong predictor of Intercultural Self-Efficacy once the psychosocial variables were entered into the model. This result is in line with earlier studies showing that training has a positive effect on Intercultural Self-Efficacy. Schwarzentel et al. (2023), for instance, highlighted that professional development, which offers opportunities to closely observe role models and experts on a particular topic (i.e., vicarious experiences), and international mobility programs, such as studying or teaching abroad, can offer experiences that enable teachers to interact more effectively with diverse student populations and manage the challenges of multicultural classrooms more effectively.

On the other hand, interest in intercultural training lost its statistical significance when psychosocial variables were added to the model, suggesting that interest in intercultural training is a reflection of the positive beliefs and attitudes towards diversity and multiculturalism or that these psychosocial variables constitute mediator variables carrying the positive effect of interest on Self-Efficacy. Future research should properly assess these hypotheses with more adequate methods for testing mediation.

Interestingly, our data also showed that working in private schools predicts higher levels of Intercultural Self-Efficacy. However, this result should be interpreted with

caution because it might be observed by chance as being related to at least one of the other variables in the model that act as suppressor variable (Ludlov & Klein, 2014). Note that the simple correlation between the type of school and Intercultural Self-Efficacy did not differ from zero. Its beta weight became statistically significant only once included in the regression model. Further examination of the data shows that age acted as a suppressor variable, increasing the predictive power of the type of center. Note also that the type of center was also significantly related to age, where public school teachers were significantly older than private school teachers ( $r = -.19, p < .001$ ), accounting for the confounding relationship. Since there is not much literature on this topic, we can not provide a further explanation of the pattern. Future studies should consider not only the type of school per se as a predictor of teachers' Intercultural Self-Efficacy, but also other characteristics associated with the schools since previous research has shown that teachers' attitudes and practices toward multiculturalism are also influenced in part by institutional orientations of the schools in which they work (Konings et al. 2023; Horenczyk & Tatar, 2002).

Regarding the role of psychosocial variables, our data provides support for early findings. For instance, Gutentag et al. (2018) also found that teachers with positive perceptions toward immigrant students exhibited lower attrition and higher Self-Efficacy related to cultural diversity. Other studies, by López-Rodríguez and Zagefka (2015), or more recently by Lutterbach and Beelmann (2021), have also highlighted that prejudice and stereotypes are constructed and modified by personal experiences of inter-group interaction, motivational states, and social beliefs. Mera-Lemp et al. (2021) also found that high levels of Intercultural Self-Efficacy occur when teachers have low levels of affective prejudice. Romijn et al. (2020) found that diversity-related beliefs are positively related to intercultural classroom practices. Finally, other authors, such as Larusso et al.

(2024), have found evidence that it is not so much the cultural diversity of migrant students in the classroom that impacts teaching performance but rather the perception (fueled by stereotypes) that students of immigrant origin are a burden.

Many authors, such as Bueno-Álvarez et al. (2022) or Navarro Mateu and Amaro (2016), have emphasized that teacher Self-Efficacy should be investigated more in Spanish-speaking contexts since this analysis has not been carried out as much as in other contexts. Our data reinforce all this earlier evidence providing novel data from Spain to better understand how immigrants can be integrated into the education system in the best possible way, suggesting that attitudes and beliefs towards cultural diversity are key proximal predictors of intercultural Self-Efficacy that might directly reinforce positive practices for a better adaptation of immigrant students. Future studies should explore Intercultural Self-Efficacy as the mechanism through which awareness of cultural diversity translates into efforts to engage with it effectively and develop targeted strategies.

### **Practical implications**

Our study showed that teachers with high Intercultural Self-Efficacy tend to be older, have more work experience, and possess more intercultural training and sensitivity. They also exhibited stronger Pro-Diversity Beliefs and positive expectations for Cultural Preservation than their colleagues with low Intercultural Self-Efficacy. Conversely, teachers with low Intercultural Self-Efficacy displayed more negative stereotypes and more expectations of forced assimilation or separation than their colleagues with higher levels of Intercultural Self-Efficacy.

In general, our data strongly suggests the need for more intercultural training as part of the curricula of teaching carriers at Spanish universities. Considering the relative contribution of each predictor in our models, our data suggest putting special emphasis



on cultural sensitivity, which might contribute to a positive school climate that values diversity and actively promotes intercultural understanding among staff and students.

Although the relationship between attitudes and behaviors is complex, our data also highlight the value of promoting the awareness among teachers that their beliefs about cultural diversity affect their practices and behaviors towards their students, given the strong associations between the cultural diversity appreciation variables and Self-Efficacy. Thus, encouraging teachers to reflect on their own cultural biases and actively work towards self-improvement is highly recommended as part of their training (Gómez-Chaparro & Sepúlveda-Sanhueza, 2023).

### **Limitations and future research**

Our work is not exempt from a few limitations. The resulting data is exploratory and correlational, gathered by self-reporting methods on subjective perceptions, which limit causal inferences. Therefore, more research with experimental or longitudinal approaches is needed to explore causality and control for other relevant variables. Secondly, gathering information online is coupled with self-selection biases, given that there were no restrictions on who could participate (Fricker, 2017), and participants accessed the survey voluntarily (i.e., no incentives were offered). This means that those intrinsically interested in the research topic might be overrepresented in the sample. Future research should conduct the same analysis with representative randomly selected samples. Future studies would also benefit from a comparative perspective of active teachers and teachers in training (university students). In this way, it would be possible to analyze whether the variables and predictors of both groups present differences or similarities. Finally, we also need to acknowledge the highly normative quality of several of the constructs we measured and its consequences for response tendencies that might

partially account for the extremely high (i.e., Pro-diversity Beliefs) or extremely low (i.e., stereotypes index) scores. Social desirability is an important issue when using a self-report measure, especially of constructs such as self-efficacy beliefs. Future research might include several methods to cope with response biases, including multitrait-multimethod strategies combining self-report measures with direct classroom observation and using social desirability scales or randomized response techniques (Nederhof, 1985). In general, more replication is needed.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the results of the present study offer more evidence of the relationship between attitudes and expectations toward cultural diversity and teachers' intercultural self-efficacy, underscoring the relevance of designing training programs fostering intercultural competencies, specifically cultural self-awareness, the ability to manage cultural conflict, and a positive attitude towards cultural differences, among others.

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## Appendix A

### Measures used in the study

Scale	Spanish version used in this study	English version
<b>Pro Diversity Beliefs (PDBS)</b>	1 Una sociedad que es diversa funciona mejor que una que no es diversa.	1 A society that is diverse functions better than one that is not diverse.
	2 Una sociedad con un alto grado de diversidad cultural tiene mayor capacidad para abordar nuevos problemas	2 A society with a high degree of cultural diversity is better able to tackle new problems.
	3 Valoro la diversidad cultural en Costa Rica porque beneficia al país.	3 I value cultural diversity in (country) because it benefits the country.
	4 Los países con diversidad étnica tienen una ventaja a la hora de alcanzar el progreso.	4 Countries that are ethnically diverse have an advantage when it comes to achieving progress.
	5 Una sociedad étnicamente diversa puede superar los retos futuros mejor que una sociedad sin diversidad étnica.	5 An ethnically diverse society can overcome future challenges better than a society that is not ethnically diverse.
Scale	Spanish version used in this study	English version
<b>Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS-15)</b>	1. Me gusta relacionarme con personas de otras culturas.	1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
	2. Normalmente, cuando me relaciono con personas de culturas diferentes, suelo ser bastante positivo(a) durante nuestra interacción.	2. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterparts during our interactions.
	3. Tiendo a evitar aquellas situaciones que me exigen relacionarme con personas de otras culturas.*	3. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally distinct persons*.
	4. No me gusta estar con personas de diferentes culturas.*	4. I do not like to be with people from different cultures*.
	5. No aceptaría las opiniones de personas de diferentes culturas.*	5. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.*
	6. Creo que las personas de otras culturas tienen una mentalidad muy cerrada*	6. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.*.



	7. Cuando me relaciono con personas de culturas diferentes me siento bastante seguro de mí mismo(a).	7. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.
	8. Creo que tengo habilidades para relacionarme con personas de una cultura diferente a la mía.	8. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.
	9. Puedo ser tan sociable como quiera cuando me relaciono con personas de diferentes culturas.	9. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
	10. A menudo me siento inútil cuando interactúo con personas de diferentes culturas*	10. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.*
	11. Me enfado fácilmente cuando interactúo con personas de diferentes culturas*	11. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures*
	12. A menudo me desanimo cuando estoy con personas de diferentes culturas*	12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.*
	13. Estoy muy atento(a) cuando interactúo con personas de diferentes culturas.	13. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.
	14. Cuando me relaciono con personas de otras culturas creo que me doy cuenta claramente de las pequeñas diferencias de significado que pueden tener las palabras o las ideas.	14. I am sensitive to my culturally distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.
	15. Cuando me relaciono con personas de otras culturas, intento obtener toda la información posible.	15. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.
Scale	Spanish version used in this study	English version
<b>Stereotypical Attributions Index (SAI)</b>	1. Honradas	1. Honest
	2. Competentes	2. Competent
	3. Malintencionadas	3. Malicious
	4. Cordiales	4. Friendly
	5. Traicioneras	5. Treacherous
	6. Cálidas	6. Warm
	7. Agresivas	7. Aggressive
	8. Trabajadoras	8. Hardworking

Scale	Spanish version used in this study	English version
Acculturation Expectations Scale (AES)	1. Ellos adoptan las tradiciones y costumbres españolas.	1. They adopt (country) traditions and customs.
	2. Cada grupo conserva sus propias tradiciones y costumbres.	2. Each group keeps its own traditions and customs.
	3. Ellos viven un poco apartados de nosotros.	3. They live a little apart from us.
	4. No intentamos mezclarnos mucho.	4. We do not try to mix with them.
	5. Ellos adoptan los valores de los españoles.	5. They adopt (country) values.
	6. Cada grupo mantiene sus propios valores.	6. Each group can maintain its own values.
	7. Ellos adoptan la forma de ser de los españoles.	7. They adopt the (country) way of life.
	8. Cada grupo vive por separado.	8. Each group lives separately to maintain each culture.
	9. Cada grupo mantiene su estilo de vida propio.	9. Each group has its own lifestyle.
	10. Cada grupo mantiene sus rasgos culturales específicos.	10. Each group maintains its specific cultural features.
	11. Ellos se amoldan al estilo de vida de los españoles.	11. They adapt to the (country) lifestyle.
	12. Cada grupo mantiene y expresa su propia forma de ser.	12. Each group retains and expresses its own way of life.
	13. Mantenemos “cierta distancia” entre los grupos.	13. There is "some distance" between the groups.
	14. Ellos adoptan la mentalidad de los españoles.	14. They adopt the (country) mentality.
	15. Cada grupo conserva su mentalidad.	15. Each group preserves its mentality.
	16. Ellos acogen la cultura española.	16. They embrace the (country) culture.
	17. Ellos viven alejados de nosotros.	17. They live far away from us.
	18. Vivimos “juntos pero no revueltos” para mantener nuestras formas de vida.	18. We live "together but not scrambled" to keep our ways of life.

Scale	Spanish version used in this study	English version
<b>Intercultural Self-Efficacy (ISE)</b>	1. Afrontar los retos de un aula multicultural.	1. Face the challenges of a multicultural classroom.
	2. Adaptar mi metodología de enseñanza a la diversidad cultural del alumnado.	2. Adapt my teaching methodology to the cultural diversity of the students.
	3. Lograr que alumnado con y sin origen migrante trabaje conjuntamente.	3. Ensure that students with and without a migrant background work together.
	4. Concienciar a mis alumnos y alumnas sobre las diferencias culturales existentes entre ellos.	4. Raise awareness among my students about the cultural differences that exist between them.
	5. Contribuir a la reducción de estereotipos culturales entre el alumnado.	5. Contribute to the reduction of cultural stereotypes among the students.

*Notes.* ISS-15 Subscales: Interaction engagement: 1, 2, 3; Respect of cultural differences: 4, 5, 6; Interaction confidence: 7, 8, 9; Interaction enjoyment: 10, 11, 12; Interaction attentiveness: 13, 14, 15. AES Subscales: Cultural Preservation: 2, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15; Forced Assimilation: 1, 5, 7, 11, 14, 16; Separation: 3, 4, 8, 13, 17, 18. Reverse-coded items are marked with an asterisk \*