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Towards inclusive and egalitarian vocational education and training:
Key challenges and strategies from a holistic and multi-contextual approach

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Editorial

Towards Inclusive and Egalitarian VET – A Cross-Contextual Inquiry

We are thrilled to welcome readers to the Proceedings of the 6th *Crossing Boundaries in Vocational Education and Training* conference. This dynamic scholarly event unites researchers for meaningful dialogue on vocational education and training. The contributions' diversity and quality showcase the research field's rich perspectives and the enduring significance of VET as a catalyst for educational, economic, and social change. We believe this volume will inspire fruitful discussions and encourage shared learning across various contexts, traditions, and disciplines – both during the conference and afterwards.

This volume features 70 contributions that reflect the diverse and evolving field of VET research in 2025. Centred on the theme *"Towards Inclusive and Egalitarian Vocational Education and Training: Key Challenges and Strategies from a Holistic and Multi-Contextual Approach*", the papers tackle critical issues related to access, participation, educational outcomes, and reforms in VET across various regions and contexts.

What emerges is a colourful mosaic of viewpoints that cross disciplinary, methodological, and national boundaries. Collectively, they express a strong commitment to reevaluating VET as not just a means for labour market integration, but as a space for personal growth, social inclusion, and democratic engagement.

A key issue highlighted in many papers is the impact of structural inequalities on participation in various VET pathways and their associated career prospects. Several studies indicate persistent trends of gender segregation, socio-economic divides, and challenges faced by migrants. Additionally, some studies explore how vocational aspirations develop and are limited across different educational systems and emphasise that targeted support, along with acknowledgement of learners' backgrounds and goals, can enhance participation and outcomes.

Another key focus is on transitions and trajectories – not just from school to work, but throughout the life course. Whether examining early vocational decision-making, adult learning, or mid-career upskilling, many contributions emphasise the need for VET systems to accommodate diverse and non-linear educational journeys. This necessitates more flexible offerings, guidance structures, and recognition mechanisms that are aligned with learners' realities.

The development of VET professionals represents a third major strand. Several papers argue that inclusive VET needs a redefinition of the roles and skills of teachers, trainers, and guidance personnel. There is an emerging agreement that VET professionals require assistance to address the increasing diversity of learners alongside the evolving challenges of digitalisation, sustainability, and work-based learning.

Whether in urban areas or rural settings, and across dual systems or school-based models, the papers collectively explore how policy, culture, and context influence the opportunities and challenges of inclusive VET. Additionally, multiple contributions suggest specific strategies—such as curriculum reform, participatory governance, and cross-sectoral collaboration—that can effectively address ongoing gaps.

A particularly noteworthy feature of this volume is the consistent effort to reflect across contexts. Many authors engage in critical dialogue with practices and findings from other countries, fostering a shared learning culture.

Taken together, the papers emphasise the essential role of VET in addressing societal challenges. They also highlight that unlocking the potential of VET demands ongoing critical reflection and a steadfast commitment to equity, quality, and inclusion. This volume aids this effort – serving as an academic resource, reflecting ongoing discussions, and inviting collaborative action across boundaries.

Participants were selected based on the submission of a proposal for the conference, which underwent a rigorous double-blind review conducted by members of the VETNET community. Upon acceptance, participants were required to submit a short full paper prior to the conference, which was included in this volume of proceedings. Submitting a paper was a prerequisite for conference participation. Each short paper received additional feedback in preparation for publication. Specifically, papers were read and commented on by the editorial team and a critical friend – another participant of the conference – who engaged constructively with the work. This collaborative review structure reflects the spirit of the *Crossing Boundaries* conference: fostering dialogue, critical reflection, and joint learning.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our VETNET colleagues for their support during the review process – without their contributions, this publication would not have been ready in time for the conference. Above all, we thank the authors and co-authors for their commitment and scholarly engagement. Their work forms the heart of this volume. While the conference papers are published as edited volume, full responsibility for content and copyright remains with the respective authors.

We would also like to warmly acknowledge the invaluable contributions of all members of the Vocational Education and Training Research and Innovation Laboratory (LABVET) at the University of the Balearic Islands. Their dedication, creativity, and commitment were instrumental in shaping and delivering this conference. The event would not have been possible without their tireless efforts and collaborative spirit.

Our heartfelt thanks also go to CaixaBank Dualiza, the Department of Applied Pedagogy and Educational Psychology, and the Institute for Educational Research and Innovation at the University of the Balearic Islands. Their generous financial and institutional support made it possible to bring together a diverse international community of researchers and to share their work through this publication.

We hope you find the papers in this volume inspiring and thought-provoking. Our desire is that they ignite fresh ideas, stimulate critical reflection, and promote ongoing dialogue within the VET research community. We eagerly anticipate welcoming you to the next *Crossing Boundaries* conference in 2027, which presents another chance to advance our collective journey toward inclusive and progressive vocational education and training. Additional details will be shared in due course on https://vetnetsite.org.

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Organisers and Collaborators of the Crossing Boundaries 2025

Laboratory for Research and Innovation in Vocational Education and Training (UIB)
The Laboratory for Research and Innovation in Vocational Education and Training (VET-Lab) is a research centre within the Department of Applied Pedagogy and Educational Psychology at the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB). The VET-Lab focuses on investigating and promoting innovative practices in vocational education and training. Its mission includes analysing dropout and stopout processes, addressing gender segregation in VET, and exploring strategies to foster inclusive and egalitarian vocational education systems. The laboratory emphasizes a holistic and multi-contextual approach, considering structural, institutional, contextual, and personal factors influencing VET pathways.
For more information, please visit https://labvet.uib.eu/

The European Research Network in Vocational Education and Training (VETNET) is a leading scholarly community dedicated to advancing research and development in vocational education and training (VET). Established in 1996 as the second research network of the European Educational Research Association (EERA), VETNET encompasses a broad spectrum of VET-related research, including initial and continuing vocational training, both school-based and workplace-based learning provisions, as well as the development of pedagogic expertise for vocational and professional education.
VETNET actively promotes high-quality research and fosters collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. It organizes conferences, publishes scholarly work, and supports emerging researchers through initiatives like the European Emerging Researchers Network (EERN-VETNET).
For more information, please visit vetnetsite.org

CaixaBank Dualiza is an initiative by the CaixaBank Foundation for Dual Training, aimed at promoting Vocational Education and Training (VET) and its dual modality in Spain. Its objective is to enhance students' employability and boost business competitiveness through three main lines of action: promoting VET, guidance, and research.
CaixaBank Dualiza has also formed partnerships with organisations such as the Spanish Chamber of Commerce to support soft skills training programmes and to host awareness events on VET. In addition, its VET Observatory provides data and analysis to support informed decision-making in the education and labour sectors.
Through these initiatives, CaixaBank Dualiza reaffirms its commitment to VET as a key tool for training workers and meeting the needs of the labour market
For more information, please visit https://www.caixabankdualiza.es/caixabank-dualiza/

The Institute for Educational Research and Innovation (IRIE) is a research centre affiliated with the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB), committed to advancing educational knowledge through research, innovation, and collaboration. Its key areas of focus include multilingualism, inclusive education, gender, VET, dropout prevention, educational technology, and teacher training. The institute leads both nationally and EU-funded projects (such as Erasmus+) and offers doctoral and postgraduate programmes in education and educational technology.
Moreover, IRIE actively promotes academic dissemination through publications, seminars, and conferences, facilitating the transfer of knowledge to education professionals and institutions. It collaborates with national and international bodies, including the Spanish Network of Institutes for Educational Research, and supports research visits from scholars at other institutions. Through this comprehensive and collaborative approach, IRIE makes a significant contribution to the improvement of educational policy and practice within a global context.
For more information, please visit https://irie.uib.cat/en/

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Beyond Single Dimensions: Exploring Differences in Sexism Among Italian iVET Students Through an Intersectional Perspective

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Abstract

Purpose: Since iVET plays an important role in fostering inclusivity and equal opportunities, and sexism poses significant obstacles to gender equality and equality overall, the paper explores sexism among Italian iVET students through an intersectional perspective to better understand how multiple students' characteristics (gender and migratory background) impact sexism.
Methods: Three sexism-related items were selected from a questionnaire administered to n = 377 iVET students in Italy. A quantitative data analysis was conducted, primarily focusing on frequency distribution analysis and chi-square tests using contingency tables.
Findings: Sexism-related attitudes are more prevalent among male students than female students. Migratory background does not show significant relationships with sexism-related attitudes. However, combining gender with a migratory background reveals that female students with migratory background tend to respond more similarly to male students.
Conclusions: The multiple subordinated identities of iVET students interact in complex ways, leading to the development of unpredictable attitudes. Exploring how subordinated identities shape attitudes on social issues such as sexism is essential for informing educational practices.

Keywords

vocational education and training, sexism, intersectionality, migratory background, gender equality

1 Introduction

In recent years, the role of VET has expanded beyond labor market preparation to include broader social and educational objectives, such as promoting inclusivity, equal opportunities, and democratic values.

Gender equality is one of the core principles of a just, inclusive, and democratic society. Sexism represents a significant obstacle to gender equality, influencing students' attitudes and behaviors in ways that perpetuate inequalities. The presence of sexist attitudes in educational

[1] The chapter is the result of joint reflection and research by the authors. In formal terms, paragraphs 1, 3, 4, and 5 were written by Flavio Brescianini and paragraph 2 by Elena Luppi.

settings is particularly relevant in VET, where gender segregation is evident (with male and female students enrolling in different vocational specializations based on traditional gender roles), alongside a high concentration of students at higher risk of dropping out, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and a significant presence of students with a migratory background.

For this reason, this study aims to explore how key socio-demographic variables prevalent in VET—such as gender and migratory background—interact and influence sexism-related attitudes. While existing research has examined the relationship between gender equality and individual socio-demographic variables, less is known about how multiple dimensions intersect to shape students' attitudes toward sexism in initial VET (iVET) contexts.

Understanding how these identities interact is essential for addressing the specific educational needs of iVET students and designing effective educational strategies that foster gender equality and democratic citizenship in vocational education. By adopting an intersectional approach, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on how multiple subordinated identities shape attitudes toward sexism within iVET settings.

2 Theoretical Background: Sexism and Intersectional Approach in Vocational Education and Training

The theoretical framework of this contribution refers to two main thematic areas: the first is sexism, its relationship with gender equality, and, more broadly, with the idea of equality as one of the foundations of democratic citizenship; the second is the intersectional approach.

Traditionally, sexism has been defined as prejudice towards women, following the classic Allport's definition of prejudice as antipathy based upon and inflexible and stereotyped generalization directed toward a group (Allport, 1954). However, over the years, sexism has come to be defined as an ambivalent construct (Glick & Fiske, 1996). On one hand, there is *hostile sexism*, which is linked to the traditional idea of sexism and can be defined as a set of negative attitudes toward women. On the other hand, there is *benevolent sexism*, which is defined as a set of attitudes that are sexist in the stereotypical way they perceive women and their limited roles but may seem positive to those who hold them and can elicit behaviors considered prosocial (e.g., helping) (Glick & Fiske, 1996). It is important to underline that this is not necessarily a matter of men's prejudice against women; it can also concern women's prejudice against their own group. In fact, we speak of *internalized sexism* when women enact learned sexist behaviors upon themselves and other women (Bearman et al., 2009).

Sexism, in its multidimensionality, undoubtedly represents a threat to gender equality and, thus, the broader concept of democratic equality. In fact, empirical research has shown that greater sexism predicts decreases in gender equality over time (Brandt, 2011). According to UNESCO, gender inequality is one of the issues affecting the interaction and connectedness of communities, and it is a thematic area that should be addressed as early as ages 9 to 12. Clearly, sexism is a key concept within the thematic area of gender inequality (UNESCO, 2015), making it a major global concern whose underlying causes should be understood early to help prevent and counteract it.

Given these premises, sexism is a relevant variable in the context of VET for two reasons.

The first is that VET has seen its objectives evolve over the past years. If, traditionally, VET has been understood merely as education and training which aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required on the labor market (Cedefop, 2014), in recent European policy guidelines, its objectives have expanded. VET has been tasked with promoting inclusivity, equal opportunities, resilience, and social fairness (Council of the European Union, 2020a), and in strengthening democratic citizenship and European values

(Council of the European Union, 2020b). Also, European VET experts and stakeholders advocate for a VET system that prepares students to fully participate in society and become active citizens (Cedefop, 2020).

The second reason why sexism is a relevant variable in VET is that attitudes towards gender equality (of which sexism can be considered a proxy measure) are linked to multiple socio-demographic variables that are particularly significant in VET contexts.

Gender is the most obvious: studies on citizenship education (particularly ICCS, that focuses on students at grade 8th) showed that female students show greater support for gender equality than male students (Schulz et al., 2023). Moreover, gender is also a non-neutral variable in VET, as evidenced by the phenomenon of gender segregation, which refers to the reproduction of the gendered division of work in the labor market through the enrollment of male and female students in different vocational specializations based on traditional gender roles (Imdorf et al., 2015).

Another variable connected with sexism is socio-economic status. ICCS showed that a higher socio-economic status is associated with a higher attitude towards gender equality (Schulz et al., 2023). As is well known, in many European countries, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those at a higher risk of dropping out are often more prevalent in VET compared to other educational pathways (Cedefop, 2016).

Finally, there is a variable whose connection with gender equality has not been explored in ICCS studies but is highly represented in VET and contributes to shaping its identity in various European countries: the migratory background of students (Cedefop, 2016). It has been observed that the variable of ethnicity influences teachers' attention to sexism among students (Öhrn, 2009) and that migratory background can contribute to shaping the educational practices of trainers in iVET (Brescianini, 2024).

In summary, sexism is an obstacle to the goal that VET is increasingly striving to achieve, but it is also strongly connected to certain socio-demographic variables that are particularly present in VET. For some of these variables, taken individually, we already know how they relate to sexism. However, less is known about how multiple demographic variables interact and impact sexism and attitudes toward gender equality, particularly among initial VET (iVET) students. Exploring how these variables interact, and influence sexism can be done through an intersectional approach.

Originating within feminist movements, the concept of intersectionality focuses on examining how membership in multiple marginalized social groups exposes individuals to overlapping forms of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). Starting from the observation that Black women's struggles were not adequately represented either in Black movements led by men or in feminist movements led by white women, race and gender were the first two identities to intersect and give rise to the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). The definition later expanded to include all dimensions of social identity (e.g. social class, age, sexual orientation, physical ability), which, by intersecting, collectively form a hierarchical matrix of privilege and marginalization in society (Crenshaw, 1991).

According to the intersectional perspective, every person in society is positioned at a particular intersection and is subject to corresponding social advantages and disadvantages (Collins, 1990/2000). This has implications both in terms of feminist engagement and social research. From a feminist standpoint, it is not possible to defend those who are simultaneously victims of sexism and racism using only anti-sexist or anti-racist approaches; rather, a new framework is needed (Collins, 1990/2000). From a research perspective, conventional notions of diversity may inadvertently overlook the intersections of multiple historically oppressed identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Therefore, research must move from what are defined as "unidimensional" studies to new approaches that consider multiple dimensions and are accordingly referred to as "intersectional" studies (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013).

Given the nature of sexism (prejudice against women) and the multiple subordinated identities widely represented in VET contexts, we argue that intersectionality provides a valuable framework for understanding how these identities influence students' sexism-related attitudes.

3 Research Context and Research Questions

In addition to a theoretical framework, it is important to specify some contextual elements that help frame the research and its relevance.

This study takes place in two iVET institutes in Italy. iVET pathways in Italy are designed for students in grades 9 to 12 following the completion of lower secondary school. The iVET system seeks to balance the development of professional skills with transversal skills, the former referred to as technical-professional skills and the latter as basic skills. Of course, basic or transversal skills also play a role in labor market integration (Cimatti, 2016), but there is a clear emphasis on providing a democratic education, particularly considering the recent introduction of citizenship competence in the 2020/2021 academic year.

Similar to other European contexts (Cedefop, 2016, 2017), students attending Italian iVET programs often come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, have experienced academic failure, and have complex educational needs (Brescianini & Luppi, 2023). Among the total student population, iVET has the highest percentage of students with disabilities (MI, 2022), students from low socio-economic backgrounds (MIUR, 2019), and students with a migrant background. This last variable is particularly significant, with foreign students accounting for 28.4% of iVET students, compared to an average of 9.3% in other educational pathways, according to ministerial data (MIM, 2023).

Adopting an intersectional perspective, we can identify multiple subordinated-group identities within Italian iVET students (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Among these, the study focuses specifically on gender and migratory background, seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in sexism-related attitudes between male and female iVET students?
2. Is there a difference in sexism-related attitudes between iVET students according to their migratory background?
3. How do the previous demographic variables interact and affect sexism-related attitudes among iVET students?

4 Methods and Results

Due to space constraints, the methods and results are presented in the same chapter, to provide a more synthetic and linear reading experience by displaying the results immediately after the analysis is shown.

The research presented here is part of a broader project aimed at developing assessment tools for citizenship competences (Brescianini, 2023).

This contribution focuses on a self-assessment questionnaire on attitudes toward the Italian Constitution, administered to a sample of n = 377 students (Table 1). The institutes involved were selected through a convenience sample (Cohen et al., 2018). The questionnaires were administered by teachers from the training institutions to all students available on the day of administration; therefore, absent students or those engaged in off-site training activities were not included.

The questionnaire items examined in this contribution focus on three statements, specifically those related to sexism. The first item (I1) is “Women no longer need to fight for equality with men because it has already been achieved”. This is an original item that measures hostile sexism. The second item (I2) is “Every woman needs a man to protect her”. This item is taken

from the *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)* by Glick and Fiske (1996) and measures benevolent sexism. The third item (I3) is "In some cases, violence against people is justified". This is an original item that does not measure sexism directly but rather the predisposition to use violence, a variable strongly connected to sexism (Agadullina et al., 2022).

Students were asked to express their level of agreement using the following response options: "Not at all," "A little," "Somewhat," "A lot," and "I don't know."

Below are the frequency distributions of the responses from the entire sample for each item (Table 2).

Table 1
Sample Characteristics

Variable	Value / Category	N	%
Gender	M	230	61
	F	138	36.6
	Valid cases	368	97.6
	Missing	9	2.4
	Total	377	100
Age Mean = 15,6 Median = 15	13	1	0.3
	14	90	23.9
	15	110	29.2
	16	50	13.3
	17	68	18.0
	18	22	5.8
	19	6	1.6
	20	2	0.5
	Valid cases	349	92.6
	Missing	28	7.4
	Total	377	100
Number of Italian parents[2]	0	152	40.3
	1	35	9.3
	2	165	43.8
	Valid cases	352	93.4
	Missing	25	6.6
	Total	377	100
Course year	1	185	49.1
	2	117	31
	3	27	7.2
	4	48	12.7
	Total	377	100
Vocational specialization	Wellness - Hairdressing	89	23.6
	Catering - Dining and bar service	29	7.7
	Electronics	21	5.6
	Wellness - Beauty therapy	39	10.3
	Graphic design	21	5.6
	Information Technology	76	20.2
	Mechanics	17	4.5
	Catering - Food preparation	21	5.6
	Motor vehicle repair	64	17
	Total	377	100

[2] Students were asked to indicate the number of Italian parents. This approach was chosen to avoid requiring families to sign a data processing authorization, as – according to the institutes' teachers – this would have significantly reduced the participation rate. The number of Italian parents provides an approximate proxy

Table 2
Frequency Distribution of Responses to the Items (Percentage Values)

Item	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot	Don't know	Missing	Total
I1 - Women no longer need to fight for equality with men because it has already been achieved	19.9	25.2	26.0	13.0	10.9	5	100
I2 - Every woman needs a man to protect her	31.8	17.8	16.4	22.0	7.4	4.6	
I3 - In some cases, violence against people is justified	27.1	22.3	22.0	17.2	6.9	4.5	

Below is another frequency distribution table (Table 3), which aggregates the "Not at all" response with "A little" and the "Somewhat" response with "A lot." This allows for easier data interpretation and comparison with the subsequent tables.

Table 3
Frequency Distribution of Responses to the Items with Dichotomized Response Categories and Only Valid Cases (Percentage Values).

Item	Disagree	Agree	Don't know	Total
I1 - Women no longer need to fight for equality with men because it has already been achieved	47.5	41.1	11.5	100
I2 - Every woman needs a man to protect her	51.9	40.3	7.8	
I3 - In some cases, violence against people is justified	51.7	41.1	7.2	

To explore the research questions, a contingency table analysis was conducted between the categorical variables (gender and migratory background) and the three selected items. The significance of any identified relationships was assessed using the chi-square test (Cohen et al., 2018).

Before examining the first relationship, between sexism-related items and gender, it is important to verify whether the analytical sample exhibits a characteristic related to the gender variable that was mentioned in the theoretical framework. Specifically, whether a pattern attributable to gender segregation can be identified (Table 4).

As can be seen, apart from a few study tracks where the distribution can be considered gender-balanced (Graphic Design and Catering – Food Preparation) or nearly so, many pathways show a clear predominance of one gender over the other. In particular, male-dominated tracks, with peaks reaching 100%, include: Catering – Dining and bar service; Electronics; Information Technology; Mechanics; Motor Vehicle Repair. Female-dominated tracks are the

measure of citizenship (students with zero Italian parents do not hold Italian citizenship - according to national laws) or, at the very least, allows for identifying those with a migratory background (according to the definition of the European Migration Network). This data should, of course, be interpreted with caution, considering that students might have misreported due to the sensitivity of the topic or may not have been aware of their parents' actual legal citizenship status. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/person-migratory-background_en (website visited on February 19, 2023).

two dedicated to Wellness, namely Hairdressing and Beauty therapy. This confirms a dimension of gender segregation, making iVET a context where gender is a particularly significant variable.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution (Percentage Values) and Chi-Squared Test

Vocational specialization	M	F	Total	χ^2	p
Wellness - Hairdressing	13.8	86.2	100	248	< 0.001
Catering - Dining and bar service	81.5	18.5			
Electronics	100	0			
Wellness - Beauty therapy	2.6	97.4			
Graphic design	57.9	42.1			
Information Technology	95.9	4.1			
Mechanics	100	0			
Catering - Food preparation	57.1	42.9			
Motor vehicle repair	100	0			

Moving on to the analysis of the contingency tables, it is important to note that the response categories have been dichotomized by aggregating agreement and disagreement. This reduces the number of cells containing potentially anomalous data (e.g., very low values) and helps prevent a false significant result in the chi-square test (Corbetta, 1999/2014).

Below are the contingency tables between the gender variable and the sexism-related items (Table 5).

Table 5

Contingency Tables Between the "Gender" Variable and Sexism-Related Items (Percentage Values)

I1 - Women no longer need to fight for equality with men because it has already been achieved					
	Disagree	Agree	Don't know	χ^2	p
M	35.3	50	14-7	34.058	< 0.001
F	67.2	26.9	6		
I2 - Every woman needs a man to protect her					
	Disagree	Agree	Don't know	χ^2	p
M	42	47.5	10.5	26.268	< 0.001
F	69.4	27.6	3.0		
I3 - In some cases, violence against people is justified					
	Disagree	Agree	Don't know	χ^2	p
M	42.1	50.7	7,2	28.089	< 0.001
F	69.7	22.7	7,6		

As can be observed, female students tend to express significantly lower agreement with these items compared to male students. The significance of this relationship is confirmed by the chi-square test, with p consistently below 0.001.

The second variable to be further examined is migratory background. The same analysis is therefore repeated, creating a contingency table that cross-tabulates the migratory background variable with the responses to the sexism-related items (Table 6).

Table 6

Contingency Tables Between the "Migratory Background" Variable and Sexism-Related Items (Percentage Values)

I1 - Women no longer need to fight for equality with men because it has already been achieved					
	Disagree	Agree	Don't know	χ^2	p
Migratory background	48.3	40.8	10.9	0.354	0.838
Non-migratory background	50.9	39.8	9.3		
I2 - Every woman needs a man to protect her					
	Disagree	Agree	Don't know	χ^2	p
Migratory background	51.1	43.1	5.7	2.42	0.298
Non-migratory background	55.6	35.8	8.6		
I3 - In some cases, violence against people is justified					
	Disagree	Agree	Don't know	χ^2	p
Migratory background	50.3	42.2	7.5	0.780	0.674
Non-migratory background	54	40.5	5.5		

As shown by the contingency table and the chi-square test, there appear to be no significant relationships between migratory background and the frequency distributions of the sexism-related items.

At this point, the intersectional perspective is introduced through the stratification of the sample by both migratory background and gender. This allows for a better understanding of differences in responses to the sexism-related items across four groups: males without a migratory background, males with a migratory background, females without a migratory background, and females with a migratory background (Table 7).

Table 7

Contingency Tables Between Sexism-Related Items and the Variables "Migratory Background" and "Gender", Stratified into Four Groups (Percentage Values)

I1 - Women no longer need to fight for equality with men because it has already been achieved						
		Disagree	Agree	Don't know	χ^2	p
Migratory background	M	37.8	50.0	12.2	9.74	< 0.05
	F	62.0	29.6	8.5		
Non-migratory background	M	36.0	51.0	13.0	24.99	< 0.001
	F	76.7	20.0	3.3		
I2 - Every woman needs a man to protect her						
		Disagree	Agree	Don't know	χ^2	p
Migratory background	M	42.9	50	7.1	6.96	< 0.05
	F	63.4	32.4	4.2		
Non-migratory background	M	42.6	44.6	12.9	20.45	< 0.001
	F	78.3	20.0	1.7		
I3 - In some cases, violence against people is justified						
		Disagree	Agree	Don't know	χ^2	p
Migratory background	M	42.4	50.5	7.1	10.2	< 0.05
	F	65.2	26.1	8.7		
Non-migratory background	M	41.2	52.9	5.9	20.1	< 0.001
	F	76.7	18.3	5.0		

From Table 7, it is possible to observe that the difference in responses to the sexism-related items between males and females is smaller in the group of students with a migratory background compared to those without it. In fact, differences between males and females without a

migratory background are statistically more significant than those between males and females with a migratory background. These variations can be better observed in graphical form (Figure 1; Figure 2; Figure 3), where it becomes evident that male students, regardless of their migratory background, exhibit similar responses, while female students show greater variation based on background. In other words, female students with a migratory background tend to respond more similarly to male students than to their non-migratory background peers.

Figure 1

Agreement Levels with Item I1 Stratified by Gender and Migratory Background

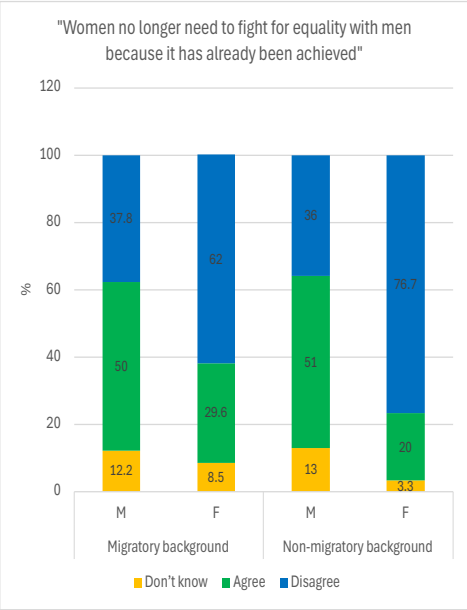


Figure 2

Agreement Levels with Item I2 Stratified by Gender and Migratory Background

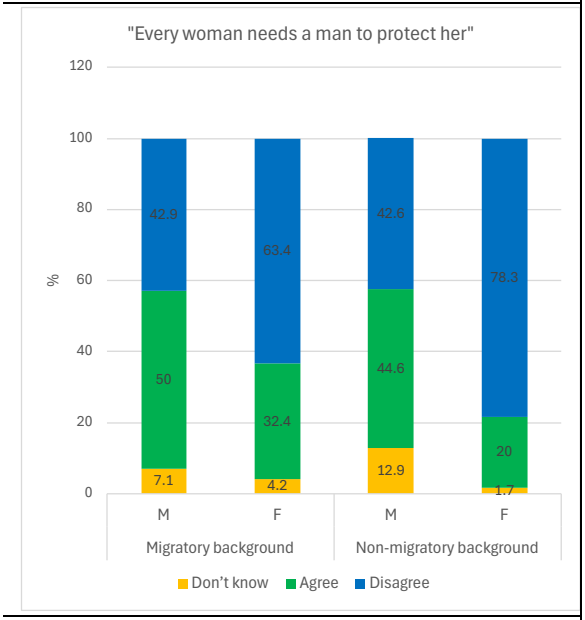
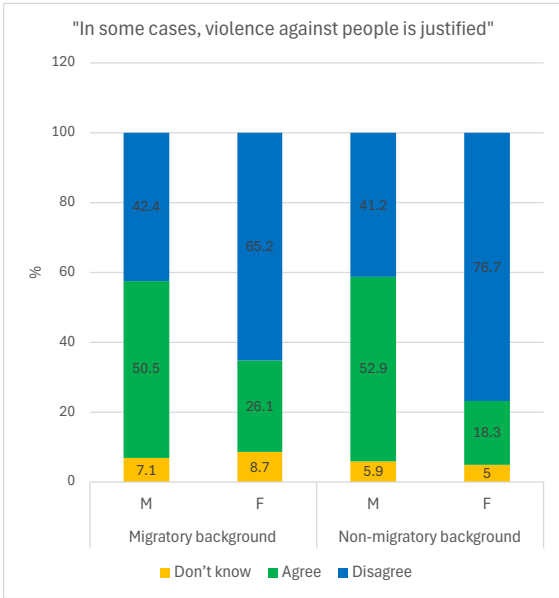


Figure 3

Agreement Levels with Item I3 Stratified by Gender and Migratory Background



5 Discussion and Implications for iVET Educational Practice

Data analysis shows consistency with the literature. First, the sample exhibits strong gender segregation across vocational specializations. Secondly, female students express lower levels of sexism compared to male students, in line with a greater propensity for gender equality observed in ICCS studies (Schulz et al., 2023). Migratory background, in itself, does not appear to show significant relationships with sexism. However, adopting an intersectional approach – one that goes beyond individual dimensions – reveals some interesting insights.

When considering both gender and migratory background, the data indicate that female students with a migratory background show higher levels of agreement with sexism-related items compared to their non-migratory background female peers. On the other hand, migratory background does not appear to impact sexist attitudes among male students.

A superficial reading might suggest that female students with a migratory background are more likely to hold sexist views than those without a migratory background. From an intersectional perspective, one might have expected that female students with a migratory background would hold stronger anti-sexist attitudes than their Italian peers, given their experience of multiple forms of discrimination. However, the way in which multiple experiences of discrimination manifest and the effects they have on attitudes are complex and unpredictable. Sometimes, the relationship between attitudes and belonging to a particular social category is counterintuitive. For example, it is important to recall the concept of internalized sexism, as introduced in the theoretical chapter. A higher level of agreement with sexism-related items could therefore suggest that female students with a migratory background experience multiple forms of discrimination based on both ethnicity and gender. Alternatively, or in addition, it may indicate greater exposure to sexist discursive practices, which can contribute to the internalization of gender stereotypes (Bearman et al., 2009).

There are many possible interpretations of these results, and in doing so, it is also important to consider some limitations of the study.

From a more technical perspective, it is worth noting that some descriptive statistics are missing and that certain relationships between variables have not been explored, such as potential differences between mixed-gender classes and gender-segregated classes. Additionally, the sample was not randomly selected, meaning it is not representative of the broader iVET student population.

The intersectional paradigm was used to examine the impact of multiple subordinated identities on *enacted* (or rather, *thought*) sexism rather than *experienced* sexism, although, as discussed, sexist attitudes can also result from internalized sexism. This approach might represent a non-conventional use of the intersectional paradigm and might risk be seen as undermining the empowerment of female students with a migratory background. In a broader sense, this contribution could leave room for easy stereotypical or stigmatizing interpretations, portraying female students with a migratory background or male students in general as pupils more inclined toward sexism. On the contrary, this should not be taken as a categorization of students but rather as a way to highlight the complexity of educational needs in iVET.

Even though the intersectional perspective is not adopted in the most conventional sense when interpreting the data, it is important to stress that it was precisely through an intersectional lens that the research questions were originally formulated. Moreover, we argue that this perspective has nonetheless enabled a type of analysis that might otherwise have been overlooked, allowing us to highlight how intersecting subordinated identities can shape complex frameworks for students' value systems and attitudes.

Adolescence is a key stage in socialization into gender-related practices, including, for instance, internalized sexism (Bearman et al., 2009). Teachers play an important role in addressing sexism, especially when working in multi-ethnic classrooms (Öhrn, 2009).

The insights provided by this contribution underscore the urgency, particularly in iVET, of gender equality education informed by the complexity of students' multiple identities, in order to promote a more inclusive and democratic iVET.

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