
MIND
THE
GAP

# Quantitative research

## Work Package

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# 1 Summary



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# 2 Technical References

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project Acronym** | MIND THE GAP |
| **Project Title** | MIND THE GAP: supporting young people's mental and emotional health in transition to work |
| **Project Coordinator** | PRO ARBEIT - KREIS OFFENBACH (AOR)- KOMMUNALES JOBCENTER |
| **Project Duration** | 30 months |
| **Report Name** | Quantitative Research |
| **Work Package** | WP2 – Assessment on young people mental health need in school to work transition |
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PU = Public

PP = Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)

RE = Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)

CO = Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)

| Version | Date | Beneficiary | Author | Approved |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 4/12/2024 | AnciLab | Luca Bramati | |
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# 3 Acknowledgements

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# 4 Disclaimer

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# 5 Executive Summary

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# 6 Methodological note

The quantitative information presented in this work was derived by processing responses to a survey questionnaire administered to individuals aged 16 to 29 from the five countries participating in the project.

A total of 1464 questionnaires were completed in a comprehensive and thorough manner. The collected data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential techniques, with special emphasis on the application of corrective statistical tests for multiple comparisons, such as Tukey and Bonferroni, which help reduce the risk of interpretive errors.

For responses that did not meet certain assumptions, non-parametric tests such as the Mann-Whitney test or the Kruskal-Wallis's test were used. These tests employ ranks instead of raw scores to compare distributions across groups of respondents (as will be seen later on). The ranks, obtained by ordering observations based on their values, serve as a synthetic measure useful for evaluating the relative prevalence of the analysed characteristic within each group. A higher mean rank indicates a greater presence of the characteristic under examination compared to other groups.

Unlike mean-based scores, which are sensitive to outliers and require sample data to follow a bell-shaped distribution, ranks provide a robust alternative for comparing distributions.

## 6.1 Possible sample biases

*Country of Residence*: Germany returned a significantly lower number of questionnaires than the pre-established sampling threshold, which was set at 385 complete and comprehensive responses.

*Gender bias:* There is a disproportionate representation of binary genders, with women responding to the questionnaire more frequently. Responses from individuals who do not identify with binary genders were numerically scarce.

*Age bias*: The data reveal a potential age bias in the samples, with certain age groups being overrepresented in some countries compared to others. The distribution of age groups varies significantly across countries, suggesting that sampling may have been influenced by local



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factors, such as participant accessibility or demographic characteristics of the respective populations.

*Student status bias*: The percentage of active students identified in the sample suggests a potential distortion concerning Germany and Italy. In both countries, the proportion of young people currently studying is approximately half that of other countries considered. In the case of Germany, this has already been addressed. For Italy, this situation stems from the sampling method, which involved second-level organizations that primarily engage with individuals who have exited the education system.

*Mitigation of biases*: In order to minimize the effects and distortions resulting from unbalanced sampling, many analyses considered the entire dataset without applying additional segmentations. For example, regarding the student status bias, no specific analysis was performed to evaluate the student status per country or identify possible data trends. Instead, the approach taken was to examine the overall educational status, regardless of country of residence, to rely on a numerically robust and more balanced sample.

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## 6.2 Definition of profiles

In order to better interpret the analysed data, respondent profiles were identified and used to cross-reference the answers provided by those who filled out the questionnaire. Some profiles were derived directly from endogenous variables, others were obtained through the interpretation of the answers provided, and finally, an additional condition was taken into account because, even if it was not part of the actual profiles, it is considered important to test some interpretative hypotheses also in view of its controlling function: this condition refers to



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the self-perception of emotional distress, that is, the answers to the question *"Do you think you suffer from some form of emotional distress?"*

Endogenous variables used:

- *Country of residence*
- *Gender identity*
- *Sexual orientation*
- *Age group*
- *Educational status (school dropout or not)*

Derived profiles:

- *Presence of a migratory background*
- *Economic status*

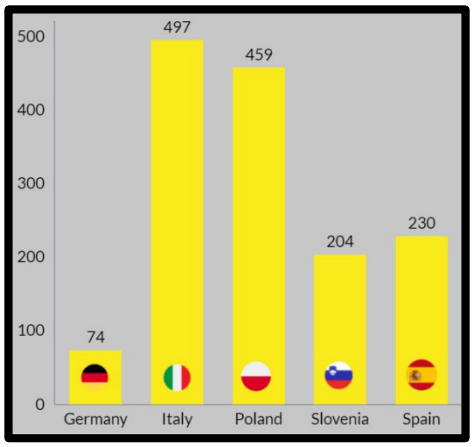
Respondents' emotional status:

- *Self-perception of forms of emotional distress*

## PROFILE – COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE

As previously mentioned, Germany returned fewer questionnaires than the other countries. Data for this country, consequently, were considered only when the results showed strong statistical evidence; otherwise, they were not included in the analysis. Slovenia and Spain also submitted a lower number of responses, however, in Slovenia's case this is an intentional situation given the very small size of the resident population; for Spain, the number of responses was slightly below yet not far from the reference threshold. On the other hand, Italy and Poland did not present problems of underrepresentation.

*Figure 1 – Questionnaires used for the analysis*



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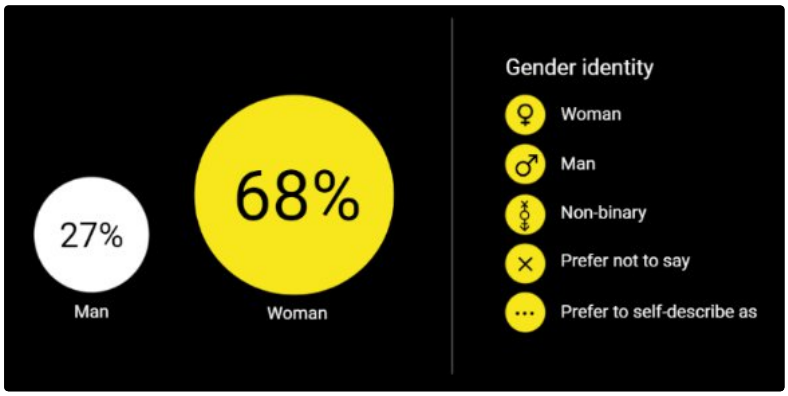
## PROFILE – GENDER IDENTITY

Most respondents, accounting for 68%, identify as women, while 27.1% identify as men. A small portion, 2.2%, identify as non-binary, 1.3% prefer to self-describe using other terms, and 1.4% chose not to disclose their gender identity (Figure 2).

*Figure 2 – Gender identity*




Women constitute the majority of respondents in all countries, with percentages of 72.7% in Slovenia, 71.2% in Poland, 70.0% in Italy, 57.0% in Spain, and 55.3% in Germany. Men represent a smaller share of respondents, at 40.8% in Germany, 39.9% in Spain, 24.9% in Italy, 23.1% in Poland, and 22.0% in Slovenia.

A small percentage of respondents prefer to self-describe using their own terms, with proportions of 2.9% in Slovenia, 1.3% in Germany, 1.3% in Poland, 1.2% in Italy, and none in Spain. Non-binary identification is reflected in 3.3% of respondents in Poland, 2.6% in Germany, 2.0% in Slovenia, 1.6% in Italy, and 1.3% in Spain.

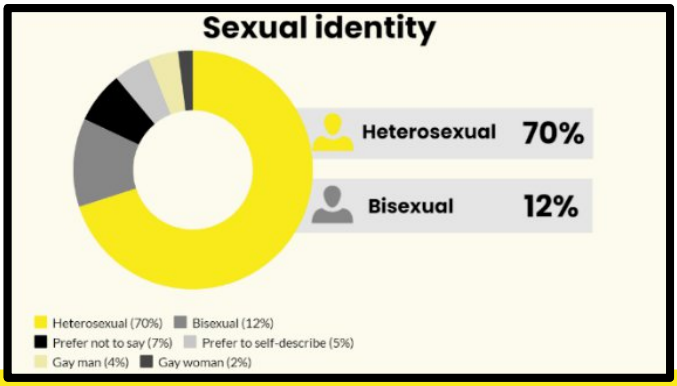
Some participants chose not to disclose their gender, with 2.2% in Germany, 1.8% in Spain, 1.1% in Poland, 0.5% in Slovenia, and none in Italy.

## PROFILE – SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Most respondents in all countries identify as heterosexual, with percentages ranging from 60.5% in Slovenia to 76.3% in Italy. Bisexuality represents a significant portion of respondents in all countries, peaking in Poland (15.9%) and with similar figures in Italy (11.3%) and Spain (10.1%).

Gay men constitute a minority, with varying percentages. In Poland, 13.7% of respondents identify as gay men, a significantly higher percentage than in other countries. Lesbian women are less represented, with percentages ranging from 1.3% in Spain to 4.4% in Italy. A notable number of respondents prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation,

*Figure 3 – Sexual identity*



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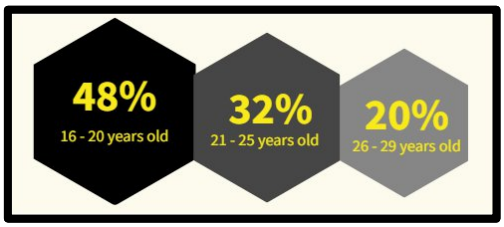
with the highest percentage observed in Germany (15.8%). Finally, a small percentage of respondents across all countries prefer to describe themselves using their own terms, highlighting the presence of non-conventional sexual identities that fall outside traditional categories. These percentages range from 2.6% in Germany to 7.2% in Poland.

## PROFILE – AGE GROUP

The average age of respondents is approximately 21 years, representing the mean age of the 1464 participants in the sample. The standard deviation, a measure of data dispersion around the mean, is 4.08. This indicates that respondents' ages tend to differ by about 4 years from the average of 21.

In practical terms, a relatively low standard deviation suggests that most respondents' ages are close to the average. Conversely, a higher standard deviation would indicate greater variability in ages. In this survey, most respondents fall within the age range of approximately 17 to 25 years, given the standard deviation of about 4.08 years.

*Figure 4 – Age group*

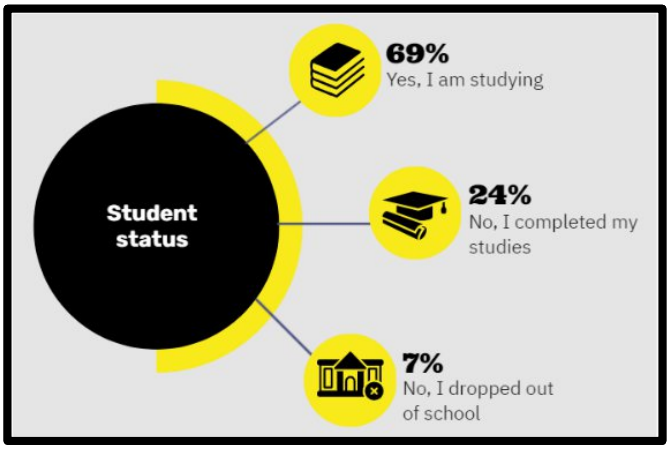



Considering that an interval of ±1 standard deviation around the mean covers about 68% of the data in a normal distribution, it can be inferred that approximately 68% of respondents are between 17 years old (21 - 4) and 25 years old (21 + 4).

## PROFILE – STUDENT STATUS

In Slovenia, 84.9% of respondents are currently students, 83.8% in Spain, and 81.7% in Poland. In Italy, the percentage of students is 46.1%, similar to Germany's at 51.3%. Regarding those who have completed their studies, Germany has the highest percentage at 46.1%, followed by Italy with 41.0%. In Poland and Spain, 14.0% and 13.2% of respondents have completed their studies, while in Slovenia this percentage drops to 9.3%.

*Figure 5 – Student status*




For respondents who have dropped out of school, Italy has the highest percentage at 12.9%, followed by



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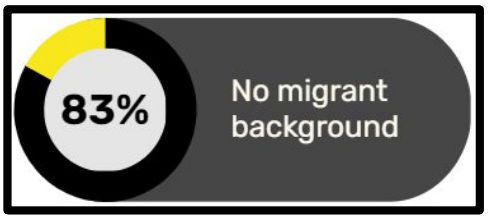
Slovenia with 5.9%. In Poland, 4.4% of respondents have dropped out, while in Germany and Spain, these percentages are 2.6% and 3.1%, respectively. Overall, 68.4% of respondents are still studying (1007 respondents), 24.0% have completed their studies, and 7.2% have dropped out of school (Figure 5). These data reflect the age groups of the respondents and show a strong prevalence of students in Slovenia, Poland, and Spain, while Germany and Italy have a more balanced distribution between those still studying and those who have already completed their studies.

### PROFILE – PRESENCE OF MIGRANT BACKGROUND

*Figure 6 – Migrant background*




One of the objectives of the research is to investigate whether individuals living in a migratory context have different levels of well-being or distress compared to those without such a background. The term "migrant background" refers to individuals who, in various ways, have a personal history related to migration: they may be immigrants themselves, children of immigrants, or simply have origins different from the country in which they hold citizenship.

To define this condition, aspects such as the country of birth, country of residence, citizenship, ethnic group, the language spoken at home, and whether a visa is required to live in a Schengen Area country were considered. The combination of these conditions allows us to infer that the respondent lives in what is defined as a "migrant background." The focus is not on the formal or legal aspects of the condition, but rather on the individual history of the person who answered the questionnaire. In this study, the condition was defined by creating a dichotomous variable that takes a value of 0 (null) if the respondent was born in one of the five countries under study, resides in the same country, holds the same citizenship, has a Caucasian ethnic background, speaks the language of the country of residence (identical to the country of birth), and does not need a visa to live in Europe. The algorithm used is relatively lenient in defining this condition: it is sufficient for any one of these criteria to be absent for the respondent to be considered as living in a migratory context. Most of the population (82.9%) does not meet the criteria for a migrant background. Partial data from Germany did not allow for an accurate assessment of this dimension and, therefore, these data were not included in the analysis. In Italy, most respondents (90.7%) do not have a migratory background, while only 9.3% come from non-Italian origins. In Poland, the situation is slightly different: 84.3% of survey participants have no migratory ties, while the remaining 15.7% do, a figure significantly



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influenced by the presence of young people of Ukrainian origin. In Slovenia, 90.2% of respondents have no migration experience, while 9.8% have a personal or family history linked to migration. In Spain, there is a greater variety of origins: 72.8% of respondents have no personal or family migration history, but as many as 27.2% have migration-related personal or family histories, with a broad representation of individuals from various parts of the world.

## PROFILE – ECONOMIC STATUS

Economic status is often defined through a range of indicators that include, among other factors, personal or household income. However, for the purposes of this survey, questions designed to collect such information were not included. Instead, attention was focused on indicators such as the presence of one or more householders, defined as individuals responsible for meeting the economic needs of the family. Additional factors considered include their level of education, employment status, and whether the respondent believes that their economic situation has, in any way, hindered their personal goals in terms of education and career. A stricter algorithm was used for this definition. A respondent is considered to live in a difficult economic context if, in addition to reporting that their economic situation has prevented them from achieving personal goals, they live in a family structure where economic needs are met by only one person who has a level of education below a high school diploma and is either unemployed or working in a non-specialized job.

The more stringent criteria for defining low economic status are reflected in the percentage breakdown by type of status among the respondents. Approximately 5.5% of those who completed the questionnaire simultaneously exhibit all three of these characteristics.

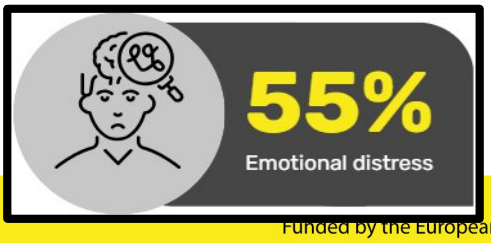
*Table 1 – Economic status*

| | Germany | Italy | Poland | Slovenia | Spain | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **No low economic status** | 98,7 | 86,3 | 98,7 | 99,5 | 97,8 | **94,5** |
| **Low economic status** | 1,3 | 13,7 | 1,3 | ,5 | 2,2 | **5,5** |

## PROFILE – PERCEIVED EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

The responses to the question *"Do you think you are currently suffering from some form of emotional discomfort?"* used to define the "perceived distress" profile, were not homogeneous across the countries involved in the study. Overall, about 55% of the young people—both women and non-binary individuals—who participated in the survey reported experiencing some form of emotional distress (Figure 7). In Germany,

*Figure 7 – Self-perception of emotional distress*

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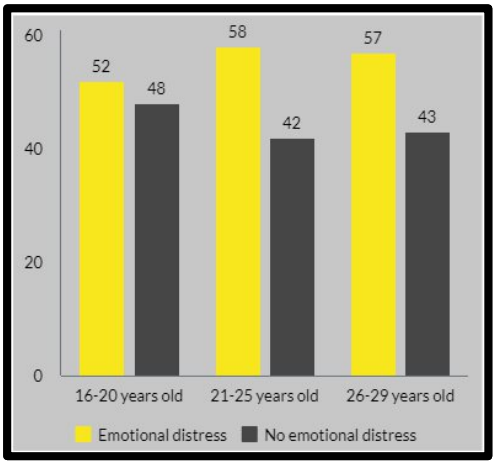
approximately 60% of the participants reported perceiving some form of emotional distress. In Italy, this percentage is around 56%, while in Poland it rises to 65%, indicating a higher level of emotional difficulties. Slovenia and Spain show the lowest figures, with 43% and 42% of the youth reporting some form of emotional discomfort, respectively.

This perception varies only slightly across different **age groups**. Among young people aged 16 to 20, more than half (52.0%) report experiencing emotional discomfort. This percentage increases to 58.4% for those aged 21 to 25, while for the group aged 26 to 29, it is slightly lower, at 57.5% (Figure 8). Overall, the differences between the age groups are minimal, suggesting that the perception of emotional discomfort does not significantly vary based on age. Moreover, these differences do not hold up when tested for statistical significance. In other words, these are small differences that, although observed among the respondents, cannot be considered reliable on a general level.

*Figure 8 – Self-perception of emotional distress by age group – percentage data*




**Gender identity** shows a certain trend, although not clearly defined. Among those who choose to self-describe outside of traditional categories, 68.4% report experiencing emotional discomfort. For those who identify as male, the percentage is 46.6%, while for those who identify as female, it is higher at 57.3%. Among non-binary individuals, 71.9% report emotional discomfort, and for those who prefer not to disclose their gender identity, the percentage rises further to 76.2%.

The perception of emotional discomfort is higher among those who do not fit into traditional gender categories, with particularly high values among non-binary individuals and those who prefer not to disclose their gender identity.

*Table 8 – Self-perception of emotional distress and gender identity*

| | Prefer to self-describe as | Man | Woman | Non-binary | Prefer not to say |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Emotional distress** | 68,4 | 46,6 | 57,3 | 71,9 | 76,2 |
| **No emotional** | 31,6 | 53,4 | 42,7 | 28,1 | 23,8 |



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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **distress** | | | | | |
| Total | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 | 100,0 |

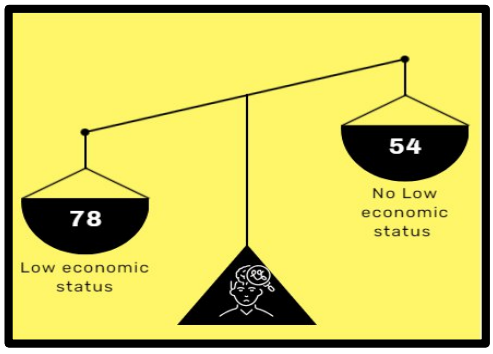
Caution is required when interpreting these data from a statistical perspective. The differences between gender categories are particularly high, especially between the binary and non-binary classifications, with the latter being underrepresented in numerical terms and therefore more susceptible to fluctuations. For this reason, it is not possible to generalize the relationship inferentially without exceeding a 5% risk of reaching random or, in other words, incorrect conclusions. To be conservative, given that the larger groups are involved, we can simply note the trend that women seem to experience emotional discomfort slightly more than men.

*Figure 9 – Self-perception of emotional distress and migrant background – percentage data*


There is no interpretive doubt that the **migratory context** does not influence the perception of emotional discomfort: 55.2% of those without a migratory background and 55.0% of those who do report suffering from some form of emotional discomfort (Figure 9Figure 10).

On the contrary, living in a context characterized by a low **economic status** seems to influence the onset of some form of emotional distress. Among those who do not fall into the "low economic status" category, 53.8% reported suffering from some form of emotional discomfort. This percentage significantly increases to 77.8% among those who are instead in a context presumably characterized by low economic status (Figure 10).

*Figure 10 – Self-perception of emotional distress and economic status – percentage data*



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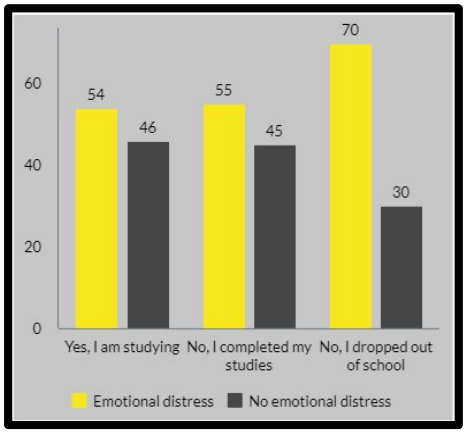
The **educational status** also appears to be a factor capable of influencing emotional well-being: 69.5% of young people who have dropped out of school report suffering from some form of psychological discomfort. The percentage decreases among those who have completed their studies (54.5%) and drops slightly to 53.8% among those still engaged in their studies.[1]

*Figure 11 – Self-perception of emotional distress and student status*




[1] Chi-Square test significant: p-value 0.008



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# 7 Analysis of the responses provided

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## 7.1 The Positive Youth Development model

**Positive Youth Development (PYD)** is a theoretical and practical model that places young people at the centre of a process of positive growth and development. This approach was developed to counteract the traditional view of youth as problems to be solved, proposing instead a perspective in which they are seen as resources to be valued and empowered. PYD aims to create supportive environments that help young people develop skills, build meaningful relationships, and adopt responsible and ethical behaviours.

The concept of Positive Youth Development was theorized and developed by researchers such as Richard Lerner, Jacqueline Lerner, and Peter Benson. Richard Lerner emphasized the importance of an ecological and dynamic approach to youth development, asserting that "youth thrive when they engage in activities that promote five key characteristics: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring" (Lerner, 2005).

The PYD model is structured around five core areas, known as the **5 Cs**, which represent the pillars of positive youth development. These areas include:

- **Competence**: the ability to acquire skills in various domains.
- **Confidence**: self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy.



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- **Connection**: maintaining positive relationships with family, friends, and the community.
- **Character**: ethical values and a sense of responsibility.
- **Caring**: empathy and concern for others.

The harmonious development of these dimensions aims to promote overall well-being and encourage young people to make active contributions to society.

### Competence

Competence refers to the skills and abilities young people develop in various areas such as education, work, and daily life. According to Lerner, "developing specific competencies through educational and formative experiences is crucial for the long-term success of youth" (Lerner et al., 2013).

### Confidence

Self-confidence pertains to self-esteem and a positive self-image. Jacqueline Lerner highlighted that "self-confidence is a key element of psychological well-being and directly influences young people's ability to face challenges" (Lerner et al., 2013).

### Connection

Social connections include relationships with family, friends, school, and the community. Peter Benson stated that "strong social connections are fundamental to the emotional and psychological well-being of young people" (Benson et al., 2006).

### Character

Character refers to values, morality, and integrity. Benson emphasized that "developing good character helps young people make ethical and responsible choices, contributing to the well-being of society" (Benson et al., 2006).

For this study, character has been reinterpreted to focus more on traits related to the school-to-work transition, such as resilience, goal-oriented behaviour, and commitment to useful activities.



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### CARING

Caring involves empathy and concern for others, promoting altruistic behaviour and social responsibility. In this work, this area was not examined, as the study's objectives focused on other aspects that might influence well-being during the school-to-work transition.

Positive Youth Development represents an integrated and positive approach to the growth and development of young people. By emphasizing competence, confidence, connections, character, and caring, PYD provides an optimistic and proactive perspective on youth potential. This model not only contributes to individual well-being but also has positive implications for society, fostering a generation of more resilient, capable, and socially engaged individuals.

**Scores inversion**

The scores for the areas of the PYD model were collected using a scale ranging from 1 to 4, where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 4 "strongly agree." To ensure accurate interpretation of the results, it was necessary to reverse some scores for negative statements. This reversal process is essential to provide an accurate assessment of participants' levels of competence.

For example, consider the statement *"I feel like I'm wasting time."* If a participant assigns a score of 1 to this statement, it indicates that they do not feel like they are wasting time. However, to calculate a score that reflects a positive perception, this score must be reversed. In this case, a score of 1 becomes 4, a score of 2 becomes 3, and so on. This process ensures that the final scores accurately represent participants' agreement with positive statements.

The analysis of average scores in the PYD model's areas shows that young people perceive themselves as having good competencies and social connections. However, there is a slight deficit in self-confidence. The Character area, while positive, could benefit from further interventions to enhance young people's perception of their values and adaptability. Standard deviations indicate variability in responses, suggesting that interventions should be tailored to address the specific needs of different groups of young people.

In the PYD model applied in this study, the component related to self-assessment of personal skills, *"***Competence***,"* achieves the highest average score (3.08). This indicates that young

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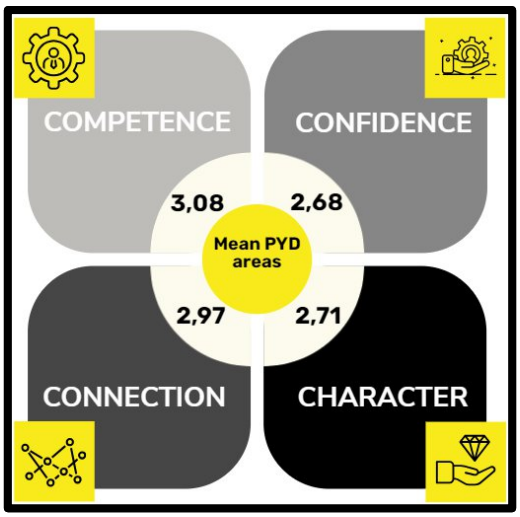
people feel more confident in their abilities compared to other aspects of their personal development. The ability to build positive relationships and a support network, "**Connection**," is characterized by the second-highest score (2.97). Participants perceive themselves as having good social relationships, although there is greater variability among responses (standard deviation 0.52).

The dimension of "**Character**" (mean 2.71) and "**Confidence**" (mean 2.68) are at comparatively lower levels, with "Confidence" scoring the lowest among the four dimensions analysed. This suggests that young people may need additional support to strengthen their self-esteem.

*Figure 12 – Score average of PYD areas*




The relatively low standard deviation for Confidence (0.41) and Character (0.34) indicates less variability in self-assessments within these personality areas, reflecting a more uniform evaluation among participants.

### 7.1.1 PYD Model – Competence area

The sample of respondents generally has a positive perception of their own skills and personal worth. Most scores are close to or exceed 3 on a 4-point scale, with the overall average, as noted, being 3.08.

**Perception of Personal Competence and Knowledge**

*"My general knowledge is good* recorded an average score of 3.21 and a median of 3. The assessment of general knowledge is thus fairly positive, with at least half of the young respondents having a solid perception of their general competencies. *"I have (or will have) good skills for the job market"* achieved an average score of 3.05, with a standard deviation of 0.68 and a median of 3. The perception of job market skills is generally positive, although the variability in responses shows that this is not a universal belief.



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**Personal Satisfaction and Engagement**

*"I am doing what I like (study or job)"* reached an average score of 2.96, with a standard deviation of 0.79 and a median of 3. The perception of doing what one enjoys is slightly lower compared to other areas, with a certain variability in individual experiences. Some participants, therefore, do not seem entirely satisfied with their current path. *"I am actively engaged in learning new things"* recorded an average score of 3.19. This score reflects a strong commitment to continuous learning, with respondents feeling actively involved in acquiring new knowledge.

**Encouragement and Support**

Respondents generally feel encouraged to try new experiences that could be positive for their personal and professional growth. *"I am encouraged to try things that might be good for me"* received an average score of 3.14. As with other items, the variability does not allow for the assertion that this situation is uniformly generalizable.

**Perception of Success and Abilities**

The average score of 2.90, with a standard deviation of 0.79, quantifies how respondents feel about the actions they are taking to achieve success ("*I'm doing what it takes to be successful in life*"). This is the lowest and most variable score recorded among the responses, highlighting doubts and uncertainties about the life paths chosen by some participants. However, the statement *"I am able to do things as well as most other people"* received a somewhat higher consensus (average score: 3.06, standard deviation: 0.72, median: 3). This indicates a positive comparative perception of abilities, with respondents feeling as competent as their peers or at least not less so. The young people surveyed were generally more in agreement when considering themselves valuable individuals, with a positive sense of self-worth and a view of themselves on par with others ("*I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others*"— average score: 3.12). However, this score was also characterized by significant variability, indicating that not all participants identify with this sentiment.

*Table 3– Average scores for competence area by individual responses*



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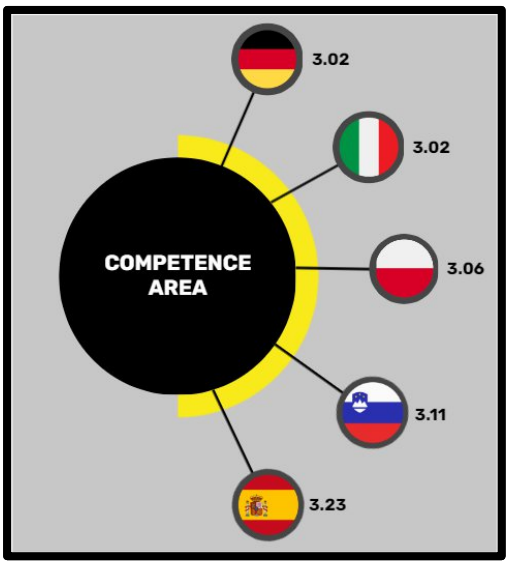
| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **My general knowledge is good** | 3,21 | ,62 |
| **I have (or will have) good skill for the job market** | 3,05 | ,68 |
| **I am doing what I like (study or job)** | 2,96 | ,79 |
| **I am actively engaged in learning new things** | 3,19 | ,69 |
| **I am encouraged to try things that might be good for me** | 3,14 | ,70 |
| **I'm doing what it takes to be successful in life** | 2,90 | ,79 |
| **I am able to do things as well as most other people** | 3,06 | ,72 |
| **I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others** | 3,12 | ,79 |

In the field of perceived skills for the job market, Spanish youth express a moderately higher level of confidence (3.29) compared to their Italian peers, who score 2.90. This difference reflects a stronger orientation toward a sense of professional competence, indicating a positive perception of their job-related skills.

Regarding satisfaction with doing what they enjoy (study or work), Italian youth report a more modest agreement (2.87) compared to Spanish (3.08), who show a slightly higher preference for what they are currently doing.

In the engagement to learn new things, Spanish participants feel more involved (3.34), while German youth, with a score of 3.03, show less pronounced interest in this area. This suggests a different orientation toward personal development.

*Figure 13 – Scores related to competence area by country*




Encouragement to try new experiences is perceived significantly in Italy and Spain (3.28 and 3.29, respectively). In contrast, in Germany, with a score of 2.91, there is a less stimulating context for exploration and experimentation.



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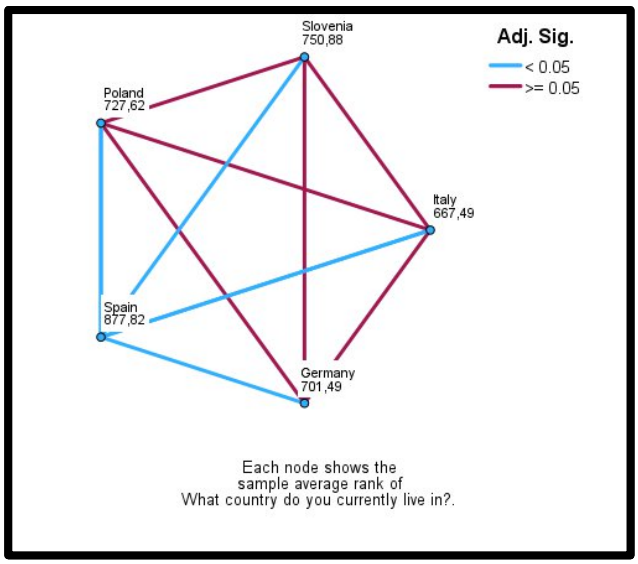
Regarding the commitment to doing what is necessary to succeed in life, the level of agreement in Spain (3.13) indicates a more optimistic perspective compared to Italy (2.61), where young people seem to show more uncertainty about their chances of success. On the perception of performing well in what they do, Slovenian youth report the highest level (3.22), compared to Italians (2.99). This self-assessment highlights a stronger confidence in their ability to do well in the required tasks.

*Figure 14 – Effect of country on competence. Pairwise comparison*




Finally, in the perception of their personal value, Slovenian youth stand out with an agreement level of 3.42, while Germans score 2.97, indicating a more positive awareness of their self-worth among the former compared to the latter. Figure 14 shows the average scores for the Competence area for each country, with pairwise comparisons to assess whether the differences between countries are statistically significant. Each node represents a country and displays the average score, ranked, for the "Competence" area, which measures the confidence and perceptions of competence among youth regarding their professional skills and preparation for the job market.

The differences between countries connected by a blue line are statistically significant (p-value < 0.05) and indicate that the difference between the average "Competence" scores is considered reliable and not due to chance. The differences between countries connected by a red line are not statistically significant (p-value ≥ 0.05), meaning that there is no relevant difference between the average scores of the countries in question, and more precisely, the observed differences could be random. The pairwise comparison graph for the "Competence" area highlights a higher perception of skills among Spanish youth, with significant differences compared to Germany and Poland. Germany and Italy, on the other hand, show lower scores, with no significant differences between them. Spanish youth, therefore, seem to have a more positive perception of their competence, while countries like Germany and Italy show more moderate levels of confidence in this area.



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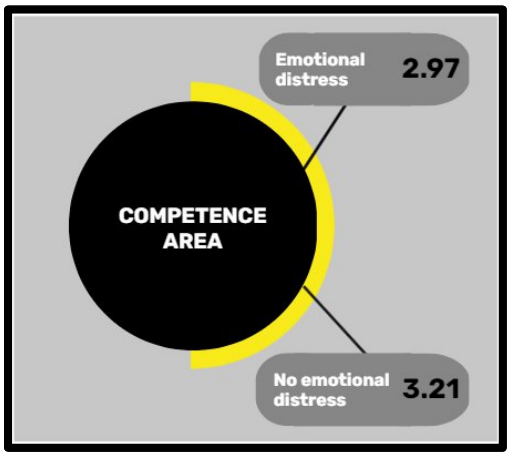
As just seen, only Spanish youth have a significantly higher perception of competence compared to all the others. This suggests that, in general, the country of residence does not have a particular influence on the perception of one's level of competence. In the subsequent analyses, we will attempt to verify whether there is a link between self-perceived competence levels and forms of **emotional distress**. Unlike the country of residence, in this case, there is no direction of the relationship. We cannot determine a cause-and-effect dimension but can only certify whether a link exists between these dimensions. The sample data provide fairly clear information, the reliability of which has been verified: the average scores of those who perceive some emotional distresses are always lower than those who did not report this issue (Table 4). At first glance, it therefore seems that there is a certain connection between these aspects.

*Figure 15 – Scores obtained in competence area for perceived distress*




Individuals who reported suffering from some form of emotional distress tend to feel less competent than those who did not report such suffering (or vice versa). The very low statistical significance ($p < 0.001$) suggests that it is highly unlikely that this link is merely a result of chance.

*Table 4– Scores obtained in the competence area by individual responses*

| | Emotional distress | No emotional distress |
|---|---|---|
| **My general knowledge is good** | 3,15 | 3,28 |
| **I have (or will have) good skill for the job market** | 2,98 | 3,14 |
| **I am doing what I like (study or job)** | 2,85 | 3,10 |
| **I am actively engaged in learning new things** | 3,12 | 3,27 |
| **I am encouraged to try things that might be good for me** | 3,04 | 3,27 |
| **I'm doing what it takes to be successful in life** | 2,80 | 3,02 |



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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **I am able to do things as well as most other people** | 2,92 | 3,24 |
| **I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others** | 2,93 | 3,36 |

What cannot be stated is the direction of this association, that is, whether emotional distress leads to a negative perception of competencies or whether a low self-assessment of one's abilities contributes to emotional distress.

Contrary to what was just mentioned, **gender identity** does not play an important role in how much young people feel competent and prepared to face the transition from youth to adulthood, which involves entering the job market.

*Figure 16 – Scores obtained in the competence area by gender identity*

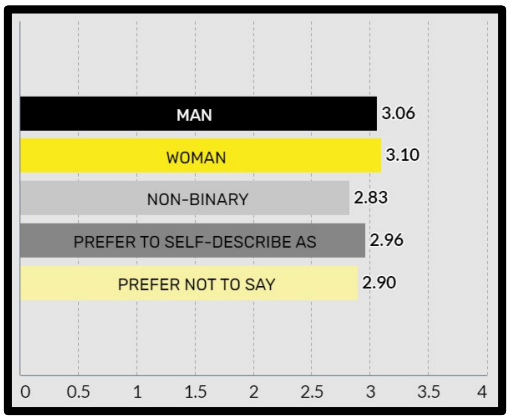
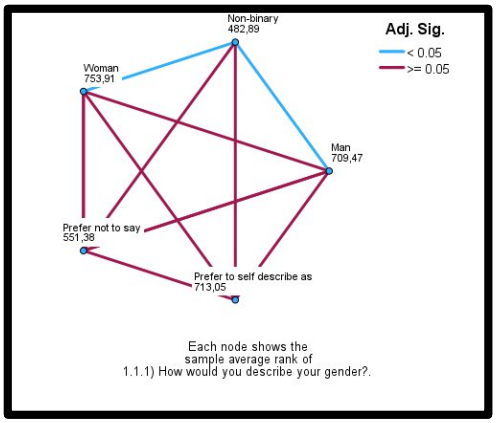



*Figure 17 – Effect of gender identity on competence. Pairwise comparison*




From the analysis of the scores (ranks) calculated through pairwise comparisons, the only significant differences worth noting are between non-binary individuals and women, and between non-binary individuals and men. The former tend to report generally lower scores on questions assessing their perceived competence. Since the reliability of the sample is observed exclusively in men, women, and non-binary individuals, it is useful to further explore the responses given by each of these groups of young people.

*Table 5 – Average scores given to the responses in the competence area by gender (man – woman – nonbinary)*

| | Man | Woman | Non-binary |
|---|---|---|---|
| **My general knowledge is good** | 3,25 | 3,19 | 3,13 |



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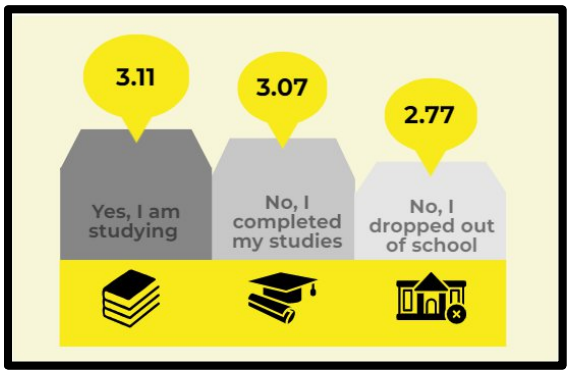
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **I have (or will have) good skill for the job market** | 3,09 | 3,05 | 2,78 |
| **I am doing what I like (study or job)** | 2,91 | 3,00 | 2,72 |
| **I am actively engaged in learning new things** | 3,12 | 3,21 | 3,06 |
| **I am encouraged to try things that might be good for me** | 3,04 | 3,19 | 2,87 |
| **I'm doing what it takes to be successful in life** | 2,85 | 2,93 | 2,69 |
| **I am able to do things as well as most other people** | 3,07 | 3,08 | 2,59 |
| **I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others** | 3,12 | 3,15 | 2,78 |

In many areas women perceive themselves more positively compared to men and non-binary individuals, especially in terms of commitment and personal satisfaction. Non-binary individuals, in particular, tend to report the lowest scores in almost all categories, indicating a potential disparity in the perception of their own competencies and personal value.

Overall, **sexual orientation** does not have a particularly significant impact on young people's perception of their competencies during the school-to-work transition phase. The main differences emerge between gay men and individuals who prefer to self-describe, compared to heterosexuals, but these differences are not so pronounced as to support definitive claims, with the risk of generalizing conclusions that are only valid for the sample used.

The dimension that plays a more significant role in self-perception of competence is **student status**. Those who have dropped out of school provided responses that, in the eight questions related to the "Competence" category, indicate a lower perceived level compared to those who are still studying or have completed their educational path. The trend is clear: there is a strong difference between "*Yes, I am studying*" and "*No, I dropped out of school*," as well as between "*No, I completed my studies*" and "*No, I dropped out of school*." On the other hand, the groups "*Yes, I am studying*" and "*No, I completed my studies*" can be considered similar in terms of self-

*Figure 18 – Average scores for competence area by student status*



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perceived competence. To summarize, it can be said that dropping out of school has a significant impact on how young people aged 16 to 29 feels about having the necessary competencies to face the workforce.

What does not seem to determine a variation in the average scores of the competence area is the **age group**. Young people in the 16-20 age range have an average of 3.07 with a standard deviation of 0.48. Similarly, those in the 21-25 age range show the same average of 3.07, but with a slightly lower standard deviation of 0.44. The 26-29 age group has a slightly higher average of 3.12 with a standard deviation of 0.48. Overall, the total average is 3.08 with a standard deviation of 0.47, indicating that there is a relatively uniform perception of competence across the different age groups analysed (Table 6).

*Table 6– Average scores for competence area by age group*

| Age group | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **16 - 20 years old** | 3,07 | ,48 |
| **21 - 25 years old** | 3,07 | ,44 |
| **26 - 29 years old** | 3,12 | ,48 |
| Total | 3,08 | ,47 |

In fact, it seems that all population groups have the same distribution of scores, meaning they consider themselves quite competent with no significant distinctions.

As stated earlier, 17.1% of participants live in a **migratory context**. This is a broad definition that also includes second- or third-generation migrants, a condition that does not seem to affect situations of distress, as evidenced by the lack of correlation with the self-perception of experiencing any form of discomfort.

*Table 7– Average scores for competence area by migrant context*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **No migrant Background** | 3,08 | ,44 |
| **Migrant Background** | 3,08 | ,58 |



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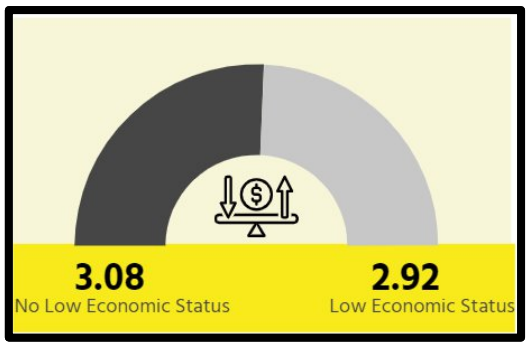
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Total | 3,08 | ,47 |

Further empirical confirmation comes from observing the average scores related to the responses to the questions concerning the competence area (Table 7): it is immediately clear that the average scores provided by the sample are identical, suggesting that this situation can be verified on a larger scale and not only within the collected sample of responses.

People with a **low economic status** tend to perceive their skills as lower (mean of 2.92) compared to those who do not perceive economic difficulties (mean of 3.08). Although the difference between these two values is small (5.5%), it indicates a divergence in opinions.

*Figure 19 – Average scores for competence area by economic status*




This difference was confirmed using a statistical test called Kruskal-Wallis, which is useful when comparing groups without making specific assumptions about the data distribution (non-parametric). The test showed that the difference between the groups is statistically significant, with a p-value < 0.001, meaning it is highly unlikely that this difference is random. The standard error for each group (0.044 for the low economic status group and 0.012 for the group without economic difficulties) tells us how reliable the means observed in the sample are. A small standard error indicates greater precision in estimating the mean. The standard errors are very small, and the difference between the means (0.16) is large enough to overcome these errors and be considered significant.

### 7.1.2 PYD Model – Confidence area

In the context of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) model, the "Confidence" area focuses, as seen, on dimensions of self-trust and self-assurance. This area aims to assess how young people perceive their abilities, sense of control over their lives, and social image. It is important to note that each statement was rated on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 indicates strong disagreement and 4 indicates full agreement.

**Perception of One's Abilities and Self-Esteem**



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The statement "*My general capabilities are equal to those of my peers*" recorded an agreement level with an average score of 2.80 out of 4 (standard deviation of 0.76, median of 3). The young people who answered the questionnaire perceive their abilities as similar to those of their peers, indicating a generally positive, though not excellent, evaluation of their competencies compared to others. Self-assessment of their self-esteem is confirmed by a generally positive judgment of themselves, as "*On the whole, I like myself*" reached a very similar average score (mean 2.88, standard deviation 0.79, median 3).

**Perception of Control and Direction in life**

With an average of 2.72 and a standard deviation of 0.83, *"I feel in control of my life and future"* indicates a not overly optimistic perception of control over one's life and future. The statement "*Sometimes, I feel like my life has no purpose*" recorded an average of 2.70, with a standard deviation of 0.93 and a median of 3. This is a negatively framed question, so a higher score means agreement with the statement. Although the average is not particularly elevated, the high standard deviation indicates that the sense of a lack of purpose in life is perceived significantly by a large part of the sample, showing considerable variation in the responses.

**Influence of External Advice and Opportunities**

The statement "*In life you need only a chance*" received an average of 2.15, with a standard deviation of 0.78 and a median of 2. Many participants agree or are neutral with the idea that luck alone is enough to make a difference in life, suggesting they see success as the result of multiple factors. This thought should be read in conjunction with what respondents expressed about not needing advice. "*I don't need any advice; I know what I have to do to try to be successful*" (mean of 1.93 - standard deviation of 0.72) shows a tendency toward disagreement. Therefore, it's not just luck; many young people also recognize the importance of receiving good external advice.

**Discrepancy between Self-Perception and Social Image**

*"The image I have of myself corresponds with the one others have of me"* received a relatively low average score of 2.43, with a standard deviation of 0.76 and especially a median of 2.



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There is quite a widespread feeling that there is a discrepancy between how young people see themselves and how others perceive them.

**Personal Pride**

The statement *"I feel I do not have much to be proud of"* recorded an average of 2.15, with a standard deviation of 0.85 and a median of 2, suggesting that many participants are in a state of neutrality or slight agreement with this statement. Therefore, there is some sense of discomfort, though not always strongly expressed.

Overall, the statements in the "Confidence" area of the PYD model, focused on personal trust and self-assurance of young people during the school-to-work transition, suggest that the participants tend to feel moderately in control of their lives and have a sufficient but not high level of self-esteem. Some respondents seem to perceive a discrepancy between their self-image and how others perceive them, while others seem more disillusioned, believing that while luck is not the only determining factor in life, it still plays a certain role.

*Table 8– Average scores for confidence area by individual responses*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **My general capabilities are equal to those of my peers** | 2,80 | ,76 |
| **In life you need only a chance** | 2,15 | ,78 |
| **I don't need any advice; I know what I have to do to try to be successful** | 1,93 | ,72 |
| **I feel in control of my life and future** | 2,72 | ,83 |
| **Sometimes, I feel like my life has no purpose** | 2,70 | ,93 |
| **On the whole, I like myself** | 2,88 | ,79 |
| **The image I have of myself corresponds with the one others have of me** | 2,43 | ,76 |
| **I feel I do not have much to be proud of** | 2,15 | ,85 |

Self-confidence is not completely the same among young people from different **countries of residence** analysed in this study. In Spain, high scores are often recorded in various areas, reflecting a high confidence in their abilities, while in Italy and Poland, lower scores are often reported, suggesting cultural and social differences that influence the perception of self-confidence and self-worth. In Slovenia, significant variations were recorded, with high scores



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both in the perception of general capabilities and in feeling a lack of pride, indicating a certain complexity in self-perception. Finally, in Germany, the perception of one's abilities and control over life is relatively positive, but there is some tendency towards feelings of insecurity or lack of purpose.

These perceptions vary across different countries, reflecting diverse cultural and social perspectives on fundamental aspects of daily life.

*Figure 20 – Average scores for confidence area by individual responses and country*

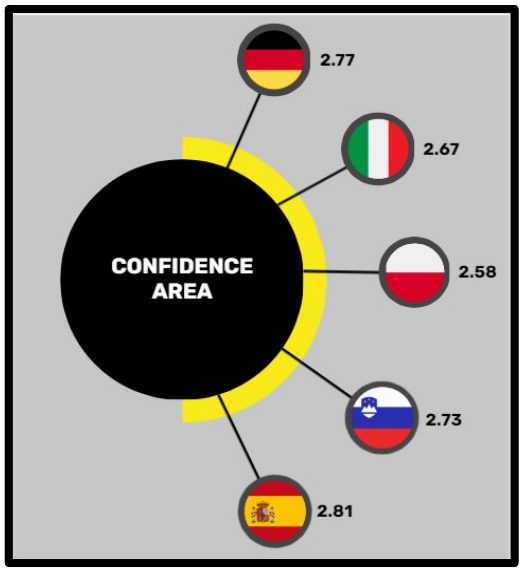
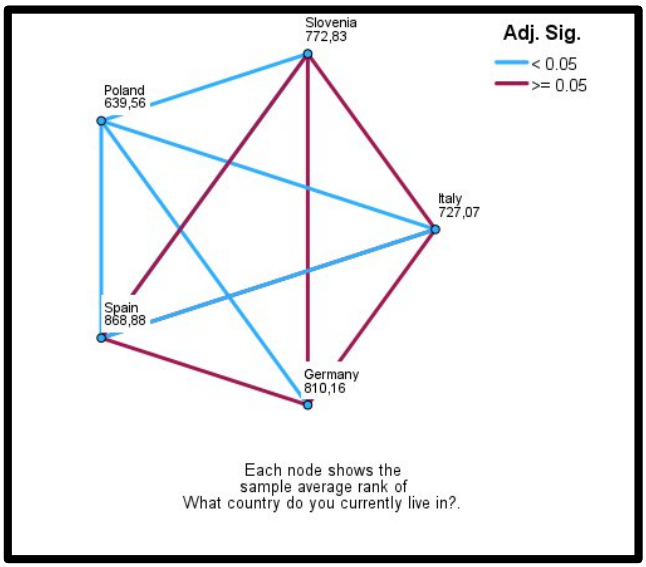
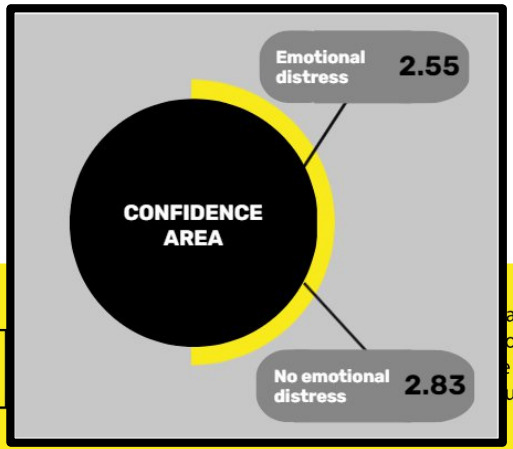



*Figure 21 – Effect of country of residence on self-confidence. Pairwise comparison*




The pairwise comparison analyses with the quantification of mean ranks allow for a clearer specification of the differences between the countries under analysis. Polish youth provided lower scores compared to their peers in Italy, Germany, Slovenia, and Spain in several survey questions, indicating lower levels of self-confidence. Additionally, it seems that young Spanish feel more secure than the already mentioned Polish peers, as well as compared to Italians, while their self-confidence is similar to that of Germans and Slovenians.

*Figure 22 – Average scores for confidence area by perceived distress*

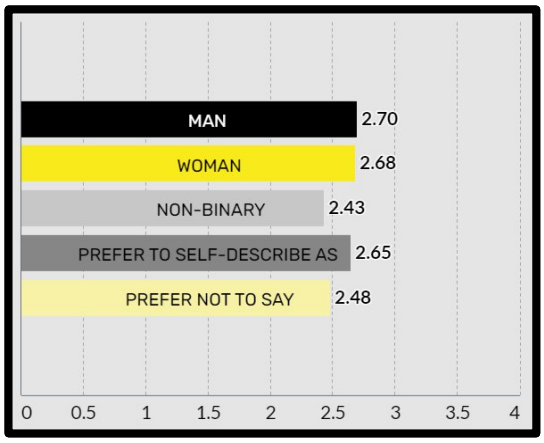



The data collected through the survey show a variation in the average levels of self-confidence between young people who reported experiencing some form of **emotional distress** and those who do not. Young

people who report experiencing emotional distress have an average score of 2.55 (standard deviation of 0.40), while those who do not suffer from emotional distress have an average of 2.83 (standard deviation of 0.37). These are not very large differences, but they are considered reliable with a high degree of certainty. Ultimately, experiencing some form of emotional distress seems to be associated with a slightly lower perception of self-confidence and security among young people.

The effects of **gender identity** are even less evident, in fact, it can be said that they are practically non-existent. Confidence in one's abilities does not vary according to gender. Men report an average level of self-confidence that is almost identical to that of women (2.68). People who prefer to describe themselves with terms other than "man" or "woman" have an average of 2.65, very close to the male and female groups.

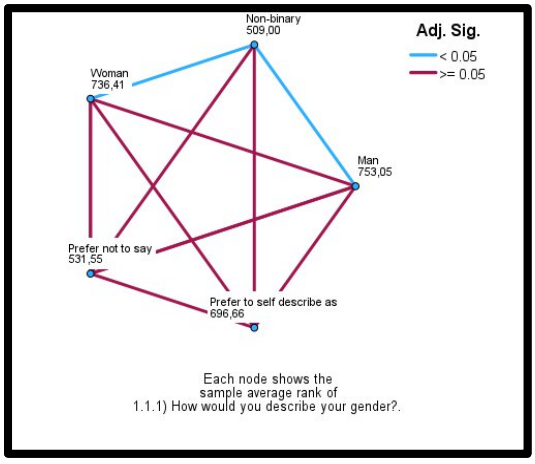
*Figure 23 – Average scores for confidence area by gender identity*




Young people who identify as non-binary report a slightly lower level of confidence in their potential (2.43), as do those who prefer not to disclose their gender identity (2.48).

Therefore, there is a consistency in the responses across gender identity groups. Further analysis confirms that the differences in self-confidence scores between different gender identity groups can be considered negligible. Looking at Figure 24, it is also easy to see that the only significant differences between gender groups are those involving women and men compared to non-binary individuals. As mentioned earlier, numerically underrepresented groups, such as in this case, are at risk of sampling bias, which should be considered. In summary, it can be concluded that gender

*Figure 24 – Effect of gender on confidence. Pairwise comparison*



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identity has no impact on the perceived levels of self-confidence during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

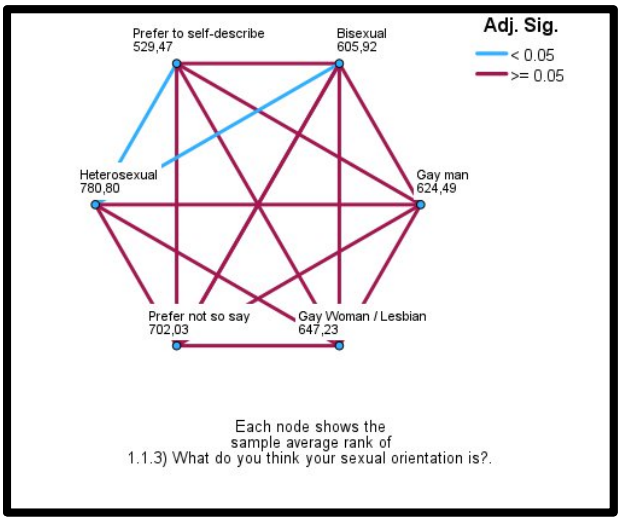
**Sexual orientation** also did not influence the responses provided by young people aged 16 to 29 regarding certain items related to their self-confidence during the school-to-work transition phase.

*Table 9 – Average scores for confidence area by sexual orientation*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **Prefer to self-describe** | 2,45 | ,47 |
| **Bisexual** | 2,56 | ,38 |
| **Heterosexual** | 2,73 | ,40 |
| **Gay man** | 2,58 | ,39 |
| **Gay Woman / Lesbian** | 2,52 | ,55 |
| **Prefer not so say** | 2,67 | ,41 |
| Total | 2,68 | ,41 |

These are not significant differences (Table 9), indicating slight variations in the responses provided.

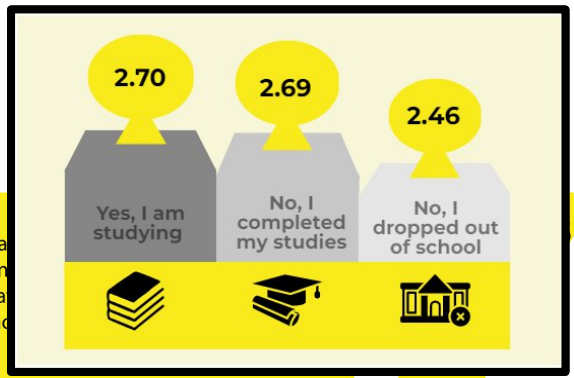
*Figure 25 – Effect of sexual orientation on confidence. Pairwise comparison*




The pairwise comparisons also highlight that these differences in perceived self-esteem, derived from responses to questions related to the "Confidence" area, concern only heterosexual individuals compared to bisexual people and those who prefer to describe their sexual orientation in a way other than the categories provided.

*Figure 26 – Average scores for confidence area by student status*

The situation changes when perceived self-esteem is measured by **student status**. Those

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who are currently studying and those who have completed their studies have similar levels of self-esteem, slightly above the overall average. On the other hand, individuals who dropped out of school report lower self-esteem, suggesting that not completing their educational path might negatively impact their self-confidence. The variability of responses is slightly higher among those who are still studying compared to those who have completed their studies, indicating a greater difference in self-esteem scores within this group. Pairwise comparisons provide more detailed information. In particular, it is clear that those who dropped out of school tend to have lower self-esteem levels than those who are currently studying or have completed their education. Furthermore, there are no significant differences between these two latter groups, confirming that the real gap is between those who dropped out and those who did not.

The effect of **age** on self-confidence reveals an interesting finding, namely that the age of respondents does not play a significant role in influencing the levels of self-confidence among young people.

*Table 10– Average scores for confidence area by student age group*

| Age group | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **16 - 20 years old** | 2,67 | ,42 |
| **21 - 25 years old** | 2,66 | ,40 |
| **26 - 29 years old** | 2,72 | ,40 |
| Total | 2,68 | ,41 |

The very similar averages indicate that, regardless of age, the levels of self-confidence are fairly uniform. Additionally, the variability in scores does not show significant deviations between age groups.

The same conclusion can be drawn when considering the **migrant background** instead of age, as an aspect that may or may not influence the levels of how capable young people feel in facing the challenges of their future.

*Table 11– Average scores for confidence area by migrant background*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **No migrant Background** | 2,67 | ,41 |



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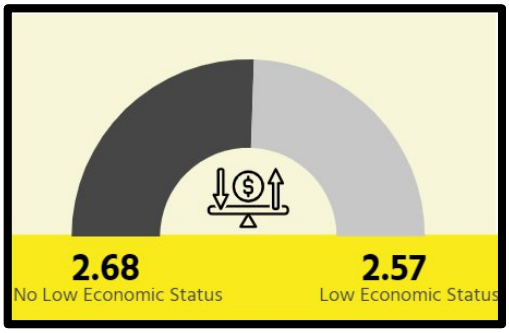
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Migrant Background** | 2,70 | ,42 |
| Total | 2,68 | ,41 |

The differences between the two groups (with and without migrant background) are minimal, both in terms of the average and the variation in opinions. Even after applying the appropriate tests, it is clear from the context of these data that having or not having a migratory background does not influence the responses given to the questions related to the "confidence" area

# 1.1

*Figure 27 – Average scores for confidence area by economic status*




The situation is different when examining the effects of **economic status**. The self-perceived confidence of young people in the transition from school to work changes depending on whether they feel, and probably with good reason, that they are living in a low economic context. Girls, boys, and non-binary individuals who do not have a low economic status tend to have, on average, lower self-esteem levels compared to those with a higher economic status. While the difference is not particularly large, it has been confirmed as statistically significant through the independent samples test. Therefore, real or even just perceived economic status can be considered an important factor influencing people's levels of confidence.



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# 1.2

# 1.3

### 7.1.3 PYD Model – Connection area

The "Connection" area of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) model focuses on the quality of social relationships and the support young people receive in their life context. This area explores the degree of connection with family, peers, and other role models, assessing elements such as the presence of positive role models, the ability to build meaningful relationships, and support for future life plans. A good level of social connection is essential for promoting the emotional well-being of young people and supporting them through important transitions, such as the one between school and the workforce.

**Strenghts in Relationships and Social Support**

Most participants demonstrate a good level of social connection, with average scores nearing or slightly exceeding 3 on almost all questions. The statements with the highest averages relate to the presence of good role models (*"I have some people who are good role models for me" - 3.07*) and the ability to build strong relationships with others (*"I can build good relationships with others" - 3.06*). This suggests that young people feel they have positive figures to look up to and are confident in their ability to form meaningful bonds.

**Advice and Discussions About the Future**

The statement *"I have someone who can provide me with advice about making plans for the future"* scored an average of 2.98, indicating that young people feel they have support and good advice for their future plans, although to a slightly lesser extent compared to other forms of connection. The statement with the lowest average, 2.74, is *"I often discuss my career plans or concerns with my family members or other people,"* highlighting that career-related discussions occur less frequently than other forms of support.



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### Being a Good Example and Giving Advice

The score for *"I am a good example for other people"* is 2.79, lower than other categories, suggesting that young people may not perceive themselves as role models for others. However, the statement *"I am often asked for advice by my friends,"* with an average of 3.02, indicates that young people feel valued and appreciated within their peer groups.

### Quality of Relationships with Peers

The averages for *"I have lots of good conversations with other people"* (3.08) and *"My relationships with my peers are good"* (3.05) indicate that communication and social relationships with peers are generally viewed positively by the participants.

The young participants in the study exhibit good levels of social connection and access to support, which are fundamental aspects of their emotional well-being during the school-to-work transition. Although there are areas where additional support could be beneficial, such as specific discussions about career plans, the overall picture is quite positive, with young people feeling supported and capable of building quality relationships.

*Table 12– Average scores for connection area by individual responses*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **I have some people who are good role models for me** | 3,07 | ,75 |
| **I have someone who can provide me with advice about making plans for the future** | 2,98 | ,77 |
| **I can build good relationships with others** | 3,06 | ,75 |
| **I often discuss my career plans or concerns with my family members or other people** | 2,74 | ,89 |
| **I am a good example for other people** | 2,79 | ,73 |
| **Friends ask me some advice** | 3,02 | ,73 |
| **I have lots of good conversations with other people** | 3,08 | ,72 |
| **My relationships with my peers are good** | 3,05 | ,71 |

Inizio modulo

Fine modulo

The perceived number and quality of social relationships appear to vary among young people based on their **country of residence**. Respondents from Spain and Slovenia seem to be the



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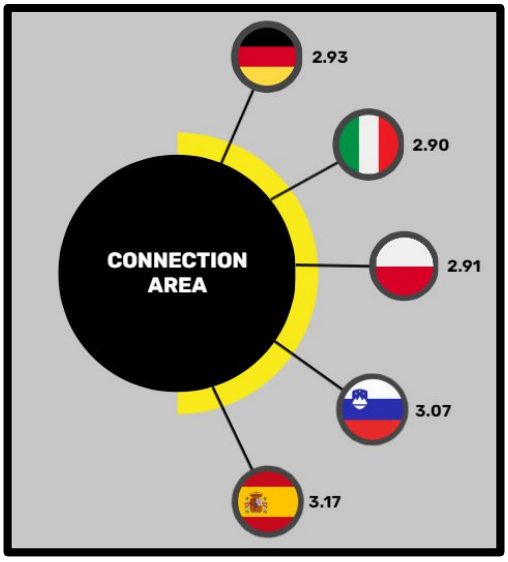
most satisfied. In contrast, their peers from Germany, Poland, and Italy reported slightly lower levels of agreement regarding the quality and importance of their relationships (Figure 28).

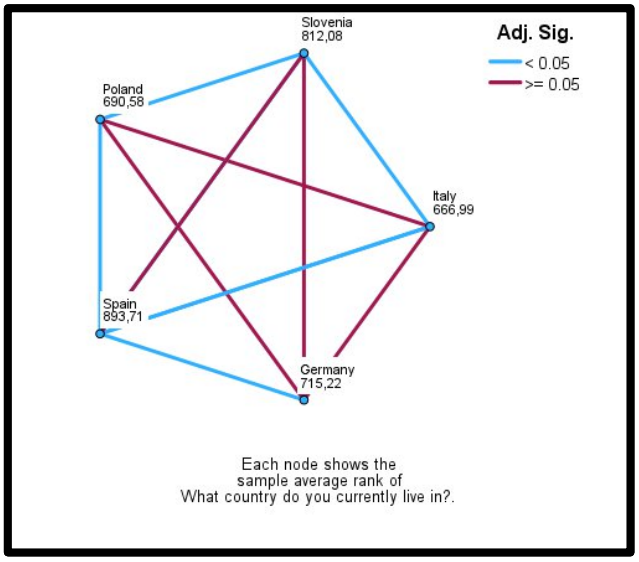
Pairwise comparisons, calculated using ranks instead of averages, further highlighted these differences and clarified certain dynamics (Figure 29). It is worth noting that the blue lines represent differences between the actors—in this case, countries—that are statistically significant and can be considered reliable. The scores given by young people residing in Spain based on their responses emerged as the highest, followed, in descending order, by those living in Germany, Poland, and Italy.

*Figure 28– Average scores in connection area by country of residence*



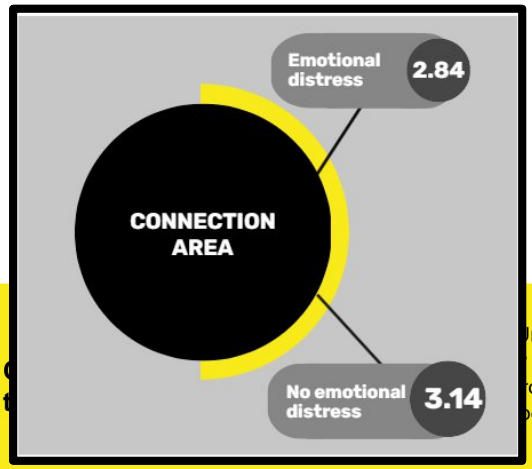

T

*Figure 29 – Effect of country of residence on connection. Pairwise comparison*



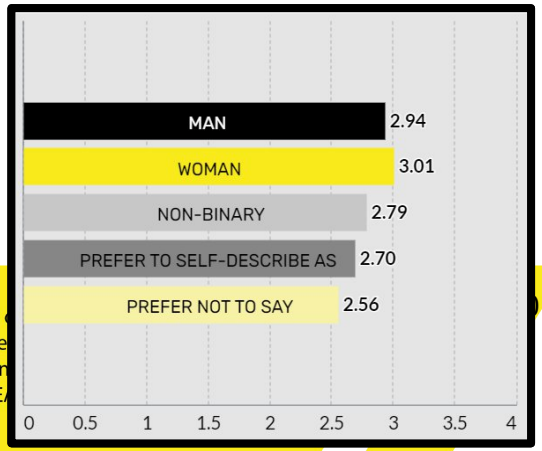

he difference with Slovenian youth, on the other hand, is not large enough to shield the interpretation of the data from sampling uncertainty. Therefore, it is assumed that the level of satisfaction and importance that Spanish and Slovenian respondents attribute to relationships is the same. The same applies to comparisons between Italy and Germany, Italy and Poland, and Germany and Poland.

*Figure 30 – Average scores in connection area by emotional distress*




**Emotional distress**

*Figure 31 – Average scores in connection area by gender identity*



significantly influences how young people perceive their social relationships. Participants who reported experiencing some form of emotional distress had an average score summarizing the quality of their social network of 2.84 out of 4. In contrast, those who did not report suffering from any form of distress showed a higher average of 3.14 (Figure 30).

With an overall average of 2.97, it emerges that individuals not experiencing emotional distress tend to assess both the level and importance of their social relationships more positively. Conversely, those who stated they are currently in a state of emotional distress describe a less satisfactory relational experience, which could negatively impact their overall well-being during the school-to-work transition.

To verify the validity of these differences and ensure they are not solely due to the sample analysed, further analyses were conducted. An independent samples t-test was used to compare the average "Connection" scores between those who reported difficulties and those who did not. The positive outcome confirms that the observed difference has less than a 5% probability of being due to chance, thereby supporting the relationship.

The same conclusion, however, cannot be confirmed for the opinion that young people have about their social and support network based on their **gender identity**. Some differences are observed in the perception of the quality of social relationships among the various gender identity groups, but clarification is needed. Women record the highest average score (3.01), followed by men (2.94), but these are minimal differences between the two groups. Participants who prefer to describe themselves with terms other than "male" or "female" report an average score of 2.70, while non-binary individuals have an average of 2.79. Those who prefer not to disclose their gender identity receive the lowest score (2.56). However, these last groups are influenced by a sampling bias due to small sample sizes. Ultimately, gender identity does not seem to have a significant impact on the perception of social support.

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **Prefer to self-describe** | 2,76 | ,60 |



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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Bisexual** | 2,90 | ,48 |
| **Heterosexual** | 3,01 | ,51 |
| **Gay man** | 2,89 | ,53 |
| **Gay Woman / Lesbian** | 3,00 | ,63 |
| **Prefer not so say** | 2,89 | ,55 |
| Total | 2,97 | ,52 |

*Table 13– Average scores in connection area by sexual orientation*

Some differences in opinions regarding the importance of connections seem to be linked to **sexual orientation**. However, as with gender identity, the data must be analysed carefully. Heterosexuals and members of the gay community report higher average scores, reflecting a generally positive perception of their social connections. In contrast, the group that prefers to describe themselves autonomously shows lower average scores, suggesting a less favourable perception of the quality of their relationships. However, the strong individual variability within each group, highlighted by the presence of outliers, reduces the significance of sexual orientation as a determining factor, indicating that the perceived quality of social relationships is influenced more by other factors than by belonging to a specific orientation.



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*Figure 33 – Effect of student status on connection. Pairwise comparison*

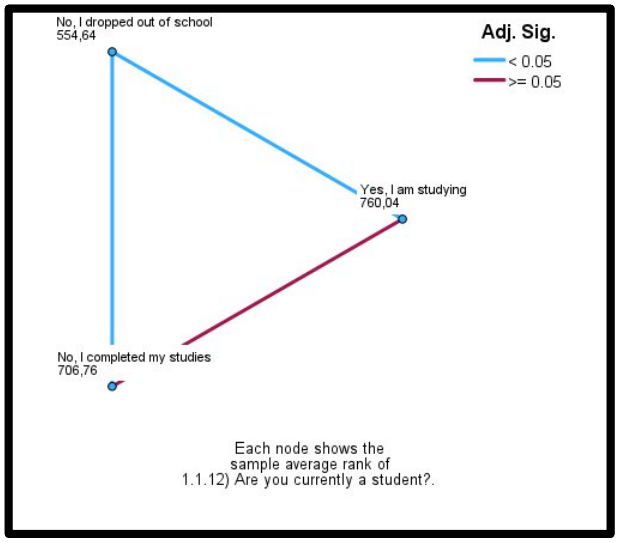
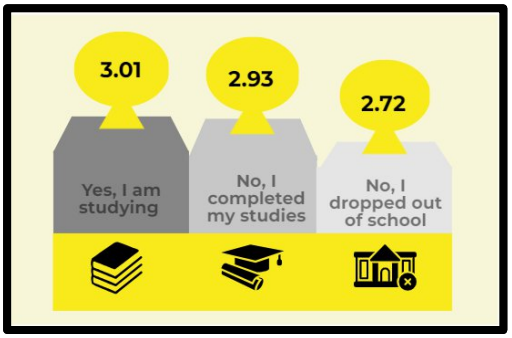



*Figure 32 – Average scores in connection area by student status*




There are different sensitivities regarding the **student status** in relation to the quality of the social relationships that young people have established. Active students generally have a positive view of their social connections, although there are divergent opinions. Those who have completed their studies express a slightly less positive perception of their social relationships compared to students still in the educational system. The group that has dropped out of school, on the other hand, exhibits a more uncertain and fragmented perception of social connections, with greater variability in responses and numerous negative judgments. Pairwise comparisons (Figure 33) highlight that significant differences mainly occur between the "Yes, I am studying" group and the "No, I dropped out of school" group. This is shown by the blue line in the comparison chart, indicating a significant difference with a mean rank score of 760.04 for the current students' group and 554.64 for the drop-out group. The differences between the other groups were not found to be significant, as indicated by the red lines.



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The opinions young people have about the quality of their relationships are, in fact, identical across different **age groups**. Responses to questions aimed at assessing how satisfied they are and how supported they feel by their network tend to converge around the general average level, and even the internal variability, which measures the diversity of views on the subject, is practically identical. It can be inferred that chronological age is not a potentially explanatory factor for the quality of the connections young people experience, nor for the importance they attribute to them.

*Table 14– Average scores for connection area by age group*

| Fascia di età | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **16 - 20 years old** | 2,99 | ,51 |
| **21 - 25 years old** | 2,96 | ,53 |
| **26 - 29 years old** | 2,96 | ,51 |
| Total | 2,97 | ,52 |

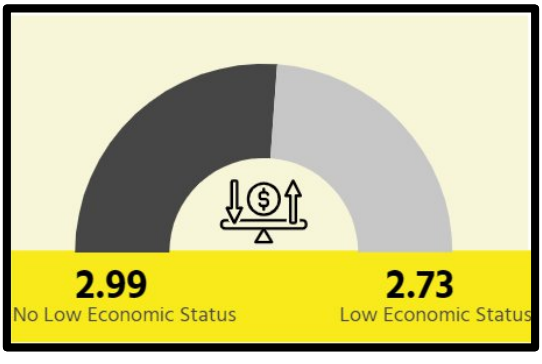
The same conclusion can be made regarding the experience of having a **migrant background** or not. The analyses show almost the same average score values for this profile as well, reflecting the level of agreement or disagreement with the dimensions that make up the area related to young people's social networks.

*Table 15– Average scores for connection area by migrant*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **No migrant Background** | 2,98 | ,50 |
| **Migrant Background** | 2,94 | ,60 |
| **Total** | 2,97 | ,52 |

The qualitative level of connections and the value judgment attributed to social networks expressed by young people vary slightly depending on whether they are characterized by a higher or lower **economic status**. Those living in a higher economic context tend to evaluate their social network and the support they receive from it more positively compared to those in a lower economic condition. This is not a very large difference, but the analysis of the variance in the responses highlights that it is higher between the two groups examined than within them. This is a significant finding that suggests this conclusion is stable and, most likely, not random.

*Figure 34 – Average scores in connection area by economic status*



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### 7.1.4 PYD Model – Character area

In the context of Positive Youth Development (PYD), with a focus on the school-to-work transition, the "character" area is crucial for understanding and promoting the growth and well-being of young people. This area focuses on the development of character traits, personal values, and adaptability, which are essential for facing challenges and seizing opportunities in life. Through a set of targeted questions, the PYD model explores various aspects of young people's character and personality, including their ability to solve problems, set goals, manage responsibilities, and face difficulties with resilience. The analysis of this area provides valuable insights into the development of socio-emotional skills and the building of a solid foundation for long-term personal and social success.

**Problem-solving Skills and Perseverance**

Young people express a good perception of their ability to solve difficult problems, as highlighted by the statement *"I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough"* (average 3.06). However, they find it more challenging to maintain long-term goals, as shown by the statement *"It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals*," which received a lower agreement score (average 2.46). These results indicate confidence in their own resilience, but also a difficulty in maintaining motivation until they achieve their goals.

**Adaptability and Self-Assessment in Difficult Situations**

When faced with problems, young people perceive themselves as reasonably capable of finding solutions, as indicated by the response to *"If I am in trouble, I can usually come up with a solution"* (average 2.93). However, a sense of limitation regarding their potential emerges, although not widely, from the statement *"I can't achieve my full potential"* (average 2.62), suggesting an area of dissatisfaction related to personal fulfilment.

**Personal Growth and Time Management**

Many young people engage in activities they consider beneficial for their growth, as shown by the statement *"I am doing activities that improve me as a person"* (average 2.92). However, some in the sample express difficulty in effectively managing their time, as reflected by the



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statement *"I feel like I am wasting my time"* (average 2.46). These data indicate a commitment to personal growth, accompanied by a widespread feeling of inefficacy in time management.

**Responsibility and Planning**

The feeling of having too many responsibilities (*"I have too many responsibilities in my life"*) is certainly present, but the average score of 2.42 out of 4 and the variation around it indicate that these are personal and varied experiences. At the same time, the ability to plan ahead and make thoughtful decisions, as expressed in the statement *"I plan ahead and make good choices*," is more evident in the experiences of the interviewed young people (average 2.80). This balance between perceived responsibility and planning ability may suggest a commitment to managing their lives consciously, despite the burden of responsibilities.

*Table 16– Average scores on character area by individual responses*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough** | 3,06 | ,67 |
| **It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals** | 2,46 | ,76 |
| **If I am in trouble, I can usually come up with a solution** | 2,93 | ,63 |
| **I am doing activities that improve me as a person (sport, club, religion group…)** | 2,92 | ,81 |
| **I have too many responsibilities in my life** | 2,42 | ,81 |
| **I can't achieve my full potential** | 2,62 | ,82 |
| **I feel like I am wasting my time** | 2,46 | ,90 |
| **I plan ahead and make good choice** | 2,80 | ,73 |



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**Young Europeans**, overall, report a fairly uniform perception of their personal abilities, with average scores very close across different countries (overall average of 2.71). Spanish respondents express slightly higher confidence (2.77), followed by Slovenians and Italians (both with 2.70) and Polish youth (2.69), highlighting a fairly stable and positive view of their ability to navigate the school-to-work transition, solve problems, and improve themselves.
German youth report a slightly lower score (2.68), which might suggest a more reserved perception of their abilities; however, it is important to note that these results are influenced by a sampling *bias*, and the differences are minimal compared to the other groups.

*Figure 35 – Average scores in character area by country of residence*

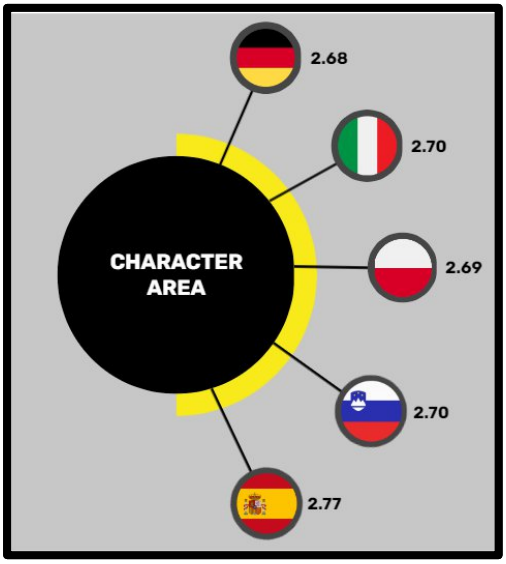
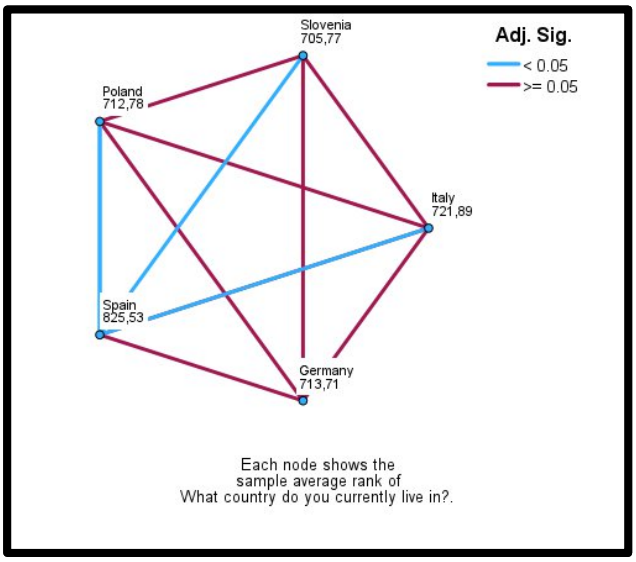



*Figure 36 – Effect of country of residence on character area.*




Analysing the comparisons between pairs of groups, it emerges that only the responses of Spanish youth show significant differences that can be generalized (Figure 35). In particular, their average rank of 825.53 is significantly different from the other countries. It is therefore assumed that the ability to adapt and cope with challenges does not differ between the youth of the five countries analysed.

*Figure 37– Average scores in character area by emotional distress*


Young people who report experiencing some **emotional distress** have a slightly lower perception of their ability to adapt and manage difficulties, with

an average score of 2.63. On the other hand, those who do not experience emotional stress tend to evaluate their problem-solving and self-improvement abilities more positively, with an average score of 2.81. Considering that the overall average of the responses is 2.71, it can be hypothesized that the absence of emotional distress or suffering is associated with a more favourable perception of one's ability to manage and adapt to the demands they face during the transition phase.

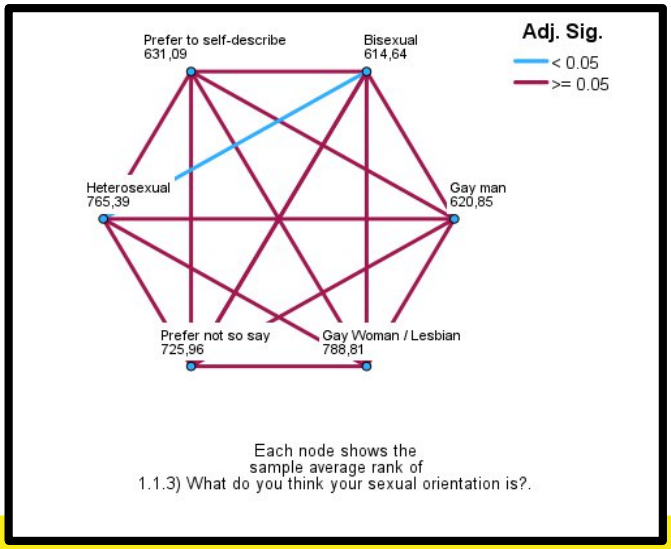
There are no significant differences in the perception of personal abilities among different **gender identity** groups. Participants who identify in ways other than the binary categories report an average score of 2.75, very similar to that of men (2.74) and women (2.70), suggesting a positive and stable perception of their ability to manage and adapt. Non-binary participants and those who prefer not to disclose their gender have slightly lower scores, with an average of 2.63 and 2.60, respectively. Overall, with a general sample average of 2.71, the results indicate a fairly uniform view of personal abilities, regardless of gender identity.

*Table 17– Average scores on character area by gender identity*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **Prefer to self-describe as** | 2,75 | ,52 |
| **Man** | 2,74 | ,35 |
| **Woman** | 2,70 | ,33 |
| **Non-binary** | 2,63 | ,40 |
| **Prefer not to say** | 2,60 | ,34 |
| Total | 2,71 | ,34 |

The perception of personal abilities is also largely similar across all **sexual orientation** categories, with no significant differences. The only exception is the comparison between heterosexual and bisexual youth, which shows a slight divergence. However, the small number of bisexual respondents may influence this result, making the data less reliable and therefore not particularly relevant in the overall

*Figure 38 – Effect of sexual orientation on character area*



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interpretation.

The perception of personal abilities, such as resilience, the ability to face challenges, and the sense of continuous improvement, shows minimal but significant variations based on the respondents' **student status**. Young people still in the educational system and those who have completed their studies report a similar assessment of these skills, while those who dropped out express a lower perception. Therefore, it is the early interruption of studies that seems to have a noticeable impact on their self-confidence. This is not a particularly large difference in feelings, but a noticeable trend. Those currently studying and those who have completed their studies share almost identical views, whereas those who have exited the academic system show more divergent opinions.

*Table 18– Average scores on character area by student status*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **Yes, I am studying** | 2,72 | ,34 |
| **No, I completed my studies** | 2,72 | ,31 |
| **No, I dropped out of school** | 2,58 | ,41 |
| Total | 2,71 | ,34 |

As with other aspects related to well-being during the school-to-work transition, **age** does not significantly affect the values. In each age group, there are individuals with similar levels of self-assessment of their personal abilities.

*Table 19– Average scores on character area by age group*

| Age group | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **16 - 20 years old** | 2,69 | ,36 |
| **21 - 25 years old** | 2,70 | ,32 |
| **26 - 29 years old** | 2,75 | ,33 |
| Total | 2,71 | ,34 |

The same applies when considering **migrant background** as an independent or explanatory variable; in fact, it can be stated that it is even less relevant. It is noticeable that the average scores, which reflect the responses provided by the young people, are virtually identical for both groups.



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*Table 20– Average scores on character area by migrant background*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **No migrant Background** | 2,71 | ,33 |
| **Migrant Background** | 2,71 | ,39 |
| Total | 2,71 | ,34 |

Inizio modulo

Fine modulo

Earlier, it was observed that for other aspects related to the personality of young people, which may have a certain impact on emotional well-being, **economic status** had a significant effect. However, this is not the case for the "character" area, where those with a lower economic status tend to respond to the questions in this area similarly to those living in a context not defined by this indicator.

*Table 21– Average scores on character area by economic status*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **No Low Economic Status** | 2,71 | ,34 |
| **Low Economic Status** | 2,63 | ,31 |
| Total | 2,71 | ,34 |



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# 7.2 External factors that can impact emotional well-being levels

The emotional well-being of young people during the school-to-work transition phase can undoubtedly be influenced by a range of environmental or contextual factors in which they live. In this study, the factors considered are:

**Support or pressure.** Young people may receive support or experience pressure from family, school, friends, or their community.
**Economic situation.** Living in a stable or difficult economic condition can profoundly affect how young people perceive their future.
**Cultural context.** It is important to investigate whether respondents believe their outcomes depend on cultural factors, such as the idea that, regardless of their skills, good connections are necessary to succeed in life.

For this set of questions, respondents could evaluate the statements on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 4 (completely agree).

**Pressure and Challenges in achieving success**

Overall, it seems that the young people interviewed perceive some pressure, without feeling overwhelmed, to succeed in life; *"People give me too much pressure for my success in life"* reached an average of 2.50 out of 4. This is above the median value but not very high when compared to the others. What stands out, but is characteristic of the entire area, is the high variability. There are differing opinions regarding the external pressure. On the other hand, they are more in agreement with the idea that it is very difficult for their generation to succeed, as evidenced by the slightly higher average (2.81) for the statement *"It is very difficult for my generation to succeed in life*," although here too the opinions are varied.

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### Dissatisfaction and Perception of Life and Work Opportunities

Similarly, they express considerable dissatisfaction with their current life path *("If I had a choice, I would not do what I'm doing in life"* – average 2.20)[2]. The view of the job market, however, is rather negative: *"Finding a job is very hard in this country"* with an average of 2.79, and they are fairly convinced that, regardless of the skills they possess, good connections are essential to finding a job, *"No matter what skills you have, good connections are necessary to find a job"* (3.02). Likewise, the young people interviewed believe that the economic situation is better in other European countries, *"In other European countries, the economic situation is better than we have in this country,"* a statement that received a high level of agreement (3.00).

### Perception of Social and Family Support

Regarding social support, young people show a moderate perception of help from teachers or other external figures, as indicated by the average of 2.76 for the statement *"Teachers or other people would help me in case of need."* However, family support is particularly positive, with an average of 3.15 for the statement *"My family is supporting my education, professional career, or my life in general."* It can be said that while external support is considered available, the family represents a stable and central resource, especially in a context where young people perceive the job market and economic conditions as challenging.

*Table 22– Average scores on character area by induvial responses*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **People give me too much pressure for my success in life** | 2,50 | ,86 |
| **If I had a choice, I would not do what I'm doing in life** | 2,22 | ,87 |
| **Teachers or other people would help me in case of need** | 2,76 | ,77 |
| **It is very difficult for my generation to succeed in life** | 2,81 | ,84 |
| **Finding a job it's very hard in this country** | 2,79 | ,85 |
| **No matter what skills you have, good connections are necessary to find a job** | 3,02 | ,78 |
| **In other European countries the economic situation is better than we have in this country** | 3,00 | ,74 |
| **My family is supporting my education, professional career or my life in general** | 3,15 | ,78 |

[2] It should be noted that this is a question with a negative direction



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### 7.2.1 Indicator of the impact of external factors

In order to provide a measure of the impact of external factors that may influence the emotional well-being of young people during the transition from school to work, a specific index has been calculated. This is an indicator that ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates that participants feel no pressure from external factors, and 1 indicates that such pressure is perceived at the highest level.

It is important to remember that the external factors considered, or the set of questions asked to the young people, include:

- Pressure for success in life
- Dissatisfaction with their current life path
- Support from teachers or others in case of need
- Difficulty for their generation in achieving success in life
- Difficulty in finding a job in their country
- Importance of good connections for finding a job
- Perception that the economic situation in other European countries is better
- Family support for education, professional career, or life in general

To ensure consistency in the direction of responses, some question scores were reversed so that all questions had the same direction of interpretation.

Subsequently, the normalization formula, shown below, was applied to transform the scores from a 1 to 4 scale into a range from 0 to 1:

$$X_{\text{norm}} = \frac{X - X_{\min}}{X_{\max} - X_{\min}}$$

This formula allows the data to be scaled so that they can be directly comparable, facilitating the analysis and interpretation of the responses.



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The pressure from external factors among young people in the five **countries of residence** examined during the transition from school to work is distributed around a mean value of 0.52 out of 1, with a standard deviation of 0.15. This represents moderate pressure but with a high degree of variability. Approximately 68% of the respondents perceive external pressure between 0.37 and 0.67, a fairly wide range that reflects a considerable diversity of individual opinions. While many experience average pressure, some young people feel a much greater or much lesser impact, likely influenced by factors such as social support, local job opportunities, and economic conditions.

The perception of external pressure shows minimal variations across the countries of residence, with an overall contained range. However, the data for the Italian respondents (0.56) deviates by 12 percentage points from the Slovenian respondents (0.44), meaning that young people, both male, female, and non-binary, living in Italy feel more pressure during the school-to-work transition compared to their Slovenian peers. The responses of young people in Poland and Spain are respectively 0.53 and 0.50, representing similar and moderate levels of external pressure, though still slightly lower than in Italy. In Germany, the average value of 0.46 is close to the Slovenian value, indicating that German youth perceive less external pressure compared to Italian and Polish peers. It is worth noting that in every country, the variability in responses is high.

*Figure 39 – Distribution of index values around the mean*

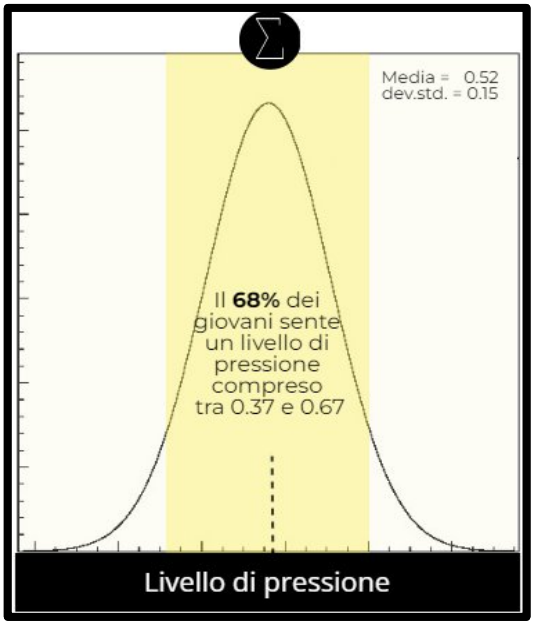
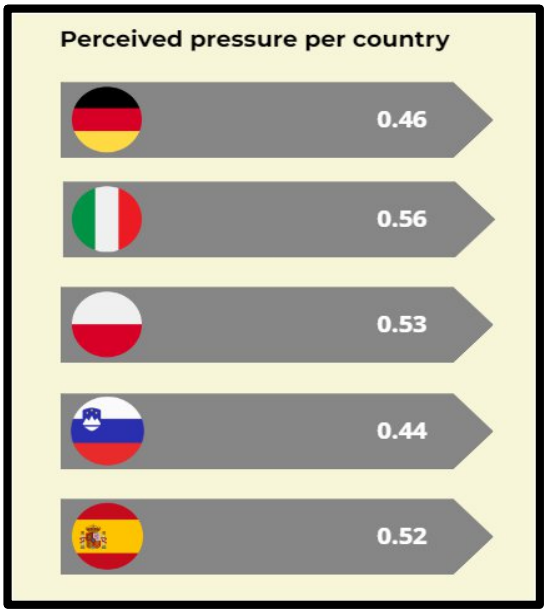



*Figure 40 – Average scores on perceived pressure by country of residence*



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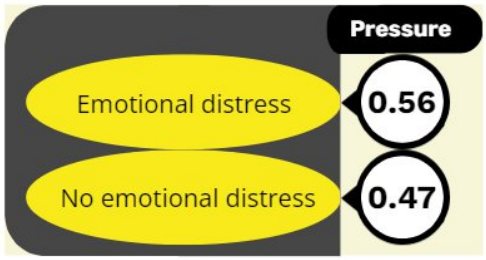
The data clearly indicate that the perception of external pressure is associated with the **emotional well-being** of young people. Those who report experiencing emotional distress perceive higher external pressure, with an average value of 0.56, compared to 0.47 for those who did not report any distress. The standard deviation of 0.15 for the group with emotional distress and 0.13 for the group without distress reflects the diversity of opinions, which is slightly wider among those who report being in a state of emotional suffering. A t-test was conducted, confirming the statistical significance of this difference, strengthening the evidence that young people in emotional distress perceive a higher level of external pressure compared to their peers who do not experience it.

*Figure 41 – Index of external pressure for emotional distress perception*




Contrary to what has been observed so far in the analyses, **gender identity** appears to influence the levels of pressure young people feel from external factors. Even taking into account that some groups are numerically underrepresented, the results of the analysis are robust. Those who prefer not to disclose their gender report a higher perception of pressure from external factors (0.63). The non-binary group also shows a high sensitivity, with an average of 0.60. Both of these groups report a higher level of perceived pressure compared to others.

Binary genders, on the other hand, report levels in line with the general average, while people who prefer to self-identify with a gender experience an external pressure level similar to that of women, but with greater internal variability (standard deviation of 0.18),

*Figure 42 – External pressure index by gender identity*

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The levels of perceived external pressure are similar across different **sexual orientations**, with the indices varying slightly but remaining within a narrow range for all groups (Table 23).

*Table 23– Average scores by sexual orientation*

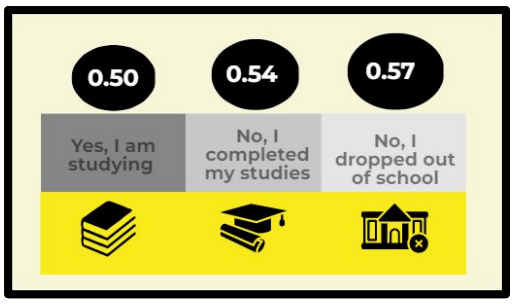
| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **Prefer to self-describe** | ,56 | ,17 |
| **Bisexual** | ,57 | ,15 |
| **Heterosexual** | ,51 | ,14 |
| **Gay man** | ,50 | ,13 |
| **Gay Woman / Lesbian** | ,51 | ,14 |
| **Prefer not so say** | ,52 | ,14 |
| **Total** | ,52 | ,15 |

Bisexual participants report the highest level (0.57), followed by those who prefer to self-describe (0.56), indicating a slightly more intense perception of external pressure compared to other groups.

Heterosexuals and lesbian/gay women show very similar indices (both 0.51), suggesting a moderate and stable perception of external pressure. Gay men have the lowest index (0.50), indicating a slightly lower perceived external pressure. Finally, participants who prefer not to disclose their sexual orientation record an index of 0.52, placing them in an intermediate position between the groups.

As with other dimensions of emotional well-being seen so far, **school dropout** seems to have a noticeable impact. Students currently enrolled report an average score of 0.50, indicating slightly lower perceived pressure compared to those who have completed their studies. This result may reflect the support provided by the academic environment, which could help mitigate external pressure, or it could suggest that those who have completed their educational journey are somehow subjected to more stressful dynamics, being in a transition phase linked to the challenges of entering the job market and professional expectations. Participants who have dropped out of school report the highest average score, 0.57. This stronger perception of external pressure may indicate that, without a formal education, these young people feel more exposed to pressures related to employment and social and family expectations.

*Figure 43 – External pressure index by student status*




This situation is clearly highlighted by pairwise comparisons using ranks rather than averages. I livelli di stress e pressione subiti da chi ha abbandonato la scuola e da chi ha completato gli



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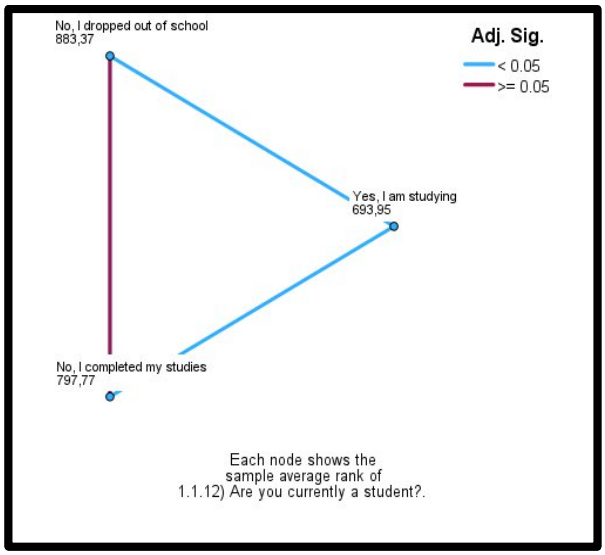
studi non presentano differenze significative e possono essere considerati comparabili. Al contrario, coloro che sperimentano meno influenze esterne sono quelli che sono ancora protetti dal loro status di studente.

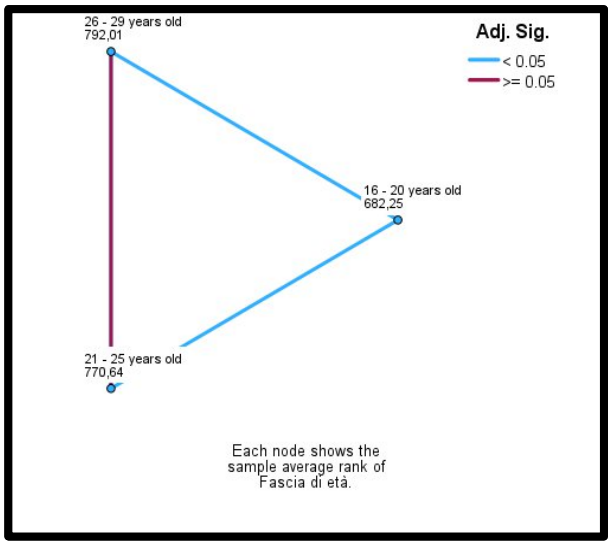
*Figure 44 – External pressure index by student status. Pairwise comparison*




A similar dynamic is observed regarding **age groups**. There are no significant differences in the pressure exerted by environmental factors between the age groups, except for a lower perception of pressure expressed by the younger respondents in their answers. It is a difference of 3-4 percentage points, but it is noticeable that as age increases, so do the reports from young people regarding pressure. Further cross-referencing of the data provides strong evidence that the same phenomenon is being observed from a different angle. Younger individuals are still within the educational system and thus benefit from the associated support. As age increases, parallel to the transition to the job market, there is a slight increase in the perception of pressure, consistent with the additional challenges young people face in the stages following their educational journey. To be more precise, the relevant finding is that only the youngest group is significantly less subject to external pressures compared to the other age cohorts. The difference in perceived pressure between 21-25-year-olds and 26-29-year-olds is negligible (Figure 46Figure 45).

*Figure 45 – Pressure index by age group*


*Figure 46 – External pressure index by age group. Pairwise comparison*



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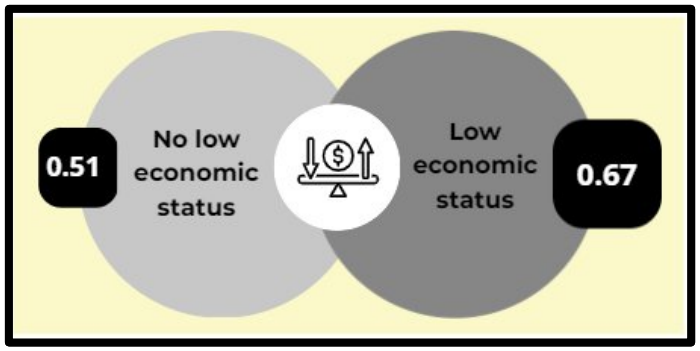
Relating the information gathered about the perceived influences on young people with their potential **migrant background**, as defined by the approach mentioned earlier, leads to a different interpretation. The data clearly show that having a migrant background does not affect the levels of pressure that individuals between the ages of 16 and 29 in the five European countries under study may perceive.

*Table 24– Average by migrant background*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| No migrant Background | ,52 | ,15 |
| Migrant Background | ,52 | ,14 |
| Total | ,52 | ,15 |

On the contrary, when we consider **economic status**, the data related to the external pressure index indicate a very different situation compared to what was observed for migrant background. Living in a context characterized by a single breadwinner (i.e., a single income source), with a lower educational qualification than a high school diploma, and a job condition akin to unskilled labour, makes young people particularly sensitive to what have been defined as external pressures. There is a 16-percentage point difference, with equal variability, in the quantification of pressure experienced between those in this category and those without economic hardship indicators. This difference is confirmed by tests, making it unlikely to be a sampling distortion.

*Figure 47 – External pressure index by economic status*



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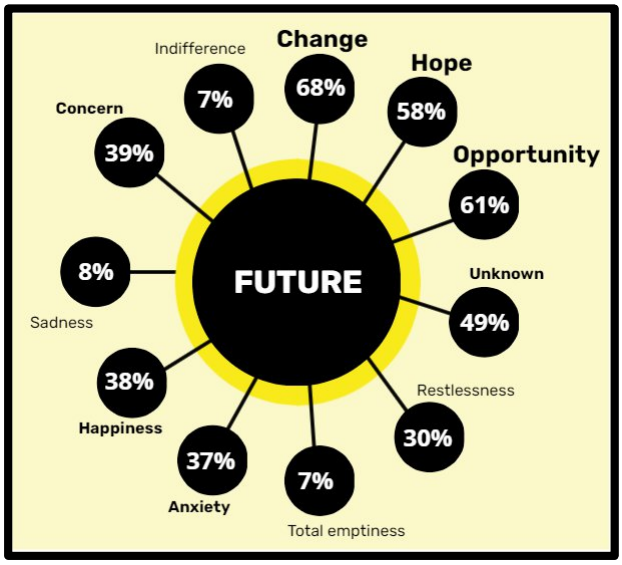
# 7.3 Feelings about the future

## 7.3.1 Association of terms with the word “Future”

The word "future" evokes a wide range of emotions and perspectives among survey participants (Figure 48 – Association of terms with the word “future”). The most common response is **change**, associated with the future by 68.6% of respondents, followed by **opportunity** (61.1%) and **hope** (58.1%), suggesting that most see the future as a space for transformation and possibilities. **Uncertainty** is another significant association, chosen by 49.4% of participants, highlighting a widespread perception of unpredictability. Along with uncertainty, fear plays a major role: **concern** is chosen by 39.3%, while **anxiety** by 36.8%, reflecting the apprehension many young people feel about what lies ahead. On the opposite end, **happiness** is a positive association selected by 38.3% of participants, showing that, despite anxieties, a significant portion of young people look to the future with optimism. Among other emotions, **restlessness** is chosen by 29.6%, while **sadness** is a less frequent response (8.3%), along with a view of the future as a **total emptiness** (7.4%). **Indifference** is the least common association, selected by only 7.5% of respondents, suggesting that, for the majority, the future is far from neutral or insignificant.

*Figure 48 – Association of terms with the word “future”*



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### 7.3.2 Principal Components Analysis (PCA)

A model of analysis that can provide further insights into how young people approach the future is the statistical technique known as PCA (Principal Component Analysis).

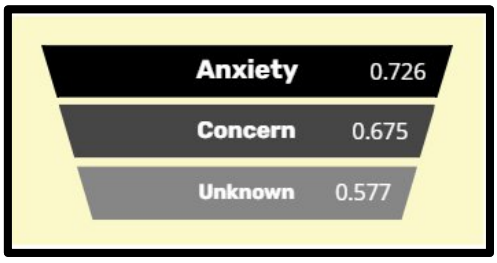
**PCA** is a statistical technique used to reduce the dimensionality of a complex dataset while retaining as much information as possible. It is particularly useful when working with numerous and correlated variables. This technique is based, in simple terms, on factor scores, which represent the position of each observation (the young people in this study) along the principal components. For example:

- A high score on a component may indicate that the respondent has a strong association with the characteristics represented by that component.
- Conversely, a low score signals a weak or opposite relationship.

From the Principal Component Analysis (PCA), three main components were identified that explain a large part of the data.

**Component 1: Uncertainty and Anxiety**

*Figure 49 – Loadings of the terms on the component 1*




The first component is characterized by high loadings for the variables *"Unknown"* (0.577), *"Anxiety"* (0.726), and "*Concern"* (0.675). This component seems to represent a state of uncertainty and anxiety about the future. Young people who load strongly on this component tend to perceive the future with worry and insecurity.

**Component 2: Change and Hope**

*Figure 50 – Loadings of the terms on the component 2*


The second component is strongly loaded with the variables *"Hope"* (0.638), *"Opportunity"* (0.663), and *"Change"* (0.593). This component represents a positive feeling toward change and hope for the future. Young people who load on this component see the future as a source of opportunity and positive change.



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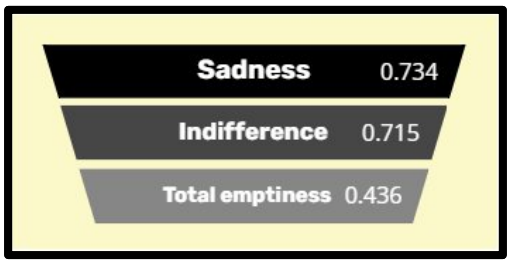
### Component 3: Sadness and Indifference

*Figure 51 – Loadings of the terms on the component 3*

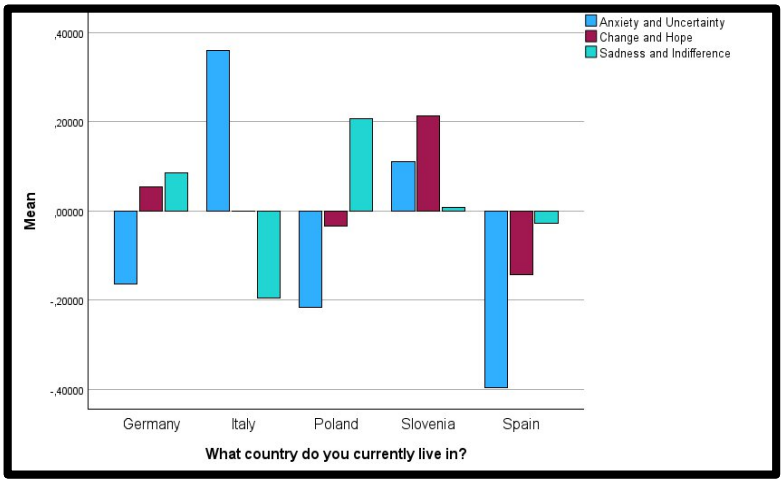



The third component is characterized by high loadings for the variables *"Sadness"* (0.734), *"Indifference*" (0.715), and "*Total emptiness"* (0.436). This component suggests feelings of sadness and indifference toward the future. Young people who load on this component exhibit a pessimistic and apathetic view of the future.

By correlating the identified profiles with the country of residence, it can be observed how young people in different countries perceive the future through three main emotional dimensions.

Germans and Slovenians express a high level of uncertainty and anxiety about the future. In particular, Germans view the future with concern, reflecting a less optimistic perception of change and opportunities, which is shown by negative scores on the "Change and Hope" component. On the other hand, Slovenian youth, while sharing feelings of anxiety, also show openness to change, with positive expectations in terms of hope and opportunity.

*Figure 52 – Ideas of the future – Identified components by country of residence*




In Italy, the perception of the future appears complex and contradictory: Italian youth show signs of concern and a certain level of apathy, evident in positive scores on the *"Uncertainty and Anxiety*" and *"Sadness and Indifference*" components. However, their attitude toward change and opportunities seems relatively weak, with negative scores on the *"Change and Hope"* component. Poland presents a profile like Italy: Polish youth tend to view the future with a sense of sadness or apathy, without harbouring significant positive expectations for change, as indicated by negative scores on



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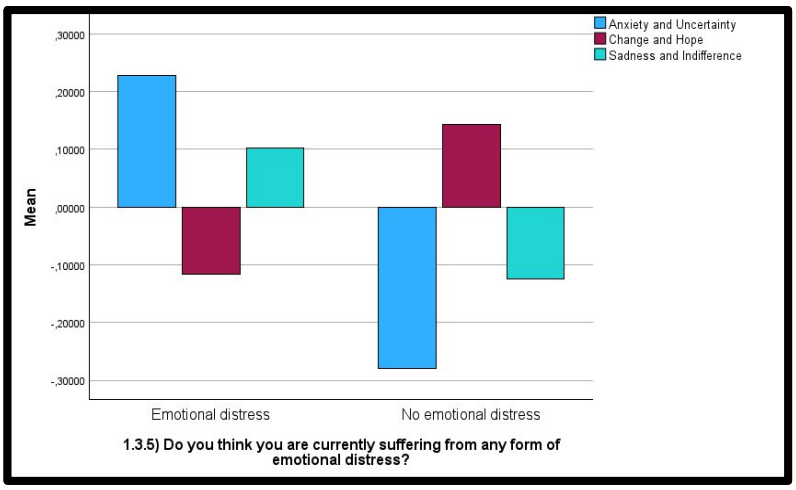
*"Change and Hope*." However, their vision of the future is not particularly marked by anxiety, remaining neutral in relation to the "*Uncertainty and Anxiety*" component".

Finally, Spanish youth stand out for a more detached approach to concerns about the future, as evidenced by negative scores on "Uncertainty and Anxiety," suggesting a less worried perspective compared to other countries. However, they also exhibit a lack of enthusiasm for change, with negative scores on *"Change and Hope*." Regarding "*Sadness and Indifference,"* Spanish youth tend not to view the future in negative or apathetic terms, positioning themselves far from an enthusiastic outlook.

The overall picture is complex and varied. Slovenian youth display an ambivalent vision, combining optimism for change with concerns. Germans, Italians, and Poles express significant levels of anxiety or apathy. Spanish youth, on the other hand, seem distanced from both anxiety and optimism about the future, maintaining a general attitude of moderate detachment regarding expectations for change and opportunities.

The emotional components of the future are perceived very differently by young people who previously reported experiencing **emotional distress** compared to those who do not. Young people who indicate they are going through a period of emotional difficulty tend to show higher scores for the "Uncertainty and Anxiety" component, reflecting a view of the future marked by feelings of worry and insecurity. Additionally, these individuals display a slightly positive score on the *"Sadness and Indifference"* component, suggesting a touch of apathy or a negative outlook toward the future. On the other hand, the *"Change and Hope"* component is marked by negative scores among those experiencing emotional distress, indicating a low perception of opportunities and positive change.

*Figure 53 – Ideas of the future – components identified by perception of distress*



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On the contrary, young people who do not perceive emotional distress tend to have a more balanced and positive outlook. They exhibit negative scores in "*Uncertainty and Anxiety,"* indicating less concern about the future, and simultaneously demonstrate a more positive perception of change and opportunities, as suggested by positive scores in *"Change and Hope."* Additionally, negative scores in "*Sadness and Indifference"* among those without emotional distress signal a calmer and more proactive perspective on the future.

In summary, individuals experiencing emotional distress appear more worried and less confident about the future, with a generally pessimistic outlook and a reduced orientation toward positive change. Conversely, young people without emotional distress seem to approach the future with less anxiety and greater openness to opportunities, reflecting a more optimistic perspective and less inclination toward sadness and indifference.

A clarification is necessary: in the violin plots, we can observe notable differences in the distribution of the components *"Anxiety and Uncertainty," "Change and Hope,"* and "*Sadness and Indifference"* between those who experience emotional distress and those who do not.

The distribution of "*Anxiety and Uncertainty*" clearly differs between the two groups. Those experiencing emotional distress (mean = 829.93) display a higher and broader distribution compared to those without emotional distress (mean = 612.82). This indicates that individuals suffering from emotional distress tend to experience significantly higher levels of anxiety and uncertainty, suggesting that this is a deeply entrenched condition.

Similarly, for *"Change and Hope,"* individuals who do not experience emotional distress (mean = 788.84) tend to show higher scores compared to those who do suffer from emotional distress (mean = 686.63). The distribution for those without distress is more concentrated toward higher scores, suggesting a more positive outlook on the future. In contrast, those with emotional distress have a more dispersed distribution skewed toward lower scores.

In the plot for *"Sadness and Indifference,"* however, the distributions between the two groups are more similar compared to the other two components. The mean rank for individuals with emotional distress is 760.98, while for those without distress, it is 697.51. While there is still a significant difference, the distributions show greater overlap. This suggests that, although individuals experiencing emotional distress tend to report higher levels of sadness and indifference, these emotions are also present to a notable extent among those without emotional distress.



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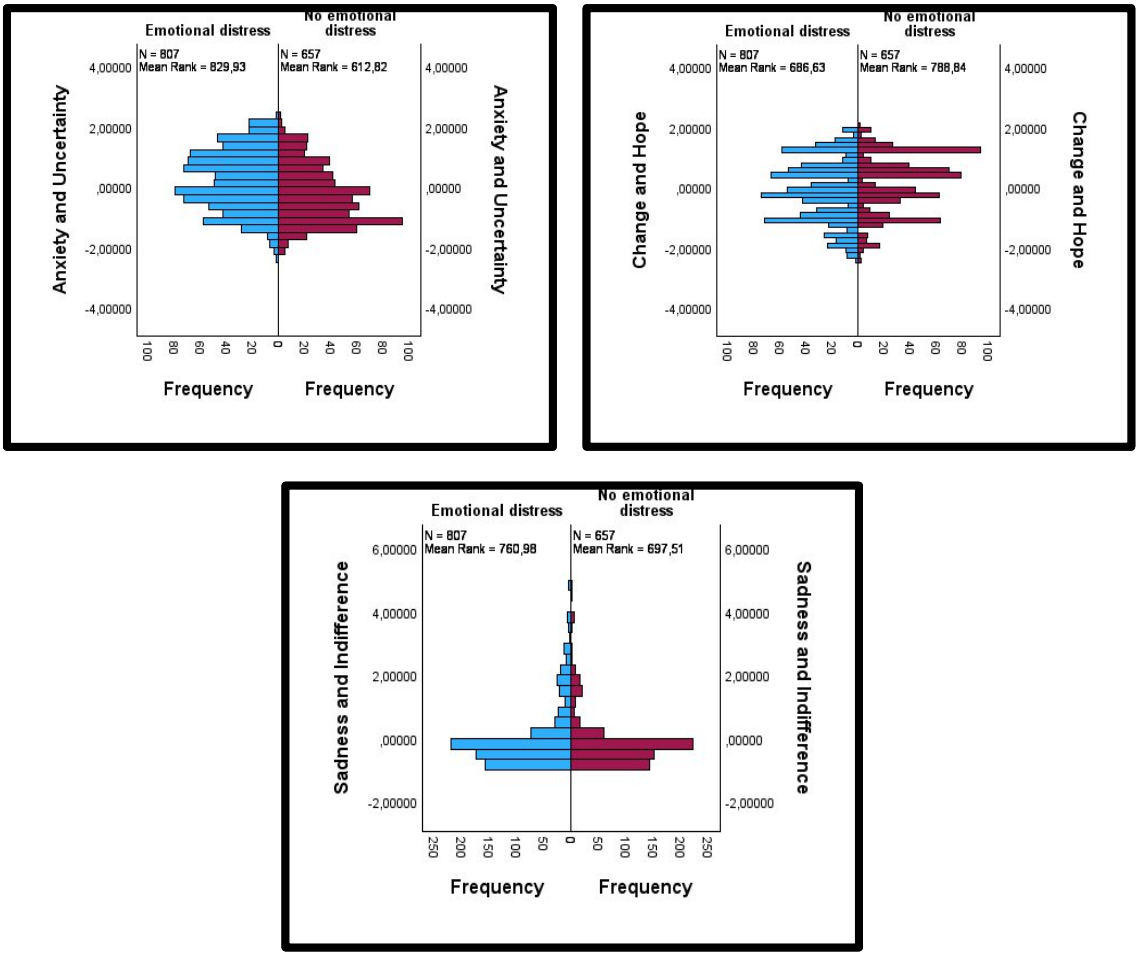
*Figure 54 – Ideas of the future. Pairwise comparison of components by perceived distress*




Respondents who prefer not to specify their **gender identity** or identify as non-binary tend to record higher levels in the "Uncertainty and Anxiety" and "Sadness and Indifference" components. This suggests an outlook laden with worry, insecurity, and apathy, although these individuals seem to experience more conflicting emotions compared to those who identify with binary genders.

For those who identify as men and women, the emotional components are more evenly distributed, reflecting a moderate perception of *Uncertainty and Anxiety* alongside a slight inclination toward *Change and Hope*. Specifically, women show a slightly more positive orientation toward the future, with moderate scores in the *Change and Hope* component, while men exhibit a certain degree of *Uncertainty and Anxiety*, albeit to a limited extent.



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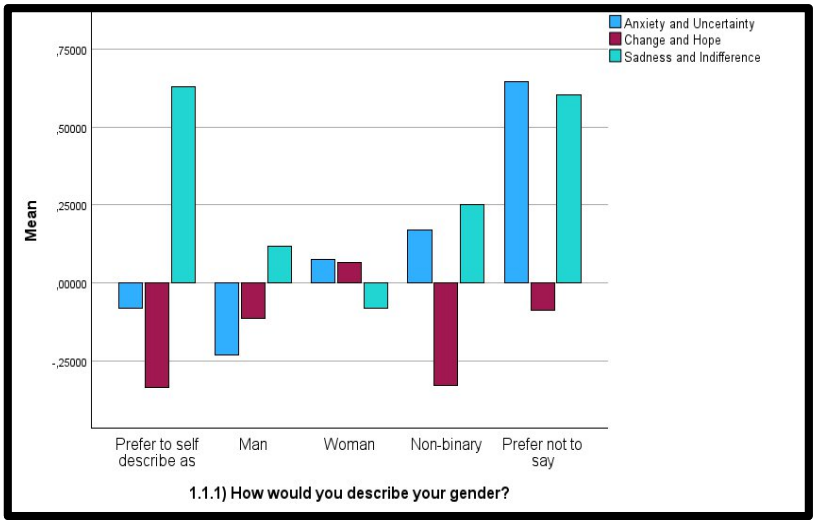
Participants who choose to describe themselves autonomously or with terms different from conventional genders show a perception strongly oriented toward *Change and Hope*, although this is accompanied by a lower degree of Uncertainty and Anxiety compared to other non-binary groups or those who do not specify their gender. This may indicate a group that, despite experiencing some insecurity, maintains an optimistic outlook and openness toward future opportunities.

*Figure 55 – Idea of future – Components identified by gender identity*




In summary, those who identify as non-binary or prefer not to declare their identity tend to perceive the future in more ambivalent terms, with a strong presence of anxiety and feelings of sadness. In contrast, binary gender groups, while acknowledging some uncertainty, demonstrate a moderate optimism toward change and hope.

However, these indications should be considered with some caution. Although, on the whole, these differences were found to be inferentially reliable, a deeper analysis shows that this is mainly due to the responses from the larger groups, i.e., the binary genders. The other groups, which suffer from a more limited sample, do not provide very high levels of certainty.



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*Figure 56 – Anxiety and Uncertainty*

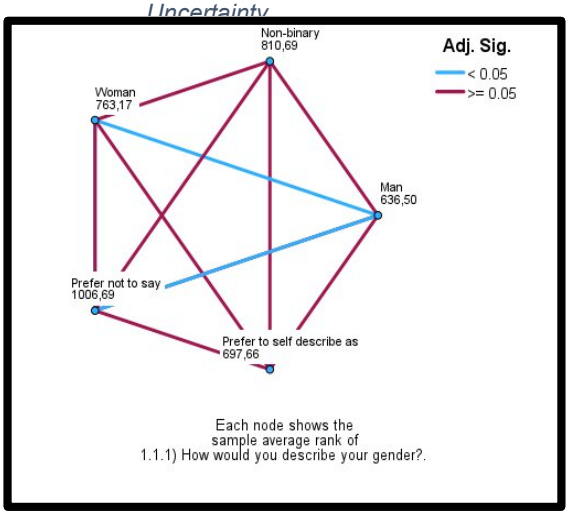



*Figure 57 – Change and Hope*

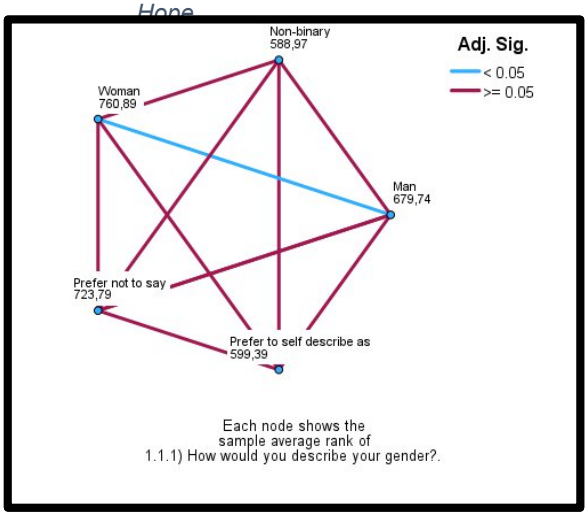
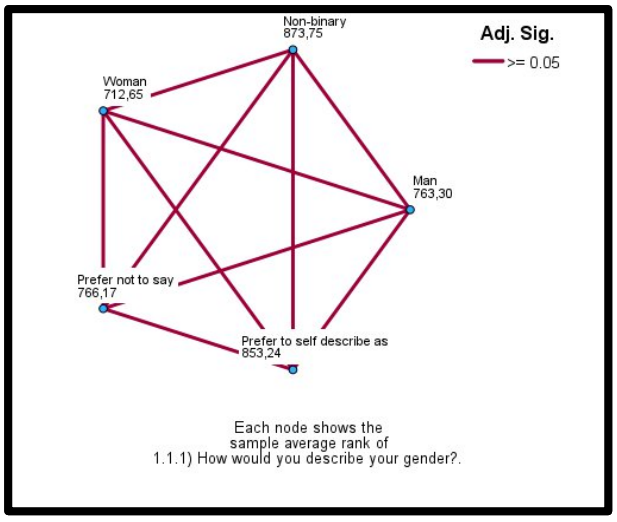



*Figure 58 – Sadness and Indifference*




Emotional associations regarding the future among groups with different **sexual orientations** show some differences in approach (Figure 59). Once again, there is a degree of uncertainty in interpreting the data due to the limited numerical representation of certain categories.

Participants who prefer to self-describe their sexual orientation exhibit a strong component of *Sadness and Indifference*, accompanied by a high level of *Uncertainty and Anxiety*, while the component of *Change and Hope* is more subdued. This suggests a more pessimistic or apathetic view of the future, with little expectation of positive change.



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The bisexual group shows a more balanced distribution, although *Uncertainty and Anxiety* remains a positive component. The components characterizing *Change and Hope* are low, suggesting that this is a group with mixed opinions, a combination of concern and optimism. This interpretation could be confirmed by the *Sadness and Indifference* component, which, being less pronounced compared to other groups, may indicate a less apathetic view of the future.

Heterosexuals and lesbian or gay women show relatively low levels of *Sadness and Indifference* and a higher presence of *Change and Hope*, indicating a more positive attitude towards the future. Both groups are also characterized by levels of *Uncertainty and Anxiety*, but without extreme peaks, striking a balance between optimism and caution.

Gay men, on the other hand, show a future perception strongly characterized by *Uncertainty and Anxiety*, while *Change and Hope* and *Sadness and Indifference* are less pronounced. This could reflect a sense of concern about the future, with lower expectations for positive change. Finally, the group that prefers not to disclose their sexual orientation shows a significant mix of *Uncertainty and Anxiety* and *Sadness and Indifference*, with a weaker component of *Change and Hope*. This profile suggests a perception of the future dominated by feelings of anxiety and pessimism, with little confidence in the possibilities for improvement or positive change.

*Figure 59 – Idea of future - Components identified by sexual orientation*

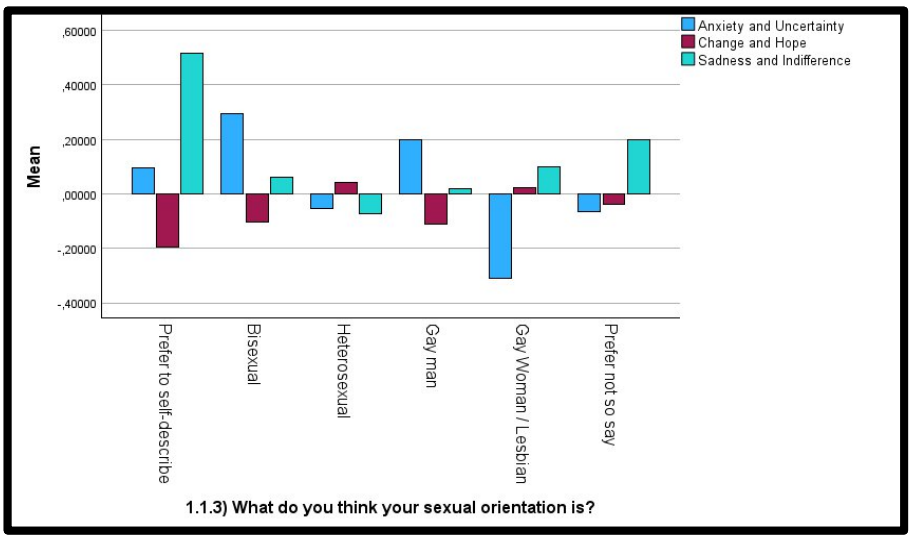


Figure 60 highlights the perception of the future, identified by the profiles emerging from the responses of young people, according to their **student status.** Young people who are currently studying have a relatively balanced perception of the future, with slightly positive values in the *Change and Hope* component and low values in *Uncertainty and Anxiety* and



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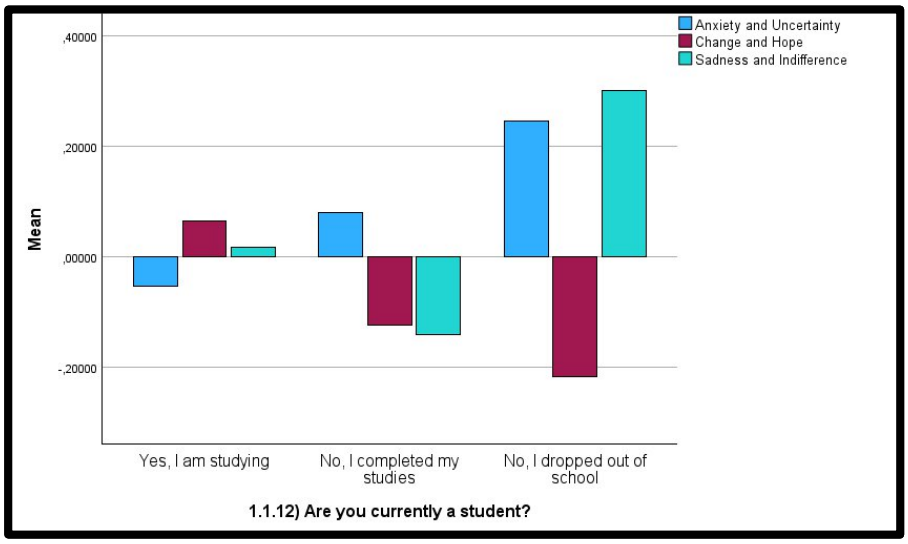
*Sadness and Indifference*. Active students, therefore, tend to perceive the future with moderate optimism and a low level of concern or apathy, likely due to the support of the school environment. On the other hand, young people who have completed their studies show a slight predominance of feelings characterized by *Uncertainty and Anxiety*, with similar but slightly negative levels in the related components of *Change and Hope* and *Sadness and Indifference*. This balance between hope and uncertainty may indicate that, once their studies are completed, young people experience a more complex perception of the future, likely related to the transition to the labour market.

Finally, those who have dropped out of school show the highest values for the components of *Uncertainty and Anxiety* and *Sadness and Indifference*, with a negative *Change and Hope* component. There is a strong sense of worry and some apathy, with a less positive view of change and opportunities, likely due to the challenges and difficulties perceived in the social and work context without a completed educational path.

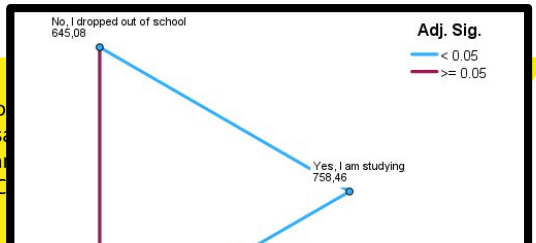
*Figure 60 – Idea of future – Components identified by student status*




Pairwise comparisons, along with the corresponding significance tests, further highlight the clear trend that dropping out of school is associated with higher levels of anxiety and uncertainty, as well as a less positive outlook on the future compared to those who continue studying or have completed their studies. The associations with the term "future" that fall under the component of sadness and indifference are less pronounced, showing little variation between these groups.

*Figure 61 – Anxiety and Uncertainty*

*Figure 62 – Change and Hope*

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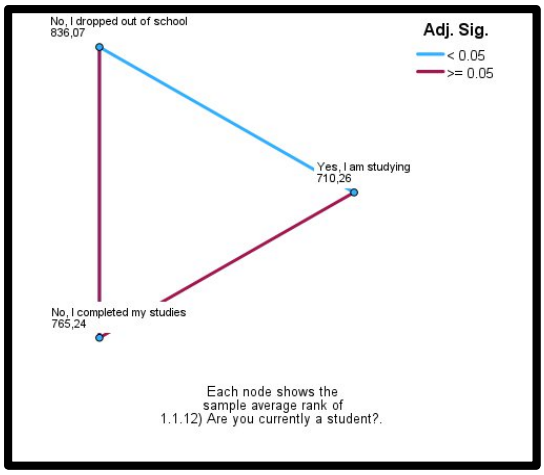



*Figure 63 – Sadness and Indifference*

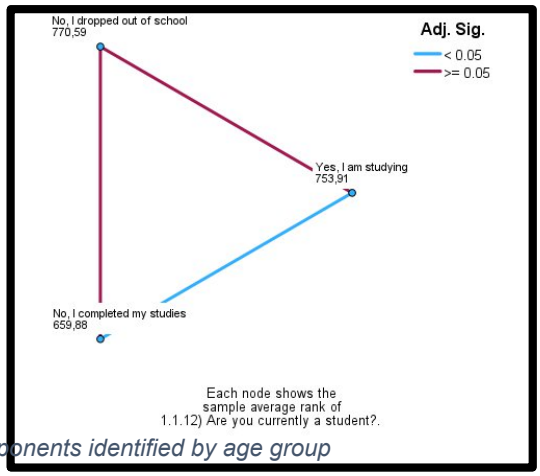
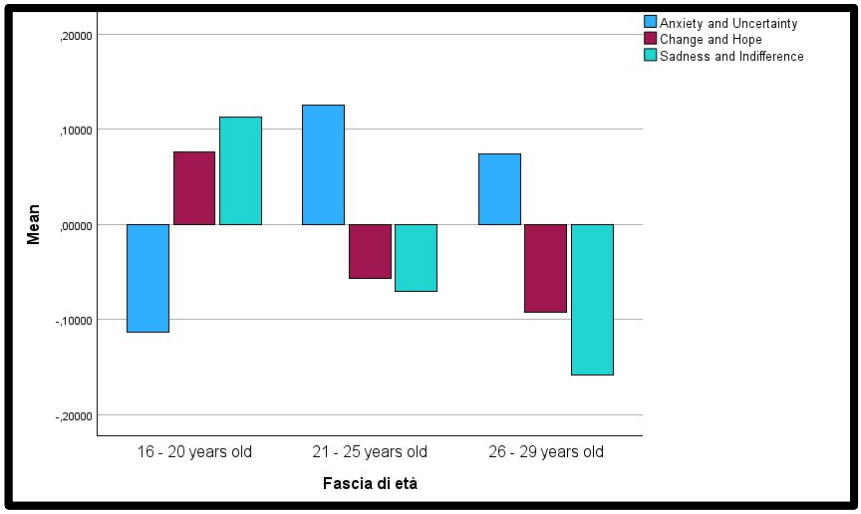



*Figure 64 – Idea of future – Components identified by age group*




Young people between the ages of 16 and 20, despite some feelings of sadness or apathy, tend to have a future outlook more oriented towards change, with relatively low levels of anxiety. The 21-25 age group has a mixed perception of the future, balancing optimism about change with concern, but without a predominance of negative feelings. In



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contrast, young people between the ages of 26 and 29 perceive the future with more anxiety and inertia, feeling less hopeful and confident about positive change. These individuals seem to approach work and personal stability with a more uncertain and less enthusiastic view compared to the younger groups (Figure 64).

Once again, pairwise comparisons provide additional insights. The components of anxiety and passivity have a significant impact.

In general, perceptions of change and hope are more similar across all age groups, indicating a more uniform view of these feelings. However, for the other dimensions, there are more marked differences, especially for those related to emotions such as sadness and indifference.

*Figure 65 – Anxiety and Uncertainty*

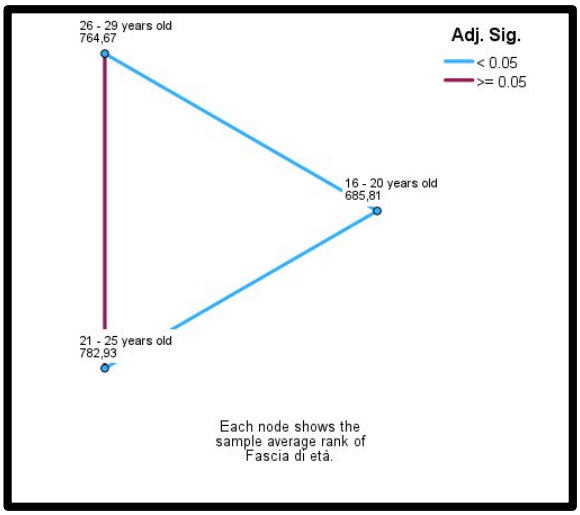


*Figure 66 – Change and Hope*

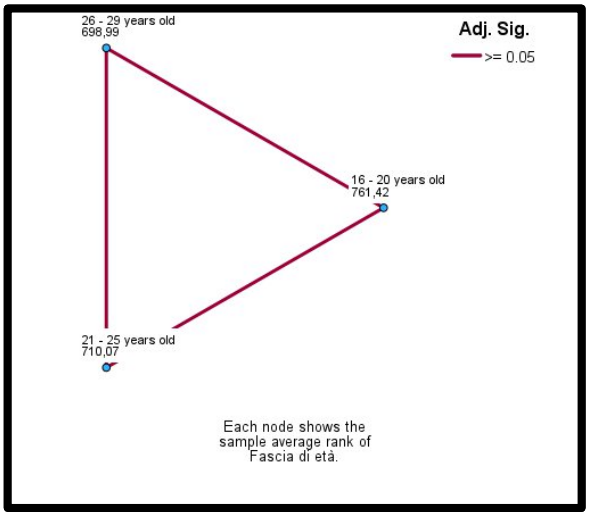




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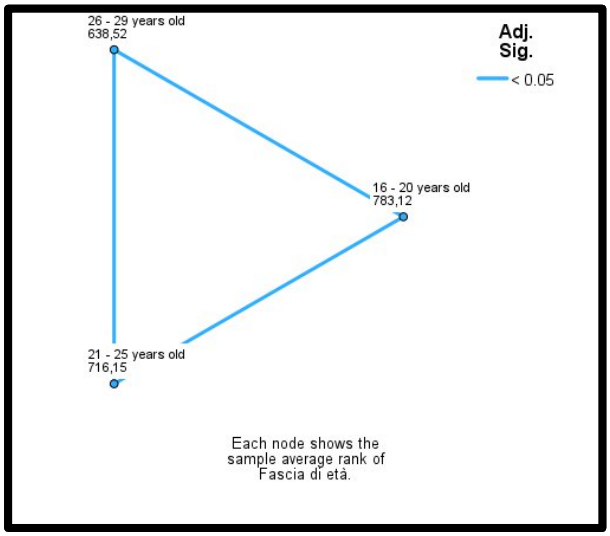
*Figure 67 – Sadness and Indifference*




Respondents with a migratory background show a greater predisposition towards feelings of *Change and Hope* but are also accompanied by a high level of *Sadness and Indifference*. The interpretation is certainly complex; it could be hypothesized that, while perceiving the future as an opportunity for growth and change, they also carry an emotional burden, or a less enthusiastic outlook compared to those without a migratory background. On the other hand, those without such a background associated words with the term "future" that led to lower levels across all dimensions, with a balance between the three components. Therefore, their perception of the future is more stable and less influenced by extreme feelings of anxiety or sadness. Further analysis revealed that individuals with a migratory background tend to have a more polarized perception of the future. On one hand, they are more positive in terms of change and hope, but on the other hand, they also report higher levels of sadness and indifference.

*Figure 68 – Idea of the future. Components identified by migrant background*

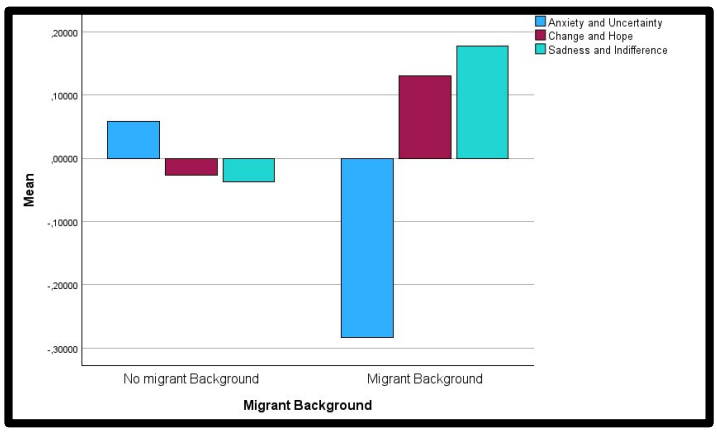





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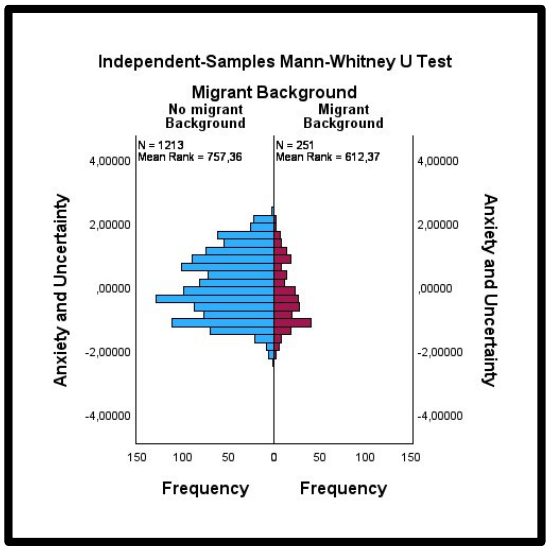
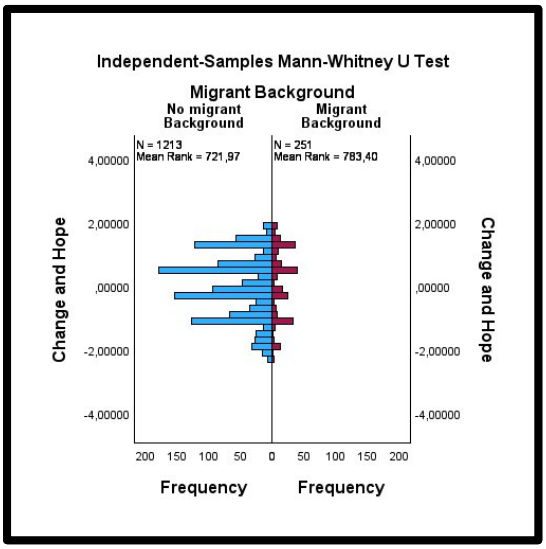
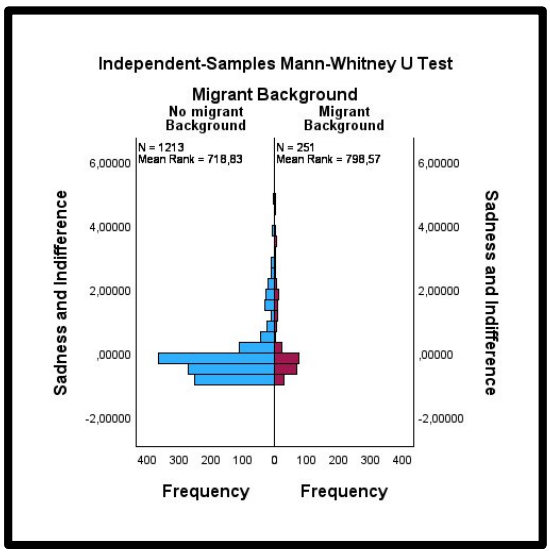
*Figure 69 – Idea of future – Components identified by migrant background*



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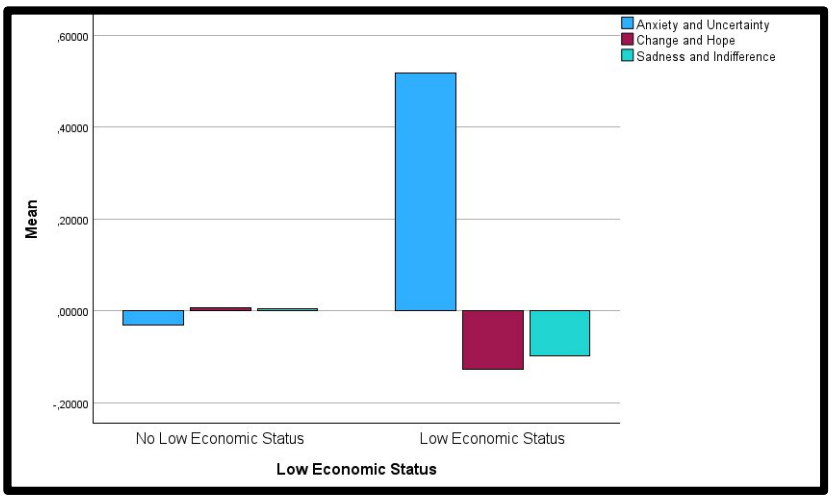
Expectations and ideas about the future of individuals with a low economic status show a clear predominance of the Anxiety and Uncertainty dimension, with significantly higher levels compared to other groups, indicating a perception of the future dominated by uncertainty and concerns. In contrast, the dimensions of *Change and Hope* and *Sadness and Indifference* appear less relevant, although still present. On the other hand, young people without a low economic status show much lower and more balanced scores across all dimensions, highlighting a perception of the future less influenced by anxiety or sadness. Subsequent comparisons between the groups, measured by average ranks, reveal how the dimensions related to anxiety and uncertainty and sadness and indifference, expressed through the words young people associated with the term "future," have a significantly greater impact on those living in contexts with low economic levels, while the dimension of *Hope and Change* shows fewer variations in the opinions of the two groups considered.

*Figure 70 – Idea of future – Components identified by economic status*



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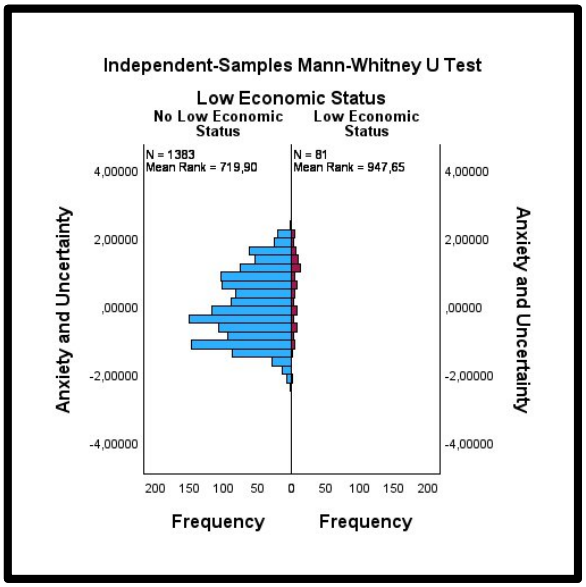


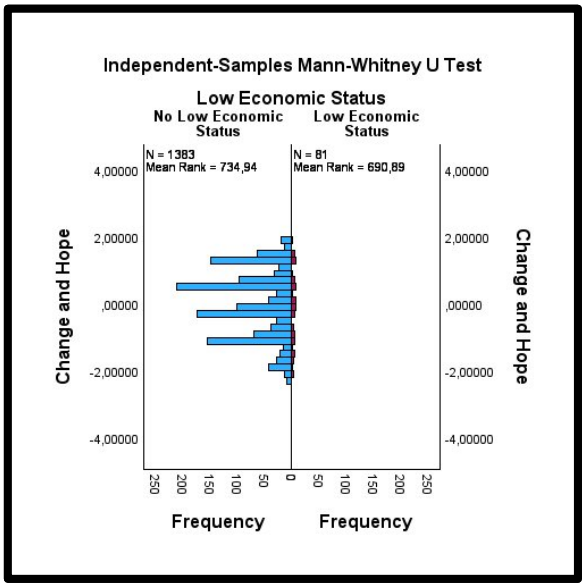
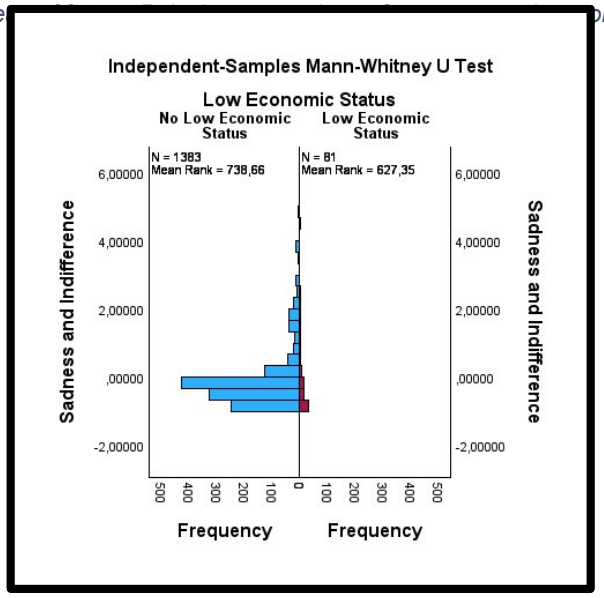




*Figure 71 – Ide... ...nomic status*



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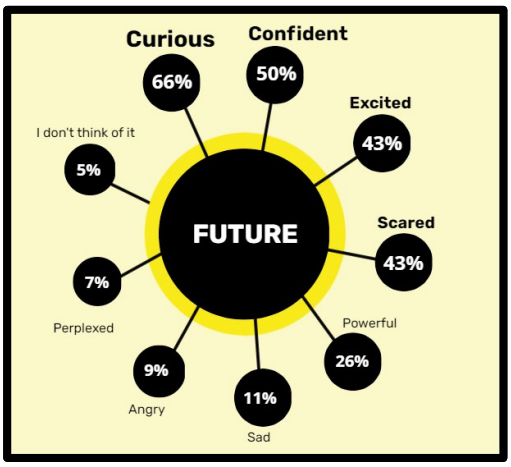
### 7.3.3 Feelings towards the word "Future"

**Curiosity** is the most frequently reported emotion, with 66.2% of young people stating that they feel curious. **Confidence** is another prevalent emotion, reported by 50.0% of participants. Both **excitement** and **fear** are reported by 43.2% of young people, indicating that a significant portion of the sample experiences these contrasting emotions. 25.7% of participants feel **powerful**, while **sadness** is reported by 10.8% and **anger** by 9.5%. **Perplexity** is a less common emotion, reported by 6.8% of young people. Finally, 5.4% of participants stated that they do not think about their emotions. Most young people experience positive emotions, but a significant portion also experiences negative emotions, indicating a complexity in their emotional experiences (Figure 72).

*Figure 72 – Feelings thinking of future*




### 7.3.4 Principal Components Analysis (PCA)

Through factor analysis, three components were isolated in this case as well.

**Component 1 - Security and Positivity**

The emotions of power, confidence, excitement, and calm indicate a positive and secure mental state. This component is composed of the following positive loadings: Powerful (0.636), Confident (0.735), Excited (0.414), Calm (0.666), and the negative loadings: Perplexed (-0.407), Scared (-0.492).

**Component 2 - Negativity and Frustration**

his component is clearly associated with negative emotions such as anger, disappointment, sadness, and fear, suggesting a profile of dissatisfaction and discomfort. The loadings for this component are the following feelings associated with the word "future": Angry (0.673), Disappointed (0.763), Sad (0.696), Scared (0.383), while no negative loadings are present.



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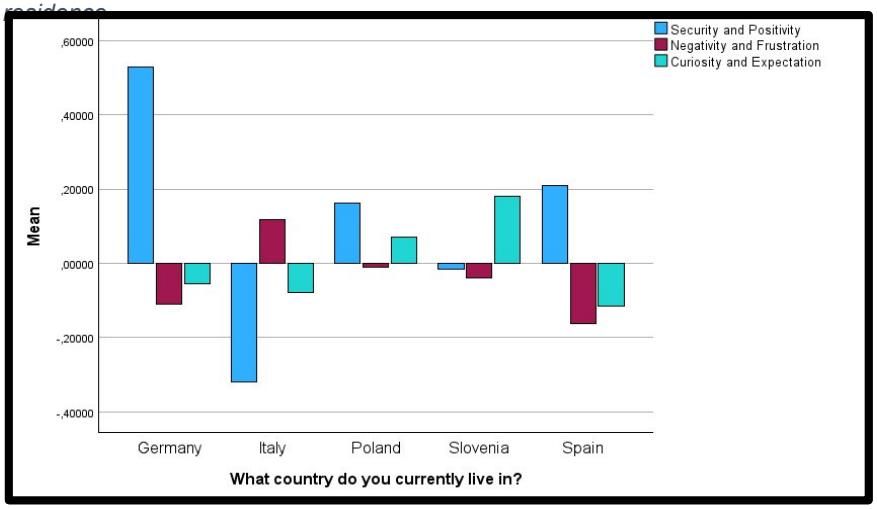
**Component 3 - Curiosity and Expectation**

The emotions of excitement and curiosity suggest an attitude of expectation and interest towards the future. Excited (0.569), Curious (0.687), while the negative loading on "I don't think of it" (-0.602) indicates indifference.

In Germany, a high level of Security and Positivity clearly emerges, much higher than in other countries. German youth generally feel secure and positive about the future. As will be seen below, although the sample size is not very large, the responses from German youth were very robust in emphasizing this dynamic, a fact confirmed by the low score in the Negativity and Frustration component, which suggests a decidedly positive perception and a lesser inclination towards negative feelings regarding the future.

In Italy, young people show the highest levels of *Negativity and Frustration* and a reduced level of *Security and Positivity*. It seems that they experience states of uncertainty or frustration regarding the future and have a less secure perception of it. This is also supported by the rather low *Curiosity and Expectation* component, which indicates a less optimistic or enthusiastic view of the future.

*Figure 73 – Feelings about the future – Components identified by country of residence*




Young people in Poland, on the other hand, seem to have more balance in the positive values of the feelings related to the components of *Security and Positivity* and *Curiosity and Expectation*, while registering minimal levels of *Negativity and Frustration*. This indicates a mix of security and curiosity about the future, with moderate concern about potential difficulties or challenges.

In Slovenia, a profile emerges characterized by high levels of *Curiosity and Expectation* and *Security and Positivity*, with a low level of *Negativity and Frustration*. Slovenian youth appear generally optimistic, curious, and proactive about the future, with little perception of frustration.



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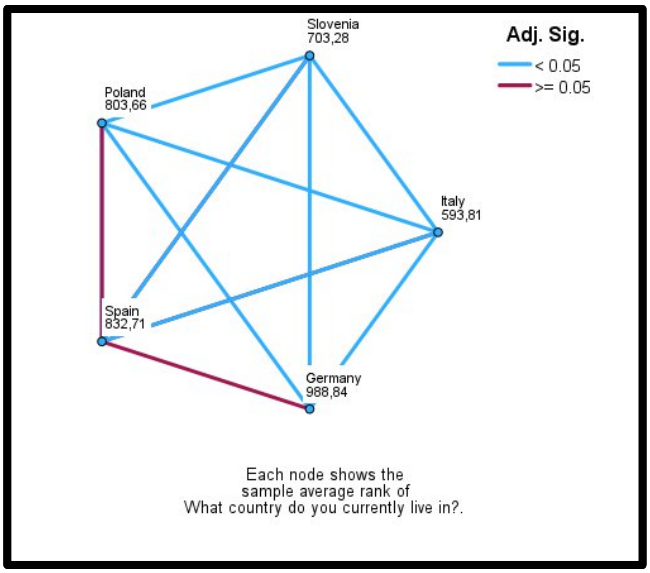
Spain presents a more polarized emotional profile, with low levels of *Negativity and Frustration*, but also accompanied by little curiosity and expectation. The positive values of the optimistic component, Security and Positivity, lead to considering Spanish youth as having, on the whole, a proactive attitude towards their future.

The graphs below highlight the comparisons between different countries for respondent profiles. The aim is to examine specific differences in how young people perceive the future for each identified profile. As before, rankings of the obtained scores were used, rather than averages, with appropriate corrections applied to further reduce the sampling uncertainty.

In the first graph (Figure 74), which represents pairwise comparisons of *Security and Positivity* across different countries, significant differences between the countries are observed:

*Figure 74 – Security and Positivity*

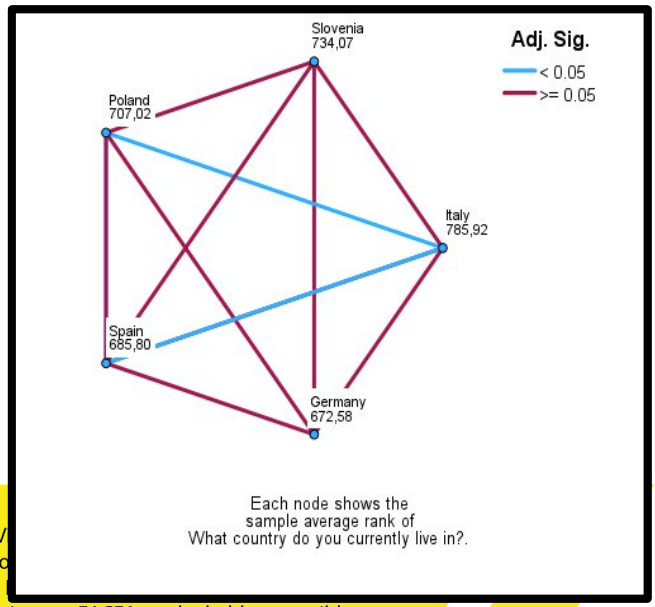



Germany has the highest average score (988.84), suggesting that young people in Germany feel more secure and positive compared to their peers in other countries. In Italy, it is confirmed that young people feel less secure and positive, as indicated by the lowest score (593.81).

The boys, girls, and non-binary individuals living in Poland, Slovenia, and Spain fall between these two extremes, with the Polish (803.66) and Spanish (832.71) feeling more secure and positive compared to their Slovenian peers (703.28).

Italy reports the highest average score (785.92), with Italian youth perceiving the highest levels of negativity and frustration (Figure 75) compared to their peers in other countries. In contrast, Spain records the lowest average score (685.80), indicating less inclination towards negativity and frustration regarding the

*Figure 75 – Negativity and Frustration*

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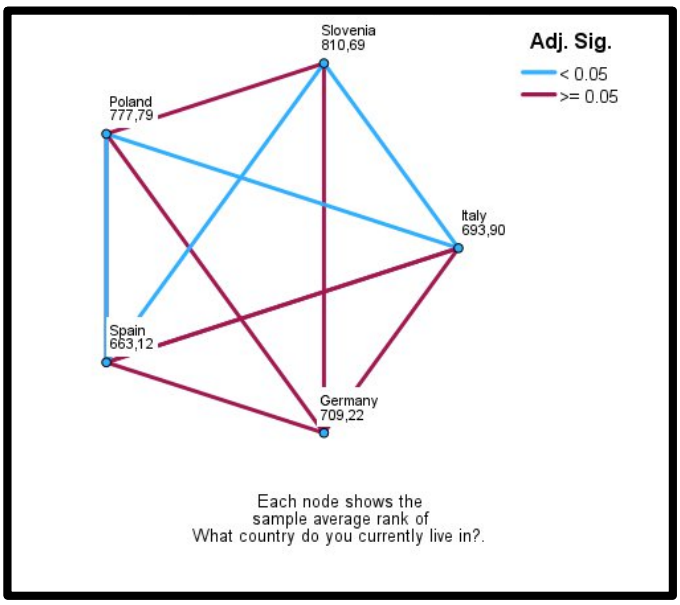
future. Slovenian (734.07), Polish (707.02), and German (672.58) youth fall in intermediate positions, suggesting that the perception of negativity and frustration varies moderately between these countries, to the point where it can be considered similar when translating this data from the sample to the general context.

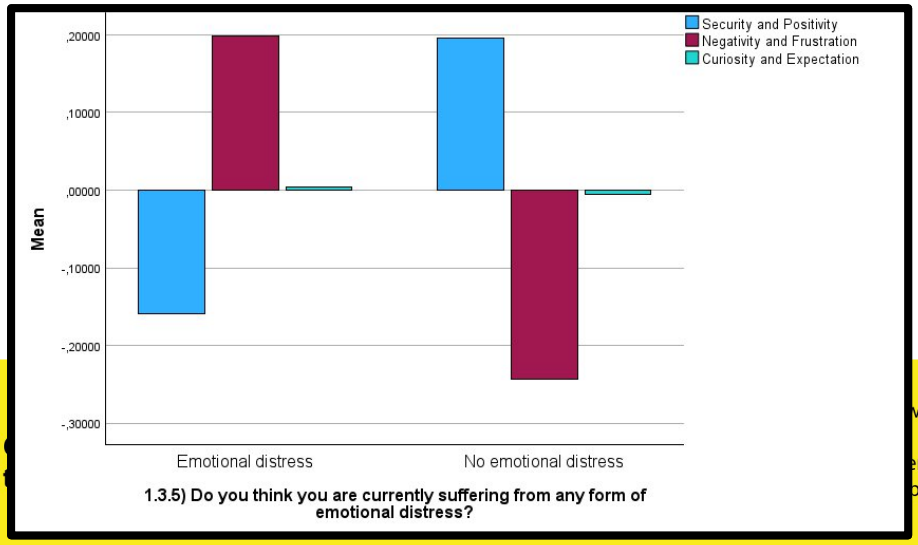
Slovenian youth are the most curious and full of expectations compared to their peers in the other countries studied. Responses from those residing in Slovenia show higher average ranks (810.69). In contrast, Spanish youth appear to be less driven by these feelings (663.12). Poland (777.79), Italy (693.90), and Germany (709.22) fall between these two dimensions regarding the future, and it is assumed that there are no noteworthy differences in terms of these feelings when thinking about their future.

*Figure 76 – Curiosity and Expectation*




Young people who report experiencing **emotional distress** tend to show higher levels of *Negativity and Frustration*, demonstrating a greater inclination toward negative emotions and a sense of frustration regarding their future. In contrast, the level of *Security and Positivity* is relatively low, highlighting a greater perception of insecurity and a lower tendency toward emotional well-being. The *Curiosity and Expectation* dimension is almost neutral, suggesting that despite emotional distress,

*Figure 77 – Feelings towards the future – Components identified for perception of distress*



curiosity or expectation toward the future does not undergo significant variation.

On the other hand, young people who have not reported experiencing emotional distress show high levels of *Security and Positivity*, indicating feelings associated with a more reassuring perception of the future. In this group, the *Negativity and Frustration* dimension is significantly lower, suggesting greater emotional stability and a less negative outlook. For them, the *Curiosity and Expectation* dimension remains almost neutral.

If we look at the component of Security and Positivity, those who prefer to self-describe their **gender identify** seem to be more positive and optimistic about the future compared to other groups. As mentioned, this is not a large group of respondents, but the feelings they expressed when asked to associate emotions with their future were very clear in expressing positivity. Men are more optimistic than women, those who prefer not to disclose their gender, and, to a lesser extent, non-binary people. Women, while showing a lower level of security and positivity compared to men, do not differ significantly from non-binary people or those who prefer not to disclose their gender.

As for the dimension of *Curiosity and Expectation,* women appear to be more curious and expectant about the future compared to their male peers. People who identified as belonging to other gender categories did not provide very different answers from each other, suggesting that gender identity is not strongly linked to these feelings about the future.

In the dimension of *Negativity and Frustration*, the responses provided do not have statistical significance for any of the groups investigated.

*Figure 78 – Security and Positivity*

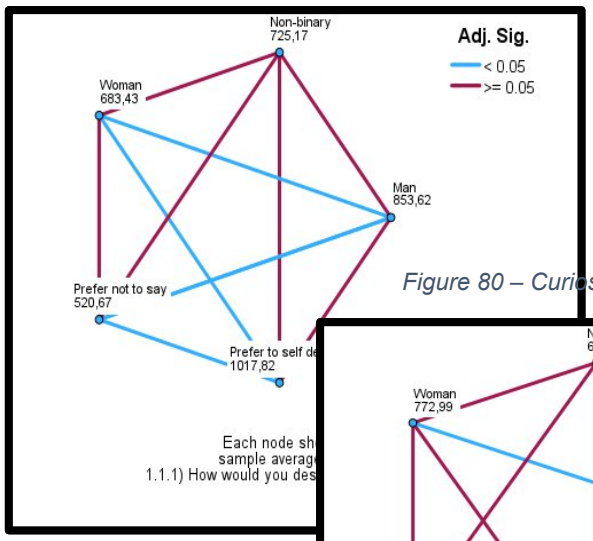



*Figure 79 – Negativity and Frustration*

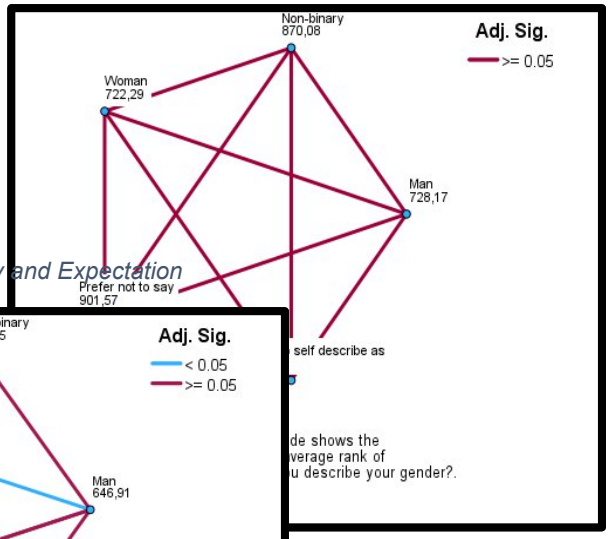
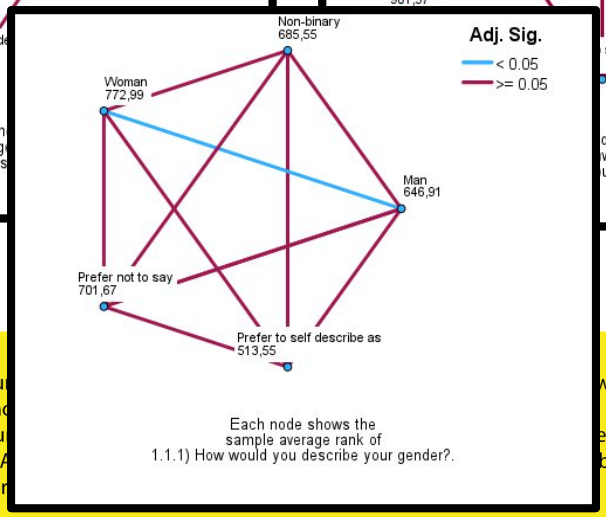



*Figure 80 – Curiosity and Expectation*



The feelings that respondents reported experiencing when thinking about the future vary based on **sexual orientation**, exclusively for those expressing security and positivity. Gay men show significantly lower levels of security and positivity compared to those who identify as lesbian or gay women, as well as compared to those who prefer to self-describe, and especially in comparison to heterosexual people. Bisexual individuals show less optimism only compared to heterosexuals, while having the same feelings about the future as all other people with different sexual orientations.

For other moods, such as those characterizing the other dimensions (*Negativity and Frustration* or *Curiosity and Expectation*), the diversity of emotions was so wide that the differences between the sexual orientation groups were negligible.

*Figure 81 – Security and Positivity*

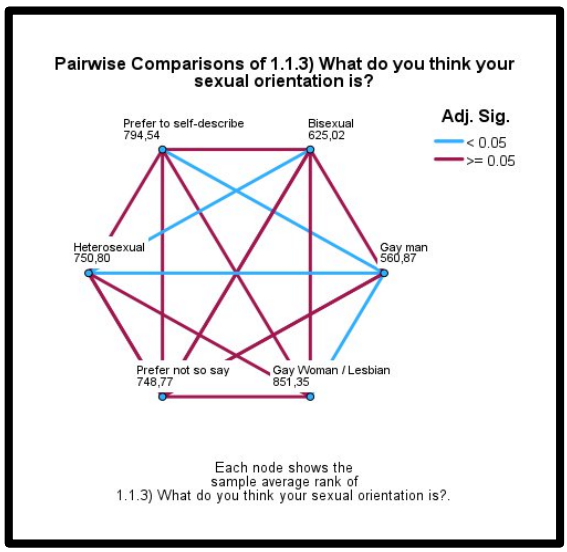



*Figure 82 – Negativity and Frustration*

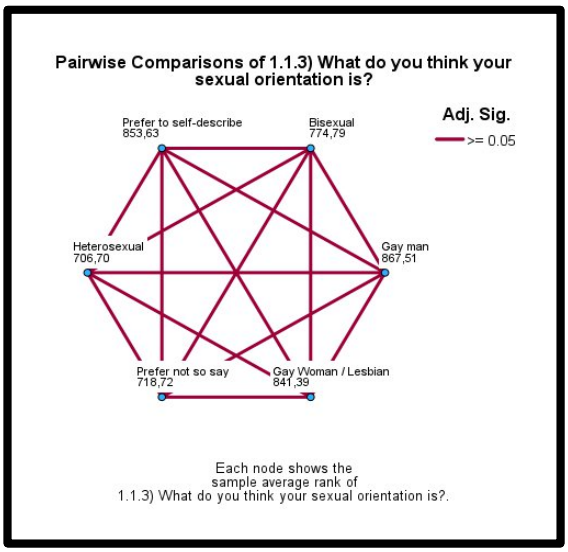





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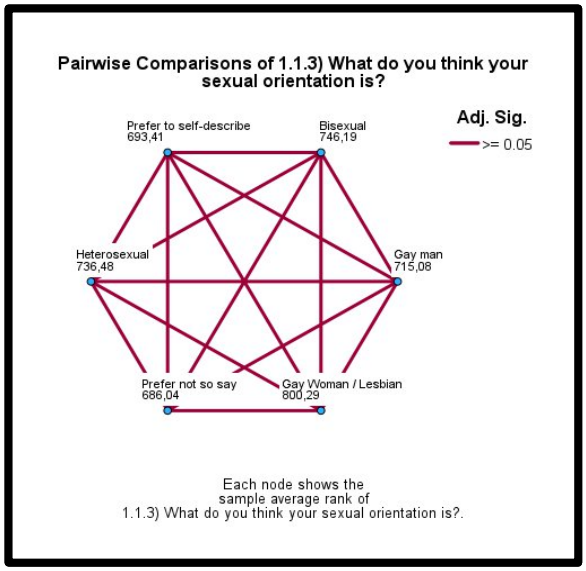
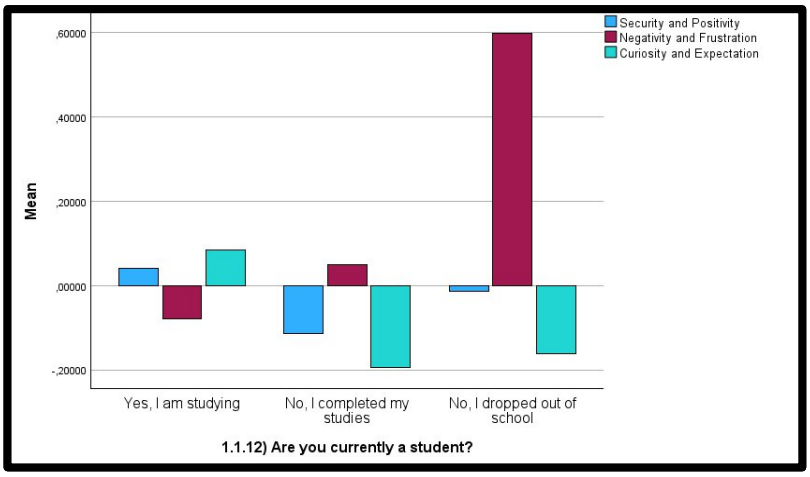
*Figure 83 – Curiosity and Expectation*




The situation is the opposite of the previous one when considering **student status** as a possible condition that brings out differences in young people's feelings about the future (Figure 84). The dimension most strongly influenced is *"Negativity and Frustration*." It is immediately apparent that this is a strong component among those who have decided to drop out of school. The factor scores for the other dimensions are more evenly distributed.

*Figure 84 – Feelings towards the future – Components identified by student status*




To better understand the situation, it is necessary to break down the analysis by each individual dimension. Positive feelings about the future do not show significant variations between those still in the educational system and those who have decided to leave it. On the other hand, those who left the educational system early have a much more negative view of the future compared to both those who are still studying and those who have completed their studies. It is noteworthy that



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among the latter two groups, they exhibit the same levels of negativity and frustration when thinking about the future.

It is also very interesting to compare feelings related to curiosity and expectations. In this case, being still in the educational system has positive effects. All the young people interviewed who are still studying were much more likely to associate words related to this dimension compared to their peers who left the educational system early, as well as to those who have completed their studies. No significant difference in feelings was observed between the latter two groups of young people interviewed.

*Figure 85 – Security and Positivity*

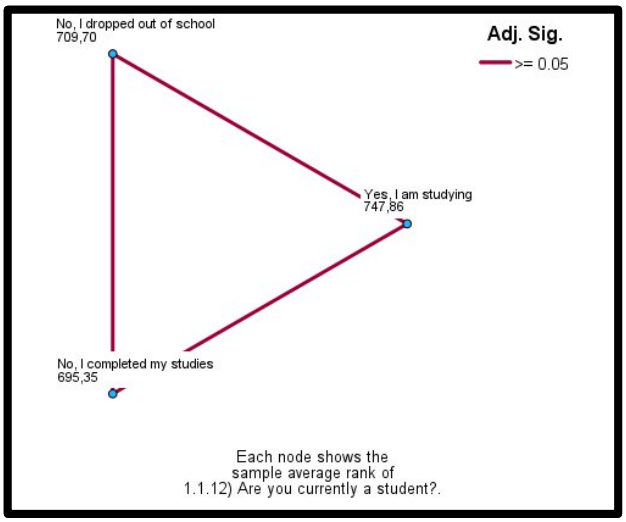



*Figure 86 – Negativity and Frustration*

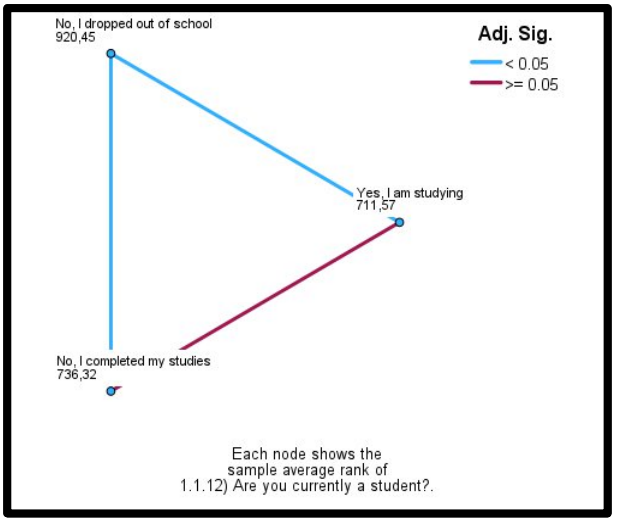
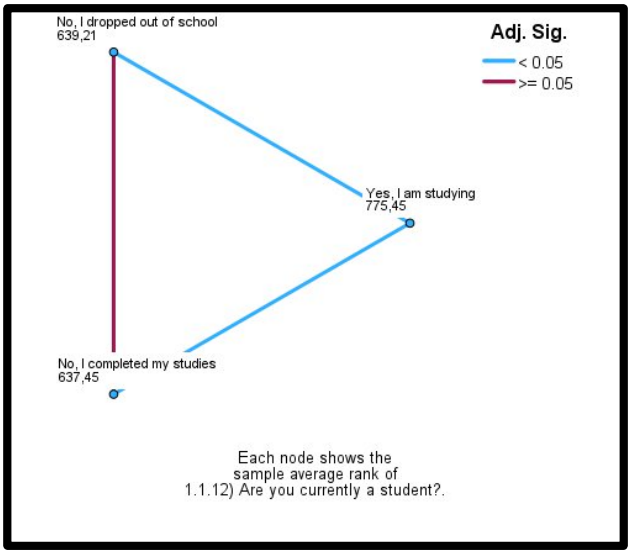



*Figure 87 – Curiosity and Expectation*



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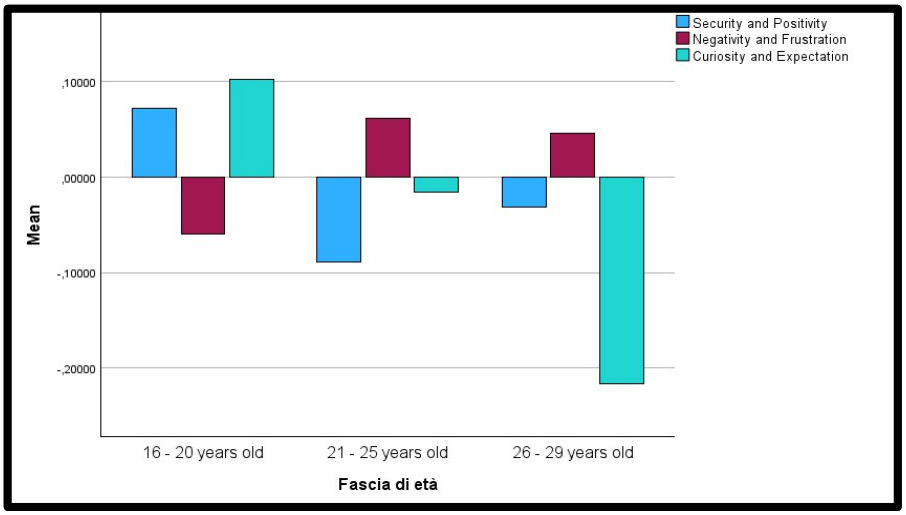
Young people aged 16-20 report mostly hopeful emotions when thinking about their future. The components of *Security and Positivity* and *Curiosity and Expectation* have reached positive factor scores, while narratives characterized by negative feelings were not frequently reported. In the 21-25 age group, a reversal of trends occurs. The levels of *Security and Positivity* decrease, while the frequency of negative feelings about the future increases, alongside those related to curiosity. Finally, among young people aged 26-29, there is a marked decline in the *Curiosity and Expectation* dimension, which shows strong negative values. This could indicate a reduction in enthusiasm or expectations for the future as young people approach full adulthood. The scores for *Negativity and Frustration* do not seem to vary much across the different age groups, especially for the middle and older age groups. It is hypothesized that the sample data may not allow for conclusions that are free from potential random effects.

The broken-down analysis confirms this hypothesis. Pairwise comparisons show that for the *Negativity and Frustration* dimension, respondents from different age groups did not exhibit characteristic feelings, which, on the other hand, emerged for more positive feelings characterized by curiosity. Regarding the former, adolescents and post-adolescents expressed optimism toward the 21-25-year-olds but showed no difference of views with respondents from the older age groups. Also, when it comes to curiosity and expectations for the future, teenagers are the most positive, but only toward the 26-29-year-olds, while their views are comparable to those of the middle-age group.

*Figure 88 – Feelings towards the future – Components identified by age group*



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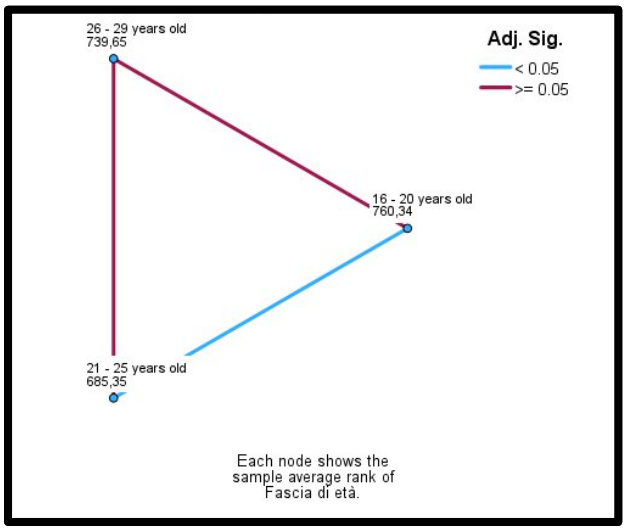



*Figure 90 – Negativity and Frustration*

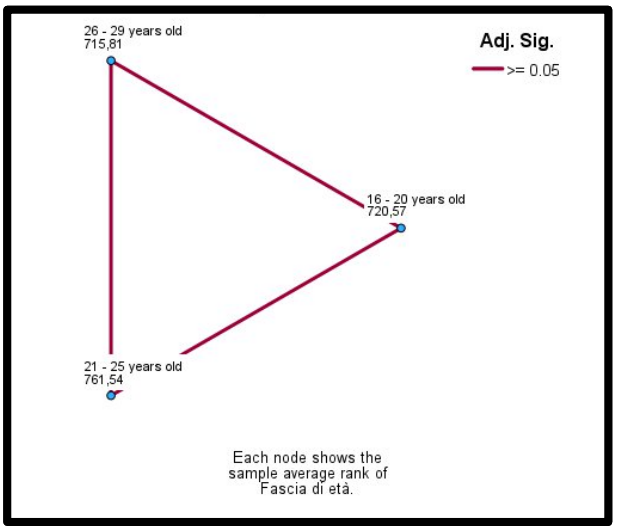
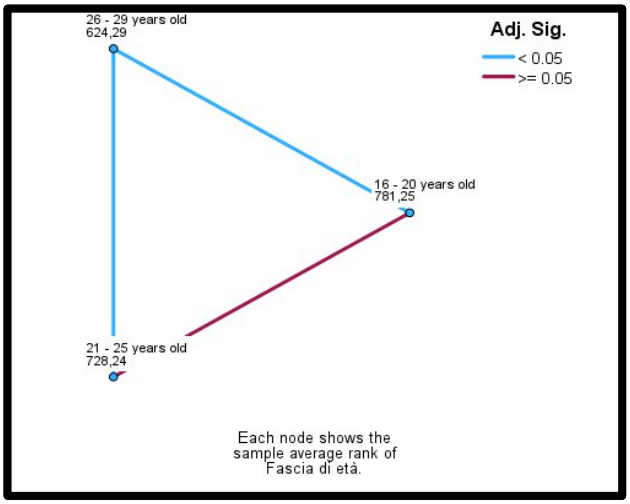



*Figure 91– Curiosity and Expectation*




The emotional dynamics regarding the word "future" differ between young people with and without a **migrant background.** Those with a personal history characterized by a migration background tend to express more intense emotions in certain specific areas. For example, they more often feel confident and powerful, highlighting a sense of self-esteem and personal strength that is more pronounced compared to their peers without this background.



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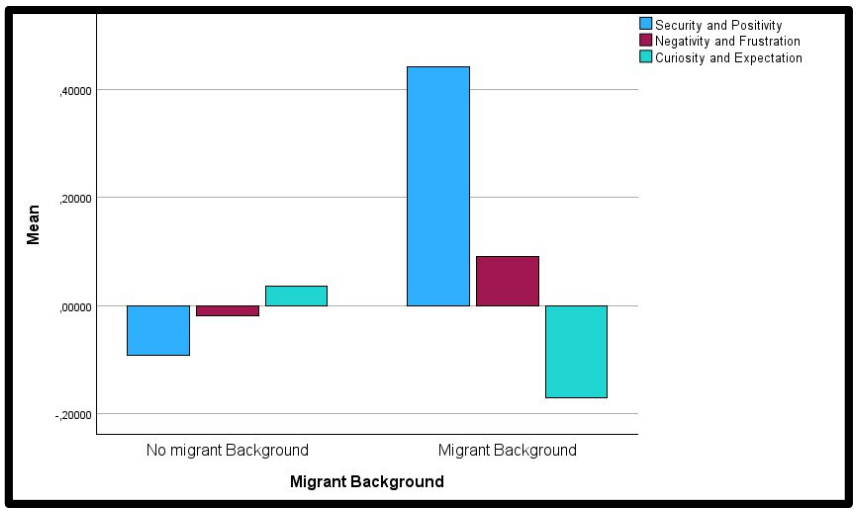
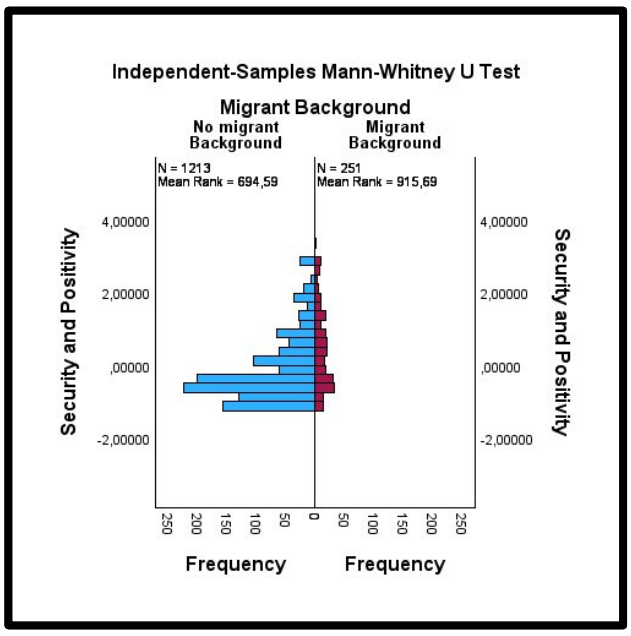
On the other hand, those with a migration background appear less perplexed and less fearful, associating words with less anxiety or emotional confusion. This could indicate greater clarity or resilience when facing challenges. Curiosity about the future is high for both groups, although slightly less pronounced among young people with a migration background, suggesting an interest in what lies ahead, albeit less emphasized.

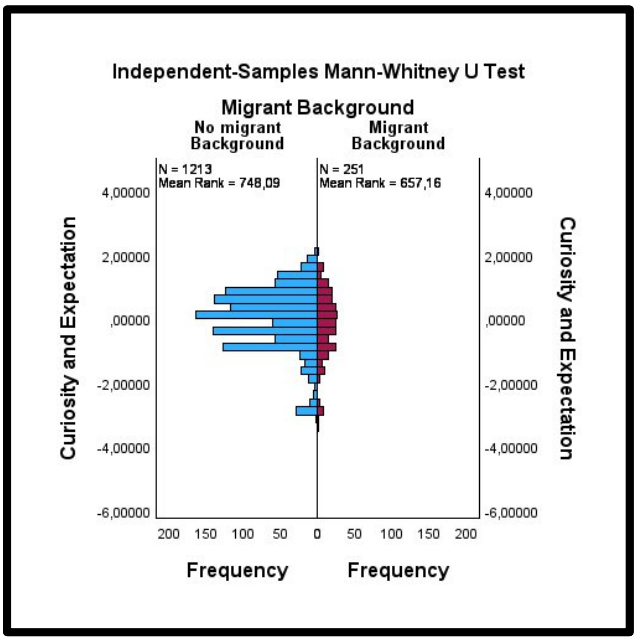
*Figure 92 – Feelings towards the future – Components identified by migrant background*




From the broken-down analysis by dimension, we can conclude that there are differences between the various feelings toward the future in the components of *"Security and Positivity"* and "*Curiosity and Expectation*" between those with a migration background and those without. However, there are no differences in the "*Negativity and Frustration*" component, where the distribution

*Figure 93 – Feelings towards the future. Pairwise comparison of components by migrant backgrounc*



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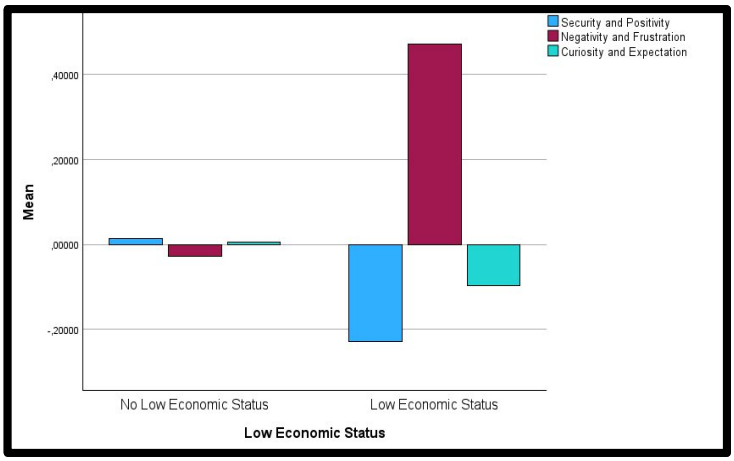
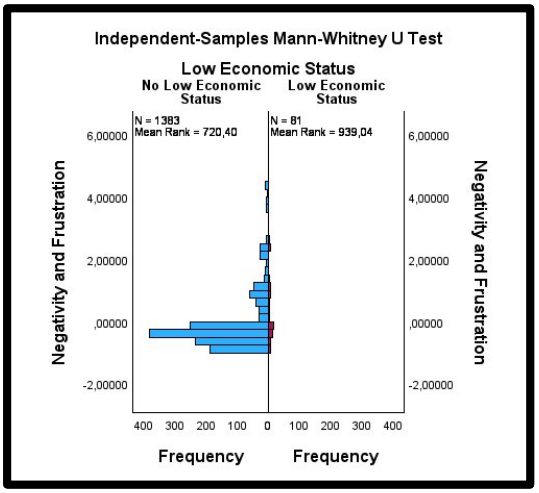
appears similar between the two groups. Negative feelings, therefore, are independent of the presence or absence of a migration background.

*Figure 94 – Feelings towards the future – Components identified by economic status*




The data show that young people with a low **economic status** tend to experience more negative emotions compared to those who do not belong to this group. Feelings of anger, sadness, and fear are more pronounced, with a greater tendency to feel confused about the future. Fear, in particular, is significantly more prevalent among those living in disadvantaged economic conditions. The graph clearly shows that individuals with a low economic status tend to have significantly higher scores for the "*Negativity and Frustration*" component compared to those without economic difficulties. The other dimensions cannot be considered as conditioned by economic status. In fact, the responses did not allow for the conclusion that any relationships are due to anything other than simple sample randomness.

*Figure 95 – Feelings about the future – Pairwise comparisons of the Negativity and Frustration component*



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# 7.4 Types of emotional distress manifested

As mentioned earlier, 55% of the participants in the survey reported experiencing some form of emotional distress. The most reported disorder is **stress**, affecting 69.8% of cases, followed by **worries**, which impact 61.2% of participants. **Anxiety** and **depression** are also high, with 58.2% and 28.4% of participants reporting their presence, respectively. Less frequent disorders include **eating disorders** (20.0%), **panic attacks** (26.2%), and **self-harm** (12.2%). **Behavioral disorders** were reported by 11.1% of participants. A small segment of participants chose not to specify their distress condition, with 5.3% selecting "Prefer not to say." Finally, 9.6% of participants indicated that they do not suffer from any of the mentioned conditions.

*Figure 96 – Emotional distress status – percentage of young people*

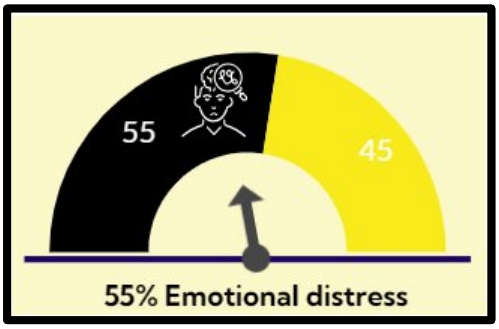
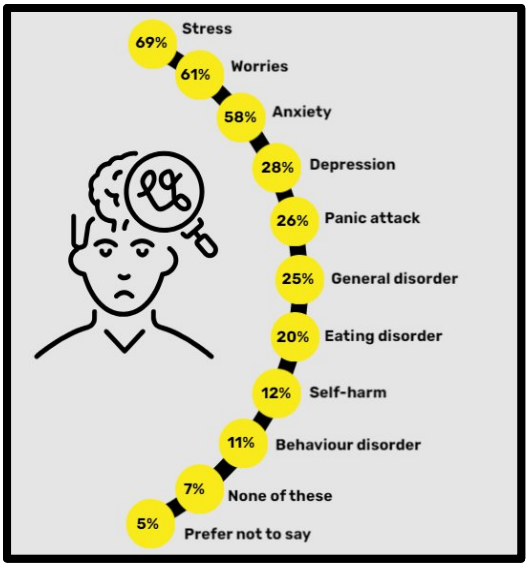



*Figure 97 – Forms of emotional distress by country of residence*




There are some discrepancies between the **countries of residence** of young people regarding the forms of distress most perceived.

In Germany, the most reported emotional disorder is stress, with 76.3% of respondents acknowledging it, followed by anxiety at 57.9%. Depression is reported by 35.5% and general distress by 23.7%. Eating disorders, self-harm, and panic attacks are less frequently reported, at 22.4%, 17.1%, and 21.1%, respectively. Behavioral disorders are noted by 22.4%, while 6.6% prefer not to disclose their condition and 10.5% do not suffer from any emotional disorder.

In Italy, stress is also the predominant issue, reported by 65.1% of respondents. Anxiety closely follows at 71.4%, and general distress is reported by 42.5%. Depression affects 33.5%,



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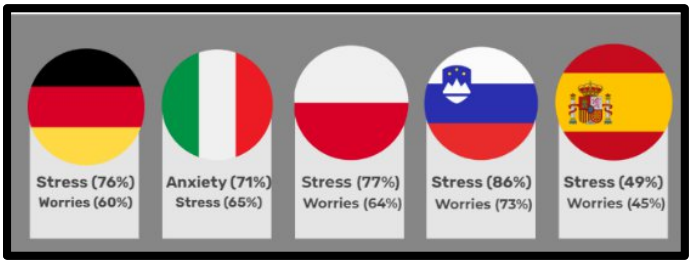
while panic attacks are noted by 33.7%. Eating disorders and concerns are reported by 22.4% and 61.3%, respectively. Behavioural disorders are less common, noted by only 8.5%. A 4.0% prefer not to disclose, and 9.5% do not suffer from any emotional disorder.

In Poland, stress is the most common problem, recognized by 76.6% of respondents. Concerns are reported by 64.1%, and anxiety by 61.4%. General distress affects 24.8%, and depression 32.6%. Panic attacks and eating disorders are noted by 29.2% and 25.7%, respectively. Self-harm is reported by 18.3%, and behavioural disorders by the same 18.3%. 4.7% prefer not to disclose their condition, and 6.7% do not suffer from any emotional disorder.

In Slovenia, stress remains the predominant issue, reported by 86.2% of respondents. Concerns follow at 72.9%, and anxiety is reported by 43.3%. Depression affects 18.2%, and panic attacks 19.7%. Eating disorders are noted by 14.3%, and self-harm by 9.9%. Behavioural disorders are the least common, reported by only 4.9%. 7.4% prefer not to disclose, and no respondents reported not suffering from any emotional disorder.

*Figure 98 – Most common types of emotional distress by country of residence*




In Spain, stress is reported by 49.1% of respondents, and concerns by 45.0%. Anxiety affects 36.0%, and depression 15.3%. Panic attacks are noted by 10.8% and eating disorders by 7.7%. Self-harm is reported by 4.5%, and behavioural disorders by 4.1%. 6.8% prefer not to disclose their condition, and 23.9% do not suffer from any emotional disorder.

### 7.4.1 Types of emotional distress manifested – Analysis of Principal Correspondences

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) process revealed three significant components that together explain 52.7% of the total variance in the data. These components represent various groups of emotions related to emotional distress among the study participants.

**Component 1 - Intense Emotional Distress**



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This component includes high loadings for variables such as *depression, self-harm, behavioral disorders*, and *panic attacks*.

**Component 2 - Anxiety and Stress**

This component is composed of high loadings for variables such as *stress*, *anxiety*, and *worries.*

**Component 3 - Privacy**

This component is characterized by a high loading on the variable *"prefer not to say*," suggesting a tendency toward privacy or evasiveness in participants' responses. This is, in fact, a less explanatory component, as it reflects a single response option, and has generally not been very impactful for interpreting the dynamics related to the forms of distress that young people may have expressed. For this reason, it is not analysed further below.



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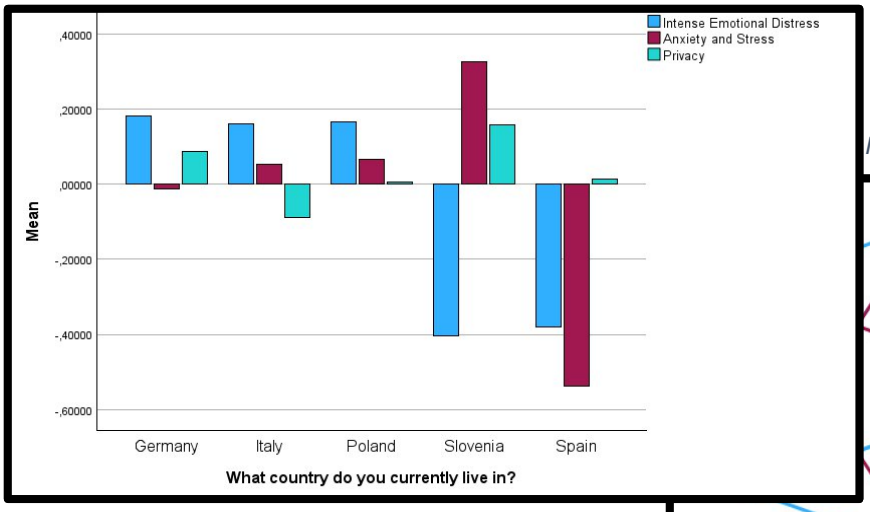
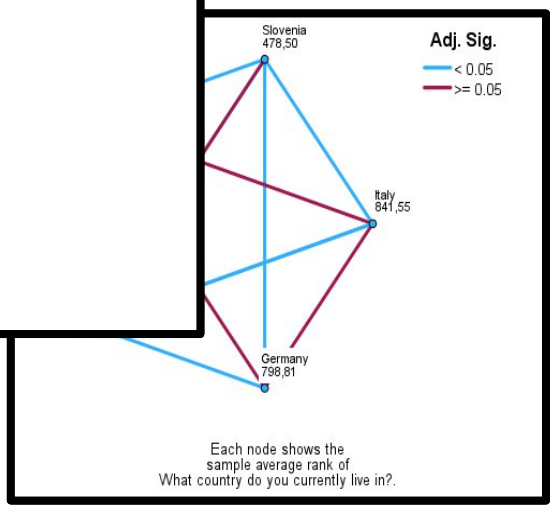
German residents tend to experience moderate levels of the components that characterize both "*Intense Emotional Distress*" and "*Anxiety and Stress.*" A similar situation is observed among their Italian peers, who reported experiencing types of distress that impact both the "*Intense Emotional Distress*" component and "*Anxiety and Stress*," with the latter at lower levels compared to those characterized by more severe forms. In Poland, the situation is almost similar to the Italian context, while Slovenian youth show a distinctly different pattern. The forms of "Intense Emotional Distress" have a very negative value, indicating that residents in Slovenia tend not to experience strong feelings in this regard. On the contrary, the types of distress they report lean towards Anxiety and Stress, which indeed has a very high positive value. Spanish youth show strong emotional differences compared to their peers in other countries. The negative values in both the "Intense Emotional Distress" dimension and the anxiety dimension indicate that they seem to perceive significantly lower levels of negative emotions compared to their peers from other nationalities. Pairwise comparisons between the dimensions help to better understand the situation. Regarding more severe emotional distress (Figure 100), Slovenia and Spain are comparable, as shown in the graph, with Slovenia, however, presenting a significantly higher level of "*Anxiety and*

*Figure 99 – Types of emotional distress by country of residence*




*Intense Emotional Distress*



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*Stress*" (Figure 101). Italian, Polish, and German youth stand out for having similar levels of significant emotional distress. However, the emotional experience of the interviewed youth differs when it comes to the "*Anxiety and Stress*" dimension. The only notable difference, even after applying corrections to account for potential random fluctuations in the sample data, pertains to the responses of Spanish youth, who are significantly less anxious and stressed compared to their peers in other countries.

People who have reported experiencing some forms of emotional distress are significantly more likely to experience a wide range of emotional disorders compared to those who do not report such distress (90%). Specifically, the prevalence of stress, anxiety, depression, and panic attacks is notably higher in the group with emotional distress. Eating disorders and self-harm are also significantly more common

*Figure 102 – Forms of emotional distress by perceived distress*

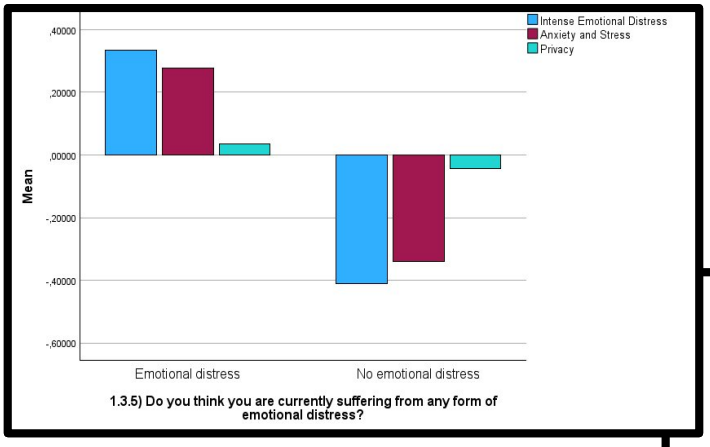



*Figure 101 – Anxiety and Stress*

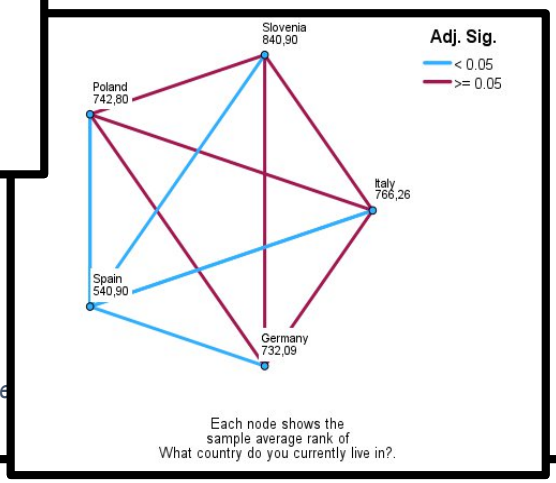
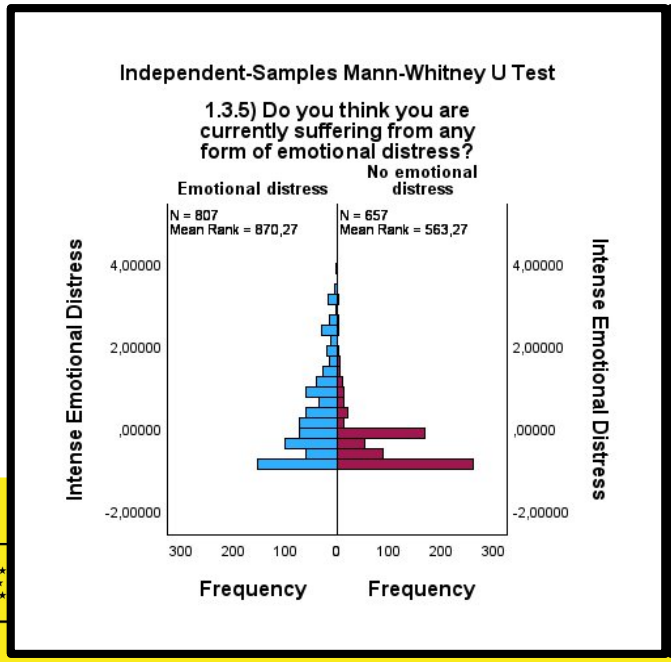
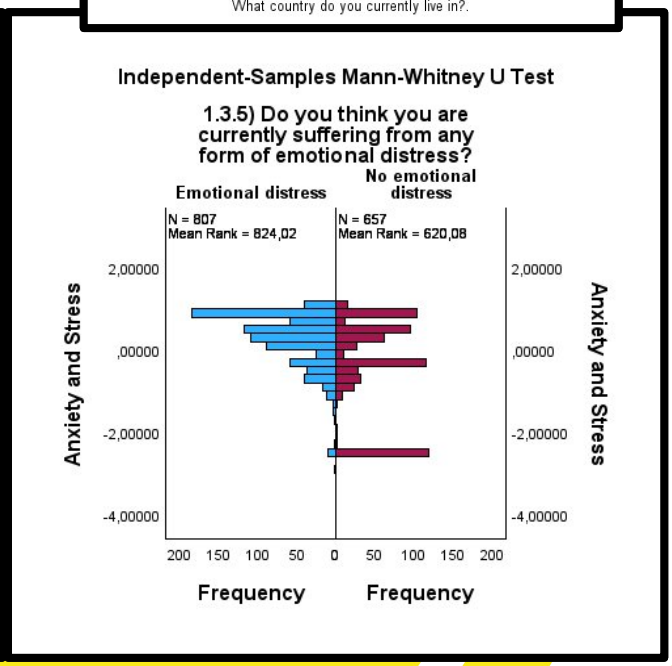



*Figure 103 – Emotional distress forms – pairwise perceived distress*



among those experiencing emotional distress. Behavioural disorders are more than three times more common in the group with emotional distress. Therefore, there is a clear association between reporting some form of emotional distress and the presence of various emotional disorders. In particular, the mean ranks for intense emotional distress quantify this difference to some extent, with 870.27 for those experiencing emotional distress and 563.27 for those not experiencing it, indicating a clear difference in levels of intense emotional distress between the two groups. Similarly, the mean ranks for anxiety and stress are 824.02 for those with emotional distress and 620.08 for those without, highlighting a significant difference in levels of anxiety and stress as well.

Regarding forms of emotional distress, the highest average scores are observed among those who prefer to self-describe their **gender identity** and those who identify as non-binary. Even those who choose not to disclose their gender report high scores. Caution should be exercised in interpreting these data, as categories with a numerically small sample size are subject to strong fluctuations that affect their inferential reliability. Excluding this relationship and analyzing pairwise comparisons, it emerges that gender has a very limited impact on perceptions of emotional distress, except for the binary genders concerning the "*Anxiety and Stress*" dimension".

*Figure 104 – Intense Emotional Distress*

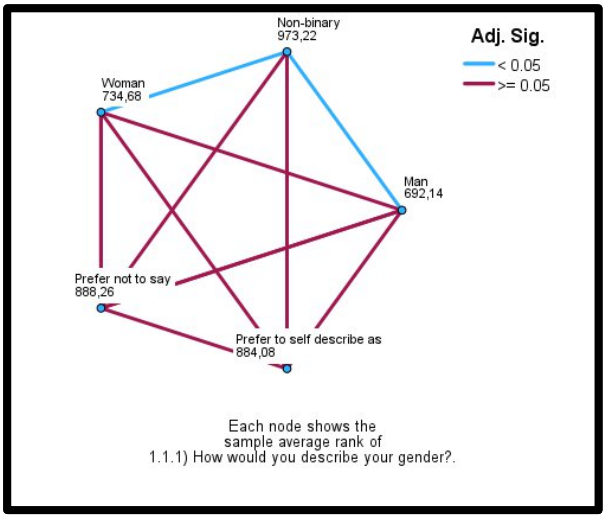



*Figure 105 – Anxiety and Stress*

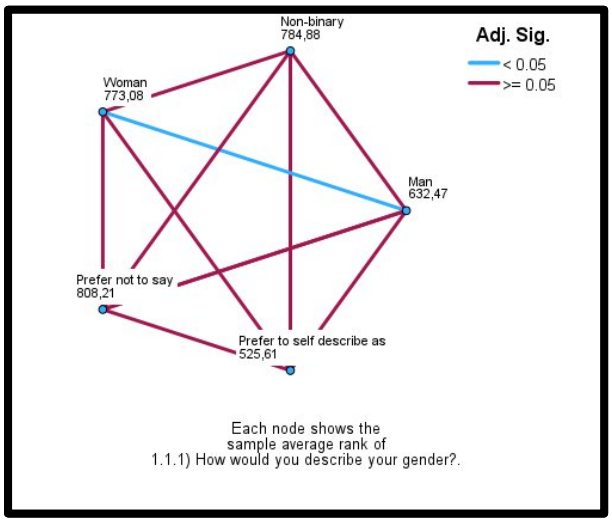
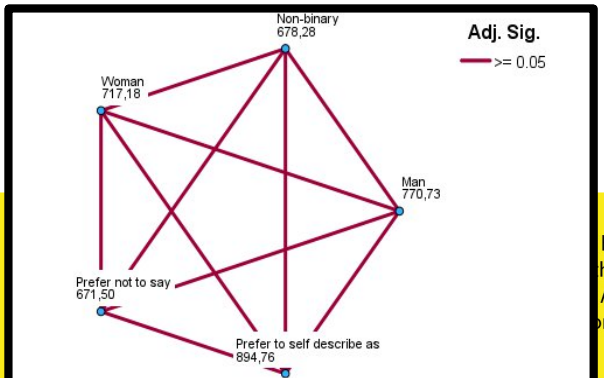
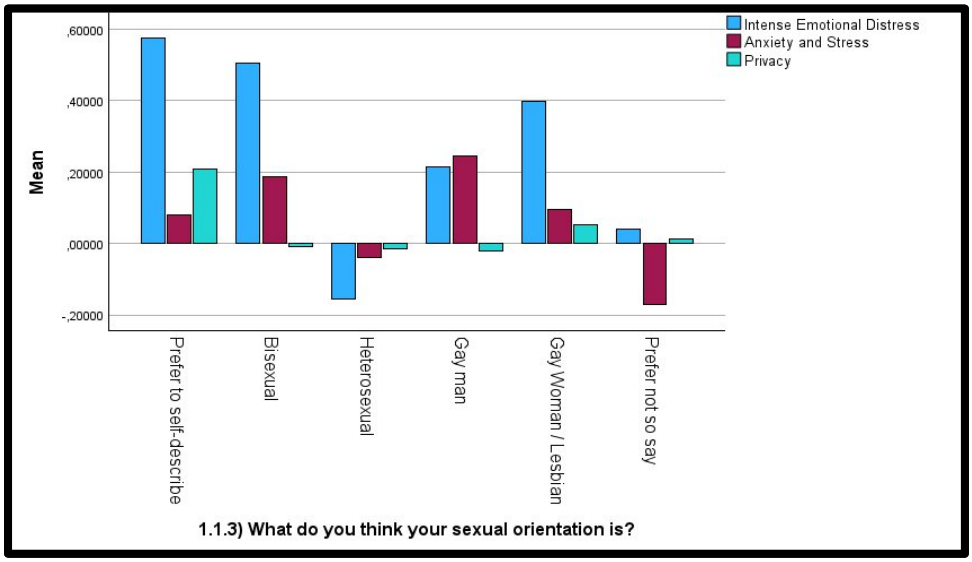



*Figure 106 – Privacy*



Regarding **sexual orientation**, the group that prefers to self-describe shows the highest scores for *Intense Emotional Distress*, with significantly elevated values compared to the other groups, indicating greater emotional vulnerability. *Anxiety and Stress* levels are also high, while *Privacy* is relevant, suggesting a tendency to maintain some distance or discretion in personal relationships. Bisexuals exhibit high levels of *Intense Emotional Distress* and *Privacy*, along with moderate *Anxiety and Stress*, suggesting a group with both emotional vulnerabilities and a tendency to keep their private space. Heterosexuals, on the other hand, present lower levels of *Intense Emotional Distress* and *Anxiety and Stress*, with almost no scores for *Privacy*, indicating a less pronounced perception of distress or need for privacy compared to the other groups. Gay men and lesbian women show a similar pattern, with moderate levels of *Anxiety and Stress* and *Intense Emotional Distress*. However, lesbian women present slightly higher levels of *Intense Emotional Distress*, signalling a possible greater emotional impact compared to their gay peers. Finally, the group that exercises the right to disclose their sexual orientation shows lower levels of *Anxiety and Stress* and a negative level of *Intense Emotional Distress*, indicating less exposure to intense emotional distress. However, moderate *Privacy* is observed, highlighting a preference to keep personal information private.

*Figure 107 – Forms of emotional distress by sexual orientation*



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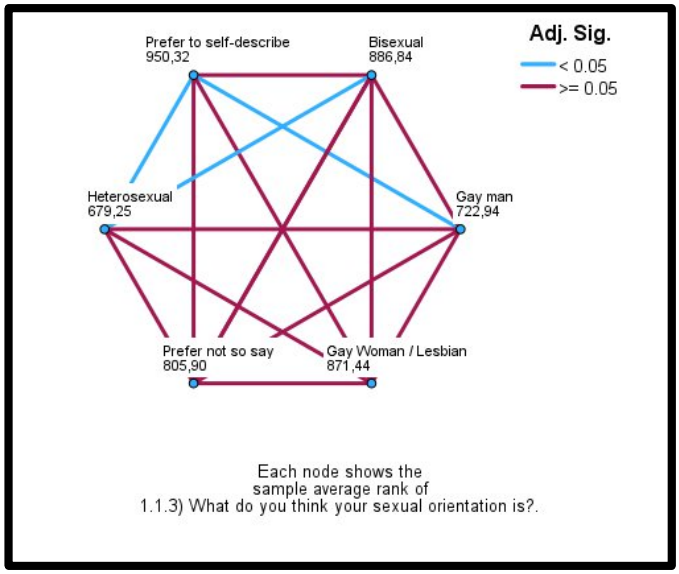
The pairwise comparison graph shows significant differences in the mean ranks of Intense Emotional Distress across different sexual orientation categories, with an adjusted significance (Adj. Sig.) below 0.05 indicated by the blue lines.

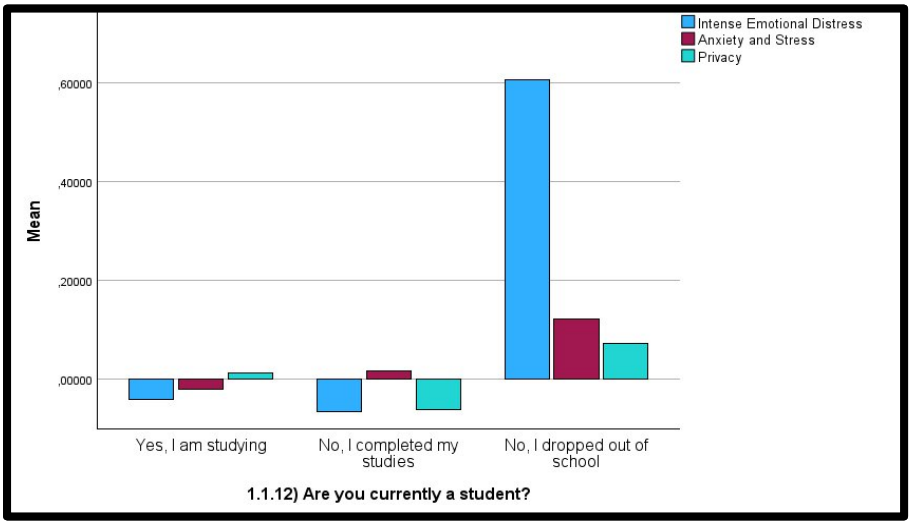
People who prefer to self-describe and bisexuals report significantly higher scores for intense emotional distress compared to heterosexuals and gay individuals. Specifically, those who self-describe and bisexuals have mean ranks of 950.32 and 886.84, respectively, showing significant differences compared to heterosexuals (mean rank 679.25) and gay individuals (mean rank 722.94).

*Figure 108 – Intense Emotional Distress*




*Intense Emotional Distress* is particularly pronounced among those who have **dropped out of school**. Those who have made this choice are characterized by a higher mean score compared to the other groups analysed. *Anxiety and Stress* are also relatively high among those who have dropped out, although less pronounced than *Intense Emotional Distress*. Currently enrolled students and those who have completed their studies, on the other hand, show much lower and similar levels of Anxiety and Stress, suggesting that no significant

*Figure 109 – Forms of emotional distress by student status*



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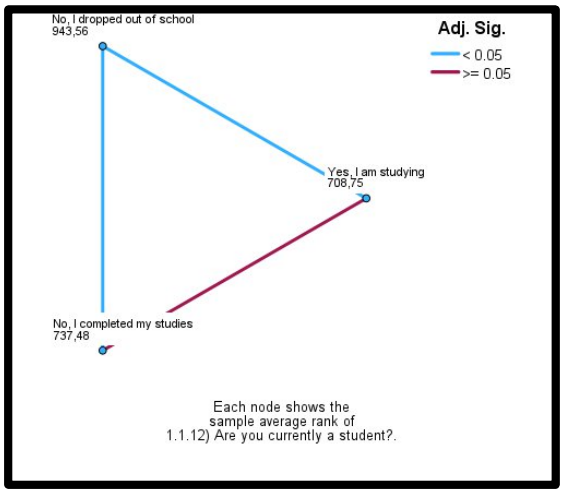
differences exist between these groups for this dimension.

In fact, as shown by the pairwise comparisons, even for intense distress, it is not possible to consider these groups as distinct, as the differences in responses are such that it cannot be stated that there is a substantial difference between them.

*Figure 110 – Intense Emotional Distress*




The analysis of the factor scores obtained from the PCA for the sample examined revealed some small differences in the dimensions *of Intense Emotional Distress, Anxiety*, *and Stress*, in relation to age group. However, the results of the statistical tests performed to assess the significance of these differences suggest that the observed variations may not be strong enough to represent a generalizable phenomenon. In particular, the Kruskal-Wallis's test was used to test the null hypothesis that the distribution of scores in the analysed dimensions is the same across different age groups. The results show significance levels above the commonly accepted threshold (0.05) for each of the three dimensions:

- For *Intense Emotional Distress*, the significance value is 0.200, which leads to retaining the null hypothesis. This implies that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of intense emotional distress between the age groups considered.
- Similarly, for the *Anxiety and Stress* dimension, the significance value is 0.173, also above the 0.05 threshold, suggesting that the observed differences are not statistically significant.

These results indicate that, although there are differences in the factor scores of the three emotional dimensions in relation to age within the analysed sample, we cannot conclude that these differences are valid for the general population without further investigation on larger and more representative samples. In summary, the observed variations may be specific to the



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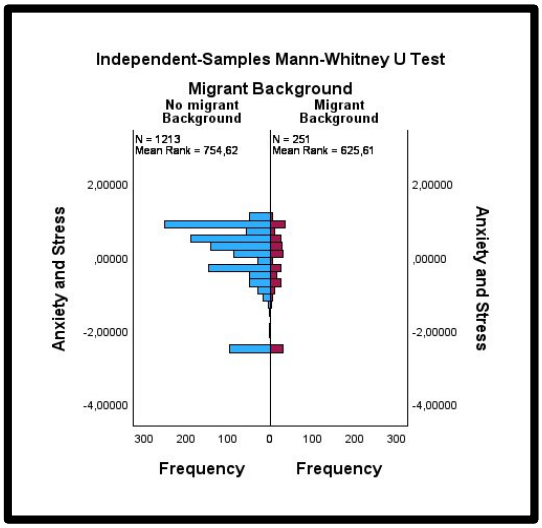
studied sample and not necessarily reflect a trend that can be generalized to the youth population as a whole.

The analysis of data on components of emotional distress, anxiety and stress, and privacy in relation to migration background yielded the following results:

*Intense Emotional Distress*: The Mann-Whitney U test showed that there are no statistically significant differences in the distribution of intense emotional distress between participants with and without a migration background ($p = 0.115$). This suggests that, for the analysed sample, the level of intense emotional distress is similar between the two groups.

*Anxiety and Stress:* The test revealed a significant difference in the distribution of anxiety and stress between participants with and without a migration background ($p < 0.001$). Specifically, participants with a migration background tend to report significantly lower levels of anxiety and stress compared to participants without a migration background. This result confirms what was observed in the factor score graph.

*Figure 111 – Forms of emotional distress – pairwise comparisons of the Anxiety and Stress component*




Participants without a migration background tend to have higher levels of anxiety and stress compared to those with a migration background. This is evident from the higher density of the blue bars (without migration background) in the positive part of the frequency axis (Figure 111). However, there is no evidence to suggest that having a migration background has an impact on intense forms of emotional distress.

The perception of Intense Emotional Distress and Anxiety and Stress is correlated with **economic status**, while for the dimension of Privacy, it seems that economic condition does not have noteworthy impacts. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test reveal that young people reporting a low economic status tend to perceive significantly higher levels of *Intense Emotional Distress* and *Anxiety and Stress* compared to those who do not report such a condition. The significance value is below 0.001 for *Intense Emotional Distress*, indicating a



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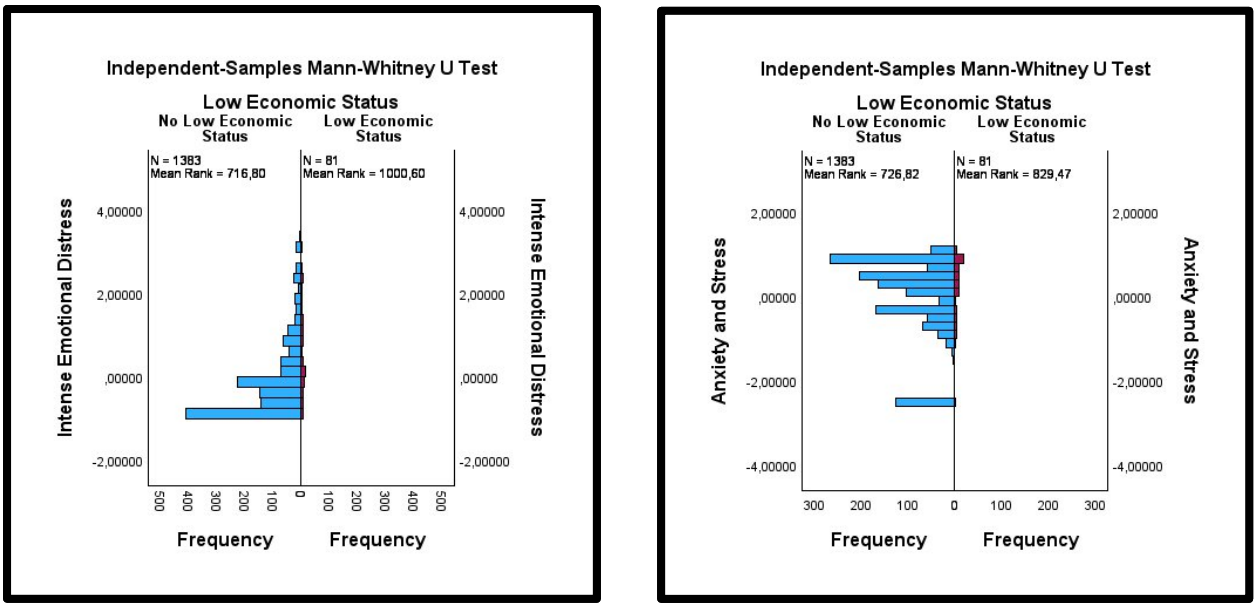
strong difference between the two groups; for *Anxiety and Stress*, the significance value is 0.033, also below the 0.05 threshold, confirming a relevant difference, though less pronounced than for the first component.

Young people who identify with a low economic condition, therefore, show higher levels of emotional distress and stress, suggesting that economic difficulties may have a negative impact on their emotional well-being.

*Figure 112 – Forms of emotional distress – pairwise comparisons of components by economic status*



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# 7.5 Level of concern regarding future employment

Participants in the survey were asked to express their level of concern about their future employment on a scale from 1 to 10.

Overall, the data show that survey participants have a moderate level of concern about their future employment, with an average score of 6.66 on a scale from 1 to 10. The variability in responses suggests that individual experiences and perceptions vary significantly within the sample. These results highlight the importance of considering concern about future employment as a significant aspect of young people's emotional and psychological well-being.

*Figure 113 – Average level of concern about the future – scale 1 to 10*


The responses indicate that concern about the future career varies significantly among participants from **different countries**. In particular, Italian and Spanish people appear to be the most concerned, while Germans and Slovenians are less worried. The high standard deviation in some countries suggests that there are significant differences within these national groups.

*Table 25– Concern for the future – average by country of residence*

| | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Germany | 5,36 | 2,97 |
| Italy | 7,13 | 2,25 |
| Poland | 6,55 | 2,74 |
| Slovenia | 5,74 | 2,80 |
| Spain | 7,14 | 2,41 |
| Total | 6,66 | 2,61 |

Pairwise comparisons between countries show generalizable differences:



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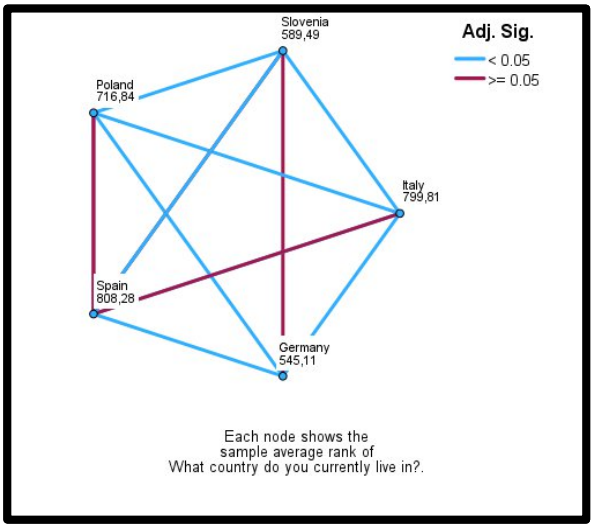
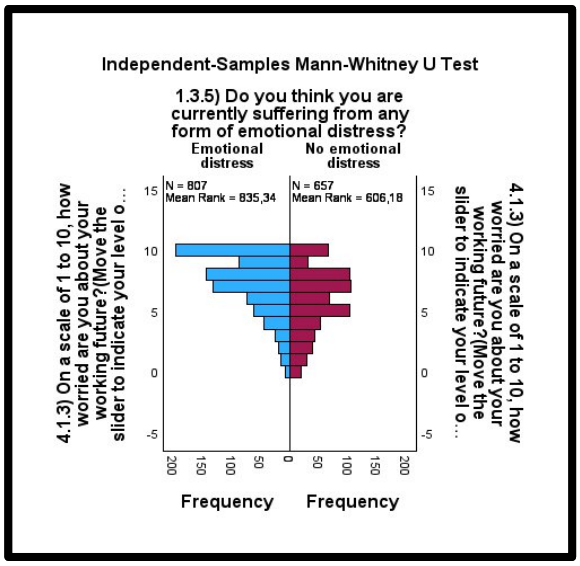
Germany differs significantly from Poland, Italy, and Spain, but not from Slovenia. Slovenia, in turn, stands out significantly from Poland, Italy, and Spain. Italy and Spain do not show significant differences between them. Significant values were adjusted using the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests, ensuring a more stringent significance level. The average scores for each country indicate that participants from Spain (808.28) and Italy (799.81) report higher levels of concern compared to those from Germany (545.11) and Slovenia (589.49).

*Figure 114 – Level of concern for the future – pairwise comparisons by country of residence*



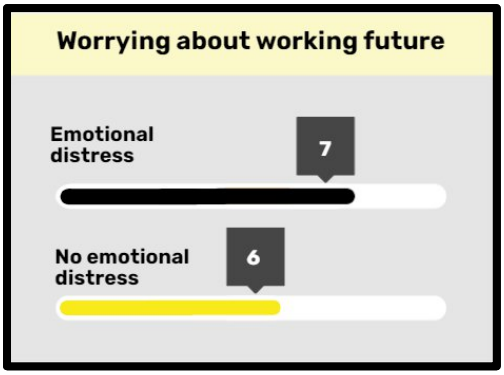

Concern about the future varies significantly between countries, with some nations showing higher levels of anxiety than others.

*Figure 116 – Concern about the future – pairwise comparisons of components for perceived distress*




The analysis of concerns about future employment in relation to **emotional distress** shows significant differences. Participants who report suffering from emotional distress have an average concern score of 7.29 with a standard deviation of 2.42, while those who do not report emotional distress have an average score of 5.89 with a standard deviation of 2.64. These results indicate that, in the analysed sample, those who experience emotional distress tend to have higher levels of concern about their future employment compared to those who do not.**Inizio moduloFine modulo**

*Figure 115 – Level of concern for perceived distress*



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The mean ranks for participants with emotional distress (835.34) are significantly higher compared to those without emotional distress (606.18), so it can be stated that those who suffer from emotional distress tend to have greater concern about their future work prospects than those who do not experience such distress.

People who prefer not to disclose their **gender identity** have the highest average level of concern, followed by women and non-binary individuals. Men and those who prefer to self-describe show lower levels of concern compared to the overall average. Pairwise rank comparisons of different gender identity groups indicate that gender has an impact on concern about future employment, but this impact is specific to certain pairs of gender groups rather than being a general effect across all groups.

*Figure 117 – Level of concern about the future by gender identity*

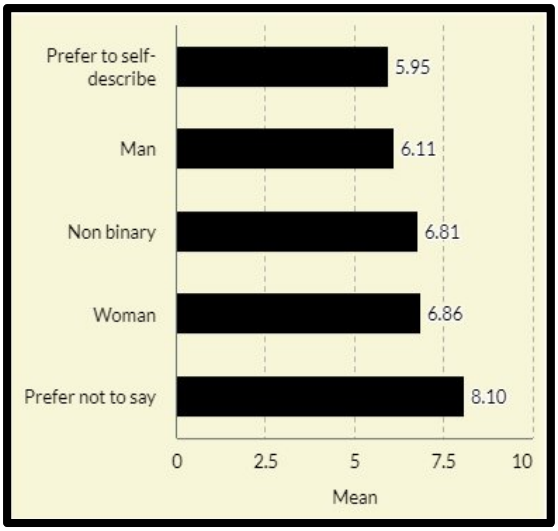
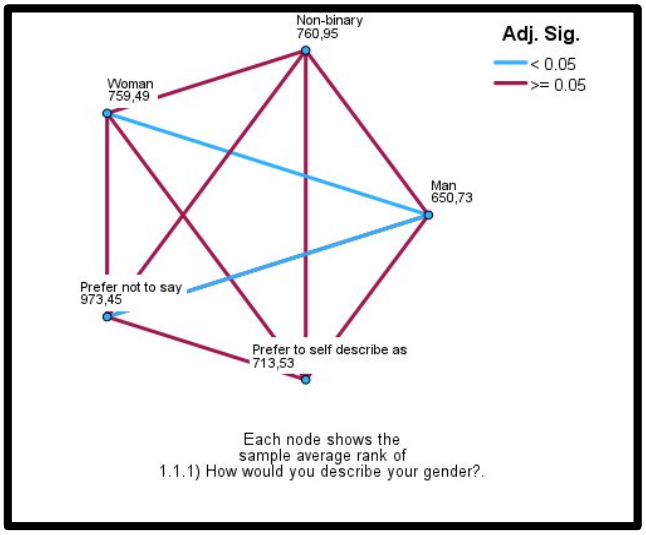


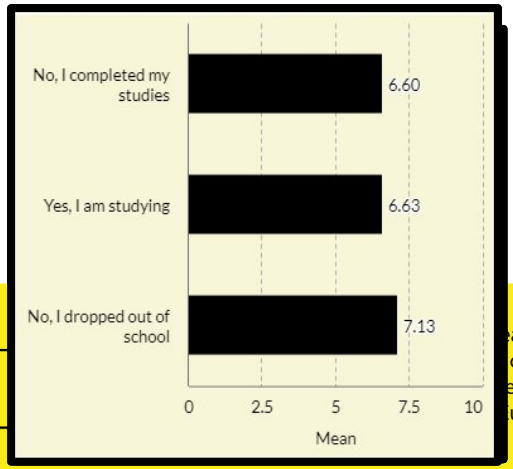

*Figure 118 – Level of concern about the future – pairwise comparisons by gender identity*




The perception of concern about the future is, in fact, not influenced by **sexual orientation**. The scores given by young people regarding how concerned they feel about the future show some variations. Bisexual people, gay men, and lesbian women seem to express a slightly higher level of concern compared to other sexual orientation categories. However, this data is more the result of a certain variability of opinions within each group. Further analysis of this diversity of opinions leads to the conclusion that it is not possible to say that different sexual orientation groups have a defined

*Figure 119 – Level of concern for the future by sexual orientation*

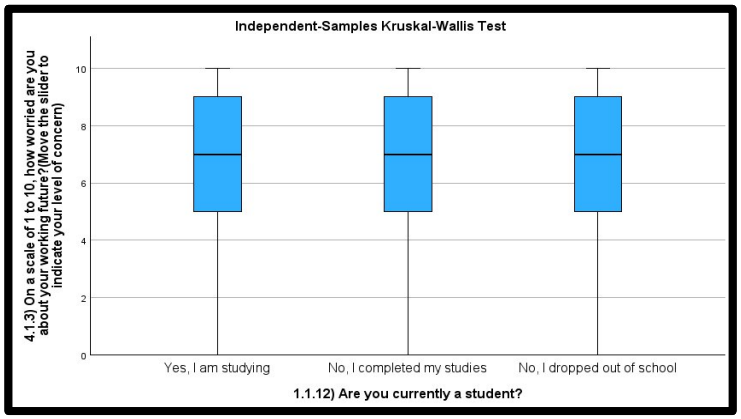
*Figure 120 – Level of concern for the future by student status*



level of anxiety about the future. The same lack of influence is observed when comparing student status instead of sexual orientation. Even in this case, slight differences are noted, with the group that has dropped out of school showing a higher level of concern than average and slightly lower variability. However, by observing the box plot (Figure 121), it can be seen that this is due to the distribution of the data, which is almost identical. The different mean is a result of the frequencies with which various scores were indicated. In other words, the variability within the levels of concern is such that the data does not strongly support the idea that there is a relationship between dropping out of school and a higher concern for future employment.

Inizio modulo

*Figure 121 – Level of concern for the future – distribution of scores by student status*




There is little doubt that people feel more or less concerned about the future regardless of their **age**. The differences between the average levels of concern are minimal. Participants aged between 16 and 20 have an average concern level of 6.66, identical to the overall data, with a standard deviation of 2.69. Participants aged between 21 and 25 have a slightly higher average concern level of 6.79, with a standard deviation of 2.38. Participants aged between 26 and 29 have an average concern level of 6.47, with a standard deviation of 2.76.

*Figure 122 – Level of concern for the future by age group*

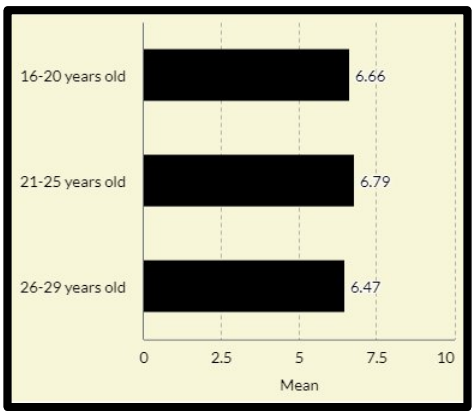
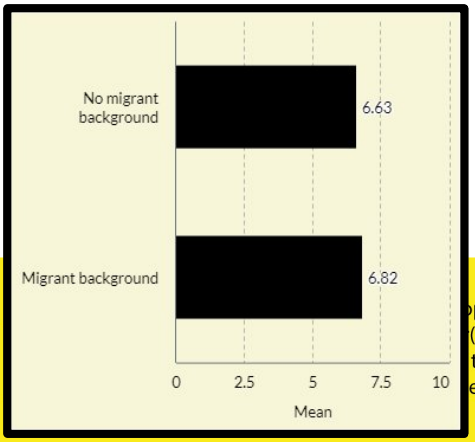



*Figure 123 – Level of concern for the future by migrant background*




Having a **migrant background** also does not affect how much people feel

influenced by the future. Given that the concept of migratory context is very broad, this result is not surprising at all. These are groups that contain very different and heterogeneous cases, and consequently, they do not play a determining role when asked to express a judgment that is vague and general, such as the level of concern for the future on a scale from 1 to 10. By narrowing the categorization, the results change.

As stated at the beginning of the work, the categories of **economic status** follow stricter parameters, and it is therefore natural that more marked differences are recorded between the two groups. The people who responded to the survey and were placed in the low economic status group seem to have a higher average level of concern about their future employment (mean = 7.73, standard deviation = 1.87) compared to those without low economic status (mean = 6.60, standard deviation = 2.64). The Mann-Whitney U test confirmed that these data are reliable ($p<0.001$). The difference observed in the levels of concern about future employment between participants with low economic status and those without low economic status is therefore real and highly unlikely to be due to the chance of using a non-representative sample.

*Figure 124 - Level of concern for the future by economic status*

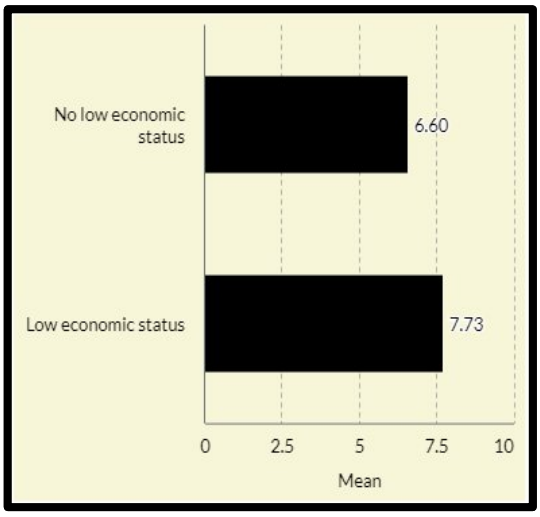
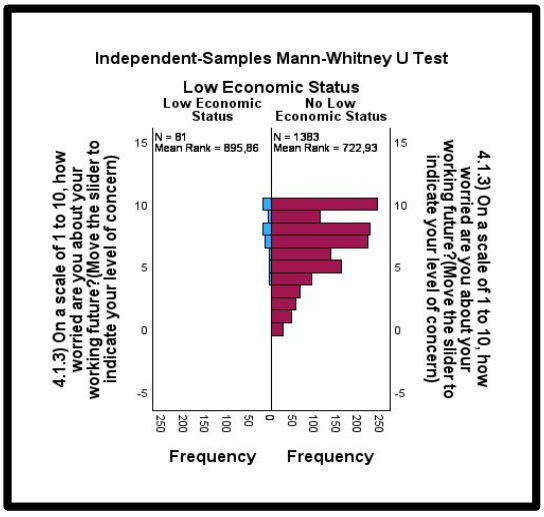



*Figure 125 – Concern about the future – pairwise comparisons by economic status*



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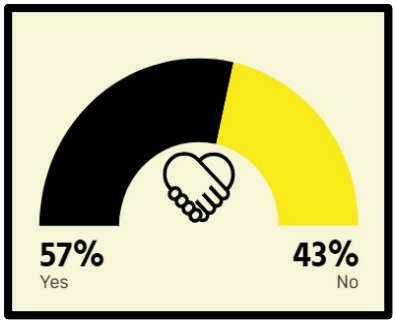
# 7.6 Request for help to improve mental well-being

*Figure 126 – Request for emotional support*




The 56.8% of the 1464 respondents reported seeking support to improve their emotional well-being.

There is considerable variability in the percentage of people who have sought help to improve their mental well-being across the different **countries of residence**. In Poland, a strong majority of young people (69.4%) have sought some form of help, followed by Italy (61.2%) and Spain (43.2%). In Slovenia, the rate of people who sought help is much lower, at 36.1%. It is important to note that in Spain, 100% of the sample answered "No," indicating a complete lack of help-seeking. On average, 56.8% of the total sample sought help, while 43.2% did not. The results of the Chi-square test show strong statistical significance (<0.001). The Pearson Chi-Square value (91.002) confirms this association. Additionally, the values of Phi and Cramer's V, both at 0.249, indicate a moderate strength of association between the country of residence and the tendency to seek help.

*Figure 127 – Request for support by country of residence*

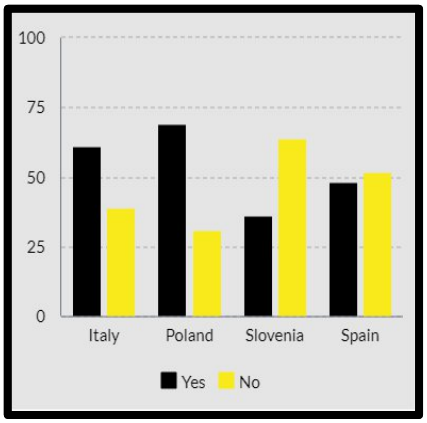
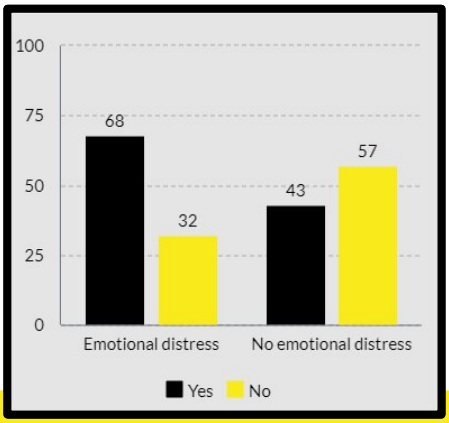



Figure 128 – Request for support - distribution by perception of distress




It is interesting to note that people who reported experiencing **emotional distress** are more likely to seek support to improve their mental well-being compared to those who did not report such distress (Figure 128). In fact, 68% of the former stated that they had sought some form of help from others, while the remaining 32% did not. On the other hand, among those who did not report emotional distress,



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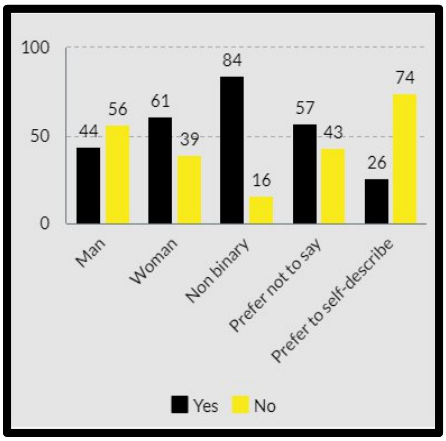
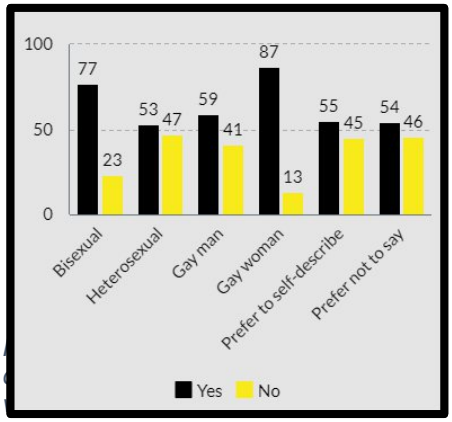
a minority (43.1%) sought help, while 56.9% did not. Again, the Chi-Square test results indicate a significant difference between the groups with respect to the variable "Have you ever asked for help to improve your mental well-being?" with an asymptotic significance value ($p < 0.001$). This means that the observed difference between those who sought help and those who did not is not due to purely random factors. It is important to emphasize that this is an association without a cause-and-effect relationship and can be interpreted in a bidirectional way.

*Figure 129 – Request for support - distribution by gender (percentage values)*

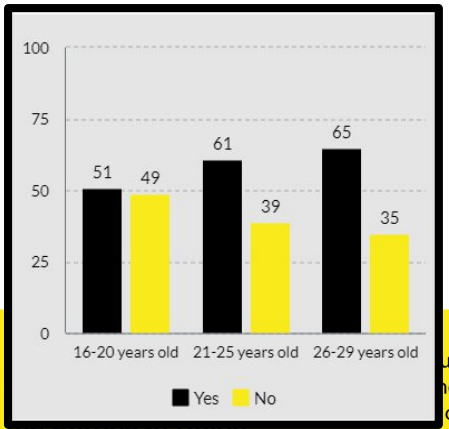



The tendency to seek help to improve mental well-being is more frequent among non-binary individuals, women, and those who prefer not to disclose their **gender identity**. Figure 129 shows the distribution of responses to the question "Have you ever asked for help to improve your mental well-being?" based on gender. As mentioned, non-binary individuals are the most likely group to seek support, with 84.4% reporting that they have sought help, followed by women at 61.5%, and those who prefer not to specify their gender at 57.1%. Men are at 44.3%, while those who self-describe are the least inclined, with only 26.3% having asked for help.

*Figure 130 – Request for support - distribution by sexual orientation (percentage values)*




**Sexual orientation** (Figure 130) also reveals differences in the tendency to seek help to improve mental or emotional well-being. Lesbian women and bisexual individuals reported more frequently than others that they had sought support (87% and 76%). About half of the young people in the other sexual orientation categories reported seeking help.




Looking at Figure 131, we can observe a trend related to **age group**. 50.6% of participants aged 16-20 reported seeking help to improve their mental well-being. This percentage increases to 61.2% for the 21-25 age group and reaches 64.9% for the 26-29 age group. This evidence confirms that as age increases, so does the

tendency to seek help for mental well-being.

From the analysis of responses from young people with different **migration backgrounds**, some specificities can be drawn. People without a migration background are more likely to seek help for their mental well-being compared to those with a migration background. There is a difference of more than 10 percentage points in the behaviour regarding the request for mental well-being support between people with and without a migration background. In the analysed sample, 58.9% of people without a migration background sought help, compared to 47.0% of people with a migration background. The observed difference in the data from the sample used for the analysis is not due to random fluctuations, as demonstrated by the results of the Chi-Square test. Although the association between migration status and seeking help for mental well-being is statistically significant, the strength of this relationship is extremely weak (Phi Index = 0.09). This suggests that, while there is a real difference in behaviour between the two groups, migration status only explains a small portion of the variability in seeking help for mental well-being. In other words, although there is a visible difference between the two groups analysed, when we look more closely and consider all the data, we see that this difference is not strong enough to create a powerful association between having a migration background and seeking help for mental well-being.

*Figure 132 – Request for support - distribution by migrant background (percentage values)*

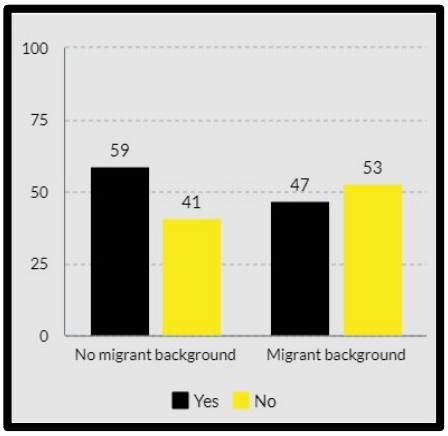
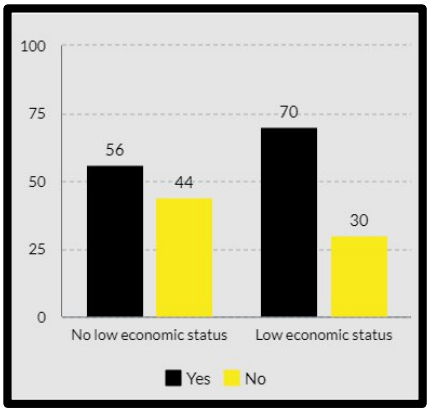



*Figure 133 - Request for support - distribution by economic status (percentage values)*




The **economic status** (Figure 133), on the other hand, seems to have a similar impact in determining the likelihood that a young person will turn to others for help. A much higher percentage of people with *Low Economic Status* (70.4%) sought help to improve their mental well-being compared to those with *No Low Economic Status* (56.0%). In contrast, a larger percentage of people who are not in a low economic context (44.0%) did not seek help compared to those who are (29.6%). The Pearson Chi-Square value is 11.904 with 1 degree of freedom and a significance of less than .001. This indicates that the



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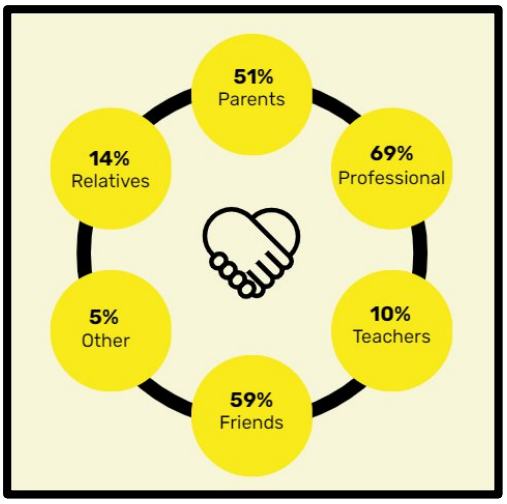
data show a statistically significant difference between the percentages of people who sought help to improve their mental well-being in the two economic status groups. The Phi measure, with a value of 0.09, suggests that the strength of the association between economic status and seeking help is negligible, although the two variables are not entirely unrelated.

It can therefore be stated that economic status is not a strong indicator of the help-seeking behaviour.

### 7.6.1 People to whom the help request was addressed

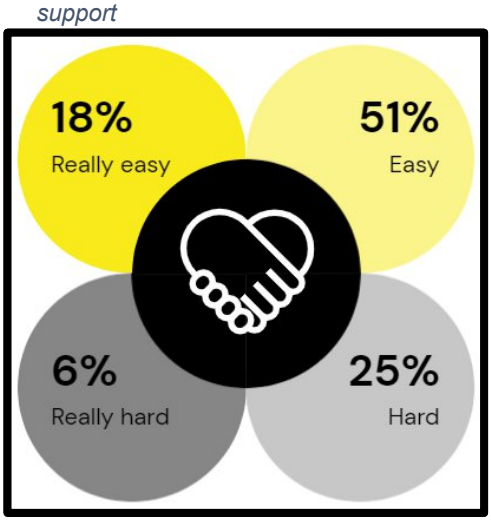
To the question "*Have you ever asked for help to improve your mental well-being?*", 56.8% of respondents, or 832 people out of 1464, answered affirmatively. Of these 832 people, 68.5% sought help from professionals, such as psychologists or doctors. 59.1% stated they turned to friends, while 50.9% asked for help from their parents. A smaller number, 14.3%, sought help from relatives. Only 9.7% turned to teachers for help. Finally, 5.2% indicated they asked for help from other unspecified people or figures.

*Figure 134 – People to whom help request was addressed*




About half of the young people who asked for help (50.8%) felt that accessing the type of support they requested was "easy." Additionally, 18.0% found it "very easy," bringing the total of those who had no difficulty accessing support to 68.9%. In contrast, 25.4% reported that it was "hard" to access support, and 5.8% found it "really hard".

*Figure 135 – Difficulties in finding support*



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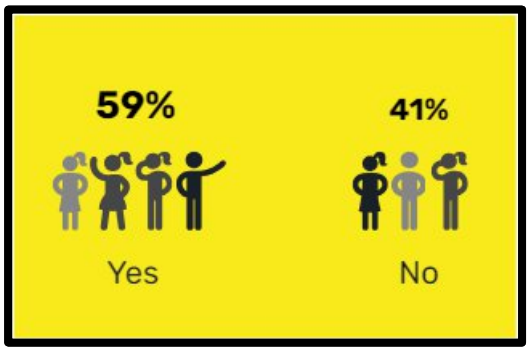
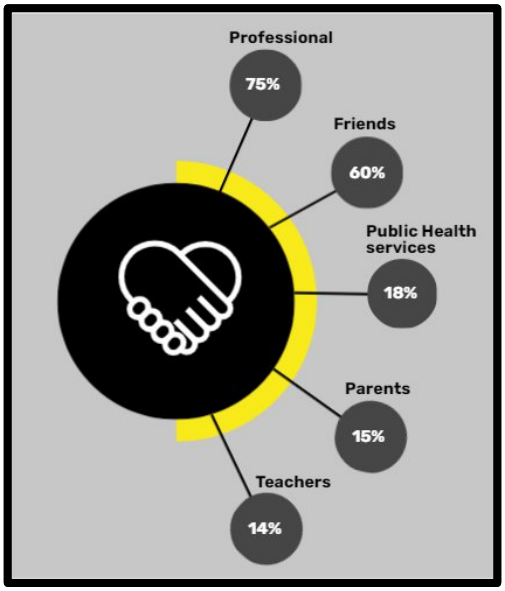
### 7.6.2 Intention to seek help

*Figure 136 – Opinions on the utility of asking for help*




The people who answered "No" to the previous question ("Have you asked for help?") responded to the question "*Do you think asking for some type of help could be useful for you?*". Of these, 59.2% answered "Yes", indicating that they believe seeking help could be useful, while 40.8% disagreed.

*Figure 137 – Figures to whom help would be sought in case of need.*




The figures to whom young people would turn for support show that they trust qualified professionals such as psychologists and doctors (75.2%). 59.5% stated that they would ask for help from friends, highlighting the significant role of friendships as a source of support. Less frequent would be the intention to turn to public healthcare services (17.9%). 14.9% of young people indicated that they would ask for help from their parents, a percentage similar to those who would involve teachers (14.3%).

# 8 Conclusions

The differences among the analysed European countries provide an interesting and multifaceted overview of young people's perceptions and emotional well-being during the transition from school to the workforce. This period of life is often characterized by a combination of expectations, challenges, and pressures that manifest in different ways depending on each country's socioeconomic and cultural context.

In Germany, young people exhibit a balance between security and anxiety. The overall perception of the future is positive, supported by economic opportunities that are considered bigger than those in many other European countries. This optimistic view is reflected in the



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confidence that German youth have in their own potential, even though, surprisingly, social support is rated as less central. This may indicate a context that, while providing stable economic and infrastructural foundations, is less focused on personal relationships and emotional support. This aspect highlights an interesting contrast between individual confidence and a certain social detachment, which could represent a vulnerability for less autonomous young people. Additionally, the strength of the labour market and the German educational system seem to create a relatively stable environment, but this stability can generate high expectations, contributing to the perception of anxiety that, while not dominant, is present.

In Italy, the landscape is much more complex. Italian youth report the highest levels of perceived pressure for personal success, an aspect that intertwines with a frequently negative view of the opportunities offered by the labour market. Anxiety and uncertainty dominate the emotional landscape, fuelled by a perception of distrust in meritocracy and a widespread belief that personal connections are essential for professional advancement. This scenario creates a vicious circle where social pressure, difficulty in accessing job opportunities, and the perception of economic instability contribute to lowering confidence in one's own means. However, the family represents a crucial strength for Italian youth, serving as a network of emotional and economic support that helps them cope with difficulties. This dynamic reflects a system in which the lack of structural policies to promote youth autonomy is partially compensated by a strong role of the family, which, however, risks limiting young people's independence.

Poland offers an intermediate picture, with young people expressing an outlook characterized by moderate concern but also growing confidence in their own abilities. Here, the weight of social connections is less pronounced compared to Italy, but the perception of a challenging labour market remains present. Family and social support, although rated positively, do not seem to play the same central role that emerges in other contexts, perhaps reflecting a greater push towards personal autonomy. Polish youth, although not as optimistic as their German or Slovenian counterparts, show a relatively balanced attitude, balancing awareness of challenges with reasonable confidence in their own potential. An interesting aspect is the impact of the migratory context, as a significant portion of young people in Poland live in families of foreign origin, with experiences that influence both the sense of belonging and prospects for integration into the labour market.



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Slovenia stands out for its overall optimistic profile. Slovenian youth see the future as an opportunity for change and growth, with a proactive attitude clearly emerging from their responses. Change and hope are the main dimensions that define their approach to the future, supported by a positive perception of social and family support. However, even in Slovenia, a moderate level of anxiety is present, suggesting that, despite a favourable context, uncertainties related to the labour market and the transition to adulthood remain a challenge. This country also distinguishes itself with above-average resilience and adaptability, reflecting an educational and social system capable of fostering young people's well-being. The presence of a stable economy and strong social networks allows young people to face transitions with greater serenity, although the rate of youth emigration remains a concern, indicating a search for opportunities abroad.

In Spain, the emotional landscape appears less pronounced compared to other countries. Although Spanish youth report relatively low levels of anxiety and perceived pressure, they also show limited enthusiasm towards change and the future. Curiosity and expectation are less pronounced than observed in Slovenia or Germany, suggesting a more moderate view of the future. However, social and family support remains an important pillar, helping to mitigate potential difficulties and maintain emotional balance. This ambivalent attitude perhaps reflects a socioeconomic context perceived as stagnant, where opportunities do not always appear accessible or stimulating. Another interesting aspect is the resilience of Spanish youth, who, despite not showing great enthusiasm, manage to maintain a certain emotional stability thanks to the strong role of the family and social cohesion.

Overall analysis reveals that, despite national differences, some common factors significantly influence young people's emotional well-being and their perception of the future. Firstly, economic and educational status are crucial variables. Young people living in difficult economic conditions or who have dropped out of school tend to perceive greater emotional difficulties and show a less positive view of the future. Conversely, those who are still within the educational system or have successfully completed their educational path report higher levels of self-esteem, confidence, and resilience. This underscores the importance of investing in educational policies that prevent school dropout and provide support to those in vulnerable situations.

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) model provides an effective framework for better understanding these dynamics. By analysing dimensions such as competence, confidence,



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connection, character, and caring, PYD highlights how European youth tend to perceive themselves as competent but with weaker confidence in their work abilities, especially among those who have left their studies. Social connections are generally strong, but those who perceive emotional distress tend to feel less supported, confirming the link between emotional difficulties and social isolation. Resilience and adaptability, while present, are challenged by difficulties in achieving long-term goals, highlighting the need for specific support to address the challenges of the school-to-work transition.

Perceptions of the future add further complexity to the picture. Although many young people associate the future with positive terms such as change and hope, anxiety and uncertainty are equally widespread, especially among those living in emotional or economic hardship. In particular, Italian and Polish youth tend to perceive the future with greater apprehension compared to their Slovenian and German peers, who show a more positive and proactive attitude. Spain is positioned in an intermediate stance, with young people less worried but also less enthusiastic about change.Inizio modulo

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