



The Presence of Prejudices Towards People of Catalonia and Muslims in Primary School

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Abstract: Society may be exposed to prejudices. From the moment this concept appears, it has been frequently analysed in different contexts. In recent years, the debate about whether people from Catalonia have the right to decide on their nationality has been raised. This issue has become an ongoing debate. People's perception across different regions of Spain, excluding Catalonia, may have influenced the overall image of citizens from Catalonia. This study aims to analyse the answers provided by Primary School children on the existence of prejudices in people from different backgrounds in relation to the aforementioned citizens. The pre-conceptions of Muslims have also been taken into consideration in order to compare and contrast data. The results have shown there are differences related to the setting where participants live. Citizens from urban areas have proven to be more negatively prejudiced than those from rural areas towards people from Catalonia.

INTRODUCTION

The cultural basis of a society gives rise to the development of prejudices that are reflected in all of its social structures whether it be the family, the educational context or individual's closest surroundings^[1]. The educational context carries stereotypes that entail action on the part of teachers that is adapted to the new scenario and which in the long run, must produce change in society^[2].

Allport said that prejudice consists of negative opinions against a group of persons that lack sufficient evidence^[3]. This sentence contains two concepts that should be discussed. On the one hand, the researcher points out that prejudice has a negative sense. Initially it does not have to be that way, since, a prejudice can also be positive. On the other hand, prejudices have been

implanted in individuals for a long time, beginning in childhood. In fact, the ideas and feelings produced in the first years of life can become real prejudices due to social prejudices prevailing in the child's closest environment^[4].

The concept of prejudice is closely linked to a stereotype. Lippmann was the first to use this comparison. He referred to the cliche consisting of mental images that help to classify people according to their way of speaking, dressing, etc. It is the image of the world that a group transfers to its members^[5]. This researcher emphasized the difficulty of eliminating prejudice, just as Allport who commented that it is easier to destroy an atom than a prejudice^[3]. The reason is that almost all authors connect stereotypes to the functioning of the human mind which makes them very difficult to eliminate^[6]. A situation of acculturation may occur in which a person

develops in a different cultural context which can entail significant changes in their emotional stability.

As previously mentioned, the acquisition of prejudices usually takes place at an early age, mostly during the first years of life. Children of 3 or 4 years of age create social categories based on age or gender but these categories are not yet stable. Subsequently, between 4 and 5 years of age, positive and negative preconceptions start to appear. At 6 or 7 years of age these positions strengthen and preference is shown over the components of their own group while others are rejected. As children grow older, the presence of prejudices tends to stagnate or even to decrease.

In recent years we have seen prejudices towards different groups appear in primary schools. This study analyses different prejudices children have towards persons living in different regions (Catalonia) or who have a different religion (Muslims). These opinions or preconceived ideas may lead to establishing a model of person based on inflexible generalizations. They may refer to a group in general or to an individual who belongs to said group^[3]. In the majority of modern societies there may be minority groups that have formed for different reasons such as ethnic origin, language or religion^[7].

In respect to Catalonia, only a few studies have been published on this topic and the literature is scarce. On the other hand, there are many more studies on prejudice against Muslims. In respect to age groups, there are not many studies of children in primary school, although the prejudices and stereotypes in children at that age have been analysed. In many cases this perception depends on personal experience and the individual dynamics of social learning^[8].

The issue of Catalonian nationalism has been present in Spanish history for centuries, due to the appearance of ideological prejudices and to the permanence of political, social and economic status^[9]. The events that have taken place in recent years have reproduced these historical roots, unleashing “El Procés” or “Soberanista Process”, a sector of Catalonian society claiming the so-called “Right of Self-determination”. All of these circumstances have awakened a series of feelings and differing opinions towards Catalonian people on the part of the inhabitants of Spain.

If we look for some precedent regarding the origin of prejudices towards the people of Catalonia, we can go back to old texts written by classic Spanish writers such as Francisco de Quevedo. This researcher makes both positive and negative references to some ideas referring to the people of Catalonia. He highlights positive ideas such as “friendship” or “love of freedom”; however in his

research La rebelión de Barcelona, he also refers to a negative concept of the people from Catalonia, calling them “vengeful”^[10].

Other researchers such as Pinillos, Rodríguez Sanabria and Sangradorre searched prejudices between different regions starting in the middle of the past century. The studies carried out by Javaloy, Cornejo and Bechini comparing the people of Catalonia with the people from other Spanish regions (Basque Country, Valencia, Galicia, Aragon and Andalusia) are noteworthy. The participants found similarities between Basques and Catalans but indicated very different characteristics if they were compared to Andalusians^[11]. Similarly, Rodriguez *et al.*^[12] analysed stereotypes about Europeans and the people from various communities. The people of Catalonia were perceived as similar to the Europeans and were described as modern and segregated. These researchers also detected that the people of Catalonia were perceived as being opposed to the Andalusians, as shown in the previous case. Regarding the Spanish autonomous communities, the Catalans were considered to have characteristics close to the Galician and Basque people^[12].

Spain's relationship with the Muslim population is also ancient. The presence of this group in the Iberian Peninsula dates back to the eighth century. Since, the 1980's there has been racist behaviour against certain multi-ethnic religious groups as in the case of Muslims^[13]. The Spanish people have yet to acknowledge the relationship between Arabs and Spaniards which lasted for more than eight centuries. Since then, some admiration has been expressed regarding the legacy left by the ancient Arab civilization but on the other hand there has also been a harsh rejection of the Arab people as they are considered foreign. The existing stereotypes of Islam, together with the events of the last two decades have given rise to certain opinions about Muslims on the part of the inhabitants of Spain. We have witnessed a great deal of news about jihadist terrorism which has caused Spaniards to relate these fanatics with the entire Islamic population^[14]. In addition, our society has also witnessed the arrival of a significant number of immigrants from North African countries who profess the Muslim religion.

Due to gender issues, there is a stereotyped image of the role of women in Islam, often originating in and propagated by the media^[15]. In many cases, the feminine sex is linked to oppression of women in their daily lives^[16]. Clichés about Muslim women have been perpetrated since the Middle Ages and transmitted by writers and painters. Polygamy and the use of the veil have contributed to creating this image. It is essential to avoid recurring to these excessive generalities and

oversimplifications^[17]. Manifestations of young Muslim women regarding subjects such as laicism, religion, terrorism and multiculturalism can be found. This is an example of current British society which maintains a stereotyped vision of Muslims, particularly of Muslim women.

In addition, the presence of certain characteristics can cause prejudice against some groups that belong to cultures different from ours^[18]. Certain visual attributes such as the turban and the beard are directly associated with Islamic people^[19] and even with terrorism^[20]. Prejudice towards Muslims in our country may be caused by the phenomenon of immigration in recent decades. This immigration occurred differently in Spain than in the rest of Europe with immigrant workers arriving later in comparison to other countries such as Holland, Germany or France. This left the family reunification process and the issue of integration up to public debate which revealed three basic aspects of the issue. The first was the difficulty to find positive elements in the migratory process and to ignore preconceived stereotypes about the immigrants. Secondly, there was a sense of threat to the social hierarchy of the indigenous inhabitants. Finally, the presence of Islamophobia did not occur spontaneously but has been around for centuries, causing negative opinions about immigration.

Although, not widespread, a wave of Islamophobia has arisen in Europe questioning the liberal tolerance of society. Therefore, the bases of democracy and equality achieved in various countries of the old continent such as Sweden, the Netherlands and Great Britain seem to be threatened. Some institutions that offer assistance to the immigrant population are highlighted such as the National Integration Office in Sweden or the Ministry of Urban Policy and Ethnic Minority Integration in the Netherlands. In the last 30 years there has been a very significant increase in publications on the Islamic world and its situation in Western Europe. This is due to a great extent to different national and international events such as the Iranian Revolution, the Gulf War, the war in the former Yugoslavia and the revolution in Afghanistan. Another important factor is the great impetus of the migration of Muslim people to countries in the European Union^[21].

In the annual report on European Islamophobia, the current situation is seen as a danger to the values and the democratic order in the European Union. It is also the main challenge to social peace and the coexistence of cultures, religions and ethnic groups. In some areas such as education, employment, media, politics, the judicial system and the internet, Islamophobia and the appearance of prejudice towards this group is showing an upward trend^[22].

According to a report issued by Amnesty International, the rights of freedom of expression and religion are restricted and cannot be justified as international human rights. In fact, anti-discrimination legislation is not applied effectively in the institutions of several European countries^[23].

In the United States there is also evidence of prejudice towards Muslims, obtained from different examples of opinion polls, articles and institutional projects about Islam. Prejudice is a very complex social phenomenon to analyse; no theory is able to provide an explanation of its causes and manifestations^[24].

The Observatory of Islamophobia presents some conclusions taken from different events, news, speeches or incidents. For example, the appearance of prejudice against Islamic people has been growing in the United States and Europe, mainly with vandalism in mosques or Muslim centres as well as directly against individuals and women who wear hijab or veil.

Islam is presented as a very important factor for the integration of young Muslims who were born in Europe. We must fight against the negative stereotypes promoted by those who defend a continuous clash between civilizations.

Multi-culturalism may be adequate in order to establish a liberal and democratic base but it cannot be the only solution to the challenges posed by multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies^[25].

Next, we will explain the methodology used in the research including the instruments and procedure used. There is hardly any bibliography on this subject involving schoolchildren of the ages that are considered in this study. The children's answers to the questionnaire were analysed taking into account where they lived and their sex. Lastly, the results of the analysis of prejudices and stereotypes that persist in children of different environments about people of Catalonia and Muslims will be discussed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: A total of 138 students participated in this research. They were from Tomelloso (a rural town belonging to the province of Ciudad Real) and from Madrid. All of them are fifth or sixth grade students in Primary School with an average age of 10.94 and a standard deviation of 0.61. About 73 are boys and 65 are girls. Note should be made that the province of Ciudad Real belongs to the region of Castilla-La Mancha which is located in the South of Madrid.

A pilot test was performed to verify that the language and structure of the questionnaire which will be discussed later was appropriate. The pilot test was given to a small

group of seven students. The questions, the font size and the organization of the contents were considered to be adequate and were correctly understood by participants.

Instruments and method: To carry out the data collection phase of the research, an “ad hoc” questionnaire was prepared and presented directly to the students involved. It was anonymous and only included students’ date of birth. This made it possible to know their exact age and gender to compare and contrast the answers. This questionnaire was explicitly designed for this specific experience based on an activity called “Paintings in our heads”. To carry out this experiment, the children had to complete a series of sentences that were incomplete and then add an adjective to one of the proposed nouns. First, several questions not part of the research were given to the students to help them understand the dynamics of the activity. The following question was formulated as an example: “Firemen are...” Several answers were offered (brave, important...) explaining that they should do the same for the other questions. Once the students became familiar with the activity, they began to answer the research questions, which were similar to the one shown but with other nouns that could lead the participants to show certain prejudices. For example: “Muslims are...”. Next, a qualifier with one or more words would be added. Several categories were established depending on the presence of prejudice in the words used by participants in their answers. Answers with positive and negative prejudices were assessed as well as answers without any type of prejudice.

The exercise was carried out in different groups but not led by the same teacher. We decided to draft some instructions that all teachers giving the questionnaire had to follow and thus control all the unknown variables that could influence the research. Therefore, all the participants followed the same guidelines and in the same order with students receiving the same explanations.

The results of the questionnaires on the prejudices shown by the children were exported to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Software for statistical treatment. The prejudices expressed by the participants about the people of Catalonia were the ones mainly analysed however those that referred to Muslims were also taken into account. First the positive prejudices of the students in favour of these two groups were registered. Then, the answers that did not express a definite feeling or indifference were considered. Finally, negative prejudices towards people of Catalonia and Muslims were registered, even when they were expressed with insults that showed a clear offense towards these groups.

The different frequency distributions for the answers collected with the Chi-square test were contrasted. We

checked if there were significant differences in the two samples presented, either taking into account the student’s gender or their place of origin. The p-value was used to check if there were significant differences. If $p < 0.05$ were obtained, we could conclude that the two groups were statistically different with a confidence level of 95%. If the p value was > 0.05 , both were considered to be similar, even though they showed inequalities. Confidence levels of 99% were also taken into account when the value of $p < 0.01$. In addition, statistical calculations were taken into account using Pearson’s bilateral correlation with significance levels of 0.01 and 0.05.

The questionnaire was administered in the month of December 2017. It must be remembered that during the last months of that year a major phase of the so-called “Proces” took place in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. The vote on the right to determination in this region was held on October 1st and the student participants were exposed to continuous news and opinions about the inhabitants of this community in many cases with a marked negative opinion. The expression of prejudice on the part of the students against the people of Catalonia could be influenced by this factor.

Objective and hypothesis: The main objective of this study was to analyse the appearance of prejudices of Primary School children towards people of Catalonia and towards Muslims. It was intended to analyse if prejudices of different types appeared (positive, negative, insults) taking into account variables such as the participants’ gender or their place of residence. Two different settings were considered, one urban (Madrid) and one rural (Tomelloso, Ciudad Real).

The research was geared at analysing the prejudices of children in two different contexts towards Catalonians. In addition, the results were also compared to prejudice against other groups, namely Muslims. It is assumed that persons are likely to express prejudices as a personality trait^[26]. In consequence, the fact the same persons may have a negative opinion regarding one group and not another can be significant. In this case, the conclusion is that there exists clear rejection of a specific group.

The following are the research hypothesis to be corroborated by the results obtained. The null hypothesis indicating the non-existence of differences between the groups analysed is presented first, followed by the hypothesis that seek to verify that there are significant differences between the two groups analysed. The hypothesis are worded as follows:

- $H_{1.0}$: the students of an urban and rural setting do not show differences in the prejudices towards the people of from Catalonia

- $H_{1,1}$: the students of an urban and rural setting show differences in the prejudices towards the people of from Catalonia
- $H_{2,0}$: the students of an urban and rural setting do not show differences in the prejudices towards Muslims
- $H_{2,1}$: the students of an urban and rural setting show differences in the prejudices towards Muslims
- $H_{3,0}$: there is no correlation between prejudices towards the people of from Catalonia and Muslims depending on the place of residence
- $H_{3,1}$: there is correlation between prejudices towards people of from Catalonia and Muslims depending on the place of residence
- $H_{4,0}$: there are no differences in the apparition of prejudices towards people of from Catalonia and Muslims according to gender
- $H_{4,1}$: there are differences in the apparition of prejudices towards people of from Catalonia and Muslims according to gender

The results of the research that were obtained from the collected data are presented next. Later they will be analysed in order to obtain the final conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to compare the children's place of origin, the percentages of the students that gave a certain response have been considered, since the number of students in the rural setting was greater than in the city. In order to obtain the correlation of results between gender and prejudices towards people of Catalonia and Muslims, the children's answers have been taken into account.

First, the results of the prejudices expressed by children according to their place of origin are presented. Next, the correlation between prejudices towards two different groups, the people of Catalonia and Muslims is presented. Finally, other results are shown taking into account the difference in the participant's sex.

Figure 1 shows the different percentages of the prejudices that are inferred from the answers offered by the participants living in Madrid. Only 8.7% of the students show a positive prejudice towards the people of Catalonia. Approximately one third, 30.4%, show neutrality. However, there is a very high percentage with a response that indicates a negative prejudice, specifically 60.9% (Fig. 2).

Regarding students in Tomelloso, the results were different. The lowest percentage was that of students who showed a positive prejudice, twice as many as students in Madrid at 17.4%. There was also a greater presence of neutral prejudice than the one seen in the boys and girls in Madrid with a value of 44.6%, nearly one half of the total. The greatest difference occurred in the category of negative prejudices with only 38% found amongst the

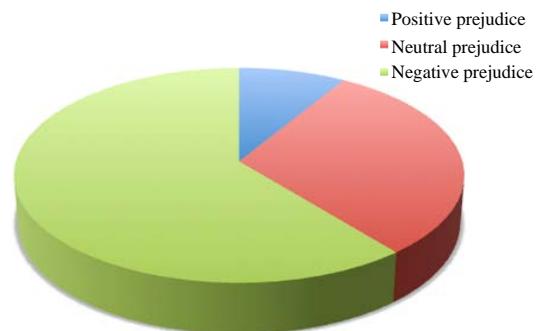


Fig. 1: Prejudices students in Madrid have towards people of Catalonia

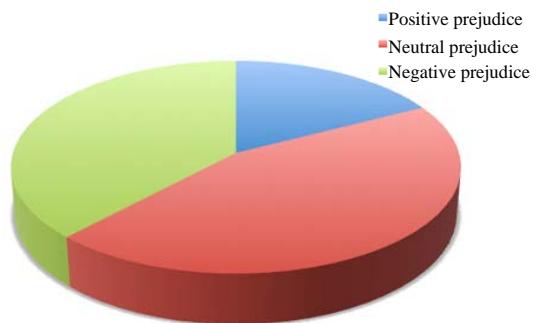


Fig. 2: Prejudices students in Tomelloso have towards people of Catalonia

students in Tomelloso. This figure contrasts with the high percentage (>50%) presented by the participants in Madrid.

Finally, Table 1 shows the results of the percentages commented above, along with the differences between them. The difference between negative prejudices and insults towards people of Catalonia depending on place of origin is significant. A greater percentage of boys and girls in Madrid presented negative prejudices towards people of Catalonia. This is demonstrated by the Chi-square test with a value of $p = 0.011$. Therefore, there are significant differences between the participants of Madrid and Tomelloso with a level of significance of 95%.

This tendency to present negative prejudices towards the people of Catalonia by the children from Madrid is confirmed by observing the percentage of very offensive responses (insults). In the case of children in Tomelloso, it was 18.5%. For the children in Madrid, it reaches 34.8%. As in the previous case, significant differences also appear with a confidence interval of 95% and a value of $p = 0.034$.

Regarding the expression of positive prejudices, it is greater in the case of girls and in Tomelloso, although the total is only 9.3%. The percentage of participants who do not show any kind of prejudice is also higher (14.2% higher) for children who live in a rural setting.

Table 1: Prejudices towards people of Catalonia according to participants' place of origin (percentage)

Prejudice	Prejudices towards people of Catalonia				Prejudices towards Muslims			
	Madrid (%)	Tomelloso (%)	Difference (%)	p-values	Madrid (%)	Tomelloso (%)	Difference (%)	p-values
Positive	8.7	17.4	8.70	0.171	13.0	9.8	3.2	0.562
Neutral	30.4	44.6	14.20	0.110	73.9	73.9	0.0	1.000
Negative	60.9	38.0	22.90	0.011*	13.0	16.3	3.3	0.615
Insults	34.8	18.5	16.30	0.034*	13.0	15.2	2.2	0.732

*p<0.05

Table 2: Correlation of prejudices towards people of Catalonia and Muslims according to the place of residence

Variables	People in Tomelloso				People in Madrid			
	Positive prejudice Muslims	Neutral prejudice Muslims	Negative prejudice Muslims	Insults Muslims	Positive prejudice Muslims	Neutral prejudice Muslims	Negative prejudice Muslims	Insults Muslims
Positive prejudice catalans								
Pearson's correlation	0.332 **	- 0.250 *	0.030	0.45	- 0.120	0.008	0.110	0.110
Sig. (bilateral)	0.001	0.016	0.774	0.669	0.429	0.960	0.469	0.469
Neutral prejudice catalans								
Pearson's correlation		0.433 **	0.337**	- 0.319 **		0.178	- 0.116	- 0.116
Sig. (bilateral)		0.000	0.001	0.002		0.237	0.443	0.443
Negative prejudice catalans								
Pearson's correlation			0.321 **	0.291 **			0.046	0.046
Sig. (bilateral)			0.002	0.005			0.761	0.761
Insults Catalans				0.500 **				- 0.012
				0.000				0.938

** The correlation is significant at level 0.01 (bilateral). *The correlation is significant at level 0.05 (bilateral)

As for the prejudices of students from both locations towards Muslims, the results are more similar. The differences are minimal, always 4%. This equivalence is confirmed by using the Chi-square test in all cases with values well above 0.05. Therefore, there were no significant differences.

Once the prejudices shown by the participants of a rural environment and an urban environment towards the people of Catalonia were analysed, the next goal was to assess whether they corresponded to the prejudices towards other groups such as Muslims. In Table 2, the results can be observed according to their place of origin. Although there are several significant values, only those that correspond to positive, neutral or negative prejudices or to insults for both groups will be discussed.

Firstly, a direct correlation is seen between the positive prejudices towards the people of Catalonia and the Muslims on the part of students in Tomelloso with a value of 0.332 ($p<0.01$). The same did not happen with children in Madrid where the correlation could not be considered to have significant values.

Similar results are also observed in respect to impartiality in the sample of prejudices of the children in both groups. There was correlation with a value of 0.433 ($p<0.01$). However, in the case of children in Madrid, there was no correlation between their predisposition to present prejudices towards people of Catalonia and Muslims.

Following the same trend in the expression of negative prejudices towards inhabitants of Catalonia and Muslims, a significant correlation was found. The same

happened in the case of the expression of insults towards these groups. There was a correlation of 0.321 ($p<0.01$) and 0.500 ($p<0.01$), respectively. As in the previous cases, the correlation between negative prejudices and insults towards people of Catalonia and Muslims by the Madrid participants was very low and cannot be considered significant.

Therefore, it can be deduced that in the case of children from a rural setting (Tomelloso) who showed prejudices towards people of Catalonia, they also showed them towards Muslims. In addition, this also occurred in all cases with positive, neutral and negative prejudices and even insults, always with very high levels of significance (confidence interval of >99%). In contrast, this was not the case with the participants in Madrid. They showed prejudices towards the inhabitants of Catalonia, which did not correlate with the preconceptions they had towards Muslims. Therefore, the perception of the children in Madrid about the people of Catalonia was different than the perceptions they had towards other groups such as Muslims.

Finally, the prejudices that participants had towards people of Catalonia and Muslims according to gender will be discussed. They are shown separately for both groups in Fig. 3.

First, the difference in the perception of positive prejudices can be observed. It is greater on the part of girls, although a greater discrepancy is shown in the case of prejudices towards Catalonian children. Once the statistical calculation was carried out, significant differences were confirmed with a χ^2 0.007. It is <0.01

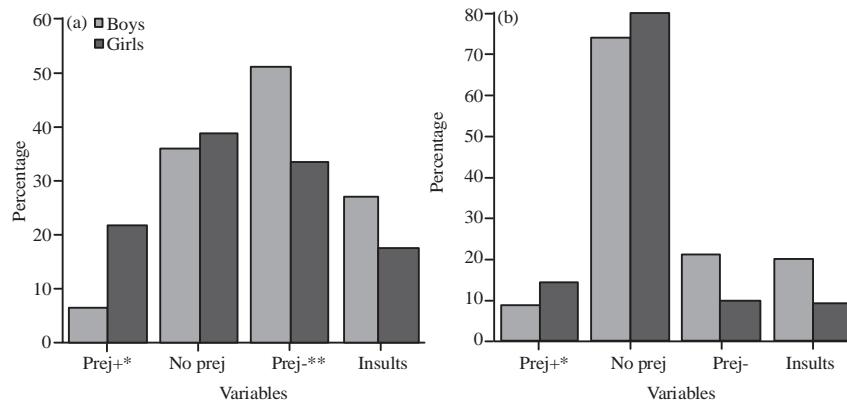


Fig. 3 (a, b): Total results of prejudices by gender; * $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$ Prejudices towards people of Catalonia prejudices towards Muslims

and therefore, it can be affirmed that a difference exists with a confidence interval of 99%. However, in the case of prejudices towards Muslims, it cannot be confirmed that there are inequalities.

The same tendency is also observed in the case of the absence of prejudices towards both groups. An important similarity can then be observed by the absence of statistically significant differences. It is noted that more than seventy per cent, both boys and girls, showed no prejudices towards Muslims.

However, the trend changes in the other two variables, showing a greater predisposition of boys to emit negative prejudices. This is also clearly observed in the expression of insults. The graph shows this difference in both variables but significant differences are only considered to exist in the negative prejudices towards people of Catalonia with a $\chi^2 = 0.022$. Since, it is <0.05 , it is possible to state that a difference exists with a confidence interval of 95%. Therefore, the tendency is that boys show more negative prejudices and insults, both towards people of Catalonia and Muslims. However, it can only be confirmed that there were statistically significant differences in the negative prejudices towards the people of Catalonia.

Once the data collected in the questionnaires mentioned above were analysed, the data was checked and the different hypotheses were verified.

A clear difference can be seen in the prejudices shown by the children in Madrid and Tomelloso. The inhabitants of an urban environment had a greater predisposition to emit a negative judgment towards people of Catalonia, almost double. Conversely, residents in a rural area had a higher percentage of positive prejudices. Therefore, the opinions of the students were very different according to their place of origin. There were also differences in the expression of insults against the people of Catalonia with twice the percentage on the part of

students in Madrid. Therefore, hypothesis $H_{1,1}$ which states that the students of an urban and rural environment show differences in the prejudices towards Catalonian people is accepted as valid, specifically in respect to negative prejudices and insults.

When analysing prejudices towards Muslims, there were hardly any differences. The results of students in Madrid and Tomelloso were almost identical. In addition, the percentage of responses that showed negative prejudices was very small in this case. Approximately three-quarters had no preconceptions about Muslims. Therefore, hypothesis $H_{2,1}$ cannot be accepted and the null hypothesis $H_{2,0}$ which states that students of an urban and rural environment do not show differences in their prejudices towards Muslims, must be considered valid. The correspondence that exists in the consideration of prejudices by the students towards the inhabitants of Catalonia and Muslims has also been analysed. Once the data was compared, a significant correlation was seen in the prejudices that residents in a rural setting showed towards both groups. That is to say that the participants who showed prejudices towards the people of Catalonia, in general also had them towards Muslims. Therefore, in the case of the students in Tomelloso, a rural environment, hypothesis $H_{3,1}$ which states that there is a correlation between prejudices towards people of Catalonia and Muslims depending on the place of residence is accepted.

However, the students living in Madrid showed a different trend. They did not show a correlation on prejudices towards both groups. That is to say, the boys and girls from Madrid expressed prejudices towards people of Catalonia but not towards Muslims. In the case of the participants in Madrid, only the null Hypothesis $H_{3,0}$ which states that there is no correlation between prejudices towards people of Catalonia and Muslims depending on the place of residence can be accepted.

Finally, the differences in the expression of prejudices towards inhabitants of Catalonia and Muslims according to gender will be discussed. The general trend is that girls showed more positive prejudices and an absence of negative prejudices towards both groups. However, we can only confirm this difference between both sexes in the expression of positive prejudices towards people of Catalonia. On the other hand, the tendency to express negative prejudices and insults was greater on the part of children in general. But as in the previous case, we can only confirm a significant difference in the expression of negative prejudices towards the inhabitants of Catalonia. Therefore, Hypothesis H_{4.1} which states that there are differences in the appearance of prejudices towards inhabitants of Catalonia and Muslims according to sex can be accepted even if only partially.

CONCLUSION

At present, there is exists in society a policy of general confrontation in which the world is seen as a federation of religions or civilizations. This means that persons or groups of persons are put into categories and opinions are expressed regarding specific groups or their members.

Moreover, prejudices against certain people may vary depending on their origin^[27]. For example, since the end of the last century there have been publications that seek to establish the common challenge of eliminating the preconceived ideas of Islamophobia against Muslims^[28].

In this study we have tried to analyse the presence of prejudices of Primary School children towards people of Catalonia and Muslims. It has not been easy to compare this study with previous ones on the inhabitants of Catalonia, since, there is not much research on the topic. The preconceptions regarding people of Muslim origin have been analysed more thoroughly, both in Spain and in other countries.

This study highlights that the inhabitants of an urban environment, specifically Madrid, the capital of Spain, show negative prejudices against the people of Catalonia. In contrast, this is not the case in a rural environment, where the tendency is the opposite: children do not have a negative preconceived idea regarding the inhabitants of Catalonia; their idea is positive. However, in respect to Muslims, the children of Tomelloso and of Madrid show no prejudices.

However, if correlations between the children of Madrid and Tomelloso are analyzed, the children in a rural environment who showed prejudices against Catalonians also had them against Muslims. This data is in line with the conclusions reached by Adorno *et al.*^[26] who state that the prejudices a person expresses are conceived as a personality trait. Nonetheless, the results

are very different in the case of the children in Madrid where the data does not correlate and there is a significant number of children who show negative prejudices against Catalonians but not against Muslims. In addition, there is a tendency to show certain dislike of persons who live in Catalonia in comparison with the students living in a rural environment. Note should be made of the traditional rivalry that has existed between the cities of Madrid and Barcelona. The results could be due to tensions between the Catalan autonomous region and the Spanish central government in the months prior to the administration of the questionnaire. During that time the children were exposed to many comments at home or in the media regarding the situation including many derogatory opinions towards the inhabitants of Catalonia.

Other significant results were also obtained, indicating a clear trend in which students of Madrid and boys showed more negative prejudices than girls. These results are of interest because some participants in Madrid expressed hostility towards Catalonians but not for other groups such as Muslims. The latter have also been exposed to prejudice since the “War on Terrorism” when all Muslims started to be seen as Jihadists. On the basis of the situation of the war on terrorism, anthropological studies have tried to contribute analytical information regarding the justifications for appearance of prejudices^[29]. Islamophobia has increased in the past two decades and it is essential to find paths of understanding with this culture within the common framework of the current social and cultural context^[30].

In a multicultural society like ours, we must consider what has to be done in order to prevent the appearance of preconceptions regarding a specific group of persons.

The importance of unconscious mental processes that can condition our attitudes towards a specific group in the expression of prejudices must also be taken into account^[31]. This is particularly important with children in primary school whose personality is not yet developed and who are more easily influenced by the comments they hear around them.

The capacity to prevent the presence of these prejudices towards a specific group of people is a challenge for the years to come, in particular with primary school children. Generalized opinions regarding specific groups must be avoided; millions of persons with many different ways of thinking live in the autonomous region of Catalonia.

In future research we should consider analysing the prejudices towards people of other nationalities and even towards the inhabitants of other regions of Spain which would enable comparing the prejudices that may exist in this respect.

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