
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Socio-Ecological Exploration of Sub-Saharan Migrant Students in Moroccan Public Schools

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| ABSTRACT

Education and migration intertwine as complex issues, impacting historical, social, cultural, economic, and political domains. While migration studies in the global north have extensively explored education trends among migrants, research in the global south, particularly in Morocco, where public schools host a significant number of Sub-Saharan migrant students, remains scarce. This study seeks to delve into the experiences of four Sub-Saharan students in Moroccan public schools, examining how they navigate the educational environment and the multifaceted impacts it generates. The study gathered data through in-depth, individual interviews with these migrant students. Utilizing a qualitative approach and drawing on the theory of social ecology of human development, the analysis reveals that despite a strong self-awareness, these minority students have unmet academic and non-academic needs. Their development is notably influenced by the diverse structures within their environment. Additionally, the study highlights how the interplay between conflicting microsystems, such as the school and the family, alongside broader macro-level structures like culture and belief systems, hampers the progress and education of these individuals. However, their personal attributes and support from key figures, notably teachers, play a pivotal role in assisting them in overcoming challenges within and outside the school environment. Consequently, the presence of cultural and religious minority students in Moroccan public schools represents a growing trend requiring thoughtful planning and targeted interventions.

| KEYWORDS

Education, Morocco, sub-Saharan migrant migrants, public schools, socio-ecological perspective

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, Moroccan migration patterns have undergone a significant shift, transitioning the country from primarily sending migrants to becoming receiver (de Haas, 2005; et al., Berriane, 2015). This change has seen diverse sub-Saharan populations settling in Morocco (de Wenden, 2013), impacting the country's sovereignty and educational system. Particularly within schools, this diversity has gained increasing importance, prompting inquiries into fostering harmonious coexistence, considering the inseparable link between the nation-state and the education system. Concerns arise not just from the challenge of accommodating culturally diverse societies but also from the absence of effective policies ensuring cultural and economic fairness (Berry, 2016).

Recognizing the potential for schools to drive constructive social change (Banks, 2006, p. 110), Moroccan education policy emphasizes multiculturalism and aligns with sustainable development goals. This focus echoes the new migration policy from 2013 and the adoption of the "Global Compact for Orderly, Secure, and Organized Migration" in 2018 in Marrakesh, prompting educational reforms that underscore schooling's pivotal role in supporting migration policy. However, achieving this goal may

prove elusive without integration into the school system (Banks, 1993), the sole institution capable of realizing the promise of an equal, just, and democratic society (de Nieto, 2009).

Despite sub-Saharan minority students' enrolment in Moroccan public schools, existing research mostly delves into their personal experiences, migration policy effects, transit migration, or factors influencing attitudes (Berrian et al., 2015). This article aims to explore sub-Saharan students' experiences within public schools, focusing on their challenges navigating the system, addressing cultural and linguistic dynamics inherent in Moroccan institutions, and understanding their interactions with various systems, particularly schools viewed as complete "social systems in which all major variables are closely interconnected" (Banks, 1993, p. 22). Consequently, interaction with the dominant culture and its nuanced perceptions of the "different others" becomes unavoidable (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008).

2. Migration and Education: An Overview

Education and migration intersect in ways that yield diverse yet mutually advantageous impacts, contingent upon variables like migrants' age, educational attainment, language fluency, and generational background (UNESCO, 2019). The United Nations' 2030 agenda, encapsulated by the motto "leave no one behind," underscores the significance of education, urging nations to ensure all-inclusive, high-quality education for everyone alongside lifelong learning opportunities (UN, 2015). Nevertheless, a persistent gap prevails between aspirational rhetoric and the academic achievements of migrants. This educational discrepancy between migrants and native populations has been extensively documented, with Ogbu (1974) initially discussing differences in educational performance among voluntary and involuntary minorities. For instance, in the United States, statistics reveal that 40% of Mexican migrants arriving at age 7 did not complete secondary school, compared to 70% of those arriving at age 14 (p. 56). Additionally, in 2012, first-generation migrant students in various countries, ranging from Slovenia at 13% to Finland at around 80%, required remedial courses (UNESCO, 2019). Migrant students encounter various hurdles, including low academic performance, negative teacher perceptions, diminished academic self-confidence (Schunk, 1991), and declining engagement with academics over time (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008). Eldering (1997) conducted a comparative study on the academic performance of ethnic minority students, revealing significant correlations between the educational levels of parents from Moroccan, Turkish, and Surinamese backgrounds and the academic success of their children. This education and labor market access gap between migrants and native populations tends to persist longitudinally. In 2015, first-generation migrants were 32% less likely than natives to attain "basic proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science," while dropout rates were higher among minority students (UNESCO, 2019, p. 18). Even in 2019, both in the US and the EU, students with migrant parents continued to lag behind their peers academically. This achievement gap often transcends generations and leads to a mismatch between the education received by migrant graduates and the available job opportunities (Flacke et al., 2020). Furthermore, Boyd et al. (1994) argue that migrants arriving in host countries without proficiency in the local language encounter significant challenges, as mastering the host country's language is pivotal for their integration. Some countries have aligned their curriculum reforms with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to bolster educational accessibility. However, the implementation of these reforms faces obstacles due to historical and cultural specificities, especially in countries in the Global South, where religious and cultural homogeneity plays a vital role in upholding national sovereignty.

3. Sub-Saharan Migrants' Children's Education in Morocco: Major Challenges

The right to education often faces barriers due to national policies, regional dynamics, and geopolitical interests (Castles & Miller, 2009). In Morocco, before 2013, substantial criticism was directed at the state for its purportedly harsh treatment of illegal sub-Saharan migrants, resulting in limited access to fundamental rights like healthcare and education. Consequently, a series of measures were introduced, including the adoption of a new migration policy, regularization campaigns, and the issuance of a 2013 circular permitting all migrant children to enroll in Moroccan schools. Contrary to the previous law, N°4.2000, which made education accessible solely to Moroccan children, both the 2011 constitution and the 2013 circular extended this right to sub-Saharan children. Nevertheless, the registration of migrant students in schools continues to be impeded by stringent document requirements, often challenging to fulfill due to migrants' lack of documentation and bureaucratic hurdles (Qassemy et al., 2014; Booknight, 2018). For instance, acquiring a medical certificate, a copy of the child's parents' passport stamped by Moroccan authorities, or a birth certificate can pose significant difficulties (Caritas Rabat, 2015). Another significant hurdle highlighted by certain NGO activists is the requirement of "the Orange File" (le dossier orange), which must be processed and validated by local authorities when a migrant student transitions from primary to secondary education (Qassemy et al., 2014; Caritas Rabat, 2018). Additionally, socioeconomic challenges faced by parents, such as poverty forcing reliance on their children for sustenance, religious beliefs, lack of stability, and no fixed residence, further encumber school enrolment along with the major challenges outlined below.

3.1. Language Proficiency

Proficiency in the host country's language(s) is deemed pivotal for integration and long-term residency. Greater proficiency correlates with increased prospects for economic, educational, and social success among migrants. While some argue that

language proficiency is a consequence of integration rather than a precursor (Van Avermaet, 2009), studies (Ishphording, 2015) emphasize a strong link between proficiency in the host country's official language and integration across all facets. Boyd et al. (1994) argue that migrants lacking proficiency in the host society's language encounter substantial challenges in accomplishing tasks. Proficiency in the host country's language is a vital factor in facilitating migrants' integration and is considered a key indicator of their progress. Within Morocco's context, sub-Saharan migrants may not always face significant linguistic barriers as "Morocco is a multilingual society where several languages are in use (El Kirat, 2008b)." Sub-Saharan migrants can communicate using French or other languages with a sizable portion of the local population, access official institutions, and even secure employment (Mourji et al., 2016). However, this linguistic advantage doesn't necessarily extend to their children. Modern Standard Arabic, the language of instruction in Moroccan public schools, is claimed to pose a major obstacle to the education and social integration of migrant students (Ismaili, 2023; Schoenen, 2016). Ismaili (2023) and Booknight (2018) contend that sub-Saharan migrant children struggle in the learning process due to their lack of understanding of Arabic, the language used for instruction in lower education. Anglophone students from countries like Nigeria or Liberia face even greater marginalization in this context. It is crucial to emphasize that discussions surrounding migration, particularly the educational experiences of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, are entangled within a continuous language policy discourse. Unfortunately, these conversations frequently veer away from academic focus and tend to descend into the realm of ideological conflict. Language proficiency emerges as an educational disadvantage that migrants encounter in various countries worldwide (UNICEF, 2018). Some countries, such as Canada and Germany, necessitate a language proficiency test for migrant application acceptance from the outset.

3.2. Lack of Documents

Education for migrants and refugees proves to be a complex and challenging endeavor, beset by numerous obstacles beyond financial constraints. Even nations with abundant resources encounter practical difficulties in providing education to refugees. Effective planning and coordination are indispensable for this undertaking (UNESCO, 2019). Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco encounter diverse barriers to accessing public services, especially education, despite state efforts to streamline legal processes. These obstacles often stem from rigorous documentation requirements (Qassemey et al., 2014; Caritas Maroc, 2018). The stringent need for documentation persists despite the Ministry of Education's issuance of Circular N°13-487 in 2013, aiming to ensure education for all children residing in Morocco. Previously, the enrolment of migrants and refugees in Moroccan public and private schools relied on collaboration between civil society, international organizations, and regional educational bodies (Qassemey, 2014). The circular (13-487) stipulates the enrolment of foreign students from the Sahel and sub-Saharan countries in public and private educational institutions, allowing them access to non-formal education courses as well (Ministry of Education, 2013). However, obtaining the requisite documents doesn't ensure immediate access to public or private schools, as they must undergo validation by the regional government office (wilaya) to confirm legal resident status (Booknight, 2018). It's important to acknowledge that these perspectives might oversimplify the on-ground situation and may not entirely capture the realities experienced by migrants and refugees.

3.3. Religious Affiliation

The access to education for migrant children of various religious backgrounds remains a contentious issue across numerous countries (Foner & Alba, 2008). In certain instances, religious teachings have been substituted with a global citizenship curriculum aiming to foster multiculturalism and multilingualism (Engel & Orloff, 2009). However, ensuring quality education for migrant children while respecting their cultural, religious, and linguistic identities presents challenges due to political, cultural, individual, and systemic barriers (Sobane et al., 2018).

Preserving this right, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement emphasize that displaced children should receive free and compulsory education while honoring their cultural identity, language, and religion (UNHCR, 1998). Nevertheless, accomplishing this objective has proven challenging due to a myriad of obstacles, ranging from individual to systemic issues. According to Sobane et al. (2018), efforts to actualize the right to education for migrant children cannot adopt a one-size-fits-all approach; instead, they must be tailored to specific countries or regions (p. 4). Consequently, religious affiliation appears to impede the education of migrant children in Morocco, where some Christian parents are hesitant to enrol their children in schools incorporating Islamic education within the curriculum (Brammer, 2014). Such reluctance often stems from concerns about the potential impact on their children's faith and religious identity (Qassemey, 2014, p. 24). Additional barriers to migrant students' education in Morocco include mobility challenges, child exploitation, and intergroup tensions arising from negative interactions with the local population.

While prioritizing access to education for migrant children from diverse religious backgrounds remains crucial, achieving this objective necessitates addressing both individual and various national and international systemic barriers.

4. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach and gathers data from four students: two Congolese middle school girls aged 15 and 16, a 17-year-old Cameroonian male, and a Senegalese female high school student. Among them, two students have refugee status, while the other two live with their documented mothers. These students were selected from two distinct public schools situated in different districts of Rabat—specifically, Yaakoub El Mansour and Hay Ennahda. Both schools are located in popular neighborhoods known for their diverse population, encompassing both Moroccans and sub-Saharan migrants who closely interact and live close. To initiate the research process, older migrants assisted in contacting and introducing younger students, explaining the research objectives and the types of questions that would be asked. Subsequently, the students were requested to obtain informed consent from their parents, either through formal permission requiring their parents' signature or by contacting the parents via email or phone.

The inclusion criteria involved foreign-born students who had spent at least three consecutive years in a Moroccan public school belonged to a non-mixed family, and were at least fourteen years old. Structured interviews conducted in French lasted between thirty to forty minutes and encompassed fifteen questions covering various topics. These topics included challenges encountered within and outside of school, treatment or support received from peers and teachers, sources of support, school dynamics, interactions with peers, teachers, and administration, instances of school violence, and perspectives on language of instruction and Islamic education.

The data analysis process followed a six-step approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2017), culminating in theme definition and the production of the final report. Data analysis involved organizing themes correlating with different systems within the ecological model outlined in the theoretical framework. This framework addressed three research questions:

- (i) How do Sub-Saharan students navigate and experience the Moroccan public school?
- (ii) What personal attributes do the researched students possess?
- (iii) To what extent do the environment's four levels—micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, and macro-system—curb or encourage their interaction with the environment and maintenance of social relations?

5. Theoretical Framework

The study's theoretical framework adopts Bronfenbrenner's (1977b) theory of social ecology of human development, which explores the multifaceted lived experiences of migrant students. According to this model, human development results from interactions between the growing human organism and the changing environments it inhabits. The person-environment interrelation relies on four properties: proximal processes, person, environmental contexts, and time.

In this study, migrant students engage in proximal processes at school, such as interactions with teachers, peers, and textbooks. These processes are influenced by environmental contexts and the person's attributes, categorized by Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2007) into force, resource, and demand characteristics. Force characteristics are closely linked to dispositional traits and can be either "developmentally generative" or "developmentally disruptive." Resource characteristics refer to mental abilities, and emotional and material needs such as past experiences, intelligence, supportive environments, and educational opportunities. Demand characteristics act as immediate stimuli to others, including age, gender, skin color, and physical appearance.

Bronfenbrenner (1977b) categorizes the ecological environment into nested structures: the micro-system (immediate context level, like schools and neighborhoods), meso-system (connections across micro-systems shaping perceptions and aspirations), exo-system (influences on immediate settings, e.g., migration and school policies), and chrono-system (time). Time plays a crucial role in Bronfenbrenner's theory, encompassing micro-, meso-, and macro-time, affecting individual life events like attending school amid migration policies or political crises. Ultimately, the socioecological model, rooted in constructivism, offers a robust framework for researchers seeking insight into the experiences of ethnic minority migrant students.

6. Data Analysis

This research employs a thematic analysis to investigate migrant student issues within a multidimensional theoretical framework. The analyst-driven approach is chosen for three key reasons. First, limited data collection arises from challenges in obtaining parental consent for student interviews. Second, the research adheres to predetermined concepts within the theoretical approach, shaping both research questions and interview guides. Lastly, the thematic analysis is crucial due to the study's constrained scope.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step procedure, themes were matched with systems in the theoretical framework's ecological model. The subsequent sections present concise findings organized around the addressed research questions.

6.1. Sub-Saharan Students' Experience in Moroccan Public Schools

The data related to interaction within the school setting revealed two broad themes. The first can be labeled as internalized discrimination. This latter was often evoked and tended to be still exerting a lot of pressure on these coming-of-age persons. Al, a sixteen-year-old female in middle school still recalls with a lot of resentment that *"We used to have a lot of problems in the primary school. In the middle school we no longer face problems"*. These problems were confirmed by another informant who referred to issues that pertained to skin color, negative stereotypes, and being a foreigner that permeates the school atmosphere and determines a peculiar mode of construction and othering that is not quite different from the one taking place outside of the school. In this regard, Pnp, a fifteen-year-old female Congolese confessed with a big smile and twinkle in the eye that *"Apart from the insults in the street where some undisciplined boys told me 'Go back to your country'[said it in Moroccan Arabic], why are you coming here [laughter]. This is not racism"*. Besides the individual-level qualities of informants that facilitate their navigation of the school, their apparent contentment can be ascribed to the ethics of care being implemented in Moroccan schools. In this regard *"in our school, at the beginning of the school year, the superintendent told us that there is no difference. We are all Africans. The other classmates came to talk to me, and with time we made friends"*. The intervention of significant others such as the superintendents was not limited to nurturing equality and equity discourse through the catchphrase *"we are all Africans"*, but also included care inside the classroom when interviewees were asked about issues related to religion as Al, a sixteen-year-old female student admits that the teachers are helpful, considerate and constantly try to create anxiety free classrooms for them as the quote below illustrates:

"The teacher of Islamic education doesn't force us to do it; even on the day of the exam, the teacher comes and explains to us and provides us with some words to answer. They help us. They don't coerce us. But my mother, yes, my mother always talks about it and says "don't do it" [it refers to Islamic education courses]. I say there is no harm since in high school I would stop learning it".

The support provided by teachers, and administrative staff and how the student perceives it indicates the presence of intersubjectivity in the Husserlian sense. The teacher's empathy enables consideration not just for oneself but also for others, especially those individuals who lack the resources to overcome challenging experiences. This lack of resources extends beyond the demanding tasks of learning Modern Standard Arabic, which informants are hesitant to acquire as they believe it won't be necessary once they leave Morocco. It also applies to the lack of symbolic capital needed to assert oneself and escape the mistreatment that these young sub-Saharan individuals sometimes face when trying to "act Moroccan." Marl, a seventeen-year-old Senegalese high school student confirms this, avowing, *"When I speak Arabic, my friends make fun of me"*. Yet, the overall impression is that these students demonstrated an aptitude for effectively navigating their mesosystem despite the challenges. The mesosystem comprises various microsystems, including the school, the family, and the immediate environment outside the school and home, referred to as the street. Despite enduring traumatic experiences, particularly bullying, and mistreatment from peers during their time in primary school, the students' primary concerns in middle and high school mainly revolve around economic issues. This can be attributed to the interconnectedness of bio-systemic factors, such as the natural process of getting older and the personal attributes that are elucidated in the next section.

6.2. Migrants' Personal Attributes

Interviewees exhibited a higher level of self-awareness and a reasonable understanding of their status as minorities, with a propensity to overcome certain challenges through the adoption of healthy and productive strategies. These force attributes were especially clear when discussing sensitive topics, such as their experiences as Christian students who had to learn Islamic education. While the male participant seemed less interested in the issue, the two female informants displayed impressive qualities, such as well-supported arguments, logical reasoning, and practical solutions. Pnp's, a fifteen-year-old middle school female student, the following quote exemplifies how force attributes can be advantageous for migrant students:

"I don't speak classical Arabic. Yes, this causes me problems, but I don't recite the Quran; I write the lessons. When I go to school, I just write the lessons, and this doesn't cause any problems. But I don't believe it. I am Christian, but you are Muslim; you can write the Bible without believing. It is not a sin".

This interviewee employed a pragmatic perspective, employing critical thinking analysis to distinguish between theoretical knowledge and religious practical application. The religious approach of the young learner is shaped by a unique religious praxis, which is influenced by their migrant status and other micro-systems and macro-systems, especially the family and religion, as evidenced in a fifteen-year-old Congolese female student's testimony:

"Me I am Christian; I wrote only the lesson for us the Christians we write only the lesson and this doesn't pose any problem. That's what I do. I write, but I don't believe. [...] I go to the church Saint Pierre with my family. [...] Sometimes people ask me why are you Christian? I ask why are you Muslim? I think this type of conversation leads only to sins."

It should be noted that despite their quite similar living conditions, the four informants exhibited different levels of satisfaction with their lives, motivation, and persistence to achieve their educational goals. Their attitudes reveal that despite leading a life fraught with challenges, they can set goals with a high level of agency and self-awareness. Such qualities are part of the resource characteristics that are elucidated in the next section.

Resource characteristics: these characteristics are linked to mental abilities, emotional experiences, and material needs. Informants showed a satisfactory level of school performance and expressed their concerns over the future openly and plainly. A fifteen-year-old informant narrates that because her grades do not allow her to study medicine, she would like to be a real estate agent.

Negative emotional experiences tended to be linked to the primary school, as mentioned above. However, the most salient resource characteristics are those related to material needs, in that all informants express their concerns over a lack of financial support despite the aid they get from the UNHCR, as Marl, a seventeen-year-old female high school informant illustrates.

"The problem is my family. Life here is good; everybody is welcoming; Moroccans are good, but there is no work for our parents; my mother is sick. There isn't enough food. Fortunately, we have the UNHCR aid, but it is not enough?"

Lack of access to these developmental assets disrupts the growth opportunities for these students and constrains their engagement in the available interactions and activities.

Demand characteristics, or 'personal stimulus' characteristics, are "those that act as an immediate stimulus to another person, such as age, gender, skin color, and physical appearance" (Tudge et al., 2009, p. 200). These characteristics are apparent and can determine the initial interaction since they act like stimuli to other persons and orient how proximal processes are maintained. Based on the interviewees' statements, two major demand characteristics can be surmised: First, sub-Saharan student interaction with the school context depends heavily on the students' personalities, temperaments, and appearances, especially skin color. The word "Azzi" or negro is often evoked with a deep sense of restlessness. Second, their engagement with challenging macro and micro levels issues that exceeds their resource characteristics given their young age.

6.3. The Influence of the Micro-, Meso-, Exo-, and Macrosystems on Sub-Saharan Migrants

The interviews revealed that these migrant students and their proximal processes are encapsulated in three major microsystems: the "street," the school, and the home. The interviews show that the street and the primary school are the milieus where these students receive the most disruptive input and are subject to rejection, discrimination, gratuitous insults, and bullying. Testimonies unveiled that the students' interactions with the school dynamics as an immediate environment are quite positive. The chronosystem tends to influence these students retrospectively since it is often related to negative experiences in primary school. This sense of self that evolves in conjunction with a set of beliefs about one's attributes and memories can sometimes spill over to issues of black visibility, social justice, and perceived systematic discrimination, as Pnp contends: *"If I complete my studies here in Morocco, I will not work in a big company like Moroccans. Have you ever seen a sub-Saharan African holding a powerful position in that company? Even when you are competent."* Certainly, such perceptions are the outcome of the interaction between different systems, including the cultural macro-system, which subtly emerges in the form of perceived discrimination against black-skinned persons. This may be from the self-consciousness of being black or the family and its dynamics, which, when coupled with the school, is often considered an intricate system involving opposing structures such as parental religion and the school curriculum. Parents' opposition to studying Modern Standard Arabic and Islamic education was not the only challenge since informants are being guided by other systems like churches. This latter's role tends to be disruptive since it advises them not to engage in discussions revolving around matters of faith as a fifteen-year-old Congolese Christian student maintained. The church's role for these minority students highlights how features of the macro-system can have a direct impact on their development in that both the education policy, belief systems (Islam and Christianity), cultural differences, and foreign geopolitical agendas like the promotion of Christianity in non-Christian countries have bearings on the type of interaction taking place in their immediate environment, through both elements of the exo-systems such as the education policy and the curriculum. Both the Marco and Exo systems do not contain sub-Saharan migrant students as developing persons, but they impinge upon and encompass the immediate setting in which they are found (Bronfenrenner's 1977b, p. 515).

7. Discussion

The theory of social ecology of human development, as proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1977b) and other works, presents a comprehensive framework for examining the intricate and diverse experiences of sub-Saharan migrant students as they navigate the educational environment and the broader context of their lives. Hence, this study substantiates the claim that the interaction between two micro-systems, namely the school and the family, plays a significant role in the development and engagement of migrant students (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008). The study supports Bronfenbrenner's argument that proximal interactions and distant contexts shape a particular perspective on experiences. The testimonies of the four students involved in the present study

revealed the significant challenges they face because of their socioeconomic conditions, and the inadequacy of the UNHCR and NGOs' outreach programs. This underscores the significance of comprehending these variables and posits that when migrant students are endowed with ample resources emanating from both the familial and educational spheres, their meso-systems and ensuing exo-systems are inclined to cultivate a nurturing milieu. This, in turn, empowers students to accord precedence to their academic pursuits, a contention corroborated by the works of Prothrow-Stith and Quaday (1995) as well as Suarez-Orozco et al. (2008).

The school-family relationship is a microsystem that connects individuals through relationships, messages, objects, and symbols (Arnold et al., 2021). As a microsystem, the school plays a crucial role in fostering the socio-cultural development of migrant students by providing care and promoting multicultural discourse. Islamic education teachers' strategies to communicate with and accommodate non-Muslim students contribute to creating a safe and nurturing environment for migrant students. Moroccan teachers' attitudes toward these ethnically and religiously diverse students lend support to the assertion made by Chapman et al. (2013) that educators are increasingly recognizing the significance of adopting 'the ethics of care' as part of their educational mission. The interviewees' testimonies revealed that educating migrant students poses a significant challenge that impacts all aspects of the teaching-learning process and policy development (Betancourt et al., 2014). The inherent complexity and volatility of their lives make this task particularly daunting, requiring meticulous planning of both academic and non-academic strategies to address their needs amidst various economic, social, and acculturative stressors (Betancourt et al., 2014). Macro systems such as the cultural frames of reference and the educational policies are another obstacle to elaborating effective approaches and policies that are sensitive to the diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds of these students, and would enable their skills and competencies to be contextualized within their own experiences (Gay, 2001). Such challenges are not limited to a specific location; similar concerns arise for students with migratory backgrounds not only in Morocco but also in Sweden and Estonia (Trasberg and Kond, 2017). The students' testimonies in Morocco illustrated the embracing of a culturally responsive pedagogy in schools, especially in the urban areas with high migrant populations, for a better support of culturally and ethnically diverse students. The study emphasizes the impact of the family, churches, and local culture on young migrant learners, stressing the need to address these challenges and improve their socioeconomic reality to foster independence and understanding of ethnicity, religion, and language. These challenges are crucial for enhancing the social ecology of migrant students, who are transitioning into adulthood and grappling with decisions beyond their abilities and age, such as whether to remain in or leave the host country, the lack of control over their reality, and the need to improve their families' economic circumstances. They also struggle to negotiate their basic symbolic needs due to their minority status and their families' religious and linguistic beliefs. The study aligns with Ngo's (2010) findings for Los Angeles urban migrant students' identities constructed imperfectly and uncertainly. It also aligns with Olivier Galland's (2008) exploration of the modern concept of adolescence, characterized by autonomy without independence. In other words, while relying on their families for their basic needs, these young migrant students make independent decisions regarding their relationships and interpretations of ethnicity, religion, and language.

8. Conclusion

The research at hand explored the intricate dynamics characterizing the interactions of Sub-Saharan migrant students in the context of the Moroccan public school system. The study focused on a nuanced exploration of the multifaceted factors that come into play, to shed light on the complexities that shape how these students navigate not only the educational landscape but also their broader engagements within their families and the Moroccan society. Central to this investigation is an analysis of the varying degrees of influence exerted by diverse structures. The research investigated the differential impact of these factors on the students' experiences, encompassing both the educational setting and the broader societal context. By unraveling some of the layers of these interactions, the study aimed to contribute valuable insights into the nuanced pathways and challenges faced by Sub-Saharan migrant students in their educational journey within the Moroccan milieu. The study adopted the socioecological model to examine the experiences of sub-Saharan migrant students in Moroccan public middle and high schools. Its main goal was to shed light on a hidden but growing phenomenon in the country's educational landscape: the inclusion of ethnic and religious minority students in Moroccan public schools. The adopted model proved to be reliable as it helped integrate various systems that have a significant impact on the development of migrant students as they navigated and tried to adapt to a unique context during a specific phase of their lives. The data analysis and interpretation revealed that to effectively serve this minority group of students, there is an urgent need for more research on issues related to sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco and their cultural and economic integration. The study addressed the academic and non-academic needs of these minority students to draw attention to the various structures at play and their impact on the development of the students in migratory backgrounds. While a comprehensive understanding of the issues has not yet been achieved, preliminary findings suggest that due to the interaction between two conflicting microsystems, namely the school and the family, along with the macro-level structures such as culture and belief systems, migrant students are at risk of leading parallel lives that benefit neither the host society nor these disadvantaged individuals.

Despite making modest contributions, the study is constrained by methodological limitations. The challenges in securing participation from informants and their parents for interviews, the reliance on a qualitative approach, the limited informant pool, and the application of a specific theoretical framework collectively impact the findings of the research. As a result, the findings are not generalizable. A more extensive investigation with a larger sample size is necessary to gain a nuanced understanding of the evolving challenges and adaptations experienced by Sub-Saharan migrant students over time.

Therefore, conducting a comprehensive examination with a broader informant base is imperative to delve deeper into the intricacies. This expanded research could uncover commonalities and unique challenges, significantly contributing to a nuanced comprehension of the schooling and migrant experience in Morocco. Additionally, exploring how policies and community engagement influence the effectiveness of existing educational and social policies in supporting migrant student integration would be valuable. Such an inquiry might pinpoint specific areas requiring adjustment or enhancement.

Equally significant is investigating the role of community and peer support in the academic and social development of Sub-Saharan migrant students, identifying interventions that foster a sense of belonging. Extending this exploration to scrutinize the impact of variables such as gender, nationality, and religion, in conjunction with policies and local community attitudes, would provide valuable insights into the broader influences on Sub-Saharan migrant students' experiences.

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