

Interview with Eider Goiburu, the expert who will be delivering the course 'Strategies for the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence with Young People in Formal and Non-Formal Education'



Gender-based violence is a phenomenon that occurs at all ages, but does it occur in the same way among young people as among adults?

This is a structural problem that, insofar as it is structural, affects everyone within society or the system. In other words, it occurs at all ages and in all spheres, but in each age group, it has specific characteristics. Although the first thing that comes to mind is relationships, this violence also occurs in the family, school, public spaces, sports, festive atmospheres, etc. Last summer, we had a clear example of this with the needle spiking incidents during

festivities and the panic this generated.

In recent years, the discourse favouring equality has gained considerable traction. Why does this progress not have a direct impact on the behaviour of young people?

There has undoubtedly been a change of discourse at the societal level. It is hard to find anyone who does not share the idea of equality. Unfortunately, however, this consensus remains at the rhetorical level. The necessary social change has not yet occurred, which is why we are still talking about violence. In that sense, I see a great risk that the change that has taken place at the rhetorical level will be taken for granted and that it will be no more than that.

What should be done to overcome this rhetorical level?

The first thing we have to do is to understand our actual situation. When it comes to promoting social change, when talking mainly about discrimination (sexism, racism), social psychology analyses three areas: the rational or cognitive sphere (what we think, what we believe in), the emotional sphere (what we feel) and the behavioural sphere (what we do). Changes in our beliefs do not bring about changes in the emotional sphere. Our attitudes remain the same; from the moment a child is born, we begin to make a boy-girl distinction and, with it, establish gender

stereotypes and roles. In this process, in addition to making distinctions, we promote a hierarchy among people, thus creating relations of domination-submission.

But many teenagers are mature enough to deal with the discourses you mention.

It is more common to see attitudes contrary to this type of discourse among young girls and boys who do not conform to this hegemonic model, but not so much among young people who subscribe to it. In the end, this issue challenges the existing relationship of power. Acknowledging the existence of these relationships and the need for violence to maintain them entails a loss of privilege. It involves the creation of new relational and social positioning models. It should be borne in mind that adolescence is a time of significant changes. Adolescents are very insecure at this age because they are building their identity; consequently, peer acceptance is a very important element. On the other hand, adolescence also reinforces sexual identity, which nowadays appears to be linked to traditional gender roles. Therefore, the need for recognition and the fact that sexual identity is linked to conventional and sexist models often leads to social and sexist issues among adolescents.

What can we do to prevent gender-based violence among adolescents?

Firstly, we adults have to take a hard look at ourselves. Reflect on our attitudes and behaviour. As we said before, we often have a discourse, but our attitude sends contradictory messages. As adults, we are role models, and we must be aware of this. On the other hand, young people do receive sexist messages through other means (the media, Internet, advertising, etc.). Our job is to teach them how to interpret all these messages and provide them with resources for critical thinking. Today, we cannot avoid receiving sexist messages, but we can help to understand and manage them. Finally, we need to talk and listen to what adolescents and young people are telling us. We must recognise the status of adolescents as political subjects. We must acknowledge that they can participate in decisions about their own lives, that they can make decisions and suggestions and that they are subjects of the law. Initiatives are often launched without taking into account their reality, their experiences and their wishes. We must start from their needs and not those of adults. Only from that baseline will we achieve real change.

Why would you encourage people to take this course?

There are few forums where people from the same field can share their concerns, queries and realities. This course offers such a forum. On the one hand, it will provide training on gender-based violence, but it will also be an opportunity to share. It provides an excellent opportunity to interact and get to know different realities and experiences. Together, we will offer and develop the keys to preventing gender-based violence.