

Original Article

Institutionalized migrant youth: a view from the Southern Occupational Therapy

Juventudes migrantes institucionalizadas: una mirada desde la Terapia Ocupacional del Sur

Juventude migrante institucionalizada: uma visão a partir da Terapia Ocupacional do Sul

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Abstract

Introduction: The migration process involves a series of occupational, social, and cultural challenges; however, when this process involves unaccompanied youth who become institutionalized, it radically changes their entire performance and occupational identity. **Objective:** To analyze the occupational impact of unaccompanied youth institutionalized in a protection and emergency service in Catalonia, Spain. **Method:** Ethnographic study that used as an information-gathering technique: field observations, semi-structured interviews, and informal conversations, which were transcribed and coded through a content analysis process. **Results:** They brought up three main themes that explain the phenomenon a) The precarious context of the country of origin: the construction of the migratory desire, b) Institutional racism: cultural production of social discrimination and c) Occupational deprivation: as a limitation for autonomy and cultural insertion. **Conclusion:** The influence of institutionalization is evidenced as a structural factor that limits the choice and occupational participation of young people. This problem takes refuge in a legal imperative of “protection” that ends up reproducing a system of colonial, racial, and welfare discrimination that violates the human rights of young migrants.

Keywords: Social Justice, Human Rights, International Migration, Youth, Occupational Therapy

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Resumen

Introducción: El proceso migratorio implica una serie de desafíos ocupacionales, sociales y culturales, sin embargo, cuando este proceso se trata de jóvenes no acompañados que se institucionalizan, cambia radicalmente todo su desempeño e identidad ocupacional. **Objetivo:** Analizar el impacto ocupacional de jóvenes no acompañados institucionalizados en un servicio de protección y emergencia en Cataluña, España. **Método:** Estudio etnográfico que utilizó como técnica de recogida de información: las observaciones de campo, entrevistas semi estructuradas y conversaciones informales, las cuales fueron transcritas y codificadas a través de un proceso de análisis del contenido. **Resultados:** Arrojaron tres grandes temas que explican el fenómeno a) El contexto precario del país de origen: la construcción del deseo migratorio, b) Racismo institucional: producción cultural de discriminación social y c) Privación ocupacional: como limitación para la autonomía y la inserción cultural. **Conclusión:** Se evidencia la influencia de la institucionalización como un factor estructural que limita la elección y participación ocupacional de los jóvenes. Esta problemática se refugia en un imperativo jurídico de “protección” que termina reproduciendo un sistema de discriminación colonial, racial y asistencial que viola los derechos humanos de los jóvenes migrantes.

Palabras-clave: Justicia Social, Derechos Humanos, Migración Internacional, Jóvenes, Terapia Ocupacional.

Resumo

Introdução: O processo de migração envolve uma série de desafios ocupacionais, sociais e culturais, porém, quando esse processo envolve jovens desacompanhados que se institucionalizam, muda radicalmente todo o seu desempenho e identidade ocupacional. **Objetivo:** Analisar o impacto ocupacional de jovens desacompanhados institucionalizados em um serviço de proteção e emergência na Catalunha, Espanha. **Método:** Estudo etnográfico que utilizou como técnica de coleta de informações: observações de campo, entrevistas semiestruturadas e conversas informais, as quais foram transcritas e codificadas por meio de um processo de análise de conteúdo. **Resultados:** Três eixos temáticos foram escolhidos que explicam o fenômeno a) O contexto precário do país de origem: a construção do desejo migratório, b) Racismo institucional: produção cultural da discriminação social e c) Privação ocupacional: como limitação para autonomia e inserção cultural. **Conclusão:** A influência da institucionalização é evidenciada como um fator estrutural que limita a escolha e a participação ocupacional dos jovens. Esse problema se refugia em um imperativo legal de “proteção” que acaba reproduzindo um sistema de discriminação colonial, racial e previdenciária que viola os direitos humanos dos jovens migrantes.

Palavras-chave: Justiça Social, Direitos Humanos, Migração Internacional, Juventude, Terapia Ocupacional.

Introduction

The migratory phenomenon has been present throughout the history of mankind being a matter of interest both nationally and globally. People participate and have participated in territorial mobilizations in a broad and complex way due to a diverse and unequal condition in the structuring and distribution of resources and opportunities (Reher et al., 2011).

However, when we analyze migrations from earlier stages such as the case of an unaccompanied youth, a novel and complex phenomenon occurs in other historical migratory flows (Martín-Palomino, 2015; Vinaixa, 2019), with important ethics and policies (Bravo & Santos-González, 2017).

With this background, Sayad (2010) determines the existence of a structural relationship between the concept of migration and colonization because migratory processes inherently come from a hierarchical world organization, being implicit that every migrant person is traversed by classificatory links between the different territories or nation-states at stake, and the country of origin is the one that is undervalued by the host country.

Thus, the migration process is influenced by the racism present in our societies. Grosfoguel (2012, p. 92) defines racism as:

[...] a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority on the line of the human that has been politically produced and reproduced as a structure of domination for centuries by the imperialist/western-centric/Christian-centric/capitalist/patriarchal/modern/colonial system.

If we examine this structure of the social organization in the construction of youth and their migratory processes in Catalonia, we see that there is an increased precariousness, especially when we talk about young people who arrive in the Spanish territory without documentation (Ruiz & López-Riba, 2020), This phenomenon has been increasing in recent years, finding people –on many cases– in subhuman conditions or a situation of abandonment (Vinaixa, 2019).

In Catalonia, specifically, 3,600 unaccompanied minors arrived in 2018, more than double the number in 2017. But, the most worrying thing is that the Catalan Ombudsman's Report warns that, during 2019, if the current trend is followed, they could get to enter between about 5,400 and 6,000 more young people. In Catalonia, in a single day, 3,166 MENA [Unaccompanied Foreign Minors] are attended in 125 Centers (Vinaixa, 2019, p. 574).

Thus, the case of young unaccompanied migrants who arrive in Catalonia generates so much concern and debate, especially when their arrival is interpreted as *another that is different*, which impacts on the construction of self-esteem and a sense of personal causality and social legitimacy, causing intergroup disadvantages and risk of social exclusion at an early age (Hitti et al., 2011). With this, the occupational identity of young people understood as the unity between the personal and cultural dimension of the subjects, is nurtured unevenly, and their actions may be blocked, which would be

expressed in attitudes of rejection, withdrawal, or confrontation before social participation (Mera et al., 2014)

Therefore, there is the challenge of generating non-exclusive social representations from the host societies to avoid offering a partial and ethnocentric vision of the phenomenon. To do this, instances of leading role must be generated and promoted to the group of young migrants, considering their personal experiences and value their knowledge, to break with the pre-established hierarchical processes between both territories - origin and provenance - eliminating the opposing social concepts or dichotomous, such as national-foreigner or local-migrant, which, finally, impact when it comes to understanding and approaching the situation from both points of view without limiting it to the single perspective of the host society (Zango & Moruno, 2013).

One of the main problems is treating young migrants without considering their needs, culture, and knowledge, creating an epistemic silence that creates differences and borders that produce an unresolved inside/outside in their identifications (Gil, 2010).

Consequently, this injustice and epistemic silence ratify the hegemonic perspectives that originate processes of exclusion naturalized in the host society, eliminating possible opportunities for the protagonist participation of young people, perpetuating hierarchical phenomena, and placing young people in positions of inferiority for the social exchange and collective learning (Sayad, 2010).

Migration and Youth Racism: A Complex Ordering of the World System for Occupational Opportunities

From the Social Sciences, the analyzes of migratory movements have been constructed predominantly under the umbrella of the positivist paradigm (Gómez et al., 2005). As a consequence and as Walsh (2007) points out, the epistemological bases of this concept from the positivist, modern, capitalist and colonizing paradigm, only contemplate the creation of knowledge from the scientific-academic sphere, marked by the Eurocentric, supposedly neutral gaze and rational, without considering the plurality of knowledge, “[...] denying or relegating to the status of non-knowledge, knowledge from places and produced from different social and cultural rationalities [...]” (Walsh, 2007, p.103).

The concept of migration has been influenced by the epistemic racism present in society. This concept is understood by De Sousa Santos (2010) as the power relationship between the different “knowledge” generalizing and establishing their “knowledge” as universal and questioning and devaluing the “knowledge” created in societies and cultures other than those world power centers.

Therefore, the approach with young unaccompanied migrants in Catalonia is not exempt from a defensive view of policies based on institutional racism. This problem is understood as the set of policies, practices, and procedures that harm an ethnic or racialized group, preventing it from reaching a position of equality within societies (Ruiz & López-Riba, 2020).

This racism has this institutional dimension when it is exercised by the structures and their representatives, promoting discriminatory behavior by the officials who represent the law and the State towards migrants (Ruiz & López-Riba, 2020). This can

also be seen in the violation of rights through discriminatory measures, regulations, laws, and decrees that make it difficult to achieve residence and citizenship in the host country (Aguilar & Buraschi, 2012).

Institutional racism systematically established in the development of social policies increases the difficulties of young unaccompanied migrants for adequate inclusion and participation in the host society (Aguilar & Buraschi, 2012). For example, in studies of the contexts of direct intervention with groups of unaccompanied foreign youth, it has been possible to show over the years the existence of patterns that favor inequality and discrimination, finding within them racist prejudices (Manzanos, 1999; Ruiz & López-Riba, 2020; Sayad, 2010).

We believe that the main effects of racism in the institutional functioning of the entities in charge of welcoming young people are its paternalistic and assistance nature in the behavioral and occupational regime of young people, mostly promoting social control and the creation of little intervention policies that evoke a saturation of the system with long waiting times that prevent the rapid and effective resolution of the documentary regularization of young people (Bravo & Santos-González, 2017; Jiménez, 2003; Manzanos, 1999).

The institutional concepts and categorizations used to understand this problem are another effect of the institutional colonial racism that segregates young migrants. For example, when referring to “Unaccompanied Foreign Minors” or colloquially called in Spain: “MENA”.

There are several authors (Martín-Palomino, 2015; Ruiz & López-Riba, 2020) who talk about the need to categorize human beings and how these categories directly influence the treatment of subaltern groups. One of them is Juaristi (2017), which affirms that the categorization of the group supposes the establishment of a social dynamic that determines the distinction between affluent countries and impoverished countries under different geographical points.

In this way, the group loses its individuality, leaving the typical dimensions of the person blurred, subtracting their presence in a unique and stigmatizing category. Consequently, the fact of categorizing the person as a minor establishes them as an “incapable person”, “immature” and, ultimately, perpetuates the reproduction of a discriminatory system, as paternalistic, ageist, and segregating. After this reflection on the group, we believe it is more appropriate to refer to them as young unaccompanied migrants, eliminating the concepts “minor”, “foreigner”, and all the negative connotations associated with them.

Therefore, youth is established as a key and influential point and topic in the group of unaccompanied migrants. We observed that being young and migrating causes psychosocial interference that affects the development process. Among others, we find problems for social relations and integration of the cultural and identity dimension Juaristi (2017). However, one of the least studied issues has to do with the process of gendering in young migrants and is especially complex when it takes place in institutional settings.

During youth, the identity of the sex-gender system is most strongly constructed (Rubin, 1975). It is interesting to differentiate and relate the concept of sex to gender and how they operate in occupational identities. Kogan (1993, p. 36) affirms that sex refers to the biological support of a socially interpreted person, on the other hand,

gender is understood as an “eminently cultural and psychosocial construction”. Both are expressed in the conformation of the corporeity and occupations being the concrete, social and historical place through which and in which the learning process of gender is built.

Therefore, young people follow different roles and stereotypes attributed to the sex-gender system assigned to them from birth. From this point of view, identity and inequality are the results of those social constructions linked to the culturally assigned sex gender (Grandón, 2019; Morrison & Araya, 2018). These social constructions are cemented by archetypes, stereotypes, and social roles that dictate the behavior and occupational forms of young people. These gender mandates are established by a patriarchal system that aims to nurture the social order translated into unequal roles between genders, in which the male is superior to the female (Moreno et al., 2018; Testa & Spanpinato, 2010).

For this reason, the young people who migrate are mostly men who in part try to comply with the assigned gender mandates, reaffirming their construction of masculinity. In this way, in migratory contexts, a clear affection is seen in the personal and occupational identity of young people, in which stereotypes of masculinity are reproduced as a way of coping and hiding the vulnerability through which they are passing (Moreno et al., 2018).

This causes one of the greatest conflicts in the construction of their identity and the value they have for other groups, especially when they are part of a new community in the host country (Mera et al., 2014). Thus: “[...] when people do not have access to a feeling of legitimacy, representations become more unstable, and their actions may be blocked, which would be expressed in attitudes of rejection, withdrawal or confrontation with participation [...]” (Mera et al., 2014, p. 226). In the case of young institutionalized migrants, when categorized under the concept of “another”, it causes intergroup disadvantages and risk of social exclusion at an early age (Hitti et al., 2011) that affect this powerful masculine imaginary.

Occupational Therapy: A Critical Approach from the South to the Migration of Young People to Catalonia

Within the practice and professional research, a critical view of Occupational Therapy (OT) of the south has been established, inspired by the ideas of Galheigo & Simó (2012), Guajardo & Simó (2010), Guajardo, (2010), Pino et al. (2015), Pollard et al. (2010), Townsend & Wilcock (2004), Whiteford & Townsend (2011), and Zango (2017), among others. This means that “the south” is a metaphorical place that represents that subaltern scenario, invisible, discriminated, gendered, racialized, but also, the place of hopes, struggles, and dreams of an occupational life that remains in line with social justice and respect for our sexual, racial, social, political and cultural differences.

For this reason, we see the position of the “south” in which young institutionalized migrants in Catalonia are located, which allows us to understand the particular forms of occupation that they can explore in their new conditions and communities. In this sense, the assessment and integration of the worldview of young people from different

contexts are established as a primary element to develop a critical and intercultural perspective of Occupational Therapy, understood as:

[...] interculturalism in occupational therapy, [...] proposes an intervention in favor of human development, pluralist and inclusive democracy, and the new citizenship considering the framing of “cultural issues” jointly with the socioeconomic and civic-political (Zango & Moruno, 2013, p. 12).

Thus, the OT of the south refuses a univocal vision since they question the linear and authoritarian development of history, the hierarchy of cultures, and the human being. For this reason, we carry out a problematizing reflection on the establishment of power relationships in the institutionalization of young unaccompanied migrants, questioning their ordering from practical experience within a center and there is the objective of analyzing the occupational impact of young people not accompanied and institutionalized in a protection and emergency service in Catalonia.

Methodological Design

This is a qualitative study with an ethnographic approach (Esteban, 2015) carried out between January, February, and March 2020 in an emergency and reception center in Catalonia. The process included ordering and coding a set of antecedents, establishing relationships between actors, developing annotations, and systematically reviewing the information collected. For ethnographic reflection, two of us are immersed in the framework of our professional practice as “educators in practice” which is a social category established within the institutional culture of the centers. It is important to highlight that due to the implicit hierarchy that this means, we remain in a subordinate position to the rest of the professionals, which determines a particular form and bond when it comes to intervening and being there.

This position and approach to the reality of the group allowed us to understand, describe and explain social phenomena from within the institution, building knowledge through dialogue, interaction, and experience with the group of young unaccompanied migrants. Also, it allowed understanding the handling of symbols, representations, social and cultural practices established in social relationships (Flick, 2012). On the other hand, the fact of being conscious researchers of the generic interpretation of life allowed us to carry out a somatic ethnographic reflective process (Esteban, 2015) with greater depth, which was built day by day in the interaction with the collective and its immediate environment.

Approach to the Participants

The approach to the participants was carried out according to the type of study proposed. We incorporated the participants from the criterion of non-probabilistic intentionality to consider a greater depth in discursive representativeness and the meanings attributed by the participants.

The study population was made up of young residents in the service for the protection and emergency of unaccompanied migrant youth, fictitiously called for these

purposes “El Refugi”. These centers are made up solely of young men. In the case of migrant women, differences have been identified in the migratory pattern concerning men, which is why they hardly ever become institutionalized (Cónsola, 2016).

For this reason, the target population was made up of young men, between 14 and 17 years old, who had just arrived in Catalonia (Spain). Therefore, they are in a situation of helplessness without family references. The origin and usual place of origin of young migrants is from African countries: Morocco, Algeria, Guinea, Senegal, and The Gambia.

Throughout the study, the flow of young people varied due to entries and exits (referral to reception centers and voluntary absences). However, in mid-January 2020, the population assisted by the service was a total of 33 adolescents between 16 and 17 years old. Due to the characteristics of the service, they are divided into two groups. On one hand, the emergency group made up of a total of 23 young people, who are waiting to be referred to a definitive center, and, on the other hand, the reception group made up of 10 young people, who will remain in the same center until they become adults.

One of the first inclusion criteria that we considered was the willingness and availability of the participants to collaborate in the study. Secondly, we took into account the level of understanding and speaking of Spanish at a medium-high level. Finally, we selected a total of six young people, made up of three young people from the reception group and three from the emergency group.

Techniques for the Construction of Information

For the data collection from the ethnographic approach (Esteban, 2015), two of the authors carried out the fieldwork while they were in the daily environment of the group. Therefore, information was collected from the discourses and interactions of the group in a naturalistic way, that is, in their current daily context. An information record was made through three qualitative techniques: field observations (FO), individual semi-structured interviews (SI), and informal hallway conversations (IC).

The field observations were used as a form of participatory approach to reality, intended to understand, dialogue, and transform relationships, taking advantage of the opportunity to have a face to face to interaction and build the data in a systematic and non-intrusive way (Amezcuá, 2000). The purpose was to build information related to the social and cultural reality of the selected group of young people.

For this reason, the observations were carried out in different settings where the young people and the authors participated. Their selection is determined by the particularity of the activities offered, being both activities carried out in the community (outside) and inside the center.

Throughout the data collection process, we observed four main entities: 1) youth routine and occupational performance in food, leisure, sports, and literacy; 2) dynamics and forms of relationship of the group during food, leisure, sports, and literacy; 3) dynamics and forms of relationship of professionals in the development of praxis and daily performance; 4) context of occupational performance.

On the other hand, 6 semi-structured interviews were carried out with a guiding script in such a way that it allowed the participants to speak freely (Roigé et al., 1999) to construct information related to the life history and migratory journey, daily routine,

and satisfaction, occupational identity and future projects of the group of young unaccompanied migrants. Likewise, this technique facilitated accessibility to more intimate spheres and aspects (Roigé et al., 1999).

All the interviews were previously arranged with the participants, establishing the day, time, and place of their conduct. Concerning the place, we tried to find an environment different from the usual one, outside the center, and that gave rise to a conversation as fluent as possible. For this reason, most of them were carried out in a community context, specifically in a cafeteria. In all cases, the privacy and security of the space were preserved. The interviews were recorded with the prior informed consent of the participant. Of the total of interviews carried out, four were carried out in a community context (cafeteria) and the remaining two in an authorized place in the center.

Finally, spontaneous conversations with young people were valued as a documentary source of analysis. We were able to observe how they were very useful and allowed us to build important information for the analysis. This last technique was called informal conversations to differentiate it from the information obtained through field observation and interviews.

Ethical Considerations

The most relevant ethical considerations for the research were the confidentiality of the information of the centers, institutions, and participants. It was respected at all times, maintaining the anonymity of the participants, both the key informants, the target population, the professional interveners, and the institution. Informed consent from both the institution and the participants was used for direct participation in the interviews with the young people.

The veracity of the research has been a fundamental aspect throughout the study, especially during the transfer of information both orally, in writing, and electronically with all the parties involved: professionals from the center and a group of young migrants. This criterion is considered an essential element to reinforce the trust and bond created.

Study Quality Criteria and Methodological Rigor

To validate the quality of the study, we used the proposal by Guba & Lincoln (1985) based on credit criteria, which allows us to contrast our beliefs and concerns with the different sources from which the data have been obtained. On the other hand, the confirmatory criterion (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) was essential when designing the different data collection instruments to achieve greater representativeness of the information and the results produced.

To favor methodological rigor, a triangulation of information obtained in the field phase was carried out with the three researchers, who first separately and from different disciplinary points of view and critical judgment, a common agreement was reached on the dimensions and categories, allowing to organize the presentation of the results.

Analysis of the Information Built

The information obtained from the different qualitative information recording techniques was analyzed through a content analysis, which was developed through a first exhaustive reading of the documents, to then create a matrix of topics and subtopics that are found after a coding process. Thus, we established three main categories and six subcategories. The categories were established according to the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (Torricco et al., 2002) that from different levels, the factors that influence the experience of young people were differentiated. This categorization allowed us to analyze the results systematically and rigorously.

In the first place, the macroenvironment encompasses the factors linked to the characteristics of the culture and the historical-social moment, and the main category is the precarious context of the country of origin: the construction of the migratory desire, divided into two subcategories, the so-called effect: the European dream of “becoming” and arrival at destination: the emergence of racial stigma. Second, the meso-environment is established. It comprises the interrelationships of two or more environments in which young people develop their daily lives. Institutional racism: the naturalized cultural production of social discrimination is established as the main category in which two more subcategories appear; Methodological approach of the institution: a management of differences and occupational panopticon: surveillance of the physical environment. Finally, we find the micro-environment which constitutes the most immediate level of young people, in which the main category is occupational deprivation: as a limitation of autonomy and cultural insertion, that two subcategories are extracted; daily life: structuring the routine and community mediation: difficulty in creating new social ties.

Results

The results are presented graphically and descriptively, according to the different categories and subcategories found in the research (Figure 1).

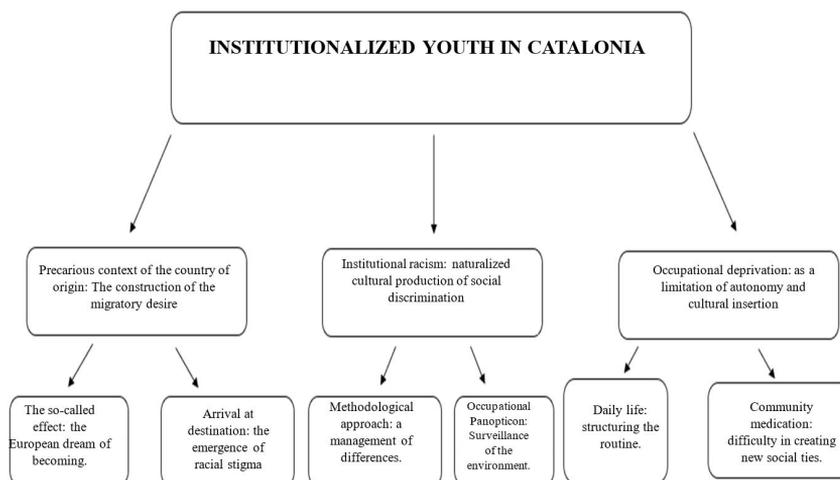


Figure 1. Self-made figure.

Precarious Context of the Country of Origin: The Construction of the Migratory Desire

In the first place, we find that the migratory process is mainly determined by the situation and social context in the country of origin; countries in situations of poverty, and with socio-cultural and political difficulties, which generate family tensions. This implies the abandonment of home, the primary social network, customs, roles, occupations, and activities of meaning in young people, the desire to emigrate and undertake a difficult, long and dangerous journey, with the aim of a supposed improvement in the quality of life, working conditions and offering family help: *“I was thinking a lot about Europe and Spain and my future because in Morocco there is no good future and that's it!”* (E.1).

Thus, a migratory desire takes shape, which in turn responds to dominant cultural representations of well-being, development, and prosperity. However, there is a milestone that is very useful when making the decision, known as the called effect: *“Well, I have spoken with a friend of mine and he told me that maybe we are going to Spain to find a better life there. Because we have friends here and they live well. Working and everything [...] I had talked to them and they told me that here is better than there. Much better”* (I.3).

With these experiences, we could appreciate how some dominant discourses that are seen as successful for young people influence decision-making, which allows them to begin to problematize the idea of emigration, especially thinking that a better life can be achieved.

The Called Effect: the European Dream of Becoming

Second, the presence of a pull effect becomes apparent. Most of the young people show great work and life expectations towards the host country, motivated by emotional or family references, the media or social networks, which provokes overvalued imaginary: *“I thought I would arrive here and could work, I did not know that he was like this and that he couldn't work”* (I.5).

This produces an important gap between the expectations generated before the migration process and the material reality at the time of arrival in the country of destination, faced with all legal-administrative restrictions, and the important cultural problem of racism that young people face as a product of their place of origin and the racialization of their bodies.

The Arrival at Destination: The Emergence of Racial Stigma

In their arrival, we find a double stigma towards the group: own and social. Young people must constantly fight against the social labeling that we find in their configuration as “MENA” young people. This brings prejudices and values associated with: “incapable person”, “illegal immigrant”, “second-class citizen” or terms referring to dangerousness and delinquency binding on the young foreigner. The following statements, among others, show this intrinsic struggle in the young people interviewed: *“I am a person who does not have papers, does not have a job* (E.2). *When entering a bar or*

shop in Barcelona, I feel that everyone is watching. I get angry because I also have money to pay. I'm not stealing!!! ” (I.4).

With this, an ontological difference is expressed between migrants and locals, those who have valid papers and those who do not have papers (nationality, residence permits, studies, etc.) who automatically must work in “black-illegal” legally illegitimate condition to stay in the destination country.

Institutional Racism: Naturalized Cultural Production of Social Discrimination

Upon entering the country of destination and being identified as a young unaccompanied migrant, an entire institutional journey begins to operate, ranging from suspicion controls to institutionalization in the so-called “child protection centers”. This is where present institutional racism becomes latent, which keeps the collective within a system of hegemonic, paternalistic, welfare, and social oppression power: *“I would like to go to an open center where I could go out to find work by myself without educators. I would go out just to wander down the street. But they don't stop” (I.2).* *“I can't do what I want [...] I would like to be able to decide where to go out and when to get up” (I.4).* Under the legal imperative of “protection”, the opportunities for social community inclusion of the group are severely limited: *“I cannot relate to people from outside, only with children from the center” (I.5).* Everything lies perpetuating their situation of vulnerability and feeding the existing stigma and rejection.

On the other hand, the intrinsic characteristics of institutional functioning cause the saturation of the resources of approach and treatment of the group, chronicling the situation of social exclusion and documentary regularization: *“There is a great saturation of the system caused by the absence of places in reception centers and bureaucratic slowness in document regularization processes” (IC).* This historical dynamic is accompanied by a series of problems to be able to integrate into any institutional educational, work, or health device. *“For me, it is important to study and work. Now I am not doing any courses. I feel bad, I don't like it. I would like the mandatory and then something more specific” (E.4).* *“No, I don't know why I do not get the passport [...] it was two weeks since my birthday (18 years) and now I don't know what will happen” (I.1).* *“It worries me because I don't have a passport, I don't have anything” (I.6);* which increases their position of vulnerability within the host country.

Methodological Approach to the Institution: Managing Differences

The institution is established under a behavioral educational methodology. It does not allow an intervention focused on the social or individual needs of the group. Also, the initial objectives of the service have not changed even though the demands of the group are different.

The mission of the service remains the same as in its creation without adapting to the new needs of young people. The lack of adaptation of the service to the new needs does not allow a real inclusion within the community. Currently, we find a

profile of young people lacking opportunities to work, access to training courses, etc. (IC).

On the other hand, the focus on the documentation process forgets the approach and presence of resources that facilitate social inclusion and community contact. Thus, the little information provided to young people related to the status of their documentary situation influences their “becoming”, creating great uncertainty in their future: *“No, I don't know why I do not get a passport [...] It was two weeks since my birthday (18 years) and now I don't know what will happen [...] I don't know, it's very difficult”* (I.2). Consequently, it increases the situation of vulnerability and limits social and occupational rights.

In the development of the practical stay, we observed that the main objective of the praxis and methodology developed by the professionals of the institution is the scope of group control. To do this, young people must reduce their right to individual autonomy, needing the constant supervision and authorization of a professional to perform tasks. At the team meeting, the coordinator said: *“we need to increase group control, group A and B should not cross each other during the change of dining rooms, there should be an educator supervising in the bathroom and they can only enter two by two. Controlling the group is the only way to avoid conflicts”* (O.3).

On the other hand, the set of professional dynamics and power relationships implies the appearance of molded attitudes in the referent professional status. Among the professional staff, there is the figure of Arabic-speaking interpreters/translators. However, the public administration does not offer enough resources to facilitate inclusion and communication with young people of sub-Saharan and Asian origin. Interprofessional communication is also hindered, which has repercussions in teamwork deficiencies, coordination, and distribution of tasks and responsibilities: *“Throughout yesterday, several things happened. Through an audio they explain an event that is expressed differently in the incident book”* (O.3). This accounts for the difficulties of communication and the problems that institutional management entails.

Occupational Panopticon: Surveillance of the Physical Environment

The physical environment determines the appearance of circumstances that affect the occupational performance of the group. The location of the service, the geographic isolation, and scarce public transport service, respond to the decrease in autonomy, community participation, and mobility in the community. *“We cannot go down to town because then there is no educator who comes to pick us up”* (E.1) However, its outdoor spaces favor the performance of leisure and recreational occupations. The contextual characteristics of the interior of the center cause a decrease in privacy and their own space: *“We observed that the boys use blankets on the beds to create personal space within a shared room”* (O.4). Likewise, there is little differentiation of the spaces, implying a transfer of erroneous information and feedback. *“The educator wants to start the literacy class and half of the boys are lying on the sofas in the room instead of sitting on the chairs to start the class”* (O.4). This shows the methodological difficulty in creating an appropriate space and environment for social bonding and learning.

Occupational Deprivation: As a Limitation of Autonomy and Cultural Insertion

The paternalism and assistance characteristic of the system in the institution, reproduced by the professionals of the center, hurts the personal autonomy of young people, who yearn for a greater degree of it. *“I would like to go to an open center where I could go out to look for work on my own without educators. I would go out just to wander down the street. But they don't let us go”* (I.2).

The institution determines the degree and possibility of occupational participation of young people by imposing a pre-established routine, leaving very little space for free choice and occupational exploration. *“It's always the same, what you do today you also do tomorrow [...] It's good for them, for educators, it's easier. For me it is not important, I just do what I have to do, period. [...] We do class and sports, I would like to do something else, but I don't know what I can do”* (I.2). This hinders the development of the sense and occupational identity of young people, showing difficulty in identifying meaningful occupations.

In contrast, the young people in the host group show greater satisfaction with their routine, highlighting as more relevant occupations in the area of productivity. *“I learn from work with Manel. We do maintenance, internet installations, doors, and locks. I like it very much. At 16 I have to go to the course until 8 and Thursday until 9. Every day I learn more about work and every day is better”* (I.6).

This shows how important job skills represent for the future performance of young people and their insertion into the new culture. Hence how relevant labor inclusion can be as part of a community inclusion strategy.

Everyday Life: Over-structuring the Routine

The basic activities of daily life such as waking up, personal hygiene, taking medication, etc. are determined and supervised under the criteria of professionals. Therefore, they are instrumentalized, observing the null participation of young people in most of them. This hurts the degree of autonomy and control over one's routine, hinders the possibility of developing tools and skills necessary for the transition to adult life and a sense of belonging to the community. *“We observed that every morning young people are awakened by educators and they are not responsible for taking care of their own health”* (O.1).

Leisure activities are proposed by the center, preventing participation in their choice, preparation, and execution, being on some occasions, lacking in interest and motivation. *“We observed that throughout an activity in which they are offered to choose the weekend outing, difficulties appear to identify tastes, hobbies and interests”* (O.2).

The area of productivity is established as a primary need of the group. However, it is limited by the responsible institution and administrations. Work and training are identified as the occupation give more relevance. *“Because here I come to work, to learn how to work”* (I.6). Young people from the emergency group cannot access formal training, a fact that generates discontent and demotivation *“For me, it is important to study and work. Now I am not doing any courses. I feel bad, I don't like it”* (I.4).

On the other hand, within the institution, hierarchical relationships marked by cultural hegemony between the different ethnic groups are reproduced. Culture is identified as a determining element in access and choice of occupations, showing differences according to ethnic groups. Also, there is a differentiation of spaces and unequal distribution of resources in the center:

The television control was always at the disposal of the majority ethnic group (O.2). Depending on the ethnic group, they carry out some sporting activities or others (O.2). Throughout these years at the center, I have been able to observe relational patterns among young people who repeat themselves [...] playing football or badminton, it has always been determined by the origin of the young person. If you look at it, it is very strange to see a Pakistani boy playing football or a Moroccan boy playing badminton (IC). Sometimes I would like to play soccer, but then I think that they always have the ball and we always have the shovels (I.1).

These facts are constituted as elements that negatively influence the choice and occupational participation of the minority ethnic group.

Finally, the construction of hegemonic masculinity is shown through occupations. A preference is observed in carrying out sports and physical contact activities. In the behavior, way of speaking, and way of relating to each other, sometimes of a macho character, the need to differentiate from the feminine and construction of their masculinity is evidenced. *“During the cooking activity, on more than one occasion, the young people said that cooking was a woman's thing and at first they were reluctant to participate” (O.2).* It is important to note that the group is made up only of young people who live a masculinization process where archetypes of the hegemonic gender stand out, such as the need to exercise power and control, sometimes seeking to confront the other, affirming their intelligence, self-confidence, and strength avoiding expressing their feelings and trying to show and highlight their capabilities.

This is increased with the migration process and its institutionalization stage, in which young people move away from positive relationships with peers, a fundamental element for the optimal development of psychosocial autonomy. *“It is important to me to meet people and spend time with them. It's easier like this [...] Before, in my town, I had my friends, my family, my girlfriend. I walked, every night. Now I have no one. I miss it” (I.6).* This process is clearly expressed in the group analyzed, where there is a detachment and loss of previous social relationships of trust, causing the young person at the beginning of the establishment in the host country to adopt behaviors where interpersonal contact with equals is scarce: *“It is difficult for me to talk to outsiders (...) on my mobile phone, talking to other people is better, easier” (I.3). “I do not tell problems to boys from the center, I speak little with them; we respect and that's it” (I.5). “Although we sleep, eat and live together, we never do things together” (I.2).* We observed that the result of this determines a very scarce interaction with the rest, the intimate relationships are few or nonexistent, and the brief and superficial treatment.

Community Mediation: Difficulty in Creating New Social Ties

The social environment is consolidated under terms of impoverishment and lack of social support, formed only by close family, friends from the country of origin, and educators from the center. Young people express the need to create and expand a strong support network. *“It is important for me to meet people and spend time with them. It’s easier like this [...] Before, in my town, I had my friends, my family, my girlfriend. I walked, every night. Now I have no one. I miss it”* (E.6). These experiences show the urgency of promoting collective occupation through the link to community spaces and environments, which allow recognition and intercultural learning of young people, and increase the sense of cohesion, community, well-being, relevance, and social identity.

Discussion

Research on unaccompanied youths coincides with the cultural construction of the idealized migratory imaginary that we have found in the study. For example, Cabrera & Valdez-Gardea (2015) found that young Mexicans who emigrate to the United States do so by relying on influenced representations by radio, television, or internet or by ideas of significant others, the pattern of emigrating without documentation and running the risks of what it means is also repeated, which in this context facilitates the desire to achieve the “American dream”.

In the same way, coinciding results are identified around the institutional problems of the receiving State. Specifically, in Spain, we see different investigations carried out (Belattar, 2014; Juaristi, 2017; Ruiz & López-Riba, 2020) where this is an evidenced complex problem for several decades. For example, Laiz-Moreira (2011) refers to the administrative and bureaucratic difficulties that leave young migrants in a vulnerable situation, generating processes of social exclusion in the group.

Specifically, the investigation refers to the impediments that the established deadlines to obtain the documentation imply for immediate intervention with young people, which often culminates in their escape. One of the biggest problems they face is the anxiety in the face of their most urgent needs: study, getting papers, and work.

On the other hand, Belattar (2014) warns of the need to know the different realities of the immigrant population to attend in the best possible way to the development and situation of these young people and their families. He poses the challenge of professionals who work in direct contact with young people, to understand and train in intercultural skills to be able to fulfill the socio-educational work.

Juaristi (2017) refers to the duality faced by young people when they are constituted as “minors”, where they are given protection until they are 18 years old. However, when they reach the age of majority, they automatically acquire full legal capacity and are left in a helpless situation. Hence, Juaristi (2017) proposes the urgency of working at the socio-community level to influence social networks that can strengthen the inclusion of young people, since they are usually small and homogeneous, being accessible social capital is limited, especially when we think of institutionalized young people in Catalonia.

These reviewed investigations show the relevance of the findings on the impact of the migratory process at a personal level, the investigations reaffirm the relevance of this

process in the personal identity of the occupational performance of young people. Montoya et al. (2020) consider that young people share a background of identity and experiences, which is imperative to know and recognize their strengths to be able to visualize and use them, in the collective life of society. Facilitating the complex process of adaptation to a new society that they do not know, where they do not master the language, do not feel “part of” and must learn to behave in the new social, educational, and family context.

Torrealba & Santoja (2005) agrees with the need to reproduce hegemonic masculinity. The dilemma faced by many of the young people they are trying to solve is: how to recompose themselves to their gender-gender identity, how to adjust their project without giving up an image of themselves that gives them confidence and security.

Some authors (Esteban-Guitart & Saubich, 2013; Martín-Palomino, 2015) speak of a population that is multi-situated in two or more spaces, and that does not come to form a homogeneous whole, which must be considered part of the same complex unit sometimes difficult to integrate. That is, we hope that the group of young people participate in actions in the community, understood as a facilitating means for the constitution of the own and intrinsic characteristics of the person and, ultimately, their development through recognition, participation, and social interaction with the other (Pino et al., 2015).

The limitations of this study are related to the number of participants and the difficulty in finding young people who will achieve a medium-high level of command of the Spanish language that would allow fluent communication to identify their processes, occupations, and personal challenges. Also, the rotation of young people, who often leave the centers or are transferred to other units.

Conclusions

The experiences of the group of young institutionalized migrants in Catalonia show their immersion in an inequitable, structurally biased, and violent world. In this approach from Occupational Therapy, it became evident the southern place that young people occupy in the host society, the situation of violation and inequality of opportunities that are faced with their institutionalization process in the destination country.

Above all, when we analyze the restrictions of their interests, in the limitation of their community participation, and the surveillance of their daily life occupations. These barriers and inequalities harm the healthy migratory process of young people, in their attempt to achieve well-being they are faced with forms that perpetuate their precariousness and poverty with little possibility of insertion in the destination country.

Therefore, we can conclude that institutionalization takes refuge in a legal imperative of “protection” for “minors”, which ends up reproducing a whole system of colonial, racial, and welfare discrimination that violates the human rights of young migrants.

Finally, Southern Occupational Therapy seeks to transform this situation and context, making the human rights of young people visible for their incorporation into their new community and culture. Thus, establishing an ethical principle in the relationship to work on justice, social welfare, and quality of life of young migrants.

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Author's Contributions

Laia Ruiz and Cristina Robles has participated in the design of the research, in the compilation of information, analysis, and interpretation of the data, in the critical review of the manuscript, and finally, in the preparation and approval of this article. Juan Andrés Pino-Morán has participated in the analysis, interpretation of the data, the critical review of the manuscript, and finally, in the preparation and approval of this article. All authors approved the final version of the text.

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