





Positive Youth Development Programmes for Adolescents in the educational context: systematic review

-  **Adriana Álamo-Muñoz**¹, Universidad de La Laguna (España)
-  **Juan Carlos Martín Quintana**, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (España)
-  **Jesús Alemán Falcón**, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (España)
-  **Miriam del Mar Cruz-Sosa**, Universidad de La Laguna (España)

Abstract

Programmes from the Positive Youth Development approach favour integral development, promoting positive behaviours and reducing the probability of risky behaviours. But what are the characteristics of these programmes implemented in schools and what is their relationship with school adjustment? To answer this question, a systematic review was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 protocol. After searching the WoS, Scopus, ERIC, PsycINFO and PubMed databases and selecting the articles according to the inclusion criteria (1st Positive Youth Development programmes, 2nd targeted at adolescents, 3rd implemented in schools, 4th evaluated), the main findings of 15 articles (between 2008-2020) are presented. It has been found that Positive Youth Development programmes applied in the educational context are in line with the theoretical approach. The most widespread model being the 5Cs. Despite being well-founded, not all of them consider relevant aspects for schools to become positive environments (involving the whole educational community or guaranteeing loyalty to the programme). In the standards of evidence, most of them show shortcomings in reporting on the implementation process. In conclusion, it is relevant to consider the results of this review to design, implement and evaluate Positive Youth Development programmes that promote school continuity in schools.

Resumen

Los programas desde el enfoque del Desarrollo Positivo en la Adolescencia favorecen el desarrollo integral, promueven conductas positivas y disminuyen la probabilidad de que se den conductas de riesgo. Pero ¿qué características tienen estos programas implementados en los centros educativos y cuál es su relación con el ajuste escolar? Para responder a esta cuestión, se realizó una revisión sistemática siguiendo el protocolo PRISMA 2020. Tras buscar en las bases de datos WoS, Scopus, ERIC, PsycINFO y PubMed y seleccionar los artículos según los criterios de inclusión (1º programas de Desarrollo Positivo Adolescente, 2º dirigidos a adolescentes, 3º implementados en centros educativos, 4º evaluados), se presentan los hallazgos de 15 artículos (entre 2008-2020). Se ha comprobado que los programas de Desarrollo Positivo Adolescente aplicados en el contexto educativo se ajustan al enfoque teórico. El modelo más diseminado es el de las 5Cs. A pesar de estar bien fundamentados, no todos tienen en cuenta aspectos relevantes para lograr que los centros educativos se conviertan en entornos positivos (involucrar a toda la comunidad educativa o garantizar la fidelización al programa). En los estándares de evidencia la mayoría presenta carencias al informar sobre el proceso de implementación. En conclusión, es relevante tener en cuenta los resultados de esta revisión para diseñar, implementar y evaluar programas de Desarrollo Positivo Adolescente que promuevan la continuidad escolar en los centros educativos.

Keywords / Palabras clave

Positive Youth Development, Educational Environment, Compulsory Education, Evidence-Based Programmes, Formal Education, Adolescence, Systematic Review.

Desarrollo Positivo en la Adolescencia, Ambiente Educativo, Escolaridad Obligatoria, Programas Basados en Evidencias, Educación Formal, Programas de Educación, Adolescencia, Revisión Sistemática.

¹ Autor de correspondencia: aalamomu@ull.edu.es

1. Introduction

Positive Youth Development (PYD) contrasts with the negative view of adolescence by creating a framework focused on adolescent strengths, enabling them to thrive with a healthy life trajectory (Beck & Wiium, 2019; Benson, 2003; Lerner et al., 2004; Oliva et al., 2010). This perspective promotes comprehensive interventions that foster positive behaviours and reduce the likelihood of risky behaviours. The objective of this review is to analyse the characteristics of PYD programmes implemented in educational settings and their relationship with academic adjustment through a systematic review procedure. Additionally, it aims to ascertain whether these programmes consider conditions that guarantee the creation of positive environments for students. Given the growing importance of evidence-based educational practices, this review also seeks to identify elements of these standards reported in publications, as programmes with published results are presumed to adhere to this practice.

2. Theoretical Framework

Several models address positive development during adolescence. Some focus on a single concept as sufficient for its promotion. For instance, Larson (2000) centres this development on personal initiative, whereas Damon (2008) emphasises the need to address life's purpose. In contrast, some authors propose approaches encompassing various aspects. One of the most widespread models is the 5Cs. Initially, Little (1993) proposed a grouping of four factors to promote PYD: competence, confidence, connection, and character. Later, Lerner (2004) added a fifth C: caring and compassion. They suggest that having these five Cs leads to a sixth, contribution, which reflects what the person contributes to their family, environment, and community. Another significant model is Benson's Developmental Assets (2003, 2011) and his colleagues at the Search Institute, which include internal and external adolescent resources. The higher the concentration of these assets, the greater the development, visible through indicators such as academic success, civic behaviours, self-care, risk avoidance, and overcoming adverse situations. Oliva et al. (2010) developed the Flourishing model, based on five developmental areas represented by a flower: personal, cognitive, emotional, moral, and social development. Personal development is central, as it promotes and is enhanced by the other areas, reinforcing each other.

2.1. PYD Programmes in the Educational Context

From the PYD perspective, educational institutions are fundamental agents (Lerner et al., 2005; Oliva et al., 2010) as they can promote developmental elements that contribute to school continuity (Beck & Wiium, 2019; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). Thus, it is crucial to provide students with opportunities for positive development. However, to foster this, educational settings must be positive environments characterized by establishing connections with supportive adult role models, a climate of affection and safety, and opportunities for skill development (Lázaro-Visa et al., 2019; Lerner et al., 2005; Oliva et al., 2011; Pertegal et al., 2010). This is ensured by implementing programmes with structured activities (Catalano et al., 2004). Some authors highlight important criteria for their design and implementation. It is essential to focus on fostering students' strengths rather than preventing risky behaviours. Moreover, programmes should promote overall development, be intensive with a minimum duration of nine months, ideally lasting several academic years to maintain their effects (Catalano et al., 2004; Oliva et al., 2010; Pertegal et al., 2010). Another critical aspect is the involvement of adults and the community, with strategies to promote participation of students, families, and the community, i.e., multidomain programmes (Pertegal et al., 2010). Additionally, ensuring teacher training and involvement is necessary (Bergeron et al., 2011; Pertegal et al., 2010; Uriarte, 2006). Teachers should be equipped to handle their role's challenges, improve their competencies, act creatively, proactively, and with humour, and be resilient role models and support sources for students. It is also necessary to measure intervention outcomes, control quality, and fidelity of implementation (Catalano et al., 2004). This demonstrates achieving the designed objectives and establishes conditions ensuring success (Mihalic & Elliott, 2015). Educational policies increasingly favour evidence-based programmes. Different evidence standards agree on the necessity of grounding programmes in a theoretical basis, developing structured content in a manual, and conducting rigorous studies to evaluate effectiveness. Moreover, evaluations should include variables influencing the implementation process to determine possible variations in results (Axford et al., 2012; Slavin, 2017; Walter et al., 2005). The European Family Support Network

developed its standard for evaluating evidence-based programmes supporting families, children, and adolescents, providing a common framework for European programmes (EurofamNet, 2020).

3. Methodology

The PRISMA 2020 protocol (Page et al., 2021a, 2021b) was followed to address the following research questions:

1. What characteristics do the included programmes have, and what is their relationship with school adjustment?
2. Do the identified programmes consider relevant aspects for promoting PYD beyond their theoretical foundation?
3. What elements of evidence standards are specified in the articles?

Methodological agreement was reached with four experts for selecting criteria and scientific production. The analysis for article inclusion was conducted in two steps: individual review of texts by each expert to apply inclusion criteria, followed by consensus on final contributions. Discussions and conclusions were conducted simultaneously. EndNote X9 was used for automatic duplicate removal, manual elimination of non-detected articles based on titles and keywords, and database analysis.

3.1. Eligibility Criteria

3.1.1. Inclusion Criteria

Articles were selected if the programmes: a) addressed PYD elements; b) targeted adolescents (11-18 years); c) were implemented in secondary education schools; d) had evaluated interventions.

3.1.2. Exclusion Criteria

When the same programme had a longitudinal study with multiple publications, older publications presenting similar results were excluded. Thus, the most recent publications and those expanding results were retained.

3.2. Information Sources

The search was conducted in WoS, Scopus, ERIC, PsycINFO, and PubMed, ensuring compliance with evidence certainty evaluation criteria through indexed work assessments. The query (“positive youth development”) AND (program* OR intervention*) was used in all databases, limited to articles published in English from 2008-2020. Both the seminal and final databases are published in the Mendeley Data repository with DOI: <https://10.17632/p7bk9dmynx.1>.

3.3. Selection Process

A total of 2873 articles were imported into EndNote for selection - 809 in WoS, 1207 in Scopus, 305 in ERIC, 41 in PsycINFO, and 511 in PubMed. After removing 1234 duplicates, 1639 articles remained for review (Figure 1). Articles were excluded based on title and abstract if they did not address PYD programmes (1180); were not implemented in schools (318); or lacked evaluation (91). If titles and abstracts lacked sufficient information, experts read the full text. Subsequently, the full text of 50 articles was reviewed, and the exclusion criteria applied. Thirty-five articles were excluded: 31 evaluated the PATHS programme, 2 the Changing Lives programme, and 2 an adaptation of the PATHS programme in Macao. Finally, 15 articles from 10 different programmes were selected.

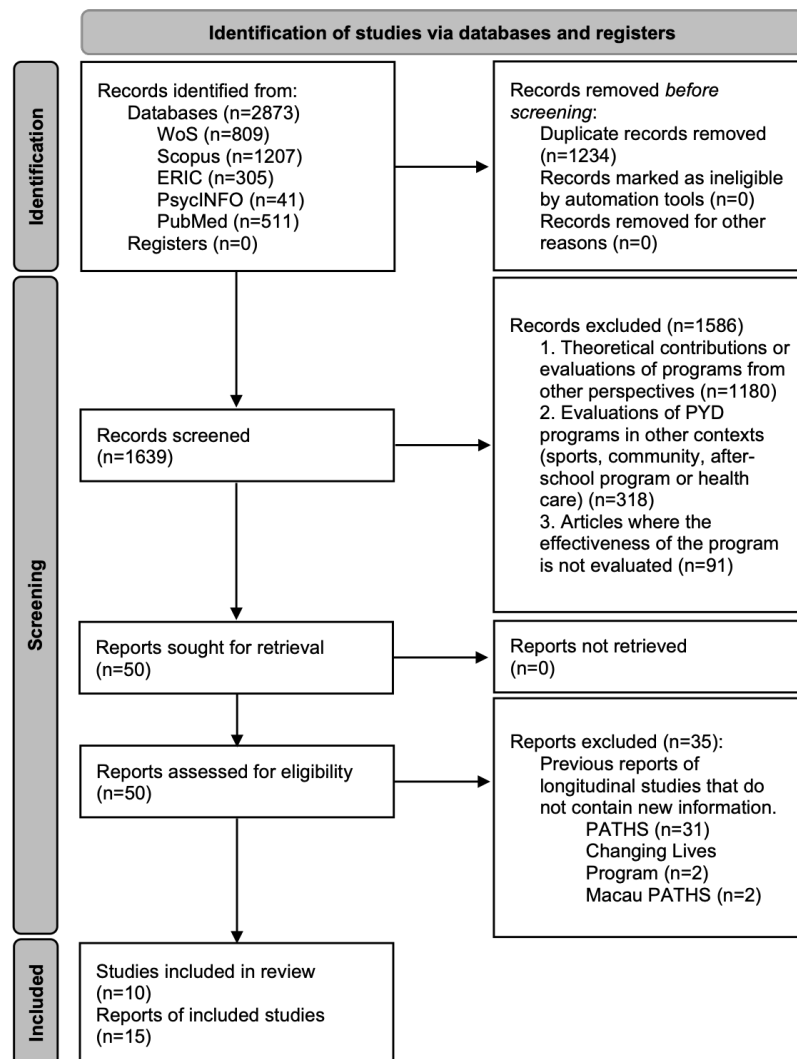


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram. Source: Page et al. (2020)

3.4. Data Collection Process

From the articles, information was extracted for their description (Table 1). Additionally, the characteristics of the programmes were analysed in relation to the promotion of Positive Youth Development (PYD): theoretical approach; global intervention (at least five constructs); intensity and continuity (at least nine months of weekly intervention); multidomain (intervention with adolescents, families, and the community); teacher training and involvement; evaluation design (including measures to assess positive outcomes and reduction in risky behaviours); fidelity and quality of implementation (indicating mechanisms to measure these) (Table 2). Finally, information on the evidence of the programmes was extracted (EurofamNet, 2020) (Tables 3 and 4). Criteria analysed included: identification (authors), description (scope, area of action, theoretical bases, manualisation, duration, population and target group), implementation (organisation - place of implementation, training, technical support, follow-up, fidelity - and evaluation - quasi-experimental design or randomised controlled trial, standardised tools and longitudinal time measures) and impact (positive outcomes and effect sizes ranging from moderate to large). The assessment of reporting bias was not addressed as this study aims to analyse the explicit information in the publications.

4. Contributions

4.1. Description of the Articles

Of the 15 selected studies (Table 1), six are from China (40%), four from the United States (26.67%), one from Canada, one from Spain, one from Lithuania, one from Portugal, and one from Turkey (6.66% each). Three articles evaluate the PATHS programme (20%), three the Changing Lives Programme (20%), three adaptations of PATHS (20%)—two in Shanghai and one in Macau—and the remaining articles assess various other programmes (Amplify, PERGEL, DPAR, Try Volunteering, Challenge To Be +, and Positive Action).

Regarding the evaluation design, 66.6% of the articles present a quasi-experimental design study, and 26.67% employ a randomised controlled trial. Concerning research methodology, 80% are quantitative studies and 20% are mixed-method studies. Most studies had a sample size ranging from 100 to 250 participants (40%). Analysing the instruments, self-reports were used, and only 40% of the studies employed specific scales based on their theoretical foundation. Additionally, six of the articles include tools to measure problematic or negative aspects. In terms of school adjustment, many authors relate the improvement of academic performance and adjustment to the promotion of Positive Youth Development (Beck & Wiium, 2019; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008); however, this was considered in only three programmes. In this regard, the DPAR programme found significant improvements in academic performance, while the PATHS programme and its adaptation in Macau reported reduced academic maladjustment.

On the other hand, three of the programmes did not adopt a universal approach. The Amplify programme is specific to girls aged 12 to 13; the Changing Lives Programme targets adolescents at risk of social exclusion; and the Positive Action programme is aimed at schools with low academic performance and students from low-income backgrounds. Regarding age ranges, 40% of the programmes were directed at students from early to middle adolescence; 33.33% at middle to late adolescence; and 26.67% focused on early adolescence. Finally, thirteen of the programmes were conducted in urban school settings (86.67%) and two in rural settings (13.33%).

Table 1

Description of the Articles (N=15)

Intervention design and length, country, and program name	Participants and setting	Intervention characteristics	Evaluation variables	Primary outcomes
Gilham et al., (2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-experimental design, non-randomized stepped-wedge design. 12 weeks. 6 weeks each academic year. Canada. Amplify. 	EIG= 52; DIG= 63 N=115. Girls between 12 and 13 years old. Rural schools.	12 sessions divided into 2 interventions. Eighteen of the 56 activities that comprise the programme were selected...	Development Assets.	+ in vulnerable participants. NS in the total sample.
Paricio et al., (2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-experimental design of repeated measurements. Pilot study. 10 months. Spain. DPAR. 	IG N=83, CG N=93. 50,6% girls y 49,4% boys, between 11 and 15 years old. Rural schools	21 units integrated in five modules, in addition to the introductory and closing modules (during school hours, for 50 minutes). It is taught by the teacher, a PYD professional and an alumnus of the center.	Self-esteem. Group Identification. Empathy. Alexithymia. Social Skills. Planning and Decision Making. Moral Values.	+ in all variables.
Shek y Zhu, (2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RCT study design. 3 years. China. PATHS. 	IG N=3607, CG N=3574 55,6% boys IG, 53,8% boys CG, 12-15 years old. 23 schools IG, 24 schools CG.	120 units of 30 minutes, to be applied during the three years of junior high school. The units were implemented during school hours by teachers, social workers, and support professionals.	Thriving.	U-shaped trajectory in GI and GC. Smaller decrease in GI.

Truskauskaitė-Kunevičienė et al., (2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-experimental design of repeated measurements. Pilot study. 8 weeks. Lithuania. Programa Try Volunteering. 	IG N=351, CG N=264 44,2% girls IG, 40,9% girls CG, 13-17 years old. 1 IG school, 1 CG school.	8 sessions of 45 minutes conducted in the classroom. At the end of the program, a volunteer fair was organized to give students different options where they could volunteer.	Competence. Confidence. Connection. Character. Caring.	NS in total sample. + individual and subgroup evaluation.
Zhu y Shek, (2020): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-experimental matched-pairs design, multiple waves of measures. 3 years. China. PATHS Shanghai adaptation. 	IG 505 + CG 539	Adaptation of PATHS Programs to the Characteristics of Shanghai (simplified chinese characters, from cantonese to mandarin, material adaptation).	Development Assets. Satisfaction with Life. Depression level. Delinquency traits.	NS (test x group x grade) + assets in the IG Lower increase in depression and delinquency.
Ma et al., (2019): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RCT study design, matched samples. 3 years. China. PATHS. 	N=9226 7137= Level 1 program 1015= Level 2 program 1074=in both levels.		Development Assets. Satisfaction with Life. Thriving.	+ in all sizes and for all levels.
Shek et al., (2019): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RCT study design. 3 years. China. PATHS Shanghai adaptation. 	859 valid diaries 14 out of 24 randomized IG schools.		Satisfaction with the program. Benefits of the program. Instructors.	86% positive opinions.
Eichas et al., (2018): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-experimental design, non-randomized stepped-wedge design. Between 8 and 12 weeks. United States of America. Changing Lives Program. 	IG N= 140; CG N= 98 14-18 years old. Miami Alternative Secondary Schools.	Between 8 and 12 sessions of 45 minutes to 1 hour.	Conflict resolution. Expression of feelings. Life goals. Problem internalization and externalization.	+ specific effects. + cascading effects of specific results.
Freire et al., (2018): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-experimental design, mixed method. 8 weeks. Portugal. Challenge To be + 	IG N= 74; CG N= 25 13-17 years old. Urban school.	90-minute sessions for 8 weeks, during school hours.	Self-concept Self-esteem Psychological well-being Life satisfaction Subjective evaluation of each session and general program.	+ self-esteem and life satisfaction. NS self-concept and psychological well-being.
Kagitcibasi et al., (2018): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RCT study design. 14 weeks. Turkey. PERGEL. 	IG N=511, CG N=418. 11-12 years old. Istanbul urban schools.	Integrated into the regular guidance and counseling curriculum. Two trainers delivering the program in each class.	Social Agency. Self-efficacy. Mentality.	+ in 10 of 12 constructs.
Eichas et al., (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-experimental design, non-randomized stepped-wedge design. Between 8 and 12 weeks. United States of America. Changing Lives Program. 	IG N= 113; CG N= 96 14- 18 years old Miami Alternative Secondary Schools.		Life goal. Self-discovery. Self-build. Identity resolution. Problem behaviors.	+ self-discovery and self-construction, development of life goals, identity synthesis and internalization of problems.
Lewis et al., (2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quasi-experimental matched-pairs design, 	14 schools matched N=1170 11-13 years old.	Classroom-based curriculum. 140 for 6th grade and 70 lessons for	Self-development and self-control. Peer affiliations. Ethics.	+ lower decrease of developmental assets in IG.

multiple waves of measures. • 3 years. • United States of America. • Positive Action.		7th and 8th grades (15-minute lessons).	Social skills. Conflict resolution.	
Luk et al., (2013): • Quasi-experimental matched samples design, mixed method. • Pilot study. • 3 years. • China. • Project PATHS Macau adaptation.	IG N= 118; CG N= 118 236 matched students. Two secondary schools in Macao.	Adaptation of PATHS Programs to the Characteristics of Macao (local terminology, government structure, and indigenous customs).	Development Assets. Life Satisfaction. Behavioral Intention. School adjustment. Program assessment.	+ for developmental assets. + less academic and behavioral maladjustment. 73.1% very positive evaluation of the program.
Eichas et al., (2010): • Quasi-experimental design, non-randomized stepped-wedge design. • Between 8 and 12 weeks. • United States of America. • Changing Lives Program.	IG N= 117; CG N= 61 14-18 years old. Miami Alternative Secondary Schools.		Positive identity development. Problem behaviors Identity resolution level. Psychosocial development level.	+ in all variables studied.
Shek y Sun, (2010): • RCT study design. • 3 years. • China. • PATHS.	IG N=3170, CG N=3808 19 IG schools, 24 CG schools.		Development Assets. Life Satisfaction. Thriving. School adjustment. Program assessment.	+ in all variables studied.

4.2. Analysis of Aspects for the Promotion of Positive Youth Development

Among the analysed programmes, five meet the majority of the necessary conditions for the promotion of Positive Youth Development (PYD): DPAR, PATHS, its adaptations, and Positive Action (Table 2). All these programmes adopt a comprehensive approach to PYD, which is fundamental to ensuring the success of such programmes (Catalano et al., 2004).

Additionally, although there is variation in the duration of the programmes, they can be described as intensive and continuous, as they are conducted weekly over a period of at least nine months. Notably, the PATHS programme, its adaptations, and Positive Action extend beyond a single academic year. This is the ideal scenario to maintain effects and achieve lasting changes (Catalano et al., 2004; Pertegal et al., 2010).

Regarding multidomain intervention, the more domains involved, the greater the potential for creating a positive environment for development (Pertegal et al., 2010). Although most programmes involve more than one domain, only the DPAR and Positive Action programmes emphasise the role of the family and community in the intervention, planning actions in which they can participate.

Teacher training and involvement is a requirement shared by the five programmes. This aspect is crucial as it equips teachers for implementation and enables them to act as positive role models, compensating for deficiencies students may experience in other contexts (Bergeron et al., 2011; Pertegal et al., 2010; Uriarte, 2006).

The final requirements pertain to evaluation design, fidelity, and the quality of implementation (Catalano et al., 2004). The PATHS programme and its adaptations exhibit the greatest robustness as they measure multiple aspects related to improvements, implementation, and fidelity.

Table 2
Aspects for the Promotion of Positive Youth Development

Programme	Intervention Approach	Global approach	Intensive and continuous	Multi-domain	Teacher training	Evaluation design	Fidelity and quality
Amplify	Development assets						
DPAR	Flourishing model	X	X	X	X	X	
Programa Try Volunteering	5Cs	X		X		X	
PATHS	Positive developmental constructs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adaptación Shanghai	PATHS Positive developmental constructs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Changing Lives Program	Lives Transformative Participatory Approach	X		X		X	
Challenge To be +	5Cs					X	
PERGEL	Development assets					X	
Positive Action	5Cs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adaptación Macao	PATHS Positive developmental constructs	X	X	X	X	X	X

4.3. Analysis of the Elements of Evidence Standards in Programmes

The assumption was made that programmes publishing their results are evidence-based. However, it was pertinent to verify what evidence the articles collected and identify the main shortcomings. According to the criteria outlined by EurofamNet (2020), certain relevant information is often omitted (Tables 3 and 4).

For instance, authorship or a bibliographic review of the programme manual is rarely presented. This is one of the most critical points as it contributes to ensuring faithful reproduction (Axford et al., 2012; Mihalic & Elliott, 2015). Additionally, descriptions regarding the organisation, sources of support, follow-up, or guarantees of fidelity are seldom included. These conditions are typically overlooked due to the limited resources available to researchers. More funding is allocated to design than to implementation, which is a significant oversight by administrations (Fixsen et al., 2013). This review clearly illustrates this issue. The PATHS programme, which includes all elements of evidence and has been disseminated nationally, benefits from greater funding that allows for large-scale implementation, necessary support and follow-up, and appropriate fidelity measures.

In terms of evaluation, most programmes employ a pre-post-test design. As Axford et al. (2012) assert, this is a common deficiency since effects tend to diminish over time. Once again, the PATHS programme and its adaptations include measures beyond the post-test, highlighting the importance of sufficient resources to develop a robust evaluation design.

Regarding impact, it is noteworthy that in two programmes, significant results were not obtained for the entire sample, leading to analyses with specific groups. In the Amplify programme, vulnerable participants were identified, showing improvements in their assets. In the Try Volunteering programme, individual and subgroup analyses revealed differences in some constructs, mainly confidence and character. Analysing the variables that moderate programme effectiveness and individual changes is emphasised by most evidence standards. It is important to consider how the individuality of participants and trainers affects programme effectiveness for future implementations (Axford et al., 2012; Mihalic & Elliott, 2015; Slavin, 2017; Walter et al., 2005).

Table 3
Analysis of EurofamNet Standards (2020), Part I

Programme	Identification			Description			
	Authorship	Scope	Ámbito de acción	Authorship	Scope	Duración	Authorship
Amplify			Amplify			Amplify	
DPAR		X	DPAR		X	DPAR	
Programa Try Volunteering	X		Programa Try Volunteering	X		Programa Try Volunteering	X
PATHS	X	X	PATHS	X	X	PATHS	X
Adaptación PATHS Shanghai	X	X	Adaptación PATHS Shanghai	X	X	Adaptación PATHS Shanghai	X
Changing Lives Program		X	Changing Lives Program		X	Changing Lives Program	
Challenge To be +		X	Challenge To be +		X	Challenge To be +	
PERGEL		X	PERGEL		X	PERGEL	
Positive Action	X	X	Positive Action	X	X	Positive Action	X
Adaptación PATHS Macao	X	X	Adaptación PATHS Macao	X	X	Adaptación PATHS Macao	X

Table 4
Analysis of EurofamNet Standards (2020), Part II

Programmes	Implementation							Impact	
	Organization			Evaluation				Significant results	Effect size
	Location	Training	Technical support	Monitoring	Fidelity	Design	Instruments		
Amplify	X	X					X		
DPAR	X	X	X			X	X		X
Programa Try Volunteering	X	X	X	X		X	X		X
PATHS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adaptación PATHS Shanghai	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Changing Lives Program	X					X	X		X
Challenge To be +	X	X				X	X		X
PERGEL	X	X	X	X		X	X		X
Positive Action	X	X			X	X	X		X
Adaptación PATHS Macao	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

5. Conclusions

Several recommendations arise from the findings of this study. Firstly, educational institutions should adopt the programme as their own, creating a positive climate and involving all teachers, families, and the community, as reliance on external personnel diminishes effectiveness.

In this vein, it is crucial to consider the theoretical model, the comprehensive approach to competencies, and the duration of the programme, with an extended timeframe necessary for greater reach.

This study supports the reliability of the results by ensuring that the evaluated programmes are evidence-based. However, when publishing results, it is essential to include aspects for dissemination (authorship, organisation, methodology, fidelity mechanisms, and implementation support).

Moreover, it is important to evaluate the implementation process by analysing the moderating and mediating variables that affect its efficacy. Aspects such as individual variables, group characteristics, and trainer attributes help identify who benefits the most and under what conditions.

It is confirmed that not all programmes have a true impact on Positive Youth Development or school continuity. However, if the highlighted aspects are considered and appropriate implementation conditions are ensured, successful interventions can be developed.

Regarding the limitations of this study, only programmes with published evaluations in scientific journals were included. Therefore, "grey literature" programmes, which may be effective and highly evidence-based, could be missing. Additionally, publications in other languages were not included. Consequently, the sample size is limited to 15 articles.

This review provides relevant information for programme developers and organisations that fund their design, implementation, evaluation, and continuity. As a future research direction, a meta-analysis of the common characteristics of the programmes is proposed, contributing to the creation of a reference framework for the analysis of evidence-based group programmes for Positive Youth Development.

Author's contribution

Adriana Álamo-Muñoz: conceptualization; methodology; validation; formal analysis; investigation; data curation; writing; visualization; project administration; original draft writing; writing (revision and editing) and funding acquisition. **Juan Carlos Martín Quintana y Jesús Alemán Falcón:** conceptualization; methodology; validation; formal analysis; investigation and supervision. **Miriam del Mar Cruz-Sosa:** conceptualization; methodology; validation; formal analysis; investigation; writing (revision and editing) and funding acquisition.

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