Empirical Article

The association between family dynamics and Positive Youth Development in secondary education students

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Introduction
The Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework is a strengths-based approach to adolescence that states that adolescents will thrive if nurtured by the right developmental assets. The family is one of the most important developmental assets, but studies about the relationship between family dynamics and the overall PYD of adolescents are scarce.

Objective
The present study aims to examine the associations between five family dynamics indicators and PYD, while taking into account the role of gender.

Methods
A cross-sectional study was carried out with a representative sample of adolescents from the city of Huelva, Spain ($n = 1{,}036$). Data were collected in 14 randomly selected secondary education schools. A Structural Equation Model (SEM) was tested to determine the effect of family dynamics on PYD, both for the whole sample and within each gender.

Results
The SEM for the whole sample showed a positive effect of the family dynamics factor on the PYD factor, explaining 51.8% of its variance. The indicators of satisfaction with the relationship with the mother, satisfaction with the relationship with the father, frequency of engaging in joint family activities on weekends, and frequency of sharing daily occurrences at home showed factor loadings over 0.50, while the indicator of frequency of contribution to household chores had the lowest loading. The family dynamics factor in the model with the subsample of girls explained 54.8% of the variance in PYD, while in the SEM with the subsample of boys this factor explained 47.6% of it. Additionally, among girls, the relative influence of satisfaction in the relationship with the parents, as well as of frequently discussing the day at home, is higher than among boys.

Conclusion
These results highlight a strong association between family dynamics indicators and PYD among adolescents and indicate that this relationship is stronger for girls than for boys. Intersectoral policies enhancing improvements in family dynamics (e.g., facilitating the practice of joint family activities on weekends) may have a relevant impact on PYD.

Key words: Positive Youth Development, family dynamics, adolescence, gender, secondary education, Structural Equation Modeling, Spain.

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INTRODUCTION

Studies on adolescence have traditionally focused on the negative aspects of this period, such as strained relationships with the parents, externalizing and internalizing behavioral problems, and risk behaviors. However, the focus is shifting toward a more positive view of adolescence – a strength-based approach – in which young people will likely thrive when they establish positive relationships within their contexts. It is important to study adolescents' development from a holistic perspective, instead of focusing solely on a series of concrete, negative outcomes. Research has recurrently shown that programs and interventions that focus predominantly on risk behaviors have limited impact (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008), whereas strength-based approaches have been proven effective in various contexts (Benson, Scales & Syvertsen, 2011; Burkhard, Robinson, Murray & Lerner, 2024). The Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, which originated in the 1990s as a response to the concept and treatment of adolescence as a crisis period, states that adolescents can thrive when the potential plasticity of human development is aligned with developmental assets (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas & Lerner, 2005). These developmental assets are the resources that young people can count on in their social context and within themselves that will foster their well-being and positive development (Benson, Scales & Syvertsen, 2011). One of the most extensively researched theories of PYD is Lerner's 5 Cs model (Lerner & Lerner, 2013), which states that positive development will happen when five Cs are cultivated: competence (a positive view of one's actions in different domains), confidence (a sense of self-worth in general), character (considered as respect for the rules of one's society and culture, and a sense of integrity), connection (or positive relationships with others), and caring (defined as developing sympathy and empathy for others). When youth present these attributes, they are likely to become citizens who actively contribute to themselves, their community, and civil society and are less prone to engage in risky behaviors. Therefore, a sixth C, social contribution, emerges when all five Cs are

present (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas & Lerner, 2005; Lewin-Bizan, Bowers & Lerner, 2010).

PYD is rooted in Relational Developmental Systems Theory (RDST), which constitutes a metatheory on developmental science (behavioral, cognitive, motivational, emotional, and sociocultural development, inheritance, and evolution) (Overton, 2013). This paradigm presents two key features. The first states that human development involves bidirectional relations between developing individuals and the multiple levels of their complex and changing contexts. When these mutually influential relations are beneficial to both the person and his or her social context, RDST speaks of adaptive developmental regulations. The second important feature is the presence of (relative) plasticity in human development, that is, the potential for systematic change in individual–context relations across the lifespan (Lerner & Overton, 2008; Lerner & Schmid Callina, 2013). Evidently, this entails that people's life trajectory can change for better or for worse. The RDST perspective and the PYD perspective that stems from it both consider, however, that the complex and diverse developmental system provides opportunities to build connections between individuals and their context that increase the likelihood of positive changes (Geldhof, Bowers, Johnson, *et al*., 2014).

Important contexts that affect adolescents' development, and that in turn are affected by them, include the family, the school, the group of peers, and the community. The family is crucial in that it provides relationships and contexts in which adolescents are included, and in which the PYD trajectory can be set in motion. Research has consistently shown that constructive family dynamics are related to young people's well-being and to problem behavior prevention. For instance, Soares, Pais-Ribeiro, and Silva (2019) found that family support and family communication were positively related to life satisfaction in a sample of Portuguese adolescents. Similarly, in a large sample of Croatian adolescents, it was found that increases in family communication and family satisfaction were significantly associated with reduced depression, anxiety, and stress (Novak, Parr, Feric, Mihic & Kranzelic, 2021). Indicators of family functioning have also been related to academic achievement and commitment to learning. For example, Chen, Wiium, Dimitrova, and Chen (2019) found that both family support and family boundaries (monitoring their children's whereabouts and setting clear rules) were positively and significantly correlated with both behavioral and affective student engagement. Furthermore, time spent with the family engaging in different activities was related to better educational achievement and labor market position and reduced risk behaviors in a longitudinal study by Sweeting, West, and Richards (1998). When studying the impact of different developmental assets on developmental outcomes, Theokas and Lerner (2006) observed that family assets were highly important in the lives of youth, as eating dinner together as a family was one of the variables that showed the strongest correlation with PYD, social contribution, less depression, and reduced risk behaviors. Additionally, research carried out with 14- to 18-year-old students in Spain showed that participating regularly in family activities on weekends was associated with many characteristics of positive development, such as a good self-perception of the body, high confidence, no smoking or drug using, positive school adjustment, and low risk-seeking behaviors (Mendoza-Berjano, 2003).

Nevertheless, these studies have focused on exploring associations between specific indicators of family dynamics and distinct positive (e.g., academic achievement, life satisfaction) and negative (e.g., depression, risk behaviors) outcomes in adolescents, while studies on the relationship between a variety of family functioning indicators and the overall development of adolescents are scarce. Specifically, to our knowledge, the associations between several family dynamics indicators simultaneously and the 5 Cs of PYD, as well as social contribution, have not been explored. Results around these particular relationships are important, as they may inform family and community interventions and policy recommendations on how to optimally support family relations in order to promote PYD.

Only a few studies have paid attention to gender differences in PYD and related constructs. For instance, in the United States, Zimmerman, Phelps, and Lerner (2008) found that girls were significantly more likely than boys to be in the optimal trajectory group for PYD from fifth to eighth grade. In Europe, some studies found differences by gender in the 5 Cs, with girls obtaining higher scores in connection, caring, and character, whereas boys reported having more confidence (Ardal, Holsen, Diseth & Larsen, 2017) and competence (Gómez-Baya, Reis & Gaspar de Matos, 2019; Gómez-Baya, Santos & Gaspar de Matos, 2022). Gender has also been found to be a moderator in the relationship between PYD and variables such as well-being and mental health (Tomé, Gaspar de Matos, Reis, Gómez-Baya, Coelhoso & Wiium, 2021) and substance use and the onset of sexual activity. In a longitudinal study, Schwartz, Phelps, Lerner, *et al*. (2010) found that PYD was a negative predictor of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use and early sexual activity initiation hazard for girls only, and of other drug use for both genders. However, the role gender plays in the interrelation between the family context and PYD has not yet been explored. The present study aims to elucidate if there are gender differences in this regard, in order to, ultimately, provide data that can guide professional efforts to promote Positive Youth Development equally in boys and girls.

Therefore, the aim of the present study is to examine the relationships between five indicators of family dynamics and the 5 Cs of Positive Youth Development – character, confidence, self-perceived competence, caring, and connection – and social contribution, as well as differences by gender in this regard. Based on the aforementioned research, we hypothesized that beneficial family dynamics are positively associated with PYD in Spanish youth, as well as with social contribution.

METHODS

Study design

A cross-sectional study was carried out with a randomly selected sample of the students of the four grades of compulsory secondary education from the city of Huelva (Spain). Self-reported data were gathered using an anonymous questionnaire, within the context of the EVESO study, focused on examining positive development and lifestyles of adolescent students.

Participants and sampling procedure

Following a multi-stage procedure, a random, stratified, and proportional sample of the students of compulsory secondary education in the city of Huelva (Andalusia, Spain) was selected. As a first stage, all the secondary education schools of the city were stratified according to their ownership (public school or charter school) and the municipal districts in which they were located. In a second stage, within each stratum, a proportional number of schools were randomly selected. All these schools were invited to participate in the study. If a school did not accept, another school of the same stratum was then randomly selected and invited. As a whole, a 58.3% acceptance rate from the schools was obtained. This way, 14 schools were selected (seven public schools and seven charter schools). Afterward, within the participating schools, one class of each grade was randomly selected. Among the students who were present (87.4% of those enrolled) on the day of administration of the questionnaire, 2.2% did not answer the questionnaire, either because they refused to do so (in approximately half of these cases) or for other reasons, such as not understanding the Spanish language or having an issue with their electronic device (personal computer or similar device). Each school decided whether the students would be surveyed in their usual classrooms (using a printed questionnaire or its online version) or at home (online). The final sample was composed of 1,036 adolescents (50.3% boys, mean age = 14.17, *SD* = 1.34, age range = 11–18). Similar percentages of students were found in the 4 years of compulsory secondary education (1st year: 25.5%, 2nd year: 25.9%, 3rd year: 26.3%, and 4th year: 22.4%). Regarding nationality, 96.2% of the adolescent participants were Spanish.

Instrument

Demographics. Several items concerning sociodemographic variables were included in the questionnaire: gender, age, grade, cycle (cycle 1 is composed of the first two grades of compulsory secondary education, with students who are typically between 12 and 14 years old; cycle 2 is composed of the last two grades, with students who are normally between the ages of 14 and 16), type of school (public or charter), orphanhood (indicated by checking the box "I don't have a father" and/or "I don't have a mother" in the items concerning parents' educational level and work situation), household composition, i.e., with whom they live (with nine dichotomous variables: mother, father, siblings, stepsiblings, the new partner of your mother/father, grandmother, grandfather, other relatives, other people), parents' educational level (with 10 response options, subsequently categorized into five values: no studies, basic studies, intermediate studies, university studies, and the parents' education level is unknown to the student), parents' work situation (with eight response options, categorized into five values: stable employment, unstable employment, retired, takes care of the housework, and the parents' work situation is unknown to the student), and country of birth (of the adolescent, the mother, and the father, categorized into two values: Spain or another country).

Positive youth development. The Positive Youth Development Short Form, developed by Geldhof, Bowers, Boyd, *et al.* (2014), was used. It was adapted to Spanish by Gómez-Baya, Reis, and Gaspar de Matos (2019). The questionnaire assesses self-perceptions of young people in relation to the five components of PYD, or "5 Cs": character, self-perceived competence, confidence, caring, and connection. The 34 items were assessed following a five-point Likert-type scale, and the response options were different for each group of items: 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*, 1 = *not important* and 5 = *very important*, 1 = *not at all like me* and 5 = *very much like me*, or 1 = *never or hardly ever* and 5 = *always*. After calculating each of the five dimensions by averaging the scores obtained in each item, the overall PYD score was made up by the sum of those scores. Both this overall score and the scores on the 5 Cs were used for the analyses in this study. The scale presented excellent internal consistency reliability, with $\alpha = 0.90$. Good factorial validity was observed, with one factor explaining 52.64% of the variance and an eigenvalue of 2.63.

Social contribution. In order to assess social engagement, the Spanish adaptation of the Social Contribution Scale developed under the auspices of the Positive Youth Development Cross-National Project study was used (Wiium, 2018). The scale is composed of five items that examine the number of hours students dedicate in a normal week to volunteering, helping friends or neighbors, helping relatives, giving advice to classmates or friends, or participating in school committees or government. The scale was adapted to Spanish by native speakers with expertise in psychology (Gómez-Baya, Reis & Gaspar de Matos, 2019). There are five response options: 0 h, 1 h, 2 h, 3 to 5 h, and 6 or more h. The total score was calculated as the sum of the scores for the respective items, ranging from 5 to 25. The internal consistency reliability was questionable, which may be due to assessing the frequency of behaviors concerning the diverse ways of contributing to different people and in different contexts ($\alpha = 0.62$).

Family dynamics. Five items were included to assess family dynamics. The first two items examined the satisfaction of adolescents regarding the relationship with their mother and father, assessed on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *very satisfied* to 5 = *very unsatisfied*, through the questions "How satisfied are you usually with your relationship with your mother?" and "How satisfied are you usually with your relationship with your father?" These two items were taken from the ESPAD 2019 survey (ESPAD Group, 2020) and piloted for the present study with a sample of 96 students that took place in advance of the fieldwork, during the definition process of the questionnaire by the research team. The third item explored contribution to household chores: "How frequently do you help with household chores?," with response options ranging from 1 = *never* to 5 = *daily or almost daily*, whereas the fourth item gauged the frequency of joint family activities during the weekends by posing the question "Think about your family as a whole; how frequently do you engage in activities together on weekends?," assessed through a scale from 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*. Whole-family activities during weekdays, after school, were not assessed, as in the Spanish context it is quite common for parents to work until late in the evening, whereas youth often do their homework and/or practice extracurricular and other diverse activities. Finally, one item explored sharing daily occurrences at home: "Do you usually talk at home about things that happen to you during the day?," with response options ranging from 1 = *Yes, frequently* to 4 = *No, never.* These three items had been created for the questionnaire of the EVAE study, a nationwide investigation on lifestyles in adolescence previously carried out in Spain (Mendoza, Batista-Foguet & Rubio, 2006; Mendoza-Berjano, 2003). They were tested in a pilot study comprising 897 students carried out in the preparatory phase of the EVAE study.

Procedure

Data were collected in the fall of 2020.The great majority of the sample (81%) filled in the anonymous questionnaire at their school, in their classrooms during normal school hours, using the printed questionnaire (65.7%) or the online version (15.3%). During the time the students filled in the questionnaires, a member of the research group and a teacher were in the classroom. The rest of the sample (19%) filled in the questionnaire at home, using the online version, with a procedure that also preserved anonymity. In all cases the questionnaire was filled in anonymously and individually. On average, students spent around 20 min in the completion of the questionnaire.

The study followed a research protocol approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Andalusian Department of Health and Families. Informed consent had been obtained from the schools, the parents/legal guardians, and the students participating in the study.

Data analysis design

Initially, descriptive statistics were calculated for the study variables, specifically mean and standard deviation of the overall PYD score, the 5 Cs, and social contribution, as well as the frequency distributions of the variables of family dynamics and demographics. Then, gender and

age-group differences in regard to PYD and the five family dynamics indicators were assessed using the Mann–Whitney test and chi-squared analyses, respectively. For this purpose, the established age-groups were mainly 12- to 13-year-old students and 14- to 16-year-old students, with the first age-group including a few 11-year-olds and the second including a few 17- and 18-year-olds. After this step, the Kruskal–Wallis test was used to examine bivariate associations between the indicators of family dynamics and the 5 Cs of PYD, the overall PYD score, and social contribution. Post hoc comparisons were subsequently carried out by using Mann–Whitney, with the *p*-value corrected through the Bonferroni test. Next, a Structural Equation Model (SEM) was tested to examine the effect of family dynamics on PYD. Two factors were developed to respectively integrate the 5 Cs of PYD (i.e., character, self-perceived competence, confidence, caring, and connection) and the indicators of family dynamics (i.e., satisfaction with the relationship with the mother, satisfaction with the relationship with the father, frequency of contribution to household chores, frequency of engaging in family activities on weekends, and frequency of sharing daily occurrences at home). Then, following the same procedure, a separate model for each gender was tested. The statistics χ^2, χ^2/df, CFI, SRMR, RMSEA, and 90% confidence intervals of RMSEA were calculated to examine overall model fit for each of the models. Standardized coefficients were reported. These analyses were carried out with LISREL. Missing cases were eliminated, bringing the total sample for the SEMs to 926 students. In addition, a Lagrange multipliers test was conducted to evaluate the impact of model modification from a more limited model. This is a modification test that suggests adding new effects in the structural model to reach an improvement in the overall model fit (Chou & Bentler, 1990). The modifications were sequentially performed to develop the final models. Finally, invariance testing was performed to determine whether the difference between the girls only and boys only models were statistically significant.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and gender/age differences in Positive Youth Development and social contribution

As reflected in Table 1, medium to high average PYD scores were found in the five dimensions, with self-perceived competence presenting the lowest and caring the highest mean score. Bivariate analyses through the Mann–Whitney test showed a significant gender effect on PYD dimensions. Boys reported significantly higher scores in self-perceived competence ($Z = -6.526$, $P < 0.001$) and confidence ($Z = -6.138$, $P < 0.001$), while girls reported higher scores in caring ($Z = -7.974$, $P < 0.001$). No gender difference was found in character, connection, or the PYD overall score. Some age-group differences were also observed using the Mann–Whitney test. The younger age-group presented higher scores in overall PYD ($Z = -2.571$, $P < 0.05$), self-perceived competence ($Z = -2.621$, $P < 0.05$), confidence ($Z = -2.224$, $P < 0.05$), and connection ($Z = -2.054$, $P < 0.05$).

Table 1. *Positive Youth Development and social contribution according to gender*

	All		Boys		Girls		
Variables	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*P*-value
Character	3.78	0.58	3.75	0.60	3.82	0.57	>0.05
Self-perceived competence	3.26	0.77	3.42	0.75	3.10	0.76	<0.0001
Confidence	3.58	0.85	3.74	0.78	3.42	0.89	<0.0001
Caring	3.92	0.85	3.71	0.89	4.14	0.75	<0.0001
Connection	3.76	0.70	3.76	0.70	3.76	0.70	>0.05
Positive Youth Development	18.31	2.67	18.39	2.71	18.24	2.64	>0.05
Social contribution	2.70	0.85	2.55	0.81	2.85	0.85	<0.0001

With respect to social contribution, students presented a medium-low mean score. They showed greater engagement helping their families (3.6 h per week on average), while also dedicating some time to advising their peers (2.9 h per week) and helping their friends (2.7 h per week). They spent less time volunteering (1.6 h per week) and participating in school committees or government (1.4 h per week). Bivariate analyses through the Mann–Whitney *U* test showed significant gender effects on social contribution indicators, as reflected in Table 1. Girls scored higher in social contribution ($Z = -5.697$, $P < 0.001$). When examining specific areas of social contribution, results show that girls dedicate more time, on average, to helping their families ($Z = -2.003$, $P < 0.05$) and their friends ($Z = -4.901$, $P < 0.001$) and advising peers ($Z = -7.327$, $P < 0.001$). Age-group differences were also observed in the overall social contribution score ($Z = -2.000$, $P < 0.05$); older adolescents presented a slightly higher mean score ($\overline{X} = 2.73$) than their younger counterparts ($\overline{X} = 2.65$). Specifically, the adolescents between 12 and 13 years of age spent more time volunteering ($Z = -2.217$, $P < 0.05$) and participating in school committees ($Z = -3.685$, $P < 0.001$), while the 14- to 16-year-old students dedicated more time to advising their peers ($Z = -3.507$, $P < 0.001$).

Descriptive statistics and gender/age differences in family dynamics

A great majority of students are satisfied or very satisfied with the relationship with their mother (88.9%). Noticeably, this percentage is approximately 10 points lower when it concerns the satisfaction with the relationship with their father (79.7%). Chi-squared analysis showed no significant effects by gender. Nevertheless, the students in the lower age-group more often reported being very satisfied with the relationship with their mother ($\chi^2 = 12.165$, $P < 0.05$) and the relationship with their father ($\chi^2 = 13.731$, $P < 0.05$).

A little over half of the students reported that they helped with household chores daily, whereas a quarter of the participants reported helping a few times a week. The rest of the students reported helping sometimes or on the weekends. Chi-squared analysis showed a small but significant gender difference ($\chi^2 = 9.919$, $P < 0.05$); girls (56.8%) reported more often that they helped with the household chores daily than did boys (49.3%). No significant differences were observed between age-groups.

Regarding the frequency with which the students do an activity together as a family on weekends, more than half of them reported doing so always, almost always, or frequently, while a quarter of the sample reported doing this rarely or never. Chi-squared analysis showed no significant effects by gender or age-group.

Finally, when asked whether they talked at home about the things that happened to them during the day, almost half of the

Table 2. *Bivariate associations between the five indicators of family dynamics and Positive Youth Development and social contribution*

	Character		Self-perceived competence		Confidence		Caring		Connection		Positive Youth Development		Social contribution	
	M (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size
Satisfaction with the relationship with the mother														
Very satisfied[a]	3.86 (0.57) b, c	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.031$	3.38 (0.75) b, c, e	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.054$	3.76 (0.79)b, c, d, e	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.096$	4.00 (0.83) b, c	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.021$	3.85 (0.61)b, c, d, e	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.144$	18.97 (2.47)b, c, d, e	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.127$	2.75 (0.84)	$P > 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$
Satisfied[b]	3.65 (0.55)a		3.11 (0.75)a		3.34 (0.83)a, c		3.81 (0.83) a		3.48 (0.67)a		17.40 (2.46)a, c		2.62 (0.86)	
Indifferent[c]	3.64 (0.54)a		2.80 (0.68)a		3.04 (0.80)a, b		3.59 (0.90) a		3.27 (0.67)a		16.33 (2.35)a, b		2.54 (0.82)	
Unsatisfied[d]	3.48 (0.73)		2.99 (0.89)		2.92 (0.94)a		3.70 (0.92)		3.17 (0.89)a		16.12 (3.17)a		2.54 (0.96)	
Very unsatisfied[e]	3.59 (0.69)		2.73 (0.65)a		2.92 (0.96)a		4.22 (0.53)		2.82 (0.99)a		16.40 (2.77)a		2.50 (1.05)	
Satisfaction with the relationship with the father														
Very satisfied[f]	3.91 (0.56) g, h, i, j	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.058$	3.45 (0.73) g, h, i, j	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.073$	3.83 (0.78)g, h, i, j	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.108$	3.99 (0.84)	$P < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.004$	4.01 (0.58)g, h, i, j	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.149$	19.22 (2.42)g, h, i, j	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.132$	2.70 (0.81)	$P > 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.000$
Satisfied[g]	3.68 (0.56)f		3.13 (0.70)f, i		3.43 (0.77)f, j		3.90 (0.83)		3.57 (0.69)f, i		17.69 (2.38)f, h, i		2.63 (0.85)	
Indifferent[h]	3.58 (0.58)f		3.04 (0.76)f		3.22 (0.88)f		3.76 (0.89)		3.39 (0.72)f		16.99 (2.63)f, g		2.78 (0.83)	
Unsatisfied[i]	3.55 (0.62)f		2.75 (0.79)f, g		3.16 (0.81)f		3.77 (0.88)		3.24 (0.74)f, g		16.50 (2.82)f, g		2.66 (0.93)	
Very unsatisfied[j]	3.58 (0.54)f		2.94 (0.83)f		2.98 (0.92)f, g		4.01 (0.71)		3.39 (0.83)f		16.94 (2.67)f		2.82 (0.94)	
Frequency of contribution to household chores														
Never[k]	3.52 (0.75)	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.014$	2.61 (0.86)	$P > 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$	2.76 (0.52)o	$P < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.009$	3.51 (0.85)	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.019$	2.96 (1.06)	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.015$	15.37 (1.92)n, o	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.022$	2.00 (1.11)	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.043$
Sometimes[l]	3.62 (0.63)o		3.24 (0.75)		3.44 (0.85)		3.60 (0.94) m, n, o		3.67 (0.63) o		17.58 (2.79)o		2.32 (0.84) n, o	
Only on weekends[m]	3.69 (0.59)		3.09 (0.79)		3.51 (0.96)		3.98 (0.82)l		3.70 (0.72) o		17.97 (2.75)		2.51 (0.82) o	
Several times a week[n]	3.75 (0.57)		3.29 (0.76)		3.56 (0.84)		3.89 (0.85)l		3.71 (0.64)		18.24 (2.50)k		2.69 (0.83) l	
Daily or almost daily[o]	3.85 (0.56)l		3.29 (0.77)		3.64 (0.84) k		4.01 (0.81)l		3.83 (0.72)l, n		18.63 (2.65)k, l		2.83 (0.82) l, m	
Frequency of engaging in family activities on weekends														
Never[p]	3.68 (0.67)	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.024$	2.79 (0.78)t, u, v	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.065$	3.02 (0.91)t, u, v	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.075$	3.73 (0.93)	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.020$	3.07 (0.77)s, t, u, v	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.149$	16.30 (2.89)s, t, u, v	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.127$	2.49 (1.00)	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.041$
Hardly ever[q]	3.56 (0.62)t, u, v		2.97 (0.79)t, u, v		3.19 (0.82)s, t, u, v		3.57 (0.96) u, v		3.29 (0.79)s, t, u, v		16.58 (2.74)s, t, u, v		2.40 (0.88) t, u, v	
Few times[r]	3.70 (0.57) u, v		3.02 (0.72)t, u, v		3.37 (0.90)t, u, v		3.82 (0.80)		3.47 (0.71)t, u, v		17.38 (2.45)t, u, v		2.53 (0.87) u, v	
Sometimes[s]	3.73 (0.55)		3.16 (0.71)t, u, v		3.49 (0.80)q, u, v		3.91 (0.85)		3.68 (0.59)p, q, t, u,v		17.98 (2.46)p, q, t, u,v		2.56 (0.75) u, v	
Frequently[t]	3.83 (0.50)q		3.38 (0.74) p, q, r, s		3.67 (0.76)p, q, r, v		3.95 (0.78) q		3.89 (0.60)p, q, r, s,v		18.70 (2.34)p, q, r, s,v		2.74 (0.81) q	
Almost always[u]	3.89 (0.54) q, r		3.47 (0.68) p, q, r, s		3.82 (0.72)p, q, r, s		4.07 (0.77) q		4.01 (0.58)p, q, r, s		19.25 (2.20)p, q, r, s		2.91 (0.80) q, r, s	
Always[v]	3.88 (0.72) q, r		3.49 (0.83) p, q, r, s		3.88 (0.94)p, q, r, s, t		4.04 (0.94) q		4.09 (0.66)p, q, r, s, t		19.46 (2.99)p, q, r, s, t		2.97 (0.90) q, r, s	

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Character		Self-perceived competence		Confidence		Caring		Connection		Positive Youth Development		Social contribution	
	M (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size	*M* (*SD*)	*P*-value, effect size
Frequency of sharing daily occurences at home														
Yes, frequently[w]	3.91 (0.54)	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.046$	3.39 (0.73) x, y, z	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.030$	3.81 (0.79)x, y, z	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.088$	4.08 (0.78) x, y, z	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.031$	3.99 (0.61)x, y, z	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.125$	19.19 (2.42)x, y, z	$P < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.124$	2.79 (0.83) x	$P < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.008$
Sometimes[x]	3.74 (0.56) w, y, z		3.24 (0.76) w, z		3.53 (0.79)w, y, z		3.82 (0.84) w		3.69 (0.65)w, y, z		18.03 (2.37)w, y, z		2.59 (0.82) w	
Hardly ever[y]	3.60 (0.60) w, x		3.05 (0.78) w		3.24 (0.84)w, x		3.80 (0.85) w		3.45 (0.67)w, x		17.14 (2.64)w, x, z		2.68 (0.83)	
Never[z]	3.50 (0.72) w, x		2.86 (0.86) w, x		2.91 (1.00)w, x		3.47 (1.10) w		3.12 (0.89)w, x		15.87 (3.25)w, x, y		2.55 (1.06)	

Note: Significant differences between groups are indicated with letters a–z.

students responded "yes, frequently," whereas a third of the sample reported doing this sometimes, and approximately 20% reported not ever or hardly ever talking about daily occurrences at home. In this regard, the chi-squared analysis found an important effect by gender ($\chi^2 = 17.660$, $P < 0.001$); significantly more girls (52.4%) than boys (40.7%) reported talking at home about their day frequently.

Bivariate associations between family dynamics and Positive Youth Development and social contribution

As shown in Table 2, students who reported being more satisfied with the relationship with their mother obtained higher overall scores in PYD and in each of the 5 Cs, according to a Kruskal–Wallis test and the consecutive post hoc comparisons through the Mann–Whitney test. Very similar results were found for the satisfaction with the relationship with the father.

Regarding contribution to household chores, as presented in Table 2, students who reported helping more frequently obtained higher scores in character, confidence, caring, connection, and the overall PYD score. However, no significant association was found with self-perceived competence.

A significant positive relationship between the frequency with which students reported engaging in joint activities with their families on weekends and PYD was also observed. As shown in Table 2, this association was found with the overall PYD score, as well as with each of the 5 Cs.

As for sharing daily occurrences at home, reflected in Table 2, the association follows the same positive direction for the 5 Cs, as well as the overall PYD score.

In addition, the frequency of contribution to household chores, of engaging in joint family activities on weekends, and of sharing daily occurrences at home were all positively related to social contribution scores, but this was not the case for the satisfaction with the relationship with the mother or the father.

Structural Equation Models of the effect of family dynamics on Positive Youth Development

The overall SEM, including boys and girls (Fig. 1), presented a positive effect of the family dynamics factor on the PYD factor, explaining 51.8% of its variance. The family dynamics factor included the five above-mentioned indicators. Four indicators of this factor (satisfaction with the relationship with the mother, satisfaction with the relationship with the father, frequency of engaging in joint family activities on weekends, and frequency of sharing daily occurrences at home) showed factor loadings over 0.50, while the indicator of frequency of contribution to household chores had the lowest loading (0.12). In turn, the PYD factor included the 5 Cs, with connection presenting the highest loading and caring the lowest one. The model reached good overall data fit, SB $\chi^2(29) = 99.42$, $P < 0.0001$, $\chi^2/df = 3.42$, CFI = 0.98, SRMR = 0.030, RMSEA = 0.051, 90% CI RMSEA = (0.040–0.062), and pointed out a positive and big effect of family dynamics on PYD ($\beta = 0.72$, $P < 0.001$).

Lagrange multipliers tests suggested some relationships between measurement errors to improve the overall model fit. These relationships were the positive associations between the

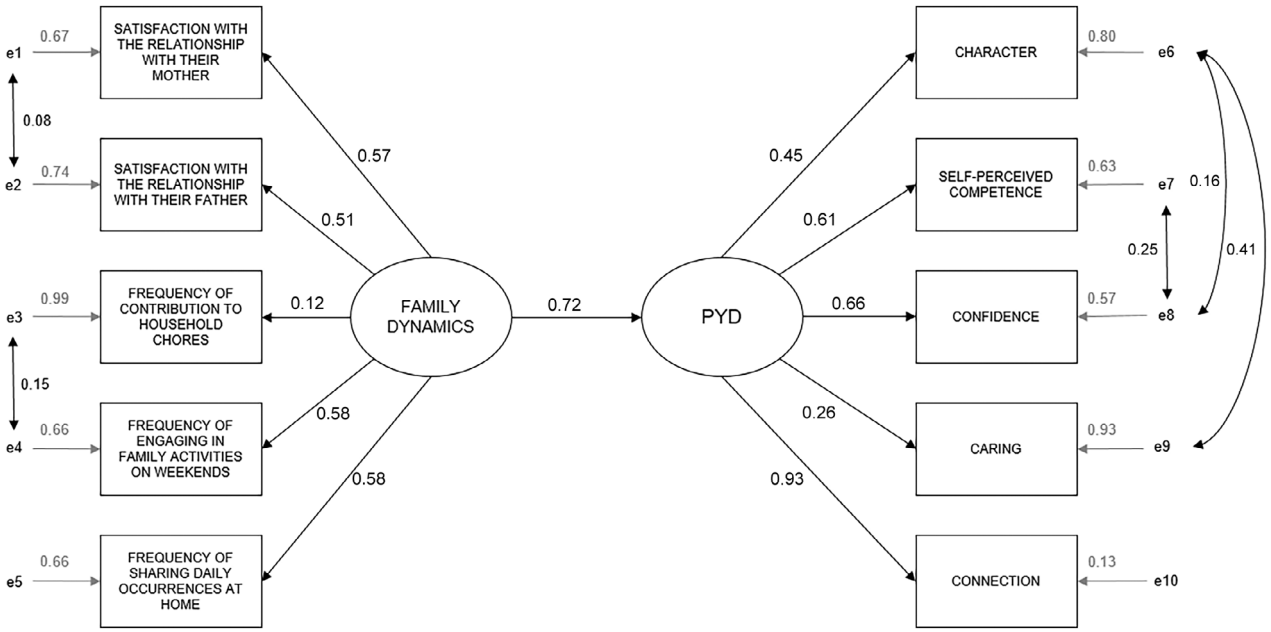

Fig. 1. Overall Structural Equation Model of the effect of family dynamics on Positive Youth Development.

measurement errors of the satisfaction with the relationship with the mother and the satisfaction with the relationship with the father, between the measurement errors of frequency of contribution to household chores and engaging in family activities on weekends, between the measurement errors of confidence and perceived competence, between the measurement errors of character and caring, and between those pertaining to character and confidence.

Figure 2 shows the results of the SEM specifically for boys. The model showed a positive effect of the family dynamics factor on the PYD factor, explaining 47.6% of its variance. Regarding the family dynamics factor, the indicators of satisfaction with the relationship with the mother, satisfaction with the relationship with the father, frequency of engaging in family activities on weekends, and frequency of sharing daily occurrences at home showed factor loadings close to 0.50, while the indicator of frequency of contribution to household chores had the lowest loading (0.16). With respect to the PYD factor, connection presented the highest loading and caring the lowest one. The model reached good overall data fit, SB $\chi^2(29) = 64.67$, $P < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.23$, CFI = 0.98, SRMR = 0.031, RMSEA = 0.052, 90% CI RMSEA = (0.035–0.069), and pointed out a positive and big effect of family dynamics on PYD ($\beta = 0.69$, $P < 0.001$).

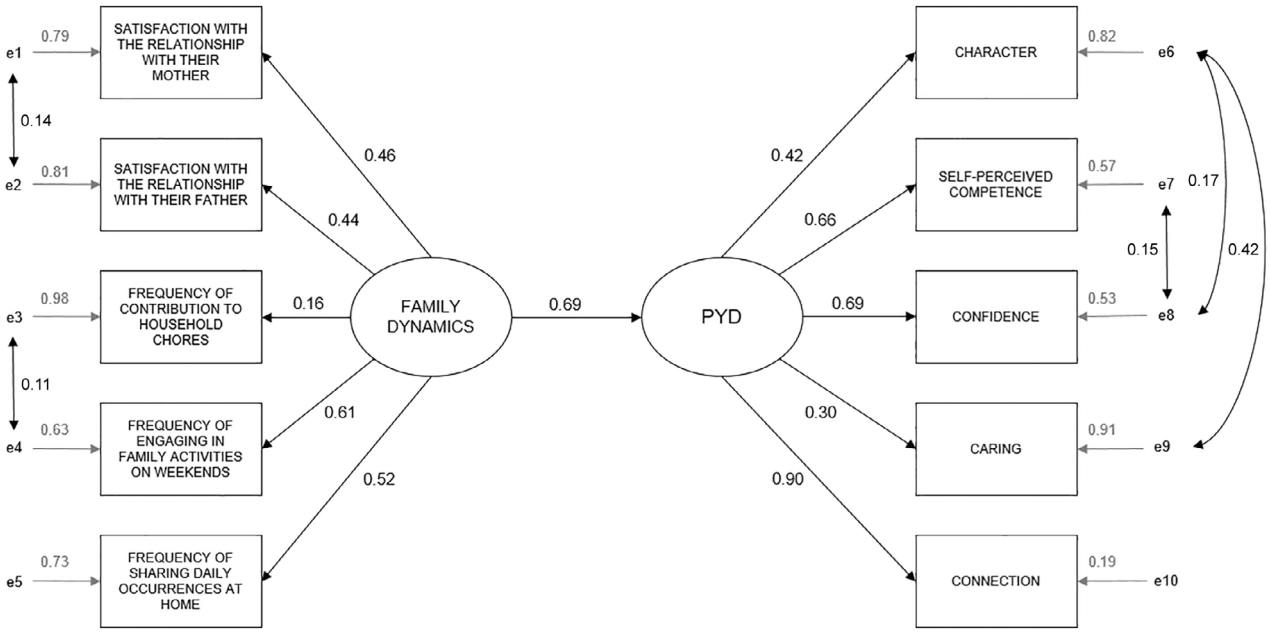

Fig. 2. Structural Equation Model of the effect of family dynamics on Positive Youth Development in boys.

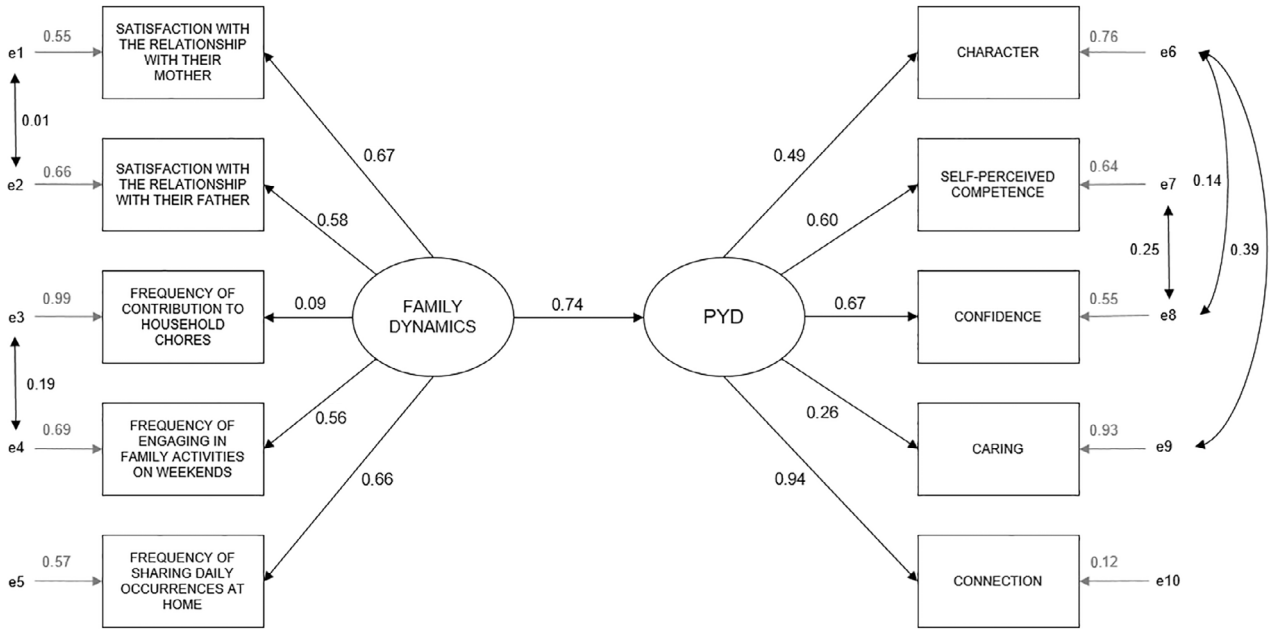

Fig. 3. Structural Equation Model of the effect of family dynamics on Positive Youth Development in girls.

Figure 3 presents the results of the SEM for girls. The model showed a remarkable positive effect of the family dynamics factor on the PYD factor, explaining 54.8% of its variance. In relation to the family dynamics factor, the indicators of satisfaction with the relationship with the mother, satisfaction with the relationship with the father, frequency of engaging in family activities on weekends, and frequency of sharing daily occurrences at home showed factor loadings close to and over 0.60, while the indicator of frequency of contribution to household chores had a very low loading (0.09). On the other hand, connection presented the highest loading in the PYD factor and caring the lowest one. The model with only girls reached good overall data fit as well, SB $\chi^2(29) = 36.32$, $P = 0.16$, $\chi^2/df = 1.25$, CFI = 1, SRMR = 0.029, RMSEA = 0.023, 90% CI RMSEA = (0.0–0.045), and pointed out a positive and big effect of family dynamics on PYD ($\beta = 0.74$, $P < 0.001$).

Finally, the goodness of fit of the model where the parameters of boys and girls are set equal (null hypothesis) (χ^2 [83] = 184.39) was compared with the goodness of fit of the model in which the parameters are different (χ^2 [67] = 142.35). It was observed that there was a statistically significant difference between both models $P < 0.001$, which shows that the parameters of boys and girls are different and consequently there is an effect of gender on the parameters. Thus, gender has a moderating effect on the relationship between family dynamics and PYD.

DISCUSSION

The aims of this study were to explore the relationship between several indicators of family dynamics and the 5 Cs of PYD, as well as social contribution, and to examine the differences in these associations according to gender.

Focusing first on gender differences in the 5 Cs, boys scored higher in self-perceived competence and confidence, in line with previous results presented by Gómez-Baya, Reis, and Gaspar de Matos (2019). It is important to note that the questionnaire assesses competence as perceived by the students. Women tend to underestimate their own cognitive and emotional abilities, whereas the opposite happens with men (Furnham & Bunclark, 2006; Sánchez Núñez, Fernández-Berrocal, Montañés & Latorre, 2008), and boys have higher self-efficacy and self-esteem than girls (Muris, 2002; Quatman & Watson, 2001). In addition, two of the items refer to the adolescents' perceived competence in sports, and one relates to their body image ("I am handsome/pretty"), two topics in which boys have traditionally obtained higher scores than girls. In contrast, we found that girls scored higher on caring and social contribution. This is partially in line with Gómez-Baya, Reis, and Gaspar de Matos (2019) and Ardal, Holsen, Diseth, and Larsen (2017), who found that, besides caring, female students also scored higher on connection and character. This discrepancy may be due to age-group differences, as their samples were older (between 16 and 29) than our sample. In addition, their samples were made up of students who had chosen to continue their educational trajectory after finishing the phase of compulsory education, whereas the participants of this research work were still enrolled in mandatory secondary education. One interpretation is that gender differences in PYD may be more accentuated in late adolescence and young adulthood than in early adolescence, which would require further examination in future investigations.

A few gender-related differences were also observed in family dynamics. Thus, girls reported helping with household chores more than did boys, which was also concluded by Mendoza, Batista-Foguet, and Rubio (2006). Gender roles are likely to be at the basis of this association, as in countries such as Spain, girls are usually expected to help at home more than boys. Girls also shared daily occurrences at home more frequently. Boys and girls are subject to different gender socialization patterns, which may lead to girls talking more about emotions and boys being taught to avoid showing vulnerability (Galet Macedo & Alzás

García, 2014; Rodríguez Menéndez, 2007; Sánchez Núñez, Fernández-Berrocal, Montañés & Latorre, 2008), and they may therefore choose not to share as much about their daily experiences with their family members.

Some interesting differences between age-groups were also present. The younger age-group scored higher on overall PYD, self-perceived competence, confidence, and connection. This is somewhat consistent with the results of Schwartz, Phelps, Lerner, *et al*. (2010), who, in a longitudinal study with 5,305 adolescents from Grades 5 to 10, found that each of the Cs, and PYD as a whole, declined a bit following Grade 7. However, Lerner and Schmid Callina (2013), in a sample of 2,887 North American adolescents, found a relative consistency in adolescents' PYD trajectories from Grades 5 to 12, implying that PYD scores remain quite steady throughout adolescence. Longitudinal research is necessary to examine if – and why, if so – PYD decreases with age in southern European youth.

Regarding social contribution, the data show that the older age-group dedicates less time to volunteering and participating in school committees. This could be related to the fact that, as adolescents get older and move on to higher grades, they usually have to spend more time studying and working on school assignments, and this may account for the decrease in time spent volunteering and participating in school committees. Nevertheless, it could be useful to explore formulas to enhance this type of social engagement in middle adolescence, through synergistic actions between organizations related to youth, schools, and associations that promote family–school cooperation.

With respect to the SEMs conducted, it is noteworthy that the set of family dynamics variables explain approximately 50% of the variability of PYD in each of the three SEMs (with the whole sample, with only boys, and with only girls). This suggests that the family might be especially influential in the development of adolescents, in line with previous findings that family assets are among the most important developmental assets in relation to PYD (Theokas & Lerner, 2006). This relationship is understandable, as the family is the first and longest lasting source of socialization for children and adolescents. Nevertheless, the percentage of PYD explained by family dynamics variables might present significant variability when comparing samples of culturally different societies. It would be useful to investigate in future studies the extent to which the interaction between these variables varies depending on the cultural context in which the adolescents and their family members are imbedded.

Considering the moderating role of gender, it is worth mentioning that the family dynamics factor in the model with the subsample of girls explained 54.8% of the variance in PYD, while in the SEM with the subsample of boys this factor explained 47.6% of it. A cultural component could contribute to this gender difference, as girls and women have traditionally been more devoted to the family, for instance, helping with the household chores and taking care of younger siblings and, as they become adults, taking on the role of informal caretaker and being more in touch with their parents than their male counterparts. This might explain why having a satisfactory relationship with their parents, as well as good communication and spending leisure time together, has a bigger effect on girls' development than on that of boys. Coherently, Jiménez-Iglesias, García-Moya, and Moreno (2017) found a closer relationship between family dynamics and life satisfaction in girls than in boys, in a large sample of adolescents ($n = 46{,}593$) who participated in the 2002, 2006, or 2010 editions of the Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) Study in Spain.

Of the five aspects considered within the *family dynamics* factor of the SEMs, four have a high weight: satisfaction with the relationship with the mother, satisfaction with the relationship with the father, frequency of engaging in family activities on weekends, and frequency of sharing daily occurrences at home.

As reflected in the models, the satisfaction with the relationship with the mother and the father are important aspects of the overall family dynamics factor for both male and female adolescents. Therefore, factors contributing to enhancing these key relationships might be indirectly promoting healthy youth development. Nevertheless, the factor loadings of these two variables suggest that they play a bigger role in family dynamics for girls than for boys.

Regarding the frequency of engaging in joint family activities on weekends, the results obtained in the SEMs suggest that spending quality time with the family could promote adolescent thriving, pointing in the same direction as the results found by Sweeting, West, and Richards (1998) and Maynard and Harding (2010).

With respect to sharing daily occurrences at home, feeling comfortable sharing with your family members what has happened to you throughout the day may be a sign of overall good communication within the family. Furthermore, it can give rise, at least in some cases, to building an attractive and viable developmental itinerary toward adulthood, as sharing with parents can contribute to clarifying young people's project for the future. Moreover, adolescent disclosure to their parents is negatively associated with delinquent behaviors and substance abuse (Kapetanovic, Skoog, Gerdner & Bohlin, 2018; Keijsers, Branje, VanderValk & Meeus, 2010). In addition, the results of the present study suggest that sharing with parents may be linked to the development of positive traits. For this kind of sharing to be possible, family members need to be in the same space at the same time, in a context that promotes conversation and with as little interference as possible. It would be interesting to study the extent to which long working hours, spending a lot of time commuting from home to work or home to school, and, above all, the high number of screens in many homes are hindering this tendency to comment on the incidents of the day.

The contribution to household chores, although significant, seems to have considerably less weight in the family dynamics factor. Although collaborating at home can strengthen certain important life skills, such as responsibility, discipline, planning and time management, and cooperation, in addition to generating a sense of usefulness, from the point of view of adolescents, the feeling that they can express themselves freely and the time they enjoy together as a family may have a greater influence on their experience of the family dynamic than collaboration in household tasks. It is of note that helping with the chores at home is particularly irrelevant for the overall family dynamics of female students, when, in contrast, we found that girls contributed to household chores significantly more than boys. In countries such as Spain, there could be cultural differences in the way in which

girls and boys are asked to cooperate in housework, which may have a different impact on the personal understanding of the meaning of sharing household chores. Future research may contribute to a better understanding of this question.

Relevant gender differences in the interaction between family dynamics and PYD have been found in this study when conducting the successive analyses using SEM. Among girls, the relative influence of satisfaction in the relationship with the parents, as well as of frequently discussing the day at home, is higher than among boys. In addition, an overall moderating effect of gender in the interaction between family dynamics and PYD has been found. Further cross-cultural research on the interrelationship between family factors and PYD would shed light on whether these gender differences are shared by different cultures.

This work has some limitations. First, the PYD Short Form collects personal perceptions of the students about themselves and their context. Some of its items could be particularly susceptible to social desirability bias. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the research design does not allow us to make inferences about causality. Family functioning lies at the heart of adolescent development. However, the relationships between family dynamics and PYD may very well be bidirectional, and adolescents' positive development may, in turn, promote a healthy relationship with their family. These mutual influences would be fully in line with the Relational Developmental Systems Theory mentioned, which states that all facets of the individual and the context exist in mutually influential relations (Overton, 2013). Future research directions should include a longitudinal study of this relationship between family dynamics and the five Cs of PYD to be able to make inferences about the direction of the effects. Finally, nesting of students in school should be accounted for in future research.

Practical implications

Knowing how important the family is for a positive development of youth, it is vital that families receive multidisciplinary and comprehensive support in their parenting task, while taking into account individual needs and challenges of each family and their different experiences relating to culture and ethnicity. There are an increasing number of evidence-based family support programs (EBPs) available, aimed at promoting positive parenting and parents' and children's competences, as well as their social–emotional well-being. The use of evidence-based family support interventions has started to gain prominence in Europe, especially since the publication of the Council of Europe Recommendation (Rec2006/19) on Policy to Support Positive Parenting (Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, 2006). Completely in line with the Positive Youth Development framework, family support EBPs are also experiencing a shift in perspective, moving from a deficit approach to one based on prevention and promotion, inspired by the Council of Europe's positive parenting framework. According to Rodrigo (2016), interventions should focus on the promotion of parental capacities and move toward a strengthening approach that identifies parents' existing skills and strengths and builds on these, as well as promoting the strengths and resources of the children. The findings of the present study highlight the importance of targeting specific family dynamics, such as satisfaction with the relationship with the parents, time spent together engaging in family activities on weekends, and sharing daily occurrences at home, in family support interventions, in order to promote adolescents' positive development.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT

The study followed a research protocol approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Andalusian Department of Health and Families. Informed consent was obtained from the schools, the parents/legal guardians, and the students participating in the study.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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