

Cultural Identity of Sub-Saharan African Students in Moroccan Public Secondary Schools: Evidence from a Large-Scale Quantitative Survey.

Auteur 1 : Ayoub REGRAGUI,

Ayoub REGRAGUI, (<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6509-7143>*, academic title PhD)

1Mohammed 5 university/ Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences of Rabat/Morocco.

Déclaration de divulgation : L'auteur n'a pas connaissance de quelconque financement qui pourrait affecter l'objectivité de cette étude.

Conflit d'intérêts : L'auteur ne signale aucun conflit d'intérêts.

Pour citer cet article : Ayoub REGRAGUI (2026) « Cultural Identity of Sub-Saharan African Students in Moroccan Public Secondary Schools: Evidence from a Large-Scale Quantitative Survey », African Scientific Journal « Volume 03, Num 37 » pp: 1761 – 1788.



DOI : 10.5281/zenodo.21992442

Copyright © 2026 – ASJ



Abstract

Migration flows in Morocco, both in terms of the reception of immigrants and the transit of migrants to other countries, constitute an established reality. The Sub-Saharan African population has emerged as one of the largest immigrant communities residing in Morocco in recent years. Major urban centres such as Casablanca, Rabat, Tangier, and Marrakech host a considerable proportion of the country's Sub-Saharan African population. In order to examine the cultural identity of students originating from Sub-Saharan African countries within the Moroccan context, the present study investigates the perspectives of Sub-Saharan African students enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools regarding their own cultural identity. The study population consisted of 900 students of Sub-Saharan African origin enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools. A quantitative research approach was adopted, employing a descriptive survey design. The data collection instrument explored five principal dimensions: participants' migration trajectories to Morocco, their contact with their countries of origin, their perceptions of their cultural traditions, aspects of their current lives in Morocco, and their future life perspectives related to cultural identity. The findings reveal that participants generally evaluate their educational and social experiences in Morocco positively while maintaining strong emotional and cultural ties with their countries of origin. Most respondents considered the preservation of their cultural traditions to be highly important, maintained regular contact with family and friends in their home countries, and demonstrated a preference for transmitting their cultural heritage to future generations. At the same time, many participants reported developing a dual or bicultural identity that combines attachment to their heritage culture with increasing integration into Moroccan society. The study concludes that Sub-Saharan African students in Moroccan public secondary schools possess a strong sense of cultural identity, particularly with regard to their cultural heritage. These findings underscore the importance of intercultural educational practices that recognize students' cultural backgrounds and promote inclusive learning environments capable of fostering both socio-educational integration and intercultural competence.

Keywords: cultural identity; Sub-Saharan African students; intercultural education; Morocco; migration; bicultural identity; secondary education.

Introduction

Sub-Saharan African immigration to Morocco began to become significant at the beginning of the 2000s and, since then, the Sub-Saharan African community has continued to grow steadily. Within the Moroccan context, this presence has been even more pronounced due to Morocco's geographical position as both a destination and transit country for migration within the African continent. Currently, migratory movements in Morocco, both in the reception of immigrants from different African nationalities and in the transit of migrants to other countries, constitute an established reality. Specifically, in the case of the population originating from Sub-Saharan African countries, Morocco hosts a considerable number of regular and documented Sub-Saharan African residents, representing a significant proportion of the country's foreign population. In this respect, Sub-Saharan Africans constitute one of the largest foreign communities residing in Morocco.

Furthermore, if we observe the situation in Morocco, available data indicate that the number of Sub-Saharan African residents has increased considerably in recent years, representing a significant proportion of the country's foreign population. In this respect, Sub-Saharan Africans constitute one of the largest foreign communities residing in Morocco, particularly in major urban centres where educational opportunities and economic activities are concentrated (International Organization for Migration, Year; High Commission for Planning, Year).

These data demonstrate the importance of this population both within Moroccan society in general and, more specifically, within the Moroccan educational context. In this regard, the present research focuses on students of Sub-Saharan African origin enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools, seeking to delineate some of the key aspects that reflect their cultural identity.

Against this background, the present study examines the cultural identity of Sub-Saharan African students enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools. More specifically, it seeks to explore students' feelings and perceptions regarding their cultural identity, describe the relational aspects associated with it, and examine their future aspirations and expectations in relation to their cultural identity. To achieve these objectives, the article first reviews the literature on cultural identity and its relationship with nationality, migration, and education. It then presents the methodological design, sample, and research instrument, followed by the presentation and discussion of the main findings. Finally, the article concludes by highlighting the principal findings and their implications for intercultural education within the Moroccan educational context

1. Cultural Identity

The concept of cultural identity has generated considerable discussion within the field of sociology due to the breadth of its meaning and the level of abstraction required to perceive it in reality. Nevertheless, it can be observed that the overwhelming majority of scholars in this field maintain that cultural identity is intrinsically linked to culture and to membership in a particular social group (Kijima, 2005; Koc, 2006; McNiff, 2012; O'Connor & Faas, 2012; Steinbach, 2014; Silver, 2015; Velázquez, 2012).

Cultural identity is composed of a set of characteristics or attributes that an individual acquires through belonging to a particular community. In this sense, it may be defined as a product of the culture through which individuals are socialized; that is, it refers to the sense of belonging to a community to which specific characteristics are attributed (O'Connor & Faas, 2012).

Thus, cultural identity represents an expression of both the individual and the culture through the individual, in which a series of ethical and aesthetic values are manifested, enabling mutual knowledge and recognition among members of the same community. In this regard, Velázquez (2012) argues that cultural identity can be analysed through its cultural products, whether material, by examining buildings, utilitarian objects, or works of art; or non-material, by observing oral traditions, patterns of behaviour, and a community's idiosyncrasies.

Research conducted by Rebollo and Hornillo (2010) identifies family belonging as the primary context in the formation of cultural identity, as it provides individuals with values, beliefs, customs, and traditions. Other social factors highlighted in their study as having a strong influence on the construction of individual identity are gender and nationality. Thus, family, together with an individual's gender and nationality, plays a significant role in the process of constructing cultural identity. Along the same lines, Fuentes (2014) emphasizes the importance of the bond between the individual and his or her community of origin, arguing that it is fundamental to the construction of cultural identity.

The direct relationship between the socializing discourses continuously transmitted within the family—through which issues related to culture, race, and the society in which individuals live are conveyed—and the formation of individual identity is particularly noteworthy (Villareal, 2016). In this respect, such influence becomes highly relevant to students' educational development, both within the school environment and in other spheres of society (Esteban-Guitart, Oller, & Villar, 2012). Lin's (2014) study highlights the crucial role of the family in shaping the sociocultural identity of individuals in China, demonstrating differences while emphasizing the influence of the family environment among migrants moving from rural areas

to urban centres. Similarly, Hernández and Martínez (2011) underscore the predominant role of the family in the development of children's identity and in the communication they maintain with their social environment. Furthermore, other studies identify the family's sociocultural background as a decisive factor in shaping the identity of future generations (Farias & Asaba, 2013; Sijelmassi, 2011).

Nevertheless, another group of scholars focuses exclusively on the spiritual or moral dimension of cultural identity. McNiff (2012) defines cultural identity as the customs, values, and beliefs shared with a social group that provide individuals with a sense of belonging. These elements include language as a means of communication, social relationships, rituals and ceremonies, collective behaviours, and, more broadly, systems of values and beliefs. In this regard, the use and proficient command of a foreign language in itself entails a transformation in an individual's identity, both personally and socially (Usó, 2013). Similarly, Steinbach (2014) argues that cultural identity consists of knowledge, beliefs, art, skills, morality, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by individuals as members of society. Finally, Kulyk (2011) highlights the importance of the use of one's native language, as well as secondary languages, in shaping individuals' social and political identity.

When focusing on cultural identity, it may also be understood from a dynamic conception of the self, drawing upon the contributions of cultural psychology. From this perspective, the sociocultural notion of identity is viewed as the dynamic capacity of individuals to construct meanings through the situations in which they participate. In this regard, the concept of **agency** is particularly significant, referring to the actions undertaken by individuals to participate actively in the creation of sociocultural meanings. Consequently, the construction of identity involves individuals' interactions with different contexts, situations, and people, all of which serve as cultural references in the formation of their identity (Rebollo & Hornillo, 2010).

In order to further deepen the concept of cultural identity, the following sections address two essential aspects closely related to the term: **the differentiation of the other** and **its dynamic nature**.

1.1. Cultural Identity as Differentiation from the Other

One of the most frequently cited aspects in defining the concept of cultural identity is **the** differentiation from the other. In other words, it is associated with processes of assimilation, differentiation, and the construction of values and beliefs at both the individual and collective levels. Numerous scholars agree that cultural identity is a complex relationship that is defined in relation to others, as an interaction between belonging to a group (identity) and differentiation

from the other (alterity), through which one's own cultural identity is gradually constructed (Bennett, 2015; O'Connor & Faas, 2012; Paat & Pellebon, 2012). Identity is constructed through the dialogue among multiple voices that shape the individual's imagination and contribute to the understanding of the self. The recognition of significant others is indispensable for the strengthening of one's own personality (Rebollo & Hornillos, 2010).

From an anthropological perspective, identity emerges through differentiation and self-affirmation in relation to the other (McNiff, 2012). Accordingly, the process of acquiring cultural identity arises from self-evaluation and the evaluation of oneself and others, enabling individuals to assimilate the distinctive characteristics that form part of their own consciousness, as well as those that constitute the collective consciousness of the group, while distinguishing between them (Velázquez, 2012). In this sense, cultural identity cannot exist without the other; it is created through the relationship between the self and the other. Therefore, when discussing one's own identity, it is equally necessary to take into account the identities of others.

1.2. Cultural Identity as a Dynamic Process

A second important aspect in defining cultural identity is its evolution over time, as it is a dynamic concept that is continuously reconstructed both individually and collectively through ongoing interaction with external influences (Koc, 2006; Law, 2015; McNiff, 2012; Schatz-Oppenheimer & Kalnisky, 2014; Velázquez, 2012). The notion of cultural identity as fixed, simple, stable, and immutable has long been abandoned. Today, it is understood as relative and constantly evolving, being simultaneously objective and subjective, and functioning as a dynamic and transformative system through which cultures are synthesized (Paat & Pellebon, 2012).

Human beings possess the capacity to create, transform, collectivize, and establish new ways of identifying with or distinguishing themselves according to their cultural values and beliefs. Consequently, individuals are capable of being transformed and enriched through contact with other cultures, which may result in minor changes that modify their cultural identity or, alternatively, profound changes that give rise to entirely new identities (Velázquez, 2012). A clear example of the creation or transformation of cultural identities can be observed in the role of the mass media as an agent of globalization, fostering the emergence of hybrid cultures in which tradition and postmodernity become intertwined.

Recent studies on adolescents with migration backgrounds similarly conceptualize cultural identity as a dynamic process involving the interaction of heritage and host-society identities.

Research indicates that immigrant adolescents may simultaneously develop ethnic, national, and personal identities and that the relationship between these dimensions evolves throughout adolescence (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2021). More recent evidence also suggests that cultural identity is associated with the academic, social, and psychological adjustment of adolescents with immigration backgrounds (Baumert et al., 2024).

Likewise, another body of scholars advocates the notion of multiple cultural identities, owing to the inherently dynamic nature of the concept. Cultural identity should not be conceived as uniform or singular; rather, it is plural and allows individuals to belong simultaneously to multiple groups. Therefore, it is more appropriate to speak not of cultural identity in the singular, but of multiple, dynamic, diverse, and intersecting cultural identities (Xu, 2015).

2. Cultural Identity and Nationality

As discussed above, the concept of cultural identity is dynamic and relative. Consequently, transformations in cultural identity have occurred throughout history. However, certain social changes over recent decades, particularly the phenomenon of globalization, have significantly intensified the dynamic character of cultural identity. In this regard, some scholars express concern over the weakening of nationality as a bond with the nation-state, the questioning of cultural belonging, and the rejection of nationality as the primary criterion of social affiliation (Rodríguez, 2013).

An indisputable aspect of this discussion is the relationship between culture and the people or nation as a collective entity. National culture, which embodies the aspirations, values, and essence of a people, constitutes an inseparable component of identity and plays a fundamental role in the life of communities (Infante & Hernández, 2011). In this respect, the **World Conference on Cultural Policies**, held in Mexico in 1982 (UNESCO, 1982), represented one of the earliest global affirmations of the importance of cultural identity. During the conference, a series of principles were formulated that highlighted the importance of preserving and promoting the cultural identity of peoples:

- Every culture represents a unique set of values through which each people expresses its presence in the world.
- The affirmation of cultural identity contributes to the liberation of peoples, whereas every form of domination denies that identity.
- The cultural identity of a people is enriched through contact with other peoples.
- Culture is dialogue, interaction, and the exchange of ideas and experiences.
- Cultural identity and cultural diversity are inseparable.

- The international community considers it a duty to defend and preserve the cultural identity of every people.
- Cultural policies must protect the identity and cultural heritage of every people and promote respect for cultural minorities.
- It is necessary to recognize the right of every people to preserve and affirm its own cultural identity.

Along these lines, it is also important to consider the concept of the **foreigner**. In the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy, the first definition of the term is "*A person or thing that belongs to a country other than one's own*" (RAE, 2016). Thus, the concept begins with the differentiation of the other, distinguishing the native of the host country from the newcomer. As discussed previously, this distinction reinforces the immigrant's own sense of identity by constructing it through differentiation from the other. On the other hand, there exists a category of foreigners who neither return to their country of origin nor develop a sense of belonging to the majority group. Consequently, they find themselves positioned between two identities without fully belonging to either of them (Roitman, 2009).

At present, there are growing concerns regarding the processes of cultural homogenization taking place worldwide. Some countries find themselves in a position of dependence on more powerful nations, and the defence of their cultural identity must contend with economic forces that contribute to the erosion of national boundaries (Infante & Hernández, 2011). Local cultural beliefs and values in some societies may become universalized, thereby diminishing or even eliminating the distinctive character of local identity. Consequently, various social, governmental, and religious institutions seek to preserve and cultivate cultural identities that may be threatened by this phenomenon (Erol, 2012; Koç, 2006).

In contrast to this perspective, other scholars argue that identities are not disappearing but rather being transformed. Globalization does not eradicate cultural identity; instead, it nourishes, enriches, and transforms it (John, 2015; Ikonómová, 2005). Within this framework emerges the notion of **transnational identities**, which connect ethnic and other social groups across national borders. In other words, cultural identities are constructed through different processes of socialization and are therefore in a constant state of change (Llorent & Terrón, 2013; Arias, 2009). Ultimately, cultural identities tend to be transversal, enabling us to recognize how they simultaneously distinguish and unite people despite state borders.

3. Cultural Identity and Migration

As noted above, the relationship between cultural identity and nationality is evident. Consequently, it is important to examine what happens to cultural identity within migratory processes. One of the defining characteristics of migration is the emergence of cultural diversity; however, such diversity does not necessarily imply the preservation of cultural identity.

The evolution of cultural identities within migratory contexts takes different forms. History provides numerous examples illustrating the various ways in which cultural identity develops throughout migration processes. The geographical distance separating immigrants from their country of origin does not necessarily sever their sense of belonging. In this regard, it is essential to distinguish between physical residence in a particular place and the subjective feeling of belonging to a community. Therefore, it is particularly relevant to investigate individuals' self-perceptions of their cultural identity (Liberona & Pagnota, 2012).

When examining the specific case of Moroccan immigrants, the literature reveals that in France they have maintained strong ties with their country of origin regardless of the number of years spent in the host country. Moreover, upon reaching retirement age, many continue to travel regularly between France and Morocco in order to preserve their connection with their homeland. In Spain, and particularly in Andalusia, geographical distance is considerably shorter, travel is faster, and transportation costs are lower. Consequently, interaction with the country of origin is substantially greater (Capote, 2011).

4. Cultural Identity and Education

Formal education is valued not only as a provider of scientific and technical knowledge but also as a means of civic and moral formation. In this respect, formal education may be understood as a promoter of citizenship through the acquisition and development of ways of thinking, while simultaneously contributing to the development of the modern concept of the individual as a citizen. This latter dimension plays a significant role in the construction and development of an individual's cultural identity (De La Mata & Santamaría, 2010).

Along these lines, Basarab (2015) argues for the need to construct a multiple and relative cultural identity in relation to the various social, political, and cultural contexts that characterize contemporary society. As the principal tool for intercultural communication, the author advocates raising awareness of the differences that exist among cultural identities. In this regard, education plays a fundamental role as a precursor to tolerance and the understanding of cultural differences, thereby fostering an effective intercultural dialogue.

In response to this growing demand, education has sought to address these challenges through practices associated with intercultural education. Consequently, numerous examples can be observed in Western societies where intercultural education has been approached as a process of assimilating the culture and values of the host society. Nevertheless, the primary objective of intercultural education should be to promote multiculturalism within the classroom by emphasizing its value as an enriching element and encouraging the integration of students into the school community. In this respect, students belonging to cultural minority groups frequently experience feelings of exclusion and often fail to perceive themselves as fully belonging either to their classroom community or, more broadly, to the host country. These students should feel accepted and valued for their differences, including the cultural heritage and traditional values that constitute their cultural identity (Deusdad, 2013).

Several studies have examined practices related to intercultural education. On the one hand, the classification proposed by Deusdad (2013) in her study on identity and social inclusion identifies four principal areas for the development of intercultural education. The first is content integration, which involves incorporating different cultures across the curriculum in a cross-curricular manner. The second concerns the knowledge construction process, in which teachers play a central role by seeking to reduce the influence of prejudice. The third is equity pedagogy, whose primary objective is to improve students' academic achievement by adapting teaching methodologies to their specific educational needs. Finally, the transformation of the school structure aims to support cultural minorities and other disadvantaged groups through the provision of educational resources and learning opportunities.

More recent research has reinforced the importance of these issues in contemporary multicultural educational settings. In the Moroccan context, research on Sub-Saharan African students in public schools has identified several challenges related to educational integration, including limitations in educational programmes, insufficient resources, and the need for greater teacher preparation to address the specific needs of migrant learners. Such findings highlight the continuing importance of intercultural educational approaches that recognize students' cultural backgrounds while facilitating their participation and integration within the host educational system (El-Kacimi, 2023).

On the other hand, Osuna (2012) presents a synthesis of the four principal approaches and models of intercultural education:

- **Cultural assimilation:** This perspective seeks to ensure equal educational opportunities for students from different cultural backgrounds by identifying cultural differences as a potential source of academic underachievement.
- **Appreciation of other cultures:** This approach proposes several models, including the incorporation of multicultural content into the curriculum, the promotion of cultural pluralism through recognition of the value of diversity, multicultural guidance aimed at strengthening the self-concept of students belonging to cultural minorities, and anti-racist education.
- **Bicultural education:** This model seeks to strengthen the cultural identity of minority groups by fostering students' ability to function competently within two cultures.
- **Critical social approach:** Its primary objective is to combat cultural, social, and political inequalities by educating students in the principles of equity and social justice.

Following this classification, the author emphasizes the rather rigid nature of these models and argues in favour of a more flexible conception of intercultural education. In this respect, she advocates a more individualized approach, contextualizing students' cultures by considering each learner not merely as a member of a particular cultural group but as a unique individual. As a conclusion to the study, Osuna (2012) supports a vision of intercultural education that promotes cultural diversity within society as a whole and within the educational community in particular, while encouraging critical and reflective thinking about diversity and difference, and contributing to the reduction of racism and discrimination.

Recent research conducted in Morocco also emphasizes the importance of language in the integration of Sub-Saharan migrant students. El-Kacimi (2024) found that linguistic integration is influenced by students' family environments, multilingual practices, and the educational conditions provided by Moroccan schools. The study further highlights the need for clearer educational measures to support the linguistic and social integration of migrant learners.

With regard to the impact of migratory processes on educational institutions, it can be argued that immigration, together with the cultural diversity it brings, has a positive influence on education. The motivation of immigrant students toward learning and academic achievement is reflected in their desire to improve their quality of life, which often constitutes one of the main reasons for migrating to the host country. Nevertheless, Altugan (2015) reports that some immigrant students express feelings of lacking the right to participate actively in classroom

activities. However, when classrooms encourage the exchange of ideas rather than suppress them, students with cultural identities different from the majority benefit significantly, experiencing increased self-esteem and greater classroom participation. At the same time, all students benefit from exposure to diverse perspectives, thereby fostering the development of their intercultural competence.

Furthermore, the aforementioned study examined students who demonstrated academic success and found a positive relationship between their achievement and their cultural identity, as the incorporation of students' social and cultural experiences into the classroom contributed positively to the learning process. In this respect, teachers should be aware of their students' cultural identities in order to adapt the learning process to their particular characteristics and thereby enhance their motivation. Likewise, the study highlights the significance of students' cultural identity in teaching and learning processes, arguing that cultural disconnection may lead to a decline in students' motivation to learn. Consequently, classroom activities and instructional strategies should be designed in accordance with the diverse cultural identities represented among students, taking into account their individual characteristics.

Specifically, with regard to the population examined in our study, namely students of Moroccan origin, Deusdad (2013) discusses two previous investigations on the cultural identity of Moroccan students within the Spanish context. Both studies reveal a marked rejection of students belonging to the Moroccan cultural minority. The prejudice and discrimination directed towards this group reinforce the existence of a negative collective perception of this cultural minority within Spanish society.

In response to the discrimination and rejection they experience, the study concludes that students generally cope with these circumstances by developing either a reactive identity or a dual identity. Through a reactive identity, students construct a defensive and supportive sense of self as a means of protecting their dignity and cultural identity against the hostility they perceive. Conversely, a dual identity enables students to embrace multiple identities in accordance with the cultural diversity surrounding them, integrating both their identity of origin, rooted in their family and cultural heritage, and the identity associated with their Spanish peers (Deusdad, 2013).

Ultimately, it can be argued that although cultural diversity is not a new phenomenon within educational institutions, the construction of students' identities in multicultural environments remains an unresolved pedagogical challenge (Fuentes, 2014; Hjärne & Säljö, 2014). Educational systems should seek to counteract the imposition of a homogeneous identity by the

dominant culture, particularly in response to the cultural uncertainty that students belonging to minority groups may experience. In this regard, **Fuentes (2014)** highlights the challenge faced by intercultural education in giving voice to all cultures while simultaneously preserving the cultivation of the cultural identity that characterizes the educational context itself, an identity that remains essential for social coexistence.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that respect for difference and cultural plurality requires both pedagogical and community-based intervention. Intercultural education, promoted through collaborative learning among students from diverse cultural backgrounds, provides an ideal setting for improving relationships with students of Moroccan origin (Deusdad, 2013). Nevertheless, this represents a shared educational responsibility that must be addressed across all contexts of socialization in order to facilitate the full development of individuals' cultural identity formation.

5. Methodology

5.1. Objectives

With regard to the methodological design, the present study focuses on **Sub-Saharan African students enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools**, seeking to identify some of the key aspects that reflect the cultural identity of this population. The purpose is to analyse the influence of both the culture of origin and the culture of the host society during this particularly crucial stage of academic development, which plays a fundamental role in shaping personality and, consequently, cultural identity.

In this way, the study aims to enhance understanding of the cultural identity of this group of students in order to propose intercultural education strategies that contribute to improving their socio-educational integration and academic development within the Moroccan educational system.

With this purpose in mind, the principal objective of the study is:

- **To examine the perspectives of Sub-Saharan African students attending Moroccan public secondary schools regarding their own cultural identity.**

From this general objective, the following specific objectives are derived:

- To explore students' feelings and perceptions regarding their cultural identity.
- To describe specific relational aspects associated with their cultural identity.
- To examine students' future aspirations and expectations in relation to their cultural identity.

5.2. Research Design

The present study adopts a positivist research approach for two principal reasons. First, the ambitious sample upon which the study is based required a positivist perspective in order to include a sufficient number of participants to enable the findings to be generalized to the population under investigation. Second, the proposed research objectives are consistent with the positivist paradigm, as their primary purpose is to examine the cultural identity of Sub-Saharan African students attending Moroccan public secondary schools, with the sole intention of providing a general overview of their current situation.

Within this positivist framework, a descriptive research method was employed, in accordance with the descriptive nature of the research objectives outlined above. Finally, the research design selected was the survey design, as it represented the most appropriate approach for collecting data from a large study population.

From an epistemological perspective, the study is therefore positioned within the positivist paradigm, which allows the phenomenon under investigation to be examined through observable and quantifiable data. The study follows a deductive mode of reasoning, since the dimensions examined through the questionnaire were derived from the existing literature on cultural identity, migration, and intercultural education. This methodological positioning is consistent with the descriptive purpose of the research and the use of quantitative data to identify general patterns within the population under study.

5.3. Sample

The target population of this study consists of students of Sub-Saharan African origin enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools. To estimate the sample size, a multistage stratified cluster sampling procedure was employed. To determine the size of each stratum, the proportional allocation criterion was used, thereby preserving the quantitative importance of each stratum by assigning to the sample a number of participants proportional to its size.

According to the most recent data provided by the Ministry of National Education, Preschool and Sports of Morocco, there were a total of 4500 students of Sub-Saharan African origin enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools during the [academic year]. Taking the total population into account and following the recommendations of Sierra (2008), for a sampling error of 3%, the representative sample required for this population consisted of 900 participants. Using the proportional allocation criterion, each stratum contributed to the sample according to its relative size within the population. By applying the following formula:

$$n_i = n \times \frac{N_i}{N} \quad n_i = n \times \frac{N_i}{N}$$

where n_{in_ini} represents the sample corresponding to each stratum (region), n_{nn} is the representative sample for the target population, N_{iN_iNi} denotes the size of each subpopulation within the corresponding region, and NNN is the total population size, the sampling distribution presented in Table 1 was obtained.

Region	Enrolled Students	Sample by Strata
Casablanca–Settat	1,200	240
Rabat–Salé–Kénitra	850	170
Tangier–Tetouan–Al Hoceima	650	130
Fès–Meknès	520	104
Marrakech–Safi	450	90
Oriental	310	62
Souss–Massa	220	44
Béni Mellal–Khénifra	120	24
Drâa–Tafilalet	80	16
Guelmim–Oued Noun	45	9
Laâyoune–Sakia El Hamra	35	7
Dakhla–Oued Ed-Dahab	20	4
Total	4,500	900

5.4. Instrumentation

For data collection, a **questionnaire** was used as the research instrument. It was administered to the target population and consisted of two sections: the first gathered information related to the description of the sample, while the second comprised a series of items developed on the basis of a **table of specifications**, with the purpose of establishing the **content validity** of the questionnaire.

Accordingly, the questionnaire was designed around three principal dimensions: **feelings and perceptions**, **relational aspects**, and **future life perspectives** in relation to participants' cultural identity. From these dimensions, a number of questions were developed concerning participants' arrival and trajectory in **Morocco**, the contact they maintain with their **countries of origin**, their opinions regarding their **cultural traditions**, as well as aspects of their current lives and their prospective views concerning their future.

Finally, it should be noted that the data were analysed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 29.0**.

6. Results

6.1. Description of the Sample

We begin with a brief description of the sample, highlighting its principal characteristics. A total of **74.6%** of the students surveyed were between **12 and 15 years of age**, while the remaining **25.4%** were over the age of **15 years**. With regard to gender, the sample exhibited a relatively balanced distribution, with **47.2%** female participants and **52.8%** male participants. Regarding the students' countries of origin, the sample was highly diverse, as participants came from different **Sub-Saharan African countries**. The most frequently represented countries were **Senegal (24.8%)**, **Mali (18.6%)**, **Guinea (15.2%)**, **Côte d'Ivoire (12.4%)**, **Cameroon (10.3%)**, while the remaining participants originated from countries such as **Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and Ghana**.

With respect to the length of residence in **Morocco**, the majority of participants (**60.9%**) had lived in the country for **more than five years**, **24.8%** had resided in Morocco for **between two and five years**, **4.8%** had lived in the country for **one year or less**, and **9.5%** had been **born in Morocco**.

Regarding the educational stage at which participants first entered the Moroccan education system, considerable variation was observed. The most frequent entry points were **Grade 1 of Primary Education (26.5%)**, **Grade 3 of Primary Education (13.1%)**, **Preschool Education (11.6%)**, and **Grade 4 of Primary Education (10.7%)**. Consequently, it can be concluded that the majority of students of **Sub-Saharan African origin** entered the Moroccan educational system during the **primary education stage (70.7%)**.

Finally, when analysing the age at which students entered the Moroccan education system, it was found that the majority (**73.8%**) had enrolled **before reaching 12 years of age**.

6.2. Feelings and Opinions Related to Cultural Identity

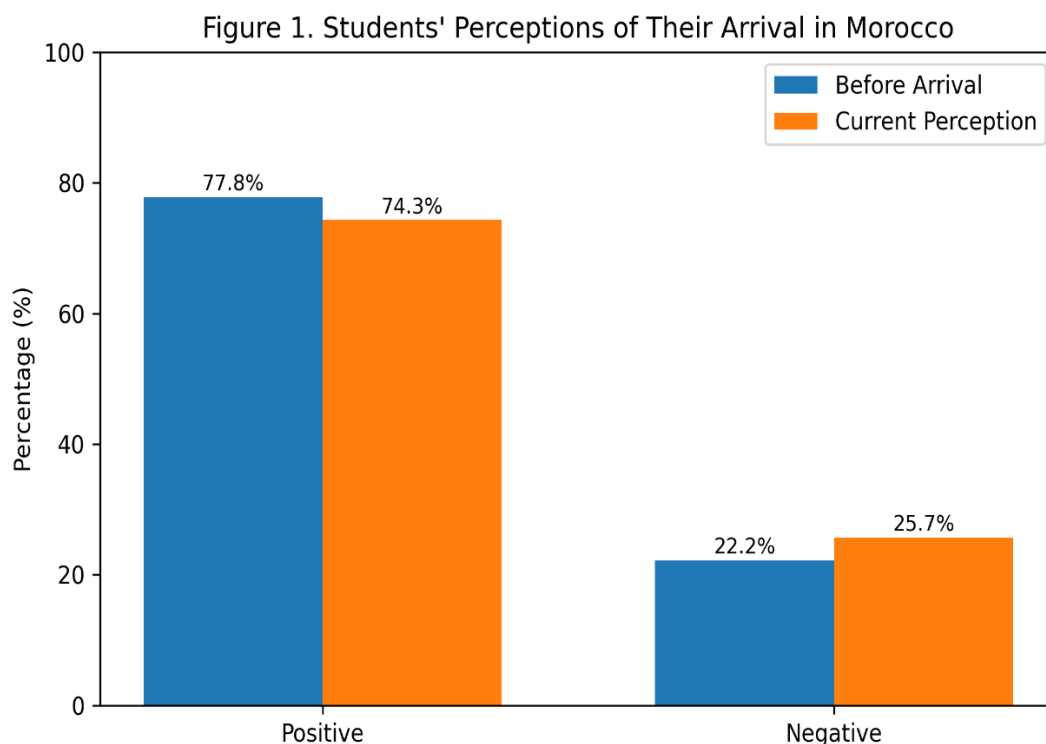
The following section presents the principal findings concerning the **feelings and opinions** expressed by the population under study regarding their cultural identity. As consistently reflected throughout the literature, students' feelings and perceptions of their cultural identity influence both their educational experiences and their assimilation of, or resistance to, the dominant culture of the host society.

Accordingly, the items examined within this dimension included: "When you first learned that you would be coming to Morocco, how did you perceive it?", "And now, how do you perceive it?", "Do you consider it important to preserve the customs and traditions of your country of

origin?", "Has your way of life in Morocco changed compared with the one you had in your country of origin?", and "Do you consider yourself a foreigner in Morocco?"

Thus, Figure 1 illustrates participants' perceptions of their arrival in Morocco before the migration process began and their current perceptions. The majority of the students surveyed expressed a positive view of their new life in Morocco, both **prior to their arrival (77.8%)** and **at the time of the study (74.3%)**. Nevertheless, a slight decline in this positive perception was observed over time, decreasing by **3.5%**.

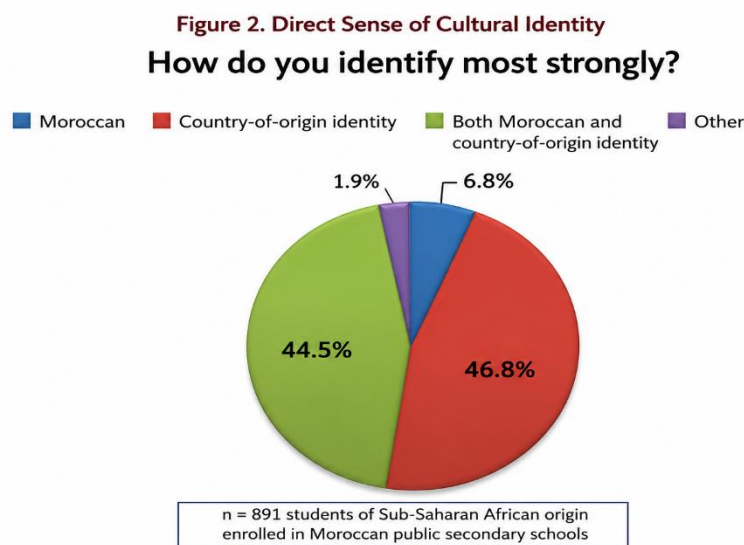
These findings are consistent with the notion that students' motivation to pursue education is closely associated with aspirations for personal improvement and enhanced future life opportunities. The slight decline in positive perceptions from the period preceding migration to the present may be associated with the challenges encountered during the adaptation process, including experiences of discrimination, social exclusion, or other barriers to full integration within Moroccan society.



Conversely, only 6.8% of the respondents identified exclusively with Moroccan cultural identity. The high percentage of participants who reported identifying simultaneously with both the cultural identity of their country of origin and Moroccan cultural identity is consistent with the concept of dual cultural identity, which is frequently observed among members of cultural minorities within educational settings. This dual identity is shaped by the combined influence of the family environment and peer interactions, particularly relationships established with

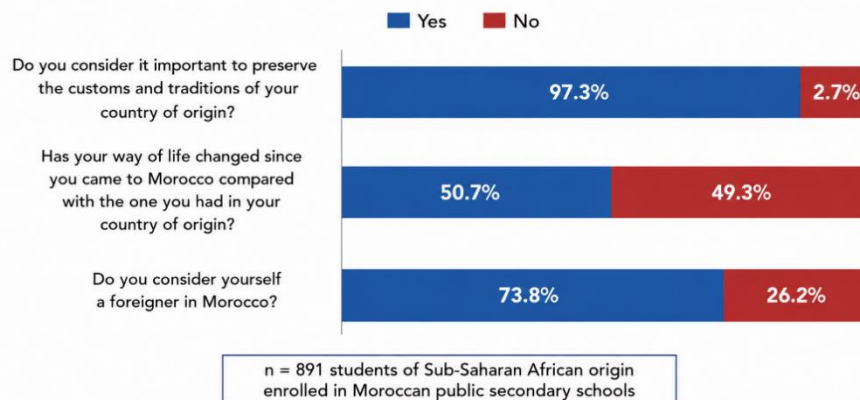
classmates. In this regard, it is worth emphasizing that, as previously indicated, 9.5% of the respondents were born in Morocco.

Recent research further supports the relevance of bicultural identity among adolescents navigating different cultural environments. Educational contexts, family influences, language, and attitudes toward cultural diversity can contribute significantly to the development of bicultural identity among minority and immigrant adolescents (Laketa et al., 2023). Furthermore, the integration of heritage and national identities has been associated with different dimensions of adolescents' psychosocial adjustment (Safa et al., 2024).



In order to examine participants' sense of cultural identity indirectly, three key questions were included in the questionnaire, the results of which are presented in Figure 3. The findings reveal that almost all respondents considered it important to preserve the customs and traditions of their countries of origin. This finding supports the importance of intercultural education within schools as a strategy for fostering students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. Furthermore, the majority of respondents considered themselves to be foreigners in Morocco, while responses regarding changes in their way of life following their migration to Morocco were relatively balanced. The perception of being a foreigner in Morocco may be associated with feelings of exclusion within the classroom community, which can, in turn, influence students' participation and motivation throughout the teaching and learning process.

Figure 3. Indirect Sense of Cultural Identity

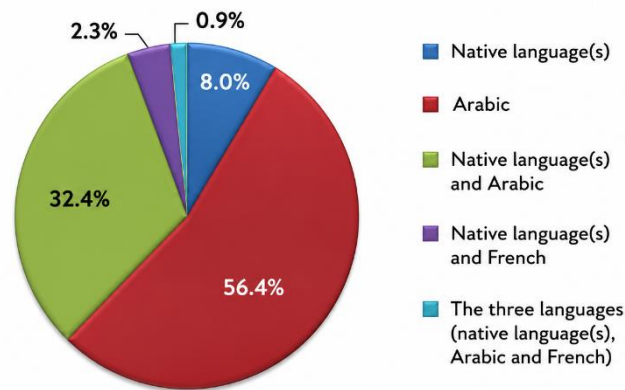


6.3. Relational Aspects of Cultural Identity

A second aspect considered relevant to the present study is the analysis of participants' relationships with their immediate social environment, as these constitute a fundamental component of the socialization process and, consequently, of the development of cultural identity and, ultimately, their socio-educational integration. We begin by examining one of the essential factors in interpersonal interaction: language, specifically the language(s) spoken within the home, whose use plays a direct role in the construction of cultural identity. Likewise, the use of one language within the family and another at school, primarily Arabic and/or French, the principal languages of instruction in Morocco—may contribute to the development of the dual cultural identity discussed previously, facilitating the integration of both the culture of origin and the culture of the host society.

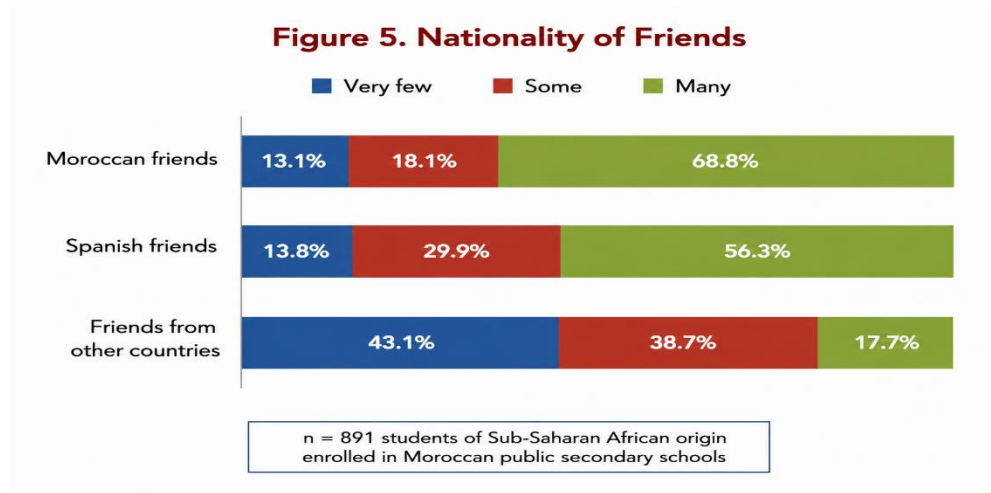
As illustrated in Figure 4, the most frequently spoken languages within the family are participants' native African languages, followed by combinations of native African languages and Arabic, native African languages and French, and, to a lesser extent, the simultaneous use of all three languages. The predominance of participants' native languages in the family environment once again reflects their strong attachment to their countries and cultures of origin, given the central role that language plays in the construction and preservation of cultural identity. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Arabic and French are also spoken within many households, indicating an ongoing process of linguistic adaptation and cultural integration into Moroccan society.

Figure 4. Language(s) Spoken at Home



n = 891 students of Sub-Saharan African origin enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools

With regard to the nationality of participants' friends, Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of friendships according to the nationality of respondents' peers. The findings indicate that friendships with fellow students of Sub-Saharan African origin were more prevalent than friendships with Moroccan students or students from other nationalities. Nevertheless, 56.3% of the respondents reported having many Moroccan friends. It is also noteworthy that 17.7% of the participants reported having many friends from other nationalities, suggesting that students from different immigrant backgrounds tend to establish social relationships with one another. These findings are consistent with the tendency of students belonging to cultural minorities to form peer networks with individuals who share similar migration experiences or cultural backgrounds. Such patterns may also be associated with the perception of being foreigners in Morocco expressed by many participants in previous questionnaire items. Consequently, opportunities for interaction with Moroccan peers, which could foster the development of a dual cultural identity, may be reduced. As a result, exposure to and assimilation of the culture of the host society may become more limited, potentially creating additional challenges for students' educational integration and participation in the teaching–learning process.

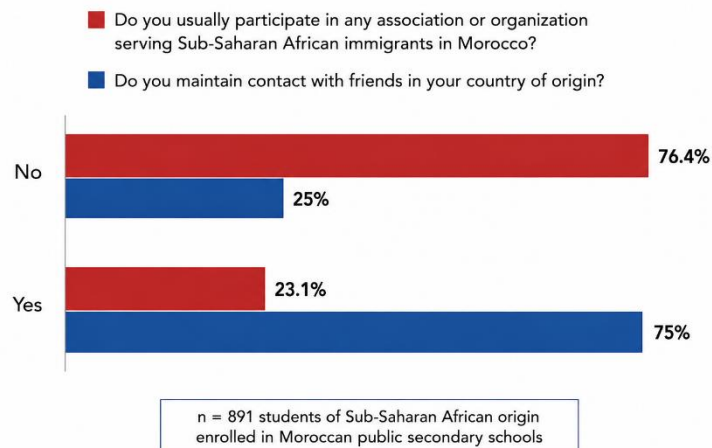


Along the same lines, participants were asked whether they maintained contact with friends in their countries of origin. The results, presented in Figure 6, indicate that the majority of respondents (75%) reported maintaining regular contact with friends in their home countries, whereas 25% responded negatively.

To further explore the extent of participants' connections with their cultures of origin, they were also asked whether they regularly participated in any associations or organizations serving Sub-Saharan African migrant communities in Morocco. In this regard, the majority of respondents (76.4%) indicated that they did not participate in such organizations, while a smaller proportion (23.1%) reported regular involvement.

These findings once again suggest that students of Sub-Saharan African origin maintain strong ties with their countries and cultures of origin through sustained interpersonal relationships, despite their relatively limited participation in migrant community associations. Consequently, educational institutions should recognize and value the sociocultural backgrounds of Sub-Saharan African students when designing teaching strategies and learning environments that facilitate their academic engagement, socio-educational integration, and overall educational development.

Figure 6. Relationships with the Country of Origin



6.4. Future Life Perspectives Related to Cultural Identity

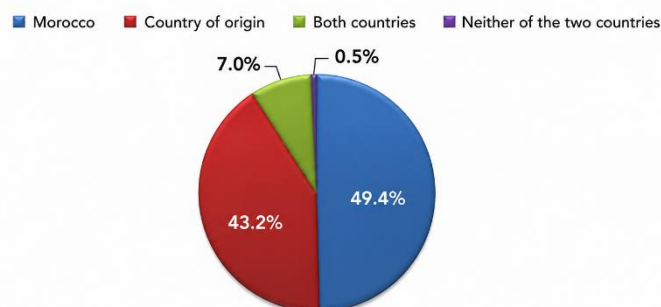
Finally, we examine the future life perspectives of Sub-Saharan African students enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools in relation to their cultural identity, as these perspectives may influence their current development, particularly their views regarding their socio-educational experiences. To this end, two key questions were explored. The first examined the country in which participants would prefer their future children to be born and raised, the results of which are presented in Figure 7.

The responses revealed a relatively balanced distribution. The largest proportion of respondents (49.4%) indicated that they would prefer their future children to be born and raised in **Morocco**, while a slightly smaller proportion (43.2%) preferred **their country of origin**. A minority (7.0%) expressed a preference for **both countries**. These findings suggest a relatively balanced distribution of preferences among the respondents.

The relatively high percentage of students who preferred their children to be born and raised in **their countries of origin** once again highlights the strong emotional and cultural ties that participants maintain with their homelands. At the same time, the fact that nearly half of the respondents preferred **Morocco** suggests that many participants perceive the country as offering favourable educational, social, and future opportunities for the next generation. This finding reflects the complex and dynamic nature of cultural identity, in which attachment to one's country of origin coexists with the development of a sense of belonging to the host society.

Figure 7. Preference for the Country of Birth and Upbringing of Future Children

If you had children, would you prefer that they were born and raised in Morocco, in your country of origin, or in both?

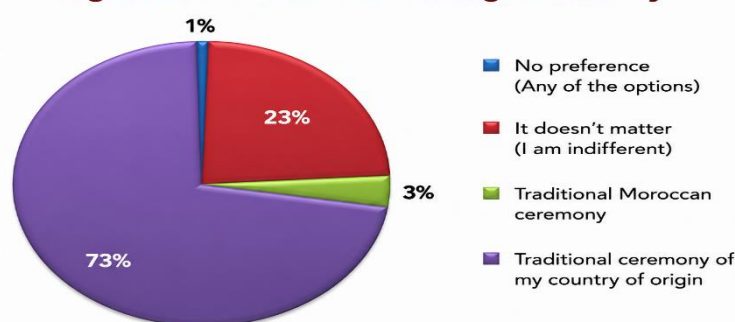


n = 891 students of Sub-Saharan African origin enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools

The second item explored the type of marriage ceremony participants would prefer to have in the future. The results presented in Figure 8 indicate that the majority of respondents would prefer a traditional ceremony reflecting the customs of their country of origin, followed by a group who expressed no particular preference, and a smaller proportion who preferred a traditional Moroccan ceremony.

These findings once again demonstrate the strong importance that participants attach to preserving the rituals, customs, and cultural traditions of their countries of origin. In this respect, educational institutions should take such cultural dimensions into account in order to better understand the realities of students from Sub-Saharan African backgrounds, strengthen their sense of belonging and inclusion within the school environment, and ultimately promote their socio-educational integration and academic development.

Figure 8. Preference for Marriage Ceremony



n = 891 students of Sub-Saharan African origin enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools

Conclusions

First, we present the principal conclusions derived from the research objectives established for this study.

- With regard to the first objective, *"To examine the opinions of Sub-Saharan African students enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools regarding their cultural identity,"* the findings indicate that participants generally hold a positive perception of their migration to Morocco. Their sense of cultural identity is divided primarily between the cultural identity of their country of origin and a dual identity combining both their country of origin and Moroccan cultural identity. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents still consider themselves to be foreigners in Morocco and regard the preservation of the customs and traditions of their countries of origin as highly important. On the one hand, these findings demonstrate the prominence of a dual cultural identity among students who navigate between the culture of their country of origin and Moroccan society. On the other hand, the perception of being a foreigner in Morocco raises important questions regarding the extent of these students' educational and social integration within Moroccan schools.
- Regarding the second objective, *"To describe the relational aspects associated with the cultural identity of Sub-Saharan African students enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools,"* the results reveal that, although many respondents reported having numerous Moroccan friends and indicated that they do not regularly participate in migrant community associations, the predominant language spoken at home remains their native language(s), friendships with peers of Sub-Saharan African origin remain particularly strong, and most participants continue to maintain regular contact with friends in their countries of origin. These findings suggest that both language and friendship networks reinforce the strong cultural and emotional ties that students maintain with their countries of origin while simultaneously navigating their integration into Moroccan society.
- Finally, with respect to the third objective, *"To examine future life perspectives related to the cultural identity of Sub-Saharan African students enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools,"* the findings indicate that, when asked where they would prefer their future children to be born and raised, respondents showed a relatively balanced preference, with a slight majority selecting Morocco, closely followed by those who preferred their countries of origin. By contrast, when considering future marriage ceremonies, the overwhelming majority expressed a preference for a traditional ceremony reflecting the customs of their country of origin. These findings once again highlight the enduring

importance of cultural traditions and rituals among participants. At the same time, they suggest that cultural identity among Sub-Saharan African students is characterized by a dynamic coexistence of attachment to their heritage culture and adaptation to the Moroccan context. Rather than reflecting a lack of integration, these results point to the development of bicultural or dual identities, through which students maintain meaningful ties with their countries of origin while simultaneously building a sense of belonging within Moroccan society.

- As highlighted throughout the literature reviewed, cultural identity is a dynamic and evolving construct that develops alongside both the individual and society. In this regard, similar to findings reported in studies conducted in other host countries, our results demonstrate that Sub-Saharan African students in Morocco maintain strong connections with their countries and cultures of origin. While geographical proximity to some Sub-Saharan African countries and the increasing mobility across the African continent may facilitate continued contact with their homelands, the findings suggest that the family remains the primary institution responsible for preserving and transmitting cultural values, traditions, and identities across generations.
- Based on the evidence gathered, it can be concluded that participants exhibit a strong sense of attachment to their countries of origin, particularly in relation to cultural practices and traditions. At the same time, students enrolled in Moroccan public secondary schools generally evaluate their educational experience in Morocco positively. Nevertheless, the preservation and intergenerational transmission of their cultural heritage continue to constitute a central component of their identity construction.
- From an educational perspective, students from Sub-Saharan African backgrounds may encounter barriers to full educational and social integration, including cultural misunderstandings, stereotypes, and, in some cases, discriminatory attitudes. Consequently, teachers should be aware of the cultural diversity present within Moroccan classrooms and, in particular, of the sociocultural backgrounds of students from Sub-Saharan Africa. Such awareness can support the design of inclusive teaching strategies that acknowledge and value students' linguistic and cultural heritage. In doing so, schools can create learning environments that enhance students' motivation, participation, and sense of belonging while simultaneously providing all learners with opportunities to develop intercultural competence through exposure to diverse cultural perspectives.

In conclusion, Sub-Saharan African students enrolled in Moroccan public secondary school appear to develop a dual or bicultural identity that connects the culture of their country of origin—primarily transmitted through the family, with the culture of the host society, acquired through school and everyday social interactions. However, attachment to their heritage culture remains a fundamental element in the construction of their cultural identity. Consequently, this cultural dimension should not be overlooked within educational processes, as failing to recognize students' cultural backgrounds may hinder their engagement, participation, and learning experiences.

Intercultural education therefore emerges as a powerful framework for promoting the socio-educational integration of these students. By understanding and acknowledging the cultural identities of Sub-Saharan African learners, educators can develop inclusive pedagogical strategies that foster equitable teaching and learning environments, strengthen students' sense of belonging, and ultimately enhance both their academic achievement and their overall educational experience.

REFERENCES

- Altugan, A. (2015). The effect of cultural identity on learning. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 190, 455–458.
- Arias, L. (2009). La identidad nacional en tiempos de globalización. *Revista Electrónica Educare*, 18(2), 7–16.
- Basarab, N. (2015). Education, cultural and intercultural relation. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 180, 36–41.
- Baumert, J., Becker, M., Jansen, M., & Köller, O. (2024). Cultural identity and the academic, social, and psychological adjustment of adolescents with immigration background. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 53, 294–315.
- Bennett, T. (2015). Cultural studies and the culture concept. *Cultural Studies*, 29(4), 546–568.
- De La Mata, M. L., & Santamaría, A. (2010). La construcción del yo en escenarios educativos: Un análisis desde la psicología cultural. *Revista de Educación*, 353, 157–186.
- Deusdad, B. (2013). El respeto a la identidad como una forma de inclusión social: Interculturalidad y voluntariado social. *Educatio Siglo XXI*, 31(1), 89–104.
- El-Kacimi, B. (2024). Intégration linguistique des élèves-migrants subsahariens dans l’environnement scolaire au Maroc : Au croisement d’expériences familiales. *Comparative and International Education/Éducation comparée et internationale*, 53(2), 34–45. <https://doi.org/10.5206/cie-eci.v53i2.17171>
- Esteban-Guitart, M., Oller, J., & Villar, I. (2012). Vinculando escuela, familia y comunidad a través de los fondos de conocimiento e identidad. Un estudio de caso con una familia de origen marroquí. *Revista de Investigación en Educación*, 10(2), 21–34.
- Erol, A. (2012). Identity, migration and transnationalism: Expressive cultural practices of the Toronto Alevi community. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38(5), 833–849.
- Farias, L., & Asaba, E. (2013). “The family know”: Negotiating identities and cultural values through the everyday occupations of an immigrant family in Sweden. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 20(1), 36–47.
- Fuentes, J. L. (2014). Identidad cultural en una sociedad plural: Propuestas actuales y nuevas perspectivas. *Bordón*, 66(2), 61–74.
- Hernández, G., & Martínez, C. M. (2011). El proyecto de vida de los jóvenes hijos de emigrantes retornados. *Papers*, 96(1), 165–182.
- Hjörne, E., & Säljö, R. (2014). Representing diversity in education: Student identities in contexts of learning and instruction. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 63, 1–4.

- Ikonómova, A. M. (2005). Identidades e identidad nacional en el mundo contemporáneo. *Oasis*, 11, 19–38.
- Infante, M. E., & Hernández, R. C. (2011). Preservar la identidad cultural: Una necesidad en la actualidad. *Arte y Sociedad (ASRI)*.
- John, J. V. (2015). Globalization, national identity and foreign policy: Understanding “Global Korea”. *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 33(2), 38–57.
- Kijima, M. (2005). Schooling, multiculturalism and cultural identity: Case study of Japanese senior school students in a secondary school in South Australia. *International Education Journal*, 5(5), 129–136.
- Koc, M. (2006). Cultural identity crisis in the age of globalization and technology. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 5(1).
- Kulyk, V. (2011). Language identity, linguistic diversity and political cleavages: Evidence from Ukraine. *Nations and Nationalism*, 17(3), 627–648.
- Law, M. (2015). Doing cultural studies and education between borders. *Cultural Studies*, 29(2), 229–254.
- Liberona, N., & Pagnota, C. (2012). La construcción de una nueva identidad en contexto migratorio. Estudio de casos comparados de inmigrantes latinoamericanos en Italia y Francia. *Imagonautas*, 1(2), 130–147.
- Lin, X. (2014). “Filial son”, the family and identity formation among male migrant workers in urban China. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 21(6), 717–732.
- McNiff, J. (2012). Travels around identity: Transforming cultures of learned colonisation. *Educational Action Research*, 20(1), 129–146.
- O'Connor, L., & Faas, D. (2012). The impact of migration on national identity in a globalized world: A comparison of civic education curricula in England, France and Ireland. *Irish Educational Studies*, 31(1), 51–66.
- Osuna, C. (2012). En torno a la educación intercultural: Una revisión crítica. *Revista de Educación*, 358, 38–58.
- Paat, Y.-F., & Pellebon, D. (2012). Ethnic identity formation of immigrant children and implications for practice. *Child & Youth Services*, 33(2), 127–145.
- Rebollo, M. A., & Hornillo, I. (2010). Perspectiva emocional en la construcción de la identidad en contextos educativos: Discursos y conflictos emocionales. *Revista de Educación*, 353, 235–263.
- Rodríguez, E. (2013). Identidad y nacionalidad. *AFDUAM*, 17, 207–235.

- Roitman, D. (2009). Integrando vocablos: Identidad y extranjero. El caso de los hispanos en Estados Unidos. *Cuadernos Judaicos*, 26, 1–6.
- Safa, M. D., Long, Y., & Umaña-Taylor, A. J. (2024). Bicultural identity and adjustment among ethnoracially minoritized and immigrant adolescents. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 48(3).
- Schatz-Oppenheimer, O., & Kalnisky, E. (2014). Travelling far—Drawing closer: Journeys that shape identity. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 8(3), 170–187.
- Sijelmassi, A. R. (2011). Migration, family and identity: Concerning slums. *Thérapie Familiale*, 32(3), 383–393.
- Silver, L. J. (2015). Urban school formation: Identity work and constructing an origin story. *Urban Review*, 47(3), 492–512.
- Steinbach, M. (2014). Competing discourses in the ongoing identity construction of adult immigrants. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35(1), 104–115.
- UNESCO. (1982). *Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT)*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Usó, L. (2013). Pronunciación en lengua extranjera e identidad. *Cultura, Lenguaje y Representación*, 11, 145–163.
- Velázquez, A. (2012). La identidad: Camino hacia la individualidad cultural. *Revista Adicción y Ciencia*, 2(1), 1–6.
- Villareal, K. (2016). Construcción de la identidad racial: Una mirada desde la familia negra cartagenera. *Cuadernos de Lingüística Hispánica*, 27, 19–31.
- Xu, C. L. (2015). Identity and cross-border student mobility: The Mainland China–Hong Kong experience. *European Educational Research Journal*, 14(1), 65–73.