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**School policies for transgender
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quantitative analysis of the alias
career regulations**

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School policies for transgender students in Italian high schools: a quantitative analysis of the alias career regulations

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Abstract

This paper aims to quantitatively analyse the regulations of the alias career in upper secondary education by considering the disparities between schools, the types of high schools (Liceo, Technical and Vocational), and geographical differences. The analysis of the regulations detected 23 attributes in the text, which were then recorded within absence/presence (0/1) matrices. Subsequently, the attributes were analysed through Multiple Correspondence Analysis.

1. Introduction

In the last years, there has been an increased interest in the experience of transgender students in Italian K-12 schools and universities from scholars and the public (Bourelly *et al.*, 2022; Santambrogio, 2022; Lorusso & Albanesi, 2022; Bourelly, 2023). As of the 30th of August 2023, approximately 249 K-13 schools (Agedo, 2023) have adopted and regulated a device named alias career (*carriera alias*), which aims to support and guarantee a gender-affirming school life for trans students. The alias career, first introduced by the University of Turin in 2012 (Russo & Valerio, 2019), is an agreement between the school, family and transgender student which allows the youth to use their chosen name within the school's unofficial documentation, such as the online grade book and school-issued e-mail address. The device was introduced within schools as a bottom-up solution at the request of students, families, LGBTQIA+¹ associations, and mental health providers. As of today, it is the only school policy in Italy that aims to support trans students within K-13 education. Indeed, the alias career is regulated under the School Autonomy policies (Benadusi *et al.*, 2020), which leaves the decision of its adoption to school authorities, leading to differences on a school-to-school basis. The requirements to access the alias career can differ from each school, and such conditions

¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual. The plus signifies that there are also other sexual orientations and gender identities within the community.

can be influenced by the pathologisation of gender incongruence (World Health Organization, 2019), as well as cisgenderism (Santambrogio, 2022) and adultism (Castañeda, 2014; Owen, 2014).

This paper aims to quantitatively analyse the regulations of the alias career in upper secondary education by considering the disparities between schools, the types of high schools (Liceo, Technical and Vocational), and geographical differences. The analysis of the regulations detected 23 attributes in the text, which were then recorded within absence/presence (0/1) matrices. Subsequently, the attributes were analysed through Multiple Correspondence Analysis (Di Franco, 2011).

2 Trans students and the alias career

The extensive literature on transgender K-12 students, primarily based on anglophone studies, indicates that their educational experiences are often marked by transphobic bullying, marginalisation, victimisation, systemic microaggressions, and the presence of a cisnormative school environment (McBride, 2021). These experiences can harm trans youths' mental health (Scandurra *et al.*, 2017, 2020; Johnson *et al.*, 2020), academic performance, and classroom engagement (Council of Europe, 2018). Additionally, it can lead to increased absenteeism and dropout rates (McGuire *et al.*, 2010).

Most of the challenges faced by transgender students stem from the invalidation and invisibility of their gender identity (Johnson *et al.*, 2020). These challenges also include the disrespect and refusal to use their chosen names and pronouns by peers, teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as exclusion from gender-segregated spaces and activities like bathrooms and locker rooms (Davies *et al.*, 2019) and sports (Ingram & Thomas, 2019). Other issues arise from the lack of education and training for both educators and peers and the absence of comprehensive policies and action plans (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017; Council of Europe, 2018; Meyer & Keenan, 2018; Omercajic & Martino, 2020; Mayo, 2022).

In Europe, the first attempts to improve the educational experience of trans people started at the University of Turin in 2002 by providing students with the predecessor of the alias career, the *doppio libretto*. The *doppio libretto* entails issuing a second record book for students who desire to use their chosen name on documents internal to the University, allowing them to attend class and exams without needing to come out to other students and professors. This device was then substituted in the academic year 2012/2013 with the alias career (Russo & Valerio, 2019) due to the digitalisation of students' grade books. The latest mapping of

universities shows that of the 64 Italian public universities, six offer the *doppio libretto* and 32 the alias career (Universitrans, 2018). However, during the last five years, the number of universities with the device, both public and private universities, has increased. Additionally, some have changed their rule books, permitting students to access the alias career without providing a diagnosis of Gender dysphoria (Alma Mater Studiorum, Università degli Studi di Palermo, La Sapienza Università di Roma, to name a few) - thus extending the device to non-binary students, and in general to who does not desire gender-affirming care, people who do not live in a region or city with a gender clinic or are experiencing socioeconomic difficulties. The introduction of the alias career in K-13 schools started in the 2018/2019 school year due to the requests from below (Stryker, 2006) by trans students, families/caregiver(s), trans and LGBTQIA+ associations and gender clinics. Both universities and schools formalise the device through a confidentiality agreement between the institute and the transgender student and, in the case of a minor, the family/caregiver(s). The primary goal of the device is to grant students the use of their chosen names on the school's internal documentation, such as the school's online record book and school-issued e-mail addresses. Some institutes provide further support by recognising trans students' needs, such as access to gender-segregated facilities (bathrooms and changing rooms) according to their gender or needs, regulating transphobic bullying, training and educating the school community, and support according to individual needs. The decision to adopt the alias career is left to school authorities due to School Autonomy, which grants institutes independence in teaching, organisation, research and development, and administration (Benadusi *et al.*, 2020). The Ministry of Education (MIUR) has not taken a stand on the alias career. Italy has also not considered the recommendations of the Council of Europe on transgender youth's well-being in education. In 2010 and 2015, the Council of Europe suggested to its Member States to ensure the well-being of transgender pupils, promote respect and inclusion within schools, train teachers on gender identity and sexual orientation, and collect data on bullying, cyberbullying, and discrimination towards trans students. Likewise, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provided similar recommendations to Italy. Despite the lack of endorsement from the MIUR (Bourelly *et al.*, 2022), parents' associations and legal associations have proposed and provided schools regulations for the alias career and information regarding good practices for the well-being of trans pupils.

2.1 Gender ideology and schools

The lack of directives from the MIUR has given political parties and catholic organisations excuses to denounce the device as illegal and a threat due to the indoctrination of pupils because of "gender ideology" (*ideologia gender*) within schools. In the educational context, gender ideology refers to the belief that discourse related to sexual health, gender stereotypes, gender roles and respect for all people are harmful to children (Selmi, 2015).

The opposition to "gender ideology" in Europe is highly intertwined with Catholicism and its morals and beliefs (Prearo & Garbagnoli, 2018). Indeed, the primary critics and opposers of the alias career within schools have been the catholic association Provita e Famiglia and right-leaning political parties. On their socials, Provita e Famiglia (2023) has stated that the alias career is dangerous as it subjects adolescents and young adults not only to "gender ideology" but also to abuse by indulging in their "belief" of being transgender. In November 2022, the catholic organisation sent 150 institutes that had approved the device for its students a cease-and-desist notice requesting the elimination of the alias career (Provita e Famiglia, 2022). Some schools have publicly responded that they will not acquiesce to their threats (De Falco, 2022), but others have decided to support their transgender pupils no longer. The organisation's displeasure with the device has not been limited to the web and notices to schools. They have also been distributing leaflets in front of schools that have adopted the alias career or discussed its adoption (Bourelly, 2023).

Likewise, the political party Fratelli d'Italia has proposed laws in some cities and regions to abolish the alias career within (K-13) schools (Draft law 3 June 2022, n. 148). Previously postponed from July 2023 to September 2023, and in September again postponed to a date to be determined, the party has intended to present a motion to the Lombardy Region to "Require schools in Lombardy that adhere to the alias career to cancel/no longer apply its regulations", by affirming that supporting transgender students is detrimental since most would no longer have gender dysphoria in their adulthood (Buscaglia, 2023).

These attacks on the alias career will most likely continue until the MIUR determines the legitimisation of the device and, hopefully, requires all Italian schools to adopt good practices for transgender students and standardise the rule books.

3. The method

As of September 2023, the MIUR has yet to map the schools that have adopted the alias career. Because of this, since 2021, the organisations AGEDO, Genderlens and the author have

mapped the schools that have regulated the alias career and supported principals in adopting the device. Moreover, the author has been instrumental in training teachers and aiding students and educators seeking to integrate the alias career into their school settings. This active participation has been made possible by the author's deep involvement in the transgender community as an advocate for transgender rights since 2013. This situated positioning has allowed the author to directly contribute to expanding the implementation of the alias career in various schools and introducing effective practices that have benefited transgender students and the broader student community (Bourelly *et al.*, 2022).

For the mapping, four sources were used:

- Web searches through keywords such as “*carriera alias*” and “*regolamento carriera alias*”.
- News articles on the phenomenon.
- Student associations within and outside of schools.
- Trans-led organisations, LGBTIQ+ organisations, transgender activists, transgender students and their families.

The mapping resulted in 249 K-13 schools adopting and regulating the device between April 2019 and August 2023. The device is not evenly distributed within the Italian peninsula; it is mainly present in the North (42%) and the Centre of Italy (35%).

This imbalance is mainly because, in the North, all regions (except Valle d’Aosta, the only region without alias career) have a higher number of schools per region (Figure 1) than the Centre and the South.

Although it is not possible to determine if there is a direct relation between these two variables since it would be necessary to determine the direct impact of gender clinics on each school, it is possible to affirm that regions and provinces with fewer schools with the alias career are also those that lack a gender clinic and other services for transgender individuals.

Mapping of 249 K-13 schools with the Alias Career.

introduced between 2019 - August 2023

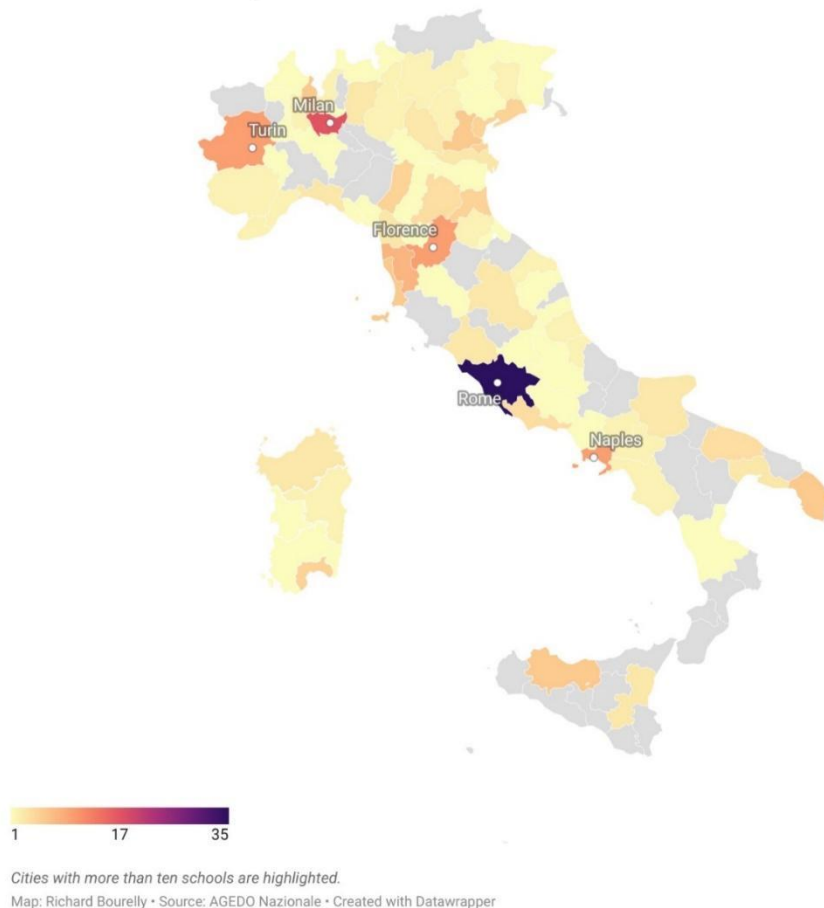


FIGURE 2. *Mapping per province*

Source: AGEDO (2023)

During the mapping, when finding a school without a rule book on their website, their principals were contacted via e-mail by Fiorenzo Gimelli, president of Agedo Nazionale, or the author to provide principals with support and training when needed.

Between April 2019 and August 2023, approximately 228 schools that provide upper-secondary education regulated the device. This study focuses on the regulations of 223 high schools for which it was possible to obtain the rule book through the school website or the principal. For the scope of this research, schools that do not provide upper-secondary education

(ISCED- 3) were excluded from the analysis. Two reasons guided this decision: 1) the autonomy of adult students and support out of school (such as PCTO internships²) were taken into consideration, and 2) due to the low number of schools (ISCED 0, 1 and 2) that support to transgender children through the alias career.

The study aims to quantitatively describe and analyse the alias career rule books, registration forms and confidentiality agreements. The review and analysis of the regulations detected 19 positive and negative attributes within the text. In addition, four other attributes were encountered during the mapping: the rule books, registration forms, confidentiality agreement on the schools' website, and gender-neutral language within these three files³. The 21 attributes were recorded within absence/presence (0/1) matrices and aggregated thematically within five categories (Table 1).

² Tr. Pathways for transversal skills and guidance. A form of cooperative education that is mandatory for all high school students to graduate. It differs based on the type of upper secondary education: Liceo, Technical school, and Vocational school.

³ The schools made the text gender-neutral using asterisks * or the *schwa* ə (Manera, 2021).

Categories	Attributes
Self-determination	Gender identity self-determination. Mention chosen pronouns. Adult students can request the alias without parental permission. The chosen name can be used on exams.
Bodily autonomy	Access to bathrooms. Access to changing rooms. School trip accommodations. Right to play sports based on gender.
Education, training and recognition	Training for teachers. Training for janitors. Education students. Inclusion of LGBTQIA+ themes in the curricula. Disclosure to substitute teachers. Disclosure to graduation exam external examiners.
School's support	Workgroups. Support outside of school for external activities. Disciplinary measures for transphobia and transphobic bullying. Special educational needs. Support and mediation in the case of parents against activating the alias career.
File accessibility	The Rulebook is on the school's website. The Registration forms are on the school's website. The confidentiality agreement is on the school's website. Gender-neutral language within the text.

TABLE 1. *Alias career regulations' characteristics*

3.1 Differences with the exploratory study

During the analysis of the 223 rulebooks, new attributes were detected, compared to the exploratory analysis of the regulations of 98 schools conducted on schools that approved the alias career within July 2022 (Bourelly, 2023): the possibility to play sports according to gender, use the chosen name on exams, and support with parents. In this new analysis, some attributes were incorporated, such as 1) the education of classmates and all students and the involvement of the school's psychologist, 2) self-determination with the possibility to obtain the device without needing a diagnosis of Gender dysphoria (American Psychiatric Association, 2022) and without the need to start transitioning, 3) the presence of the rule book on the school's website and the ease with which the file can be found. The reasoning for the

first decision stemmed mainly from the wording of some regulations, which do not allow distinction. The second is that all schools enabling students to self-determine do not request a diagnosis or the need to transition, thus rendering these two variables redundant for the analysis. The third was because the rule books that were not easily accessible, contrary to other regulations and rule books, were within the public notices board (*Albo Pretorio*) - thus not on the school's main website. Finally, the variable about the use of gender-neutral language within the text was moved from the thematic category "Self-determination" to "File accessibility" since gender-neutral language can only be found within the alias career regulations and no other school documents.

3.2 Issues with the mapping and limitations

In 2023, many schools have changed their website and have not uploaded the files regarding the alias device. Because of this, it was not possible to retrieve the regulations of 5 high schools. In total, 34 schools (K-13) do not have the rule book on their website, and these schools can be divided into three categories:

- The regulations are on Google Drive, but no direct link is available to the public.
- The regulations are hidden on public notice boards.
- The regulations cannot be found on the Internet.

It is uncertain if schools that have yet to upload or link the files on their new websites have forgotten to do it, only making them available on request from students and parents or having decided to suspend/remove the device.

Additionally, many schools still need to regulate the alias career formally, and the presence of an informal alias career is often not made public. Indeed, some schools do not want to share this knowledge due to fear of retaliation from trans-agonistic families and groups such as Provita e Famiglia. During the exploratory study (Bourelly, 2023), while searching for pupils to interview on their experience with the device, a student stated that she was prohibited from disclosing her school's name and agreeing to interviews.

«I talked about this with the school, and they pointed out that the clauses included in our agreement prohibit any interview or publicity; this would cause the annulment of our agreement. »

The student confirmed that her school was not listed on the mapping. Since she did not share the school's name, it is unclear if it is now in the mapping. This encounter established the presence of schools that go undetected because of school authorities.

The lack of information on schools' websites and the presence of school authorities that do not allow students to disclose the presence of the device within their school is not only an issue because of a lack of data but also because 1) students are not aware that they can enrol in that school if they want to access the alias career and 2) they are not able to denounce issues with the device within their school. Moreover, three schools no longer offer their pupils the alias career. High school Luzzatti (Venice) had written on their website that they stopped to apply the regulation (Wayback Machine, 2023). However, all mentions of the alias device were removed after changing their website. Meanwhile, High School G. Bruno (Bologna) has stated on their website that "The implementation of the regulation is currently suspended for legal verifications" (IIS G. Bruno, 2023) - most likely due to Provita e Famiglia's cease and desist notice. Lastly, in September 2023, the Istituto Comprensivo di Perugia 9 (ISCED 0-2) voted to remove the device and requested AGEDO and Genderlens to delete their institute from the mapping. For the time being, the first two high schools have been excluded. Meanwhile, the last one has been considered in the final number of schools (249) since the mapping includes schools with the alias career within August 2023.

4 Multiple Correspondence Analysis

The Multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) technique was employed to identify the latent factors underpinning the alias career regulations by analysing the first 19 absence-presence attributes derived from 223 rule books, registration forms, and confidentiality agreements (Table 1). This method allowed for the simultaneous analysis of categorical variables condensed into smaller dimensions (factors), expressing combinations and capturing a substantial portion of the inertia among the variables and modalities analysed (Di Franco, 2011). Of the 23 variables, 7 were not included within the instrument: "Adult students' autonomy", "School trip accommodations", "Right to play sports based on gender", "Inclusion of LGBTQIA+ themes in the curricula", "Workgroup" and "Special educational needs". The characteristics were not considered because of the variables' low variance; to refine the instrument, the nearer a point is from the origin of an axis, the lower its contribution to the dimension's creation (*Ibidem*).

The MCA revealed two factorial dimensions explaining 36.35% and 16.5% of the variance (Table 2). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated to measure the degree of internal

consistency to assess the instrument's reliability. A Cronbach's score above 0.6 indicates reliability; instead, values between 0.6 and 0.8 are considered acceptable (El Hajjar, 2018).

Model Summary					
Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	Variance Accounted For			
		Total (Eigenvalue)	Inertia	% of Variance	
1	,854	4,725	,363	36,350	
2	,578	2,145	,165	16,502	
Total		6,871	,529		
Mean	,768 ^a	3,435	,264	26,426	

a. Mean Cronbach's Alpha is based on the mean Eigenvalue.

TABLE 2. Multiple correspondence analysis model summary

Subsequently, the two factors were projected onto a Cartesian plane using a scatter plot to visualise and identify the two dimensions as they were positioned along the axis. Within the scatter plot, we can also find the supplementary variables; these are not used to determine the dimensions but to provide additional context and insight for interpreting the MCA. The supplementary variables introduced in the instrument are those related to the category “File accessibility” (Table 1), the geographical location of the institute, and the type of *curricula* they offer (Liceo, Technical or Vocational; Eurydice, 2023).

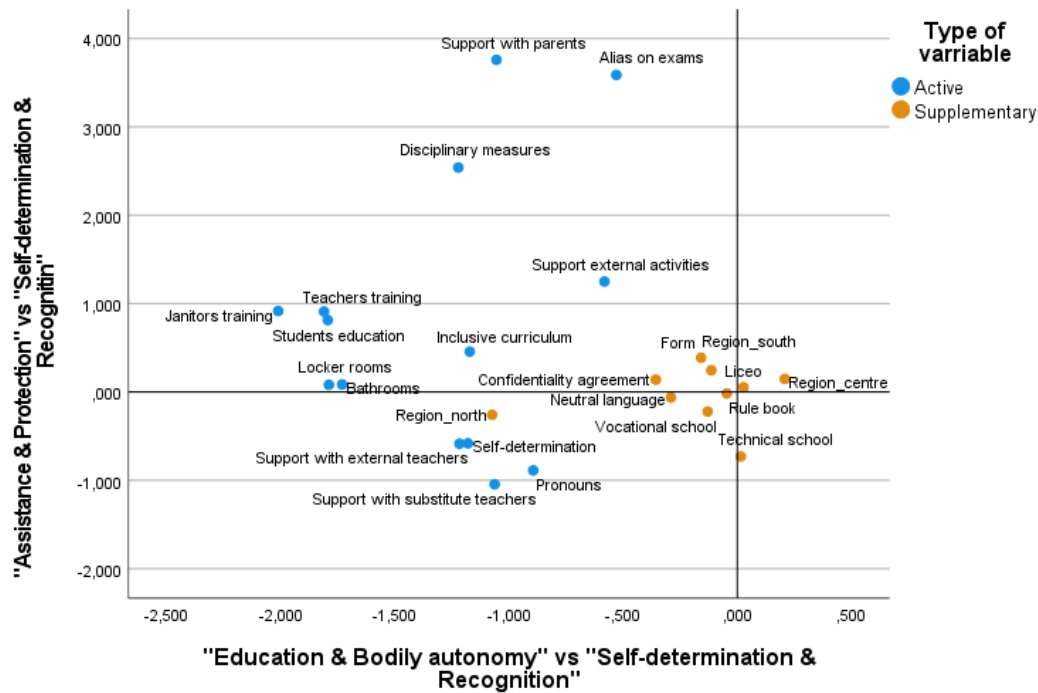


FIGURE 3. Scatter plot of the characteristics of the alias career and supplementary variables

Figure 3 shows that the active variables are only present within the second and third quadrants. Most variables significantly contribute to the first dimension, particularly education and body autonomy within the second quadrant and recognition and self-determination within the third quadrant. Additionally, the first dimension can be read as a measure of intensity because of the high contribution to inertia (Table 2). Meanwhile, the characteristics of the school's support and the students' necessities related to education (use of their chosen name on exams and support for external activities) primarily contribute to the second dimension and show a considerable dispersion within the second quadrant. After determining the influence of the variables on the dimensions and their positioning within the quadrants, the first dimension was named "Education & bodily autonomy" *versus* "Self-determination & recognition" and the second dimension Assistance and protection" *versus* "Self-determination & recognition". Regarding the supplementary variables, most are near the origin and thus are not significantly associated with the two dimensions. Concerning the types of high schools, the issue lies with the education the schools offer: 188 Liceo, 57 Technical schools and 37 Vocational schools. Some schools offer two or all three types of high school, although out of the 223 schools analysed, most are only Liceo (69.5%). Instead, the type of regulations adopted by schools can be attributed to the geographical location of the schools due to isomorphism. Indeed, most schools adopt the regulation of schools in their proximity, and this is particularly relevant to the Lazio region and Rome, where most schools use high school via Ripetta's rule book.

Self-determination * Location Crosstabulation

% within Self-determination		Location			Total
		North	Centre	South	
Self-determination	No	38.1%	37.5%	24.4%	100.0%
	Yes	53.6%	26.8%	19.6%	100.0%
Total		42.0%	34.8%	23.2%	100.0%

TABLE 3. *Self-determination per geographic area*

Meanwhile, the North of Italy is highly associated with the first dimension. In fact, from Table 3, we can observe that out of 56 schools that do not require a diagnosis of gender dysphoria or psychological counselling, 53.6% are located in the North. However, if we were to consider schools that require the diagnosis, 38.1% are in the North and 37.5% in the Centre.

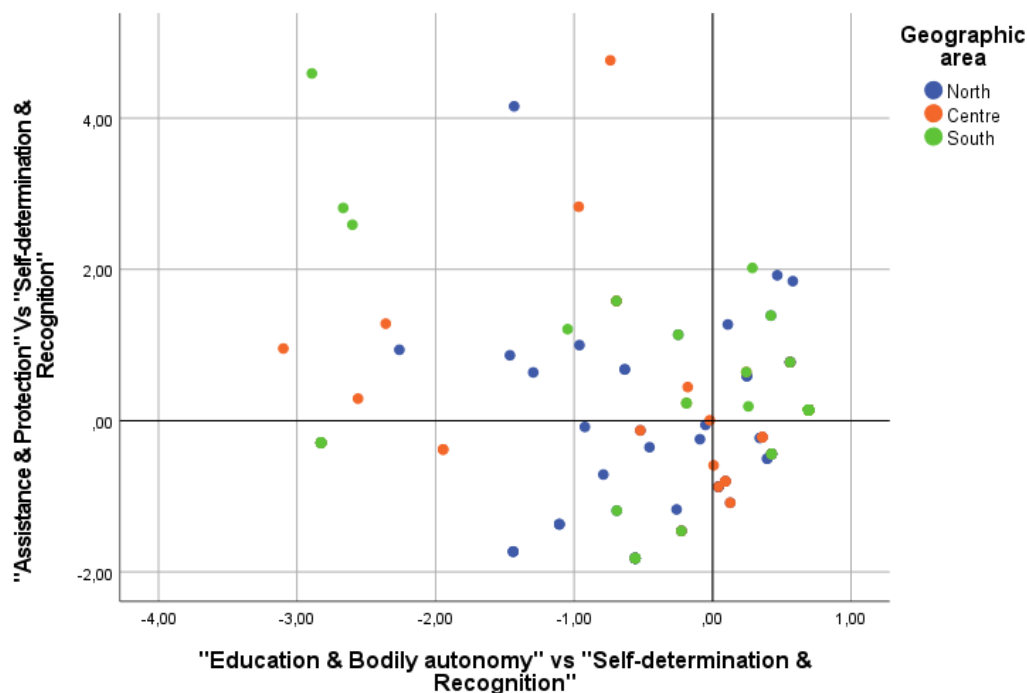


FIGURE 4. Scatter plot of the characteristics of the alias career based on geographic area

Since the figure depicts the presence of the characteristics in the regulation, pathologisation cannot be detected. Because of this, a second figure was produced (Figure 4) to highlight the results of the MCA's active variables (presence/absence) per geographic area. From the scatter plot, we can observe that many regulations from all three geographic areas are near the axes' origin, thus lacking the positive characteristics that contributed to the formation of the two dimensions. Indeed, most schools do not provide much support to trans pupils, granting them only the possibility to use their chosen name on unofficial documentation – thus requiring a diagnosis, not giving them access to gender-segregated facilities and activities, training the school's staff, educating students, and providing further support. For most regulations, the presence of self-determination is also an indicator that the school offers more support than just using the chosen name.

5. Conclusions

Examining the regulations of the alias career in upper secondary schools reveals a concerning trend where the self-determination of transgender students is often overlooked. Instead, many schools tend to pathologise gender incongruence by requiring a diagnosis of gender dysphoria. This practice can have detrimental consequences, particularly for individuals residing in

regions lacking gender-affirming care options, those facing socio-economic challenges, or those not wishing to pursue medical transition. Furthermore, a geographical analysis of these schools across the Italian peninsula reveals a concentration in the northern regions and major cities like Rome, Milan, Florence, Turin, and Naples (Figure 2), with a notable presence in high schools that are a Liceo.

The analysis also demonstrates that positive aspects of these regulations, such as teacher training, student education, and access to gender-appropriate facilities, often go hand-in-hand (Figure 3). Unfortunately, most schools do not consistently offer these benefits to students and staff. Many regulations only mention using preferred names and updating unofficial school documentation, such as school-issued email addresses or the online grade book.

Moreover, it is imperative to conduct interviews with students who have used the alias career, particularly those in schools with distinctive policies, both positive and negative, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of these regulations and their application within schools. Additionally, interviewing principals and teachers will help uncover the rationale behind the presence or absence of supportive measures and the factors influencing their decisions. Thanks to the MCA, it was possible to identify schools whose students, teachers, and principals will be beneficial to interview to analyse their regulations and personal experience with the device qualitatively.

The findings from the explorative research (Bourelly, 2023) suggested that school authorities often fail to implement the alias career effectively. Students frequently feel abandoned once their birth name is removed from internal school documents due to a lack of follow-up actions and support. Indeed, when drafting these regulations, it is crucial to involve transgender students and their families in order to understand their support expectations and needs (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017) and to undergo training to support the student once they adopt the device.

Improving the educational experience for transgender students requires not only individualised support but also systemic change within educational institutions. The enforcement of binary norms and normalisation can harm the psycho-physical well-being of transgender individuals when their gender identity and experiences are invalidated, and their chosen names and pronouns are not respected due to cis-heteronormative values and transphobia (Stryker, 2006;; Mayo & Blackburn, 2019; Mayo, 2022). Strategies for dismantling the cisnormative and binary system include adopting inclusive language (Manera, 2021) in school communications, providing gender-neutral facilities accessible to all students (Davies *et al.*, 2019), incorporating LGBTQIA+-related activities into the curriculum, and redefining the structure, relationships,

and pedagogical approaches to promote mutual respect and understanding (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017; Council of Europe, 2018; Meyer & Keenan, 2018; Omercajic & Martino, 2020). In conclusion, the alias career should be implemented nationwide to support all individuals, and support should not be contingent on parental permission, as many students face exclusion due to transphobia or fear of repercussions at home. Educational institutions should aim to support all students, including those in vulnerable situations, by implementing best practices such as respecting all trans pupils and not only those who are determined worthy because of their diagnosis (Ingrey, 2018; Omercajic & Martino, 2020).

Guidelines and best practices from the MIUR specific to the alias career would legitimise the device and address the demands of transgender students, their families, and LGBTQIA+ associations. Currently, the legitimacy of the alias career relies on School Autonomy laws (Benadusi *et al.*, 2020) and the judgment of individual principals, leading to disputes by trans-antagonistic parents, political interests, and religious organisations claiming its illegality. A unified and nationally recognised framework is essential to ensure equitable treatment for transgender students across all institutes (Bourelly *et al.*, 2022).

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