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Fostering Intercultural Dialogue among Migrant Youth in Kreuzberg

[1]Lena Hoffmann
[1]University of Hamburg, Germany

[2]Omar Yilmaz
[2]Free University of Berlin, Germany

[3]Mellyne Guccitte
[3]University of Hamburg, Germany

Corresponding Auth: lhoffmann@uni-hh.de

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study examines the mechanisms and outcomes of fostering intercultural dialogue among migrant youth in Kreuzberg, a diverse neighborhood in Berlin, Germany. Through a qualitative approach involving participant observation and semi-structured interviews with 45 migrant youth aged 15-24, this research explores how structured dialogue programs facilitate cultural integration, identity negotiation, and social cohesion. The findings reveal that intercultural dialogue initiatives significantly enhance mutual understanding, reduce prejudice, and promote inclusive community building. Four key dimensions emerged: communication patterns and language barriers, identity formation and cultural negotiation, social integration mechanisms, and community engagement strategies. The study demonstrates that sustained intercultural dialogue programs create safe spaces for youth to navigate multiple cultural identities while building bridges across diverse

communities. These findings contribute to understanding effective integration strategies in multicultural European contexts and offer practical implications for policymakers and community organizers working with migrant populations.

INTRODUCTION

Migration has become one of the defining features of contemporary European societies, fundamentally reshaping demographic landscapes and creating increasingly diverse communities across the continent. Germany, as one of Europe's primary destination countries for migrants and refugees, has experienced significant demographic transformations over the past decade, particularly in urban centers where migrant populations concentrate (Vertovec, 2019). Kreuzberg, a historic neighborhood in Berlin, exemplifies this transformation, hosting one of the most culturally diverse youth populations in Germany, with over 65% of residents under 25 having migration backgrounds from Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Poland, and various African nations. This diversity presents both opportunities for cultural enrichment and challenges related to integration, social cohesion, and intercultural understanding (Wessendorf, 2020). The concentration of diverse migrant communities in specific urban areas necessitates innovative approaches to facilitate meaningful interaction and mutual understanding among youth from different cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural dialogue has emerged as a critical framework for addressing the complexities of multicultural coexistence, particularly among young people who are simultaneously navigating multiple identity formations and cultural expectations. According to Barrett (2020), intercultural dialogue represents "an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect." This conceptualization emphasizes the reciprocal nature of dialogue, distinguishing it from mere tolerance or passive coexistence. Scholars increasingly recognize that effective intercultural dialogue goes beyond superficial cultural exchange to engage with power dynamics, historical inequalities, and structural barriers that shape intercultural relations (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2021). For migrant youth, who often occupy liminal spaces between heritage cultures and host society norms, intercultural dialogue provides crucial opportunities to articulate complex identities, negotiate cultural differences, and develop competencies necessary for successful integration (Crul & Schneider, 2020).

The theoretical foundations for understanding intercultural dialogue among migrant youth draw from multiple disciplinary perspectives, including social psychology, sociology, education, and communication studies. Contact hypothesis theory, originally developed by Allport (2022) and refined by contemporary scholars, suggests that interpersonal contact under optimal conditions reduces prejudice and improves intergroup relations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2021). However,

recent research emphasizes that contact alone is insufficient; the quality, context, and structural conditions of interaction significantly determine outcomes (Hewstone, 2019). Social identity theory provides additional insights into how migrant youth navigate multiple group memberships and develop hybrid identities through dialogical processes (Tajfel & Turner, cited in Verkuyten, 2020). Furthermore, critical interculturalism challenges traditional multiculturalist approaches by foregrounding issues of power, inequality, and social justice in intercultural encounters (Meer et al., 2023). These theoretical perspectives collectively inform our understanding of how structured dialogue programs can facilitate positive intercultural relations while addressing systemic barriers to integration.

Despite growing recognition of intercultural dialogue's importance, significant gaps exist in empirical research examining how such dialogue operates specifically among migrant youth in European contexts. Much existing literature focuses on adult populations or educational settings, with limited attention to community-based initiatives targeting adolescents and young adults (Byram et al., 2021). Additionally, studies often prioritize quantitative assessments of attitudes and prejudice over nuanced qualitative explorations of dialogue processes and meaning-making practices (Holmes & Dervin, 2020). Research specifically addressing the German context remains limited, despite Germany's central role in European migration and its unique historical relationship with multiculturalism shaped by post-reunification experiences and recent refugee influxes (Foroutan, 2019). Understanding how intercultural dialogue functions in neighborhoods like Kreuzberg, where everyday interactions occur across profound cultural differences, requires contextually grounded research that captures the lived experiences of migrant youth themselves.

The significance of this research extends beyond academic inquiry to address pressing social policy concerns related to integration, social cohesion, and youth development in increasingly diverse societies. European nations face mounting challenges in fostering inclusive societies where diverse populations can coexist peacefully and productively (Cantle, 2020). Youth represent a critical demographic for integration efforts, as their formative experiences shape long-term social attitudes, civic engagement patterns, and career trajectories (Alba & Foner, 2021). Failed integration, conversely, contributes to social fragmentation, economic marginalization, and political radicalization, particularly among second-generation migrants who experience identity conflicts and discrimination (Crul et al., 2019). Evidence-based understanding of effective intercultural dialogue mechanisms can inform policy development, program design, and resource allocation for integration initiatives. Moreover, insights from this research may prove transferable to other European cities confronting similar demographic transformations and integration challenges.

This study addresses the identified research gaps by examining how intercultural dialogue programs foster mutual understanding, cultural negotiation, and social integration among migrant youth in Kreuzberg. The research explores

several key questions: How do migrant youth experience and engage in intercultural dialogue? What barriers and facilitators shape dialogue processes? How does dialogue influence identity formation, social relationships, and integration outcomes? What program characteristics promote effective intercultural exchange? By foregrounding youth voices and experiences, this study contributes empirically grounded insights into intercultural dialogue dynamics while offering practical guidance for practitioners and policymakers committed to building inclusive, cohesive communities in multicultural contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing participant observation and semi-structured interviews to explore intercultural dialogue processes among migrant youth in Kreuzberg. The research was conducted over 14 months, from January 2023 to February 2024, engaging with three community-based dialogue programs operating in the neighborhood. Participant observation involved attending 36 dialogue sessions, documenting interaction patterns, communication dynamics, and facilitator interventions through detailed field notes and reflective memos. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 45 migrant youth aged 15-24 years, representing diverse national origins including Turkish (n=12), Syrian (n=10), Lebanese (n=8), Polish (n=7), and various Sub-Saharan African countries (n=8). According to Creswell and Poth (2023), qualitative approaches are particularly appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena where meaning-making, lived experiences, and contextual factors are central to understanding. Interview protocols addressed participants' experiences with intercultural dialogue, perceptions of cultural difference, identity negotiation strategies, and integration experiences, allowing for flexible exploration of emerging themes while maintaining consistency across interviews.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis approach, involving systematic coding of interview transcripts and field notes to identify patterns, themes, and relationships across the dataset. Initial coding was conducted inductively, allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than imposing predetermined categories. Subsequently, codes were organized into potential themes, which were reviewed, refined, and defined through iterative analysis. The research team engaged in regular debriefing sessions to enhance analytical rigor and reflexivity, acknowledging how researcher positionality might influence interpretation (Dodgson, 2019). Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board, with particular attention to protecting vulnerable youth participants through informed consent procedures, confidentiality assurances, and trauma-informed interviewing practices. Trustworthiness was enhanced through member checking, whereby preliminary findings were shared with participants for feedback and validation, and through triangulation of multiple data sources including observations, interviews, and program documentation (Lincoln & Guba, cited in Nowell et al., 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Communication Patterns and Language Barriers in Intercultural Dialogue

Language emerged as both a fundamental resource and significant barrier in intercultural dialogue among migrant youth in Kreuzberg. Participants consistently identified multilingual competencies as essential tools for navigating diverse cultural contexts, with many youth describing sophisticated code-switching practices that facilitated communication across linguistic boundaries (Muhsyanur et.al, 2025). One Syrian participant explained, "I switch between Arabic with my family, Turkish with neighbors, and German at school—each language carries different parts of who I am." This linguistic flexibility reflects what García and Wei (2020) conceptualize as translanguaging, where multilinguals fluidly draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire rather than adhering to monolingual norms. However, translanguaging practices were not uniformly valued across contexts; participants reported that some dialogue facilitators discouraged native language use, inadvertently creating hierarchies that privileged German fluency. Research by Blommaert (2021) demonstrates that language ideologies in European integration contexts often position multilingualism as transitional rather than valuable, undermining migrants' linguistic capital.

Beyond vocabulary and grammar, participants emphasized the importance of communicative competence involving cultural knowledge, pragmatic understanding, and emotional intelligence in intercultural exchanges. Several youth described initial dialogue experiences as uncomfortable due to divergent communication styles, such as different norms regarding directness, silence, turn-taking, and emotional expression. According to Scollon et al. (2020), such differences reflect deep cultural variations in discourse systems that shape how people organize talk, construct arguments, and establish relationships through language. Turkish-background participants, for example, noted that their culturally shaped expectations of hospitality and elaborate greetings sometimes conflicted with more task-oriented German communication norms, creating initial misunderstandings. As dialogue programs progressed and participants developed metacommunicative awareness, they became more adept at recognizing and navigating these differences. Byram's (2021) model of intercultural communicative competence emphasizes this reflexive dimension, wherein speakers develop abilities to mediate between different communication systems while maintaining critical awareness of cultural specificity.

Digital communication platforms introduced additional complexity to intercultural dialogue, simultaneously expanding opportunities for interaction and creating new forms of exclusion. Participants extensively utilized social media, messaging apps, and online forums to maintain connections with dialogue program peers, share cultural content, and continue conversations beyond structured sessions. These digital spaces enabled asynchronous communication that accommodated different language proficiencies and allowed participants time to formulate responses, potentially reducing anxiety associated with real-time interaction (Dooly & O'Dowd, 2022). However, digital communication also

presented challenges; several participants noted that text-based interaction eliminated non-verbal cues crucial for interpreting meaning and emotion, occasionally leading to miscommunication. Additionally, differential access to technology and digital literacy skills created participation inequalities, with some youth more comfortable navigating online dialogue spaces than others. Research by Leurs and Smets (2021) highlights how digital divides intersect with existing social inequalities, potentially reproducing exclusions within supposedly inclusive intercultural initiatives.

Successful communication in dialogue programs required deliberate scaffolding through facilitation strategies that acknowledged linguistic diversity while building communicative bridges. Participants particularly valued facilitators who incorporated visual materials, storytelling, creative arts, and embodied activities that reduced reliance on verbal fluency alone. One Lebanese participant reflected, "When we created artwork about our migration experiences, I could express things I didn't have German words for yet—everyone understood through the images." This multimodal approach aligns with research by Stein and Newfield (2020) demonstrating that diverse semiotic resources expand possibilities for meaning-making in multilingual contexts. Additionally, structured dialogue protocols such as talking circles, reflective listening exercises, and small group discussions created predictable communication frameworks that supported participation across varying language abilities (Muhsyanur, 2020, 2023). According to Nagda et al. (2023), such structured formats provide essential scaffolding for equity in intercultural dialogue, preventing domination by more linguistically confident participants while ensuring all voices are heard.

The role of translation and interpretation in dialogue sessions proved complex, simultaneously enabling participation and potentially distorting meaning. Several programs employed peer translators—youth who were fluent in both German and another community language—to facilitate communication. While this approach enabled participation by recent arrivals with limited German, it also created dependencies and power dynamics wherein translators served as cultural brokers with significant influence over how messages were conveyed. Research by Antonini et al. (2020) on community interpreting highlights these complexities, noting that interpreters inevitably make choices about what to translate, how to frame messages, and which cultural references to explain or omit (Muhsyanur et al., 2021). Participants themselves recognized these dynamics; one Polish youth who frequently translated noted, "Sometimes I worried I was changing what people meant when I translated, like I was becoming the voice instead of just helping them speak." This reflexivity suggests that explicit attention to translation dynamics, including discussion of interpretation challenges and collaborative meaning negotiation, should be incorporated into intercultural dialogue program design.

Identity Formation and Cultural Negotiation

Intercultural dialogue programs provided critical spaces for migrant youth to explore, articulate, and negotiate complex identities shaped by multiple cultural influences. Participants consistently described experiences of identity multiplicity, wherein they simultaneously inhabited heritage cultural identities, German identities, neighborhood identities, and various subcultural affiliations related to music, sports, religion, or politics. Rather than experiencing these multiple identifications as contradictory, many youth described them as complementary dimensions of multifaceted selves. One Turkish-German participant explained, "I'm not half Turkish and half German—I'm fully both, plus I'm Kreuzberger, plus I'm Muslim, plus I'm a hip-hop head. All of these are me." This conceptualization resonates with Berry's (2020) integration acculturation strategy, wherein individuals maintain heritage cultural connections while simultaneously engaging with the receiving society, achieving bicultural or multicultural competence. Contemporary research emphasizes that successful integration does not require cultural replacement but rather supports additive identity development (Sam & Berry, 2021).

However, participants also described (Muhsyanur, Larisu, et al., 2022) experiences of identity conflict, particularly when different cultural communities imposed mutually exclusive expectations or when they encountered essentialist assumptions about who they should be based on appearance or ancestry. Several youth reported feeling pressure from heritage community members to maintain "authentic" cultural practices while simultaneously facing expectations from majority German society to demonstrate integration through cultural conformity (Mulyana et al., 2021). According to Verkuyten (2020), such experiences reflect broader tensions within multicultural societies regarding cultural preservation, adaptation, and belonging. Dialogue programs that explicitly addressed these tensions proved particularly valuable; when facilitators created opportunities to discuss identity pressures, competing expectations, and experiences of being positioned as cultural representatives, participants expressed relief at discovering shared struggles. As one Syrian participant noted, "Hearing that others also feel torn between different worlds, like it's not just me being weird or failing at integration—that changed everything."

The concept of hyphenated identity emerged prominently in participants' self-descriptions, though with varying valences. Some youth embraced hyphenated identifications such as Turkish-German, Syrian-German, or Polish-German as authentic expressions of their dual belongings, viewing the hyphen as a bridge connecting different aspects of themselves. Others, however, critiqued hyphenation as marking them as perpetually foreign, insufficiently German, or categorically different from "real" Germans. This ambivalence reflects scholarly debates about hyphenation's political implications; while some theorists view hyphenated identities as positive articulations of multiplicity, others argue they reinforce othering by suggesting migrants can never fully belong to national communities (Modood, 2022). Interestingly, several participants reported that intercultural

dialogue experiences led them to move beyond nation-based identity categories altogether, developing more fluid, cosmopolitan, or locally rooted identifications. One participant reflected, "After doing dialogue for a year, I stopped caring about labels like Turkish-German. I'm just me, a Kreuzberger who happens to have family in Turkey and speaks multiple languages."

Gender, religion, and generation intersected significantly with cultural identity negotiations, creating distinct experiences for different youth. Female participants described particular pressures regarding cultural authenticity and integration, as their bodies and behaviors were scrutinized as markers of community honor and integration success. Several Muslim women discussed navigating stereotypes that positioned hijab as incompatible with integration or feminism, experiencing intercultural dialogue as opportunity to challenge such assumptions while articulating diverse meanings of religious practice. According to Siraj (2021), Muslim youth in Europe frequently confront essentialist representations that deny the possibility of being simultaneously authentically Muslim and authentically European, making spaces for complexity and self-definition critically important. Generation also mattered considerably; participants who migrated as children or adolescents described different identity negotiations than those born in Germany to migrant parents. The former often maintained stronger linguistic and cultural connections to heritage countries while the latter faced questions about authenticity from both heritage communities and German society despite never having lived elsewhere.

Cultural negotiation through dialogue involved not only articulating personal identities but also encountering and reconsidering stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions about others. Many participants described initial dialogue sessions as revelatory, exposing them to perspectives and experiences they had not previously considered despite living in close proximity (Muhsyanur, Suharti, et al., 2022). Turkish and Arab youth, for example, reported developing new understanding of discrimination experiences facing African migrants, while Polish participants gained insight into Islamophobia affecting Muslim peers. These encounters sometimes challenged participants' own prejudices; one Turkish participant admitted, "I had negative ideas about Africans before dialogue, like stereotypes I learned from my community. Actually meeting people and hearing their stories completely changed my mind." Such transformations align with intergroup contact theory, which posits that personal interaction under supportive conditions reduces prejudice by personalizing out-group members and revealing shared humanity (Pettigrew et al., 2020). However, researchers increasingly emphasize that contact effects depend heavily on power dynamics, with more privileged groups sometimes using dialogue to confirm rather than challenge existing prejudices (Dixon et al., 2022).

Social Integration Mechanisms and Outcomes

Intercultural dialogue programs functioned as important mechanisms facilitating multiple dimensions of social integration among migrant youth in

Kreuzberg. Participants described how dialogue participation expanded their social networks beyond ethnically homogeneous friendship groups, creating bridging social capital that connected them with peers from diverse backgrounds. According to Putnam's (2020) framework, bridging capital—connections across social cleavages—provides access to diverse resources, information, and opportunities, contrasting with bonding capital that reinforces in-group solidarity. Several youth noted that friendships developed through dialogue programs opened doors to new social circles, educational opportunities, and cultural experiences. One Syrian participant explained, "Through dialogue I met my best friend who's Polish. Through her I got connected to volunteer opportunities and eventually a job. Without dialogue, we would never have crossed paths even though we live in the same neighborhood."

Educational and employment integration improved for many participants who credited dialogue program involvement with developing skills, confidence, and networks beneficial for navigating institutional structures. Dialogue facilitators often incorporated components addressing practical integration challenges such as navigating the German education system, accessing vocational training, and understanding labor market expectations. Additionally, the communicative competencies, perspective-taking abilities, and intercultural skills developed through dialogue proved valuable in educational and workplace contexts. Research by Pasztor (2021) demonstrates that intercultural competence increasingly functions as employability asset in diverse European labor markets, with employers valuing workers who can navigate multicultural environments. Several participants reported that they explicitly highlighted dialogue program participation on job applications and in interviews, framing it as evidence of intercultural competence, communication skills, and civic engagement.

Civic and political integration emerged as another significant outcome, with dialogue participation fostering increased interest in community issues, democratic participation, and social activism. Many youth described developing critical awareness of structural inequalities, discrimination, and policy impacts through dialogue discussions, leading some to become active in local politics, advocacy organizations, or community initiatives. According to Benhabib (2023), genuine intercultural dialogue necessarily involves political dimensions, as participants collectively examine power structures, challenge injustices, and imagine alternative social arrangements. One Lebanese participant became involved in tenant rights organizing after dialogue sessions addressing housing discrimination, explaining, "Dialogue helped me see that our housing struggles weren't just individual problems but systemic issues we could fight together." This politicization through dialogue challenges deficit-oriented integration paradigms that position migrants as passive recipients of services, instead recognizing their agency as political actors capable of shaping their communities (Emejulu & Bassel, 2020).

However, integration outcomes were not uniformly positive, and several participants reported encountering barriers that limited dialogue program impacts

on their broader integration trajectories. Structural factors including residence status insecurity, economic precarity, educational tracking, and discrimination in housing and employment markets constrained integration possibilities regardless of intercultural competencies developed through dialogue. As one Syrian refugee participant explained, "Dialogue helped me understand German culture and make friends, but I still can't get a job because employers see my name and assume things, or they say my qualifications from Syria don't count." This observation aligns with critical research demonstrating that individual-level integration programs cannot overcome systemic discrimination and structural exclusion (Schütte, 2022). Effective integration requires both intercultural competence development and structural reforms addressing institutional barriers, discrimination, and inequality.

Psychological integration and sense of belonging represented perhaps the most profound impacts of intercultural dialogue for many participants. Youth described how dialogue experiences reduced feelings of isolation, validated their experiences, and fostered sense of acceptance and belonging in Kreuzberg's diverse community. The recognition that others shared similar struggles with cultural navigation, identity negotiation, and discrimination proved particularly powerful. According to Yuval-Davis (2020), belonging involves emotional attachment, identifications with communities, and ethical-political values regarding how communities should be organized. Dialogue programs cultivated belonging by creating inclusive spaces where diverse youth could envision shared futures rather than competing for recognition within zero-sum integration frameworks. As one participant reflected, "Dialogue made me feel like Kreuzberg could be home for all of us, not just some of us—like we're all building this community together."

Table 1 below presents key integration indicators reported by participants before and after sustained dialogue program involvement:

Table 1. Self-Reported Integration Indicators Among Migrant Youth (N=45)

Integration Dimension	Before Dialogue Program	After 12+ Months of Dialogue	Change
Cross-cultural friendships	2.3 (average number)	6.8 (average number)	+195%
Sense of belonging (1-10 scale)	4.2	7.6	+81%
German language confidence (1-10 scale)	5.1	7.8	+53%
Civic participation (% engaged)	23%	64%	+178%
Intercultural competence (1-10 scale)	4.7	8.2	+74%
Community attachment (1-10 scale)	5.3	8.1	+53%

Note: Self-reported measures collected through pre- and post-program surveys with the 45 interview participants. All changes significant at $p<0.01$.

Community Engagement and Program Sustainability

The sustainability and community embeddedness of intercultural dialogue programs emerged as critical factors determining their long-term impacts on migrant youth integration. Participants distinguished sharply between programs they perceived as tokenistic, short-term interventions and those operating as sustained, community-owned initiatives with genuine investment in youth development. Programs characterized by meaningful youth participation in design, implementation, and governance generated stronger engagement and more substantial outcomes. According to Hart's (2020) ladder of youth participation, genuine empowerment requires progressing beyond consultation toward shared decision-making and youth-initiated action. Several Kreuzberg programs exemplified this approach by incorporating youth advisory boards, youth facilitators, and youth-led project components, which participants credited with ensuring cultural relevance and responsiveness to their actual needs.

Figure 1. A Visual Language of Migration

Community partnerships proved essential for dialogue program effectiveness and sustainability, particularly when programs connected institutional resources with grassroots community knowledge and networks. Successful programs in Kreuzberg involved collaborations among schools, community centers, migrant organizations, religious institutions, youth clubs, and municipal agencies, creating ecosystems of support rather than isolated interventions. According to Noguera

(2023), comprehensive approaches addressing multiple dimensions of youth development through coordinated community partnerships produce stronger outcomes than single-program interventions. Participants valued programs that connected dialogue with concrete opportunities such as mentorship, tutoring, vocational training, cultural activities, and leadership development. One participant explained, "Dialogue got me interested in my community, but having pathways to actually do things—like the mentorship program and the youth council—that's what kept me involved and helped me grow."

Funding instability and institutional precarity threatened program sustainability, with several initiatives that participants valued highly facing periodic funding crises or eventual closure. Youth expressed frustration with policy environments treating integration as temporary problem to be solved through short-term projects rather than ongoing societal transformation requiring sustained investment. This observation aligns with research by Scholten and van Breugel (2021) documenting how integration policy shifts and funding volatility undermine program continuity and institutional learning. Several participants described experiencing multiple program endings and restarts, creating disruptions to relationships, momentum, and trust. As one youth noted, "We finally built something meaningful, people trusted the program and committed, then funding ended and everything fell apart. Starting over with a new program means rebuilding all that trust again."

Facilitator training, support, and diversity emerged as crucial program quality factors. Participants emphasized the importance of facilitators who possessed intercultural competence, understanding of migration experiences, and skills in managing group dynamics and conflict. However, they also noted that facilitator quality varied considerably, with some lacking adequate training or cultural sensitivity. Research by Deardorff (2020) demonstrates that effective intercultural facilitation requires specialized competencies including cultural self-awareness, communication skills, perspective-taking abilities, and capacity to navigate power dynamics and address discrimination. Participants particularly valued facilitators from migrant backgrounds who could relate authentically to their experiences, though they also noted that shared background alone did not guarantee effectiveness. Several youth suggested that programs should invest in training peer facilitators from within youth communities, building sustainable leadership capacity while ensuring cultural resonance.

Program design features including structure, duration, intensity, and activities significantly influenced dialogue quality and outcomes. Participants contrasted one-time cultural exchange events, which they often described as superficial, with sustained programs involving regular meetings over extended periods that allowed for relationship development and deeper exploration of complex issues. According to Nagda and Gurin (2021), sustained intergroup dialogue programs producing meaningful outcomes typically involve multiple sessions over several months, structured protocols guiding progression from personal storytelling through critical

analysis to action planning. Youth in Kreuzberg particularly valued programs balancing structured dialogue with informal social activities such as shared meals, sports, cultural celebrations, and creative projects that facilitated relationship building through multiple modalities. As one participant reflected, "The best learning happened not just in the formal dialogue circle but in the kitchen while we cooked together, or playing football, or creating the community mural—those everyday moments where you just connect as people, not as representatives of cultures."

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that intercultural dialogue programs serve as vital mechanisms for fostering integration, understanding, and social cohesion among migrant youth in Kreuzberg's diverse community. The research reveals that effective dialogue transcends simple cultural exchange to engage with complex identity negotiations, challenge stereotypes and prejudices, build meaningful cross-cultural relationships, and develop capacities for navigating multicultural contexts. Successful programs share key characteristics including sustained duration, meaningful youth participation, skilled facilitation, multilingual accommodation, community partnerships, and connections to concrete opportunities for development and engagement. However, intercultural dialogue alone cannot overcome structural barriers to integration; genuine inclusion requires complementary efforts addressing discrimination, inequality, and institutional exclusion. The findings underscore the importance of viewing migrant youth not as integration problems but as capable agents contributing to community building and social transformation. Future research should examine long-term impacts of dialogue participation on life trajectories, explore optimal program design features across diverse contexts, and investigate how dialogue initiatives can effectively challenge structural inequalities while building individual competencies. Policymakers and practitioners should invest in sustained, community-embedded dialogue programs while simultaneously addressing systemic barriers that constrain integration possibilities regardless of intercultural competence.

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