



**MODERN CHALLENGES AND ISSUES  
IN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IN GREECE. INTERNET  
ADDICTION, ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENTAL  
SEXUALITY, AND SCHOOL BULLYING**

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**Abstract:**

In Greece, as in most European countries, the heterogeneity of students leads to conflicts resulting in a general inability of the educational process to function. This review study is focused on modern issues affecting youth and school education procedures such as internet addiction, student behavior expressed as bullying, and adolescent sexuality development. All sides agree that the most essential purposes of education are to emphasize the cultivation of interpersonal relationships, the development of sociability, and self-esteem, and the prevention. Teachers wanting to respond to the spirit of the times to rationalize the pedagogical process introduced the pedagogical contract as a school practice as a valuable tool in taking control of the class and gaining students' attendance. The teacher's positive attitude will create added value to their knowledge and experiences while helping them to integrate into society.

**Keywords:** education, adolescent, sexuality, bullying, internet addiction, teaching

**1. Introduction**

Understanding and learning about diversity in the classroom can greatly benefit both new and experienced teachers as they encounter the realities of modern classrooms. Today's educators are likely to encounter a diverse range of students, including those

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from various socioeconomic backgrounds, with different learning abilities, disabilities, with diverse ethnic and religious identities. Effectively managing classroom diversity is crucial for promoting educational equity, improving access to education, and achieving better outcomes. Additionally, developing strategies for working with diverse students can provide both short-term and long-term benefits for students. Furthermore, diversity within the classroom can be a valuable tool for educational enrichment. According to Allik et al. [1] human behavior is ultimately a function of many factors, such as social norms, habits, attitudes, and expectations. It is widely accepted that after a formative stage, behavior does not easily change.

However, the same behavior is likely to be characterized by different persons as smooth, normal, and desirable, or as problematic, disturbed, and undesirable [2,3]. The most common elements that are taken into account to characterize a behavior as normal or problematic are first of all the attitudes and norms of society and it appears under different conditions [4]. The same behavior is treated differently, depending on the frequency and intensity with which it appears [5]. It is worth pointing out that student discipline is one of the most difficult issues faced by teachers [6,7]. For this reason, the role of the teacher as a classroom administrator has been recognized as multifaceted, while their work is complex and interesting [8].

According to Morfi [9], in order to respond to this environment, the teacher must possess a number of characteristics and skills since the relationship observed between the teacher and the students has an impact on their behavior but also on their further development and integration in society [2]. The effectiveness of this relationship is mainly based on the role played by the teacher where the teacher should be the ruler who will give clear instructions, [10]. The interaction between students and teachers can contribute to overcoming problems related to social stereotypes, minorities, etc.

Thus, the role of today's school is particularly demanding complex and, and apart from its pedagogical character, it reflects the cultural, social, political, economic, and generally all kinds of rearrangements that occurred in society. In addition to learning today's school is responsible for student's socialization, in order to integrate them as active citizens. The evidence of students' social interactions both inside and outside the school environment is usually simple, sometimes incorrect, often one-dimensional, or even distorted. The school has the possibility to develop an integrated pedagogical tool, through education, which will not only provide the correct information but also contribute to the formation of responsible attitudes and behaviors.

Regarding sexual education, it does not refer only to sexual relations but to much broader and particularly important issues, such as love, care and respect for ourselves, respect for the personality, values, and ideals of others, rights, and obligations to them. As mentioned in previous studies [12,13] the formation of the sexual identity of adolescents is a delicate and long-term process that includes both biological and psychological factors. Regarding the biological factors, the young person "discovers" the continuous development and differentiation of his/her body, and discovers "personal identity", of which sexual identity is a part [14]. Their sexual identity, character, attitudes,

behavior, and beliefs are formed through various information they receive from the family environment, friends, the internet, their sexual partners, and school [15-18]. This is why young people and even more teenagers need a balanced and well-informed environment during the critical years of their adolescence, without meaning that sexual liberation is not linked to sexual responsibility.

In conclusion, different research studies have shown that student behavior is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors [19]. The purpose of this review article is to record some of the contemporary challenges such as internet addiction, sexuality, and school bullying, and the importance of self-reflection for both teachers and students.

## **2. Discussion**

### **2.1. Classroom Issues and Management**

#### **2.1.1. The Role and Characteristics of the Effective Teacher**

The main aim of the teacher for effective education is to create a climate of trust both among student(s), family, and him/herself [20]. First of all, the ethos and communication skills of the teacher are important for the successful student's approach. These characteristics are perhaps considered as two of the most important for the successful approach and operation of a school class, since according to Matsagoura [21] any form of ambiguity creates a climate of insecurity among students. Regarding a teacher's personality, characteristics that distinguish him/her are a pleasant and positive disposition, friendliness, explanatory competence, respect, unconditional acceptance, honesty, authenticity, self-disclosure, availability, impartiality, patience, self-control, determination, consistency, and practical care, expressed by the non-negotiable willingness to face problems without avoiding them [3,22]. Consistency is another characteristic that should characterize both sides and should refer to time as well as actions. On the contrary, the inconsistency in the observance of the rules and the imposition of sanctions, as well as the inconsistent and unpredictable application of the teacher creates uncertainty about what is expected of them which soon turns into discomfort or even indifference. Unexcused absences, frequent tardiness, insufficient preparation, unfulfilled promises, etc., disturb the trust of both parties resulting in an increase in behavioral issues [3,23].

Impartiality is another key characteristic that a teacher should possess. An issue must not be the subject of comment and criticism towards third parties. An impartial teacher is him/her who adopts a unified system of criteria and measures in his/her relations with students so that students can clearly recognize what is required of them and what kinds of behavior are acceptable or unacceptable. In addition, the impartial teacher cares enough for students offering equal opportunities for help and support. Through humor, the teacher will be able to be accepted by students. However, he/she is allowed to laugh at students or use them as targets for his/her jokes. In this way, the

teacher manages to reduce the distance between him/her and the student. Humor was effectively used to reduce classroom issues [3].

Teachers should also use simple and understandable language. Clarity is the teacher's ability to provide clear expressions and behavior. Many times, school-class issues can arise during the educational process, not due to lack of interest or substance, but because the teacher fails to communicate in an approachable way. Thus, the student ends up feeling bored and irritated. Patience results from the teacher's genuine interest in the student's world [22].

Teachers should also respect the cultural background and diversity of the students. The teachers who understand their role and influence on students know that their perceptions, stereotypes, and expectations greatly impact students' self-concept and performance. The separation in the teacher's perception of students into "good" and "bad-problematic" results in their unequal treatment, consciously or unconsciously. He/she should accept the diversity of students and their families, value their opinions and initiatives, and be positive in working with students and their parents without using defense mechanisms, resulting in the creation of meaningful interpersonal relationships that promote effective communication and honesty between the two parts [24-25].

### **2.1.2. The Pedagogical Contract as a Possible Solution**

Hatzidemou [8] reported that the role of the teacher has many dimensions such as coordinating, encouraging, and supporting. However, the teacher must have sufficient communication skills in an appropriate manner that gains the interest of the students. For this reason, teacher's development of skills and personal characteristics are very important. In a classroom, the teacher, in addition to his teaching work, must be able to offer help to individuals or groups in order to improve their personality, develop the ability to solve problems, make decisions about their personal and educational/professional life, change attitudes and behaviors, supporting students to discover their positive characteristics.

However, sometimes the education environment in a class is not ideal. Based on Brousseau [26] both parties (the teacher and the student), have the responsibility of managing how to learn. This system of mutual obligations is like a contract.

Furthermore, Mamoulidou [27] presented that the pedagogical contract is the result of a voluntary transaction between those involved in the learning process (teacher and the students). The purpose of any type of pedagogical contract is to achieve a specific goal, undertaking the commitment to observe the mutual obligations agreed upon by them. In order to achieve results, the two sides need to negotiate, to discuss and contrast their views, to express their expectations and desires, to assess their capabilities, to adapt to each other's needs and requirements of the other, and finally to co-decide on the process, the content, the means, the evaluation, and the final object of the pedagogical contract.

The pedagogical contract reflects the mutual intention between teacher and student to solve a problem, settle a backlog, implement a collective or personal project,

acquire a specific skill, etc. Among them is inserted knowledge, the acquisition of which is the purpose of the contract. Therefore, the pedagogical contract regulates everything related to the provision of knowledge to students, but also the environment that is established between the members of the group-class, the rules of life, and the roles and positions of each party in the educational process. Because the pedagogical contract depends on knowledge gained from students, and also on the relationship with the teacher, it proposes specific practices for its acquisition, adapted to student's particularities, without, neglecting the imperatives of the pedagogical program [28].

Regarding duration of the pedagogical contract can vary and it can last from "ten minutes, two hours" or "a week or three months" depending on the age of the student and the nature of the promise [29]. For this reason, the implementation of the pedagogical contract cannot be a requirement of the teacher, but presupposes its common acceptance by the students, given the need to overcome the difficulties encountered by some or the regulation of the rules of life for others.

To ensure the successful implementation of the pedagogical contract, certain conditions must be met. The teacher must adopt the contract in the classroom, which means that all agreed-upon actions will guarantee the student's access to knowledge or the intended skill. With this condition, the teacher can determine how to help the student, defining a favorable work context. In addition, the teacher believes in the student's abilities for the autonomous acquisition of knowledge by supporting actions. The implementation of the pedagogical contract also implies a relationship of reciprocity. However, from the various roles within the class, an asymmetry emerges [30]. The terms of the pedagogical contracts are under constant negotiation between teachers and students. In order to be effective, any change in the pedagogical contract should be recognized at least by the teachers, in order to allow new arrangements and reorganization of the teaching procedures. The negotiation of the terms of pedagogical contracts is also limited by external factors such as the curricula, educational circumstances, the school reality and its components, social expectations, etc. These restrictions exert different types of influences on teachers and students.

In the traditional pedagogical contract, teachers present the issues, identify the solution process, which is usually either individual or led by the teacher, and validate the solutions. Often teachers simply ask for collaboration from the students. Students try to solve the problems by making individual efforts and/or being guided by the teachers. They activate only a small part of their abilities, relate information to what they already know, and recognize its usefulness to the issue.

However, instead of the application of the 'traditional pedagogical contract' the application of a new more 'open', pedagogical contract in which the position of the learner is indeed that of someone who learns by taking initiatives, satisfying personal interests, interacting, adapting information to his/her needs and questioning the knowledge of the teacher. However, Meirieu [31] in his study reported that in a pedagogical contract, "*partners are never truly equal*".

Another study also highlighted that for the preparation of schoolwork, the most characteristic form of individualization of schoolwork is that of the Dalton system or plan [27]. According to the Dalton system, the student is learning by trying to undertake the learning procedure in a way that appeals to his/her natural desire, in his/her own way, and even in his/her own time. The student is forming the same kind of relationships in his/her school life that he/she will afterward get in his/her professional life. The students are responsible for the contract and have the freedom to work as they like (under certain conditions)[32]. With this agreement, the teacher, *"is no longer forced to teach face-to-face teaching children of all ages, but can devote much more time to each child individually or to groups of children"* [33].

According to Tsiandis [34] Helen Parkhurst, sought to make the student autonomous and active. In this way, he *"developed the activity corners in the schoolroom-laboratory, introduced the method of written instructions and work contracts and made learning possible, according to the student's individual needs"*. However, this specific method has been recognized by various researchers who have focused on the fact that this particular way of working in the classroom is of interest to only some students and whether these assignments really have a meaning for them. For critics of the particular Dalton method, the *"acceptance contract"* is not *"motivational, except for the already trained students who want the school"* [35]. This means that the pedagogical contract excludes students who do not maintain such good relations with the educational institution (school) and that the proposed individualization is not a sufficient condition for their successful studies. It has been said by Dewey [36] that the position of the teacher as the *"leader of group activities"*, allows him to work with the logic of the plan, which is understood in terms of reciprocity and exchange. The process of acquiring knowledge is collective, but his/her suggestions can be a starting point for the implementation of a work plan.

Regarding the application of the pedagogical contract in Freinet pedagogy, according to Burguière [37] the pedagogical contract is a series of tools that allow the regulation of the production of work at school, seeking the autonomy of the student, since the form of work proposed by him it is personalized, meets his learning needs and takes into account the conditions under which the work takes place. The plans of work that he established in the various classes are in reality contracts between teacher and students, entered into in cooperation, in order that the latter may become 'free' within certain limits, which he has previously appreciated and accepted. Within these limits of the framework, he/she can proceed at his/her own learning rhythm and measure the progress of his/her work [38]. Additionally, Filloux, [39] reported that the pedagogical contract regulates the relations between two contracting parties who hold different positions in the learning process.

Application of the pedagogical contract concerning teacher and student respectively is presented as follows: *"I am here to teach you something"* and *"we are here to learn something"*, clarifying at the same time that *"the presence of one it is validated by the presence of the other"*.

## **2.2. Educational Reflection**

The importance of reflection has been recognized since ancient times. Ancient philosopher, Socrates, emphasized the need for a 'life under examination' in order to develop one's moral and compassionate relationship with the world and its moral dilemmas [40]. Karkaletsi [41] reported that Dewey [42] was the first who recognize the value of educational reflection as that mental process that helps professionals to actively face problematic situations, responsibly, and holistically. The modern teacher as a reflective professional began to be systematically cultivated at the end of the 20th century and expressed through the training models adopted in many countries abroad [43-45].

Beyond the benefits to the levels of training and education of teachers, the contribution of educational reflection in connecting theoretical knowledge with the practice and action of the trainees is valuable [46-49]. Educational reflection is not possible by simply resorting to already tested 'recipes', and technical and scientific knowledge [50-51]. Educational reflection, therefore, can equip the teacher-in-training with the necessary supplies to confidently overcome any situation that makes his/her work difficult while simultaneously taking responsibility for his/her actions [52-53]. Brookfield [54] studied educational reflection and presented that this can help us become aware of learning and teaching so that we understand why we do what we do and what needs to change. Education reflection helps us develop a positive learning environment. Through educational reflection, teaching becomes more responsive to feedback and student needs and can be used to build trust with students who see that their feedback is taken into account. Furthermore, educational reflection helps us to take various social facts into account and to appreciate the factors that influence learning. In this way, it helps to keep our perspective and avoid blaming ourselves for every problem that occurs in the classroom.

## **2.3. Internet Addiction**

### **2.3.1. General**

Undoubtedly, electronic media have invaded our daily lives. Electronic devices no longer have the same capabilities as they did a few years ago. The spread of the internet and electronic devices that interact with the environment and users are now in use as before. There are many times when many of us sleep next to or even in our arms with our mobile phone devices. The daily use of new technologies in our lives has made technology a part of it, with positive or negative results, since the internet does not only offer infinite information and be used in teaching procedures, especially in technical courses where several research studies [55-59] can be used as case studies, but also dangers. The continued use of these interconnected devices is considered to be as harmful and dangerous as other substance addictions and obsessive-compulsive disorder since this addiction fulfills all those criteria that describe substance and gambling addiction and compulsion. Thus, internet addiction refers to problematic content without stopping the use of the Internet and all that is related to this technology, such as e-mail and the World Wide Web. Nowadays, many researchers replace the concept of "substance" with that of

the internet and describe the phenomenon. At the same time, research scientists describe internet addiction in terms of obsessive and compulsive behavior.

### **2.3.2. Cause of Internet Addiction**

Goldberg [55] first proposed the term (internet addiction) with the term becoming popular with Young's (1996) innovative research, which referred to "*compulsive, excessive use of the Internet and irritability or dysthymic behavior that it is presented during its deprivation*" [60]. One of the possible causes of internet addiction is the possibility of changing the mood and personality of the person who often participates in a virtual environment outside of real conditions. Internet user or participants feels a special stimulation and euphoria as well as a pleasant change in his/her mood due to the actions and situations he/she experiences in virtual reality. Also known is the euphoria felt by online consumers which often leads to financial difficulties since the waste of money is not noticed immediately. It has been noticed that even the process of starting up a computer and browsing various websites affects an addicted user's mood, as it releases and changes the body's bio-chemicals, similar to those seen when one engages in an addictive behavior.

In addition, using the internet may also enhance the pleasant thoughts and feelings that occur while the person is using the internet. It has also been observed that it is very likely that the person who is addicted to the internet is also prone to other addictions, substances, or activities. People who have other mental disorders or psychological problems such as depression, feelings of isolation, stress, or anxiety may use the internet as a means of "self-medication" just as other people do when they use alcohol or other substances to treat their psychological symptoms.

Another reason for using the internet and generally isolating the person from his surroundings can be the family environment itself as well as other family factors such as surfing the internet to avoid meeting a family member with whom is in a rupture, thereby ignoring its existence.

Even difficulties with our social skills can eventually lead us to extensive internet use since through distance we can better manage such situations and become, as we like to believe, a bit more social. Identifying our behavior with that of our peers can also encourage Internet use (if your friends use it, you do the same to be like them) [61]. In addition, another reason is the use of the internet by people who wish to be alike. The role models play an important role as users become spectators of how others use the internet and then copy that behavior. These standards can be either away from us or related to our social environment. The interactive features of the Internet, such as chat rooms, e-mail, and interactive games, seem to lead more easily to Internet addiction than simple solitary surfing on the internet.

Another cause of addiction is our already existing activities such as gambling. There are many online clubs or rather mentioned as online gambling platforms, which operate nowadays, some legally and some illegally, and allow us to deceive ourselves and thus strengthen our already existing addiction to it.



Similarly, a user who is addicted to consuming and buying products can easily satisfy this desire through the use of e-commerce. Finally, the use and visit of online sites with sexual or pornographic content can be the cause of addictive behavior since the user can visit various sites without becoming the target of his sexual preferences especially when these are illegal and condemned by society. Through these websites, they can use chat rooms to get to know others, overcoming some communication barriers that exist with physical contact (e.g. they use a different photo or information from their real, misleading other users or their interlocutors).

### **2.3.3. Symptoms and Consequences**

The main symptom of this disorder is that the person devotes excessive time to the use of various online applications to such an extent that this use interferes with their daily functioning, social life, schoolwork, or employment. There are many cases where some are addicted to discussions in various chat rooms that deal with various topics of discussion from dating discussions which are very popular to more specialized discussions. Treatment is often similar to that followed for other addictive behaviors.

Warning signs of internet addiction that should concern those around us especially parents are

- a) user's occupation constantly either with electronic devices such as a tablet, PC, and mobile phones (smartphones) which can be connected to the internet, or with activities related to it, often neglecting his obligations at home and to school,
- b) the user often loses track of time and forgets a few times that even at meal time they either delayed coming or completely forgot it,
- c) the child showing a preference for online games instead of physical interaction with his/her friends resulting in his isolation,
- d) the reduction of school grades since students now spend a lot of time not on school activities but on the internet reading various websites and engaging in other meaningless activities,
- e) sleep disturbances. The student sleeps late at night or remains sleepless due to the excessive use of the screen,
- f) changes in reaction which is often irritable and aggressive towards others, especially if someone interrupts him/her from the game or any activity occurs in front of a PC's screen or use of the internet,
- g) he/she often presents him/herself as he/she would like to be, looking like using many times words like "he is the best, cool", etc.,
- h) his/her daily activity revolves around using the internet. The user constantly has the internet in mind (thinking about the previous activity or waiting for the next internet connection),
- i) user's failed attempt to reduce or stop Internet use with a concomitant change in mood such as being anxious, moody, depressed, or irritable,
- j) not admitting addiction and using false information about internet use to family members, is another symptom of internet addiction.

Usually, those who are addicted to the internet, face interpersonal difficulties. For example, they are introverted or lack adequate social support and therefore turn to "virtual" relationships as a substitute for the lack of real social relationships.

#### **2.3.4. Required Actions**

To avoid internet addiction, it is agreed that the most effective method would be to stop or completely avoid the internet connection. However, this method is a rather unrealistic expectation given that computers and the internet are now an integral part of social, educational, and professional life. Thus, it is recommended the moderate use of the internet and electronic media, in such a way that addicted users can have a less dependent relationship with it. Connecting to the internet and accessing compared times and websites can be achieved using various settings. In addition, it is recommended to use other means of entertainment such as going on an excursion, participating in various activities such as music, sports and in general the individual's participation in various social events and gatherings. However, sometimes other mental health reasons are hidden behind this social alienation, and for this reason, other psychosocial issues that may be behind the addiction such as social phobia, mood disorders, problems in marriage or broader family problems, occupational burnout, childhood sexual abuse, etc., should be investigated.

Unfortunately, many of the procedures that have been used to treat Internet addiction are modeled after treatment programs for other addictions [62]. For this reason, treatment may not be so effective. However, the swelling of the problem has led more and more researchers to deal with the specific subject.

Finally, in some cases where there is an excessive degree of dependence, it is compulsory to visit a specialist. The use of antidepressants or anti-anxiety drugs may help but they must be consumed after a doctor's prescription. Family therapy is believed to help the user recover from their addiction problems. However, relapsing into an addictive behavior is common, so part of treatment is preparing for such an eventuality.

### **2.4. Sexuality**

#### **2.4.1. General**

Sexuality is the natural and normal component of human existence and is an integral element of everyone's personality [63] regardless of abilities or disabilities. The term "sexuality" refers to any aspect of an organism's life and behavior that is related to the existence of two sexes. This includes biological, psychological, social, and moral aspects of sexual life, as presented in literature [64]. Sexuality can be defined in two ways. The first definition describes it as a social interaction between two sexes that is influenced by both biological and social factors. The second definition views sexuality as an integral part of human life that impacts various aspects of one's existence, including biological, mental, and social behavior [65]. Furthermore, according to Ferrante [66] the term 'sexuality' refers to the quality of being sexual or the way people experience and express themselves as sexual beings. The term includes biological, erotic, physical, emotional,

social, or spiritual stimuli and behaviors. Sexuality is therefore much more than a physical sensation or physical experience. Additionally, it refers to how we feel about ourselves, whether we are liked, whether we understand ourselves as male or female, and what we are available to share with others [67]. As reported in Merkouri's [64] research work, according to the Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S. [68] "*Human sexuality includes the sexual knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors of individuals. It involves the anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry of the human sexual system, as well as gender roles, identity, personality, thoughts, feelings, behavior, and relationships*" [69].

However, the content of the concept of "sexuality" has not been the same for all cultures and in all periods of the long history of humanity. Approaching the opposite sex is not always achieved in a correct and socially acceptable way [70]. Sexuality was treated differently in the prehistoric world where a human was probably sexually unrestrained, without the slightest idea of their natural role in reproduction, differently in antiquity, differently in the Byzantine Empire, differently in the Eastern world, and differently in modern times. The modern Western conception of sexuality comes from all historical periods of humanity. Teachers also adopt their personal perceptions, which, depending on their social and family environment, are influenced by different periods of the long history of sexuality. Sexuality is presented as a social phenomenon with sexual behavior being socially learned, shaped, and reinforced within the social contexts of family, community, school, and friends [71-73]. Also, Larson et al., [74] stated that the amount of affection and tenderness we receive as children "*is essential to the development of healthy sexuality*". Thus, sexuality cannot be separated from human's social development, beliefs, attitudes, values, self-image, and self-esteem [72]. We all have an attitude towards sexuality and the way it is expressed. We can be negative, positive, possibly unwilling to accept it, or distressed, but never completely indifferent [74].

In conclusion, sexuality is not a characteristic of some people. As stated in various studies even people with intellectual disabilities develop sexuality and sexual needs similar to those of people without disabilities [75].

#### **2.4.2. Adolescence**

Adolescence is the age period in which children prepare with a gradual transition that begins with specific biological-hormonal changes with parallel psychosomatic effects and ends with the maturation of adult life. Apteslis [76], emphasized the importance of the period from birth to the end of adolescence, as it marks the completion of biological, mental, and psychological maturation [77]. In chronological terms, the teenage years last from age 13 to age 19. In biological terms, puberty begins with pubescence.

According to Tsarmaklis [78], adolescence is divided into three phases: i) early adolescence (the period between 11-14 years) where the adolescent's mental focus begins to change from that of parents to that of peers with elements of contradiction, self-centeredness, rudeness but also sensitivity, ii) middle adolescence (period from 15 to 17) where the adolescent becomes distant and hostile and looks for new idols to complete his personality. The teenager in this period tries to renounce everything related to his

sexuality, iii) Late adolescence (period from middle to 19-20) where independence is essentially secured, parental advice may or may not be taken into account and body image, as well as gender role definition, are now defined.

Most of the biological and psychological changes that take place at this age stem from the development of young people's sexuality, which is why there is a difference between the two sexes. Usually, this period starts in girls one to two years earlier than in boys. It is a common phenomenon for teenagers to feel uncomfortable with their bodies, especially if one is growing slower or faster than their peers. This leads to concern about whether they are attractive or not, and many times teenagers see themselves as physically imperfect.

Information and education in human sexuality in that period played an important role in the slow completion of the individual's personality, while at the same time preventing matters of a sexual nature [79]. Thus, such a process must begin early in the person's life if we wish to enjoy satisfying adult sex [80]. We should not forget that during adolescence teenagers become reactive and difficult to approach, which makes their sexual education quite a complex process.

## **2.5. Sex Education**

### **2.5.1. General**

The need to strengthen the sexual education of the child in an organized way in the context of general education, without limiting the important role of the family, has been emphasized and demonstrated in international literature [81].

Sexual education is a process of life, accurate information, and the formation of attitudes, opinions, and values for the formation of identity, relationships, and intimacy of each person. It is also developing young people's skills so that they can make choices about their behavior, and feel confident and competent [76]. Haffner [69] reported in his study that comprehensive sexuality education should address facts, data and information, feelings, values and attitudes, effective communication skills, and decision-making.

Teachers can help youth consider and discuss sexual issues in a variety of situations and encourage them to discuss specific issues related to appropriate social behaviors, and other interpersonal dilemmas [82]. Sex education should begin before young people reach puberty, and before they develop specific behaviors. However, the exact age at which sex education should begin depends on the physical, emotional, and mental development of young people. The topics to be taught and the manner also depend on who is doing the sex education, when, and in what context, as well as what we want to know [83]. Teachers who could undertake this delicate task must have the appropriate education (knowledge) and inform without interjecting subjective assessments, phobias, inhibitions, exhortations, and deterrents [84]. However, due to the many difficulties that teachers can face, they often easily give up their work and pass the responsibility on to parents, who again lack the appropriate tools, but also the appropriate education (knowledge). However, since sex education in school takes place

at a specific time and duration, it cannot always address the issues that arise, and so parents have a particularly important role to play in providing information and opportunities to discuss these issues as they arise. As Milton [85] commented, "*Our sexual education takes place throughout our lives, and there are many people who help us in this process.*" So, in addition to teachers' parents also have the opportunity to discuss with their children. Thus, sex education is not a series of lectures that usually takes place when children are approaching or are in puberty but is a lifelong process and should begin as early as possible [69].

### **2.5.2. Benefits from Sex Education**

It is commonly accepted that sex education is a value. The development of sexual values does not necessarily contain ethics, but it contributes decisively to the formation of the person who feels good about him/herself, has a satisfactory level of self-esteem, and a respectful personality, and receives decisions that prevent their exploitation in any kind of relationship, friendly, erotic or professional. Most young people consider their knowledge of sex issues insufficient and feel the need to discuss them with experts. Benefits of sex education include increasing social skills communication, independence, and responsibility, while also reducing the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy. However, lack of information does not decrease sexuality. Moreover, no evidence can support the opinion that sex education stimulates or incites sexual activity.

### **2.5.3. Teacher's Opinion on Sex Education**

According to Vazla [86], teachers play an important role in the success of programs related to health education, and more specifically sex education since they are the bearers of attitudes, ideas, and perceptions related to either their own initiative or by organizing health education programs [87]. According to Kakavoulis [88], with the introduction of sex education in preschool age, it is easy to eliminate inequalities and discrimination. In addition, Lai [89] found that the involvement of teachers in the sexuality education program contributes to the creation of a complete opinion that children have about sexual issues. Regarding matters of sexuality and behavior, teachers often expect girls to be less curious about matters of sexuality and behavior than boys and at the same time more responsible for ethical and health issues.

Kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers believe that the preschool age is the most appropriate to start implementing sex education. On the contrary, teachers at the secondary education level and parents believe that the most suitable age for the introduction of sex education is when children are between 10-12 years. The views of preschool teachers and primary school teachers show a more mature and informed attitude towards sex education, as they seem to understand that the first years of a person's life are the most important for the formation of personality [88]. In addition, many teachers consider that is necessary to introduce such a course in secondary

education, while others consider that sex education is purely the responsibility of the health officer.

Paraskevopoulos et al., [90] found that most teachers believe that if sex education is introduced in schools, this entails serious risks for the school program to become either unsound or ridiculous since it is known that the existing educational system prepares students only in terms of learning processes aimed at their professional skills without giving particular importance to human relationships and the emotional maturation. Thus, most teachers believe that sex education at school can easily end up on the sidelines, or even worse become a minor subject like biology. Additionally, many teachers understand the lack of knowledge and training around sex education issues. There is a great risk that the people who will be chosen to implement such a program are themselves emotionally immature without the necessary knowledge, and very likely to bring their experiences as an example to teenagers. This would be something that, at such a sensitive age, could negatively affect teenagers and disorient or confuse them, passing them the wrong standards.

Regarding the opinion of special education teachers regarding sex education in two surveys, the first completed by Apteslis [76] and the second completed by Armeni [91] conducted in Greece, it was found that they are positive in the creation of sexual relations of special needs adults, while some teachers declared that they even feel joy about this fact, while in matters of marriage and family, they seem to be even less receptive. During the survey, teachers expressed that people with special needs have the same rights as their peers in sexuality. On the contrary, in a survey completed by Theodorou [92] teachers seem to be more positive about marriage. So, through the research, it seems that teachers accept more sexual rights of people with special needs compared to the past where there was a lot of oppression. It seems that there is less acceptance when it comes to issues surrounding reproduction and homosexuality.

In Western countries, sex before marriage has become the norm, and it is statistically less normal for a woman not to have premarital relations when she marries [93]. The Netherlands, Sweden, Australia, France, and Germany provide comprehensive sexuality education in their schools through public sexual health promotion education programs [94]. Adolescent sexuality in the Netherlands was treated more as a normal stage of child development. Parents in the Netherlands anticipate that adolescents will become emotionally involved with another person and consider this as a natural and healthy part of human development [95]. In the Netherlands, sex education emphasizes the importance of open discussions about sexuality in the classroom [96]. Furthermore, teacher's training in schools also includes training in sex education, and additional funding is provided by the Netherlands Institute for Health Promotion and Prevention [93].

In Sweden, all teachers are trained in sex education as part of their studies and focus on providing honest answers to students' questions. Overall, Sweden supports an open and liberal approach to sex education encouraging responsibility and respect for others.

Australian and New Zealand teachers implement sex education programs that reflect an overall school effort to accept young people as sexual beings and provide young people with skills in order to be able to control and enjoy their sexuality. It also, accepts the sexual diversity of all students, pioneering, and providing a comprehensive approach to sex education, emphasizing the diversity of sex education [95].

In France, Biology teachers cover the biological aspects of development, including reproductive anatomy, and invite often experts to talk to students about more topics [95]. Sex education in Germany is designed to motivate young people to use protection to avoid unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, to make conscious appropriate decisions about sexuality and relationships, and to accept and tolerate different lifestyles [97]. Thus, sex education in Germany strives to provide young people with information about the natural aspects of sexuality, personal identity, gender roles, and relationships, information on how to develop a healthy sex life, pregnancy, awareness of other lifestyles, and a comprehensive understanding of sexually transmitted diseases and ways to reduce health risk.

In conclusion, most teachers in secondary education consider that it is necessary to implement a sex education program, but not in the way that lessons are currently taught today. The adolescent must first be able to develop and understand his sexuality, develop his emotional intelligence, and be able to solve sex-issued matters. In this way, the teenager can develop a mature personality, judge and evaluate, and get rid of prejudices and wrong stereotypes.

## **2.6. Bullying**

### **2.6.1. General**

School bullying is a multidimensional social phenomenon with alarming dimensions and effects on the child's psycho-development and learning process. The problem of school violence and bullying is increasingly observed in modern societies [98-100]. Despite the increasing number of research studies, the phenomenon, of school bullying is a relatively new area of research but also an urgent need due to its frequent occurrence [101]. This phenomenon was studied for the first time in 1978 in Norway with the suicide of three students was recognized as a social issue, while in 1987, 9 years later, the relevant term "bullying" appeared in several scientific journals [102]. School bullying has prevailed with the English term 'bullying' since in the Greek language it is given various names such as "bullying/victimization", "school bullying", "school aggression", "peer abuse", "student-to-student violence", "suffering", "reducing", "type of aggressive behavior", "anti-social behavior", "anti-social-aggressive behavior among students in school".

According to Olweus [103], who is a pioneer in research investigating the phenomenon of bullying, school bullying, and violence are observed when a child is "*exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative acts by one or more individuals*" and distinguishes school bullying as a sub-category of aggressive behavior, thereby separating it from violent behavior, although in many cases they overlap. It is characterized by repeated, unprovoked harassment of a child who has difficulty

defending himself. Bullying can hardly be defined since it appears in various forms. This appearance can take the form of psychological violence and is expressed with various teasing, nicknames, insults, humiliation, racist comments, threats, or even terrorism. The bullied child can sometimes be forced to suffer or even act out in front of others.

School bullying can also be expressed through the financial exploitation of bullied children resulting in theft or damage to their personal belongings. In recent years, the category of cyberbullying has been added and is used to describe forms of psychological abuse and blackmail, via the internet or similar technology. Many parties such as the bully (the student or group of students who bully), the victim (the student who is being bullied), the child's viewers, the teachers or other staff of the school unit, and the parents are involved in the phenomenon of bullying.

What separates school bullying from simple teasing is the intensity, duration, repetition of a situation, and the power imbalance between the parties involved. The most common places where incidents of school violence are committed are the classroom, the schoolyard, the stadium, the toilets, on the way to and back from the school.

Bullying can be expressed in various direct or indirect forms [104]. Direct forms of bullying are more easily recognized in order for teachers to take the appropriate measures, while indirect forms need special attention and observation from teachers and parents. Many of the forms are overlapping and can only be distinguished by very specific details.

- Verbal: This is a direct form of bullying, which includes the use of abusive expressions, the use of nicknames, teasing, threats, extortion, rude comments, irony, or any other type of mocking and sarcastic expressions directed intentionally by a person or group of people to someone other in order to hurt him/her [105-107].
- Emotional: This is mainly an indirect form of bullying. Emotional blackmail includes threats, extortion, spreading malicious rumors, and abusive or playful comments about the victim's race, ethnicity, religion, disability identity, sexual identity, isolation, or peer pressure [108].
- Psychological: This is an indirect form of bullying, where victims are deliberately excluded from social and/or group activities, social isolation or exclusion. As in emotional blackmail, victims may be the recipients of defamation and malicious gossip [109].
- Physical: Physical bullying is the most immediate form of the expression. It involves physical violence, hitting, biting, pushing, tripping, punching, destroying, or stealing personal property. Both boys and girls are victims of physical violence. This form of bullying is directly related to the muscular strength of the bully [110].
- Social: Social bullying involves intentionally excluding students from social activities or influencing the peer group to dislike the victim [111]. It is immediately expressed by systematic exclusion, isolation, and indifference towards the victim.



Indirectly, it is expressed with 'silent' exclusion which is perceived by the victim only when he/she attempts to participate in the specific group [112].

- Sexual: This is a form of sexual harassment, that affects boys and girls and is expressed by abusive comments or teasing of sexual content, immoral gestures, unwanted touching, etc. [113].
- Racist: This is the expression of verbal, emotional, or even physical violence aimed at insulting the victim because of his/her origin, social class, the economic situation of his/her family, and in general his/her difference from the majority [114].
- Extortion: Usually refers to the theft or destruction of the victim's belongings, such as the voluntary extraction of money or personal belongings, and is accompanied by threats or even coercion into unwanted, antisocial acts [115-,116].
- Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is described as "*the repeated and intentional harm caused through the use of computers, mobile phones, and other electronic devices*" and occurs most often on websites [117-,118].

### 2.6.2. Implications

Children who are bullied are more likely to suffer from depression and often be suicidal into adulthood, they are more likely to experience physical symptoms including, migraines, skin problems (e.g. eczema, psoriasis), ulcers, tremors, panic attacks, they are more likely to complaints about their health, they have reduced school grades and school attendance, they are more likely to react in an extremely violent way, the feeling of sadness and loneliness, they suffer from changes in sleep and eating habits and they lose interest in activities. Furthermore, research showed that victims in elementary school were twice as likely to develop psychotic symptoms in adolescence.

Children who bully have increased chances of abusing alcohol and starting drugs during adolescence as well as adult age. They are more likely to get involved in fights, and vandalism, to have premature sexual activity, and to have trouble with the law. In one study it was found that 60% of boys who were bullied in middle school had some kind of trouble with the law before they turned 24 [119].

Children watchers are more likely to smoke and abuse alcohol or other drugs. They have increased mental health problems, including depression and anxiety, and are more likely to be absent from school more frequently.

In Greece, school bullying has reached alarming proportions and according to research data, at least 10%-15% of students are victims of systematic violence by their classmates, while 5% admit to perpetrating violence [120].

### 2.6.3. Taken Actions for the Elimination of School Bullying

According to Artemi [121], the teacher is the person who has one of the most important roles in incidents of school bullying. Thus, teachers must be trained in the prevention and treatment of school bullying. He/she must create a discussion environment among all the students in the class, in order to ensure the involvement of all students and create a cooperative and familiar environment in the class [122]. The teacher must develop the

skill of empathy, in order to perceive the different sides of an issue, to understand his/her students, to show sincere interest, and sympathy for them in order to be able to face any problem with patience, apply flexibility, alternative and personalized treatment [123]. Due to familiarity with them, he/she can even interpret their facial expressions, their body movements and can perceive the issues that make them resentful [124]. Batsche [125] underlines that some of the necessary elements that a teacher must have adopted are i) the promotion of the true facts and not the prevailing myths about school bullying, ii) dispelling misconceptions about aggressive behavior, iii) the development of a student guidance and assistance code; iv) the provision of individual counseling services and group skills development services to replace maladaptive behaviors, v) the participation of parents in the intervention process, vi) the implementation of intervention strategies especially for aggressive children, vii) teaching students to objectively evaluate the behavior of their classmates, viii) the development of responsibility through informing teachers and students of the positive results of a holistic intervention by the school [123].

### 3. Conclusions

Today's school system is multifaceted and for this reason, education today is not only a learning process but also a psychological process. The educational process does not only provide knowledge but also prepares students for their integration into society. Today's school, in addition to knowledge and information, is necessary to form the conditions for students to develop personal and social skills to become capable of managing information and their difficulties through communication and creativity. The school environment must be characterized by a positive attitude towards students since each one can be a special member of society and a special person. Apart from their teaching skills, teachers should also find several ways to motivate students' interest and control the class by setting some rules that are naturally accepted by the students. How easy or difficult these rules are to follow will ultimately lead to the effective control of the classroom. The teacher with the possibilities and obligations can contribute with his/her way of communication and cooperation to the transformation of the school reality. One of these tools is the application of the pedagogical contract. In the new regime of pedagogical contracts, the teacher enables the student to become co-responsible for the learning process, to co-decide on a common goal, accepting a necessity and thereby rejecting the traditional model of knowledge transmission. The student and his/her learning rates are respected by the teacher, while knowledge is no longer considered inaccessible to him/her.

Regarding the excessive use of the internet and electronic media, it is agreed that they can become addictive for the user and affect both their interpersonal relationships and their financial and psychological situation. Parents should set rules for the rational use of the internet and also set limits on it both in terms of time access and access to specific websites. Important parameters in the development of children and adolescents are the encouragement of social and sports activities and the establishment of family

activities that do not involve the use of computers and the Internet. The computer should be placed in a room shared by the family and not in the children's room. Access program control is considered to be a tool to prevent inappropriate use of the internet. However, access to the internet should not be completely blocked because blocking often leads to mythologizing. We should be concerned with proper control, not rejection of the internet.

Regarding the expression of sexuality, it is agreed that is one of the main characteristics of adolescence, during which the individual's sexual awakening occurs, which is characterized by sexual curiosity, cunning, and embarrassment. Adolescent sexuality is expressed differently depending on various parameters such as family, friends and society, morals and customs, culture, and religion.

Regarding bullying, the following prevention actions are recommended within the school:

- Discussion and information of the children by the teachers about their rights, but also the rules of behavior at school.
- Finding appropriate ways to express aggression, such as sports and art as well as an appropriate context to highlight teamwork and noble competition.
- Substantial and effective supervision during breaks, especially in areas where incidents of school bullying are likely to occur, such as toilets, warehouses, laboratories, etc.
- Communication with parents to raise their awareness and also to inform them about the phenomenon of school bullying, in order to be prepared to detect symptoms in their children.
- Encouragement to parents for their active participation in school life and their cooperation with the educational staff.
- Taking the appropriate actions for the integration of newly arrived students or students with special needs.
- Development of cross-curricular programs linked to the curriculum to promote the mental health of students in order to strengthen the feeling of cooperation and mutual understanding among them.
- Training of educational staff for the recognition and effective management of the phenomenon.

Modern challenges and problems in the school environment cover a wide range of research topics, so the literature review presented in this study may not be exhaustive. Nevertheless, the proposed framework of this review study can serve both as a reference for future research and provide recommendations for researchers in designing and developing new studies.

### **Supplementary Materials**

Not applicable.

### **Author Contributions**

Conceptualization, S.L., and P.S.; investigation, S.L., P.S., and V.L.; writing—original draft preparation, S.L.; writing—review and editing, S.L. and P.S.; visualization, S.L., P.S.; and V.L. supervision, S.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of this manuscript.

### **Funding Statement**

This research received no external funding.

### **Institutional Review Board Statement**

Not applicable.

### **Data Availability Statement**

Not applicable.

### **Acknowledgments**

Not applicable.

### **Conflicts of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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