



UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL BULLYING OF STUDENTS WITH MIGRANT AND REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS IN GREEK PRIMARY EDUCATION: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract:

This study explores the perceptions and practices of primary school teachers in Greece regarding the bullying of students with migrant and refugee backgrounds. Using a qualitative research design and semi-structured interviews with 23 teachers, the research investigates how educators define, understand, and respond to bullying within multicultural school environments. The findings reveal that school bullying is perceived as a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by linguistic barriers, cultural differences, and socioeconomic inequalities. Teachers acknowledge that migrant and refugee students are at greater risk of victimization, mainly through verbal harassment and social exclusion. They also emphasize the negative impact of bullying on students' mental health, self-esteem, and academic performance. Effective preventive and intervention strategies identified include intercultural education, experiential learning activities, empathy-building practices, continuous professional development, and collaboration with families and community organizations. Despite their willingness to act, teachers highlight the need for institutional frameworks, systematic training, and support mechanisms to ensure consistency and sustainability in anti-bullying initiatives. Overall, the findings suggest that intercultural education can serve as a central strategy for preventing school bullying and fostering an inclusive and safe educational environment for all students.

Keywords: school bullying, intercultural education, migrant students, teachers' perceptions

1. Introduction

School bullying constitutes a multidimensional and complex socio-pedagogical phenomenon that profoundly affects children's psychosocial development and the cohesion of the school environment. Despite the extensive body of international research,

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the issue remains critical, as the forms, causes, and manifestations of bullying vary depending on the sociocultural context. Of particular interest is the study of the phenomenon among students with migrant and refugee backgrounds, who often experience higher levels of victimization due to linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic differences.

The present study aims to explore the perceptions and practices of primary school teachers regarding school bullying, with an emphasis on the experiences of students from migrant or refugee backgrounds. It investigates how teachers define and understand the phenomenon, which forms of bullying they identify, what factors contribute to the targeting of specific students, and which prevention and intervention strategies are applied within the school setting. At the same time, the study highlights the role of intercultural education as a key mechanism for fostering an inclusive and safe school environment.

2. Literature Review

The widespread prevalence of school bullying across Europe, combined with its short- and long-term adverse effects, has made the phenomenon a subject of significant scientific concern. Conceptual clarification of school bullying is a prerequisite for both its systematic study and its effective management. Bullying does not refer to any form of aggression or conflict among students; rather, it constitutes a multidimensional socio-pedagogical phenomenon, manifested as deliberate, malicious, and systematic behavior that is repeatedly directed against a specific individual who occupies a position of power disadvantage relative to the perpetrator (Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Most researchers agree that bullying represents a distinct form of aggressive behavior, defined by three core characteristics: the intention to cause harm, the repetitive nature of the behavior, and the imbalance of power between perpetrator and victim (Olweus, 1991, 1993; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Such behavior can be expressed verbally, physically, and/or relationally, through social exclusion or rumor spreading, and is consistently associated with negative outcomes for all parties involved (Smith *et al.*, 1999; Nansel *et al.*, 2001; Hawkins *et al.*, 2001; Farrington & Ttofi, 2009).

In the international literature, a distinction is typically made between direct forms of bullying (physical and verbal) and indirect or relational forms, which include social exclusion and manipulation (Smith, 2016; Rigby, 2014; Albdour & Krouse, 2014). The former involves physical and verbal attacks, while the latter encompasses behaviors such as social isolation, the spread of false rumors, or the intentional marginalization of the victim. A particularly notable form is cyberbullying, referring to the transference of bullying practices into the digital environment. Due to the anonymity and the wide reach offered by social media, cyberbullying often results in more pervasive and lasting consequences.

Empirical evidence suggests that physical aggression occurs more frequently among boys, whereas relational bullying is more commonly observed among girls

(McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015). Furthermore, students with disabilities or special educational needs exhibit increased vulnerability to victimization (Dimou, 2013; Aravanis, 2016; Thanos, 2012).

The occurrence of bullying is attributed to a combination of factors: individual (e.g., low self-esteem, difficulties in self-regulation), interpersonal (e.g., peer relations, power imbalances), institutional (e.g., insufficient adult supervision, inadequate prevention mechanisms), and sociocultural factors (e.g., norms that promote aggression, discrimination, and prejudice; Olweus, 1993; Nansel *et al.*, 2001; Swearer *et al.*, 2010).

Within the context of school life, bullying may manifest as racist or ethnically motivated behavior, commonly referred to as *ethnic bullying* or *racist bullying* (Tolsma *et al.*, 2013). This dimension of bullying has attracted particular scholarly attention, as it intersects with issues of social inequality and discrimination. Research examining school bullying among students with migrant and refugee backgrounds in various educational and social contexts consistently highlights their heightened vulnerability. In such cases, the victim is targeted as the bearer of an “undesirable” collective identity, which, in the perception of the perpetrator, represents a threat to the dominant social group.

As emphasized in the literature, the phenomenon of school bullying is closely linked to the notion of otherness and deviation from socially accepted norms of behavior and characteristics. Bullying frequently stems from perceived difference—whether it relates to individual attributes or to elements of social identity that are tied to one’s belonging to a particular group. From this perspective, otherness can provoke negative reactions, leading to the marginalization and rejection of the “different” individual through mechanisms of fear and prejudice (Maniatis, 2010).

Racist bullying should not be understood merely as an individual act, but rather as a collective social phenomenon, since it involves not only perpetrators and victims but also third parties such as bystanders or indirect instigators—including teachers, parents, and the broader sociopolitical environment (Aravanis, 2016).

According to the findings of Tolsma *et al.* (2013), the increased incidence of bullying in ethnically diverse classrooms constitutes a real and measurable phenomenon. This finding supports the argument that high levels of ethnic diversity may lead to social isolation and the weakening of interpersonal relationships both within and between different ethnic groups (Tolsma *et al.*, 2013).

Although school bullying constitutes a particularly serious form of violence within the educational environment, research findings remain inconclusive regarding whether students with a migrant background are at greater risk of involvement in bullying incidents compared to their native peers in ethnoculturally diverse schools (Nikolaou & Samsari, 2016). While numerous studies confirm the existence of racial or ethnocultural targeting (e.g., Campbell & Smalling, 2013), other empirical findings question a direct causal relationship between cultural identity and bullying, arguing that aggressive behaviors are not primarily driven by ethnocultural diversity (Eslea & Mukhtar, 2000). Accordingly, some studies report no significant differences in victimization rates

between native students and those from ethnoculturally diverse backgrounds (Graham & Juvonen, 2002; McKenney *et al.*, 2006; Fandrem *et al.*, 2009; Nikolaou, 2013).

However, other research highlights a dual dimension in the relationship between school bullying and ethnocultural diversity: on one hand, the increased victimization of minority children through both direct (physical and verbal) and indirect (social or cyber) forms of bullying (Monks *et al.*, 2008); and on the other hand, the active participation of some minority students as perpetrators, engaging in bullying behaviors toward their peers (Houndoumadi *et al.*, 2003; Dimou, 2013).

The heterogeneity of research outcomes appears to stem from variations in the factors under consideration, such as participants' ethnic identity, the degree of ethnic diversity within the sample, as well as the country and period in which the studies were conducted. More recent approaches adopt an intermediate perspective, acknowledging that a student's ethnocultural status may constitute a vulnerability factor, though not a determinative one. Targeting seems to intensify when socioeconomic factors coexist—particularly in connection with the perpetrator's profile and motivations (Nikolaou *et al.*, 2019; Xu *et al.*, 2019; Caravita *et al.*, 2021).

In other words, bullying cannot be attributed unilaterally to cultural characteristics but should be understood as a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by the intersection of social, economic, and interpersonal parameters.

According to the study by Javier Gil-Flores and José Clares-López (2014) on bullying among students from immigrant families in Andalusia, immigrant students experience bullying to a greater extent than their native peers, as the frequency of incidents they report exceeds the overall sample average. Using a composite bullying index derived from CATPCA analysis, the researchers classified 665 immigrant students into four groups representing *low*, *medium-low*, *medium-high*, and *high* levels of bullying. The analysis revealed an inverse relationship between bullying and academic performance: the higher the level of bullying, the lower the students' academic achievement and learning outcomes. In particular, when bullying involved physical aggression, students demonstrated even poorer performance. This relationship also appeared to be influenced by external factors, such as language, given that the students studied were non-Spanish speakers, which further heightened their educational vulnerability.

The study by Verkuyten and Thijs (2006) on adolescent victimization distinguishes between victimization related to personal characteristics and that attributed to one's ethnic identity. The findings indicate that the latter form has a direct and significant impact on ethnic self-esteem, as it is closely linked to the perceived acceptance and social value of the individual's group of origin. Two main types of victimization were identified: verbal, encompassing teasing, mockery, and insults—which showed a stronger negative correlation with self-esteem—and social exclusion, such as isolation or denial of participation in group activities, which exhibited a weaker association, possibly because it is more ambiguous and often socially "justifiable." Experiences of ethnic discrimination negatively affect adolescents' self-esteem by undermining the value they

attribute to their ethnic identity. Ethnic self-esteem thus functions as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between discrimination and overall self-concept, with ethnic-based victimization being more directly associated with lower self-esteem than other forms of victimization (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2006).

Poverty constitutes a factor that further heightens the vulnerability of students with migrant or refugee backgrounds, as the so-called “*double disadvantage*”—that is, the combination of socioeconomic hardship and cultural/linguistic difference—significantly increases the risk of victimization within the school environment (Bianchi *et al.*, 2021). According to the findings of Bianchi *et al.* (2021), migrants experiencing this “*double minority condition*” (being both foreign-born and in extreme poverty) face a higher and more persistent risk of victimization than their native peers, suggesting a greater likelihood of long-term adverse outcomes. Migrant families generally exhibit higher rates of poverty compared to native families, leading their children to experience stigma, social exclusion, and bullying more frequently among their classmates. The international literature identifies prejudice against immigrants, combined with economic inequality, as critical risk factors that not only increase the likelihood of victimization but may, in some cases, lead to the adoption of bullying behaviors as a defensive or reactive strategy against social rejection (Fandrem *et al.*, 2009).

The study of school bullying in Greece begins with mapping the available body of research and statistical evidence. Sources such as national surveys, academic studies, and reports by educational institutions provide a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon, offering insights into its prevalence, forms, and consequences, as well as the prevention and intervention strategies currently implemented (Kub & Feldman, 2015; Bourou & Papageorgiou, 2023).

At the level of educational policy, the Ministry of Education has developed a range of multidimensional prevention and intervention initiatives aimed at fostering a positive school climate and strengthening collaboration with the wider community and health professionals. Indicative measures include the nationwide campaign “*Living Harmoniously Together – Breaking the Silence*” and the introduction of digital tools for the anonymous reporting of bullying incidents, designed to encourage students to report abusive behavior (*Living Harmoniously Together – Breaking the Silence*, 2024). In parallel, the establishment of a scientific advisory committee within the Ministry demonstrates a clear intent to promote the systematic study of the phenomenon. However, as noted in the literature, the effectiveness of these initiatives has not yet been adequately evaluated (Bourou & Papageorgiou, 2023).

Available data indicate that the prevalence of school bullying in Greece remains high. According to one study, 8.2% of students reported being victims of bullying, 5.8% identified as perpetrators, and 1.1% were both perpetrators and victims (Sapouna, 2008). Another study found that 26.4% of students reported involvement in bullying behaviors at least once per month (Magklara *et al.*, 2012). More recent evidence shows that nearly one in three students (32.4%) has experienced some form of bullying (Bourou & Papageorgiou, 2023), while other studies report rates ranging from 26% to 41%

(Gkouliama *et al.*, 2020). Comparative data with other European countries reveal that Greek prevalence rates are considerably higher, underscoring the particular severity of the issue (Stefanakou *et al.*, 2013).

In terms of forms of bullying, verbal bullying is recorded as the most frequent type (45%), followed by physical bullying (38%) and cyberbullying (17%) (Bourou & Papageorgiou, 2023). Findings on gender differences are mixed: in some studies, boys appear more frequently as perpetrators (Sapouna, 2008; Bourou & Papageorgiou, 2023), while others report no statistically significant differences (Sapouna, 2008).

Particular interest lies in the relationship between school bullying and socioeconomic and cultural factors. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds appear to be more exposed to bullying incidents (Tippett & Wolke, 2014). Moreover, children with disabilities or those belonging to ethnic and cultural minorities—such as students with migrant or refugee backgrounds—are consistently identified in both international and Greek literature as particularly vulnerable groups (Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2013; Nikolaou & Samsari, 2016; Stefanakou *et al.*, 2013). The victimization of these students is often attributed to factors such as linguistic and cultural differences, prejudices, and social exclusion.

Overall, the high prevalence of bullying in Greek schools and its disproportionate impact on children from migrant and refugee backgrounds underscore the complexity and multifactorial nature of the phenomenon. The need for targeted, inclusive interventions—integrating prevention, timely support, and the long-term cultivation of a culture of respect and equality—is more urgent than ever (Artinopoulou *et al.*, 2023).

Building on this framework, the present study seeks to empirically investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the forms, causes, and mechanisms of school bullying experienced by students with migrant and refugee backgrounds, thereby contributing to the development of inclusive pedagogical practices and evidence-based prevention policies.

3. Methodology

The purpose of the present study is to explore the perceptions and practices of primary school teachers regarding school bullying, with particular emphasis on the experiences of students with migrant or refugee backgrounds. The study aims to highlight how teachers define and conceptualize the phenomenon, which forms of bullying they recognize, which factors contribute to the targeting of specific students, and which prevention and intervention strategies they implement within the school context. At the same time, it seeks to examine the role of intercultural education as a key mechanism for promoting an inclusive and safe school environment.

The research was guided by the following questions:

- How do teachers perceive the phenomenon of school bullying, and what specific characteristics do they identify among students with migrant or refugee backgrounds?

- In what ways does cultural diversity (language, religion, cultural practices, socioeconomic background) influence students' victimization or targeting?
- What prevention and intervention strategies do teachers apply, and what role do they attribute to intercultural education and collaboration with the school community and families?

The study adopted a qualitative research approach, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, attitudes, and beliefs—particularly in the context of complex social phenomena such as school bullying (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Examining teachers' perceptions makes it possible to understand how school policies are shaped and enacted in response to the needs of students from migrant backgrounds.

The primary data collection tool was the semi-structured interview, which provided flexibility in exploring sensitive issues and allowed participants to freely express their experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The interview guide was designed based on both international and Greek literature on school bullying and included questions related to: the definition and understanding of bullying, its forms and prevalence within the school context, its relationship to cultural diversity and the factors contributing to student targeting, the consequences for students, the preventive and intervention strategies adopted by teachers, and their perceptions of the role of intercultural education. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or online, depending on participants' availability, and was recorded with their consent.

Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their voluntary participation and anonymity were ensured. Data collection took place over a two-month period. Establishing a relationship of trust with the teachers was considered essential in order to elicit authentic narratives and avoid filtered or socially desirable responses, particularly regarding issues related to cultural diversity.

The data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun &

Clarke, 2006), which facilitated the identification of core thematic axes. The process included the following stages: familiarization with the transcribed material, generation of initial codes, grouping into thematic categories, review and refinement of themes, and final synthesis and reporting of the findings. The analysis followed an inductive approach, as categories and themes emerged directly from the data, while also being interpreted in light of theoretical frameworks drawn from the relevant literature.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data revealed educators' perceptions and practices concerning school bullying, with particular emphasis on the experiences of students with migratory or refugee backgrounds. Specifically, the results are organized around: (a) the definition and conceptual understanding of the phenomenon, (b) its forms and prevalence within the school environment, (c) its association with cultural diversity and factors of victimization,

(d) its impact on students' mental health and educational trajectories, (e) educators' attitudes and practices towards prevention and intervention, and (f) the institutional and pedagogical framework within which interventions are situated.

Educators defined school bullying as systematic, intentional, and repetitive behavior rooted in an imbalance of power, distinguishing it from isolated incidents of teasing or conflict. As one teacher noted:

"It is not all teasing; when you see the same child being belittled again and again, that is when we are speaking of bullying" (T11).

They further observed that both parents and students often conflate the term with other behaviors, thereby complicating the establishment of a common understanding and coherent response to the phenomenon.

The study confirms that school bullying constitutes a pervasive socio-pedagogical phenomenon, manifesting in multiple forms (physical, verbal, social, and cyber), consistent with findings in the international literature (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Sprague & Nishioka, 2012; Farrington & Baldry, 2010). Participants reported significant student involvement in bullying behaviors, a finding aligned with both Greek (Magklara *et al.*, 2012) and international research. Representative statements included:

"Almost every class has at least one incident of verbal harassment or social exclusion" (T7).

"In the past, we observed more physical pushing; nowadays it is mostly verbal and online" (T13).

Exploring the relationship between cultural diversity and school bullying, the findings revealed that, according to educators, students with migratory or refugee backgrounds face heightened risks of victimization. Linguistic barriers, cultural incongruities, and psychosocial vulnerabilities operate as aggravating factors that amplify the likelihood of marginalization and targeting. As one teacher emphasized:

"Students who are not proficient in the language are often isolated from their peers and become easy targets for verbal comments and ridicule. This makes them more vulnerable to bullying" (T4).

Another teacher elaborated:

"Sometimes children laugh at the pronunciation or the mistakes made by students who do not speak Greek fluently. It may start as a joke but evolves into rejection" (T19).

Similarly, an educator noted:

"A different ethnic identity or religion may serve as a pretext for children to be targeted. We have seen cases where students are excluded from peer groups or subjected to psychological pressure simply because they are perceived as 'foreign'" (T11).

Educators appeared to regard students' ethnic identity as one of the most frequent factors associated with incidents of bullying. Reported cases included verbal harassment, social exclusion, psychological pressure, and racist discourse. Additional factors such as family and socioeconomic background, academic performance, race, religion, and cultural practices were also identified as causes of victimization. These findings are consistent with international studies (Stevens *et al.*, 2019; Vitoroulis & Georgiades, 2017), as well as Greek research emphasizing the multifactorial nature of bullying (Sapouna, 2008). Migrant or refugee status was shown to be associated with a range of interpersonal difficulties arising from divergent cultural backgrounds. Cultural differences may hinder social integration and increase the likelihood of victimization, including bullying behaviors (Graham & Juvonen, 2002). The study by Motti-Stefanidi *et al.* (2008) demonstrated that migrant status is linked to increased socioeconomic risk and greater exposure to adverse life events, factors that negatively affect adolescents' school adjustment. Migration thus emerges as a risk factor, with its impact varying according to ethnic group and the degree of social acceptance.

Educators acknowledged serious consequences for students' mental health, self-esteem, and academic performance, a finding consistent with international evidence (Wolke & Lereya, 2015; Hymel & Swearer, 2015). For students with migratory backgrounds, these consequences appeared to be more pronounced, due to additional barriers such as language limitations and social isolation (Due & Riggs, 2016; Bourou & Papageorgiou, 2023). With regard to gender differences, the present findings suggest that boys are more frequently targeted at certain educational stages, with smaller differences observed in lower grades. This partially aligns with the international literature, which nonetheless documents more distinct gendered patterns of aggression (Carney *et al.*, 2002).

A significant theme was the recognition of the need for systematic teacher training in intercultural education, as understanding and respecting diversity were regarded as essential for creating an inclusive school environment. The majority of participating educators emphasized that without specialized training in intercultural education, it is difficult to respond effectively to the real needs of all students. As one teacher noted:

"In my classroom, I see every day how difficult it is for children with different backgrounds to feel that they belong. Without proper training, we cannot truly support them" (T16).

Teaching experience was also shown to be a decisive factor: more experienced educators reported being able to recognize signs of bullying and intervene more effectively, while younger teachers, though more receptive to innovative practices, stated that they required greater guidance and support.

"Over the years you learn to recognize the signs more quickly and prevent situations from escalating" (T9).

"We younger teachers are eager, but often we don't know how to handle things and we need support" (T6).

In examining the practices employed by educators to address school bullying against students with migratory or refugee backgrounds, the analysis of responses highlighted critical aspects of their perceptions. The responses were organized around four central thematic axes: (a) intercultural education and the cultivation of empathy, (b) awareness-raising and systematic professional development, (c) the establishment of clear rules and procedures, and (d) the strengthening of collaboration with families, the school community, and external stakeholders.

Particular emphasis was placed on the need to foster a culture of acceptance of diversity through experiential activities, discussions, storytelling, and the use of films or images with intercultural content. The rotation of student groups, role-playing exercises, and friendship-based initiatives emerged as practices that enhance empathy and prevent the consolidation of stereotypes. Educators underscored that active engagement with elements of different cultures functions as a protective factor, cultivating respect and inclusion. Experiential activities, in particular, were regarded as an effective means of strengthening empathy and dismantling stereotypes. As one teacher noted:

"Experiential activities help children get to know one another better and overcome stereotypes that they often bring from home" (T12).

Finally, the importance of a democratic and open school climate was underscored, one in which relationships are built on mutual acceptance. As another educator observed:

"When the school provides space for dialogue, children begin to respect diversity and build collaborative relationships" (T7).

Many participants emphasized the importance of continuous training not only for themselves but also for students and parents. Proposed measures included seminars on differentiated instruction, skills development programs, and collaboration with specialists (e.g., psychologists, social workers). References were also made to the need for postgraduate studies or specialized training programs. Such initiatives were considered fundamental to the systematic and effective prevention of bullying. According to the international literature, educators' attitudes critically shape both the timely recognition of bullying and the effectiveness of intervention (Craig *et al.*, 2000). Moreover, sensitivity to multiculturalism has been linked to faster and more targeted responses to manifestations of discrimination and violence (Stevens *et al.*, 2019). The data from the present study confirm the willingness of educators to adopt inclusive, collaborative, and

intercultural practices, while also highlighting the need for a stable framework of training, support, and evaluation to ensure that intentions are translated into systematic action (Cohen *et al.*, 2009; Hong & Espelage, 2012; Sprague & Nishioka, 2012).

Another recurring finding concerns the necessity of institutionalized protocols within schools. Educators called for the development and implementation of an official anti-bullying policy, with clear guidelines for the documentation, investigation, and management of incidents. This institutional anchoring was regarded as an essential precondition for the immediate and consistent response of the school.

Equally significant was the involvement of parents, school leadership, and the teaching staff. Direct communication with both perpetrators and victims, counseling support for families, and the activation of interdisciplinary teams (e.g., school psychologists) were considered essential for the effective management of incidents. At the same time, participants stressed the importance of reinforcing initiatives that extend beyond the school environment, such as collaboration with NGOs, state institutions, and European programs (e.g., Erasmus), which broaden opportunities for social integration and intercultural interaction.

Overall, the findings are consistent with the international trend of recognizing the heightened vulnerability of students of migratory origin, while also highlighting the Greek particularity of a system attempting to address the phenomenon through a combination of legislative and pedagogical interventions. Respondents' accounts of the practices implemented reveal a constellation of actions aimed at fostering an inclusive school climate. The adoption of intercultural educational practices, systematic training, the standardization of procedures, and multi-level collaboration emerged as central pillars for the prevention and management of school bullying. Despite the implementation challenges posed by unequal resource distribution and the absence of nationally institutionalized practices, educators expressed a strong willingness to assume an active role, thereby reinforcing the vision of a school that ensures equal opportunities and a safe environment for all children, irrespective of cultural background.

In summary, the study highlights the heightened vulnerability of students with migratory backgrounds and underscores the necessity of fostering an inclusive school climate. Educators appear willing to adopt practices that cultivate respect for diversity. Nevertheless, they emphasize that a stable institutional framework, continuous professional development, and multi-level collaboration are required to ensure that good intentions are translated into systematic and effective action.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the heightened vulnerability of students with migratory and refugee backgrounds to bullying, while also revealing educators' awareness of the challenges in fostering inclusive school environments. Bullying persists in multiple forms—verbal, social, physical, and online—with students of diverse cultural origins

disproportionately affected due to linguistic barriers, cultural misalignments, psychosocial vulnerabilities, and socioeconomic disadvantage.

Educators demonstrated a willingness to adopt practices that foster respect for diversity, empathy, and intercultural understanding. Experiential learning, intercultural educational practices, and collaborative initiatives were viewed as effective strategies for prevention and intervention. However, the absence of a stable institutional framework, uneven resource distribution, and the lack of nationally standardized protocols emerged as major obstacles to the consistent implementation of these practices.

These findings resonate with international literature emphasizing intercultural sensitivity, professional training, and institutionalized anti-bullying policies as essential components for promoting equality and student well-being (Craig *et al.*, 2000; Stevens *et al.*, 2019; Wolke & Lereya, 2015). At the same time, they underscore the particularities of the Greek context, where responses to bullying are situated within a hybrid framework of legislative measures and pedagogical initiatives.

6. Policy and Practice Implications

The study suggests several directions for policy and practice. At the national level, there is a pressing need for standardized anti-bullying protocols, sustained teacher professional development in intercultural education, and the establishment of interdisciplinary school-based support teams. Greater parental engagement and equitable allocation of resources, especially in under-resourced or high-migration areas, are also critical for ensuring inclusive environments.

At the European level, anti-bullying and intercultural education initiatives should be aligned with broader EU strategies on inclusion and child protection. Programs such as Erasmus+ could be expanded to strengthen teacher training and transnational school partnerships, while EU-wide networks for knowledge-sharing and evaluation would facilitate the dissemination of effective practices.

Ultimately, the findings reinforce the view that intercultural education is not merely a tool for integration, but a substantive strategy for preventing and addressing school bullying. Building inclusive schools requires not only pedagogical innovation but also institutional commitment and coordinated policy frameworks at both national and European levels.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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