**Addressing Violence in Schools**

**through Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education**

**Research review on violence in Greek schools**

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## 1. Introduction

Since the beginning of 2000s, there is an accrued research interest in school violence. Initially, school violence had been studied within the general discourse of social exclusion, such as students' dropping out, racist attitudes, substance abuse, and issues related to the multicultural context.

In this report we review mainly academic papers published between 2001 and 2015. They all draw on empirical research through qualitative and quantitative methodologies and study a) bullying in Greek schools in terms of interaction among students and the role of the family b) school factors in negotiating and understanding bullying such as the role of the school climate to bullying incidents. The bulk of research is revealing that school violence is reduced to bullying with special emphasis on Olweus model of analysis. Olweus (1992) definition of bullying refers to one's repeated (over time) exposure to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself. The Olweus scale is revised in order to conform to Greek schools environment. Research takes place within the scope of Research and Intervention Programs. Research programs aim at mapping bullying phenomena in Greek schools, on regional level (mainly). They explore parents and family factors, teachers' reactions, gender differences, age of both bullies and victims, as well as factors interfering with vulnerability to bullying practices such as ethnicity, disabilities and school achievement. Intervention programs relate to prevention and intervention activities in order to combat school violence and bullying. Most of the times, research undertaken in the scope of intervention programs aims at evaluating the efficiency of training programs and stressing their limitations.

In terms of academic disciplines, most studies draw on (Clinical and Social) Psychology, Mental health and fewer on Sociology. Research is often following the priorities expressed by stakeholders such as schoolteachers and education executives who demand for tools and measures. Hence, special attention on bullying (as a symptom) and not on violence (as a sociological concept susceptible to be generated through school institutions) can be justified by the internationally recognized efficiency of Olweus prevention programs.

According to Tsiantis et al. (2013) research in Greece shows that approximately 7% to

15% of students have experienced victimization at school and that more than 5% of students have engaged in bullying behavior (Giannakopoulou et al., 2010; Kokkevi, Stavrou, Fotiou, & Kanavou, 2011; Konstantinou & Psalti, 2007; Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001). The most frequently reported forms of bullying deal mainly with verbal forms of mockery, spreading rumours and consequent intimidation (Psalti et al. 2007, Sapouna, 2008, Didaskalou E., Andreou E., Vlachou A., 2009, Kokkevi, A. et al2015, Bibou-Nakou Iet al 2014).

Variation in percentages reported in Greek studies possibly reflects differences in age, sample characteristics, and methodologies employed in the various studies.

## 2. General national data

According to Daphne Program : ***European Research on the phenomenon of bullying (Europe's Anti-bullying Campaign Project) Daphne***

http://www.e-abc.eu/files/1/PDF/Research/School_Bullying_Greek.pdf

According to students' perceptions victimization factors are as follows:

- 57.03% inability of the victim to defend themselves
- 44.6% the victim's sensitivity
- 44.34% the victim's ethnicity
- 31.6% being overweight
- 25.05% sexual preferences
- 23.88% physical deficiency

## 3. Forms of bullying

In existing literature bullying is described as both an individual and collective act. However, incidents in which bullying is presented as an one-to-one enactment are more frequent (Sapouna 2008, Kalati et al 2010, Smile of the Child 2012, Bibou-Nakou et al 2014). While individual bullying (in which one boy is attacking another boy) is prevalent (Kalati et al 2010, Smile of the Child 2012, Bibou-Nakou et al 2014), there are cases where bullying occurs among groups of perpetrators consisting of boys and girls (Kalati et al 2010, Bibou-Nakou 2014) relatively small in size (3-4 persons) (Sapouna 2008).

The vast majority of the studies refer to bullying as an act, which takes place exclusively among students (Houndoumani, Pateraki 2001; Andreou, Metallidou 2004, Psalti et al.2007; Kalati, Psalti 2010; Athanasiades, Deliyanni-Kouimtzis 2010; Psalti 2012; Sapouna 2008; Didaskalou et al. 2009; Andreou, Bonoti 2010; Kapari 2010; Sapouna 2010; Giovazolias et al. 2010; Papanikolaou et al. 2011; Smile of the Child 2012; Magklara et al. 2012; Kokkinos, Antoniadou 2013; Kokkevi et al. 2015; Manesis, Lambropoulou 2015; Andreou et al. 2007; Bibou- Nakou et al. 2014; Karakiozis et al. 2015), while implications for other patterns of bullying are rather rare. For instance, Kottaridi et al. (2007) find that students manifest aggressiveness towards teachers (as reported by teachers, 12.3% in primary schools, 26.1% in junior high schools, 27.3% in senior high schools), a finding which is also supported by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' reports (2014a, 2014b), where LGBT students mention having heard/seen negative comments/conduct because a teacher was perceived to be LGBT. Moreover, in the research conducted by Manesis and Lambropoulou (2015), students identify as bullying certain behaviors of the teachers and in European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' reports (2014a, 2014b), LGBT students claim to have been discriminated against by school staff.

## 4. Location

As far as location is concerned, bullying incidents are reported in and out of school premises. School playground and corridors are the most common spaces in which bullying takes place, as well as the class (with or without teacher's presence) and the stairs (Sapouna 2008, Didaskalou et al 2009, Kalati et al 2010, Papanikolaou et al 2011, Bibou-Nakou 2014). Outside  school, on the road to/from school, as well as the bus stop are predominantly reported as the most frequent places in which bullying is exercised (Sapouna 2008, Papanikolaou et al 2011, Bibou-Nakou 2014).

## 5. Families' reactions to bullying

The study of bullying situations involves examining the part of families and teachers as members of the school community. Research in Greece is mentioning the role of families

in various settings: Houndoumani and Pateraki (2001) in their study on parents' attitudes and awareness mention that parents are the ones who are mostly concerned with bullying situations and talk about them, while bullies were the group of pupils who reported that both parents and teachers were least likely to talk to them. Papanikolaou et al (2011) who focus specifically on the role of the family in bullying found that parents' hesitation to provide assistance with homework correlates with bullying. They also mention that students' involvement in bullying incidents increases when there is no punishment, despite the child's misbehaviour, or when parents enforce the discipline methods without justification. Victimisation is likely to occur when children's autonomy and independence are restricted. Parents' socioeconomic status is correlated with vulnerability to victimisation, since higher victimization rates occur when both parents are unemployed. Home environment is also statistically associated with victimization: good relationships with parents, conflict resolution in the family and good relationship between parents seem to be factors that prevent it (Daphne Project http://www.eabc.eu/files/1/PDF/Research/School_Bullying_Greek.pdf)

The importance of the social and material condition is also stressed in the cases of perpetrators: the socioeconomic indicators indicate that a lower school performance and father's employment status are associated with being a perpetrator (bullies are more likely to come from families with an unemployed father, while father's retirement was associated with a lower risk of perpetration) (Magklara et al. 2012).


**6. Teachers' reactions to bullying**


The ways in which teachers react to bullying incidents, their opinions about bullying, students' understanding of teachers' intervention and their capacity to act efficiently in order to prevent or even handle bullying incidents are of concern. When it comes to record students' views, there is a general agreement on teachers' ineffectiveness or lack of skills to cope with bullying (Athanasiades C. et al. 2010, Manesis et al. 2014, Bibou-Nakou et al, 2012, Kapari, K.et al. 2010, Assimopoulos et al. 2008, Karakiozis et al. 2015). In the paper published by Karakiozis et al. (2015) 36.7% of the students who have suffered bullying (13% of those who haven't) regard that their teachers *Almost never* try to stop such an incident. On the contrary, 23% of the students who haven't suffered

bullying regard that their teachers *Often* (18.6% of them regard *Occasionally*) try to stop such an incident.

Assimopoulos et al. (2008), testify that teachers do not show clear and comprehensive definitions of bullying. They recognize physical violence and maltreatment and tend to lay emphasis on the physical effects on bullied students. Other kinds of bullying (verbal etc) are described by teachers as normal socialization processes.

According to the findings of the research conducted in the scope of Daphne Project (Daphne II project: http://www1.epsype.gr/images/daphne_enpdf.pdf), students who were involved in bullying, perceived that their teachers tried to step up only in the 1/3 of bullying incidents, while teachers stated that they helped in the majority of bullying cases (79.4%). 62.5 % of the victims tended to talk about the bullying situations first to their parents, and second to their peers (42.5 %), but they rarely talked to their teachers (27.5 %).

Teachers are portrayed as ineffective: even if they show some interest in bullying incidents, they do not have the skills to support or to protect students. At the same time, teachers' usual intervention strategies (such as punishments and exclusions) are described by students as completely inconsiderate and ineffective (Athanasiades C., et al., 2010).

The first reactions of teachers to bullying incidents are reported as uncertain towards the victims and the perpetrators. They seem to verbally 'punish' the perpetrators (often by using harsh words), while they try to comfort the victims. Further reactions of the majority of teachers include reporting to the school principal, in order for him / her to handle the incident, informing the parents and imposing the relevant penalties. A large number of teachers choose to call the parents, so that they take care of the situation and admonish children.

Few teachers report that they tried to resolve the conflict in the classroom, using discussions and group projects, or by involving other teachers or non-school bodies. The aim was to integrate the perpetrator and the victim in the same group in order to boost trust, compliment them for their cooperation and resolve the issues, that generated violence (Manesis, & Lambropouloy 2014). It seems that Peer Intervention and Teacher Intervention have a significant and negative correlation with bullying, whereas these factors are not significantly correlated with victimization processes. (Kapari, et al. 2010).

There is a rather sharp social separation between students and teachers. Students claim that teachers stress the *cognitive child* by underestimating emotional learning and by disregarding the students' ability to cooperate with teachers. Students are uncertain regarding the extent to which teachers effectively practice conflict resolution and whether or to what degree they can actually be seen as a help (some teachers even seem not to listen and respect all students). The student-teacher relationship is analysed as a hidden curriculum: the participants point out that practices such as calling names, displays of favoritism or scapegoating, taking out anger on students, or hurtfulness are considered as bullying practices. (Bibou-Nakou et al, 2012).

## 7. School factors

School factors such as (a) excellence in teaching, (b) school values, (c) awareness of strengths and problems, (d) policies and accountability, (e) caring and respect, (f) positive expectations, (g) teacher support, and (h) physical environment characteristics have been stressed as components of bullying prevention (Jimerson Swearer & Espelage 2009 : 46-40).

Kapari et al. (2010) state that sense of fairness, school belonging and discipline were significantly negatively related to bullying, while authoritarianism had a significant, positive correlation with bullying. fear has a significant and positive correlation with victimization, whereas discipline is negatively correlated with victimization. Sense of fairness, school belonging and authoritarianism are not significantly correlated with victimization.

The group of bullies/victims had a negative attitude towards school climate compared to the bullies or victims. (Giovazolias T. et al. 2010).

## 8. School achievement

Low school achievement rates and negative feelings towards school are analysed as factors susceptible to induce bullying (Kochenderfer, B.J., & Ladd, G.W. (1996).

According to Daphne Project (*European Research on the phenomenon of bullying (Europe's Anti-bullying Campaign Project)* Retrieved from: [http://www.e-abc.eu/files/1/PDF/Research/School_Bullying_Greek.pdf](http://www.e-abc.eu/files/1/PDF/Research/School_Bullying_Greek.pdf)) poor school grades, low achievement and disliking of school are stated as factors that generate bullying, since students with low academic achievement are more frequently victimized (42.86%, while 28.57% among good students).

It is noteworthy though, that outstanding achievement might be perceived as a factor of victimization. Kalati et al. (2010) report that 44.6% of victims suggested they were targeted because they were good students. A greater proportion of primary-school students than secondary school students (55.4% compared with 29%) reported that they believed they had been victimised due to their high academic achievement. In terms of self-reported bullying, Special Learning Disabilities students were more likely to engage in direct verbal bullying, such as name-calling the victim because of his/her outstanding educational record, ethnicity, and family. (Kokkinos, M., C., Antoniadou, N., (2013), "Bullying and victimization experiences in elementary school students nominated by their teachers for Specific Learning Disabilities", School Psychology International, 34:6, pp. 674–690)

## 9. Bullying variables: gender, age and national origin.

### 9.1 Gender

The gender variable has been considered in most research reports. Bullying seems to be 'a matter of boys'. Violence is often presented as a male issue related to masculinity and the dominant views and demands regarding gender-appropriate behaviour (Psalti 2012). Boys are involved in bullying incidents more frequently than girls (Kalati et al. 2010, Sapouna 2008, Didaskalou et al. 2009, Kokkinos et al., 2013), either as perpetrators (Kokkevi et al. 2012, Daphne II Project,) or as victims (Kokkevi 2012, Magklara et al. 2012, Kokkinos et al. 2013). The gender of the pupils made a difference with respect to the likelihood of parents talking to them. More girls than boys (71.3 versus 44.5%) reported that parents had talked to them about their being bullied (Houndoumani A., Pateraki E., 2001).

Kalati et al. 2010 find that more girls than boys (67.7% compared with 37.7%) believed they had been victimised because of their gender. Female students tended to ignore the incidents and react with indifference, while male students tended to react with retaliation and aggressiveness towards the bully. Psalti (2012) affirms that girls were more victimized than boys at both school levels. This finding does not affirm the prevalent position of boys in school bullying.

When it comes to attitudes towards bullying boys denied any underlying or "bad" motive behind bullying, as well as the negative consequences of bullying to victims, assuming that behaviors like these are just "a joke" between them. They referred extensively to the reasons that provoke bullying, assigning responsibility even to the victims of bullying. In contrast, girls referred directly to the negative consequences of bullying and to their personal experiences of victimization. They also avoided identifying behaviors such as making fun of others and excluding from friendships as bullying (probably because they justified their involvement in these forms of bullying). Boys and girls position themselves differently with respect to bullying and victimization and independently from their actual involvement. In particular, boys put themselves in the position of bullies, thus they identify more with the bullies, whereas girls put themselves in the position of victims, thus they identify more with the victims. Boys believe that the way they choose to respond to victimization is connected with their male identity and what it means to be masculine. On the other hand, talking to parents has probably even more negative effects for the victims. For example, boys are afraid of being stigmatized as "sissies" or "cowards" by their classmates if they disclose victimization and call for their parents' support. Girls are more sincere and open with parents and friends, as this is more compatible with their female identity as well as with their constructions of interpersonal relationships. Boys and girls agreed on the different ways that bullying is expressed among them (Athanassiades et al. 2010).

All students claimed that girls are aggressive with "words" (meaning verbal or indirect bullying) and that boys are aggressive with certain "acts" (meaning physical bullying).

Gender identity plays an important role in both meanings of bullying as well as in actual bullying behaviors. That is, boys and girls talk about and engage in school bullying differently, according to the socially constructed patterns of behaviors that are gender-

appropriate, as well as to the social demands relating to masculinity and femininity, respectively (Athanassiades et al. 2010).

Bibou-Nakou et al. (2014) though, argue that more boys than girls are likely to display bullying behaviour in all the types except social exclusion, the spreading of rumours, stealing things and threatening to cause fear where there are no statistically significant differences. These data do not confirm the results of other studies in which girls sometimes stand out from boys in the category of verbal aggression. In the aforementioned study, however, it is again the boys who are more notable than the girls in insulting and calling names.

 Andreou et al., 2010 found that boys outnumbered girls in both bullying behaviour and victimization, while girls were more heavily represented in the defender group and more likely to be defenders of the victim.


While the gender variable is prevalent in most of research publications, only the research of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, including Greece, provides some information on the experiences of LGBT Greek respondents as students (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2014a, 2014b). The results are based on the answers provided through the online questionnaire, by LGBT students (school, college or university/27% of the overall sample in Greece). Victimization seems to rate significantly higher in LGBT students, since 75% of the Greek respondents report having received negative comments or conduct at school because of being LGBT. Moreover, results show that 76% of the Greek respondents claimed to having "always" or "often" been hiding or disguising being LGBT during schooling before the age of 18. There are also findings regarding school personnel's attitudes towards LGBT students. 25% of the Greek respondents felt discriminated against by school or university personnel in the last twelve months. 96% of LGBT students, as bystanders, reported having heard negative comments about a schoolmate perceived to be LGBT and 81% of the Greek respondents heard/saw negative comments/conduct because a teacher was perceived to be LGBT. 26% of the Greek respondents claimed to have been discriminated against by school/university personnel because of being trans in the last twelve months before the research took place. With respect to the school climate, only 9% of the Greek LGBT respondents experienced *positive* school climate before the age of 18, while 39% of the Greek LGBT

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respondents experienced *mixed* school climate before the age of 18. A percentage of 51% of the Greek respondents experienced *negative* school climate before the age of 18 (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2014a, 2014b).

## 9.2. Age

According to the Craig et al. (2015) cross-national research, prevalence of victimization from bullying decreased with increasing age, but only in half of the countries studied. Psalti et al. (2007) found that bullying does not reduce with age, but rather its forms change with age to indirect and subtle ones. Athanasiades et al. (2010), state that bullying is more frequent among young students, while Kokkinos & Antoniadou (2013), Kokkevi et al. (2015) Daphne II Project & Bibou – Nakou et al. (2014) and Kokkinos et al. 2013 do not support the aforementioned finding. Bibou-Nakou et al (2012), affirm that older students, such as those who are in the third year of high school, are more assertive and seek more autonomy than primary school students. The likely conflict between these trends and the prevailing school norms seems to be exaggerated by the fact that the teachers underestimate adolescent points of view and disregard their opinions.

Houndoumani A., et al., (2001) assert no age differences with respect to the frequency at which pupils reported that either parents or teachers talked to them about bullying or victimisation.

Age is possibly not a sufficient variable in bullying or school violence incidents. It needs to be taken into account in an intersectional framework of study, where factors such as gender, national / ethnic belonging and class-related issues are at play and can possibly account for differentiation in particular social settings.

## 9.3 Ethnicity / National Origin

Even though racist attacks are mentioned on the basis of ethnic belonging or country of origin (Daphne Project, Kokkevi et al. 2015, Kalati et al., 2010), there are no significant data susceptible to estimate the importance of these variables in school-violence research. Apparently, racism and xenophobia related issues are studied in the scope of

research dealing with migrant youth overall trajectories, not exclusively related with school violence, as is the case in the works we are reviewing here.

## 10. Reflective commentary

The bulk of research is based on psychology-oriented approaches and the political dimension of the issue of school violence is not conceptualized enough. Bullying is only an entry to the multi-faceted phenomenon of school violence. Factors such as power dynamics within schools, school location, socioeconomic and material elements on the national level need to be taken into account in order to get a thorough understanding. This is the general framework in which bullying research operates on the international level and not only in Greece. In this respect, we can consider that Greek research has taken into account international trends.

The variables of gender, age, and national origin are intertwined with socioeconomic issues, susceptible to produce meanings. None of these variables is valuable per se. The separation of variables is useful for analytic purposes, but it turns out to be insufficient, when it comes to implementation of prevention or intervention programs.

It seems that gender is at the core of bullying and this makes sense in terms of social construction of masculinities and femininities. The framework of 'gender differences' or 'gender inequalities' needs to be analyzed further in the light of variables that make it possible in a general setting of socialization. Thus, masculinities and femininities can make sense when their intersection with social class, race, ethnicity and (perhaps) mobility issues are taken into account. The degree of conformity to gender norms is raising the issue of homophobia, which leads to lethal violence and often remains understudied. Moreover, although several incidents of racist violence have been reported in Greece, racism as a variable of school violence is not sufficiently studied.

The age of bullies and victims turns out to be quite important: while bullying is expected to decrease with increasing age, results on the international level are quite disparate. This finding is showing the intersectional dimension of school violence, while at the same

time it is urging for thorough analysis of the social setting in which bullying and school violence incidents are taking place.

The contemporary setting of massive mobility towards Greece in the midst of the economic crisis is imposing a new framework of analysis. Thus, xenophobia and racism might become part of the school setting and induce violence among students. Yet again, masculinities and femininities are reworked and contribute to new social hierarchies. All these factors call upon bottom-up approaches and awareness-raising operating to specific settings.

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