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## ADDRESSING SCHOOL VIOLENCE, BULLYING, AND AGGRESSIVE/DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOL SETTINGS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES IN GREEK PRIMARY EDUCATION\*

**Introduction:** School violence represents a complex social and public health problem with serious consequences for students, families, and society. Schools, and particularly teachers, play a central role in creating and maintaining safe, inclusive, and high-quality learning environments. Addressing aggressive and disruptive behaviour effectively requires teachers to possess appropriate professional competencies and a strong sense of self-efficacy that support positive outcomes.

**Research Aim:** The aim of this qualitative research was to explore teachers' perceptions of their self-efficacy in addressing school violence and incidents of aggressive or disruptive behaviour.

**Method:** Twenty primary education teachers working in Thessaloniki, Greece, participated in semi-structured interviews. The research focused on teachers' perceived roles, strategies employed, challenges faced, and solutions proposed to enhance effectiveness in promoting safe school environments. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

**Results:** Teachers perceived their role as crucial and emphasized self-efficacy as a key factor contributing to positive outcomes. Empathy, positive teacher-student relationships, gender equality, trust, and professional experience enhanced effectiveness. Strategies included socio-emotional learning, democratic classroom practices, dialogue, proactive pedagogical interventions, and collaboration with parents and school leadership. Challenges involved varying levels of self-efficacy, classroom intolerance, limited cooperation, and curriculum gaps. Participants stressed the need for specialized professional development, improved school-family commu-

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nication, school-based interventions, and collaboration with psychologists and social workers. **Conclusions:** The findings highlight teachers' pivotal role in fostering safe, inclusive, and democratic learning environments, with important implications for educational policy, professional development, and pedagogical practice.

**Keywords:** school violence, bullying, aggressive/disruptive behaviour, safe learning environment, quality education, social inclusion

## INTRODUCTION

Violence is a pervasive global issue, infiltrating social life and education. School-related violence – including bullying, aggression, and disruptive behaviour – undermines learning, social-emotional development, and inclusive school environments (CoE, 2016; UNESCO, 2024a). Such behaviours can take multiple forms – physical, verbal, psychological, or relational – and can occur both in classrooms and in other school spaces, such as playgrounds or corridors. Globally, one in three students experiences bullying annually, with similar rates for physical violence, threatening both the 4th Sustainable Development Goal of quality education and children's fundamental rights to safety and dignity (UNESCO, 2023a; 2024b). Marginalized students – those with disabilities, from ethnic or linguistic minorities, LGBTQ+ youth, or low-income backgrounds – face disproportionate risk, reflecting broader societal hierarchies and gender norms (Pliogou et al., 2025). School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) exemplifies how structural inequalities translate into often-invisible harm, highlighting the need for systemic, gender-sensitive, and transformative approaches. The impacts extend beyond immediate harm, influencing students' academic performance, social-emotional development, and long-term trajectories, including future social adjustment and relationships (Bravo-Sanzana et al., 2021; O'Brien et al., 2023). Teachers are also heavily influenced by student aggression, violence, or disruptive behaviour as these phenomena are strongly linked to all dimensions of teacher burnout – emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Moreover, a positive school climate plays a complex role: while a supportive climate at the teacher level is associated with lower burnout, at the school level it moderates the impact of victimization in mixed ways (buffering depersonalization but intensifying feelings of reduced accomplishment; see Phelps et al., 2024). Similarly, Kollerová et al. (2023) found that both disruptive behaviour and bullying increase exhaustion, while leadership support helps mitigate it.

Education has the potential to transform lives and societies, offering children – particularly those facing disadvantage – a pathway out of poverty and marginalization. However, this promise is frequently undermined by violence, which occurs in classrooms, schoolyards, commutes, and online spaces (Bansal et al.,

2024). Primary education specifically represents a critical window for prevention, as it is during these early years that children develop foundational social skills, learn to navigate peer relationships, and form patterns of behaviour that can persist into adolescence (Al Ali et al., 2025; Valdebenito et al., 2025). Implementing interventions at this stage can cultivate prosocial behaviours, foster a supportive and inclusive school climate, and reduce the likelihood of entrenched aggressive or bullying behaviours later in life (Forsberg et al., 2021). Early preventive measures are particularly effective, because they address behavioural challenges before they become habitual and establish positive norms around conflict resolution, empathy, and cooperation, with transformative effects extending from the school to the wider community (O'Neill, 2025).

Moreover, creating a safe and supportive school environment during primary years benefits not only students but also teachers. It results in enhancing teachers' ability to manage classrooms effectively and contributing to a positive institutional culture. By focusing on early intervention, schools can reduce prevalence of school violence, promote social inclusion and social justice, and lay the groundwork for lifelong learning and well-being (Antonioni et al., 2024; Mayer et al., 2021).

Understanding teachers' responses to school violence requires integrating self-efficacy, intervention behaviour, and pedagogical approaches. These include socio-emotional learning and whole-school prevention. Bandura (1997) emphasizes that teachers' beliefs in their capabilities shape proactive engagement, consistent interventions, and conflict management, while low self-efficacy often leads to avoidance or punitive responses.

Despite decades of research, a persistent gap exists between attitudes and action. Teachers with higher self-efficacy and emotional stability are perceived to maintain better classroom climates and manage disruptions more successfully, while lower self-efficacy corresponds to reactive or inconsistent interventions (Dawes et al., 2024; Wettstein et al., 2021). O'Brien et al. (2023) note frequent misidentification of bullying, undervaluation of relational forms, and constraints from time, resources, and school culture. Fischer, John, and Bilz (2021) and Fischer, Woods and Bilz (2021) further demonstrate that self-efficacy may reduce perpetration but not victimization, and high self-reported confidence does not ensure effective intervention, reflecting aspirations or social desirability. Malinen et al. (2024) provide longitudinal evidence that self-efficacy shapes classroom climate, but systemic, relational, and contextual factors remain decisive.

These findings highlight that interventions targeting attitudes or self-efficacy alone are insufficient. Effective prevention requires systemic support, clear policies, nuanced professional development, and interactive teacher training. UNESCO (2023b) notes that many teachers are poorly prepared, often lacking pre-service training, particularly for psychological forms of violence. Evidence-based programs such as Dialogic Teacher Training, the Irie Classroom Toolbox, and

ICC-T can enhance self-efficacy, improve climate, and reduce violence, yet their long-term impact, scalability, and real-world implementation remain underexplored (Shim & Ye, 2024; Souza, 2024).

Such pedagogical approaches as socio-emotional learning (SEL), mediation, dialogue, and democratic classroom processes (e.g., rule-making and dialogue) show promise for reducing violence and fostering prosocial behaviour. SEL develops self-awareness, social awareness, and responsible decision-making, but its impact depends on systemic integration, teacher training, and school-wide implementation (CASEL, 2025; Freeman et al., 2024; Ha et al., 2024). Peer mediation (Dončevová, 2022) and restorative practices enhance conflict-resolution skills and classroom cooperation, yet most programs remain small-scale, short-term, and isolated, limiting sustainability and broader impact (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2023; Sibisi et al., 2024). Effective interventions require embedding these strategies within whole-school models aligned with leadership, policies, and participatory governance (Alonso Rodríguez et al., 2025; CoE, 2018; Martín Retuerto, 2020).

Leadership, interdisciplinary support, and parent engagement are essential for systemic implementation. Team-oriented and participative leadership reduces bullying, while trauma-informed social workers and school psychologists strengthen emotional and behavioural supports (Kołodziejczyk, 2025; Tulenbaeva et al., 2025; Watson et al., 2024). Curriculum constraints, uneven teacher confidence, unsupportive leadership, and low parental involvement undermine SEL and violence-prevention initiatives, demonstrating that structural factors must be addressed alongside individual teacher capacity (Dyson et al., 2023; Ha et al., 2024; OECD, 2020).

Gender-sensitive interventions are particularly underdeveloped. Violence is deeply gendered: boys are often associated with overt aggression, while girls are more vulnerable to relational harassment, which is frequently overlooked (Pliogou et al., 2025). Multi-actor, whole-school, gender-responsive approaches show promise but remain limited in number, scope, and long-term evidence.

In the Greek context, recent evidence reveals a persistent gap between policy commitments and students' lived experiences of school safety. A 2023–2024 survey by *The Smile of the Child* (N = 2,047) found that 35.5% of students reported being bullied, while over one in four perceived schools as ineffective in promoting anti-bullying values, with incidents increasing year-on-year. Although Law 5029/2023 (“Living Harmoniously Together – Breaking the Silence”) signals formal recognition of school violence, its impact remains uneven, constrained by inconsistent implementation, limited teacher preparedness, and weak institutional follow-through. Current responses prioritise reporting and awareness mechanisms (e.g., *stop-bullying.gr*, IEP initiatives), yet they offer little evidence of sustained pedagogical change or whole-school integration. Similarly, participation in such EU programmes as *Daphne III* relies on outdated frameworks that insufficiently

address school violence as relational, gendered, and intersectional. Greek empirical studies mirror this implementation deficit: teacher-reported findings identify patterns of aggression and strong support for mediation (Bourou & Papageorgiou, 2023; Koutkou & Paschaloudis, 2024), yet methodological limitations and the lack of outcome data restrict their policy relevance, while qualitative research highlights heightened vulnerability of students with migrant and refugee backgrounds (Maniatis, 2025). Overall, while policy recognition has advanced, translation into coherent, evidence-informed, and equity-oriented practice remains limited.

Overall, the literature indicates that effective prevention in primary education requires integrated, multi-level approaches combining teacher training, socio-emotional learning, restorative practices, gender-sensitive policies, and systemic support. Yet, significant research gaps remain: primary teachers' lived experiences, their day-to-day efficacy, integration of SEL and restorative practices, and practical implementation of gender-sensitive interventions are underexplored. This research addresses these gaps by foregrounding teachers' voices, examining how their agency, intuition, and professional development intersect with systemic constraints, situating schools as sites for early prevention, social inclusion, and democratic development.

## RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIM

School violence, including bullying and disruptive behaviour, undermines student well-being and educational quality, yet primary teachers' perceptions and strategies for addressing it remain underexplored. This research aimed to investigate Greek primary school teachers' experiences, efficacy, strategies, challenges, and proposed solutions in preventing and managing school violence. The overarching aim was to provide evidence-informed insights for policy, training, and school-based interventions, emphasizing the role of teacher self-efficacy and systemic support. The present research was guided by four research questions (RQs):

1. How do teachers perceive their role in addressing and preventing school violence?
2. What strategies do they employ for addressing and preventing school violence?
3. What are the main challenges and obstacles they face?
4. What solutions do they propose to improve efficacy and promote a safe school environment?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A qualitative research design was employed. The goal was to capture in-depth insights into teachers' lived experiences, beliefs, and practices, which quantitative methods may overlook (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to elaborate on strategies, challenges, and solutions while enabling flexible probing.

The sample comprised 20 primary school teachers from Thessaloniki, Greece, with 2–22 years of teaching experience. Purposive sampling ensured diversity in gender, school type (public/private), grade levels, and prior specialized training, providing a broad perspective on teacher experiences. This sample size prioritizes depth of insight, consistent with qualitative research conventions (Patton, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were developed based on the research questions and literature review. They covered: teachers' perceived role, strategies for managing school violence, challenges faced, and proposed solutions. The protocol was piloted with two experienced teachers and refined for clarity and relevance.

Data were collected over four months (January–April 2025). Participants were recruited via school networks and informed about the research's purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. Interviews were conducted in person outside school settings, lasting 45–60 minutes, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step process. Coding was thematically aligned with the research questions:

- RQ1: Teacher Role and Self-Efficacy: codes capturing confidence, empathy, trust-building, and gender sensitive practices were synthesized.
- RQ2: Strategies for Managing School Violence: codes reflecting socio-emotional learning, democratic classroom practices, dialogue and mediation, and proactive pedagogical practices were grouped.
- RQ3: Challenges and Barriers: codes relating to classroom dynamics, curriculum limitations, variable teachers' self-efficacy, and limited collaboration led to the development of this theme.
- RQ4: Solutions and Recommendations: codes on specialized training, parental involvement, school-based interventions, policy support, and whole-school preventive measures were synthesized to generate the theme.

Thematic analysis was guided primarily by the RQs and resulted initially in four major themes. However, additional patterns related to collaboration and support systems emerged inductively during coding and were synthesized in Theme 3.

All codes and themes were reviewed independently. To enhance rigor, coding was cross-checked by the two researchers to reduce subjective interpretation and ensure consistency. Iterative coding and reflexive memoing were employed throughout the analysis, allowing for continuous refinement of codes and themes, while documenting all analytic decisions. Peer debriefing was conducted to validate the process of coding and interpretations. Illustrative quotes were carefully selected to exemplify patterns, while ensuring representativeness and clarity and preserving the authenticity of participants' voices. This approach enabled the researchers to link individual experiences with broader educational, social, and policy contexts, thus highlighting the practical implications of teachers' strategies, challenges, and recommendations to improve school safety while fostering a democratic and peaceful school culture.

## RESULTS

Presentation of findings begins with an overview of the participants' sociodemographic characteristics, as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**  
*Sociodemographic characteristics of teacher sample*

Teacher ID	Gender	Age (years)	Teaching Experience (years)	Grade Level	School Type	Education Level	Specialized Training	Average Class Size
T01	Female	29	5	1st	Public	Master's	No	23
T02	Male	34	10	3rd	Public	Bachelor's	No	25
T03	Female	42	18	2nd	Private	Bachelor's	Yes	20
T04	Female	31	7	4th	Public	Bachelor's	No	24
T05	Male	38	15	5th	Public	Master's	Yes	23
T06	Female	27	3	1st	Private	Bachelor's	No	21
T07	Male	45	22	6th	Public	Master's	No	25
T08	Female	36	12	3rd	Public	Bachelor's	Yes	21
T09	Female	33	8	2nd	Public	Master's	No	23
T10	Male	40	17	5th	Private	Master's	No	20
T11	Female	30	6	4th	Public	Bachelor's	No	24
T12	Male	35	11	3rd	Public	Master's	No	25
T13	Female	44	20	6th	Private	Master's	Yes	22
T14	Male	28	4	1st	Public	Bachelor's	No	25
T15	Female	37	14	5th	Public	Master's	Yes	23

T16	Male	32	9	2nd	Public	Bachelor's	No	24
T17	Female	39	16	4th	Private	Master's	Yes	22
T18	Male	41	19	6th	Public	Master's	Yes	24
T19	Female	26	2	1st	Public	Bachelor's	No	23
T20	Male	43	21	5th	Private	Bachelor's	Yes	20

Source: Authors' own study

Note. N = 20.

The following section outlines the findings from the thematic analysis. Major themes are presented along with key subthemes and indicative excerpts from the semi-structured interviews.

### **Theme 1: Teacher Role and Self-Efficacy**

Teachers positioned themselves as central agents in preventing and managing school violence. Key subthemes include:

#### *1.1. Confidence in Intervention*

Teachers emphasized early intervention to prevent escalation. T8 stated: "I feel able to address conflicts quickly before they spiral out of control, but it's crucial to understand each student's perspective." Experience was critical: "The more experience I gain, the more confident I feel stepping into tense situations. Earlier in my career I hesitated, but now I recognize the signs and act quickly." (T9)

#### *1.2. Empathy and Understanding*

Empathy emerged as essential for constructive intervention. T12 reflected: "Knowing the reasons behind a child's aggressive behaviour allows me to respond with empathy rather than punishment." Similarly, T13 stated that "Knowing the reasons behind a child's aggressive behaviour allows me to respond with empathy rather than punishment and gain a better understanding of the child's behaviour." And, finally, T15 stated that "Empathy helps me avoid misinterpreting behaviours. A child who is acting out may be overwhelmed, and doesn't want to hurt others."

#### *1.3. Trust-Building*

Teachers highlighted relational trust as foundational: "Students open up when they feel respected. If I show genuine interest in their lives, they're more willing to accept guidance." (T14). Similarly, T19 stated: "Limiting your role simply to teaching isn't sufficient. When my students trust me, they are more likely to follow rules and communicate their frustrations and what bothers them more easily and safely."

#### 1.4. Gender-Sensitive Practices

Recognition of gendered expectations was linked to effective interventions: “I make sure that boys and girls are treated equally when handling incidents. Uniform rules and fairness help children understand the effectiveness of rules.” (T11). In this case, teachers ensure interventions are fair and consider gender differences among students. T6’s discourse is revealing: “I also notice that some boys feel pressured to act ‘tough.’ Addressing these gender expectations early makes conflict de-escalation easier.”

### Theme 2: Strategies for Managing School Violence

Teachers reported that they adopt multi-level strategies, combining pedagogical, socio-emotional, and democratic practices. Key subthemes include:

#### 2.1. Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Participants reported that SEL activities foster emotional regulation and conflict resolution: “Teaching emotional vocabulary explicitly has made a huge difference. We dedicate time to recognize and talk about feelings, which reduces arguments.” (T17). T1 reported “Our SEL activities help students understand how their behaviour affects others, which reduces impulsive reactions.”

#### 2.2. Democratic Classroom Practices

Teachers noted that student participation in rule-making enhanced accountability: “When students negotiate classroom agreements, they hold each other accountable instead of relying only on the teacher.” (T12). T3 shared: “Class meetings where students propose solutions teach them that they have a role in maintaining a peaceful environment.” Similarly, T5 explained that “I involve students in creating classroom rules and in this way they feel responsible for keeping them.” In line with this, T15 highlighted that:

the 6th of March is the day against school violence and bullying. If children can’t have everyday lived experiences with counteraction against violence, such as negotiation and peaceful conflict resolution, then this day is wasted. Students regard it as a day off lessons. They need something more experiential and not just abstract discussions.

#### 2.3. Dialogue and Mediation

Participants suggested that open communication facilitated resolution: “Dialogue can be the best strategy. I provide space for students to express feelings, then mediate to help them find a solution.” (T2)

#### 2.4. Proactive Pedagogical Interventions

Participants also stated that structured routines and collaborative projects prevented aggressive behaviour: “Clear routines prevent confusion and frustration. When

students know what to expect, they misbehave less often.” (T12). T20 pointed out “Prevention is better than last-minute resolution. It’s like investing in the future. This doesn’t mean that there won’t be any fight in the next weeks, but gradually incidents are reducing both in numbers and severity.” And T17 reported “Planning group activities and collaborative learning through projects helps students practice teamwork and reduce conflict. They become more tolerant and learn to negotiate even if they didn’t want in the beginning.”

### **Theme 3: Collaboration and Support Systems**

Participants reflected that effective management required engagement beyond the classroom. The key subthemes are the following:

#### *3.1. Parent Communication*

Teachers stressed that regular updates and alignment with families strengthened interventions: “Collaboration with parents can increase the effectiveness of counteraction. We must know if there’s something going on at home and align efforts.” (T18). T3 shared their experiences: “Regular conversations with parents help us handle recurring issues and maintain the consistency of reactions between home and school.”

#### *3.2. School Leadership Support*

Most teachers also stressed that consistent support from principals legitimizes interventions: “Even the best strategies fail if there isn’t a consistent school-wide approach. Leadership sets the tone for what the school stands for.” (T18). Similarly, T10 reported “When the principal supports a strategy, students take it seriously, and it’s easier to maintain discipline.”

#### *3.3. Interdisciplinary Collaboration*

Working with psychologists and social workers was suggested, as it enhances complex case management: “Having access to a school psychologist allows me to address more complex cases of aggression.” (T12). T13 revealed “Social workers often bridge the gap between home and school, especially with families facing complex challenges”

### **Theme 4: Challenges and Barriers**

Teachers reported multiple obstacles limiting their effectiveness in managing school violence. The key subthemes are the following.

#### *4.1. Classroom Dynamics*

Participating teachers reported that heterogeneous temperaments and peer conflicts complicated interventions: “Some students find it very difficult to accept peers who are different, and this makes mediation difficult.” (T17)

#### 4.2. Curriculum Limitations

Furthermore, teachers criticized the lack of structured guidance for aggression management: “The curriculum expects us to promote inclusion, but it doesn’t give us the tools or structured activities to tackle aggression constructively.” (T6). T3 added “The curriculum is overloaded and this creates a huge pressure in time management (...) it doesn’t easily leave space for much flexibility”.

#### 4.3. Variable Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teachers also reflected that confidence fluctuated depending on support and classroom complexity: “Even experienced teachers have moments of uncertainty. A challenging class can undermine your confidence quickly.” (T2). Similarly, T7 reported “When I feel unsupported, my self-efficacy drops. It’s hard to maintain confidence when you’re handling everything alone.”

#### 4.4. Limited Collaboration

Finally, it was stressed that inconsistent support from parents and leadership reduced intervention effectiveness: “When leadership is inconsistent in enforcing rules, students notice and test boundaries more often.” (T9)

### Theme 5: Solutions and Recommendations

Teachers proposed multi-level solutions emphasizing systemic support and professional development.

#### 5.1. Specialized Training

Ongoing workshops in SEL, conflict resolution, and restorative practices were deemed essential: “Structured workshops on conflict resolution and socio-emotional learning would give us more confidence intervening early instead of reacting only when situations escalate.” (T20). T12 similarly stated: “I believe that specialized training would help us recognize the root causes of aggressive behaviours. Many of us rely on intuition or experience, but systematic knowledge on SEL and classroom management would give us more concrete tools.”

Finally, T3 reported: “We keep saying teachers should manage violence, but no one ensures we’re properly trained. I think annual certified training on bullying, trauma-informed practices, and de-escalation techniques should be mandatory for all educators.”

#### 5.2. Enhanced Communication with Parents

Stronger school-home collaboration was seen as preventative: “Regular communication with parents – not only when something goes wrong – could prevent many issues.” (T16), and T2 reported “Strengthening communication with parents

is essential. Many conflicts could be avoided if parents were more engaged and informed about what's happening in school.”

### 5.3. School-Based Interventions

Consistency across classrooms via structured programs was reported as critical: “A preventive framework with peer mediation, class councils, or weekly SEL sessions would address problems before they escalate.” (T5). T3 indicated: “I think schools should have clear protocols for responding to bullying. Right now, every teacher does something different. A unified process would make interventions more effective and fair,” and finally, T12 highlighted that “When the school leadership supports long-term interventions, we see real changes. Programs like anti-bullying weeks, thematic projects, or cooperation games can shape a more positive culture.”

### 5.4. Policy-Level Support

It was also reported that guidance from authorities and access to school psychologists were necessary: “Leadership plays a key role. When the school head is supportive and implements consistent policies, everything runs more smoothly.” (T2).

### 5.5. Whole-School Preventive Interventions Targeting Aggression and SRGBV

Teachers highlighted the importance of gender-sensitive, inclusive programs addressing SRGBV: “Gender equality and gender-related violence aren't discussed enough in Greek schools. Structured preventive programs focusing on gender norms would help students challenge harmful behaviours.” (T17).

## DISCUSSION

This research investigated Greek primary school teachers' perceptions of their efficacy in addressing school violence and aggressive/disruptive behaviour. The discussion below is structured according to the research questions (RQs), integrating the research's findings with the existing literature. It also offers a critical interpretation of their implications.

In relation to the 1st RQ, the findings indicate that teachers perceive themselves as central agents in preventing and managing school violence. This ascertainment echoes the established literature on teacher self-efficacy and classroom leadership (Bandura, 1997; Malinen et al., 2024). Participants emphasized that confidence, empathy, trust-building, and gender-sensitive practices underpin their effectiveness, reflecting the broader evidence that relational skills are critical for maintaining a safe and inclusive learning environment (Mayer et al., 2021).

Teachers' emphasis on empathy aligns with the literature, suggesting that understanding the emotional states and contexts of students' behaviours fosters more

constructive interventions than purely punitive responses (Malinen et al., 2024; Tulenbaevna et al., 2025). Trust-building with students also aligns with prior empirical findings, highlighting the role of relational trust in promoting classroom safety and adherence to behavioural norms (Shim & Ye, 2024). Moreover, attention to gender-sensitive interventions reflects growing evidence on school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) and the importance of early recognition of gendered behavioural expectations (Molina Roldán et al., 2025; Pliogou et al., 2025).

However, the findings also reveal that teachers' perceptions of efficacy are experience-dependent. Less confident interventions during early career stages confirm prior research, which found that professional experience and structured support enhance teacher self-efficacy in managing school violence (Spears et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2023b). This highlights a critical implication: developing teacher self-efficacy is both time- and support-dependent, requiring professional development, mentorship, and systemic enhancement.

Considering the 2nd RQ, teachers reported a range of strategies, spanning socio-emotional learning (SEL), democratic classroom practices, dialogue/mediation, proactive pedagogical interventions, and school-wide programs. These findings confirm prior literature emphasizing multi-level, integrative approaches to school violence prevention (Alonso Rodríguez et al., 2025; Freeman et al., 2024). Socio-emotional learning (SEL) emerged as a primary strategy, with teachers explicitly fostering emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict resolution skills. This aligns with research demonstrating that SEL improves classroom behaviour and promotes prosocial interactions, particularly when implemented as part of school-wide initiatives rather than isolated lessons (CASEL, 2025; Freeman et al., 2024).

Democratic classroom practices – such as shared rule-making and student-led problem-solving – reflect restorative and participatory approaches that have been shown to reduce aggression, strengthen accountability, and develop negotiation skills among students (Lešková & Haburajová, 2023; Pérez-Jorge et al., 2023). Dialogue and mediation strategies, as reported by teachers, reinforce pre-existing literature on structured conflict resolution as an effective tool for de-escalating disputes and promoting peer understanding (Pérez-Jorge et al., 2023). Proactive pedagogical interventions, including clear routines, collaborative projects, and experiential learning, illustrate that teachers recognize the preventive value of structured classroom management. These strategies are consistent with prior findings, emphasizing that predictable environments and guided social interaction reduce behavioural incidents and foster inclusion (Antoniou et al., 2024; O'Neill, 2025).

Critically, while these strategies are well-aligned with evidence-based practices, the findings suggest that their effectiveness depends on systemic support – including school leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, and parental engagement. They echo global literature on whole-school and multi-actor interventions

(CoE, 2018; Varlık, 2024). This reinforces the argument that teacher-led strategies, while essential, are insufficient in isolation.

Regarding the 3rd RQ, teachers reported four main challenges: classroom dynamics, curriculum limitations, variable self-efficacy, and limited collaboration. These findings mirror both international and Greek research on structural and relational barriers to effective violence prevention (Bourou & Papageorgiou, 2023; Kołodziejczyk, 2025; OECD, 2020). Classroom dynamics, including intolerance toward diversity and peer conflicts, underline the persistent difficulty of managing heterogeneous classrooms. This is consistent with evidence that social hierarchies and relational aggression complicate teacher interventions, particularly for students who deviate from normative behaviours (Maniatis, 2025; UNESCO, 2024a).

Curriculum limitations highlight a system-level constraint that restricts teachers' capacity to integrate SEL and preventive practices. These are especially evident through the lack of explicit guidance on aggression management and an overloaded syllabus. Teachers' concern about improvisation in the absence of structured guidance aligns with OECD (2020) findings on the "mile-wide, inch-deep" challenge in curricula, which can undermine SEL integration.

Variable teacher self-efficacy emerged as a critical internal barrier. Teachers' confidence fluctuated with experience, support, and classroom complexity, supporting Bandura's (1997) assertion that self-efficacy shapes proactive intervention and behaviour management. Importantly, even experienced teachers reported moments of uncertainty, indicating that professional development must be ongoing and responsive to contextual challenges (Spears et al., 2025).

Finally, considering the 4th RQ, teachers' solutions emphasize systemic, multi-level interventions. These included specialized training, enhanced parent-teacher communication, school-based programs, policy-level support, and whole-school initiatives. These recommendations are consistent with research evidence suggesting that effective prevention requires integrated, evidence-informed strategies rather than isolated interventions (Molina Roldán et al., 2025; Souza, 2024).

Specialized training was universally emphasized. It highlighted the need for both pre-service and continuous professional development focused on SEL, conflict resolution, restorative practices, and trauma-informed approaches. This recommendation reflects the literature's emphasis on structured teacher training as a mechanism to enhance self-efficacy and classroom outcomes (Shim & Ye, 2024; UNESCO, 2023b).

Parent-teacher collaboration emerged as another key area. It reinforced prior evidence that family engagement can buffer aggression. It also aids in strengthening student-teacher relationships and supports positive peer interactions (Chen et al., 2025; Lesneskie & Block, 2016).

School-based programs and whole-school initiatives were highlighted as critical for consistency and sustainability. They included peer mediation, democratic

classroom rules, and structured SEL curricula. They align with the whole-school, multi-actor models identified in the literature as most effective for SRGBV prevention and broader school violence reduction (Alonso Rodríguez et al., 2025; Pliogou et al., 2025).

Finally, teachers emphasized policy-level support. It included guidance from educational authorities, leadership consistency, and access to psychologists and social workers. These recommendations echo global findings that sustainable school violence prevention depends on institutional alignment and cross-stakeholder collaboration (McMahon et al., 2025; Pearce et al., 2024).

Limited collaboration further constrained teacher efficacy. Inconsistent support from leadership and varying levels of parental involvement are especially poignant examples. – These challenges align with prior studies demonstrating that leadership, family engagement, and interdisciplinary support are crucial moderators of successful school violence interventions (Ertem, 2024; Watson et al., 2024).

Overall, the present research highlights the central role of teachers in shaping safe, inclusive, and democratic learning environments, particularly in primary education – a context often neglected in SRGBV and school violence research. While teachers employ evidence-informed strategies, their impact is constrained by systemic, structural, and curricular limitations. The findings highlight a clear gap between policy recommendations and day-to-day practice, emphasizing the need for integrated, contextually grounded interventions that strengthen teacher agency while embedding preventive measures across the school ecosystem.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research demonstrates that primary school teachers perceive themselves as central to preventing and managing school violence. They employ strategies such as socio-emotional learning, democratic classroom practices, and dialogue. Teacher efficacy is shaped by confidence, empathy, trust-building, and gender-sensitive approaches, yet it is constrained by curriculum limitations, classroom dynamics, and insufficient collaboration with parents and school leadership.

Implications of these findings suggest that enhancing teacher capacity requires sustained professional development, whole-school approaches, gender-responsive practices, and policy-level support. By empowering teachers, engaging families, and fostering systemic cultural change, schools can function as effective early intervention sites. As such, they promote safe, inclusive, and democratic learning environments while supporting social inclusion, equitable treatment, and positive student development.

## LIMITATIONS

Despite its contribution to an under-researched educational context, this research has some limitations. The qualitative design and small sample size ( $N = 20$ ), while appropriate for in-depth analysis, limit generalizability of the findings beyond primary teachers in Thessaloniki. Reliance on self-reported interviews raises the possibility of social desirability bias, while the exclusive focus on teachers' perspectives excludes other key stakeholders, such as students, parents, and support staff. The absence of observational or documentary data restricts methodological triangulation, and the cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time. Finally, limited engagement with intersectionality constrains deeper analysis of how gender interacts with other social factors in shaping school violence. These limitations highlight the need for future research using mixed methods, longitudinal designs, and multi-stakeholder perspectives to strengthen evidence for school violence prevention in primary education.

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## RADZENIE SOBIE Z PRZEMOCĄ SZKOLNĄ, ZASTRASZANIEM ORAZ AGRESYWNYM/ZAKŁÓCAJĄCYM ZACHOWANIEM W ŚRODOWISKU SZKOLNYM: PERSPEKTYWA NAUCZYCIELI W GRECKIEJ SZKOLE PODSTAWOWEJ

**Wprowadzenie:** Przemoc szkolna stanowi złożony problem społeczny oraz zdrowia publicznego, który niesie ze sobą poważne konsekwencje dla uczniów, rodzin oraz całego społeczeństwa. Szkoły, a w szczególności nauczyciele, odgrywają kluczową rolę w tworzeniu i utrzymywaniu bezpiecznego, włączającego oraz wysokiej jakości środowiska uczenia się. Skuteczne reagowanie na zachowania agresywne i destrukcyjne wymaga od nauczycieli posiadania odpowiednich kompetencji zawodowych oraz silnego poczucia własnej skuteczności, które sprzyja osiągnięciu pozytywnych rezultatów edukacyjnych i wychowawczych.

**Cel badań:** Celem niniejszego badania jakościowego było zbadanie postrzegania przez nauczy-

cieli własnej skuteczności w radzeniu sobie z przemocą szkolną oraz incydentami zachowań agresywnych lub destrukcyjnych w środowisku szkolnym.

**Metoda badań:** Dwudziestu nauczycieli edukacji wczesnoszkolnej pracujących w Salonikach w Grecji wzięło udział w półstrukturyzowanych wywiadach. Badanie koncentrowało się na postrzeganych przez nauczycieli rolach, stosowanych strategiach, napotykanym wyzwaniach oraz proponowanych rozwiązaniach mających na celu zwiększenie skuteczności w promowaniu bezpiecznego środowiska szkolnego. Dane zostały przeanalizowane z wykorzystaniem analizy tematycznej.

**Wyniki:** Nauczyciele postrzegali swoją rolę jako kluczową i podkreślali znaczenie poczucia własnej skuteczności dla osiągnięcia pozytywnych rezultatów. Empatia, pozytywne relacje nauczyciel–uczeń, równość płci, zaufanie oraz doświadczenie zawodowe wzmacniały efektywność działań. Strategie obejmowały edukację społeczno-emocjonalną, demokratyczne praktyki klasowe, dialog, proaktywne interwencje pedagogiczne oraz współpracę z rodzicami i dyrekcją szkoły. Wyzwania dotyczyły zróżnicowanego poziomu skuteczności, nietolerancji w klasie, ograniczonej współpracy oraz luk programowych. Uczestnicy podkreślali potrzebę specjalistycznego doskonalenia zawodowego, poprawy komunikacji szkoła–rodzina, interwencji szkolnych oraz współpracy z psychologami i pracownikami socjalnymi.

**Wnioski:** Wyniki badania podkreślają kluczową rolę nauczycieli w tworzeniu bezpiecznych, włączających i demokratycznych środowisk uczenia się oraz wskazują na istotne implikacje dla polityki edukacyjnej, rozwoju zawodowego i praktyki pedagogicznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przemoc szkolna, *bullying*, zachowania agresywne/destrukcyjne, bezpieczne środowisko uczenia się, edukacja wysokiej jakości, włączenie społeczne