

ARTICLE

A study of teachers' views on parental involvement in Greek primary schools

Nikolaos Alexopoulos¹, Konstantina Tsoi², Thomas Babalis³, Ilias Krikelas⁴ & Dimitrios Kokkinoulis⁵

Abstract

As the role of parents in school affairs and trends in the decentralization of educational administration are continuously being strengthened internationally, the Greek educational system is attempting, through recent legislation, to respond to these trends. For this reason, practices have been promoted that enhance the autonomy of the school unit and the institution of parental involvement in school affairs. However, teachers are not always receptive to following these practices.

In light of this, the present research aimed to investigate the views and attitudes of Greek primary education teachers regarding the phenomenon of parental involvement, its importance, and the obstacles it faces in an education system that remains centralized, such as the Greek one. The research results mainly showed that, despite the positive view of the Greek teachers' community regarding parental involvement, their reservations about it continue to exist and the obstacles to its implementation are real. Furthermore, the present study attempts to identify parental involvement practices that could help the educational community to manage its misgivings about parental involvement in school activities and to set the framework for an equal collaboration among them.

Keywords: Parental involvement, School life, Parent-Teacher collaboration, Family-School relationships, School community

- 1 Nikolaos Alexopoulos, Department of Pedagogy and Primary Education, Faculty of Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece. Nikolaos Alexopoulos (0000-0001-9582-9994)-ORCID. Email: nkalex@primedu.uoa.gr Corresponding Author
- 2 Konstantina Tsoi, Department of Pedagogy and Primary Education, Faculty of Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece. Konstantina Tsoi (0000-0001-6414-3172)-ORCID. Email: nadtso@primedu.uoa.gr
- 3 Thomas Babalis, Department of Pedagogy and Primary Education, Faculty of Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece. Thomas Babalis (0009-0002-1798-7123)-ORCID. Email: tbabalis@primedu.uoa.gr
- 4 Ilias Krikelas, Athens' 2nd Directorate of Primary Education, Greek Ministry of Education Religious Affairs and Sports, Greece. Email: ikrikelas@gmail.com
- 5 Dimitrios Kokkinoulis, Athens' 3rd Directorate of Primary Education, Greek Ministry of Education Religious Affairs and Sports. Greece. Email: dimitris.kokkinoulis92@gmail.com

Introduction

In educational policy and research, parental involvement constitutes an important parameter in the effective functioning of the school (Johnson, 2015; Yang et al., 2023). More specifically, it is considered (Alexopoulos et al., 2023; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Price, 2017; Topor et al., 2010) that parents, together with well-trained teachers, the modern curriculum and the school's pedagogical leadership, contribute to students' high performance and their smooth psychosocial maturation. De Oliveira Lima & Kuusisto (2019) notably mention that students' chances of achieving high academic performance increase when cooperation between parents and educators is ensured, both in learning matters and behavioral issues. Furthermore, Mapp & Kuttner (2013) point out that high parental expectations have a positive impact on children's school success, a perfectly logical observation considering that parents and students "spend a large proportion of their lives outside the classroom, frequently with at least one parent" (Pomerantz & Monti, 2015, p. 54).

In this context, schools are increasingly seeking to encourage and actively involve parents, as well as other adults responsible for or tasked with safeguarding children's rights, in their functioning (Crozier & Symeou, 2017; Grant & Ray, 2018). Parental involvement, or more broadly, family engagement in school activities, can take many forms. These include participating in voluntary actions for the organization of school events (e.g., theater, visual arts), attending school-based training sessions on social issues that extend beyond the school community (e.g., delinquency, adolescence, addictions), and supporting children with their homework (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023).

International experience is largely positive towards parental involvement, and as such, it represents a steady orientation for education policies in many countries. Typical examples include the United States of America and the United Kingdom (Parentkind, 2024; Wilson, 2019), which consider the parent as an active participant in the school's operation and view their involvement as essential (Crozier, 2019; Epstein, 2018; Ho & Staub, 2018; Wilson, 2019). Moreover, within this framework, parents have been given the opportunity to choose their children's school, evaluate the pedagogical and teaching work of their teachers (Crozier, 2019), participate in decision-making regarding school resource management (Baron, 2022), and have a say in shaping the school's curriculum (Haisraeli & Fogiel-Bijaoui, 2023, Kent et al., 2022).

Despite extensive theoretical analyses and empirical studies on parental involvement, it is deemed to require further study and research (Kovács et al., 2022; Kurtulmus, 2016; Leithwood & Patrician, 2015). Of particular research interest are the views and attitudes of teachers who, for many years, have found it challenging to manage issues related to collaboration with their students' families and often lack

the necessary attitudes, knowledge, and skills for effective partnership (Georgiou, 1996; Smith & Sheridan, 2019; Symeou, 2002, 2010).

There also appears to be interest in Greece to study the phenomenon of parental involvement. However, unlike decentralized educational systems, Greece does not have prior experience of this phenomenon (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Antonopoulou et al., 2011). On the contrary, for social and political reasons, the country has a long tradition of centralized public and educational administration. Consequently, only in the last 10 years has it gradually and more systematically sought to decentralize its system for the management and operation of schools and to promote active parental participation in school affairs (e.g., Law 4823/2021). Overall, this pursuit can be characterized as a challenge that aims not only to strengthen decentralized tendencies in the Greek educational system but also to make the school unit more open to the local community and autonomous with a high sense of initiative, responsibility and collaboration, in terms of both its internal and external environments.

The research conducted so far on parental involvement in Greek schools (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Babalis & Kirkigianni 2011; Beazidou & Spathis, 2019; Georgiou, 2011; Giotsa et al., 2015; Mylonakou – Keke, 2019; Stravakou, 2020) mostly focuses on exploring the topic from the perspectives of sociology, educational psychology, and school counseling. Despite these different approaches, most of these studies highlight three key obstacles to the open, collaborative relationship between Greek schools and families: the absence of prior experience on both sides (school – family), the systemic way of thinking among those involved, and the holistic approach to the problems of the modern school unit. Furthermore, as a barrier to parental involvement, there is a strong resistance to change that schools generally exhibit, being inherently conservative organizations (Starr, 2011), as well as the reserved attitudes and behaviors of teachers regarding parental participation in school management issues, particularly in centralized systems (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Gokturk & Dinckal, 2018; Symeou, 2020). These obstacles are likely to either promote strictly formal parental participation in school activities (e.g., school celebrations) and decision-making concerning the school community or effectively nullify any effort to strengthen and deepen school-family interaction.

Taking into account the importance of educational community perceptions in implementing strategic choices regarding parental involvement and encouraging parents to actively participate in their children's education (Agam Ben Artzi & Greenbank, 2023; Pushor & Amendt, 2018; Symeou, 2006), the present study aimed to investigate the views and attitudes of Greek primary education teachers concerning this phenomenon. The significance of this study stems from its examination of parental involvement within an educational system that is transitioning in terms of its administrative approach (from centralization to decentralization) and has little

tradition in this phenomenon. As specifically noted in the Explanatory Report of the recent general law on school education 4823/2021 (p. 581), it is now an objective of the Greek state to enhance school autonomy, "...its synergy and networking with external entities and individuals such as other school units, families, scientific and social bodies, local government services, and higher education institutions." As for the results of this research, they are expected to contribute to the formulation of proposals for collaborative relationships between teachers and parents, based on the prerequisite for their active and in-depth participation in the operation of the school.

Theoretical Framework: Concept, forms and barriers regarding parental involvement

In the relevant literature, parental involvement is depicted using terms such as home-school connection, parental engagement, parental involvement, and home-school partnership (Kim & Sheridan, 2015), which express different approaches to the issue of school-family collaboration. The spectrum of these approaches ranges from the distinct relationship between parents and teachers, where the school has the primary and guiding role, to a fully equal relationship of collaboration and mutual assistance between the two (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023; Murray et al., 2015).

A large part of the study of family-school relationships focuses on the issue of interdependence of all those involved in the school community. This is because its members can either hinder or facilitate school-family communication, refute expectations, and nullify or enhance the positive contribution of the home to the multidimensional work that takes place in the school and classroom (Grolnick & Raftery-Helmer, 2015; Ho, 2009).

Epstein, one of the most important researchers on parental involvement, drawing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective, investigates the interdependence and interactions between school and family in the broader social context, such as the neighborhood. The ultimate goal of her studies is to identify those activities in the local and broader community that, if implemented, will actively and substantially support the school in its pedagogical and educational work. Specifically, Epstein identified six types of parent-school collaboration (Epstein, 2011).

The first type of parental involvement focuses on helping schools support families in creating a healthy and safe home environment, which will form the foundation for their teaching, learning and education. The second type of involvement highlights the importance of two-way, continuous, simple, clear and essential communication (in person or electronically) between parents and teachers regarding aspects of school life such as school programs and events, learning outcomes and the psychosocial development of children. The third type of involvement concerns

parents' volunteerism in activities that help their children's teachers inside and outside the classroom (e.g., classroom decoration, accompanying children during educational visits outside the school, etc.). The fourth type of involvement focuses on parents' supportive role regarding homework, skills that should be developed in collaboration with the class teacher, learning objectives that they may be able to develop jointly, expectations they should develop, and assessment practices they should adopt. The fifth type of involvement, according to Epstein's model, emphasizes the participation of families – regardless of their social, cultural, economic, or other background – in making school decisions regarding the administration and operation of the school unit. Such activities prepare parents to assume leadership roles and activate their representation through which they provide and receive information. The final (sixth) type of involvement refers to the school's extended cooperation with the local community in particular. It involves activities that bring the entire local community/neighborhood such as small or large businesses, governmental organizations, cultural, religious, humanitarian organizations, universities and other social groups close to or within the school to support its multidimensional work. Also, through these collaborations, the school community will have the opportunity to contribute to society (e.g., by participating in environmental and cultural activities outside school), to reach out and actively demonstrate its presence and contribution.

Epstein's typology for school-family communication examines the issue of school-family relationships without focusing solely on what parents can do for the school, e.g., being regularly informed by the teacher, participating in decision-making committees, or helping to organize school activities/events. Instead, it highlights as equally important the intentions and behaviors that all members of the school community – teachers, support staff, family, and local society – are called upon to develop in order to participate equally in the children's progress (Epstein, 2018; Sheridan et al., 2016). However, the greatest value of Epstein's typology stems from the fact that it highlights the value of the interconnections of everything that constitutes the internal and external environment of the school unit and contributes to its smooth operation. Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which studies the developmental processes of organizations and their changing relationships with the environment (Shelton, 2019), Epstein's approach of overlapping spheres of influence suggests that families, schools and society should work closely together to support students.

Despite the success of Epstein's model regarding increased parental involvement in the school community, improved student performance and an improved collaborative school climate (Epstein, et al., 2019), it is currently being tested by a series of difficulties and challenges (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). These include, among others: (a) relationships between parents and teachers, (b) children's learning difficulties,

(c) social and cultural differences among school community members, (d) teachers' workload and insufficient training in school-family relationship issues, (e) parents' increased working hours and correspondingly limited time for engaging with their children (OECD, 2020), (f) the diversity of modern families (single-parent, same-sex, and blended families) (Amato, 2005; Gates et al., 2018), (g) parents' desire/need to utilize digital technology in their communication with the school, influenced by the recent pandemic (García & Weiss, 2019; OECD, 2020), and (h) a greater participation of men in the care and education of their children (Curry et al., 2019).

Further defining the challenges and difficulties in the school-family relationship according to educators' views is considered important in both Greek (Beazidou & Spathi, 2019; Koutrouba et al. 2009; Matsagouras & Poulou, 2009) and international literature (Andoni et al., 2022; Arar et al. 2018; Ho & Cherng, 2018) in order to enhance parental involvement and improve the pedagogical/teaching and administrative functioning of the school. Interestingly, the educators themselves believe that without strong parental involvement, children are more likely to leave school or exhibit reduced academic performance (Hernandez-Monreal, 2019). Additionally, educators consider the family's contribution to the supervision and implementation of homework to be significant (Korem, 2024). This is despite reservations expressed, particularly in centralized systems, about whether parents should be given more room for action and initiative (Beazidou & Spathis, 2019; Gokturk & Dinckal, 2018).

From the review of relevant literature, it ultimately emerges that teachers' views, beliefs, prejudices or stereotypes contribute to or hinder the establishment of parental involvement, as they shape parents' image of the school, enhance or prevent their cooperation and trust (Fives & Gill, 2015; Pushor & Amendt, 2018), and contribute to the success or failure of family involvement strategies in school life (Andoni et al., 2022).

Methodology

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to investigate the views of primary education teachers regarding parental involvement, the obstacles that exist, and the practices that could enhance the collaboration between teachers and students' parents.

To achieve the above purpose, the following objectives were set to determine:

- a) the degree to which teachers are positive about parental involvement;
- b) the extent to which the demographic characteristics of the sampled members (years of service, age, gender, academic level, and type of school) influence their views on parental involvement;

- c) the degree to which training on parental involvement issues, the limited available time and parental criticism of their educational work shape teachers' views on parental involvement;
- d) the parental involvement practices that are considered most important by teachers.

Sample and statistical techniques

The method used in this research was quantitative method. Research data were collected through an anonymous written questionnaire distributed electronically between April and May 2024. A simple random sampling technique was used. The sample consisted of 218 primary education teachers from three regional units of Greece—Central Athens, West Attica, and Larissa—representing urban, suburban, and rural areas. The participants' demographic characteristics are presented in Tables 1–5 below.

The questionnaire, as a research tool for the present study, was deemed appropriate also because it has been utilized in collecting data for a series of similar studies (e.g., Ihmeideh et al, 2020; Solish et al, 2015). For its compilation, the research team based it on the questionnaire for investigating school, family and community interaction by Epstein et al., 2018 and Salinas et al., 1999, as well as on the study of relevant literature (Epstein & Connors, 1995; Goodall & Montgomery, 2023; Horny & Blackwell, 2018; Topor et al., 2010; Wilder, 2023).

In its final form, the questionnaire of this study was developed after exchanges of views with teachers and a pilot study on a small sample of 47 teachers from 4 schools in Athens and 2 in Larissa, which was excluded from the main research. Analysis of the pilot study data showed that the Cronbach's alpha value was ≥ 0.70 and therefore suitable for use in the main research. Regarding the main research questionnaire, it also had a high reliability index (Cronbach's alpha = 0.85) and consisted of three groups of questions. Part A contained 11 general questions with a reliability index of Cronbach's alpha = 0.74, which, through a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree or 1=Not at all to 5=Very Much), measured teachers' views on parental involvement (e.g., "Parental involvement is important for student success in school") and three questions addressing barriers to parental involvement (e.g., "Teachers have adequate training to organize parental involvement activities"). Part B of the questionnaire, with a reliability index of Cronbach's alpha = 0.82, contained 14 questions that, through the 5-point Likert scale, measured teachers' views on parental involvement practices falling within Epstein's 6 types of involvement model (e.g., "I provide specific activities for parents to do with their children to improve their grades"). The third and final part of the research questionnaire contained questions about the sampled teachers' demographic information such as gender, age, teaching experience, etc.

The analysis of research data collected by the research team was implemented through SPSS (v. 25) and included an examination of the questionnaire's reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, descriptive analysis (mean values, standard deviations), and testing correlations/dependencies between variables of the research questionnaire using Kendall's coefficient (Kendall's tau-b (tb) correlation coefficient).

Table 1 Gender of sample

Gender	Number	Percentage
Men	67	30.73%
Women	151	69.27%

Table 2 Age of sample

Age	Number	Percentage
22-30	41	18.81%
31-40	37	16.97%
40-50	48	22.02%
50-60	91	41.74%
>60	1	0.46%

Table 3 Level of education of sample (in addition to a first degree)

Level of education	Number	Percentage
Postgraduate studies	89	40.8%
Long-term further education (more than 6 yrs)	42	22.5 %
Doctorate (PhD)	1	0.46%

Table 4 Type of school where teachers in the sample worked

School type	Number	Percentage
Public	181	83.03%
Private	37	16.97%

Table 5 Years of service of teachers in the sample

Years of service	Number	Percentage
Up to 5	123	56.4%
6-10	36	16.5%
11-15	22	10.2%
16-20	19	8.7%
≥21 years	18	8.2%

Results

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate the views of Greek school teachers regarding parental involvement. According to the results of the descriptive analysis (see Table 6), it was observed that teachers tend to agree with parental involvement in school operations as it pertains to the successful attendance of students. More specifically, they primarily believe that the role of parents is crucial for the school's well-being and student success. Additionally, they believe that their school unit appropriately views parents as important collaborators, although they either don't know how, or don't have the time and culture, to collaborate substantially and in-depth with them.

Based on the objectives of this research, the existence of statistically significant differences in the opinions of the sampled teachers regarding parental involvement was investigated according to their demographic characteristics (gender, age, years of service, level of education, and type of school they serve). Regarding work experience, the results showed that the older the age group and the more years of service the responding teacher has, the more they disagree with the proposition that every family has certain strengths that can be utilized in student success, and vice versa ($\tau_b = -0.134$, $p = 0.002$ and $\tau_b = -0.150$, $p = 0.001$ respectively). Concerning the gender demographics, according to the results of this research, female teachers to a greater extent than men accept that (i) parental involvement is important for a good school ($\tau_b = 0.569$, $p = 0.001$), (ii) every family has certain strengths that can be utilized to increase student success in school ($\tau_b = 0.416$, $p = 0.004$), (iii) all parents with appropriate guidance are able to help their children with homework ($\tau_b = 0.430$, $p = 0.003$), and (iv) parental involvement can help teachers be more effective with their students ($\tau_b = 0.412$, $p = 0.004$). Regarding school type (public / private), the research results showed that private school teachers believe, to a greater extent than their public school colleagues, that parental involvement is important for a good school ($\tau_b = 0.395$, $p = 0.004$), every family has strengths that can be utilized to increase student success in school ($\tau_b = 0.1304$, $p = 0.000$), and that the school where

they work considers, as it should, parents as important collaborators ($\tau_b = 0.678$, $p = 0.000$). As for the education level, this research found no statistically significant correlation between this level and teachers' responses to statements regarding parental involvement, as the p-values of the corresponding tests were found to be greater than 0.05.

In an attempt to determine any association between the obstacles to parental involvement such as inadequate teacher training in this area, limited available time and parental criticism of their educational work with teachers' views on parental involvement, the Kendall's tau-b correlation test was conducted. The results showed that for most of the teachers' views on parental involvement, there is a positive correlation with the aforementioned obstacles (see Table 7). However, it should be noted that while the relationships are statistically significant across almost all variables, a strong tau indicator (i.e., greater than 0.195-0.200) was found in 7 out of 16 positive correlations and 1 negative correlation. Also noteworthy is the positive correlation found between all obstacles (non-critical stance of parents, availability of teachers' time, and their inadequate training in parental involvement issues) and the teachers' view that the school treats parents as important collaborators.

Finally, in accordance with its objectives, this research investigated the opinion of teachers in Greek schools regarding the value of parental involvement practices that fall within Epstein's typology. From Table 8, it is observed that almost all parental involvement practices are considered important by teachers, as the Mean Averages (M.A.) of all practices ranged between levels 3 and 4. The only practice for which a clear positioning of teachers was not found is the one concerning the involvement of parents as volunteers in the teacher's classroom (M.A.=2.48, S.D.=0.99). This indicates that teachers are almost equally divided regarding the importance of this type of parental involvement. Lastly, the standard deviation (S.D.) in this question, which is almost equal to 1, signifies that the responses of the sample members do not have a clear trend.

Table 6 Mean values (M.V.) and standard deviations (S.D.) of the responses of the sample (N=218) regarding the value of parental involvement in school

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Parental involvement is important for a good school.	4.06	0.904
Most parents know how to help their children with homework.	1.17	0.674
Every family has some strengths that can be leveraged to increase student success in school.	4.27	0.707
All parents could learn ways to help their children with homework if someone shows them.	4.02	0.887
Parental involvement can help teachers to be more effective with more students.	3.86	0.902
Most parents of students in my school want to be more involved than they already are.	3.69	0.897
Parental involvement is important for student success in school.	3.91	0.896
The school treats parents as important collaborators.	3.95	0.961
Most parents are not inclined to criticize the work of educators and are willing to follow their instructions.	1.02	0.856
Teachers have the required time to engage parents in useful parental involvement activities.	1.15	0.880
Teachers have the appropriate training to organize parental involvement activities.	2.29	0.882
Valid N (listwise)= 218		

Table 7 Kendall's tau-b correlation test between the obstacles of parental involvement and the views of educators on parental involvement

	Barriers to parental involvement		
	Parents do not criticize teachers; they follow the directions given to them.	Teachers have time to involve parents in school life / classroom life.	Teachers have the training to organize parental involvement activities.
Views of educators sampled on parental involvement			
Parental involvement is important for a good school.	0.165 (0.007)	0.116 (0.05)	0.043 (0.47)
Most parents know how to help their children with homework.	0.195 (0.002)	0.121 (0.066)	0.177 (0.006)
Every family has some strengths that can be leveraged to increase student success in school.	0.129 (0.039)	0.139 (0.034)	0.241 (0.000)
All parents could learn ways to help their children with homework.	0.091 (0.143)	0.206 (0.001)	0.196 (0.001)
Parental involvement can help teachers be more effective with more students.	0.173 (0.005)	0.175 (0.005)	0.098 (0.089)
Parents want to be more involved than they already are.	-0.118 (0.047)	0.40 (0.516)	0.157 (0.013)
Parental involvement is important for student success in school.	0.167 (0.009)	0.113 (0.082)	0.131 (0.037)
The school treats parents as important collaborators.	0.295 (0.000)	0.219 (0.000)	0.300 (0.000)

Table 8 Mean values (M.V.) and standard deviations (S.D.) of the sample responses (N=218) regarding the significance of parental involvement practices

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Has regular collaboration with parents	4.61	0.643
Participates with parents in afternoon meetings, performances and workshops at the school.	3.78	0.877
Communicates with parents about the problems or failures of their children.	4.68	0.549
Informs about the improvement / successes of their children	4.66	0.587
Seeks the voluntary involvement of parents in the activities of the classroom	2.48	0.999
Informs parents about what their children need to master in each cognitive subject.	4.31	0.752
Provides activities for parents to do with their children, to help improve their grades.	3.95	0.884
Gives ideas to parents on what to discuss with their children regarding selected television programs.	3.93	0.875
Assigns homework that requires children to interact with their parents.	3.86	0.844
Gives preparation exercises at home before a competition.	4.28	0.775
Asks parents to listen to their children read.	4.41	0.739
Asks parents to listen to a story or paragraph written by their children	4.52	0.667
Collaborates with representatives of the local community to create learning opportunities in the classroom	4.10	0.842
Asks parents for information about the interests and needs of their children.	4.52	0.673
Valid N (listwise) =218		

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the phenomenon of parental involvement in Greek schools, focusing in particular on teachers' perceptions of the significance of school-family relationships, the challenges they face, and strategies for their further improvement. Regarding the importance of parental involvement, the results

showed that teachers are positive about its contribution to the overall functioning of the school unit (educational, pedagogical, administrative). Additionally, this research showed that teachers trust parents and are willing to collaborate with them. This finding, which agrees with other previous related studies (Crozier, 2019; Galindo & Sanders, 2019; Oostdam & Hooze, 2013), could be attributed to the increased awareness of Greek teachers regarding the necessity for parental involvement in school life in recent years. This awareness is likely due to teachers' current opportunities to attend courses or modules related to school-family relationships during their initial training, during in-school and/or out-of-school professional development, or during their postgraduate studies. Furthermore, the positive view of teachers towards parental involvement could be attributed to (a) the ever-increasing decentralization of the country's education administration system and the reduction of its centralism, which for a long time limited school-family relationships (Lazaridou & Gravanis Kassida, 2015), and (b) the literature's emphasis on, and social recognition of, the contribution of parents (Axford et al, 2019; Khalid & Signal, 2023; Redding, 2000; Young & McGeeney, 2023) and volunteers (Khasanzyanova, 2017; Wu & Tsai, 2018), both in learning and in managing issues of violence and delinquency in contemporary school environments (Artinopoulou et al., 2023; Panagiotopoulos & Daramara, 2019; Yang et al., 2021).

The discussion and interpretation of teachers' positive view on parental involvement could not ignore what the authors consider to be an important finding of this study: the value that participating teachers attributed to students' homework and to collaboration with parents for effective classroom management in matters of learning and behavior. This finding confirms the position of the educational community and literature that when parents actively participate in their children's progress, high educational outcomes are achieved (Gokturk & Dinckal, 2018; Wider, 2023).

However, despite the positive outlook that teachers attribute to parental involvement in pedagogical/educational and general operations of the school and classroom and their mutual cooperation – similar to other studies (Sanders et al. 2018) – the majority recognize a series of obstacles and challenges during its implementation. More specifically, the research results showed that, according to teachers, families are not actively involved in school life and do not always know how to help their children with learning at home (Medwell & Ray, 2018). This finding confirms earlier studies (Almalki et al., 2021; Horny & Blackwell, 2018), according to which parental involvement faces multiple obstacles and challenges in schools (e.g., regarding online teaching and teaching children with disabilities and/or special educational needs), which require enhanced two-way communication and ongoing school-family collaboration. As to why this collaborative framework has not been achieved, the following reasons could be mentioned: first, that the school has not managed (for example, due to the workload of teachers (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023) to involve parents

fruitfully and substantially in school life, and second, that parents, due to their own increased workload and social obligations (Kerr et al., 2021), are absent from school activities. However, this abstention often leads them to frequently question the role of the teacher as a professional and to be cautious about whether the school constitutes a place of collaboration, coexistence, and progress for their children.

Regarding the second objective of the study (the influence of demographic characteristics on the responses of the sample), the research initially showed that the older the age and the greater the educational experience of teachers (years of service), the less positively they are inclined towards the establishment of parental involvement. This is likely due to the fact that, unlike their younger and less experienced colleagues, teachers in this age group have not been informed during their basic studies about the value of an open school and of cooperation and communication with its external environment. They have also been professionally nurtured in closed organizational/school systems where relationships with both parents and the local community were, to a much greater extent than today, distant and formal. It is also possible that, unlike their younger colleagues, they have greater self-confidence in how they can manage the class due to their experience, both in terms of learning and behavior, without the active involvement of parents. The present study also revealed that female teachers are more positive about the establishment of parental involvement than their male colleagues, probably because they consider it a means of supporting motherhood in the face of the obstacles it still faces today (Arena et al., 2023). Regarding the differences in teachers' views on parental involvement based on their demographic characteristics, statistically significant differences were also found concerning the type of school in which they work (public or private). More specifically, it was found that those working in private schools are more positive about parental involvement. This is likely due to the policy of these schools to seek and support contact with parents with a view to student performance, the smooth operation of the school/classroom, and parent/client satisfaction.

The aim of this research study was also to investigate any relationship between obstacles to the promotion of parental involvement in schools and teachers' views on this phenomenon. The results of this research revealed that the impact of these obstacles is strong and positive. More specifically, it was found that teachers express a more positive attitude towards parental involvement primarily when parents are not negative or critical of their work, and also when the teachers themselves are adequately trained on the issue of parental participation in the school and have the opportunity to allocate part of their working time to involve parents in the activities of the school and the classroom (e.g., by showing them how to help children study at home). These findings can be interpreted from the limited time that parents and teachers dedicate to their collaboration (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). Additionally, they highlight the need for further training of teachers in the field of parental

involvement, a reduction of their teaching and extracurricular workload, and more time spent at the school unit in order to strengthen their sense of belonging to it and a long-term collaboration with their students' parents (Alexopoulos, 2019).

Finally, this study aimed to investigate teachers' views on the importance of parental involvement practices that fall within Epstein's (2011) six types of involvement practices. Regarding this objective, the research results showed that teachers consider most of the above involvement practices important. More specifically, they highlighted as particularly significant the practices concerning (a) supporting parents on how to create a learning environment at home by understanding their children's needs and informing them about their holistic (intellectual, emotional, and psycho-motor) development, (b) two-way communication with parents to identify notable positive or negative changes in their children's knowledge and behavior, (c) informing them on how to play a supportive educational role by helping with homework assignments given by the teacher, (d) parents' participation in collective decision-making regarding school operations, and (e) collaboration with the community to exploit resources for the benefit of the school. This finding aligns with previous studies (Rogers, et al., 2017; Sheldon, 2019; Visković & Višnjić Jevtić, 2017; Wilson, 2019) and could be interpreted from the relevant training/information that young teachers receive, especially on the issue of parental participation in school work (Elefteriadou & Vlahou, 2022; Smith & Sheridan, 2019). This could also be interpreted through the efforts of Greek school units over the past four years to enhance family participation in school activities in order to support children's/students' learning, to take advantage of school unit development opportunities offered by the increasingly growing trend of decentralization in school administration (Katsigianni & Ifnati, 2020), and to manage frequent school problems such as school violence and delinquency (Artinopoulou et al., 2023; Papadatou & Saiti, 2019). However, this research did not show that teachers consider the practice of volunteerism important as they do not seek parents' voluntary participation in school and classroom activities. A possible interpretation for this finding could be the perception of parents' motivation for voluntary involvement, which Greek teachers might interpret as parents' intention to interfere with their work and their student grading methods. It should be noted here that historically, both within (Poulou et al., 2022; Zbainos, 1999;) and outside Greece (Högberg et al., 2021; Klasnic et al., 2024), grades have played a crucial role in classroom management, in the recognition of student effort, and in determining students' learning capabilities and opportunities within the educational system.

Conclusions – suggestions for implementation

This research highlighted the importance of parental involvement in the functioning of the school. The participating teachers, despite their reservations and limited experience in relationships between Greek schools, parents, and the local community/neighborhood, stated that parental involvement plays a significant role in the comprehensive development of the child and the overall functioning of the school (pedagogical, educational, administrative). For this reason, the practices of parental involvement that the research identified as important for teachers, together with the obstacles it identified, need to be managed.

In this context, it is proposed to activate the establishment of co-training of teachers and parents through groups based on the cultural, social and educational background of parents in each neighborhood. This training should cover topics in psycho-pedagogy and school administrative operations, as well as familiarize parents with school textbooks and the basic philosophical principles of curricula. Although the most important obstacle to parental involvement was shown by the present research to be the limited time and workload of both parents and teachers, establishing joint teacher parent training is expected to familiarize interested parents with school life and the work of teachers.

An important measure to strengthen parental involvement would be a more systematic collaboration between parents and teachers, which could be achieved by reducing teachers' teaching hours and assigning the supervision of this collaboration to an experienced member of the school's educational community.

Moreover, within the current Greek policy environment, where schools are progressively acquiring greater autonomy and responsibility for their internal organisation, parental involvement should be reconceptualised as a structural and integral component of school governance and development. In this respect, the following measures could make a significant contribution. First, the adoption of appropriate digital platforms that would facilitate continuous, two-way communication with families, promote transparency, and enhance the accessibility of participation. Second, the integration of explicit objectives related to parental and community engagement into each school unit's annual action plan would ensure that such collaboration is embedded within the school's strategic priorities. These objectives should be systematically monitored and evaluated within the framework of the broader school self-evaluation process to guarantee accountability and long-term sustainability.

Nevertheless, beyond formal mechanisms and strategic planning, the cultivation of a culture of mutual respect and collaboration between teachers and parents remains fundamental. In this regard, initiatives such as regular open-school events, joint problem-solving meetings, and shared decision-making structures can play a pivotal role in reframing parental involvement as a genuine partnership rather than as a form of interference.

Limitations and suggestions for further study

The present research is subject to a series of limitations, primarily concerning the small number of participants in the sample relative to the population, as well as the fact that the participants came from only three of the country's thirteen regions. For this reason, its conclusions cannot be considered generalizable. Another notable limitation is that the majority of the sample were women and public-school teachers, a factor that should be taken into account when interpreting the results regarding statistically significant differences that emerged based on gender and school type (public – private). Finally, the limitations of this research should include the small number of questions (less than five) regarding Epstein's type of involvement that promotes decision-making.

It is recommended that future research be conducted on a larger number of educators from different educational levels and specialties (e.g., English Language, Physical Education, Fine Arts, Special Education), coming from more regions of the country. Any differences in responses between rural, semi-urban and urban areas should also be investigated, as should the views of school principals /deputy principals, educational consultants and parents, as all the aforementioned are in frequent interaction regarding the operation of the school unit. It would also be interesting to investigate students' views on the issue of parental involvement, as they are the ones who receive the results and those for whom the phenomenon is primarily studied. A final suggestion would be to determine the individual factors that hinder parental involvement and to correlate them with the profile of parents and the geographic region in order to form a more comprehensive program that enhances parental involvement and meets the needs of those involved in it more effectively.

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