Teachers' Attitudes Towards Racism and Xenophobia in Pre-School Education

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Abstract

This study aims to research the phenomena of Racism and Xenophobia in pre-school education in the context of Greek reality through the attitudes and views of teachers who are the communicators of educational practice. The radical change in the racial and religious homogeneity of Greek education in recent decades as a result of globalization and the high mobility of populations has created significant challenges in the educational scene, giving rise to the need to investigate the phenomenon. For the study, we employed a qualitative methodology. The teachers stated that issues such as xenophobia, religious differences, and the economic hardship in which many families have fallen due to the economic crisis make the phenomenon difficult, making the predictions for its development ominous.

Keywords: racism, intercultural education, xenophobia, inclusion

Introduction

The social identity of a student is constructed through acquaintance with the cultural pluralism of the educational department and the values and traits found there. Thus, the conflict between different cultural codes generates a national and cultural diversity that is both a cause of Racism and Xenophobia and a basis for intercultural education, following the appropriate interventions of a teacher (Zirou, 2020). Conceptually, otherness is interpreted as "*the understanding and construction of the personal identity of the subject, as opposed to the other*" (Govaris, 2011, p. 26). Thus, Racism and Xenophobia are perpetual processes that disrupt social cohesion, giving impetus to the emergence of cases of social exclusion of minority groups within a society (Walter et al., 2019).

Thus, especially in the case of Greece, the significant ethnic, social, and religious heterogeneity brought about by population mobility in recent decades in connection with globalization has significantly affected pre-school education, raising concerns and shaping new educational policies regarding the dimensions of inclusion and intercultural education (Sapountzis et al., 2015). However, it is common ground in the research data of the bibliography that Racism and Xenophobia are real phenomena in pre-school education, with significant consequences for the development of infants. Numerous studies have dealt with Racism and Xenophobia in pre-school education since, like most social issues, the beginning of compulsory education, namely kindergarten, is considered a milestone in a person's development, as it is there that he begins to form values, perceptions, and attitudes, beyond his cognitive skills. Of significant interest are the surveys of Walter et al. (2019) as well as Derman-Sparks and Olsen (2019), which deal with both the attitudes and opinions of parents and those of teachers. Both studies (having a sample capable of drawing safe and valid conclusions: *n* >1000) concluded that the intercultural and

interdisciplinary approach, to a holistic degree, has excellent benefits in reducing racist behaviors in pre-school education. It is interesting, however, that the first Survey records that appropriate prior Teacher Training is crucial for the above limitation. It is also important to ensure teachers' self-efficacy to implement inclusive education (Charitaki et al., 2023; Kourti et al., 2023). All over the world, there is a significant dialogue regarding this matter (Charitaki et al., 2022; Vogiatzi et al., 2021, 2022).

In the Greek bibliography, important research on the issue of pre-school education is found. Indicatively, the research of Zirou (2020) on the management of multiculturalism in pre-school education is of great interest, as, on the one hand, the tendency of infants to develop racist behaviors was recorded. However, the effectiveness of intercultural interventions was highlighted.

First of all, through a literature review, basic theoretical positions and previous research results on the subject under consideration are presented to fulfill the purpose of this research. Then, in the next step, there is an analysis of the research methodology in terms of the way it is conducted, the research tool, the method of analysis, and its reliability, validity, and ethical issues. After the methodology is presented, the research results are presented and analyzed, followed by a conclusion.

Review of the Related Literature

Education and Diversity

Population mobility and modern social circumstances have changed the cultural homogeneity that characterized Greek education for decades. Thus, today, the dimension of economic migration, the refugee issue, as well as the existence of religious and other minorities contribute to the need to manage the "*Otherness*" in pre-school education (Damanakis, 2018).

Undoubtedly, every educational organization is a vehicle for transmitting characteristics of the culture of a state. Thus, at every

educational level, education, among other things, is a dynamic vector of socialization that functions as a channel of transmission of society's ethics, tradition, culture, and normative framework (Nikolaou, 2020). So: "*Culture, through education, is a coherent tool of social functioning*" (Nicholas, 2007, p. 86).

As the phenomenon takes place on a global scale, there are several different approaches to managing diversity. Therefore, the management of national and cultural pluralism elements is part of educational leadership and the standards and orientations defined by each educational system. Thus, two main educational approaches to the issue of managing cultural diversity can be distinguished (Kesidou & Papadopoulou, 2008):

- Monocultural approaches, such as those of "*Assimilation*" and "*Integration*" and
- Multicultural approaches, such as the intercultural model of education and the "*Antiracist.*"

Faas (2013) states, "*Greece in recent decades has adopted a monocultural approach, with a significant degree of adoption and implementation of European Union Directives, both as a member state and due to its geographical location.*"

Integration Educational Model

In the context of this study, as it refers to the Greek educational system, the educational integration model is presented. First, as presented above, it is a monocultural model, where emphasis is placed on tolerance and recognition of cultural diversity in the social structure. Thus, the inherent elements of differentiation of social groups (religion, language, color, nationality, etc.) are not treated with a negative sign but are recognized as elements of the individual's cultural identity (Kesidou & Papadopoulou, 2008). However, the integration model emphasizes that it accepts those differentiating elements that do not affect the existing cohesion of the dominant social group and do not threaten to change its existing stability status (Govaris, 2011, p. 48). Thus, it follows that the manifestation of cultural differences is a private and not a public right. According to Govaris (2011, p. 51), integration concerns a gradual assimilation of cultural diversity. From an educational perspective, integration is expressed through didactic support measures to help faster learning of the primary language through bilingual support programs for pupils while promoting the operation of transitional or "*compensatory'* parts.

Intercultural Education

Intercultural education consists of negotiating and synergizing the cultural elements of society through educational practices and institutional remodeling. Thus, unlike other educational models, conflicts are not ignored, nor is a unified cultural and ideological orientation of education attempted. Therefore, intercultural education focuses on partnership and negotiation, dimensions that go back to the basis of educational practice (Faas et al., 2014).

The principles of intercultural education focus on the equality of students, regardless of their cultural background, intending to remove conditions that may lead to school failure or social exclusion afterward. Therefore, an effort is followed to enrich educational capital culturally by creating conditions for the interaction of cultures by applying empathy and eliminating stereotypes and social constructions (Papachristos, 2011, p. 10). According to Neuner (2012, p. 15), Intercultural education satisfies the objectives of education in terms of cultivating and educating individuals in a globalized world so that it is based on the axes of human rights, democracy, and social justice.

Racism, Xenophobia, and Pre-School Education

In the context of intercultural education and inclusion, pre-school education is called upon to shape the knowledge and perceptions of the infant towards the element of "*different.*" Thus, according to research, infants' interaction with other cultural elements and backgrounds expands their knowledge and perception of the world (Markaki et al., 2016). Thus, the infant understands that all races and cultures functionally create world culture.

Studies on the social function of pre-school education show that Racism and Xenophobia lead to the exclusion of certain children belonging to social, religious, racial, or cultural minorities, resulting in the reproduction of relevant stereotypes and the adoption of such attitudes. Thus, children tend to reproduce stereotypical views observed in their familiar environment and then apply such behaviors, generalizing and simplifying negative views in everyday life (Markaki et al., 2016).

According to Piper (2018), the principles of intercultural education are not adequately applied in early childhood education, resulting in an emphasis on the acquisition of skills and a value system by students, as a result of which the objectives of intercultural philosophy are not sufficiently promoted. Thus, according to Leung and Hue (2017), even play in pre-school education does not promote the mitigation of contrasts and the encapsulation of the element of "*different*" rather than generating contradictions.

Thus, there is a need and concern regarding the deconstruction of stereotypes of Racism and Xenophobia in Greek pre-school education so that kindergartens take on a multicultural character. Thus, it is only in recent years that there has been movement in pedagogical circles regarding these phenomena in pre-school education, as, despite relevant legislation, it is considered that orientation in general aims at preparing infants for primary education through the education of infants in basic skills, rather than in intercultural education (Spinthourakis, 2007). Moreover, the interaction could significantly affect changing attitudes (Bania et al., 2021).

Legislative Framework

Attempting a bibliographic review of the research conducted on the attitudes and views of pre-school education teachers on Racism and Xenophobia in Greek kindergarten, the need arises to study both the current legislation in Greece and the "*Intercultural Readiness*" of Greek kindergarten teachers. Below a record of the milestones of the evolution of the legislative framework of intercultural education in Greece is attempted:

- Law 2413/1996 is the institutional beginning of intercultural education in Greece, as it inaugurated the reception departments and established the first intercultural schools. In addition, in the context of the implementation of European Union directives to cover vulnerable groups, programs such as those of special education for Muslims and gypsies were set up for the first time in Greek educational events.
- In 2003, remedial teaching was officially established, while at the same time, the operation of the all-day school was fully institutionalized in the light of the teacher's support of students' study. Thus, Law 3149/2003 constitutes harmonization with the corresponding European educational policy. At the same time, the new curricula are significant breakthroughs as they introduce elements such as the student-centered operation of educational departments and the change of educational methods.
- Law 3789/2010 is the pinnacle of the implementation of relevant circulars and regulates issues of equal access for children at all levels of education. This law was decisive in avoiding the phenomenon of school dropout and exclusion, while after its adoption, emphasis was placed on the development of teacher training programs through relevant circulars of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (Karanikola & Picchu, 2015).
- The adoption of Law 4415/2016 was also a legislative milestone, as it "*structures relations between different cultural groups in order to eliminate inequalities and social exclusion, through the democratic operation of the school, the respect of children's rights and the training of teachers in intercultural education*" (A.20 – A.21).

Despite the above, there is a significant gap in pre-school education, as all the legislation refers almost exclusively to primary and secondary education. Thus, despite the legal establishment of the intercultural approach in pre-school education, the only "*noun*" tool is the "*Rules of Procedure*" (JMD

41087, 2017), which defines the education and education of infants aiming at their all-round development. However, there is a lack of more specific circulars and provisions, resulting in a gap in pre-school education in managing the issue and deficiencies in the education and training of pre-school teachers.

Teachers' Attitudes and Opinions

Teachers should stay engaged to avoid burnout and achieve a higher level of teaching self-efficacy (Antoniou et al., 2017, 2022). Below is the bibliographic review of previous surveys on teachers' attitudes, views, and beliefs towards Racism and Xenophobia in education and, especially, in pre-school education. Research by Sapountzis et al. (2015) attempted to record the differences in "*Modern Racism*" and attitudes toward intercultural education compared between first- and fourth-year pre-school students at the Department of Early Childhood Education Sciences of Democritus University. This quantitative survey had a significant sample (*n* = 139). Through the analysis of the results of the survey, it emerged that young potential kindergarten teachers do not significantly change their attitudes and views towards Racism and intercultural education. Thus, it is concluded that attendance at the Department of Pre-school Education does not change students' attitudes, resulting in stereotypes in pre-school teachers that impact their teaching work and the management of diversity.

Similarly, a quantitative survey by Lazarou (2021) among 314 kindergarten heads sought to investigate their attitudes and views on educational equality, social justice, and management issues of vulnerable social groups. The research is of significant interest as it emerged, through the undertaking of research data, that the pedagogical training of pre-school education teachers on Racism and the above is superficial, resulting in significant misunderstandings. Thus, the issue arises of the need to create an educational institution, as indeed, kindergarten teachers are alleged to have significant difficulties in effectively operating a modern and multicultural school.

Also, through the bibliography, the issue of the triptych emerges "*Family – Kindergarten – Child*" in managing Racism and Xenophobia. Thus, in Georgiou's survey (2022), she highlights the inability of most participating kindergarten teachers to communicate effectively with the parents of children who were discriminated against. Thus, they stated that they had a difficult task in managing incidents and encouraging children, while the conclusion was that they had a low sense of professional competence in managing inequalities and diversity. Of particular interest is the municipality's survey (2020) regarding the management of stereotypes in pre-school education regarding the Muslim minority of Thrace. Through qualitative research, the influence of parents on the emergence of racist attitudes on the part of children was highlighted. Thus, the social isolation experienced by most infants was observed, which leads them to develop relationships exclusively with the social group they belong to, a fact that intensifies the "*ghettoization*" there. The above research, although small in terms of sample, confirms previous research on the issue (Askouni, 2006, p. 23; Constantinou, 2016).

In research by Lekatsa (2021), an attempt was made to record the formation of teachers' educational approaches based on the personal value system. A qualitative survey was selected to be conducted on a sample of twelve (*n* = 12) primary school teachers serving in primary schools in Western Greece. Through the above survey, the following conclusions were recorded: despite the fact that teachers declared positive about the existence of bilingual and non-religious students in their classes, they expressed serious concerns about the deviations from the curriculum they are forced to make, while they also stated that the implementation of different and intercultural practices requires specialized educational knowledge and capital, This makes training and further training necessary for them to cope with their task.

In any case, the study of the textual bibliography revealed a research gap in the study of the attitudes and opinions of kindergarten teachers towards Racism and Xenophobia in Greece. Thus, despite the multitude of studies that have been carried out in recent years regarding intercultural education and inclusion, very few studies study the positions of kindergarten teachers. The latter is considered crucial, as the kindergarten teacher, as the main educational instrument, has a major role in the entry of infants into the levels of education. Thus, this paper aspires to investigate the issue to draw conclusions and proposals that will guide kindergarten teachers' beliefs.

Research Questions

However, the study of the Greek bibliography highlighted the research gap in teachers' attitudes, opinions, and beliefs regarding Racism and Xenophobia in pre-school education, which was a research reason for the study. Moreover, the parallel investigation of teachers' views on parents' attitudes and on the education issue is of serious research interest. In any case, the purpose of this study is to investigate Racism and Xenophobia in pre-school education. More specifically, the following research questions are defined:

1. In the opinion of pre-school teachers, what is the degree of perception on their part of the dimensions of Racism and Xenophobia in pre-school education and the potential consequences of this on the development of the student?
2. Can the observation by infants of divergent standards, inside and outside the family, lead to the development/adoption of Racist attitudes?
3. Is the kindergarten teacher training and further education appropriate and adequate for managing and teaching the multicultural education department?

Hypothesis

After studying the relevant literature review, examining the purpose of the proposed research, and taking into account the critical thematic axes, the research hypotheses are formulated as follows:

1. Kindergarten teachers recognize the dimension of Racism and Xenophobia among students attending pre-school education despite their young age.
2. The training and relevant education of kindergarten teachers regarding the application of intercultural approaches for the management of multicultural departments' cultural and ethnic heterogeneity is not sufficient.
3. According to kindergarten teachers, the development of stereotypes and racist behaviors on the part of students is primarily attributed to the behaviors and attitudes of their parental role models.

Methodology

Design

Qualitative research will be used as a research strategy for the implementation of the research, depending on the research questions posed.

Sample – Sampling Technique

First of all, the target population of the research, according to Creswell (2016), is defined as "*a group of individuals with common character traits.*" thus, this survey is self-explainable and limited to pre-school teachers who teach in kindergartens, while due to the nature of qualitative research, it was considered appropriate to select those participants who wished to be interviewed therefore, sampling was appropriate (Christoforou, 2019).

As a sample of the survey, 13 pre-school education teachers from the Island of Salamis, which is the researcher's residence, were selected. Sampling followed the method of "*maximum variation*" (*sex, age, level of education, marital status*) in order to highlight all possible dimensions of the issue. The selection as a sample to use teachers with tangible teaching experience in pre-school education units was made in order to draw valid conclusions stemming from recent experiences in Greek kindergarten.

First of all, the researcher, conducted a pilot research on a small number of pre-school teachers to make the initial control (and

any necessary adjustments) to the designed research tool. The scope of the research was kindergartens of Salamis, so first of all, their Heads was informed to ensure the relevant licensing. The update was done through the "*Call for Interest Form,*" which was communicated by email. Informing supervisors and participants is necessary to inform the sample about the conditions set for participation in the survey. Furthermore, the approach takes the form of an "*avalanche',* so that participants are volunteers. However, the selection of the sample was "*not accidental',* so that the researcher can achieve the maximum possible variation in the characteristics of the sample (Paraskevopoulos, 1993).

Method

The primary method used to collect data in this study is interviewing, which is widely recognized and used in qualitative research in the social sciences for its numerous advantages. As a methodological tool, interviews offer the opportunity to thoroughly examine and analyze a topic at multiple levels. The face-to-face interview process is highly adaptable, allowing adjustments based on the specific circumstances of each meeting to gather comprehensive and penetrating information (Robson, 2010, p. 323).

Moreover, the interview method stands out for its ability to deepen the interviewees' prospects, motivations, and opinions, emphasizing flexibility and immediacy as key criteria that make it the most appropriate tool for collecting qualitative data (Griva & Stamos, 2014, p. 146). As regards the flow of information to address the research topic, the choice of interviews is appropriate. The questions included serving as guidelines, offering the respondent the freedom to change the order or add/remove questions as necessary (Cohen & Manion, 1997, p. 376; Robson, 2010, p. 321).

Overall, the interview, which takes place in an open dialogue, facilitates the creation of interactive conditions between interviewer and respondent, enhancing the qualitative research process and thus was chosen as a data collection tool for this research (Griva & Stamos, 2014, p. 146).

Tool

As a data collection tool, a "semi-structured" interview developed by the researcher was used, where a combination of "closed" and "open" type questions was made in order to allow the participants to express their attitudes and opinions fully. As the issue presents originality, after identifying a relevant research gap, the above research tool is considered optimal as it allows the free expression of the sample so that unknown dimensions of the subject emerge (Robson, 2010, p. 255). Furthermore, the researcher reserves the right to add any questions to motivate the participants to express themselves fully. However, the predetermined order of the thematic axes is ultimately helpful for the sequential answer to the posed research questions (Creswell, 2016). The thematic order of the research tool was:

- Participant demographics,
- Data on Racism and Xenophobia in pre-school education,
- Examination of teacher training and training on the issue,
- Examine the contribution of the infant's environment to the development of such behaviors.

Interview Analysis

Thematic analysis was used as a methodology for the analysis of research data, i.e. "*to systematically identify, organize and understand repetitive patterns of meaning within a data set, focusing on those that are relevant to the topic under study and in particular those that are appropriate for answering research questions* (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57)." Thus, first of all, those passages that provide information on the research questions were identified and collected in their entirety in a distinct digital file. Subsequently, they were analyzed and interpreted through the attribution of conceptual determinations. The relevant process was the stage of "*coding'* research data.

Subsequently, the transition from the coding stage to the thematic stage took place, i.e. the construction of more abstract and general conceptual constructions. Therefore, the process of analysis and coding contributes to the movement towards the extraction of codes for the data, while ultimately, the presentation of research data is done in reverse by initially quoting them in the form of excerpts and then analyzing them and answering research questions.

Reliability - Validity of Research

Creating and performing a survey is a complex task, requiring the observance of specific rules and principles. A critical aspect that every researcher must consider is the reliability of the research. Since 1987, Bell (p. 119) has emphasized the importance of avoiding bias by both researcher and participants to ensure research reliability. It was evident that researchers should strive for objectivity during interviews, avoiding expressing personal opinions on the topics discussed. In addition, respondents should provide unbiased answers unaffected by external influences or prevailing circumstances.

The interview guide included on its front page an information letter asking the respondent for his opinion while assuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the data. This commitment to ensuring data confidentiality is a crucial factor contributing to the credibility of ongoing research. Maintaining credibility in research is crucial, and these principles were adhered to closely in the conducted survey with participants.

On the other hand, concerning the validity of the research, it is examined whether the instrument effectively measures its intended objective, as described by Bryman (2017). This extends to verifying whether the results align with the purpose and questions of the survey, as Christoforou (2019) noted. Validity is further categorized into internal and external components. Since the questions in the interview guide are directly related to the research questions of the survey and cover all aspects of the axes in detail, it can be argued that the internal validity is considered satisfactory.

However, when considering the external validity of the survey, attention should be paid to the sample of participating teachers and their selection methodology. Using a convenient sampling method rather than a representative one raises concerns about external validity. Therefore, it is argued that the findings and results of the present survey cannot be generalized due to the small number of participants who staffed the survey sample.

Results

The purpose of this study was to present the results of the survey. As explained in the methodology presentation, 13 kindergarten teachers participated. Their answers were codified in detail so that the presentation of the research results is not a brief description of these attitudes and views but includes - according to the research axis-specific answers of those that arouse interest and highlight new dimensions of the examined phenomenon.

The first part of the research tool consisted of demographic questions regarding the gender and age of the interviewee, the level of studies received, as well as their work experience in education, including the years of their internship, previous experience in private pre-school schools, as well as the one they may have served as substitutes. As expected, the entire sample consisted of female teachers, as the survey concerned pre-school education in Greece, where all teachers, based on recent statistical surveys, are women (Deligianni-Kouimtzi, 2008, p. 101).

Furthermore, regarding the age distribution of the sample, it emerged that six of the participants were aged 20 to 29 years, while seven participants were aged 30 to 39 years. Thus, the entire sample appears young, allowing for new dimensions and perspectives on the issue under consideration since the participants have less than a decade on average in educational levels. Therefore, it appears that the average experience of the participants ranges from approximately four years, while the range of answers ranges from one (1) to eight (8) years.

Perception of Racism and Xenophobia in Pre-School Education

The 2nd part of the research tool developed for the purposes of the research aspired to answer the first posed research question: "*How do teachers perceive Racism and Xenophobia in pre-school education?*"

First of all, through the first question asked, teachers were asked to describe the composition of the educational department where they teach and to analyze if they have students from different cultural backgrounds, automatically making their educational department multicultural. As a whole, the teachers replied that even if they do not have such students in the current school year, they had a fact in the past that verifies what was presented in the previous theoretical chapters of this dissertation work regarding the multinational and multicultural status of Greek education, of all levels. More specifically, the teachers replied that they had students of Albanian, Turkish, Arab, and Pakistani origin.

The second question of this thematic axis concerned the causes that teachers judge to form and manifest phenomena of Racism within the school environment. Thus, the following were recorded as the main causes through the responses of the sample:

- Religious causes: Two (2) participants answered -among others- that the prejudices and customary codes of each religion create cultural differences that are the cause of religious differences within the department.
- Family: Seven (7) participants answered that the cause of the development of such behaviors is the attitudes and prejudices of parents that create negative behavior patterns, which children imitate within the class, resulting in racist behavior towards their classmates. It is interesting to have the following answer: "*It is the low intellectual and educational level of parents as well as the various prejudices they may have towards social groups of people.*"
- Racial causes: According to three (3) teachers, the difference in race and color creates phenomena of Racism.
- Social stratification: According to three (3) teachers, social stratification and especially economic inequalities within Greek society trigger phenomena of Racism. Thus, the following answer was given, among other things: "*the standard of living and economic inequality between people results in a lack of respect for the lower social groups and this passes on to the behaviors of infants*".
- Upbringing: Although answered by only one (1) Teacher, the answer that addresses the issue of parenting by parents during infancy and early childhood is interesting. More specifically: "*New forms of entertainment and lack of time for parents to their children can result in children adopting the wrong standards. as parents do not have or devote time to their upbringing.*"
- Language: According to almost all teachers (11), language is an important cause of racist behavior, as it can lead to school exclusion of non-native students.

The next question of the unit concerned the investigation of the types of Racism that occur in a multicultural classroom, as well as how they manifest themselves to their recipients. Overwhelmingly, eleven (11) out of thirteen (13) teachers answered that the main types of Racism developed are racial, while two (2) teachers answered that the causes are social.

Indicatively, regarding the phenomena that occur, the largest percentage of the sample replied that they are limited to verbal attacks and frictions. For example, one participant replied:

> Appear in the process of selecting couples or groups in group games, when children of a different color or race are placed together." While another: "I have observed phenomena of social racism that can be seen in verbal harassment of children who dress differently, due to religious or economic – social reasons.

In any case, no participant reported incidents of school violence, but it is presumed from teachers' responses that

toddlers exhibit racist behaviors that, in the future of their development, can lead to other ways of manifestation.

Finally, of particular interest is the 3rd question of this thematic axis concerning teachers' intervention in incidents of Racism and Xenophobia within the educational department. These answers are listed below:

> When I am informed that there will be foreign students in my class, I make sure to cultivate a climate of equality and acceptance of diversity in the classroom from the beginning. I mainly use fairy tales and puppetry to strengthen children's empathy and, at the same time, their acceptance of otherness.
> We group children who exhibit racist attitudes and have them cooperate in group projects, for example, songs, puppet shows, and fairy tales, with a teaching role on diversity.

> There should be a discussion with parents to understand their views on diversity, and then they should be advised to slowly acquire the meaning of diversity. In my classroom, to help the children, I will read them books that talk about diversity, talk to them about this topic, show them videos, and do activities to understand it better.

> There should be a common front of response from all kindergarten teachers and the owner or principal of the school to inform both parents and children about multiculturalism. In a possible incident, I would immediately change the scheduled class activities, give an extension to learning numbers, letters, etc., and deal with the issue promptly, as I consider it of utmost importance. As has already happened in similar incidents on the subject not only of Racism but of diversity and the difficulty of children to accept something like a child with special needs, an activity would take place followed by a discussion about Racism. Then, I consider the relationship between parents and school equally important, so I would also have an informative meeting with parents about the phenomenon observed.

From the answers above that show points of interest, it follows that the solution to emerging phenomena, according to the teachers, depends mainly on the dialogue within the department and on the realization of activities in the context of intercultural education. Special impression as "*good*" practical answers regarding the use of multimedia and ICT, the frequency of use of theatrical games to cultivate empathy, as well as the need for a common policy and treatment between institutions and levels of education. Finally, the teachers stressed the importance of the kindergarten family relationship and the need to convene informative meetings with parents and guardians.

Training and Further Education of Teachers

This section aims to answer the following research question: Is the education and training of teachers sufficient for teaching in multicultural departments?

First of all, the sample was asked to answer positively or negatively about whether it has Training regarding Intercultural Education or, in general, the management of Racism in Pre-school Education. The results are shown in the graph below, where seven participants stated that they have participated, while respectively six answered negatively: the next question concerned their possible participation, apart from training, in any programs/seminars or courses of study regarding the issue under consideration. Conversely, six participants responded positively and seven negatively, as shown in the graph below:

The teachers were then asked if they thought they could manage Racism within the class. Almost all of the sample responded positively, while one participant said she thought she would need help due to little teaching experience. Also, the whole sample expressed the opinion that the ability to manage Racism is the result of a teacher's teaching experience and his training as a consequence of training, seminars, etc. Finally, by complete unanimity, the sample expressed the view that training is insufficient. Therefore, the central bodies for formulating and designing educational policies should intensify the design and implementation of such programs.

Family Environment Contribution

The last thematic axis of the research tool aspired to answer the third research question regarding the contribution of the Family Environment to the development of racist behaviors on behalf of infants. First of all, the first question asked the teachers to answer whether they had observed racist behaviors on the part of parents in the kindergarten environment. Most teachers answered negatively, but five (5) of them answered that they have observed such behaviors during school holidays or when children leave the kindergarten. Indicatively, the following answers were given:

> Unfortunately, yes, a dad called an Albanian child disparagingly because he heard his accent while chatting with his own child while picking him up from school' and 'I've dealt with, for example, a mom yelling at a school party, haven't I told you not to hang out with him? They are not like us.

In the second question, teachers were asked to answer the extent to which they believe that the family environment supports the development and adoption of racist behaviors. The teachers unanimously responded that the family environment fully influences the development of the infant's behaviors. Thus, the family as a primary vector of socialization leads infants a priori to acts of mimicry, where the projection and imitation of parental behaviors in other infants arise. Therefore, in full accordance with the bibliography, as presented, children imitate the actions of their parents and, thus, as a result, adopt racist and xenophobic behaviors, which has a particularly negative effect on their development.

The 3rd question was designed based on the strong increase in domestic violence in Greece and concerned teachers' opinions on whether gender plays a role in the development of racist behaviors in terms of parental standards. The teachers unanimously replied that Racism is not a gender issue, but one teacher additionally mentioned that the observation and experience of incidents of domestic verbal or physical abuse from the toddler has a particularly negative influence and can lead to the adoption of similar practices by the toddler.

Finally, the last question of the thematic axis and the interview concerned the practices of managing a racist attack or behavior of a parent within the school environment. The Teachers mentioned a plethora of practices dominated by the element of Discussion, while some of them raised the issue of parental concentration. Finally, although it is not widespread in the educational modus operandi of the country, it is of great interest to mention that a teacher would like to be assisted by the Social Worker of the Educational Unit as it is "*bridge'* between the educational act, the children and their parents.

Of great importance is the statement of the majority of teachers that any management of such an incident must be done in a way that will not upset children or disrupt the educational practice. Indicatively, some responses indicated the following:

> On the occasion of the axis of cooperation between family and school, I create activities in the school in which parents also participate. Then, just as we divide the children's projects into groups, I separate the parents so they can collaborate and work

collaboratively. While at first they start with grumbling, at the end of the year, they usually end up having left all the negative incidents behind.

> Assistance from the social worker of the school outside school hours (the use of the social worker helps especially when working with parents and guardians).
> I would ask for the immediate assistance of the school management, as on the one hand, it is competent and on the other hand it must take a position on such practices so that there is a common line in the educational leadership and practice of our kindergarten.

Discussion

Through the analysis and presentation of the survey results, it was possible to draw useful conclusions and conclusions regarding the attitudes and views of pre-school teachers regarding Racism in pre-school education. Of particular interest is the attempt to link the research results with what was presented in the theoretical part of this work and the connection with the Bibliographic Review that took place. First of all, regarding the perception of Racism by teachers, it is observed that teachers' attitudes and opinions are at significant levels of convergence. Thus, teachers' views on the causes of Racism in pre-school education are in line with the relevant research presented (Damanakis, 2018; Markaki et al., 2016; Sapountzis et al., 2015; Zirou, 2020). Particularly useful is the observation, however, that toddlers tend, on occasion, to exhibit racist behaviors, in contrast to some evidence in the literature that claims that they are simply etched in the subconscious and manifest at a future developmental stage (Neuner, 2012, p. 35)

Then, regarding the axis of teacher education and training through measures of educational policy instruments, full agreement of the results with the bibliography is presented. Thus, despite the institutional measures recently legislated regarding Intercultural Education and Early Childhood Education, only half of the teachers have received and shared such actions, while all of them believe that they should be intensified (Faas et al., 2013; Papachristos, 2011, p. 115).

Finally, in the axis of the contribution of the family environment to the occurrence of such phenomena in pre-school education, the results of the research have undeniably shown that the family, as a primary vector of socialization of the individual, has a major influence on the formation of the behavioral patterns of the infant, resulting in the adoption of racist practices on a case-by-case basis. The survey is, therefore, consistent with corresponding foreign surveys of significantly larger sampling ($n > 1000$) (Derman-Sparks & Olsen, 2019; Walter et al., 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it emerges through this research that the phenomenon of Racism and Xenophobia is felt in Greek pre-school education. Moreover, the teachers unanimously expressed the position that issues such as Xenophobia, religious differences, and the economic hardship in which many families have fallen due to the economic crisis make the phenomenon difficult, making the predictions for its development ominous.

Therefore, it is self-evidently concluded that the education policy should develop institutional measures to prevent and deal with such phenomena when infants enter compulsory education. Thus, despite efforts to legislate relevant measures, these have had little effect over the past decade. Specifically, the survey results showed that only half of teachers receive training programs in intercultural education. Therefore, teacher training is of catalytic importance in dealing with the increasing incidents of Racism within kindergartens. Essential is the dimension of parents' attitudes and behaviors, which, according to kindergarten teachers, are the first behavioral communicators of the infant. Teachers unanimously and ah-doc denounced the racist

attitudes toward infants as imitative acts, thus raising the overall need to educate parents in the context of intercultural education.

Finally, it is emphasized that reducing such phenomena in pre-school education is vital as it can be reduced to a preventive factor for potential social and school exclusion situations faced by students who fall under the element of *"different"* racially, religiously, or economically. Thus, intercultural education stands as a best practice and pedagogical tool for creating fertile ground for the development of equality, respect, and pluralism in the struggle to include diversity in education, in the context of respect for human rights and primarily for infants.

Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the useful conclusions that emerged from the present survey, it is worth mentioning that these cannot be generalized due to the small number of participants in the sample (N = 13) concerning its election from a specific geographical area of the country. Thus, it is proposed that this research effort be continued in the future by conducting a survey on a larger sample (N > 100) of teachers throughout Greece, as well as teachers serving in kindergartens of the diaspora. Thus, the continuation of this research on a significantly larger scale will allow the extraction of more general conclusions with greater validity that can be taken into account by educational policymakers.

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Annex 1: Racism and Xenophobia in Pre-school Education

Question 1: Describe the composition of your department. Do you have students from different cultural backgrounds?
Question 2: What do you think are the causes of Racism in the classroom?
Question 3: What types of Racism do you encounter in a multicultural classroom and who are the usual recipients of such phenomena in your classroom?
Question 4: How do you intervene in such incidents?

Annex 2: Teacher Training and Retraining

Question 1: Have you participated in Training on Intercultural Education or the management of Racism in Pre-school Education?
Question 2: Apart from the trainings, have you participated in any Programs / Seminars or Courses of Study?
Question 3: Do you feel that you can manage Racism within the department? If so, do you think it results from your experience or due to training?
Question 4: Do you think that training programs on this issue should be intensified?

Annex 3: Contribution of the Family Environment

Question 1: Have you encountered racist behaviors on the part of parents during kindergarten (e.g. during the departure of children). List any personal experiences.
Question 2: In your opinion, how much does the family environment of the infant affect the development and adoption of racist behaviors?
Question 3: Do you think fathers or mothers of toddlers are more prone to developing racist attitudes and where do you think this is due?
Question 4: How do you manage a racist attack or behavior by parents of your student within the school environment?