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REVIEW

Addressing violence and victimization in a school setting in Greece

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Abstract

The phenomenon of school violence has increasingly become the focus of research in Greece, especially during the last two decades, and includes online involvement in violence, mainly for students in middle and high school grades. In addition to the violent events that occur in school settings, adolescents are more active online than any other group and are therefore increasingly exposed to cybervictimization. The research data indicate that although cyberbullying increasingly occurs in Greece, young people, parents and educators are not aware of the extent of the problem of cybervictimization, of its main characteristics and, most importantly, of the ways to prevent it. In this article, recent data are presented on violence expressed and its implications, with an emphasis on the Greek school setting, concerning the involvement of adolescent students in incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, cybergrooming and cyber-hate speech as perpetrators, victims and bystanders. We outline the factors that lead to violence within the school setting, such as those that lead to the expression of violence and the strategies that adolescents adopt to cope with incidents of violence. Finally, the implications of this paper highlight that significant changes should be made in the field of education within school settings by recognizing the hidden structures that may sustain the phenomenon of violence to ensure that all students are reflected in the educational curriculum and supported by the institution of the school. The school setting should include initiatives to empower students to be protected and to develop critical thinking and active coping strategies against episodes of violence and bullying.

Plain Language Summary

School violence, including cyberbullying, has become a growing

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concern in Greece, especially over the past 20 years. Middle and high school students are increasingly involved in online violence, making them more vulnerable to cyberbullying. Despite its growing presence, many young people, parents, and educators in Greece aren't fully aware of how to prevent it. This article looks at recent data on violence among students, with an emphasis on the Greek school setting, focusing on bullying, cyberbullying, cybergrooming, and cyberhate speech. It also explores why these incidents happen and how students try to deal with them. It emphasizes that school institutions need to make important changes to better support students and help them develop skills and proper coping strategies in order to protect themselves and to think critically about violence and bullying. Furthermore, it highlights the need to develop more targeted prevention and intervention programs for adolescent victims, bystanders and perpetrators.

Keywords
bullying, cyberbullying, victimization, institution of school, adolescents

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The definition of violence is complex, general and even vague, including many forms, both visible and hidden. Within school settings, violence can be physical, psychological and institutional (structural) toward and between students on the grounds of skin color, race, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation or religious beliefs when prejudice and unequal treatment are present. Violence results from different causes and needs to be addressed with different intervention programs and practices. In addition, in some cases, it is ignored that there is no dealing with it because some forms or incidents are considered less serious.

School violence has become a fairly popular topic over the last few decades, and a great deal of public opinion concerning school violence is affected by increased media attention regarding incidents that occur in school settings. The phenomenon of violence and cyberbullying has been at the center of research interest in recent years, and most related studies have focused on exploring this phenomenon at the individual level, although structural causes of violence are of equal importance. In the school setting, poverty, prejudice and discrimination, as well as a lack of social support, appeared to represent the most responsible factors for violence expressed by students; consequently, the implementation of intervention programs aimed at these factors to prevent or address this phenomenon (Alexopoulos & Kokkinos, 2018; Deliyanni-Kouimtzi *et al.*, 2007; Kokkinos & Karagianni, 2017; Nikolaou & Samsari, 2016; Sygkollitou *et al.*, 2010).

Quite often, students are the recipients of various incidents of violence that lead to confusion about the causes that provoked them and about the ways to cope with them within the school setting. The prevalence of traditional school bullying and cyberbullying, as well as other forms of victimization of adolescents through cyber-grooming and cyber-hate speech, has rapidly increased in recent years. The data showed that a significant percentage of teenagers participated in different incidents of violence, playing various roles inside the school, outside the school and in cyberspace. Research findings indicate that the location, level of anonymity and heightened level of repetition make cyberbullying more dangerous and difficult to detect than traditional bullying (Slonje *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, some years ago, cyberbullying became a more dominant form of bullying (Hopkins *et al.*, 2013).

Traditional bullying and cyberbullying in Greek school settings

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in bullying among researchers in Greece (Boulton *et al.*, 2001; Deliyanni-Kouimtzi *et al.*, 2007; Kalliotis, 2000; Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001; Sapouna, 2008; Sapouna, 2010), and more recently, research interest has focused on cyberbullying by recognizing the increasing involvement of students in ICT and the dangers in which they potentially place themselves (Kapatzia & Sygkollitou, 2012; Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2019; Kokkinos & Karagianni, 2017; Kokkinos *et al.*, 2013; Nikolopoulos, 2009; Sidiropoulou & Ntavou, 2018; Tsorbatzoudis *et al.*, 2012).

A review of the literature showed that bullying incidents have occurred quite often in Greek school settings during recent decades (Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015; Sygkollitou *et al.*, 2010). According to a large-scale research study of school bullying conducted in Greece (Deliyanni-Kouimtzi *et al.*, 2007), in which 2,027 elementary school pupils and 1,830 secondary school pupils, along with 130 preschoolers, participated, the results showed that 8–14% of elementary school pupils and 10–13% of secondary school pupils identified themselves as victims, while 3–4% of elementary school pupils and 1 out of 10 secondary school pupils identified themselves as bullies. Both victims and bullies appeared to be mostly boys, and the most prevalent form of bullying was verbal bullying (mockery and sexual harassment). Most bullying incidents occurred on playgrounds and lasted for many years for at least 10% of the cases. Moreover, at the preschool level, peer victimization seemed to be greater than that experienced by elementary and secondary school pupils: 11–59.7% of the participants reported that they had been victims, and 2.2–16.3% identified themselves as bullies. Most boys appeared to be victims and bullies, and the most prevalent form of bullying was social exclusion, while the most prevalent form of victimization was physical bullying.

The ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of students can create disparities that favor student involvement in violent incidents. Students attending schools with greater ethnic-cultural diversity participate to a greater degree in violent incidents, and it seems that students in minority ethnic groups become victims to a greater degree. The results of a Greek study that investigated the relationship between ethnic-cultural background and bullying/victimization among adolescent students showed that students attending schools with greater ethnic-cultural diversity scored higher in terms of bullying and victimization (Alexopoulos & Kokkinos, 2018). More specifically, Orthodox Greek students scored lower in victimization, while Muslim Turkish students, which are a minority ethnic group, scored higher. Orthodox Greek students were more likely to be bullies, Muslim Turkish students were both bullies and victims, and students with Muslim Pomak, Romany and undefined ethnic-cultural backgrounds were more likely to be victims. Finally, regarding the forms of bullying/victimization, all students scored higher in verbal and indirect/social bullying, while boys scored higher in physical bullying as well.

Data from another Greek study concerning 719 native and 120 nonnative students attending primary and secondary schools in Greece revealed that verbal bullying was the most dominant bullying behavior among students but, most importantly, revealed that positive interpersonal relationships between Greek and non-Greek students were associated with a low frequency of bullying (Nikolaou & Samsari, 2016). The results highlighted that school institutions should support students of different ethnic origins and support activities that actively promote not only inclusion but also interaction among students with different ethnic or religious backgrounds. Above all, the institution of the school should promote cooperativeness among students at all levels of schooling (Kokkinos & Karagianni, 2017), as research data support that it is negatively

associated with various forms/manifestations of traditional bullying and cyberbullying, such as physical, verbal and behavioral (Kokkinos *et al.*, 2013; Kokkinos *et al.*, 2016).

A recent Greek review on traditional bullying and cyberbullying presented the findings of a series of recent studies on bullying in the Greek area (Kokkinos & Karagianni, 2017) by organizing them on the basis of the general model of aggression, which considers that the manifestation of antisocial and bullying behaviors is the result of the interaction of individual and situational factors (e.g., Monks *et al.*, 2009). According to the review, sociodemographic factors (e.g., gender, age), personality factors (e.g., Big Five psychopathic traits), values/perceptions (e.g., moral disengagement), beliefs (e.g., low self-efficacy), psychological states (e.g., depression), skills (e.g., social/internet), and maladaptive behaviors (e.g., specific learning difficulties), as well as specific parent styles/practices and low friendship quality (i.e., situational factors), are proposed as risk factors for traditional bullying and cyber-bullying involvement and experiences. This review indicated the need to study the interactive effect of individual and situational factors on violent behavior and victimization, as well as the intermediate mechanisms that lead to their manifestation. The researchers concluded that future research should focus on the establishment of a wider theoretical framework that would explain the manifestation of the specific phenomena. The need to study the possibility of the interaction of intraindividual, mental and behavioral factors on the emergence of aggressive behaviors is highlighted (relational vulnerability model, Mathieson *et al.*, 2011).

Poly-cybervictimization

Although research on online violence started with cyberbullying, more recently, other forms, such as cyber-grooming and cyberhate speech, which appear to be important causes of cybervictimization of children and adolescents, have been studied more systematically. Over the last two decades, preoccupation with the use of electronic means of communication has become a tool for conveying hate, racist and xenophobic content. Cybervictimization is a phenomenon that children and adolescents have a high chance of facing, as the internet is an integral part of their daily life and can affect their mental health. Indeed, the literature indicates that individuals who experience poly-cybervictimization by cyberbullying, cybergrooming, and cyberhate speech report increased depressive and psychosomatic symptoms (Sourander *et al.*, 2010; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004), increased rates of anxiety (Juvonen & Gross, 2008), lower levels of self-esteem (Didden *et al.*, 2009; Yang *et al.*, 2013), emotional distress, anger and sadness (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004), social difficulties (Tokunaga, 2010), academic problems and truancy (Beran, 2009; Yang *et al.*, 2013), substance use (Pelfrey & Weber, 2013) and sometimes suicidal ideation (Brunstein-Klomek *et al.*, 2010). Clearly, cybervictimization can have a negative impact on a victim's well-being, especially when combined with other sources of stress in the victim's everyday life, such as offline, traditional victimization. Moreover, findings from a Greek study in which 1,183 adolescent students participated in a questionnaire survey and 100 students participated in focus group interviews confirmed that cyberbullying evokes negative feelings that affect their behavior and may lead to retaliation. The results showed that, apart from their roles in cyberbullying incidents, students shared common, strong negative feelings such as anger, anxiety and aggression, and even indifference, although a different constellation of feelings characterized each role (Kapatzia & Sygkollitou, 2012).

The research data on cybervictimization in adolescents come from another Greek study, which was a cross-cultural study conducted in seven other countries (Cyprus, Spain, Germany, Thailand, South Korea, India and the United States) and aimed to investigate the poly-cybervictimization of adolescents by cyberbullying, cybergrooming and cyberhate speech, the factors associated with this phenomenon and the coping strategies adolescents adopted to address it. A total of 670 students (311 boys and 359 girls), 15–18 years old, who attended high schools in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki, completed self-report questionnaires, and the results showed that a significant percentage of adolescents participated in incidents of cyber violence by having different roles and by adopting different coping strategies to address them (Daskalou *et al.*, 2020). Regarding victimization by cyberbullying, 8.5% of the adolescents reported being bullies, and 11.4% reported being victims. According to the questionnaire on cybergrooming, 4.6% of the teenagers stated that they often and/or very often were victims of cybergrooming, 10.4% occasionally, while 85% reported that they never or very rarely had such experience. Additionally, regarding victimization via cyberhate speech, 6.1% of teens reported being victims, 42.7% were bystanders, and 4.2% were perpetrators. In particular, for racist cyberhate speech, 3.6% were victims and 34.2% were bystanders, while for religious cyberhate speech, 1.6% were victims and 16.9% were bystanders. Notably, a significant percentage of adolescent Greek students participate in cyberhate speech incidents, as the literature indicates that witnessing cyberhates can be the first step for further active involvement (Blaya, 2018; Blaya & Audrin, 2019; Holfeld & Mishna, 2018; Miller & Morris, 2016; Wachs & Wright, 2018). In addition to perpetrators and victims, bystanders need support, training and guidance, as they play an important role in publicizing incidents of violence (Cassidy *et al.*, 2013).

Addressing school violence: findings and suggestions

Although cyberbullying mostly occurs outside of school, it is usually related to incidents that begin at school (Cassidy *et al.*, 2009; Cassidy *et al.*, 2012; Cassidy *et al.*, 2013; Olweus, 2012). It is therefore important to address incidents of traditional bullying and the cyber-victimization of students within the school context. By reviewing the literature, we can identify three key interventions areas—law, technology and education—through the empowerment of students in the form of counter speech.

The key role of the school in dealing with incidents of violence

Many different events occur in schools every day, including incidents of violence, such as a student attacking a school

with a knife, racism, hate speech, humiliations and other violent phenomena, which, especially when the violence is not visible, are covered by the relative silence or inaction of schools so as not to stigmatize the perpetrator or the victim or reduce the prestige of a school.

Although school violence in Greece has not reached the major dimensions and characteristics presented in other countries (e.g., shootings, carrying weapons, group terrorism), the measurements presented in Greek surveys may not always reflect the real situation, as school authorities may avoid publicizing these incidents either in order not to discredit and expose the prestige of their school or in order not to stigmatize specific students and teachers as perpetrators or victims (Artinopoulou, 2001; Politi & Skordialos, 2020; Sokou, 2003). Thus, incidents of violence may be underestimated or implicitly evaluated as individualized idiosyncratic behaviors. In some cases, they might be overlooked in order for mass media exposure to be avoided, and this treatment indirectly favors their occurrence, as long as they are not reported to be addressed appropriately. In such cases, silence locks violence in the memory of students who have experienced it, with unknown consequences for their development (Sokou, 2003). In Greece, as teachers do not want the school they work in and therefore themselves to be stigmatized, there are doubts about the validity of surveys regarding the existence and frequency of incidents of violence.

Nevertheless, there is the question of whether incidents of school violence that are not visible are taken as seriously as incidents of physical violence and aggression. It is essential for students to know what behaviors constitute incidents of violence and to feel safe to report them. School principals and teachers play a key role in informing students about different types of violence, in guiding students how to report and in supporting them when they receive reports. Even when teachers consider the issue of school bullying to be very serious, they might not take all types of bullying seriously, such as verbal, relational and online types, and tend to ignore and not consider that it is a problem they are called upon to address (Hazler *et al.*, 2001; Holt & Keyes, 2004). Research has shown that teachers' attitudes varied by bullying type and gender. For this reason, they are more likely to intervene in incidents that fit what they consider school bullying because they are unable to recognize some behaviors such as school bullying, or they believe that they are beyond their role.

Furthermore, other research has shown that teachers are optimistic about tackling school bullying and believe that they themselves play a very important role in it, but it seems that they tend to overestimate the effectiveness of their interventions because there is a great gap between their views and the views of their students about how they perceive and deal with school bullying (Holt & Keyes, 2004). While they themselves seem to be optimistic about addressing school bullying, their students may believe that teachers have no idea about this phenomenon. An earlier survey in the U.S. showed that 80% of secondary school students believed that their teachers knew nothing about school bullying (Swearer & Cary, 2003).

The above data, derived from Greek studies and from other studies, support that there is a great possibility for violent incidents not to be referred to be treated appropriately. The incidents of violence need to be addressed by implementing a well-designed institutional policy in schools that favors treatment and does not incriminate the reporting of violent incidents. The need for continuous awareness and training of teachers to recognize and deal with violence in schools needs to be a requirement of all programs implemented.

School climate

The idea of whole-school policies that address the wider school culture and are proactive, not merely reactive, has been given much consideration among scholars and practitioners addressing both traditional bullying and cyberbullying (Cowie & Jennifer, 2008; Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Richard *et al.*, 2012). According to Greek research and other important studies, school climate is significantly related to students' well-being, learning, and behavior (Andreou *et al.*, 2020; Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015; Hinduja & Patchin, 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2011). Schools that are based on a holistic approach and offer students unconditional positive regard, modeling, dialog, and practice in ethical caring have much to teach us about addressing problem behaviors in school (Noddings, 2005).

Sometimes for school policies, "no news is good news", but a culture of silence is not conducive to eliciting calls for help from students or to engaging students and staff in working toward positive solutions. Students are more inclined to report to adults in schools with a strong or positive climate (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012).

A review of evaluative and prevention programs revealed that a positive school climate prevents traditional bullying (Wang *et al.*, 2013). Positive relationships between students and teachers, as well as a negative attitude toward inappropriate behavior such as bullying, are found to be key elements of a positive school climate. Therefore, school staff should promote appropriate attitudes and behaviors, such as caring and empathy, as well as appropriate teacher-student interactions.

To adopt antibullying attitudes, in addition to promoting knowledge and awareness of the issue, teachers should also take the reporting of any form of bullying incident very seriously and intervene consistently, according to school rules, and not ignore bullying behavior. For instance, data support that relational or psychological abuse is considered less serious by school staff (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). As a result, there is a great possibility that less serious abusive behaviors are hidden and not included in school prevention and intervention programs. Moreover, there is a growing risk of gradually legitimizing informally less serious abusive behaviors that may lead to the emergence of more serious violent behaviors (Giotopoulou-Maragkopoulou, 2010). Therefore, the behavior of the adults themselves, who must refrain from bullying behaviors of students at school, is of vital importance for the establishment of a healthy school climate. At the same time, teachers should integrate interventions to improve school climate into the formal school curriculum and use teaching moments to openly discuss issues related to bullying.

Greek data also support that a negative school climate is a strong predictor of student involvement in bullying/victimization (Andreou *et al.*, 2020). Good interpersonal relations between students, informing teachers of bullying incidents and their direct intervention, strict adherence to school rules and, more generally, a climate of respect, equality and communication within the school unit are likely to contribute to the limitation of the phenomenon of bullying (Antoniadou & Kokkinos, 2015).

Finally, bullying is not only a behavioral problem but also a mental health problem. Research has shown that students who are involved in bullying experience more mental health difficulties and experience greater cognitive distortions. In the last HBSC international report (Cosma *et al.*, 2023), in which a Greek report is included, factors such as schoolwork pressure, body image, problematic social media use and bullying victimization were identified as the most important predictors of mental health problems among students. Therefore, educators should also seek help from mental health professionals for students who engage in acts of bullying and who experience mental health problems.

Addressing school violence through proper coping strategies

An important factor that plays a decisive role in the involvement of adolescents in cybervictimization is coping adopted by students, as research shows that some strategies are more effective, mitigating the negative effects of victimization and preventing future involvement (Dell'Osso *et al.*, 2020; Hyland *et al.*, 2016; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Machmutow *et al.*, 2012).

Regarding coping with cybergrooming victimization, the findings of our research, in which there was a hypothetical scenario of cybergrooming, showed that adolescents mostly reported the strategies of technical support (89%), close support (69.6%) and assertive behavior (52.5%), while a smaller percentage of them reported the strategies of helplessness (12.6%) and distal advice (18%) (Daskalou *et al.*, 2020). With respect to coping with cyberhate speech victimization, adolescents mostly adopted the strategies of technical support (86%), close support (70.8%) and assertive behavior (62.3%). A smaller percentage reported the adoption of revenge (17%), distal advice (16.6%) and helplessness (11.3%).

Moreover, the results of a cross-cultural study of 6,829 adolescents aged 12–18 years from Asia, Europe, and North America, in which the above Greek data were a part, confirmed that the adoption of specific coping strategies to deal with cyberhates is related to the likelihood of being involved (Wachs *et al.*, 2022). The findings revealed that adolescents who preferred distant advice or technical coping strategies were less likely to become victims, perpetrators, or victim-perpetrators. On the other hand, those who felt helpless or resorted to retaliation in response to cyberhate were more likely to be involved in cyberhate, whether as victims, perpetrators, or victim-perpetrators. Additionally, adolescents who relied on close support as a coping strategy were less likely to become victim-perpetrators, while those who used assertive coping were more likely to be victims.

The results highlighted the importance of developing more tailored prevention approaches than existing approaches. According to the results of that study, it is not enough to urge students to be assertive because when the coping strategy of assertiveness is used inappropriately, it is ineffective and has the opposite results, as it puts adolescents at risk of being victimized (Navarro *et al.*, 2018; Wright & Wachs, 2020). To encourage adolescents to take action through professionals or via technical means, practicing coping skills seems to be more important for building or improving their skills. At least, it is very important for adolescents and even younger children to be educated to use technical coping and distal advice to protect themselves. The prevalence of bullying in primary schools points to the need for prevention and intervention programs to start early (Tangen & Campbell, 2010), as increasingly younger children, even preschoolers, are becoming conversant with technology (Cassidy *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, it is obvious that the focus should be given to adolescents who feel helpless or inclined to retaliate, so school institutions should support and educate these students via specific programs for proper skills and coping strategies.

Through a review of the literature, it appears that most intervention programs refer to individualized and differentiated interventions in terms of the role adopted by the students as perpetrators, bystanders or victims. A review of 36 studies on coping strategies by Perren and his colleagues (Perren *et al.*, 2012), providing indicators of effective coping strategies, revealed that psychological service providers, teachers, and school administrators should consider the distinctions of different roles to address bullying and cyberbullying with their students (Cassidy *et al.*, 2013). Many coping strategies focus on victims, and it is necessary to take a wider view and adopt strategies at the school level and even beyond. By reviewing the literature on cyberhate speech, it is worth noting that no specific intervention has been implemented for aggressors of cyberhate speech, and most related projects have focused on preventing or supporting victims through appropriate reactions (Blaya, 2018).

Applying RAT theory

In a student's environment, there are many examples of a hostile stance toward people who are different. Students may face bullying within their environment or be aware of incidents of bullying, violence and disruptive behavior related to the specific characteristics of other people with different features. The key question for every school system is whether teachers, when confronted with daily incidents of school violence, merely deal with them as undesirable consequences and immediately seek to eliminate them, or whether they address the occurrence of violence by trying to understand its underlying reasons and by taking action to eliminate the root causes.. The institution of school should include

connections with students' parents, and the concept of extended school should be implemented beyond the core function of classroom education.

Research has shown that cyber-grooming among adolescents is most prevalent during adolescence and that girls are more prone to cyber-victimization than adolescent boys are (Berson, 2003; Wachs *et al.*, 2012; Whittle *et al.*, 2013). A cross-cultural study examined the factors that facilitate cyber-grooming, applying routine activity theory (RAT) to explore whether certain conditions predict cyber-grooming victimization among adolescents. The study focused on three key factors: exposure to motivated offenders (such as PC/laptop ownership and having internet access in one's bedroom), capable guardianship (parental mediation strategies regarding internet use), and target suitability (the extent to which adolescents disclose private information online) (Wachs *et al.*, 2021). The research drew on data from a survey of 5,938 adolescents aged 12 to 18 from Germany, India, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, and the United States. The findings revealed that owning a PC/laptop, having internet access in one's bedroom, parental mediation, and online disclosure were all directly linked to cyber-grooming victimization. Specifically, while instructive parental mediation was negatively associated with both online disclosure and cyber-grooming, restrictive mediation showed a positive correlation with both. Additionally, online disclosure partially mediated the relationship between parental mediation and cyber-grooming victimization. These results support the application of RAT in understanding cyber-grooming victimization and underscore the importance of prevention programs that teach age-appropriate use of information and communication technologies.. Additionally, the RAT is supported by research data from teens in Colombia as part of the explanation for four types of cyber victimization (visual cyber victimization, online exclusion, ID theft, and written/spoken cyber victimization) (Morillo-Puente & Rios Hernandez, 2022) and aligns with other studies addressing the dimensions of routine activity theory as good predictors of cyber victimization in teenage school students (Kalia & Aleem, 2017; Vakhitova *et al.*, 2015).

The above theoretical framework implies that school authorities and professionals must work jointly to develop initiatives to prevent school students from exposing themselves to cybervictimization. It also highlighted the perspective of parents, their techniques and the contact they have with their children. The restrictive approach of adolescents lowers the voice of their parents and gradually limits their close relationships with their children. In addition, an instructive approach facilitates their relationship with their children to keep in touch and inform them how to avoid disclosing private information and to protect themselves. The above findings highlighted the necessity for an institution of school that includes close contact with each child's family. Appropriate adult supervision in schools and within families of students should also be applied to electronic media use both at schools and at home, as it contributes to reducing cyberbullying and other forms of cybervictimization (Sakellariou *et al.*, 2012).

Conclusions

The school is a sociopolitical institution for the production and reproduction of knowledge, ideas, attitudes and perceptions of the value system, as well as habits, sometimes a place for the exercise of power and social control but also a place for shaping the personal and social identity of students. School bullying and violence are multidimensional, dynamic, social phenomena that concern the whole school as an institution. Institutional violence in schools is a multifactorial issue that cannot be prevented or addressed unilaterally. To address violence in schools, fear-based and punitive programs have been proven to be ineffective and possibly counterproductive (MacKay, 2012; Shariff, 2009). Effective antibullying programs, such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, involve the 'whole school' in their efforts, including teachers, students and parents; raising awareness of issues; providing training for teachers and parents; incorporating such programs into the curriculum; publicizing antibullying policies; and using disciplinary methods and enhanced instructive supervision within and outside schools (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Rigby & Griffiths, 2011; Wachs *et al.*, 2018).

Given that different forms of violence occur in schools, schools as institutions need to include programs to prevent and address violence resulting from traditional bullying, cyberbullying and other forms of victimization, such as grooming, cyber-grooming, hate-speech and cyberhate-speech. Regarding treatment, the formation of a positive climate in schools in which students can feel safe to report incidents of violence and obtain trust that they will receive the appropriate support, as well as differentiated programs for prevention and intervention of the phenomenon in terms of perpetrators, bystanders, victims and victim-perpetrators, are of great value. Coping strategies are argued to play a key role in students' involvement and victimization in incidents of violence, with the consequence that educating students on effective strategies aimed at active coping and reporting to others is very important. The research data highlighted that there is still a need to develop more tailored prevention and intervention approaches than existing approaches. On the other hand, developing healthy behaviors and social skills more broadly should also be part of the overall curriculum in schools, with an emphasis on fostering empathy and positive self-esteem for all students (Cassidy *et al.*, 2013; Davis & Nixon, 2012).

After the systematic implementation of antibullying programs (e.g., the DAPHNE project, https://stop-bullying.sch.gr), students in Greece reported that they became more able to talk about incidents of violence to their teachers, parents and classmates and became more able to address the aggression of other children. Teachers also recognized their need for more training and awareness as well as support in implementing prevention programs in their schools. The programs promoted the principles of better communication between students, teachers and parents and respect for the individual rights and needs of students so that teachers, students and parents all contributed to violence-free schools.

Finally, the recognition of hidden institutional structures that support the manifestation and consequently the addressing of violence in school settings is of great importance. In some cases, violence is underestimated and ignored because some invisible forms or incidents are considered less serious or justified as isolated phenomena that are passed over. School authorities may follow a policy of avoiding incidents either to discredit and expose the prestige and good reputation of their school or to avoid stigmatizing specific students and teachers as perpetrators or victims. It seems necessary to establish special mechanisms that favor the discriminatory treatment of victims of violence, such as special methods of obtaining statements from bystanders, investigations, support and advisory services during proceedings. Moreover, students may feel exposed to being urged to report an incident that it would never be treated appropriately. The tolerance of some forms of violence in schools on the grounds of skin color, race, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation or religious beliefs, settles and legitimizes prejudice, unequal treatment and victimization of students can be a generative element for the manifestation of further violence.

In conclusion, the need for a wider theoretical framework that can explain the manifestation of violent phenomena in schools is highlighted by the research data. Additionally, the need to study the effects of experiencing/participating in traditional bullying, cyberbullying and victimization through longitudinal research was indicated, and above all, the structural factors that support the involvement of students in incidents of violence should be considered more systematically.

Data availability statement

No data are associated with this article.

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Open Peer Review

Current Peer Review Status: ✗ ?

Version 1

Reviewer Report 25 October 2024

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Mónica Bravo Sanzana
Núcleo Científico y Tecnológico en Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, Universidad de La Frontera, Temuco, Araucania, Chile

It is necessary to improve the theoretical framework in the first part, breaking it down from the concept of violence, types of school violence and cyberbullying. In addition, it is necessary to reference more systematically the statements or claims made in the initial paragraphs and throughout the text, as there are many different ideas in these that must be supported with the appropriate reference. For example: Research has shown that teachers' attitudes varied by bullying type and gender (reference?).
I leave some articles that could guide to improve the structure of the theoretical framework. Likewise, these articles contribute to supporting more up-to-date empirical evidence on the different concepts associated with violence (victimization, well-being, types of violence, etc.).

- Bravo-Sanzana M, Bangdiwala SI, Miranda R. (2021 [Ref - 1]). School violence negative effect on student academic performance: a multilevel analysis. Int J Inj Contr Saf Promot. 31:1-13. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457300.2021.1994615. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34719336.
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- Bravo-Sanzana MV, Varela J, Terán-Mendoza O and Rodríguez-Rivas ME (2023 [Ref - 3]). Measuring school social climate in Latin America: the need for multidimensional and multi-informant tests. A systematic review. Front. Psychol. 14:1190432. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1190432
- Grazia, V., & Molinari, L. (2020 [Ref - 4]). School climate multidimensionality and measurement: a systematic literature review. Research Papers in Education, 00(00), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2019.1697735
- Wang, M.-T., & Degol, J. (2015 [Ref - 5]). School Climate: a Review of the Construct, Measurement, and Impact on Student Outcomes. Educ Psychol Rev, 28(2), 315–352. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9319-1

Likewise, it is necessary to update the references, at least for major topics, to incorporate studies from the last five years (wos, Scopus). For example, in the section "The key role of the school in

dealing with incidents of violence" it is indicated that: The above data, derived from Greek and other studies, support that there is a high possibility that violent incidents are not reported to be dealt with appropriately. And there is only one reference from 2020, the others are from the early 2000s.

In the section: Addressing school violence through proper coping strategies, it is necessary to define cybergrooming victimization, cyberhate speech, coping adopted, etc. In general, authors must ensure that each section and relevant concepts are properly defined and cited from references of theoretical origin and with empirical evidence.
Address the anonymity of the authors: "Regarding coping with cybergrooming victimization, the findings of our research, in which there was a hypothetical scenario of cybergrooming,...". Review the entire manuscript and write in the third person.

It is necessary to theoretically substantiate, even if it is in no more than one paragraph with its respective authors, RAT theory.

Conclusions should only be related to the main themes of the manuscript. Information such as the following should be relocated to the background: After the systematic implementation of antibullying programs (e.g., the DAPHNE project, https://stop-bullying.sch.gr),

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1. Bravo-Sanzana M, Bangdiwala SI, Miranda R: School violence negative effect on student academic performance: a multilevel analysis.*Int J Inj Contr Saf Promot*. 2022; **29** (1): 29-41 PubMed Abstract | Publisher Full Text
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4. Grazia V, Molinari L: School climate multidimensionality and measurement: a systematic literature review. *Research Papers in Education*. 2021; **36** (5): 561-587 Publisher Full Text
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Is the topic of the review discussed comprehensively in the context of the current literature?

Yes

Are all factual statements correct and adequately supported by citations?

Partly

Is the review written in accessible language?

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn appropriate in the context of the current research literature?

Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: School social climate; adolescent wellbeing.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however I have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Reviewer Report 19 September 2024

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Ben Arnold Lohmeyer
Flinders University, Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

Is the topic of the review discussed comprehensively in the context of the current literature?
I congratulate the Daskalou and Syhkollitou on the purpose and contribution of this review. A review of school violence and bullying is an important useful resource for scholars, policymakers and practitioners. School violence and bullying are important issues that continue to impact children and young people internationally. Daskalou and Syhkollitou approach is inclusive focusing on poly-victimisation, school climate coping strategies, mental health impacts, and RAT theory. They present many important findings that challenge orthodoxy including the counterintuitive ineffectiveness of assertiveness as a coping strategy. I offer the following suggestions to support the development of the paper and strengthen its contribution.
The paper would benefit from a structured introduction that outlines the scale or significance of the problem, what the review aims to achieve/contribute, the authors' main points or argument, and the paper's structure. The introduction needs to set up the scope and the parameters of the paper. The paper is a review, but there are not any details about the methodology of the review.
The title states that the paper focuses on the school setting in Greece. For the international reader, some context about the school system in Greece would provide context for the issues being discussed.
The review begins with a general statement about the complexity of defining violence. While this statement is broadly true, violence, (peer-) victimisation, bullying (online and in person), and cyber-hate/grooming continue to be debated and defined in research. The reader would benefit from further clarity on the author's focus but also approach to the intersection and distinctions between these phenomena. I recommend the following resources to support this process:
1) UNESCO, & World Anti-Bullying Forum. (2022 [Ref - 1]). *Presenting a proposed revised definition of school bullying*. World Anti-Bullying Forum Retrieved from https://delegia-virtual.s3.eu-north-1.amazonaws.com/projects/delegia-wabf/WABF_summary_of_new_definition.pdf
2) da Silva, M., & da Silva, A. G. (2018 [Ref - 2]). Teachers and Students: the engendering of school violence. *Educação & Realidade*, *43*(2).
3) Schott, R.M. (2014b [Ref - 3]). The social concept of bullying: philosophical reflections on

definitions. In: Schott RM & Søndergaard DM (eds) *School bullying: New theories in context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.21-47.
4) Yoneyama, S., & Naito, A. (2003 [Ref - 4]). Problems with the paradigm: The school as a factor in understanding bullying (with special reference to Japan). *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24(3), 315-330.

Establishing the main argument of the paper in the introduction will support the authors to contextualise and demonstrate the relevance of the literature they reviewed. Summarising the key point at the end of each section will support the reader to understand the relevance of the reviewed studies to the overall argument and purpose of the paper which is unclear at times.

Are all factual statements correct and adequately supported by citations?
Throughout the paper, the author makes imprecise claims that need to be reviewed. For example, on page one they state, "school violence has become a fairly popular topic over the last few decades", or "additionally, some years ago, cyberbullying became more dominant". The paper would benefit from more specific claims, for example, how popular and with who? And how many years ago? Also, the paper has many unreferenced claims, for example, on page three paragraph three the authors state there has been a rapid increase in cyber-grooming and cyber hate. On the same page, paragraph 6, the authors described the experience it ethnic-culturally diverse students without citing a source. I recommend the following source to support this process:
5) UNESCO. (2019 [Ref - 5]). *Behind the numbers: ending school violence and bullying*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366483

The section titled "The key role of the school in dealing with incidents of violence" and the subsequent section on "School climate" raise many important points, but are thin in terms of their reference to literature within the review's scope, but also broader international research on bullying that would support the interpretation of school bullying/violence in Greece. I recommend the following sources to support this process.
6) Chalmers, C., Campbell, M.A., Spears, B.A., et al. (2016 [Ref - 6]). School policies on bullying and cyberbullying: perspectives across three Australian states. *Educational Research,* 58(1), 91-109.
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8) Springer, S. (2012 [Ref - 8]). Neoliberalising violence: of the exceptional and the exemplary in coalescing moments. *Area* 44(2), 136 - 143.
9) Pascoe, C.J. (2013 [Ref - 9]). Notes on a Sociology of Bullying: Young Men's Homophobia as Gender Socialization. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*. DOI: 10.14321/qed.0087. 87-104.
10) Walton, G. (2005 [Ref -10]). Bullying Widespread. *Journal of School Violence* 4(1), 91-118.
11) Yoneyama, S. (2015 [Ref -11]). Theorising school bullying: Insights from Japan. DOI: 10.3384/confero.2001-4562.150628.

Is the review written in accessible language?
Yes.

Are the conclusions drawn appropriate in the context of the current research literature?
The conclusion offers an important summary of the sociopolitical nature of schools and the reproduction of knowledge, habits and values within these institutions. However, this positioning

of schools is too late in the piece. Introducing this approach at the beginning of the paper will contextualise the authors' approach to the literature and the issue of bullying. The conclusion also appears to introduce new ideas (i.e. the DAPHNE project) that need to be included in the body of the paper.
Throughout the paper, but particularly in the conclusion, it isn't always clear when the authors are engaging with literature or making recommendations if they are limited or targeted to the Greek context. For example, in the conclusion the authors state there is a "need for wider theoretical framework that can explain the manifestations of violence phenomena in schools". I agree with the intent of this statement, however, it is unclear if this is targeted at Greek research or policy specifically as there are theoretical frameworks internationally that conceptualise these issues.

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11. Yoneyama S: Theorizing School Bullying. *Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics*. 2015; **3** (2): 120-160 Publisher Full Text

Is the topic of the review discussed comprehensively in the context of the current literature?

Partly

Are all factual statements correct and adequately supported by citations?

Partly

Is the review written in accessible language?

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn appropriate in the context of the current research literature?

Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: My area of expertise is school bullying and violence approached through the sociology of youth.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to state that I do not consider it to be of an acceptable scientific standard, for reasons outlined above.