



European Journal of Educational Research


Volume 12, Issue 3, 1285 - 1295.

ISSN: 2165-8714

<https://www.eu-jer.com/>

Factors Affecting the Learning of Second - Generation Migrant Children in Greek Primary School

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Received: December 8, 2022 ▪ Revised: March 4, 2023 ▪ Accepted: March 25, 2023

Abstract: An issue that has preoccupied young researchers and educators is the interaction of the fields of special and intercultural education as well as the factors that lead to the coexistences of them. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that hinder the learning process of second-generation immigrant students in Greek primary schools. The ages of the children we will refer to are 7-8 years old due to the school achievements in reading and writing that are mastered up to this age point. This study is part of a larger study, which consists of qualitative and quantitative data from two research tools: interviews and questionnaires from teachers and guardians. The results were divided into categories. One of the main ones that stand in the way of children's learning is psychological and social factors, according to 91.8% of the participants in the questionnaire. In addition, it is worth noting that 82.6% argued that the reason students have learning difficulties is due to biological reasons. In conclusion, there is a correlation between learning difficulties and intercultural education that should be studied. The latter can play a pivot role to the assistance of the diverse categories of students' needs.

Keywords: *Immigrants, intercultural education, learning difficulties, second-generation.*

To cite this article: Liagkoura, A., Romero Tena, R., & Sampedro Requena, B. E. (2023). Factors affecting the learning of second - generation migrant children in Greek primary school. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 12(3), 1285-1295. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.12.3.1285>

Introduction

The object of special education teachers' work is to enhance the learning performance of students with learning difficulties. Instructors across the European Union have recently been experiencing a change in the demographic of their students due to the rise of immigration. This change has introduced challenges socially and, in the classroom (Sullivan & Simonson, 2016), on how to appropriately evaluate and instruct based on the students' needs (Eurostat, 2018).

The assimilation of an immigrant family to its new society often comes with obstacles. The children of immigrants are still closely tied to their cultural roots via language and tradition. The problems that these children face every day vary and stem from a combination of a language barrier to family dynamics and cultural differences when developing interpersonal relationships (Foss, 2016). It is also important to note, that immigrants and their progeny often face discrimination just because of who they are. When this is coupled with a learning disability (biological factor), there is often a social prejudice experienced when interacting with peers (Lyon, 1995).

It is often difficult for an educator without special training to ascertain if a second-generation student is not understanding a concept due to a language barrier, or if there is indeed an underlying learning disability (biological factor). Biological factors are related to cognitive functions, which, if they are disturbed, appear in the form of learning difficulties (Hammill, 1990). After all, the lack of training of teachers to face the challenges of the new environment (multicultural) and the new tasks related to the development of multicultural counseling skills is a common phenomenon (Lagoudakos, 2012).

Studies Background

Many studies, such as that of Crispel and Kasperski (2019) have found that it is necessary to introduce training courses in learning disabilities early enough in the careers of teachers, especially those employed in mainstream schools. Not only special education teachers but also general education teachers need to incorporate lessons on learning disabilities.

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With proper guidance, from an early-age, teachers are able to effectively manage students with learning disabilities (Crispel & Kasperski, 2019). The research of Moriña et al. (2020) showed teachers feel the need to be well prepared. They also believe that such training not only benefits students with disabilities but also other students in the class. The same research showed that participants suggest that training should not be voluntary because it favors the change of attitudes with the result that there is no respect for the diversity and heterogeneity of students (Moriña et al., 2020).

Currently, there is no established, unified, regulatory program on how to accurately assess second generation immigrant students in the European Union (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2019). Countries have taken this task on individually, while others like Greece prohibit such a program. According to the European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice (2019) many European countries are evaluating the skills of immigrants in order to create an educational intervention program starting at preschool and continuing through upper educational levels. Specifically, instructor training for immigrant students is considered only in the Czech Republic, Spain, France, Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Serbia.

The Greek Educational System

When it comes to the Greek educational system, general instructors are often faced with no resources to accurately teach a diverse student population. However, the Greek educational system officially has yet to address the diverse cultural demographic of its students. "The multicultural dimension is an issue that has been of little concern to the scientific and educational community at the level of designing targeted educational policies for students with educational needs coming from immigrant families" (Gonidas, 2014, p. 28). Diversity is not fully understood and the intercultural approach is not effectively implemented (Koehler, 2014). This lack of action is a detriment to the education of second-generation immigrant students, thus stunting their learning potential.

Many issues plague the Greek educational system. "Issues of coordination among top-level authorities and involving the competent bodies at local level in implementing policies have proved to be difficult in Greece and Cyprus" (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2019). The formulation of the educational policy is carried out with the responsibility of the State and not of the school unit. The teachers who make up a school can make some interventions, but they do not have absolute jurisdiction. Education is a political act, a political choice (Lagoudakos, 2012). Neglecting to address the multicultural student body is not only a disservice to those students but leaves educators ill prepared. They [educators] cannot give a targeted interpretation to the weaknesses of these pupils (Griva & Stamou, 2014).

Generally speaking, for any child to be accurately assessed for a learning disability in Greece, regardless of their immigration background, they will need to be evaluated at the Greek Diagnostic Assessment Counseling and Support Centers (GDACSC). Unfortunately, due to bureaucratic issues, one is unable to promptly make an appointment to be assessed. Often, appointments are scheduled out two years in advanced, leaving students undiagnosed so they are unable to receive proper help.

In the instances that a child is able to be evaluated and diagnosed, they only then can be referred for additional support through special education instructors, provided that their school has such instructor. If the diagnosed child is a second-generation immigrant, they will find themselves more disadvantaged due to the special education instructors are not trained in intercultural education (Klingner et al., 2016). The support to these children is the same as that of children with extraordinary learning incapacities, who are not migrants (Jajali-Moghadam & Hedman, 2016). For those second-generation students who have not been able to obtain a learning disability diagnosis, and their current school does not have any additional resources in intercultural education, the teachers' instruction is insufficient (Mpotsas & Sandravelis, 2014).

The Need for Intercultural Training in Greece

The need for training in intercultural education has been seen through many researches around the world as well as that of Karabela in the Greek educational field. In the research of Karabela (2020) it appeared that the majority of the teachers in the sample come faced mainly with communication problems with students of different linguistic and cultural background, who face so many problems adaptation to Greek school classes as well as low school performance. The majority of teachers do not seem to possess intercultural adequacy, as there is a small degree of their training in its management multicultural class. This is an admission of teachers, which follows from their finding for insufficient provision of special knowledge by the University their studies (at the level of diploma), due to non-attendance training programs on intercultural education (Karabela, 2020). As a result, students are not socialized, problems arise at home and consequently the educational integration of these students is not achieved.

The European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice (2019) confirmed that the Greek state's main objective is to ensure the enrollment of its students into the public school system. The Greek state does not further give consideration to the student's cognitive capability regarding their placement in public school.

Challenges

There are not many measures and initiatives that combine competency and specialization in intercultural and special education. "Intercultural education in Greece remains trapped in the confines of a specific program" (Kakos & Palaiologou, 2014, p. 83). The main challenge is that the state benefits individually concern either the immigration background or the factor of special educational difficulties (Gonidas, 2014; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2018). Instructors who specialize in both areas are few and far between. Unfortunately, it is the student that suffers since appropriate help is unavailable.

Another factor that presents challenges, is the lack of responsibility from the parents or guardians of the second-generation children. The parents of these children do not come forwards with learning concerns mainly due to fear. According to Lad and Braganza (2013), immigrant parents tend to be absent from schools in important educational matters such as learning progress and grades as well as guidance for specialized help from a special educator due to the learning difficulties that their children may have. Misunderstandings sometimes occur due to the absence of immigrant parents from the school. These misunderstandings occur as these parents for various reasons do not attend meetings, school events, resulting in a gap in school and family communication (Breiseth, 2016). However, it is important that schools do not forget that these parents faced many difficulties to come and settle in a country just to provide a better future for their children and show the required understanding (Lad & Braganza, 2013).

UNESCO's findings detail that "disabilities may too be covered up 'or not said out of fear of social stigma' or rejection" by the modern society in which they live "leading guardians to cover up or under-report their children's needs" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2018, p. 176). After all, Greece's inadequate school system is unfortunately affected by xenophobia and prejudice (Georgitsa, 2017).

It is important to note that in Spain and Slovenia, the parents or guardians of second-generation children are more involved in the education process due to each countries' respective regulations (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice, 2019). This contrasts drastically in Greece, as there are no regulations or legislation calling for the inclusion and cooperation of parents and guardians in the educational process. This lack of participation further hinders the communication between the instructors and guardians.

More effort is required to create working strategies that support of the twofold challenge, where the child has extraordinary instructive needs and also comes from an immigrant family. It is of significance that the plausibility of collaborating with specialists in instruction may assist in the advancement in cognition and overall confidence of these children, who otherwise may be sensitive to their struggles (Timm, 2016). Most of these students feel insecure as they believe that others judge them because of the way they speak (they don't handle the new language well) but also because of their different racial background. Consequently, in such cases teachers find it difficult to include them in the classes of formal education. Their presence in the classroom is a huge challenge for the teacher (Campbell, 2016).

Everyone involved in education must be aware of the special needs of these social groups and contribute to the changes that will occur in their lives if their needs are met (Breiseth, 2016). The effort to understand the special immigrant background (ethnic, religious, cultural) of the students in our class contributes to the awareness of intercultural identity (Campbell, 2016). It is very important to think about what experiences our students probably have, where they come from and what needs they have (emotional, social, linguistic, economic) because it makes us easier to adapt to their needs and provide more substantial support.

In conclusion, school teaching in Greece lags behind in terms of the education of second-generation immigrant children and their cognitive needs. After all, the development of a second language is a very different process from that of the typical development of a language, such as the mother tongue. This must be understood by teachers, education consultants and those involved in the reforms of the education system (Campbell, 2016).

With this research we aim to focus on the learning knowledge deficits of second - generation students and identify if there is indeed an underlying learning disability. We looked at various factors such as family, social stigma and trainer challenges.

Methodology

The research was conducted in a mixed way as it has a qualitative and quantitative nature. For this reason, we constructed, utilized and analyzed questionnaires and interviews. To compose this article, we utilized the data that answers the main objective of this research.

Objective

The fundamental objective of this study is to investigate the variables that impact the learning of the Greek language in second - generation children. It is exceptionally important to distinguish the impediments within the instructive process.

Participants

The study was carried out in the primary schools of a city in western Greece during the 2020-2021 school term. Western Greece is a region that, due to its geographical position, is a gate of attraction for immigrants as it gives the possibility of exit to other European countries. Many remain in the area for many years as they live with their families and work. The city of Western Greece that was chosen has a large population of immigrants who live permanently. Their children as second-generation immigrants face daily challenges in school due to great educational difficulties. In addition, as researchers and colleagues we had access to the primary schools in the area. Therefore, the sample collection method we followed was that of convenience sampling. The target ages of children are 7-8 years old. This age range is a time point where, according to the legislation of special education centers in Greece, children's learning difficulties are most often detected. Participants will be independently informed about qualitative and quantitative research strategies.

Qualitative Study Participants

Our research sample was divided into 2 groups, parents/guardians and educators. There were 3 parents/guardians, all of them female. We noticed that parents/guardians were reluctant to participate in such a study due to fear of being stigmatized. The national origin of all three participants was Albania. Regarding the educators, the participants were selected from two schools. A total of 10 subjects participated, 7 of which were women and 3 were men. Their ages ranged from 45 to 52 years.

Quantitative Study Participants

The choice of the sample that would take part within the study with the questionnaire arose randomly and voluntarily. Particularly, a sample of 109 instructors filled within the survey (Table 1), 76 (69.7%) of which were women and 33 (30.3%) were men. It is of importance to note the most common age range of instructors was over 51 years of age, (f=57) with a participation rate of 52.3%. The level of education varied amongst the instructors with the lowest level having a "basic studies" degree, 33% (f=36). The next most common certification was in special education or "seminars" 38.5% (f=42). From the 109 instructors the 31 (28,4%) answered that they have obtained a master degree, while on the option "PhD" none answers were given. In any case, for the instructing involvement, 39 instructors replied that they have over 30 years in teaching experience (39%).

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants- Quantitative and Qualitative Study

No	Demographic Characteristics	Teachers (questionnaire)		Teachers (interviews)
		Total	%	Total /10
Gender				
1.	Male	33	30,3	3
	Female	76	69,7	7
Age				
2.	20-30	19	17,4	0
	31-40	11	10,1	0
	41-50	22	20,2	6
	>51	57	52,3	4
Educational Level				
3.	Basic studies	36	33,0	4
	Master degree	31	28,4	2
	Seminars	42	38,5	4
	PhD degree	0	,0	0
Teaching experience				
4.	1-10 years	23	21,1	0
	11-20 years	25	22,9	8
	>20 years	22	20,2	2
	>30 years	39	35,8	0

Instruments

The investigation strategy that we utilized was mixed, qualitative and quantitative. Subsequently, our study was conducted using a questionnaire and two interviews. Both interviews and questionnaires were based on published studies and were modified to further evaluate the targeted second- generation students in Greece.

Interviews Design

For the qualitative part of the study, we conducted two separate interviews. The interviews targeted guardians and trainers. It was considered valuable for the study to capture the views of the guardians, even though they were few due to the language barrier and work schedule constraints. The questions were about their children's school achievements, the school-family relationship and the family environment. Regarding the teacher interviews, the aim was to gather data about their encounter with non-traditional teaching, their behavior around special education, co-teaching and, finally, to consider the combination of special education and intercultural teaching.

For both interviews we utilized semi-structured questions used by other analysts amid their investigation. Specifically, the questions from the instructor interviews were based on an interview conducted by Gonidas (2014), Arroyo Gonzalez and Berzosa Ramos (2018). The study was partitioned into 4 parts: a) experience and special education, b) special education-general instruction, c) Special instruction and intercultural instruction and, d) Conclusions.

Therefore, we felt it was extremely critical that parents be given the opportunity to analyze the challenges their children face as well as share their views on the reasons that give rise to these challenges. The questions of parent interviews were based on an interview conducted by Gonidas (2014), Arroyo Gonzalez and Berzosa Ramos (2018) and Sorkos (2019). The interview was isolated into 3 parts: a) Child and school, b) Family and school, c) Child and Family.

Questionnaires Design

A questionnaire was outlined and given to instructors that had involvement with children from 7-8 years old. As said over, the survey was based on the research of Kiose (2016), and was adjusted to serve the requirements of this study. The instrument comprised of 53 questions isolated into 3 parts: Likert scale questions, multiple choices and demographics. The instructors assessed according to a rating scale of 1-7(Likert scale); 1 being→ I completely disagree, 2 being→I slightly disagree, 3 being→I quite disagree, 4 being→I do not know / I do not answer, 5 being→ I quite agree, 6 being→I slightly agree, and, 7 being→I completely agree.

Before conducting the survey, we conducted a pilot overview on 25 instructors in ascertain whether the survey serves the purpose for which it was composed. Their recommendations have been taken into account, and so, we proceeded with the study. The results judged that the questionnaire was suitable for our research. Therefore, the survey was authorized to be administered to more people.

The Cronbach's alpha that was applied to the 22 questions of the category "Factors that influence the learning" gave more prominent significance ($\alpha=.808$).

Ethical Considerations

Before taking part in the research, all participants were informed about its subject and purpose and accepted the declaration of interest. We completed the survey anonymously to protect the individuals who participated. Final, we informed the participants that they have the right to change their opinion and withdraw from the research if they wish.

Out of respect for the participants, the researchers informed them that when the study is completed and the data analyzed, the results will be made available upon request. As researchers, we assured members that the audio recording of the interviews would be kept as a research record by the analysts. Finally, it is worth noting that the number of volunteer trainers was gathered much more effectively than that of guardians.

Analysis of Data

For the examination of the data instruments, we utilized two statistical programs. The recordings from both interviews and the notes of the analyst were considered all as essential data. We analyzed this data through the subjective measurable analysis program Atlas.ti v.8 to construct a framework of categories and codes. Specifically, we analyzed the qualitative research data using a comparative method across findings (Creswell, 2013). After transcribing the interviews, we carefully read all the transcripts produced by each participant and compiled notes. We compared these notes between the sampled individuals, we coded new data that emerged each time, and enriched the codes that had prevailed from the beginning. Then, after examining the codes and classifying them into categories, we gathered all the necessary information that characterizes them. Using each time as a reference point the research questions, we followed the cycle of reflection to proceed with our content analysis (Gibbs, 1988), as well as the analysis program Atlas.ti v.8, through which the necessary comparisons were made. After the process of analyzing the data, the dominant codes emerged, which were examined and thus we gave the corresponding interpretation to each one separately. It is worth noting that we analyzed all the responses provided by the participants according to the basic principles of statistical analysis for primary care research, suggested by Guetterman (2019). As for the information of the questionnaires, we utilized the SPSS Measurements v.25 program for the analysis.

The data was partitioned into two categories and codes were constructed based off the analysis. Finally, the topics examined through the research will be reported, as well as the corresponding analysis techniques in the statistical

program SPSS. In order to guarantee the veracity of the investigation, frequencies, rates, means and standard deviations were utilized. In terms of quality and inside consistency, Cronbach Alpha was applied.

Results

The results from the answers of the participants were collected from both investigations of the questionnaire and interviews. They have been categorized based on the responses of the guardians and instructors and by using the comparative method of Creswell (2013). The study concluded two primary categories of from both analyses: 1) The factors that influence the learning, 2) Families' explanations.

Factors That Influence the Learning

Based on the answers gathered from the interviews, we grouped the data and assigned their codes. This category mentions all the factors that influence the learning of immigrant children, according to the instructors' interviews and questionnaires. The answer with the most common response was the *IBP Code (Influences- Behavioral Problems)*. All the instructors (10/10) concurred that the behavioral issues that most children confront, such as anger, social struggles, weakness, crying, and dissatisfaction can lead to a negative impact on their progress.

"They have behavioral problems with other children, hypersensitivity..." (personal recording of teacher interview). "As I notice in the classroom, but, also in the courtyard...well...there are many emotions observed such as, anger, crying, overall distress. It is a daily struggle" (personal recording of teacher interview).

From quantitative data, the percentage of the teachers that "slightly agreed" with the option of *behavioral problems* was 29.4% (f=32), those who "quite agreed" 25.7% (f=28) and those who "completely agreed" 13.8% (f=15). Summing up the 3 subcategories, we see that 68.9% (f=75) agree with this view.

An equally important factor appears to be the *family environment*, code *IFE*, which all the instructors (10/10) documented. Specifically, they cited the difficulties that these children face at home. The family environment is inadequate for providing support as parents cannot comprehend the language. Also, most families are from the low socio-economic background and lack upper education.

One instructor mentions, "The boy makes too many spelling mistakes, which his parents are unaware of because they do not know how to read and write in Greek" (Personal recording of teacher interview). "These children do not have the proper support at home, no Greek language background, so, they struggle a lot" (personal recording of teacher interview).

From the quantitative data, two significant reasons related to the *family environment* emerged. Initially, the first fact was that the parents do not speak Greek well. The 87.2% (f=95) of the participants underlined the language of the parents as a basic obstacle. Also, the second fact is the bilingual environment that must be taken into account. The 76.1% (f=83) agreed with this aspect.

Another factor that influences the learning is the *socialization (code ISZ)*. These children appear to be extremely sensitive or overreact to circumstances because they find it difficult to express themselves accurately, to externalize their thoughts (6/10 of the participants share the same aspect).

"I have noticed that these children feel disadvantaged and often make their classmates feel disadvantaged. That is, at times, they may be intimidated. Their position is difficult and very sensitive" (personal recording of teacher interview). "They easily feel rejected or accepted. Maybe more often than the rest of the kids because of the need to fit in" (personal recording of teacher interview).

In terms of quantitative data, the results showed some *difficulties in coexistence*. From the total of the participants, 56.0% (f= 61) answered that they agree with this aspect. Specifically, 34.9% (f = 38) "quite agreed" and, 21.1% (f = 23) "slightly agreed".

Additionally, the *IBSP code (Biological, Social, Psychological Factors)* is also worth mentioning, with 7 teachers from the 10 stressing its importance. This code mentions the combination of biological, social and psychological factors that influence the learning of these children. According to them, these difficulties stem from biological reasons (peculiarities from their birth), social reasons (possible exclusion and marginalization of both themselves and their families), but also psychological reasons. The emotional burden is too great for this category of children.

"I think they [the issues] are both biological and social. The poor linguistic family environment plays an important role" (personal recording of teacher interview). "However, when they are having difficulty, they get frustrated just as easily and may cry or not participate in the course at all" (personal recording of teacher interview).

From the quantitative data, the teachers underlined that these children make a *great effort to achieve anything*. This difficulty is emerging from *biological, social and psychological factors* they have to deal with. From the total, 66.1% (f=72) "completely agreed" with that and 25.7% (f=28) "slightly agreed". Totally, 91.8% (f=100) agreed with this aspect.

Also, it is worth mentioning that 82.6% (f=90) argued that a biological reason that hinders these children is that they face *learning difficulties*. More specifically, 45.9% (f=50) “completely agreed”, and, 36.7% (f=40) “slightly agreed”.

In conclusion, the half teachers (5/10) argued that *slow procedures* for recognizing difficulties make these children's daily lives more difficult. *ILP* (Late procedures) for specific help is due to the lack of communication and understanding. Assistance is not sought out early because the parents are unable to identify and accept the difficulty.

“Many times, they do not exactly understand the problem we are presenting and do not immediately move on to whatever procedures are needed” (personal recording of teacher interview). “The fact that the parents do not handle the Greek language well prevents us from trying to explain to them the difficulties that the children face so that they can act effectively” (personal recording of teacher interview).

Below is a table (Table 2) the results of which emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires through the SPSS Statistics program and the interviews through the Atlas program. The predominant answers are presented.

Table 2. Network Between the Factors That Influence the Learning of Second- Generation Immigrants

No	Factors that influence the learning- Most common answers	Quantitative participants		Qualitative participants
		Total	%	Total /10
1	Behavioral Problems (IBP code)	75	68,9%	10/10
2	Family Environment (IFE code)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not speak Greek • Bilingual environment 	95	87,2%	10/10
		83	76,1%	10/10
3	Socialization- Difficulties in coexistence (ISZ code)	61	56,0%	6/10
4	Biological, Social, Psychological Factors (IBSP code)	100	91,8 %	7/10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special learning difficulties 	90	82,6%	7/10
5	Slow procedures (ILP code)	-----	-----	5/10

Families' Explanations

After analyzing the parent interview, interesting views emerged from the families. In this section, we will refer to the answers given by the guardians regarding the possible reasons that, according to their knowledge, their children face learning difficulties.

Initially, the foremost vital factor is that of the assistance provided. The *FEHG* code dominates the feedback of all parents-guardians. Specifically, all the parents believe that their children lack appropriate assistance due to time constraints within the classroom. Time is never enough and their children need systematic support, which educators are not in a position to provide. However, instructors sometimes make sure to provide students with customized homework materials based on children's particular needs.

“Sometimes, the teacher gives specific homework to each child because he has noticed that they make a lot of spelling mistakes” (personal recording of parent interview). “He helps my child as much as he can. Sometimes more, sometimes less” (personal recording of parent interview).

Another factor that appears to dominate the answers is the *parental help (FEPH code)*. Parents do not express themselves in Greek fluently, and they state that they are incapable in assisting with their child's homework. Also, it is worth mentioning that some parents do not easily admit that their children need specialized help at school. They feel disadvantaged and do not desire their children to be singled out in this way.

“We don't speak Greek fluently at home, and so we cannot help him. He shows difficulties when the exercise requires him to copy something from the book. Finally, usually, he is not focused when solving an exercise.” (personal recording of parent interview).

In addition, the *behavioral factor* is also referred to this category of effects. The *FEB* code is answered at their interviews. Parents believe that their children are usually in a hurry and careless when studying their homework. In some cases, when they feel anxious, they become aggravated and generally disagree a lot. Unfortunately, they cannot handle rejection and failure. Therefore, they are unable to complete their exercises and prepare themselves as much as best they can for the next day.

“When we are at home, he is very lively and happy. However, the same does not happen if he has homework to do. He complains a lot so we argue all the time” (personal recording of the parent interview).

Once again, the *frequency of mistakes* was reported as a factor that significantly affects students' progress. At this category, this factor is reflected in the *FEFM* code. Parents reported that the mistakes their children make are frequent and their appearance does not diminish. Several times they cannot remember the spelling rules.

"My child is having a hard time. He often claims that he forgets everything and gets confused" (personal recording of parent interview). "He struggles with his homework and makes a lot of mistakes. If he has to solve a problem, he grumbles a lot. Can't comprehend during instruction the concepts of the lesson at all. In the language course, he makes a lot of spelling mistakes" (personal recording of parent interview).

Lastly, the factor of *learning difficulties (FESLD code)* is also worth mentioning. At this point, parents presented the difficulties that their children face in courses, which are intense and are not eliminated. The difficulties that plague them are related to poor memory, spelling mistakes, need for extra time for learning exercises, difficulty in solving problems, etc.

"He has difficulty in Mathematics, he cannot understand how to think and solve problems. He also makes a lot of spelling mistakes" (personal recording of parent interview). "It is difficult for the child to attend school lessons. She says she forgets everything and gets confused. I do not know what to do. Of course, not all students excel in their studies..." (personal recording of a parent's interview).

Discussion

The presence of immigrant students in Greek schools has enormously impacted the instructive community and school reality altogether. The expanding number of immigrant children in general education schools has turned the learning institutions into multicultural schools, increasing the demands that Greek teachers are called upon to meet (Ministry of Interior, 2019).

Through this study, we attempted to explore the factors that are a deterrent on the learning of these children by collecting the views of primary school's teachers and parents. According to teachers, the factors that impact the learning of these children are related mainly to biological, psychological and social reasons.

Learning difficulties belong to biological reasons, which according to the findings, are considered: the confusion of letters and phonemes, the difficulties in grammar and writing, which are continuous and do not improve, exceptionally moderate pace of reading and the fragmented comprehension of texts. In addition, vocabulary deficiencies and poor knowledge negatively affect the reading comprehension of these students. Unfortunately, slow procedures for recognizing these difficulties have negative consequences on the learning progress of children as instructors mentioned which is in accordance with the report of Schleicher (2015). Early diagnosis combined with appropriate interventions can offer viable learning pathways. Especially "for immigrant students" it is vital to "identify early the language-training needs, since proficiency in reading is key to all learning" (Schleicher, 2015, p. 14).

Another factor that this study has as a result is the marginalization which is a problem that is often chosen by the children themselves, as they manifest behavioral problems and are incapable to oversee their emotions in stressful circumstances. All the instructors agreed that the behavioral problems they face (anger, social struggles, helplessness, crying, resentment) are very likely to lead to a negative impact on their progress. This observation is particularly important and is confirmed by Campbell (2016), who, among other things, highlighted the insecurity these children feel because they are different from the majority of their classmates.

Through this current research it was found that, in terms of social factors, most teachers believe that socialization and social interaction in general are important factors that affect the learning of these students. The conditions in which each family lives and the corresponding support it can offer to its members play a vital role, as they respectively cultivate expectations and influence children's school performance (Kilpi-Jakonen, 2011).

Another factor which affects the learning of second - generation migrant children in Greek Primary school and emerged through the research is the family environment. The bilingual environment must be taken into account. Parents are unable to assist their children as they are not fluent in Greek language and are absent from school life. Thus, there is a lack of communication between the instructor and the parent. These findings also comply with the research of Lad and Braganza (2013), according to which immigrant parents are often absent from school activities for various reasons, such as the inability of language expression, fear of stigmatization or because of work.

As for the results from the parents' interview, they came to reinforce the opinions of the teachers mentioned above. In particular, parents feel at a disadvantage as they are not fluent in Greek and are unable to support their children academically. Also, it is worth mentioning that some parents refuse to cooperate with the school essentially as they are afraid to accept that their child needs some specialized help. Consequently, once again we arrive at the opinion that immigrant parents do not participate in school activities (Lad & Braganza, 2013).

In addition, the behavior factor is also very important for parents. They believe that the mistakes children make are due to the way children read, to their haste, to their strong reactions when they are pressured. Children cannot handle

failure and rejection. This opinion is in accordance with the findings from the teachers who refer to the children's emotions and their corresponding behavior and confirms the research of Campbell (2016).

Finally, it is worth emphasizing the parents' statement regarding the number of mistakes their children make in learning and the difficulties they face. These difficulties remain. They are mainly related to spelling mistakes, poor short-term memory, difficulty in reading and solving complex problems (which presupposes the reading comprehension of the problem). Time is the main obstacle in all efforts for additional help in the classroom.

Conclusion

The learning of second-generation immigrant children in the Greek primary school is affected by factors that are of critical importance and must be taken into account in order to avoid its negative development. Through this research, these factors are presented that feature from the views of the instructors and also the parents of second-generation immigrant students.

According to instructors, learning difficulties stem from biological reasons (peculiarities from their birth), psychological reasons (behavioral problems) as emotional burden is too great for this category of children and lead them to marginalization, but also social reasons (deficient socialization and social interaction). This study also indicated that the family environment, in which there is bilingualism, is an important factor that affects the learning of these students. The fact that the students' parents do not speak the Greek language fluently leads to a lack of communication, as typically reported by the instructors, with the result that the students' learning is negatively affected.

It was also found that parents feel at a disadvantage because they do not speak the Greek language well, not being able to help them and this results in their particularly limited participation in school activities. Sometimes they are afraid to accept that their children face difficulties. In addition, apart from the instructors, parents consider the behavioral factor important for their children's school success too and report specific difficulties they face.

Therefore, the factors that emerged through the present research and affect the Learning of second-generation immigrant students emphasize the need to adopt an educational framework that will help these students quickly overcome the difficulties they confront.

Recommendations

This work is the first attempt to investigate the factors that influence the learning process of second-generation immigrant children in the Greek school context and more specifically in primary education. The interaction of special education and intercultural education not only exists but also plays a critical role, as research has shown, in overcoming barriers to the learning process of second-generation immigrant children. A key role in this process is played by the teacher who is called not just to practice his profession but to help these students.

The limited amount of research in the Greek educational sector led to the selection of this topic. The general increase in immigration in Europe and more in Greece, as a gateway to the European Union, highlights the need for teachers to adapt to the new data in order to be more effective and respond to the learning difficulties that some students may have or in learning Greek language. At the same time, there is a need for new research on how to teach and learn the Greek language to second-generation immigrants, which in turn will contribute to a series of educational reforms that will fundamentally change the Greek education system. For example, to find a solution for how these children learn the Greek language by taking advantage of their mother tongue, since the classroom teachers are not obliged to know the language from the country of origin of these children. At the same time, this solution should be used universally by the country's schools so that teachers have the privilege of implementing it and effectively helping all their students.

The present research, however, was conducted during a period of time when sanitary conditions adapted to the Covid-19 pandemic prevailed. Consequently, we believe that more research in this area and with a larger sample would yield interesting and more reliable data that could be used by decision makers in the educational community to guide proper training planning. strategies, but also by other researchers to expand the specific topic.

Limitations

The most important limitation of the present research was the conditions that prevailed due to the health measures against the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to this situation, fellow teachers were particularly wary of taking part in the research with the result that the number of participants was limited. Another major limitation was that schools for a long time operated in a technological environment that was unprecedented for teachers. Moreover, as we mentioned earlier in the article, the majority of the participating teachers, i.e., 52.3%, were over 51 years old, which makes their further engagement with the computer even more difficult. The non-direct educational process combined with a degree of fatigue expressed by some teachers due to distance learning, justifiably led to not finding a larger sample willing to participate in the research.

Acknowledgements

The researchers recognize the remarkable contribution of both the instructors who participated in most of the investigation and the guardians who responded willingly despite the covid pandemic. Their participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Liagkoura: Concept and design, data acquisition, data analysis / interpretation, statistical analysis, technical or material support. Romero Tena: Critical revision of manuscript, supervision, final approval. Sampedro Requena: Critical revision of manuscript, supervision, final approval.

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