

## Article

# Perceptions of ZEP Teachers towards Parental Involvement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families: Promoting School–Family Cooperation

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**Abstract:** Parental involvement of super-diverse families in the educational process is an integral part of the integration of emergent bilingual students, which, however, entails obstacles to its implementation in Greek schools and worldwide. The present study investigates, through a qualitative case study, the perceptions of eight primary school teachers who had worked in zones of educational priority (ZEPs) in Greek public education, which are also called reception classes, towards the involvement of immigrant and refugee parents in the educational process as well as the barriers that influence it. The methodological tool of semi-structured interviews was used, while the sample was selected with both the convenience and snowball sampling techniques. Some important results reveal the usefulness of parental involvement for all involved persons in the school–family partnership as well as the multiple obstacles to its implementation. The main difficulties encountered by the participants were the parents' lack of competence in Greek or in an intermediate language as well as their unfamiliarity with a culturally different education system. In response to this reality, the establishment of translation services at school with language and cultural interpreters that could bridge these distances while recognizing families' differences as an asset rather than an obstacle emerges as a necessity.

**Keywords:** parental involvement; refugee/migrant families; zones of educational priority—reception classes; ZEP teachers; primary school; Greek public education



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## 1. Introduction

The socio-political issue of immigration is more relevant than ever since the planet can now be paralleled with a global village whose population exceeds imposed geographical and national boundaries [1]. Particularly at the local level, from 2015 onwards, the war in Syria intensified refugee and migrant flows to Greece, mostly as a transit country, causing the most substantial humanitarian crisis of our era [2]. As a consequence of these demographic developments, the physiognomy of Greece is distinguished by a super-diverse reality in which its population has a variety of linguistic, cultural, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic characteristics [3].

In response to this reality, the Greek state deemed the need for formal education, with compulsory registration in primary and junior secondary education to emerging bi-/multilingual students through two routes. Primarily, pre-existing language support structures were reformed, and reception classes/zones of educational priority (ZEPs) began to operate in accordance with law L. F/11 (Government Gazette 171/18.03. 1996) [4]. These classes are addressed to immigrant and refugee students, which are offered in morning mainstream schools, with a mixture of parallel intensive Greek language courses and attendance in mainstream classes. Also, Structures for the Welcoming and Education of Refugees were organized, which were separate classes, exclusively for newly arrived refugees, housed in school premises [5,6].

Similar educational policies with preparatory classes for refugee and immigrant students were implemented in public schools in other European countries. In Germany, in mainstream schools, young refugees and newcomers attend a welcome class for a period between one and two years to learn the German language, and after reaching a certain German language level, they join a mainstream class. In the Netherlands, also, newcomer students usually attend International Transmission Classes for about two years before their transition to the mainstream education system [5]. Likewise, in Spain and Belgium, national legislation grants all children, regardless of immigration status, access to schools. In Spain, for the education of newly arrived immigrant and refugee students, Spanish Language Support classes are organized, while in Belgium, students enroll in so-called bridging classes in the French-speaking part of Belgium or reception classes in the Flemish part [7]. However, in both countries, despite the mandates of the European Commission to preserve the students' first language, teaching in their heritage language is not provided in a systematic way. In European schools, however, a different approach is observed as they promote the learning of the second foreign language, alongside the learning of the students' mother tongue [8].

As is evident, at the national and European levels, countries are struggling with the challenge of how to provide an integrated and inclusive environment for migrant and refugee populations in their public schools. However, for their equal participation beyond the intensive courses of learning the host language, increasingly complex teaching strategies and practices tailored to the multidimensional needs and cultural backgrounds of newcomer students are clearly required [9]. In response to this view, the involvement of immigrant and refugee parents in the educational process, which will be the main issue of this research, is presented as an important practice for the acceptance and smooth integration of emergent bilingual and multilingual students [10].

On a conceptual level, the term of parental involvement is understood in multidimensional ways, since the people involved in such a relationship, such as teachers, parents, and policy makers, do not share a common understanding of this concept [11]. Hence, parental involvement is approached as a vaguely defined concept [12] or as an umbrella concept [2] that can express a wide range of parenting behavior in children's learning [12]. This complexity is described by the behaviors, practices, and relationships of family members promoting child development [2], ranging from parents' discussions with children about homework and attendance of parents at school meetings [13] to parental participation in school leadership [12].

Based on the acceptance of this generalized terminology, numerous studies confirm that the involvement of linguistically and culturally diverse families in the educational process is beneficial both for the quality of the educational project and for those directly involved, namely teachers, parents, and students [2]. Specifically, the school-family partnership has a positive impact on the academic success of emerging bilingual/multilingual students and their psychosocial integration [14]. The above view is confirmed by the research of the ISOTIS program funded in four European countries, showing that parental involvement practices that were aware of the cultural and linguistic resources of families strengthened students' identity and helped achieve their social adjustment [15].

Furthermore, beneficial results seem to be attributed to the parents themselves, especially for immigrants and refugees. In particular, for linguistically and culturally diverse families, who often have different school experiences, their familiarity with a new education system through communication with teachers, equips them with the knowledge and confidence necessary to support their children's linguistic and social integration [16]. Moreover, according to research, the sincere interest and personal interaction of teachers with parents led to a relationship of trust [14]. Building such a relationship cultivates feelings of empathy, acceptance, and the overthrow of unequal power relations between school and family [17]. Unfortunately, in reality, the participation of immigrant and refugee parents in the educational process is either almost non-existent or takes place on unequal terms in relation to the families of children in the host country whose social or cultural

capital is in line with their school objectives [18]. Finally, through an equal cooperation among school and family, the teacher acquires a better understanding of the background of children and families [19] and, consequently, of the educational needs of children that can be integrated into teacher planning.

However, despite the confirmed multiple benefits of parental involvement in the educational process, its practical implementation for linguistically and culturally diverse families is difficult since there are many factors that act as a hindrance to its achievement [10]. More specifically, numerous studies show that immigrant and refugee parents face unique challenges in terms of their participation in the educational process due to language barriers [19–21], cultural barriers [11,14,21], and many other socioeconomic factors [10]. Finally, the school itself, with its educational staff, is insufficiently equipped with knowledge [20] and social services [22] to meet the requirements of a meaningful and equal interaction between the school and families with immigrant and refugee background.

Is it obvious that effective collaboration between teachers and parents with an immigrant and refugee background is not an easy task in practice worldwide. However, in Greece, the expectation for cooperation among school–family deteriorates even more; the research interest in parental involvement is minimal, while only in recent years has it been included in the official agenda of educational policy [23]. Finally, despite the fact that the official educational policies in Greece are gradually shifting from assimilation policies to more inclusive ones, the linguistic and cultural identity of students and, consequently, of families remains invisible in the Greek educational process [24].

Based on the above assumptions, the present study aims to explore the perceptions of eight primary school teachers who had worked in a reception class (ZEP) in Greek public education towards the parental involvement of linguistically and culturally diverse families in the educational process as well as the factors that influence or hinder parental involvement. In other words, this research attempts to investigate the current conditions in Greece for the parental involvement of linguistically and culturally diverse families in the educational process in order to form a foundation for improvement actions in subsequent research.

## 2. Methodology

As previously indicated, the reduced research interest in the parental involvement of immigrants and refugees in the Greek educational context as well as the absence of equal cooperation between school and family are the main problems in this research.

Towards the enrichment of this field, which will serve as the foundation for strengthening parental involvement of immigrants and refugees in Greek schools, it will be investigated whether the participants are positively or negatively disposed towards parental involvement, as well as whether there are factors that influence its implementation. Based on the above objectives, the research questions are formulated as follows:

- What are the perceptions of ZEP teachers towards the involvement of linguistically and culturally diverse families in the educational process?
- What factors, according to ZEP teachers, influence or hinder the involvement of linguistically and culturally diverse families in the educational process?

### 2.1. Participants

The research sample consisted of eight primary school teachers who have worked as teachers in zones of education priorities (ZEPs), also known as reception classes. In these classes, immigrant and refugee students receive individualized teaching support in the Greek language for a few hours per week, allowing them to integrate smoothly into the mainstream class. In other words, ZEP teachers are the first mediators in the linguistic and social integration of foreign students in a new educational context, which is why they are regarded as an essential sample in this research.

In terms of demographics, all participants were women, ranging in age from twenty-six to thirty-four years old. The general teaching experience in public primary schools was

three to thirteen years, while there had been teachers in reception classes from one to three years. All participants held bachelor's degrees in primary education, of which four had a master's degree in intercultural education, two had attended a training program in this field, and two teachers had no relevant training. Finally, the majority of participants were substitutes in public education and only two had recently been appointed.

Moreover, both the deliberate and snowballing sampling methods were followed for the selection of the participants due to the small sample required to investigate their individualized and subjective characteristics in qualitative research [25–27]. Initially, teachers were sought in the wider social environment of the researcher, mainly from schools that she had worked with in the past. Then, in order to fill in the required number of interviewees, the teachers who participated in the research nominated other teachers who were willing to contribute to the research.

### 2.2. Data Collection

An essential research design according to the purpose of the research implies the appropriate choice of the data collection tool. Based on this view, in the present qualitative case study, semi-structured interviews were selected since they can help to inductively investigate a multifaceted social issue [25], such as the parental involvement in multicultural classrooms. In addition, through the use of this methodological tool, there is flexibility in terms of penetration into key issues, which were not preplanned [28].

Furthermore, the protocol of the current semi-structured interview emerged from a number of studies related to the parental involvement of culturally and linguistically different families in the educational process. More specifically, the interview guide was based on questionnaires from similar surveys [29,30], while it was significantly influenced by research questions from other surveys. The research questions concerned teachers' perceptions of parental involvement [19] as well as barriers to cooperation between school and family [22]. Based on the above literature, an interview guide was constructed consisting of three axes. The first axis includes basic information of the participants, the second axis explores teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in the educational process, while the third axis focuses on the factors that affect or hinder the school–family partnership.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

After the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and transferred to a written text. The breakdown of the research data was performed with thematic analysis, which is related to the identification, organization, and understanding of repetitive patterns in a set [26–28].

More specifically, the first stage of the analysis concerns the familiarization of researchers with the material through repeated careful reading in order to identify meanings crucial for the issue under consideration. The second stage concerns the production of initial codes in key points of the texts, with the third stage being related to the search for topics or sub-themes through the use or combination of specific codes. To make it more comprehensible, in the present study, the issue of the language barrier in communicating with immigrant and refugee parents was a pervasive problem among all participants. This resulted in it being included in the broader thematic category with the factors influencing parental involvement. Moreover, the fourth stage concerns the re-examination of the topics that have arisen earlier in order to determine whether they meet the criteria to form a thematic category. Finally, the fifth stage concerns the naming of the topics, while the sixth stage is completed by analyzing and writing a complex data history in which the reader recognizes the validity of the data analysis [28,31].

### 2.4. Ethical Considerations

In the present study, the researcher initially sought to inform potential participants in detail about the subject and purpose of the research, so that they would feel impartial and free to decide whether to participate in the research process. Subsequently, the participants

completed a consent form, so that the research was legally secure [26], while the researcher created a friendly atmosphere with the participants in order to avoid feelings of emotional crisis and pressure during the interview. Finally, the investigator guaranteed the anonymity of the interviewees so that their identities could not be identified. In other words, no personal questions were asked about the residency or schools in which the teachers served, and there was no mention of their names in the transcripts.

### 3. Results

The results concern the perceptions of ZEP teachers in primary education towards:

- *Parental involvement of linguistically and culturally diverse families in the educational process.*
- *Factors affecting the parental involvement of linguistically and culturally diverse families in the educational process.*

#### 3.1. Parental Involvement of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Families in the Educational Process

At the initial stage of the interview, all teachers unanimously supported the importance of parental involvement of immigrant and refugee parents in the educational process, while some of them expanded their thinking, pointing out that the cooperation between school and immigrant/refugee families is even more important in relation to the involvement of Greek parents.

**P2:** “It is definitely (important), as for Greek parents, let alone for immigrants, since school is a continuation of the daily life of the children”.

**P6:** “Of course. I think it is very important to have a cooperation between school and home, (between) teachers and parents . . . perhaps it is even more (important) for children from the ZEP classroom”.

Then, the educators pointed out that the parental involvement of immigrants and refugees in the educational process is directly linked to the academic, linguistic, and psychosocial success of the students. In particular, students’ progress was linked to obtaining valuable information from parents about the students’ profile and their experiences in order to build an appropriate educational program tailored to their needs. Moreover, it was formulated that the interaction between parents and teachers can enhance the level of parental ability in the Greek language. This means that parents will be better able to provide support for their children’s lessons, which, in turn, will lead to their children’s language success, achieving higher expectations in motivation and avoiding school dropout.

**P5:** “(Teacher) can better understand the child’s psych-synthesis, his weaknesses and strengths, his interests . . . about previous experience . . . a lot of information . . . in order to formulate an appropriate educational program according to the needs of the child”.

**P1:** “It will definitely help the child to be successful socially or linguistically, because the parents will be on the process of learning the language and will be able to support the child more”.

**P6:** “ . . . if the parents cooperate with the teachers and support the child at home, the child will see the education more positively and will not be led to school dropout”.

Also, it was reported that the inclusion of parents in a new school in a way that their cultural identity is accepted would consequently strengthen students’ identity, leading to their social success. Through equal school and family collaboration, social behavior issues can either be prevented or addressed collaboratively. Furthermore, good cooperation between the school and families with immigrant or refugee backgrounds will lead to the cultivation of parents’ positive attitudes towards the school, and, consequently, the possible initial reservations and fears they had about it will be demolished. At this point, it is worth noting that many educators consider that a partnership respecting parents’ linguistic and

cultural identity and their importance to contribute to their children's learning empowers them psychologically and socially.

**P3:** "... various social problems that may arise due to social behavior (of the student) at school can be prevented when both the child and the parents feel the acceptance and equal respect from the school".

**P2:** "... by integrating the parents in the educational process in some way, it seems that their identity, although different from the Greek one, is also accepted. This is how children feel the wider social acceptance".

**P8:** "... through a collaboration the parents will know the educational system, they feel more active ... you give them value when they participate in the education of the children and in general it strengthens their identity ... "

Finally, some interviewees emphasized that if collaboration is not based on hierarchy and separation of powers, teachers with self-criticism can deconstruct possible discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes towards immigrant and refugee families. In other words, teachers, through collaboration, can lead a journey of self-awareness, revision, and rejection of their socially constructed perceptions of culturally diverse families.

**P3:** "... the teachers, if ... show empathy and do not stand so much in the hierarchy and the separation of powers ... they break down any prejudices had about them".

**P6:** "Because as Greek teachers we often have some prejudices in our minds ... But if we communicate with them we can discover very important things that we did not know about them and through such a process we will do our own self-criticism and possibly break down our own stereotypes".

Below follows the visualization of the results (Table 1) regarding the benefits of parental involvement of immigrant and refugee families in the educational process. The benefits are distinguished in cognitive–linguistic and psycho-social and concern students, parents, and teachers.

**Table 1.** Benefits of parental involvement of immigrant/refugee families.

<i>Benefits of Parental Involvement of Immigrant/Refugee Families</i>			
	<i>Benefits for Children</i>	<i>Benefits for Parents</i>	<i>Benefits for Teachers</i>
<i>Cognitive-linguistic benefits</i>	<i>Acquisition of valuable information about students' and their families profile -&gt; appropriate teaching program tailored to the needs Support of children in school homework by parents -&gt; preventing school dropout</i>	<i>Enhancement of parents' level in the Greek language</i>	<i>Acquisition of valuable information about students' and their families profile -&gt; appropriate teaching program tailored to the needs</i>
<i>Psycho-social benefits</i>	<i>Cultivation of students' positive attitudes towards school -&gt; Motivation for school success and higher aspirations Cultivation of students' linguistic and cultural identity Improving students' social behavior (e.g., aggression, psychological trauma)</i>	<i>Cultivation of parents' positive attitudes towards school Cultivation of parents' linguistic and cultural identity</i>	<i>Deconstruction of possible discriminatory attitudes towards immigrant and refugee families.</i>

Note: The table is an attempt by the researchers to visualize the most important findings.

### 3.2. Factors Affecting the Parental Involvement of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Families in the Educational Process

After exploring the teachers' perceptions regarding the parental involvement of linguistically and culturally diverse families in the educational process, the teachers expressed, according to their experience, relevant factors that influence or hinder it in Greek public schools. All participants pointed out that insufficient knowledge of the Greek language by the students' families and the lack of intermediate communication channels are a significant language barrier. In addition, the language barrier seems to intensify when the school does not have the necessary tools and *translation services* to support communication with immigrants and refugee parents. Almost everyone reported that official interpreters were either not at the school or showed up at the school for only a limited time after appointment.

**P8:** *"I certainly believe that a very important factor is that some parents do not know Greek or any other common language of communication, such as English".*

**P1:** *"There were very rarely interpreters . . . who helped. Usually, the interpreters were not official but acquaintances of the parents . . . our communication was a bit of broken phone".*

Furthermore, according to the participants, the *cultural distance* between the culture of the school and the culture of migrant and refugee families seems to affect the involvement of parents in the education process. Special reference was made to the fact that different cultures perceive, in a very different way, the role of parents in the education of their children. In particular, teachers are perceived as experts and solely responsible for the education of their children, and their abstention from school shows respect for the role of the teacher. Therefore, given the cultural differences, families' information about the operation of the school and the expected role as parents in the education of their children is crucial. Unfortunately, however, according to participants' testimonies, the parents are insufficiently informed about basic functional issues of the school, emphasizing that informing them about parental involvement is even more difficult.

**P6:** *" . . . often have experiences from a different education system in a very different country, such as the Arab countries, so based on their own experiences they consider that their role is more invisible and that they cannot interfere . . . in the work of teachers".*

**P7:** *"Many parents are not informed about when school starts and when school ends, so imagine how difficult it is to find out about a parental involvement".*

Moreover, the socio-economic level of immigrant and refugee families seems to affect the frequency and quality of communication with the school. Specifically, the low socio-economic situation was associated with many working hours and lack of time for parents to cooperate with the school. At the same time, the *educational level* of the parents was related to their attitude towards the school, emphasizing that educated parents sought more contact with the school.

**P6:** *" . . . often . . . parents are in a difficult financial situation, work long hours and find it difficult to get leave. So it is difficult to participate in a parent briefing".*

**P8:** *"I have noticed that my cooperation with parents who had an educational level was better".*

Additionally, interviewees emphasized that achieving parental involvement is particularly more challenging for refugee than immigrant families. The *multiple barriers of refugees* in matters of survival, such as the search for housing and work, living in camps in deplorable conditions, dealing with mental and physical trauma, and achieving linguistic and social integration in a new country, are important factors that act as a deterrent to the cooperation of parents with the school. Also, a special reference was made to the refugee parents' perception of their temporary stay in Greece, as a stopover, with the result that they do not attach such great value to Greek education and their cooperation with the school.

**P2:** “... barriers are more for refugee parents than for immigrants. The refugees face difficulties in finding a job... face basic living problems. Also, the temporary nature of the situation... they do not know how long they will stay in Greece has as a result not to invest in education”.

**P7:** “Many parents have issues of survival... see Greece as a stopover so they do not give so much basis to Greek education”.

In addition, many participants attributed the reduced or non-existent opportunities for immigrant and refugee involvement in the educational process to teachers’ and principals’ biased attitudes and perceptions towards families. In particular, it was stated that many teachers consider parents either indifferent or cognitively incapable of contributing to their children’s education through parental involvement. According to the participants, this view of the inability of parents’ participation is reinforced even more when they have to be combined with a variety of duties and obligations of teachers in everyday educational life. Finally, teachers’ perceptions of their role significantly affect parental involvement. In particular, it was reported that teachers usually prefer to take a leading role in the belief that parental involvement can make the school–family relationship competitive rather than collaborative.

**P6:** “Because as Greek teachers we often have some prejudices in our minds, that parents do not want or cannot cooperate with the school”.

**P7:** “... they (teachers) believe that... have a more leading role than parents and... that if parents are involved in the educational process, they will be negatively involved... they will guide and direct their teaching”.

Finally, an important deterrent to enhancing parental involvement on the part of teachers is their lack of training in the relevant field. In particular, the need for teacher training was emphasized, which should be specialized with theories and practices, in the parental involvement of immigrant and refugee parents. According to the teachers, in addition to their lack of relevant training, the curriculum does not provide principals and teachers with the appropriate guidelines for the involvement of linguistically and culturally different families.

**P7:** “It certainly plays a role that teachers have not received any relevant training for parental involvement, especially the parental involvement of immigrant and refugee parents”.

**P5:** “Certainly, teachers need to be trained not only on a theoretical basis. That is, it is good to get in touch with teachers who have done similar actions and have more experience in intercultural education to transfer empirical knowledge and effective practices”.

**P2:** “... there is no provision in the curriculum for the involvement of immigrant and refugee parents in the school”.

Below follows the visualization of the results (Table 2) regarding the factors that influence the parental involvement of immigrant and refugee families in the educational process. The factors are divided into two categories, those related to the families and those related to the school and educational staff.

**Table 2.** Factors affecting the parental involvement of refugee/migrant families.

<i>Factors Affecting the Parental Involvement of Refugee/Migrant Families</i>	
<i>Factors Related to Families</i>	<i>Factors Related to School and the School Staff</i>
<i>Language barriers</i> -> insufficient knowledge in Greek or in other intermediate language	<i>Lack of translation services</i> at school to support communication difficulties
<i>Cultural differences and experiences</i> related to the parents’ secondary role in children’s education and the way the school operates	<i>Inadequate information</i> of parents about the school and their relevant role -> widening cultural gap



Table 2. Cont.

<i>Factors Affecting the Parental Involvement of Refugee/Migrant Families</i>	
<i>Factors Related to Families</i>	<i>Factors Related to School and the School Staff</i>
The low <i>socio-economic level</i> of immigrant and refugee families was associated with many working hours and reduced time for cooperation	<i>Teachers' and principals' biased perceptions</i> towards families (e.g., indifferent parents) in combination with a <i>range of tasks</i> and responsibilities to perform
Parents' <i>educational level</i> was related to their attitude towards school and the frequency of cooperation with teachers	<i>Teachers' perceptions of their role</i> significantly affect parental involvement -> Taking a leadership role to avoid a competitive relationship with parents
<i>Multiple barriers</i> of refugee families combining with their perception towards the <i>temporary residence</i> in Greece -> lack of motivation for Greek education	<i>Lack of training</i> in parental involvement of linguistically and culturally diverse families in combination with insufficient guidelines from the <i>curriculum</i>

Note: The table is an attempt by the researchers to visualize the most important findings.

#### 4. Discussion

The present study brings to light the positive perceptions of participants in terms of the parental involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse families in the educational process, confirming recent studies that teachers in Europe [32] and in Greece [29,33] acknowledge the importance of integrating immigrant and refugee parents in their children's education. In fact, all the participants recognized, through the interviews, the widely accepted view that the participation of bilingual/multilingual families in education benefits all the persons involved in a multidimensional way [2], emphasizing that the participation of these families is even more imperative in relation to native Greek parents.

In particular, the involvement of parents was linked to the overall success of their children at the academic and socio-psychological levels. At the same time, the school-family cooperation psychologically and socially strengthens the immigrant and refugee parents while helping to improve their knowledge of Greek. According to the teachers, all this contributes to the cultivation of positive attitudes of the parents towards education and the provision of support to their children, a fact that will lead to students' school success. Indeed, in research, students having parents as partners are motivated to learn and aim for high expectations in order to succeed academically [2]. Finally, another study seems to be, at one point, consistent with the present research, according to which, if cooperation is not based on hierarchy and the separation of powers, self-critical teachers can deconstruct possible discrimination and stereotypes about immigrant and refugee families [19].

Moreover, the present study confirms that there are many factors that influence or hinder the parental involvement of immigrant and refugee parents in the educational process [10]. Language difficulties due to the lack of competence of the parents in the Greek language in combination with the lack of relevant translation services at school are mentioned as a dominant issue, as in other studies [21,22]. In addition, the cultural differences of the families concerning the operation of the school as well as their secondary role in the education of their children affect the contact of the parents with the school. However, in terms of parents' perceptions of their role in their children's education, it seems that cultural background is not the only issue, as there is a general tendency for both immigrant parents in Europe [11] and Greek native parents in their country [34] to consider their role as subordinate in their children's learning. In other words, it is obvious that, in many cases, the distinction of power between school and family has been internalized and socially normalized, regardless of the cultural origins of their families.

However, in any case, this cultural distance between family culture and school culture should be bridged with proper parental information. Unfortunately, in the experience of the participants, parents are little informed or not informed about education, with information gaps abounding, as explored here and in another study [11].

In other words, the present study shows that the lack of familiarity of parents with a culturally different education system in the host country is not the main cause of non-cooperation between school and family, but their lack of adequate information from the school is. This clearly indicates the unequal terms of the school–family relationship in which the social and cultural capital of immigrant and refugee families is not in line with school goals [18] reproduces social inequalities. Therefore, the present research confirms the view that, although the educational policy in Greece has been oriented from assimilation to more inclusive perspectives, the linguistic and cultural identity of students and their families remains invisible [24].

Moreover, the low socio-economic and educational background of immigrant parents was negatively associated with parental involvement. However, the multiple barriers of newly arrived refugee families seemed to make it even more difficult for them to participate in education [21]. According to the participants, in addition to the socio-psychological difficulties of the refugees, their perception of their time of residence in Greece was inextricably linked to the value they attach to parental participation. In other words, the refugees' belief in their temporality in the host country led to their lack of motivation and appreciation of Greek education. These testimonies complement other research on how the length of stay in a host country can affect parental involvement, which should be further studied in future research [19].

In addition, many participants attributed the reduced or non-existent opportunities for parental involvement in education to teachers' and principals' biased attitudes toward bilingual/multilingual families. In this research, it is also stated that these attitudes clearly reflect both the lack of intercultural empathy and training of teachers and principals to meet the complex role of immigrant and refugee parental involvement. In combination with the range of tasks they have to perform and the lack of clear guidelines from the curriculum, they further aggravate parental involvement. In addition, teachers are needed who will gather specific personal characteristics as well as a set of experiences, strategies, and knowledge that will clearly define their role in managing issues of diversity in the multicultural school context [35–39].

Similar research conducted on teachers' perceptions of the parental involvement of immigrants and refugees in Greek schools broadly confirms the multiple obstacles to its implementation. According to a quantitative survey in the form of questionnaires in which 135 teachers participated, it appeared that teachers were positively inclined towards the involvement of parents; however, factors, such as the different language, lack of personal time of the parents, prejudices, and stereotypes, seemed to hinder its implementation [30]. Something similar was shown by another quantitative survey with 100 participating teachers, in which, despite the benefits of school–family cooperation, factors, such as the difficulties in the use of the Greek language by foreign parents, the parents' lack of time, as well as insufficient intercultural training of teachers, influence parental involvement [40]. Finally, a qualitative study through semi-structured interviews complements the above research as, in addition to the lack of a common communication code, the school–family social–cultural differences, the lack of organized facilities and adequate tools, as well as the unpreparedness of teachers in intercultural education, complicate this situation [36].

In summary, in this research, it is confirmed, as in previous studies, that despite the positively expressed views of the participants about the parental involvement of immigrant and refugee parents in the educational process, there are various generalized obstacles that prevent this goal. However, the novelty of this research lies in the fact that it highlights, in depth and plainly, the multidimensional barriers to parental involvement related to three stakeholders, namely families, schools, and educational staff. Special mention should once again be made of a new finding from this research on how the belief of families about their temporary stay in Greece affects the value they attribute to Greek education and, in turn, in parental involvement. However, a commonly accepted and major problem raised in this research was primarily related to the difficulty of communicating and cooperating with parents due to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In response to this reality,

the creation of translation services at school with language and cultural interpreters who could bridge these distances while recognizing family differences as an asset rather than an obstacle emerges as a necessity.

### 5. Limitations and Future Research

Conducting a survey is a time-consuming and demanding process. Given this assumption, the present research is subject to some limitations. More specifically, this study concerned the finding of a specialized sample, which was carried out in a reasonable time framework due to the small number of participants. However, automatically, this small participation did not allow for the conclusions to be generalized on a larger scale but, rather, the studied issue was penetrated and enriched with qualitative characteristics [28]. Moreover, the existence of only one methodological tool is a weakness as the combination of other methodological tools would triangulate the data [25,26] while presenting a more holistic picture of the subject under consideration.

Based on the above limitations, future extensions of this research would involve a closed-ended questionnaire based on the research findings in order to investigate whether the findings of a case study could be generalized to a large sample with the same characteristics. Finally, another suggestion would be to explore the views of immigrant and refugee parents on parental involvement in education, to cross or contrast their views with those of teachers.

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