
LITERATURE REVIEW REPORT

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RaRE

UNDERSTANDING RISK AND RESILIENCE IN THE EDUCATIONAL
PERFORMANCE OF REFUGEE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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1. Introduction

The purpose of the report is to comprehensively review the concepts of resilience and educational performance in school-aged children with a migrant-refugee background, and to establish research guidelines and priorities that will result in the development of appropriate methodological approaches and tools for the project. The report examines the theoretical approaches to resilience, including the socio-ecological and integrative approach, and presents relevant empirical findings from studies conducted in Greece. Furthermore, it discusses the measurement tools used to assess resilience and educational performance in these children, along with the measures employed in large-scale surveys. Background bibliographical information is also presented to provide an overview of the education of refugee children in Greece post-2015, including data on their access to education from 2015-2020, the legal framework, and recent developments and provisions. Finally, the report addresses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school-aged children and adolescents, and its effect on their education and overall well-being.



2. Background and context

After the fall of communist regimes of central and eastern Europe in 1989 and the early 1990s, Greece transformed rather abruptly from a country of emigration to a host country, initially receiving immigrants from neighboring countries and mainly Albania (Cavounidis, 2018; Cavounidis-Springer 2018, Triandafyllidou, 2020). The migration landscape of Greece changed again in the 2010s, first due to the emigration of highly educated Greeks seeking employment abroad in response to the Greek economic crisis at the beginning of the decade, and subsequently due to the Syrian civil war that fueled one of the biggest refugee crises of recent times (Clayton et al., 2015). Refugee inflows reached their height in 2015, when over 1 million people entered European territory, 80% of them via the Greek borders. The majority of refugees who entered Greece wanted to continue their journey northward towards other European countries, but after several countries set up border controls, the Balkan corridor was closed, and thousands of migrants were stranded in Greece. Eventually, the issuing of the EU - Turkey statement in March 2016, providing for the safe resettlement of one Syrian refugee from Turkey to an EU country, for each (irregularly arriving) migrant returned to Turkey from Greece, halted the flow of migrants, but left some of those who arrived prior to the agreement stranded in Greece. Although dramatically decreased, arrivals to the Aegean islands continued at a low steady pace during 2016–2017 (Stathopoulou & Eikemo 2019; Ziomas et al., 2017) and a new (but significantly smaller) spike in arrivals was noted at the end of 2019, this time primarily through the Greek-Turkish land border (UNHCR, 2022). Due to volatile European asylum and relocation provisions, refugee populations are often exposed to a legal vacuum that results in the deterioration of their ability to cope with new distressing conditions in host societies and communities. Moreover, a significant number among them are minors, either accompanied, unaccompanied or separated, thus rendering education a powerful mechanism for their integration in the host society, as well as a factor influencing their well-being (Mamali & Arvanitis, 2022).

Overall, Greece, being one of the major entry points into Europe, has received over a million refugees and migrants since the intensification of the refugee crisis in 2015, of which 37% were below the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2022). As these displaced populations are highly mobile and elusive,

it is difficult to establish the actual number of refugee and immigrant children present in the country. According to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum data, in January 2022 Greece was accommodating 31,508 asylum applicants and 58,339 recognized refugees. The vast majority (90%) of the asylum applicants were living in the mainland, while 10% were staying in the various refugee accommodation schemes in the East Aegean islands (Greek Council for Refugees & Save the Children, 2022).

This substantial increase in the number of refugees and migrants in European countries, along with the realization that their stay in the country of entry will be more prolonged than originally thought, led various European Union member states to accept that they were not only faced with the challenge of accommodating the newcomers, but also of developing integration strategies (OECD, 2022; Triandafyllidou, 2020). Especially when taking into consideration the soaring number of children, and adolescents among migrants and refugees, it is evident that education emerged as a prominent field of inclusivity and integration in the host country, as well as a protective factor for their physical and mental health (Fazel et al., 2012; Mamali & Arvanitis, 2022; Ziomas et al., 2017). According to data provided by the European Commission (as stated in OECD, 2022), in 2020, out of the total number of first-time asylum applicants in Europe, 141,000 were minors and almost 10% of them were unaccompanied. Some months earlier, in October 2019, about 38,000 children and youths, out of whom 4,500 unaccompanied minors, lived in Greece. Additionally, it was approximated that 1,000 more unaccompanied minors were homeless or living under unknown circumstances (OECD, 2022). Of the total 39,000 migrant and refugee youth, 26,000 were estimated to be of school age (OECD, 2022).

Two years before the war in Ukraine the WHO UNICEF Lancet Commission (Clark et al., 2020) outlined the need to address the growing threats to children's rights and entitlements due to persisting conflicts, inequalities and deteriorating environmental conditions because of climate change. The war in Ukraine has further endangered the future of children in Europe forcing over

two million children to displacement¹. A total of 6,100 Ukrainian children is estimated to reside in Greece².

3. Theoretical approaches of resilience

In the last decades, the notion of resilience has become increasingly prominent within several disciplines and research fields. Already from the '70s, developmental psychologists have pinpointed to the fact that some children, although belonging to a high-risk group for exhibiting psychopathology (e.g., due to parental mental illness or poverty), seemed not only to survive, but to success and thrive, both academically and socially (Garmezy, 1974; Rutter, 1987). This finding urged them to expand their research focus to include cases of positive adaptation and adjustment and shift their attention from risk and trauma to competence (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013; Condly, 2006; Luthar, 2003, 2006). Resilience theory has since focused on “understanding positive developmental outcomes as well as the ability of individuals who had suffered from setbacks and multiple adversities in adolescence to show evidence of competent functioning across multiple domains in adulthood, including social relationships, job performance, and marriage” (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013, p. 379).

Hence, the term resilience has been employed to describe this phenomenon of positive development and/or adaptation under circumstances of significant adversity, threats, and trauma (Luthar, 2006; Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2007). This adaptation can be observed and evaluated through various manifestations, such as educational achievement, interpersonal competence, physical health, psychological well-being, and the establishment of healthy relationships, among others (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Luthar et al., 2000). Resilience has been conceptualized in many ways and applied across various disciplines; it has been understood as “better than expected trajectories of healthy functioning over time (Bonanno et al., 2011), the harnessing of resources to overcome adversity and sustain well-being (Panter-Brick, 2014;

¹<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/two-million-refugee-children-flee-war-ukraine-search-safety-across-borders>

²<https://www.mfa.gr/koinovouleutikos-elegchos/loipa-themata-ellinikis-exoterikis-politikis/apantese-sten-up-arithm-7318-apo-13092022-koinobouleutike-erotesi-tou-bouleute-konstantinou-kheta.html>

Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013; Ungar, 2011), or the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully (Masten, 2014)” (as cited in Panter-Brick et al., 2018). According to Masten and Narayan (2012, p. 231; also, Masten 2011), resilience refers to “the capacity of a dynamic system to withstand or recover from significant challenges that threaten its stability, viability, or development”.

Despite the plethora of different conceptualizations and theoretical approaches to resilience there are two dimensions that are recognized as essential components of resilience. The first dimension is the exposure to significant adversity or threat, which may endanger an individual's or system's normal functioning or development, whether in the past or present. The second dimension is the positive adaptation exhibited by the individual in response to the adversity they face. This is typically measured through socially competent behavior, success in age-appropriate developmental tasks, psychological wellbeing and happiness, good health, and academic or work achievement (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Luthar, 2006, 2000; Masten, 2001, 2013; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021). Therefore, as Luthar (2006) notices, resilience as a construct is not -and cannot- be directly measured, but rather inferred from the two dimensions described above. It is a process, or an outcome rather than an individual trait and and as such, it can be measured (Masten, 2014; 2018; Luthar 2000).

The field of resilience research, particularly the early work classified by Masten (2007), has identified various commonly observed factors linked to resilience that have remained largely consistent to this day. These factors are classified into two main categories, namely risk and protective/promotive ones and have been extensively studied by different researchers (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Condly, 2006; Çelik et al., 2015; Masten, 2014; Masten & Obradovic, 2006; Rutter, 1987). The potential outcome of resilience is best comprehended as a complicated and multilevel interplay between these sets of factors and the broader environment in which an individual exists (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010).

According to Cardoso and Thompson (2010) and Masten and Obradovic (2006), a risk factor denotes any individual or environmental factor that is associated with an escalated probability of developing unfavorable or undesirable outcomes across various domains of an individual's development and adjustment. In simpler terms, it refers to a "psychosocial adversity or event

that would be considered a stressor to most people and that may hinder normal functioning" (Masten, 1994). The literature suggests that risks and threats to adaptation and development can be identified at various levels, including the individual, family, and broader social environment. These factors may include sociodemographic variables such as low socioeconomic or immigrant status, or being part of a single-parent family, exposure to traumatic or stressful experiences such as abuse, discrimination, war, or natural disasters, and biological attributes such as physical illness (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2022). Furthermore, they can operate and be examined at multiple levels (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2013). While early resilience research has focused on the impact of single risk factors, later approaches have emphasized that the co-occurrence of multiple risk factors is usually responsible for negative outcomes, and that their effect on developmental and psychosocial outcomes is cumulative (Luthar, 2003).

Garmezy (1993) defines resilience as the simultaneous presence of adverse circumstances and positive attributes that ultimately aid individuals in overcoming stressors and achieving resilience. These protective and promotive factors and processes can contribute to an individual's positive adaptation and development under conditions of risk and adversity, either by decreasing the likelihood of exhibiting problems or increasing the chances of displaying positive outcomes (Masten, 2014; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021). Promotive factors, also known as assets, resources, compensatory factors, or social and human capital, are mainly responsible for enhancing adaptation in both high- and low-risk situations (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Masten, 2014, 2018; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2022). Protective factors, on the other hand, are particularly important under conditions of high risk and adversity (Masten, 2018; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021). They can be individual characteristics or environmental conditions that act as dynamic mechanisms to balance or mitigate the adversities and risks to which an individual is exposed (Rutter, 2012). In essence, they function as risk moderators, reducing or even reversing the potential harm on adaptation (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2022; Rutter, 1987, 2012).

Protective factors, like risk factors, can be identified at different levels and can be categorized into three main groups: personal attributes, family-level factors, and broader external support systems such as schools or communities (Bonanno, 2021; Masten, 2018; Werner, 1989). At the individual level, personal attributes, and skills such as positive temperament, self-efficacy, social

competence, optimism, a sense of belonging, coping strategies, problem-solving skills, empathy, humor, and having goals are considered protective factors (Bonanno, 2021; Panter-Brick, 2014). At the family level, protective factors primarily involve the support and cohesion provided by family members, particularly parents, as well as adult care and good socioeconomic status (Panter-Brick, 2014). In the wider social environment, protective factors can be described as positive relationships with friends, peers, and other adults, as well as a healthy and supportive school environment. Additionally, more general conditions like access to healthcare and public safety can also contribute to protective factors (Panter-Brick, 2014). In recent years, resilience research has shifted its focus from risk to protective/promotive factors, which were previously overlooked (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Garmezy et al., 1984). Seminal scholars have even advocated for a "growing momentum to shift attention from risk to resilience in health research and practice" (Panter-Brick, 2014, p. 432), indicating a paradigm shift. This shift towards focusing on well-being, strengths, resources, and transformation rather than the negative implications of adversity is in line with a larger movement towards salutogenic approaches that focus on the positive aspects of human development (Antonovsky, 1979). These approaches are becoming more prevalent in social science disciplines as a counter-narrative to discourses of vulnerability and social suffering (Masten, 2018; Panter-Brick, 2014).

3.1 The socio-ecological approach

Many scholars have emphasized the importance of applying a developmental lens in resilience approaches (Motti-Stefanidi et al, 2017; Masten, 2007). This perspective involves examining the ways in which children and youth adapt to their social contexts based not only on individual traits but also on their interactions with proximal and distal environments, including family, school, and neighborhood. Masten (2014; 2018) notes that developmental systems theory has emerged as an integrative framework in resilience science. This framework emphasizes the interdependence of various biological, psychological, social, and ecological systems at different levels, and suggests that the resilience of an individual system depends on the resilience of connected systems (Masten & Cicchetti, 2016; Ungar & Theron, 2020). As Masten (2018, p.5) pinpoints "resilience of a system at one level will depend on the resilience of connected systems" and, hence, individual resilience will depend on the interactions between individual processes and contextual factors".

Therefore, resilience should not be viewed as a stable personal trait but as the outcome of dynamic interactions among different systems (Betancourt & Khan, 2008).

The factors that influence resilience can be grouped into three categories: (1) individual attributes of children, (2) aspects of their families, and (3) characteristics of their wider social environments (Masten & Garmezy, 1985; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Luthar, 2003). Additionally, resilience can be applied to different systems at various scales, such as systems within a person, families, classrooms, schools, or ecosystems (Masten, 2007; 2011; Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). This developmental systems approach to resilience is rooted in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory or bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), which highlights the role of proximal and distal social contexts in shaping human development and resilience.

The origins of this “relational developmental systems” resilience framework (Masten, 2018) can be found in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory or bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006); one of the most seminal ecological developmental models that has been incorporated into resilience approaches. Bronfenbrenner (1977, p. 514) conceptualizes human development as the:

“Progressive accommodation throughout the life span, between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives, as this process is affected by relations obtaining within and between these immediate settings, as well as the larger social contexts, both formal and informal, in which the settings are embedded.”

Such an approach extends the focus beyond the individual level and additionally includes the proximal and distal social contexts in which the individual is contained. The development of children and, hence, their well-being and resilience is affected by these various systems, as well as the interactions among them. Moreover, these levels constitute hierarchically nested, multidimensional, and ever-changing arrangements of structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012).

Bronfenbrenner (1977; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) conceptualized human development as occurring in an ecosystem centered around the child, while he distinguished four key developmental contexts (or hierarchically nested levels of environmental influence), namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem. The first level of a child's social ecology, the microsystem refers to the relations a person develops with its most immediate and proximal setting. It includes the interactions with the child's, objects, and symbols in their family, peer, and school environment (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The mesosystem comprises the relations, connections, and interactions between a person's various microsystems. A typical example is the relationship between family experiences and peer relations: children facing rejection by their parents, especially the mother, might find it more challenging to develop a positive relationship with their peers at school (Pallini et al., 2014). The exosystem is an extension of the mesosystem and comprises other social structures, either formal or informal, which impact a child's development, even though they do not directly interact with the child. These structures can encompass children's immediate settings or have an indirect influence upon them. They comprise major societal and political institutions, the mass media, governmental agencies, as well as informal concepts like the neighborhood, the workplace, or other informal social networks. The macrosystem, in contrast, does not pertain to a particular context of a child's development but instead pertains to the broader and more distant social, political, and historical context; the overall culture and its "prototypes" that "set the pattern for the structures and activities occurring at the concrete level" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). This way, the macrosystem influences all other levels of children's social ecology, indirectly influencing their development and wellbeing (Betancourt & Khan, 2008).

Ergo, a socio-ecological framework offers a more "social" and contextualized approach to the study and assessment of resilience, making it particularly relevant for examining the educational performance and resilience of refugee children who have experienced major adversities (Aleghfeli & Hunt, 2022; Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Masten, 2014). It offers a broader perspective on resilience, while it is sensitive on the particularities of various cultural contexts.

3.2 The integrative approach

The concept of resilience has evolved to encompass a systems perspective, which recognizes the importance of interactions between multiple systems and levels where an individual's development occurs (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Luthar, 2000; 2003). This perspective emphasizes that resilience is studied in context, taking into account the social, cultural, and economic systems that individuals are part of (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2011, 2014; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2018). Recent theoretical developments in resilience take an integrative approach that combines socio-ecological approaches with a risk and resilience framework, specifically designed to understand the adaptation and development of migrant-refugee origin children and youth (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021; Panter-Brick et al., 2018; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2018). This approach captures “the variation in individual, relational, and contextual factors that contribute to resilience” (Panter-Brick et al., 2018, p. 1804). The integrative approach recognizes that resilience is a complex process that involves interactions between individuals and their environment, and emphasizes the importance of social support, positive relationships, and cultural context in promoting resilience (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2018).

Motti-Stefanidi and her colleagues (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021) have built upon earlier work on resilience research and particularly Masten's (2014) developmental risk and resilience framework, as well as Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological approach of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), to construct a multilevel integrative risk and resilience framework. Adopting an interdisciplinary perspective, this line of thought has also incorporated a variety of theoretical frameworks, like Berry's cultural transmission model (Berry et al., 2006), García Coll's model for examining developmental competencies in minority children (Coll et al., 1996), and Verkuyten's immigrant adaptation model (2005). This approach extends beyond individual level-attributes to account for diversity in children's adaptation, and includes proximal-level factors, like the school, family, and peer-groups, as well as more distal ones, like the sociopolitical context of host societies. Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, Marks and Katsiaficas (2018) have further added the global level of context affecting migration. This is especially relevant for immigrant and refugee children, for whom these more distant developmental contexts are especially significant. Ergo,

resilience is understood as a dynamic, developmental process rather than a static result or characteristic; it is considered to be a capacity rather than an individual trait and it is expected to change depending on the environment and a person's interactions with the different levels (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Luthar, 2000, 2003; Masten, 2014; Rutter, 1987).

According to the integrative approach, the psychosocial adjustment for children and youth in post-migration contexts is defined by risk and protective factors at different levels: a) the global-level b) the political and social contexts of reception (e.g., attitudes of host societies, negative media narratives of migration, asylum policies, c) the microsystems (neighborhood, school), and d) the individual-level context, referring to children's own experiences and personal attributes (OECD, 2019, Suarez- Orozco et al., 2018). As Motti-Stefanidi et al. (2021, p. 969) highlight, "the four levels of influence are nested within each other, interconnected, and interacting". Risk and protective/promotive factors are examined within each of these levels of children and youth's ecological systems, as well as at the level of the individual person as a system (Suarez-Orozco, 2018; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021). In line with a developmental systems approach to resilience, these different levels - individual, family, community, and culture - can impact the adaptation and development of refugee and migrant children either independently or in interaction with each other. This influence is considered to be bidirectional as suggested by previous research (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2018). Refugee and migrant children's adaptation can be assessed on the basis of their success in age-salient developmental tasks, ability to accomplish acculturative tasks, and their overall psychological well-being (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012).

The global level has a significant impact on international migration patterns and flows, which have reached unprecedented levels in the post-World War II era. This level refers to the push and pull factors that influence migration, including economic and sociopolitical crises and conflicts, the absence of job opportunities, gang violence, economic inequalities between countries, wars, political upheavals, terrorism, natural disasters, and climate change. Immigrant and refugee-origin children and youth are affected differently by these factors compared to their nonimmigrant peers, which adds an additional layer to their developmental trajectory (Motti-

Stefanidi et al., 2021; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2018). These children must navigate "shifting multicultural contexts of socialization" (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2018, p. 785), as they adapt to both the culture of the host society and that of their country of origin, which can often be conflicting. The second level that impacts the adaptation and development of immigrants and refugees is the political and social context of reception. This level includes the institutional settings of host societies such as policies, programs, and legislations that define the experience of migrants and refugees, such as national immigration policies and resettlement programs for refugees and asylum seekers. It also encompasses the cultural aspects of host societies, expressed in social representations, cultural beliefs, ideologies, and attitudes towards immigrants (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2018). These factors impact the short-term adaptation of newly arrived refugees and migrants and also influence their developmental trajectories in the long run. A welcoming environment, characterized by a society that values and promotes multiculturalism and is open to immigrants expressing their identities, is crucial for their positive adaptation and development. However, the opposite situation, where immigrants face discrimination, can have a negative impact on their academic performance and psychological well-being, particularly for immigrant adolescents (Marks et al., 2015).

The microsystems level focuses on the child's immediate environments, including the family, school, and neighborhood. These environments constitute the child's "lived space" and are significant influences on their development and acculturation. The family is particularly important for a child's resilience and can have an impact on other levels of their development, such as school and peer groups. Active parental involvement in school has been found to enhance academic achievement, school engagement, and conduct, while acting as a moderator for other risk factors. The school's resources and climate also directly affect children's development and adaptation, with a safe, well-equipped, and integrated school fostering feelings of safety, belonging, engagement, and trust, all linked to resilient outcomes. The neighborhood's influence is also important, with crime rates, safety and policing, potential segregation, differentiated economic opportunities, degree of social cohesion, and the existence of supportive networks all playing a role. (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012, 2022; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Lastly, at the individual level, resilience of immigrant and refugee children and youth should be examined through their developmental competencies and resources, such as personality, cognition, social-

emotional self-regulation, self-efficacy, personal motivation, and sense of belonging, as well as their intersecting social positions, including socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and legal status, which all impact their experiences in the host countries (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2018; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021). In general, the integrative approach suggests operationalizing resilience as a positive construct (Feldman, 2020), employing a strengths-based perspective and not a deficit model approach (Motti-Stefanidi, 2020).

4. Empirical findings from relevant studies in Greece

Over the last years, the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) has participated, either as a coordinator or as a partner, in a significant number of international and European research projects on migrant-related issues. These include, inter alia, empirical surveys on newly arrived refugees (REHEAL) and on unaccompanied minors (REHEAL-UAM) in Greece (Frangiskou et al., 2020; Stathopoulou, 2019; Stathopoulou & Eikemo, 2019), as well as the MIGHEAL study on health inequalities among migrant population (Stathopoulou et al., 2018) that provide valuable information about the situation and characteristics of the post 2015 arriving refugees, as well as the adversities that they faced and no doubt continue to face after their arrival in the European territory. The REHEAL study, conducted among newly arrived adult refugee claimants living in refugee camps across Greece between July and September 2016, aimed to examine the reasons for fleeing the homeland and evaluate living conditions in Greece, as well as record self-reported health status, health care needs, and discriminative and traumatic experiences of the refugee population residing in the camps (Stathopoulou et al., 2019). The study shows that refugees' post-displacement recovery and healing process are affected by both pre- and post-displacement factors. Post-displacement factors and particularly exposure to stressors in the host country (e.g., poor living conditions, inadequate access to healthcare, uncertainty about the future, social isolation, and perceived discrimination), have a significant impact on their mental and physical wellbeing, consequently affecting their resilience (Stathopoulou et al., 2019; Rapp et al., 2019).

Interestingly, the MIGHEAL study, which examined health inequalities among migrant and native-born population in Greece, confirmed the so-called “healthy immigrant paradox”, where migrant/refugees have lower odds of reporting poor or very poor health (Eikemo et al., 2018;

Stathopoulou et al., 2018). However, according to the REHEAL data, even though the majority had good or fair self-reported health, many suffered from non-communicable diseases; their medical needs were to a large extent not met after their arrival in Greece (Jervelund et al., 2019), while they exhibited high levels of exposure to extreme trauma and lack of a sense of safety (Stathopoulou et al., 2019). Gunst et al. (2019) also corroborate the above, by pointing out refugees and migrants' inadequate access to healthcare in Greece, largely a result of the massive immigration influx after 2015 that challenged the extant healthcare system.

Refugee trauma is even more pronounced in the case of children: according to a *Save the Children* report, children stranded in the Greek islands exhibited signs of depression, anxiety, and distress, and suffered significant consequences on their physical and mental health at a crucial time of their development (Lancet, 2017). The hospitalization of refugee children in the largest general pediatric hospital in Greece has shown that the physical and mental hardships they face before and during displacement persist even after their arrival (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2016). EKKE's study on unaccompanied minors (Pilot Study on safety and protection among Unaccompanied Minors in Greece REHEAL-UAM), which was designed in collaboration with the Harvard program for Refugee Trauma and took place at the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017 in UAM shelters in Athens, has highlighted the risk of depression and anxiety that refugee minors are subject to, mostly as a result of the multiple traumatic events they had experienced before displacement and during their journey to Greece (Stathopoulou et al., 2019).

The aforementioned research on migrants/refugees offers valuable data not only on the conditions and needs of newly arrived refugees in Greece since the peak of the European refugee crisis in 2015, but also on the determinants and the factors influencing their physical and mental well-being, both at individual and societal level. However, these research projects did not explicitly focus on resilience as a framework, nor did they emphasize the role of the educational setting as a primary means of integrating refugee children. Additionally, they solely focused on the risk factors and adversities that migrants and refugees faced without exploring the potential effects of protective and promotive factors on enhancing their resilience.

A review of the relevant literature reveals that research on the risk and protective factors shaping the educational performance of school-aged accompanied and unaccompanied refugees and

migrants in Greece is rather limited, with the significant exception of the work of Motti-Stefanidi and her colleagues (Anagnostaki et al., 2016; Motti-Stefanidi, 2014, 2015; Motti Stefanidi et al., 2022). Nearchou (2018; Nearchou et al., 2014) has also conducted research on resilience in children, and particularly in the context of Greek elementary school, though not in children of migrant-refugee origin, while Leontopoulou (2006) has measured resilience in freshmen university students. Motti-Stefanidi conducted another study on youth's resilience in the school context (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2022), which examined the impact of psychosocial resources during the recent economic crisis using a quasi-experimental design. Additionally, several studies have been conducted in the form of interventions aimed at promoting the well-being and overall resilience of refugee children. An example of an intervention aimed at promoting resilience in refugee children is the work of Foka et al. (2021), who developed and implemented a program in three Greek refugee camps in 2017. The intervention targeted protective factors and positive resources such as well-being, hope, self-esteem, and sense of belonging. The results of the study suggest that such interventions are effective in low-resource settings, as improvements in well-being, self-esteem, optimism, and depressive symptoms were observed in the treated population. Hatzichristou and her colleagues (Hatzichristou et al., 2014; Hatzichristou et al., 2017) have also developed a program to promote the psychological well-being and resilience of students and teachers during the economic crisis.

Prior to 2015, Motti-Stefanidi conducted a longitudinal study on the risks and resources contributing to the adaptation and well-being of adolescent immigrants in Greek schools (the Athena Study of Resilient Adaptation). Immigrant status and socioeconomic adversity have been identified as significant risk factors for students' initial academic performance, even when resources were controlled (Motti-Stefanidi, Asendorpf, & Masten, 2012). In general, according to the study, immigrant students were less well adapted initially with respect to major developmental tasks (academic achievement, conduct, peer acceptance) and less engaged in school compared to their non-immigrant classmates but did not fall behind in their psychological well-being (Motti-Stefanidi, 2014). In other words, the "immigrant paradox", according to which immigrant children and youth adapt better than their non-immigrant peers, was not substantiated in the case of Greece (Motti-Stefanidi, 2014). The study included both first- and second-generation immigrant students enrolled in Greek urban public schools (mainly Albanians

and Pontic-Greek immigrants from the former Soviet Union) and their nonimmigrant classmates, and was conducted in three waves, during the first 3 years of secondary school (ages 13–15). In attempting to define who among immigrant youth succeeds and why, Motti-Stefanidi (Motti-Stefanidi, Asendorpf, & Masten, 2012; Motti-Stefanidi, 2015), identifies parental school involvement as a factor moderating the effect of immigrant status both for academic achievement and school rule-abiding conduct. Moreover, family functioning and individual attributes contributed to individual differences in migrant children's adaptation. Therefore, she supports the need for a multilevel, differentiated, and contextualized approach, since adaptation and resilience depend on a variety of factors, ranging from individual attributes and resources to the role of the child's family to the wider societal context, including the institutionalized setting and the attitudes towards migrants and diversity. In subsequent cross-sectional studies conducted in middle school adolescents (Anagnostaki et al., 2016), immigrant status continued to be an important predictor of academic achievement, even when controlling for resources and other social risks. Bezevegkis (2008) offers some interesting data regarding the acculturation and psychosocial adaptation of migrants in Greece prior to the refugee crisis.

Motti-Stefanidi's studies on migrant children's academic achievement in Greece have demonstrated that social adversity and negative life events are significant predictors of lower academic achievement among migrant children and youth. Additionally, even when controlling for other social risks and resources, migrant status still poses a unique risk for academic achievement (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2016). However, there is individual variation in academic achievement among migrant children, which is related to both individual and family-level resources such as self-efficacy and parental school involvement (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012, Motti-Stefanidi 2014, 2015). Individual and family-level resources, such as self-efficacy and parental school involvement, are important factors in enhancing children's resilience. However, these attributes alone may not be sufficient, as migrant, and social status still play a role in predicting academic achievement even when these resources are taken into account. This highlights the significance of factors related to attitudes towards migrants in host societies, as emphasized by Motti-Stefanidi and her colleagues (2016).

5. Measures

5.1. Measurement tools for resilience of children and adolescents

Nevertheless, the abundance of resilience research over the past decades, the operational definition of resilience has varied considerably (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2007). This is also evident in the lack of consensus on how to best assess a child's and an adolescent's resilience (Ahern et al., 2006; Smith-Osborne & Bolton, 2013; Windle et al., 2011). Despite the lack of clear definition and interpretation of resilience several scales have been developed, initially for adults and later for children and adolescents (Windle et al., 2011). The existing resilience measures have operationalized the construct of resilience as either a personality characteristic (or cluster of traits) or as a dynamic process of personal, interpersonal, and contextual risk and protective systems (Smith-Osborne & Bolton, 2013). However, several systematic reviews of resilience measures have noted the scant varied evidence of their psychometric properties highlighting the urgent need for further research into this field (Ahern et al., 2006; Smith-Osborne & Bolton, 2013; Vannest et al., 2019; Windle et al., 2011).

The first measure is the Resiliency Skills and Abilities Scales (RSAS; Jew et al., 1999), which conceptualizes resiliency as a personal trait. The RSAS is grounded in the cognitive appraisal theory of Mrazek and Mrazek (1987) and assesses specific psychological characteristics that children and youth exhibit in stressful situations to cope with psychological harm (Jew et al., 1999). The authors conducted four studies with clinical and non-clinical samples of adolescents to validate the measure. The final version of RSAS comprises 35 items distributed in three subscales: a) Active Skill Acquisition ($\alpha = .79$), b) Future Orientation ($\alpha = .91$), and c) Independence/ Risk Taking ($\alpha = .68$). Each subscale is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) and is appropriate to use for students aged 12–18 (Jew et al., 1999). The RSAS appears both reliable and valid, showing acceptable intraclass correlations indicating test–retest reliability and internal consistency (Smith-Osborne & Bolton, 2013; Vannest et al., 2019). Although the authors urged for further research with diverse groups of children and youth of different ages, locations, and environmental stressors to refine the instrument, later research and use of the instrument is limited.

The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson 2003) is the second self-report measure of resilience as a personal trait for adults and older adolescents (aged 10–18). The CD-RISC is comprised of 25 items, each of which is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 0 = *Not true at all* to 4 = *True nearly all of the time*), with higher scores reflecting greater resilience (ranges 0-100). Initial factor analyses identified five factors: a) high standards, tenacity, and competence (8 items), b) trust in one's instincts, tolerance of negative affect, and strengthening effects of stress (seven items), c) positive acceptance of change, and secure relationships (5 items), d) perceived control (3 items), and e) spiritual influences (2 items; Connor & Davidson, 2003). The scale has been administered in several studies to diverse cohorts of adults - groups in the community, primary care outpatients, general psychiatric outpatients, a clinical trial of generalized anxiety disorder, and two clinical trials of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - demonstrating good psychometric properties (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Windle et al. (2011) in their psychometric review of resilience measures using quality assessment criteria rated the CD-RISC in the top four in respect to its psychometric properties. There are over 90 approved translations of the CD-RISC and two abbreviated versions (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007; Vaishnavi et al., 2007). However, the five-factor structure of the original study has not been replicated in subsequent cross-cultural studies with adolescents in favor of a unidimensional structure (e.g., Dominguez-Cancino et al., 2022).

The Adolescent Resilience Scale (ARS) is a resilience instrument developed in Japan to assess the individual psychological features of resilient older adolescents and younger adults (Oshio et al., 2003). The ARS explores three protective factors: a) Novelty Seeking (ability to show interest in and concern about a variety of events), b) Emotional Regulation (a trait of individuals who exhibit composure and control their emotions), and c) Positive Future Orientation (approach to outlook, dreams and goals in the future; Nakaya et al., 2006). The scale is comprised of 21 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = *definitely no* to 5 = *definitely yes*). Chronbach coefficients alpha were .85 for the Total score, .79 for the Novelty Seeking, .77 for the Emotional Regulation and .81 for the Positive Future Orientation (Oshio et al., 2003). The construct validation on a Japanese population of 207 young adults between the ages of 19 and 23 (Oshio et al., 2003) differentiated among groups who were vulnerable, resilient, and well adjusted. The scale has shown good convergent and discriminant validity with the American-validated scale of the Big Five Personality

Inventory (Nakaya et al., 2006). The results support the construct of adolescent resilience, but caution is needed when used with other populations.

The Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA; Prince-Embury, 2006) assess the relative strength of three aspects of personal resiliency in children and adolescents (ages 9-18): a) Sense of Mastery, b) Sense of Relatedness, and c) Emotional Reactivity. The first two constructs entail protective characteristics and the third is a personal risk factor (Prince-Embury, 2008). The RSCA is a 64 item self-report questionnaire written at a third-grade reading level. Response options are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = *never* to 5 = *almost always*; Prince-Embury, 2008). The Sense of Mastery scale is comprised of 20 items and distinguishes three personal characteristics - optimism, self-efficacy, and adaptability. The Sense of Relatedness scale includes 24 items and encompasses four aspects contributing to the sense of relatedness - social trust, access to support, social comfort, and tolerance of difference. The Emotional Reactivity scale consists of 20 items scale and assesses sensitivity, recovery time, and impairment because of emotional arousal (Prince-Embury & Courville, 2008). Previous studies have indicated α (Cronbach's alpha) for the three global scales ranging from 0.90 to 0.94 for American students between ages 15 and 18 (Prince-Embury & Courville, 2008). In addition, confirmatory factor analysis has confirmed the construct validity of the three-scale and 10-subscale structure of the RSCA in three samples of children (ages 9-18) from the United States (Prince-Embury & Courville, 2008; Smith-Osborne & Bolton, 2013). The RSCA can be used in universal screening of children and adolescents for psychological vulnerability with the use of Resource and Vulnerability Indexes (Prince-Embury, 2008, 2013). The RSCA has also been used to assess personal resiliency in a Norwegian student sample (Sætren et al., 2019) and incarcerated male adolescent offenders within the UK (Gibson & Clarbour, 2017).

The Adolescent Resilience Questionnaire (ARQ; Gartland et al., 2011) is a comprehensive self-administered instrument for adolescents (11–19 years old) that assesses not only personal characteristics, but also resources in the environment that contribute to resilience. The measure includes 12 scales that assess resilience variables across five domains. The individual domain measures 5 traits of personal resilience: a) Confidence (8 items), b) Emotional Insight (8 items), c) Negative Cognition (8 items), d) Social Skills (8 items), and e) Empathy and Tolerance (8 items).

The environmental domains of family (11 items), peers (15 items), and school (16 items), are assessed based on the parameters of Connectedness and Availability (Gartland et al., 2011). The final environmental domain (Community) is assessed by Connectedness (6 items). The ARQ consists of 88 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = *Almost never* to 5 = *Almost always*). The ARQ was developed through extensive literature reviews and focus groups discussions, and psychometric testing; the validation was conducted on a sample of 451 Australian adolescents with adequate to good internal consistency (range between .70 and .90; Gartland et al., 2011). The scale has since been translated and studied into multiple languages (e.g., Romanian, Spanish, Swedish, Persian, and Nepali) presenting adequate psychometric properties, although alternative factor structure is recommended to account for contextual differences (Anderson et al., 2020; Cheraghi et al., 2017; Guilera et al., 2015; Marici, 2015; Nilsson et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2019). This is a lengthy instrument and is recommended when the focus is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of resilience in youth across multiple domains (Anderson et al., 2020).

The Resilience Scale for Adolescents (READ; Hjemdal et al., 2006) is a self-report scale that was developed in Norway to assess adolescent resilience as well as a multidimension construct. The READ consists of only positively phrased 28 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = *totally disagree* to 5 = *totally agree*). Higher scores on the READ indicate higher levels of resilience (Hjemdal et al., 2006). The scale includes five subscales: a) Personal Competence, b) Social Competence, c) Structured Style, d) Family Cohesion, and e) Social Resources. The READ was developed directly from the Norwegian Resilience Scale for Adults (Friborg et al., 2003); this provides opportunity to conduct longitudinal research on protective factors across adolescence and adulthood. The READ was validated on 425 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15 in Norway (Hjemdal et al., 2006). Smith-Osborne and Bolton (2013) found in their review of resilience measures READ as both reliable and valid. A Norwegian validation of a shorter, 23-item version of the scale was reported as yielding acceptable psychometric properties (von Soest et al., 2010). Further studies have validated the READ in diverse samples and contexts (Janousch et al., 2020; Kelly et al., 2017; Moksnes & Haugan, 2018; Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2020; Ruvalcaba-Romero et al., 2014; Stratta et al., 2012).

The Resilience Youth Development Module (RYDM; Furlong et al., 2009) is a component of the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), a school-focused questionnaire that measures risk and resilience factors through student self-reports. The RYDM is a 56-item test for elementary and secondary students assessing 6 internal assets (personal strengths) and 11 external resources (protective factors). Internal resilience assets include personal strengths such as cooperation and communication, empathy, problem-solving, self-efficacy, self-awareness, and goals and aspirations. The external resilience assets assess students' perceptions of caring relationships, high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation in their home, school, community, and peer group with peers (Furlong et al., 2009). Each item of the questionnaire is rated on a 4-point Likert scale (from 1 = *Not at all true* to 4 = *Very much true*). Previous research (Furlong et al., 2009; Hanson & Kim, 2007) has provided evidence supporting the psychometric properties of the RYDM. Specifically, Furlong and colleagues (2009) examined the general psychometric properties of the RYDM in a sample of more than 141,000 California students in grades 7, 9 and 11. International research using RYDM to assess internal and external resilience in Greek elementary school students (Nearchou et al., 2014) and Indonesian secondary school students (Suranata et al., 2017) has underlined the importance of the cultural and social contexts in resilience.

The Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011) is a widely used culturally sensitive resilience instrument that aligns with the socio-ecological context in which children experience and cope with adversity. The instrument developers collaborated with a team of researchers and community members from 11 countries following a mixed methods approach to develop a culturally and contextually sensitive self-report instrument of child and youth resilience. The CYRM was originally validated with a purposeful sample of 1,451 youth aged 13-23 facing diverse forms of adversity; exploratory factor analysis and expert consensus resulted in 28 items (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). The CYRM-28 has a three-factor structure that measures resilience at the level of individual, relational, and contextual systems (Liebenberg et al., 2013). Windle and colleagues (2011) in their review of 15 resilience scales highlighted that only the CYRM-28 considers how cultural context shapes resilience.

After reviewing existing evidence from 12 studies from 19 unique groups within eight countries, Renbarger et al. (2020) reported that the overall scale and individual subscales of the CYRM-28 have moderate levels of reliability (Cronbach's alpha estimates .73). However, the authors caution against using the CYRM-28 to assess and compare resilience in different cultures as it may insufficiently capture the cultural influences that might affect resilience. They noted that context-specific research on resilience with a narrower sample (e.g., refugees) is needed to understand distinctions in resilience between communities (Renbarger et al., 2020). These cultural variations are evident in the efforts to validate the CYRM-28 in youth from different countries such as Canada (Liebenberg et al., 2013), New Zealand (Sanders et al., 2015), Iran (Zand et al., 2016), and South Africa (van Rensburg et al., 2019).

As the CYRM-28 is a lengthy instrument, especially when used as a part of a broader measurement protocol, the 12-item version of CYRM was developed (Liebenberg et al., 2013). The CYRM-12 is a brief tool that can be used by clinicians and researchers to assess resilient capacities at multiple levels (individual, peer, family, and community; Liebenberg et al., 2013). The 12-items of CYRM are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = *does not describe me at all* to 5 = *describes me a lot*) with higher scores indicating increased presence of resilience processes. Cronbach's Alpha for the 12 items is also satisfactory ($\alpha = .84$). The validation of the measure was conducted to 1,494 Canadian 10- to 18-year-old youth (Liebenberg, Ungar, & LeBlanc, 2013). Other studies have tested the factor structure of the CYRM-12 among diverse groups of children and youth. For example, Panter-Brick and colleagues (2018) tested the Arabic version of the CYRM-12 among a sample of Jordanian youth and Syrian youth refugees in Jordan and found it to be a valid measure of self-reported resilience in Arabic-speaking refugee and host-community youth. A recent validation study (Rasch model) with a sample of 408 individuals in Canada resulted in the development of CYRM-R, which is a 2-subscale measure (17 items) of resilience (Jefferies et al., 2018).

In conclusion, the limitation of instruments such as the Resiliency Skills and Abilities Scales (RSAS), the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) and the Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents (RSCA) is their narrow conceptualization of resilience addressing mainly individual characteristics (Windle et al., 2011). Instruments that approach resilience as the dynamic

interplay of personal characteristics and environmental resources allow a contextualized understanding and measurement of resilience (Masten, 2014; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2021). These include the Adolescent Resilience Questionnaire (ARQ), Resilience Scale for Adolescents (READ), Resilience Youth Development Module (RYDM) and Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM). These resilience measures examine factors in adolescents' ecology (e.g., individual, family, peers, school, and community) associated with positive outcomes in the face of adversity (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). Nevertheless, the CYRM is the only instrument that emerged through cross-cultural research (Windle et al., 2011) and has also been used to assess resilience of child and adolescent immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Finland (Abuakibash & Lera, 2015; Dehnel et al., 2022; Giordiano et al., 2014; Kangaslampi et al., 2015). Thus, the CYRM (especially the abbreviated form – CYRM-12) can allow a broader examination of educational resilience of students who are refugees while considering the particularities of their cultural contexts.

5.2 Measurement tools for general psychosocial adjustment/well-being of children and adolescents

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 2001; Goodman et al., 2003) is a brief behavioral screening questionnaire for psychological adjustment of children and adolescents aged 4 to 17 years. The SDQ can be completed by parents and teachers of children aged 4–17 and by youth aged 11-17 (Goodman, 2001). The SDQ includes 25 positive and negative attributes covering 5 scales (5 items each): a) Emotional Symptoms, b) Conduct Problems, c) Hyperactivity/Inattention, d) Peer Relationship Problems, and e) Prosocial Behavior. The SDQ items are scored on a 3-point Likert scale (from 0 = *not true*, 1 = *somewhat true*, and 2 = *certainly true*). The score for each of the five scales is generated by summing the scores for the five items that make up that scale, thereby generating a scale score ranging from 0 to 10 (Goodman, 2001). The SDQ was validated on a nationally representative sample of 18,415 children and adolescents aged 5 to 16 years in the general British population; results from parents, teachers, and children aged 11 to 16 years support the use of the SDQ as a dimensional measure of child well-being. The SDQ total difficulties score, which is a sum of hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, conduct problems, and

peer problems, has also found to have sound psychometric properties (Achenbach et al., 2008; Goodman & Goodman, 2009). Goodman and colleagues (2010) recommended the use of the broad constructs of internalizing problems (emotional and peer symptoms) and externalizing problems (conduct problems and hyperactivity/inattention) in low-risk or general population samples. Extended versions of the SDQ include a brief impact supplement and there is also a modified version for the parents or nursery teachers of 2–4-year-olds (Goodman, 2001).

The SDQ has been translated in more than 80 languages and is currently one of the most frequently used instruments in epidemiological studies for child and adolescent mental health around the world (e.g., Becker et al., 2018; Bibou-Nakou et al., 2018; Duinhof et al., 2020; Richter et al., 2011; Stevanovic et al., 2015). The SDQ has extensively been used in studies with children who are refugees in many countries such as Lebanon (Sim et al., 2018), Denmark (Nielsen et al., 2008), Belgium (Derluyn & Brogkaert, 2007), Australia (Hanes et al., 2017), Turkey (Sapmaz et al., 2017) and Vietnam (Vaage et al., 2011). Hence, the SDQ can be a valuable screening tool for identifying psychosocial strengths and challenges of students who are refugees.

The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) is another widely used instrument that assesses behavioral and emotional problems in children and adolescents (ages 6-18). The CBCL together with the Teacher's Report Form (TRF) and Youth Self-Report (YSR) is part of a multi-formant assessment system. The CBCL consists of 113 questions, scored on a three-point Likert scale (0= *absent*, 1 = *occurs sometimes*, 2 = *occurs often*). The CBCL assesses eight empirically based syndrome scales: a) Anxious/ Depressed, b) Withdrawn/ Depressed, c) Somatic Complaints, d) Social Problems, e) Thought Problems, f) Attention Problems, g) Rule-Breaking Behavior, and h) Aggressive Behavior (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). These syndrome scales group into two higher order factors—internalizing and externalizing. It includes six DSM-oriented scales consistent with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) diagnostic categories. The CBCL also includes questions on academic performance and problems that can provide more information on the school functioning of a child or adolescence.

The translated versions of the CBCL, TRF, and YSR (over 110 languages) have undergone extensive research that supports their psychometric qualities across various cultures and countries (e.g.,

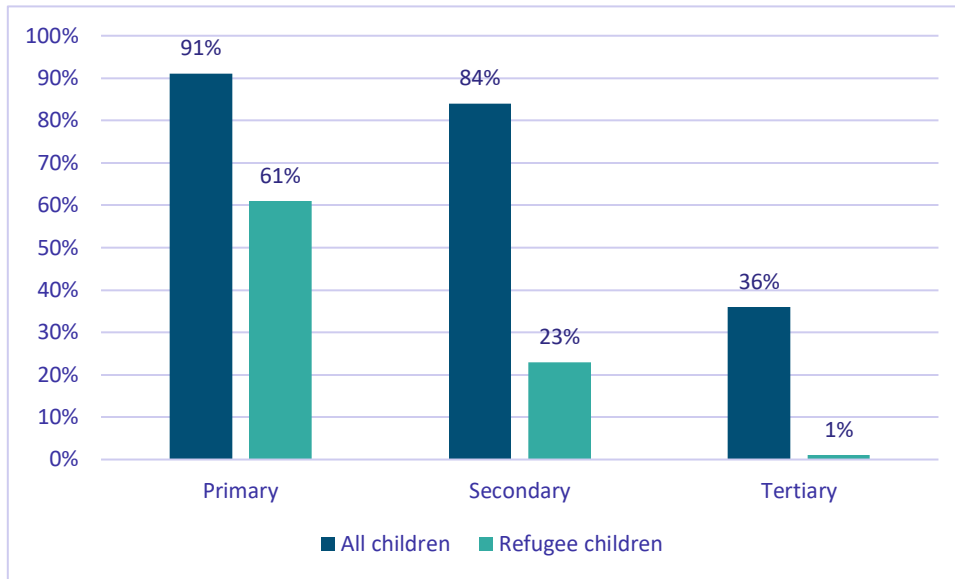
Ivanova, Achenbach, Dumenci, et al., 2007; Ivanova, Achenbach, Rescorla, Dumenci, Almqvist, Bathiche, et al., 2007; Ivanova, Achenbach, Rescorla, Dumenci, Almqviset, Bilenberg, et al., 2007; Rescorla et al., 2007). The CBCL has also been included in studies on the mental health functioning of children with a refugee background. For example, it has been used as a screening measurement for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in refugee children hosted in a German reception camp (Nehring et al., 2021), maladaptive emotional and behavioral problems of unaccompanied refugee minors in the Netherlands (Bean et al., 2006), psychological problems of North Korean adolescents in South Korea (Lee et al., 2012), and mental health outcomes of refugee children from Syria or Iraq in Germany (Buchmüller et al., 2018). As it is a lengthy instrument the CBCL appears to be a good fit when the focus is to obtain a clinical understanding of children's and adolescents' mental health challenges at school.

5.3 Measuring the educational performance of children with a migrant-refugee background in large-scale surveys.

Despite the growing numbers of students of migrant/refugee background across European and OECD countries, as well as the commonly acknowledged importance of education for the integration of refugee children in formal education, there is little evidence on their educational outcomes, especially considering the relatively small number of their school enrollment. According to UNHCR data (cited in Schleicher, 2022) that are depicted in the Figure 1, school enrollment rates for refugee children and adolescents across the globe are significantly lower compared to native students, with the gap increasing as we move towards higher educational tracks.

The educational performance and learning outcomes of refugee and migrant students is an important indicator of their overall resilience, as well as a factor contributing towards a resilient trajectory. The term educational performance is used to denote the capacity of a student to reach adequate levels of academic proficiency. It is used interchangeably in literature as “academic resilience”, “academic performance”, “school-performance”, or “educational attainment”.

Figure 1 - Rates of schooling for refugee children and adolescents, globally



Source: Schleicher, A. (2022). *Building on COVID-19's Innovation Momentum for Digital, Inclusive Education*. International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 50. <https://doi.org/10.1787/24202496-en>

In relevant academic research, as well as large-scale cross-country surveys like the ones conducted by the OECD, students of migrant/refugee background are “considered as being resilient if they have reported baseline academic proficiency, a sense of belonging at school and being satisfied with life” (Bilgili, 2019, p. 14). Thus, refugee students’ resilience is understood as a multidimensional construct that comprises simultaneously academic, social, and emotional dimensions (Cerna et al., 2021; OECD, 2018).

The most prevalent measure of educational performance in large scale surveys is the framework adopted by the ‘Programme for International Student Assessment’ (PISA), a triennial survey of 15-year-old students around the world that assesses the extent to which they have acquired key knowledge and skills essential for full participation in social and economic life. PISA assesses students’ literacy in three main subjects, namely reading, mathematics and science, using computer-based tests where possible (OECD, 2019). The results of the PISA tests are reported in proficiency score points, based on student responses for each subject. PISA defines as academically resilient those students with an immigrant background who attained at least the baseline level of performance (Level 2) in all three core PISA subjects: science, reading and mathematics (Cerna et al., 2021; OECD, 2018). The baseline level is considered to be the level at

which students have the capacity to tackle tasks that require, at least, a minimal ability and disposition to think autonomously.

In lack of data systematically and explicitly addressing the educational outcomes of refugee children, the best available comparable data can be found in the PISA database, which breaks down the data in three categories: native-born children, first-generation migrants, and second-generation migrants. According to a UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM press release, across EU countries in 2015, on average, around 3 in 4 native-born students and only 3 in 5 students with a migrant background attained the baseline level of proficiency in the three core PISA subjects (UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2019). In general, across OECD countries, having an immigrant background constitutes a factor associated with lower academic performance in comparison to native-born students, while it is often one of the most relevant predictors of school drop-out (Hippe & Jakubowski, 2018; OECD, 2018; UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2019). This academic underperformance is especially common to first-generation as opposed to second-generation immigrant students. This performance gap between native students and students with an immigrant background is also verified in the case of the 2019 OECD report employing the more recent PISA data in the case of EU countries (OECD, 2021). However, it should be highlighted that in most OECD countries, including Greece, the relationship between immigrant background and academic resilience is strongly mediated by socio-economic status, with the gap between the two groups being considerably smaller after socio-economic differences are considered. Migrant/refugee students were also somewhat less likely than native students to report a strong sense of belonging at school and being satisfied with their life but tended to express higher levels of motivation than native-born students (OECD, 2018). On average, 54% of immigrant students were academically resilient across OECD countries and 55% across EU countries.

In the case of Greece, compared to the OECD average, a smaller proportion of students performed at the highest levels of proficiency in at least one subject, while at the same time a smaller proportion of students achieved a minimum level of proficiency in at least one subject (OECD, 2018). Moreover, the gap in the academic performance between native and immigrant students is rather high. Amongst students from a refugee/migrant origin (constituting 12% of students in Greece at that moment), more than half were socio-economically disadvantaged

(Institute of Educational Policy, 2019). In general, Greece scored below the OECD average in most of the measures of the academic, social, emotional, and motivational resilience of immigrant students, while it is worth mentioning that refugee/migrant students were significantly less likely to expect to complete tertiary education; a finding that stands in congruence with the data for the other OECD countries (OECD, 2018). However, although students of migrant/refugee background tend to come from non-favorable socio-economic environments, they sometimes manage to develop academic resilience. For example, 12% of migrant/refugee students in Greece scored in the top quarter of reading performance.

6. The education of refugee children in Greece post 2015

A review of relevant literature, focusing on children of migrant/refugee origin that arrived in Greece after 2015 and their educational needs, inclusion, and performance, discloses a series of reports, mainly by public agencies, international organizations and/or NGOs, as well as some academic research that is, however, mostly descriptive, or simply evaluating the policy-making initiative in the field. A significant number of these reports attempt to map and document the educational reform implemented by the Greek government, in accordance with calls by the EU, to accommodate refugee children, their enrollment in primary and secondary education, their attainment rate and the challenges and difficulties of the plan to integrate them in the school setting. In particular, the report of the Scientific Committee in Support of Refugee Children of the Ministry of Education provides a detailed account of the “Refugee Education Project” that was implemented by the Greek government in 2016, along with an assessment of the overall reforms and proposals for the education of refugee children during the 2017-2018 school year (Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2017). A similar documentation and evaluation of the first-year implementation of the Ministry’s plan for refugee children integration is provided by the ELIAMEP report (Anagnostou & Nikolova, 2017). A report by UNICEF and the Greek Ombudsman (2017) focuses on the access to formal education for unaccompanied children in shelters in spring 2017, based on a questionnaire distributed in shelters run by NGO members of the Children on the Move Network. A subsequent report by The Greek Ombudsman (2021), addressed to the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and the Ministry of Education, sheds light on

the situational update of educational integration of children in refugee centers across the country, while similar information, employing both official and empirical data is provided by the Greek Council of Refugees, Save the Children and Terre des Homes report (2021). In addition, Manesis (2020) offers a helpful outline of the educational policies for refugee children in Greece after the recent refugee crisis, in terms of the legal provisions and the subsequent educational reforms towards their integration. This study also collects data regarding primary school units where refugee children study, aiming at documenting their profile and their educational and psychological needs, employing official data as well as participatory observation and interviews with teachers in such school units. Regarding academic research on this subject, Buchanan & Kallinikaki (2020) offer an overview of the situation of unaccompanied refugee children in Greece during the years 2017-2018, as well as the legal framework of their protection; Tzoraki (2019) focuses on schooling and higher education reforms that were introduced in 2016 as a response to the refugees' influx into Greece, while Vergou (2019) discusses the social-spatial configuration of refugee accommodation and its (unintended) consequences for refugees' inclusion in the school settings, as well as the local communities.

Moreover, there are a few comparative studies on the educational policies implemented in the various European host countries, including Greece, published in international journals. For example, Crul et al. (2019) examine how the various policies and school systems affect the inclusion of Syrian refugee children, both in Europe (Sweden, Germany, and Greece) and outside Europe (Turkey and Lebanon). They compared the different institutional arrangements in each country (e.g., access to compulsory school, access after compulsory school age, welcome or immersion classes, second language education) and concluded that school success for refugee children is more likely the sooner they attend regular school classes, instead of prolonging their education in parallel education schemes that might be exacerbating school dropout. In a similar vein of research, Mamali and Arvanitis (2022) conducted a comparative policy framework analysis in Greece and Germany, focusing on the discourse of a series of official policy documents, both national and European Union, concerning refugee education and their integration into compulsory schooling. The critical discourse analysis revealed that, albeit their differences, integration models followed in both countries share some fundamental characteristics, namely adopting a combination of attending mainstream and separate classes, where integration and

separation principles are mixed, as well as attributing particular importance to learning the national language. Furthermore, Greece and Germany are in line with the European Union's principles and guidelines for educating refugee children, but a divergence can be detected between a "maximalist perspective" adopted by the European Union, aiming at a fully integrative model of education, and a more modest or at times inadequate implementation on the part of the Member States, constituting a type of assimilation or partial integration.

6.1 The legal framework and its implementation after 2015

From a legal perspective, access to education is protected by international law and treaties, as well as national ones. All EU member states are obliged to provide the same access to education until the upper secondary level for both immigrant/refugee and non-immigrant children (Qualifications Directive 2011/95/EU).³ Article 14(2) of the Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU⁸ of the European Parliament and Council specifically states that children applying for asylum should enter the host country's educational systems within three months of submitting their application. Furthermore, Member States are to take further action in the form of preparatory classes (e.g., language classes), to ensure that refugee children will be smoothly integrated into the existing educational system. In cases that accessing the formal education process is not possible, states have the obligation to offer alternative forms of education (according to the Qualifications Directive 2011/95/EU). Nevertheless, the implementation of the universal and international right to education is not always straightforward in the case of children of migrant/refugee origin, while it significantly varies among the different states (Mamali & Arvanitis, 2022). Therefore, national governments, in cooperation with the European Union, have been trying to address refugee children's needs by modifying their educational laws and implementing new processes to deal with the increased diversity in classrooms.

In the Greek case, the state's obligation to provide access to education to all children of school age that live in the country, regardless of any other conditions, stems from the principles and

³ For an overview of the legal aspect and requirements of refugee education in EU countries, see, inter alia, Mamali & Arvanitis, 2022.

separate established rights of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in particular articles 2 (non-discrimination), 22 (rights of refugee children) and 28 (right of all children to education) (Law 2101/1992) (The Greek Ombudsman, 2021; Manesis, 2020). Along with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (article 13), they proclaim and protect every child's right to education, including not only equal access to (compulsory) primary and secondary education, but also to higher education, based on capacity. Considering the vulnerable situation of refugee children and, thus, the need for further protection, the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, highlights the obligation of host countries to provide education for refugee youth (article 22), while in 2003, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees adopted the "Agenda for Protection," indicating improved measures for the protection of refugee children. The provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have been specified in the legal provisions that guide the educational integration of noncitizen children in the country. Law No. 4251/2014 (Immigration and Social Integration Code and other provisions) safeguards the right of all noncitizen children to education, irrespectively of their residence status in the country or the possession of the necessary supporting documents for enrollment. Moreover, article 55 of law No. 4939/2022 explicitly states the obligatory character of education both for the part of the asylum seekers and the state, which is responsible to ensure children's unhindered access, providing all necessary and sufficient means to support and facilitate such a process. Finally, a Joint Ministerial Decision issued by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs in 2019 (79942/ΓΔ4/2019 (Government Gazette 2005/B/31-5-2019), also prescribes the uninterrupted access of minor citizens of foreign countries to the Greek public educational system.

In terms of the realization of the aforementioned provisions and mandates, it soon became obvious that the Greek educational system did not have the capacity to accommodate the large number of school-aged migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers that have entered the country since 2015 (Crul et al., 2019; OECD, 2022) with the existing system. Therefore, in 2016, the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs proceeded to a reformation of the existing instruments, regulations, and guidelines for the integration of migrant children in the public education system.

One of the major challenges it had to address, apart from the substantially high number of migrant/refugee children, was their accommodation arrangements; they were mostly living in Refugee Accommodation Centers (RAC) across the country, thus putting pressure on the neighboring schools that received the bulk of newcomers (Crul et al., 2019). According to data collected by the Ministry of Education, in March 2017 it was estimated that 8.000 – 8.500 children between the ages of 4 and 15 (for whom education is compulsory) resided in 40 RFCs; an additional 8.036 children aged 0-18 years old were staying in apartments and facilities managed by UNHCR, while the number of minors living in other accommodation schemes (e.g., housing squats, self-housing) was unknown (Anagnostou & Nikolova, 2017). A report by UNICEF and The Greek Ombudsman (2017) estimated the overall number of children for the same period (April to May 2017) at around 20.000, of whom 2.000 were unaccompanied.

In March 2016, following the direction set by the European Union, the Ministry of Education set up a Scientific Committee charged with the task to propose a plan for migrant/refugee children educational integration, especially those living in Reception and Identification Centers and Reception Hospitality Centers (Anagnostou & Nikolova, 2017; Tzoraki, 2019). This scheme (implemented by law 4415/2016) introduced two important initiatives: the creation of separate preparatory reception classes for refugee children, called “Reception Facilities for Refugee Education” (RFRE) and the role of Refugee Education Coordinator in Refugee Accommodation Centers (Mamali & Arvanitis, 2022; Manesis, 2019; Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2017; OECD, 2022; Ziomas et al., 2017). RFREs were established to cover the educational needs of students, aged 4-15 years-old, living in RACs and function as preparation classes for a transitional period. RFREs were created in the schools neighboring the refugee accommodation centers; they operated in the afternoon, offering a specialized curriculum of limited duration that aimed to (re-) integrate refugee children into school (Crul et al., 2019). In this transition, the role of Coordinators was deemed especially crucial; 62 educators, belonging to the permanently appointed educational staff of the Ministry of Education, were appointed by the Ministry, tasked to mediate, and coordinate the relation between schools and RFREs, as well other educational actions and initiatives organized by NGOs and other bodies (Crul et al., 2019; Tzoraki, 2019). In places without established RFREs nearby, refugee students (in other words, the ones living outside RACs) could attend the mainstream, public morning school of their area (Palaiologou,

2019). In order to host the newcomers and help them adjust to the new school reality, as well as to overcome the language barriers towards their full integration, schools could utilize the - already existing- potential to create reception classes, provided they had more than nine students. These reception classes were integrated into the morning operating school schedule; they operated as parallel classes, in the sense that refugee students were simultaneously attending the specialized reception classes (focusing on intensive instruction in the Greek language), as well as the school's regular program for the rest of the subjects (Manesis, 2020; Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2017; OECD, 2022) (what has been called a "partly integrative model", see Mamali & Arvanitis, 2022, p. 34).

The school year 2016-2017, when the educational reform was first implemented, was a preparatory year, primarily aiming at the psychological and social support of refugee children, the transition to a school reality and some sense of normalcy, as well as their inclusion and integration to the school setting (Manesis, 2020). For this year, 111 RFREs with 145 classes operated, attending to 2,643 students between 6 and 15 years old, living in 37 refugee accommodation centers (Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2017; Ziomas et al., 2017). During the same period, it is also estimated that 1.500 students residing outside the RACs, in other accommodation schemes, attended the morning shift, either in mainstream schools, in the Reception Classes of Educational Priority Zones (ZEPs), or in one of the 26 Intercultural Schools already operating in Greece (Crul et al., 2019). For an evaluation of the functioning for the school year 2016-2017, both the report by the Ministry of Education (2017) and ELIAMEP (Anagnostou & Nikolova, 2017), as well as the ones composed by The Greek Council for Refugees, Save the Children and Terre des Hommes (2022) and UNICEF and the Greek Ombudsman (2017) offer useful material.

Although the reform of the Greek educational system in order to accommodate the significant influx of refugee and migrant children after 2015 is considered a necessary and positive development, some particular challenges are identified in the way RFREs and reception classes have operated until now. The first obstacle that needs to be tackled is the divergence between school enrollment and attendance rates that, even though smaller than in the past, continues to exist. High drop-out rates and low attendance on the part of refugee children are not only

associated with their overall fragile and transient living conditions, but also with a number of factors endogenous to the educational system. In particular, delays in the staffing and function of both RFREs and reception classes, frequent changes of appointed teachers and lack of systematic and specialized/adequate training and previous experience in working with students from multi-cultural backgrounds, have all hindered the smooth school integration of refugee children (Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2017). Moreover, problems with the transfer of refugee students to and from the school units, especially in RACs that were not close to the urban fabric, as well as the lack of chaperones to conduct the transfer, posed further obstacles in children's attendance. Another issue that should be considered is the reaction of some of the local communities, which, according to the ELIAMEP report (Anagnostou & Nikolova, 2017) constitutes maybe the most difficult challenge for refugee's integration in the educational system. Finally, the Greek Ombudsman (2021) expresses a significant reservation in the long-term use and potential misuse of RFREs, in the sense of their transitional character and fulfilling their goal of integrating all refugee and migrant children into the formal education system. Even though they operate within the framework of formal education, they are not equivalent to regular, morning school attendance and, most importantly, issues of social integration arise, since RFREs operate separately during afternoon hours, potentially creating conditions of isolation or even exclusion if attendance is prolonged.

6.2 Data on access to education for refugee children (2015-2020)

As stated in the UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM overview of migration trends (2022), from January until December 2021, 2,258 children and adolescents arrived in Greece, either by land or sea, exhibiting a significant decrease compared to the previous year (51% fewer), in line with the broader recession in refugee flows. Overall, in 2021, 9,157 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece, out of whom 24% were children. More than one out of four of these children were unaccompanied or separated.⁴ Their main countries of origin were Afghanistan, Syrian Arab

⁴ According to UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM (2022, p. 7), separated children are "children separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members". "Unaccompanied children are children who have been

Republic, Somalia, and Iraq. The distribution of children's ages among the accompanied and unaccompanied groups was as follows: 28% of the accompanied children were aged between 0 and 4 years, 38% were aged between 5 and 14 years, and the remaining 34% were between 15 and 17 years old. Among the unaccompanied and separated children, 1% were aged between 0 and 4 years, 13% were aged between 5 and 14 years, and the majority (86%) were between 15 and 17 years old. A significant gender imbalance was also observed, with 72% of the children being boys and the remaining 28% being girls. As already mentioned, the situation of refugee and migrant children arriving in Greece after 2015 differs markedly from that of children who arrived in the past. According to data provided by the Ministry of Education the enrollment rate during 2017-2018 was around 59% (Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2017), while actual attendance rates were even lower (UNICEF, 2017). During the school year 2019-2020, 65 primary schools and 39 lower-secondary schools were chosen to operate reception classes for refugee children living in accommodation camps across Greece. However, the actual rate of attendance fluctuated considerably, especially among unaccompanied minors. In the following school year, 2020-2021, 81% of recognized refugee children in ESTIA accommodation were enrolled in public schools alongside their Greek peers.

UNHCR estimates that 10,600 school-aged children (4-17) were on the Aegean islands, while only a handful attended public schools (The Greek Ombudsman, 2021; Tzoraki, 2019; UNHCR, 2020). In addition, according to a report by the Greek Ombudsman (2021), the gap between enrollment and attendance rates continued to be significant. The issue of school inclusion acquired particular importance in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the obstacles posed in the educational process in general and refugees and migrants' access to remote education in particular (The Greek Ombudsman, 2021).

separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so".

6.3 Recent developments on the education of refugee children

In 2022, until the beginning of October, total arrivals in Greece were estimated to be 11,658 (UNHCR, 2022), out of which 30.6% are children and adolescents. According to the same report (UNHCR, UNICEF, & IOM, 2022), asylum applications to European countries for 2021 were more than half a million (551,020 first-time applicants), of which almost one-third concerned children (173,550), representing an increase of 29% compared to 2020. Greece received 4% of new asylum applications by children (7,035 applications), coming third among the European countries, even though holding significantly lower numbers than the first two countries, Germany with 42% and France with 15% of all children asylum applications. Positive decisions were issued for 60% of child asylum applications that were considered within 2021 in all European countries.

It is estimated that, as of February 2023, more than 17,000 school-age refugee children currently live in Greece the majority of whom are enrolled in formal education. As far as the unaccompanied and separated children are concerned, in April 2023 their number was 2,219, as indicated in the most recent data published by the National Centre for Social Solidarity with the collaboration of UNICEF (NCSS, 2023). The vast majority of unaccompanied minors are boys (86%) and over the age of 14 (93%). Almost half of them live in Attica, most in Refugee Hospitality Centers (1,673), 184 in Refugee Reception and Identification Centers, 258 in Apartments of Semi-autonomous living, 90 in Emergency Reception Centers, and 14 in Reception Facilities for Asylum Seekers. Thirty-five of these children are separated and 12 came from Ukraine, accompanied by 3 adults.

Regarding the year 2021-2022, enrollment of refugee and migrant children in primary and secondary education reached 95% or 16,417 students, while attendance increased as well to 75% (12,285 students) in March 2022 (Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2022). the outburst of Covid-19 pandemic, the subsequent school closure and the adoption of remote learning have created a series of challenges and difficulties in documenting the enrollment and particularly the attendance rates of refugee children and youth.

A report published in 2022 by the Greek Council of Refugees, Save the Children and Terre des Hommes, employing both official data provided by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (see Table 1. below), as well as interviews with unaccompanied minors living in

refugee centers across Greece, aged 3-18 years old, their parents, and professionals of humanitarian organizations provides a comprehensive overview of refugee children’s education. Specifically, regarding enrollment, 17,186 migrant/refugee children were enrolled for the school year 2021-2022, constituting a significant improvement from the previous school year (the number for 2020-2021 was between 8,637 and 14,423 students out of the approximately 20,000 eligible children). According to the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, out of these children, 1,817 enrolled in Host Structures for Refugee Education (DYEP), 10,718 children enrolled in primary and secondary education schools with reception classes, and 4,651 children enrolled in schools with no reception classes. School drop-out also decreased, as implied by the high attendance rate (again, higher than the previous year) with 75% of all enrolled students (12,285 children) attending the Greek school.

Table 1: Official Statistics for the School Year 2021-22

Total Enrollment - Number of Refugee Children in Education	17.186
Reception School Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP classes)	1.817
Primary & Secondary education schools with reception classes	10.718
Schools without reception classes	4.651
Total Attendance -Number of Refugee Children in Education	12.285
Total Number of Classes (DYEP)	110
Primary DYEP classes	83
Secondary DYEP classes	27
Total Number of staff	1.578
Teachers in reception classes	1.358
Teachers in DYEP	220
SEP Staff	87

Source: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs

For the school year 2022-2023, the introduction of Host Structures for Refugee Education (DYEP) was foreseen by a ministerial order published in the Government Gazette on 29 July 2022 (4032, Decision No. Φ1/90023/ΑΔ/Δ1), which also designated the school units that will accommodate

them. In total, 39 host structures are expected to operate in primary and 22 in secondary school units during the school year 2022-2023.

Finally, in April 2023, a new immigration law passed by the Greek Parliament (Law No. 5038/2023), providing the potential for a decade-long residence permit for adult citizens of third countries who entered Greece as unaccompanied minors and have completed at least three secondary education classes in Greece before turning 23.

7. The impact of COVID-19 on school-aged children and adolescents

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has had significant consequences for all aspects of daily life across the globe, often spilling over to more long-term repercussions. Regarding its impact on education, the social isolation measures adopted in most countries led to the suspension of face-to-face operation of schools and educational institutions and the continuance of the educational process with the use of digital media (specialized educational software and online interactive platforms), as well as intermittent school reopening (OECD, 2021). The interruption of academic activity was almost universal, with schools shutting down in 180 out of 195 countries, affecting 85% of all students,⁵ constituting the “largest simultaneous shock to all education systems in our lifetimes,” according to the World Bank Report (2020, p. 37) and an “unprecedented disruption in the lives of youth aged 10–18” (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2021, p. 1).

School closure posed a significant threat not only to learning outcomes and the quality of education, but also to the mental, and sometimes even physical health of children and youth. In terms of the former, the World Bank (2020) warned of the risk of deteriorating educational performance -what has been called “learning loss” (OECD, 2021)- as well as increasing school dropout rates since children would lose the attachment to the school setting cultivated by their teachers and the overall structural support offered by the school (Szelei et al., 2022; Primdahl et

⁵ The data refer to April 2020.

al., 2021). This might in turn fuel disengagement from the educational process or even discourage students from being motivated and pursuing their goals. All these developments are thought to affect underprivileged and marginalized students (Borgonovi & Ferrara, 2022), leading to an upsurge in inequalities among the student population, especially in the case of migrants (European Commission Joint Research Centre, 2020). In order to access the educational process via means of remote learning, students now had to possess and (have the ability to) use a digital device, have internet connectivity, a space to connect and work from, books or other educational material, and, not least, guidance, help and support from their parents or others; resources that albeit fundamental are by no means accessible to all children (World Bank, 2020). Moreover, as an OECD (2021) report indicates, only 44% of the surveyed countries took specific measures to safeguard the continuing educational attainment of migrant and refugee children during the first lockdown.

Concerning the health and well-being of students, the loss of the safety net provided by schools is critical, both in terms of the sociability, sense of belonging, and teachers' support, as well as more materialistic aspects, like the provision of school meals and feeding programs, upon which 368 million children worldwide are dependent (World Bank, 2020). It is also evident that social isolation directly affects youth's mental health, which is often further burdened when faced with an adverse family environment (Nearchou et al., 2020; World Bank, 2020). These circumstances might be further exacerbated by the long-term economic consequences of the pandemic which will no doubt afflict demand, as well as supply for education (World Bank Report, 2020).

Focusing on the psychological consequences of the pandemic, although these are evident in the general population as well, they appear to be especially pronounced in the case of children and adolescents. Minors were already experiencing mental disorders at high rates, while they are thought to be particularly vulnerable to experience stress after incidents of crises (World Bank, 2020). This can have lasting effects on their educational outcomes and overall development. Children and adolescents might be faced with mental and emotional problems, such as increased stress, anxiety, depression, fear, grief, or even suicidal attempts, as a result of the pandemic, school closure and social isolation (Lee, 2020; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2021; Nearchou et al., 2020; Szelei et al., 2022). Again, children coming from

marginalized or adverse backgrounds will no doubt suffer disproportionately from such problems, particularly migrant and refugee children that are often already experiencing health problems (Cholera et al., 2020).

Regarding the impact of COVID-19 and social isolation measures in the case of children and youth of migrant/refugee origin, it has been argued that the health crisis exacerbated their vulnerabilities, while at the same time creating new ones (European Commission Joint Research Centre, 2020; OECD, 2021; Szelei et al., 2022). Besides often lacking the necessary material -and not only- resources in order to take part in the, now, remote educational process, children living in refugee camps and other refugee accommodation centers were mostly restricted within their premises. In the case of Greece, according to a report by the Greek Ombudsman (2021), in more than half of the country's refugee accommodation centers, exit and reentry restrictions were implemented for significant parts of the school year, while the vast majority of refugees of student age living in them reported problems in the online learning process. In addition, for students under circumstances of increased vulnerability, like those living in refugee camps, school closure might further expose them to violence (both within and outside their home)⁶ and other external threats, while access to protective services and support is hindered, without the layer of protection often provided by schools (World Bank, 2020).

Concluding, as mentioned before, the school setting and children's resilience seem to form a mutually reinforcing relationship, thus creating a cycle, where in this context, promoting students' access to education becomes even more important, especially for the most disadvantaged among them (like migrants and refugees), for whom educational attainment is most crucial (Ungar et al., 2017).

⁶ Data and reports have already corroborated that incidents of domestic violence have spiked during the pandemic (UN WOMEN, 2022).

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