



STUDENT DISAFFECTION: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON DISAFFECTION CHARACTERISTICS AND FREQUENCY IN PRESCHOOL SETTINGSⁱ

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Abstract:

This paper explores student disaffection which is considered to be one of the biggest challenges facing the contemporary teacher. Despite the growing concern on the alarming increase of the disengaged students, the conceptualization of disaffection is insufficient, since the concept is closely correlated with the multidimensional construct of student engagement. Besides, while there is a research focus on qualitative and quantitative investigation on classroom engagement, there is a notable gap in students' and teachers' perspectives on student disaffection. Through one to one, semi-structured interviews, we investigate 80 Greek teachers' perspectives on students' disaffection manifestations and frequency in preschool settings. The interviews are developed based on Creswell's (2008) interview model, with a mixture of open-ended and close-ended questions. Based on qualitative and quantitative data analysis, we present how Greek teachers define student disaffection indices in preschool environments, and the frequency at which their students are disengaged. We also demonstrate that the participants attribute behavioural, cognitive and emotional components to the construct of disaffection, confirming its conceptual complexity.

Keywords: disengagement; disengaged; students at-risk, conceptualization, behavioural, cognitive and emotional components; kindergarten

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Περίληψη

Μια από τις μεγαλύτερες προκλήσεις που έχει ν' αντιμετωπίσει ο σύγχρονος εκπαιδευτικός είναι η ενεργητική συμμετοχή «όλων» των μαθητών στην εκπαιδευτική διαδικασία. Παρά το γεγονός ότι στη διεθνή βιβλιογραφία τονίζεται η σπουδαιότητα της ενεργητικής συμμετοχής των μαθητών στη διαδικασία μάθησης, ολοένα και περισσότερο αυξάνονται οι μαθητές που απεμπλέκονται από τις δραστηριότητες της τάξης. Ωστόσο, η ερευνητική κοινότητα δεν έχει ακόμη καταλήξει σε έναν κοινώς αποδεκτό όρο για την αντίθετη έννοια της ενεργητικής συμμετοχής. Οι όροι που χρησιμοποιούνται για να αποδώσουν τις παραπάνω εκφάνσεις απουσίας ενεργητικής συμμετοχής είναι διαφορετικοί. Επιπρόσθετα, η δυσκολία στην εννοιολογική οριοθέτηση της απεμπλοκής και την υιοθέτηση ενός κοινώς αποδεκτού όρου, δημιουργεί στους ερευνητές δυσκολία και στον καθορισμό των προσδιοριστικών της χαρακτηριστικών (Skinner, 2016). Μάλιστα, όπως συμβαίνει με την έννοια της ενεργητικής συμμετοχής που δεν έχει προσδιορισθεί με ακρίβεια λόγω του εύρους των συμπεριφοριστικών, συναισθηματικών και γνωστικών εκφάνσεών της (Alrashidi, κ.σ., 2016 · Findlay, 2013 · Appleton κ.σ., 2008 · Fredricks κ.σ., 2004), αντίστοιχη δυσκολία ανακύπτει και στον προσδιορισμό των χαρακτηριστικών της απεμπλοκής (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012 · Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008). Μέσω ατομικών ημιδομημένων συνεντεύξεων, διερευνούμε τις απόψεις 80 Ελλήνων νηπιαγωγών σχετικά με τις εκφάνσεις που αποδίδουν στην έννοια της απεμπλοκής και τη συχνότητα εκδήλωσής τους από τους μαθητές τους. Οι συνεντεύξεις αναπτύσσονται βάσει του μοντέλου συνεντεύξεων του Creswell (2008), με ένα συνδυασμό ανοιχτών και κλειστών ερωτήσεων. Με βάση την ποιοτική και ποσοτική ανάλυση των δεδομένων, παρουσιάζουμε τον τρόπο με τον οποίο οι Έλληνες εκπαιδευτικοί προσδιορίζουν τα χαρακτηριστικά που οι μαθητές της τάξης τους εκδηλώνουν όταν απεμπλέκονται καθώς και τη συχνότητα εκδήλωσής των χαρακτηριστικών αυτών. Τα ευρήματά μας δείχνουν ότι οι συμμετέχοντες στην έρευνα εκπαιδευτικοί αποδίδουν συμπεριφορικές, γνωστικές και συναισθηματικές εκφάνσεις στην έννοια της απεμπλοκής, επιβεβαιώνοντας την εννοιολογική πολυπλοκότητά της.

Λέξεις - κλειδιά: συμπεριφορά, γνωστικές διεργασίες, συναισθήματα, ακαδημαϊκή ταυτότητα

1. Introduction

One of the biggest challenges facing the contemporary teacher is student disaffection. Each school year and in each class there are students who show indifference to educational activities (Jablon and Wilkinson, 2006). There are students who withdraw easily in the face of challenges and difficulties. During a learning activity, they intervene in the discussion making irrelevant comments in order to "disorientate" the class and attract "negative" classmates' and teachers' attention. Their interactions with the teacher or their classmates are even conflictual (Curby, T. W., Downer, J. T., and

Booren, L. 2014; Skinner and Belmont, 1993). Since they have not yet developed the sense of relatedness, they have difficulty in conforming to school rules and consequently, they demonstrate disruptive behaviour, even mild aggression (Ling and Barnett, 2013; George and Childs, 2012; Parson and Taylor, 2011).

Student disaffection has reportedly significant and lasting negative effects on students (Ling and Barnett, 2013; Fredricks and McColskey, 2012). The disaffected students risk low academic performance due to frequent truanting and missed educational opportunities (George and Childs, 2012; Hart, Stewart and Jimerson, 2011; Skinner, Kindermann, and Furrer, 2009). The disengaged students risk peer rejection and thus feel marginalized (Curby, et al, 2014; Williford, Maier, Downer, Carter and Sanger, 2013; Skinner and Pitzer, 2012). Students who are bored, restless, disruptive, and disengaged risk withdrawal of support or increasing coercion from teacher (Findlay, 2013; Parson and Taylor, 2011; Hart, Stewart and Jimerson, 2011; Skinner, Kindermann, and Furrer, 2009). Without intervention, these students are likely to continue to display deviant behaviours throughout their academic careers and dropout both figuratively (being present, but not participating) or literally (early school leaving and failing to graduate) (Ling and Barnett, 2013; Bulotsky-Shearer, Fernandez, Dominguez, and Rouse, 2011). There is a great deal of evidence that dropping out of school is a process of gradual disaffection from learning that occurs over many years and often begins in elementary school (Appleton, Christenson and Furlong, 2008).

School disaffection, as a social phenomenon, has taken concerning dimensions.

Educators and research community have become alarmed at increasingly high levelsⁱⁱⁱ of student disengagement (Findlay, 2013; Way, Bobis, Martin, Anderson, Vellar, Skilling, Reece, 2011; Harris, 2008). *“What was once described as a problem with dropouts in the 1970’s or 1980’s is today described as a major issue of disaffection among many student populations”* (Parson and Taylor, 2011, 6).

2. Defining Student Disaffection

Although there is growing concern on the alarming increase of the disengaged students, the conceptualization of disaffection is insufficient (Skinner, 2016). The concept of student disaffection is closely correlated with the multidimensional construct of student engagement; The considerable variation in how the construct of engagement has been conceptualized over time and the number of its subcomponents that includes behavioural, emotional, and cognitive aspects, have resulted in difficulty in defining the term of student disaffection, as well (Fredricks and McColskey, 2012; Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong, 2008; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, 2004; Jimerson, Campos and Greif, 2003).

Some authors (e.g. Skinner, 2016; Trowler, 2010) seeking to define student engagement, considered its’ antithesis – if a student is not engaged, then what is he? At

ⁱⁱⁱ A Research Conducted by Willms, Friesen & Milton suggests That Now “Less Than One-Half Of Canadian Students Are Deeply Engaged In Their Study Of School Subjects” (2009,17).

what state of being is a disengaged student? The following definition offered by Skinner and Belmont indicates that conceptualization of the school disaffection is based on the opposite concept of engagement:

"The opposite of engagement is disaffection. Disaffected children are passive, do not try hard, and give up easily in the face of challenges...[they can] be bored, depressed, anxious, or even angry about their presence in the classroom; they can be withdrawn from learning opportunities or even rebellious towards teachers and classmates. Engagement versus disaffection encompasses the typical behavioural and emotional constructs from most theories of achievement and intrinsic motivation." (1993, 572)

Besides, research community has not even concluded in a common term for the opposite concept of engagement; According to Skinner (2016:148) *"engagement researchers generate a diffuse cloud of constructs loosely woven around the idea of students' connections to school"*. For instance, Curby and colleagues (2014) refer to *"negative engagement in the classroom"* with teachers, peers, or tasks, while Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong, (2008), Anderson, et. al. (2004), Dunleavy and Milton, 2009, p. 4) make use of the term *"disengagement"* in order to define the engagement-antithesis concept. Harris, as well, uses the same term, stressing:

"Disengagement has been cited as a major cause of deviant behaviour at school, truanting, and low academic achievement." (2008,57)

Some authors use terms such as *"amotivation"*, *"noncompliance"*, *"disruptive behavior"*, *"helplessness"*, *"burnout"* (Miceli and Castelfranchi, 2000; Salmela-Aro, Kiuru, Leskinen, and Nurmi, 2009 ; Vallerand et al., 1993 as cited in Skinner and Pitzer, 2012, 22; Skinner, 2016; Ling and Barnett, 2013 e.t.c.). Mann (2001) proposes the engagement–alienation dyad as a useful framework to understand students' relationships to their learning while Krause (2005) as cited in Trowler, (2010, 6), uses the terms *"inertia"*, *"apathy"*, *"disillusionment"* or *"engagement in other pursuits"*, in order to describe the state of being for the disengaged students. She explains the choice of the aforementioned terms as follows:

'I favour the term "inertia" over "disengagement". The latter suggests an active detachment or separation, whereas the former is more suggestive of doing nothing, which aptly depicts the state of being for a group of students who do not actively pursue opportunities to engage in their learning community. For some students, the interlocking of individual and institutional interests, goals and aspirations never occurs. They do not choose or see the need to waver from their familiar path to engage with people, activities or opportunities in the learning community'(as cited in Trowler, p. 6). Furthermore, the constructs of engagement and disaffection have always been central to theories of motivation. Motivational conceptualizations of disaffection include behavioural, cognitive and emotional components. According to Skinner and Pitzer (2012), behavioural manifestations /indices of student disaffection comprise the ways in

which students withdraw from learning tasks, display inattention, passivity etc, as well as their mental counterparts, (e.g apathy or amotivation) and emotional reactions (e.g boredom, anxiety, frustration etc). The motivational model holds that disaffection is the result of unsupportive interpersonal interactions or perspectives of self as unwelcome, incompetent, or pressured in school (Curby, et al, 2014; Hart, Stewart and Jimerson, 2011; Skinner, Kindermann, and Furrer, 2009). If students experience school as uncaring, coercive, and unfair, they will become disaffected (Fredricks and McColskey, 2012). Teachers' emotional and instructional support is communicated to students and has pervasive effects on the way in which students feel that their needs are met (Steins and Behravan, 2017; Nurmi, and Kiuru 2015; Sakellariou, 2012, 2005; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, Oort, 2011; Pakarinen, 2011; Jacobsen, Eggen and Kauchak, 2009). The quality of teacher - student mutual relations facilitates or not student engagement in the learning process developing either cycles of student engagement or disengagement (Aydoğan et.al, 2015; Williford, et. al, 2013; Findlay, 2013; Fredricks and McColskey, 2012; Skinner et al., 2009).

3. Methodological Approach

In reaction to the phenomenon of student disaffection and its consequent problems, research interest and focus on students' and teachers' perspectives on classroom engagement has arisen. Researchers such as Willms and Flanagan (2007) and Dunleavy and Milton (2009), having noticed glaring omissions of student voice in the research, conducted several studies that asked students to describe the "ideal school" and what would help increase student engagement in learning. Their multi-year, multidimensional action research project collected data from students on many aspects of student engagement.

However, teachers' voices are rarely heard in the literature on student engagement (Parson and Taylor, 2011). Besides, there is a notable lack of qualitative and quantitative investigation into teachers' perspectives with regards to engagement-antithesis concept, that of student disaffection.

The present research project attempts to cover this specific research gap, investigating how the Greek teachers perceive student disaffection. In particular, the purpose of this research is to present kindergarten teachers' perspectives with regard to the construct of student disaffection and the frequency, as well, at which the disengaged students of their class display disaffection manifestations in preschool settings.

The reasons for choosing to investigate kindergarten teacher perception are many and different. Firstly, the majority of the already existed research focuses solely on students in Grade 6 and higher, because this is when student engagement drops most dramatically (Willms, Friesen and Milton, 2009; Willms, 2003). Although preschool environments can be critical to academic success and risk reduction (Ling and Barnett, 2013; Vitiello, Booren, Downer and Williford, 2012), studies in preschool settings are limited (Curby, et al., 2014). Besides, the purpose of the already existed

research is not to investigate student disaffection construct and its components, but effective teaching interventions that can combat student disaffection and disruptive behaviour (e.g Skinner, 2016; Ling and Barnett, 2013).

Taken into consideration the aforementioned, we consider interesting to investigate to investigate:

- 1) How preschool teachers define student disaffection and what characteristics do they attribute to this concept? How do they figure out the disengaged student's profile in the preschool environments?
- 2) How often do their students display disaffection manifestations in the kindergarten' class?

3.1 Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the type best suited to this project. The interviews were developed based on Creswell's interview model (2008) with a mixture of open-ended and close-ended questions allowing the researcher more flexibility to fully explore the interviewee's perspective (Fontana and Frey, 2000). The interviews incorporated six types of questions; background, knowledge, experience, opinion, feelings, sensory to gain a rounded perspective (Patton, 1990).

As the mode of inquiry, we used one-on-one interviews that were been conducted from September 2017 to May 2018. Each interview was lasting about 50'-60'.

The participants in this research were 80 teachers that work in preschool education units in Greece (prefecture of Ioannina and Larissa). Most of the participants work as general education teachers (85%), 27, 5% of whose serve as head teachers of the school unit. Besides, 84,75% of them have long teaching experience (more than 10 years). The great majority of the kindergarten teachers haven't advanced educational studies/ qualifications, since 28,75% and 7,5% of whose owns M.edu. and PhD title.

3.2 Data Analysis Process

In the present research, we were conducting qualitative and quantitative data analysis processes. Creswell (2008) describes quantitative research as "*seeking to measure*", while qualitative research is best suited for research problems in which the variables are unknown and need exploring. According to Findlay (2013) a qualitative approach encompasses and values multiple perspectives and has suitable facets to access the knowledge embedded in the data.

Although there is no single approach to analyzing qualitative data, there are several guidelines for the analysis process. The most important and agreed upon guideline is that the process is inductive and iterative (Creswell, 2008; Findlay, 2013). The iterative nature is paramount to authenticity.

The data analysis was being made in situ, during each interview, where field notes were being taken. When an interview was over, another step in the analysis process was taken, that of post analysis. Post analysis was occurring during transcribing and memoing. We were converting audio recordings into text data, a process which was a time consuming, but crucial to memoing and coding. After transcribing, we were

reading data over at least several times in order to begin developing a coding scheme, a process known as memoing. During this time, initial impressions (memos) were written in the margins of transcriptions, while also searching for recurring themes (Creswell, 2008). These two analysis processes in turn were leading to coding; the final step of data analysis. Coding was being made up of the following three steps; open coding, (developing the initial categories), axial coding (reconstructing the data in order to develop main categories and sub-categories) and selective coding (demonstrating links and connections in the categories) (Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen, 2010).

4. Results

In an attempt to demonstrate teachers' perspectives regarding student disaffection in preschool environments, in this paper we present the appropriate open-ended and close-ended questions that have been used in 80 interviews and the corresponding teachers' responses that have been qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed (with the SPSS).

4.1 Teachers' Perspectives on Student Disaffection Components

Disaffected preschoolers display various disengagement features, according to the participant teachers' perspectives. The data that came up by the open question 65: 'Which are the descriptive features/ traits of disaffection?' indicate that disaffection is a multifaceted concept. Figure 1 resents disaffection components developed in categories.

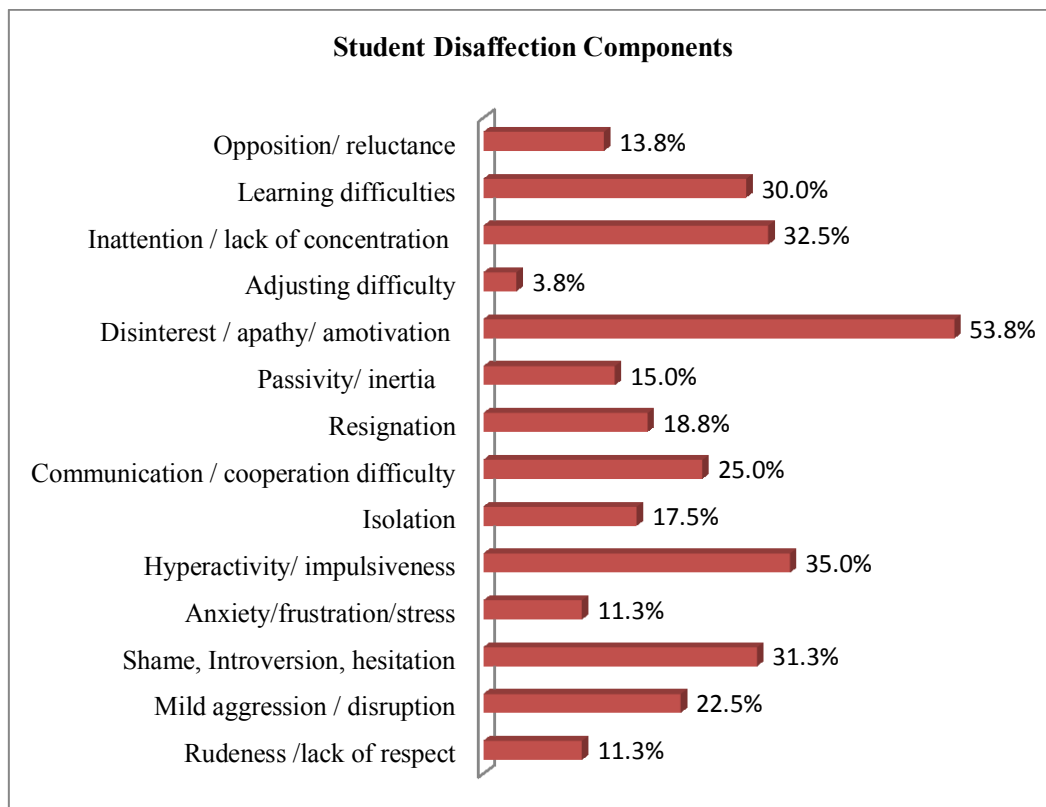


Figure 1: Teachers' perceptions on student disaffection components

A. Opposition/ Reluctance

According to the 13,8 % of participant teachers, the disaffected preschoolers are unwilling, half-hearted or refuse to participate in organized classroom activities (References in the interviews: 4, 6, 23, 26, 29, 33, 42, 68, 70, 78, 80 [N. 11]).

B. Learning Difficulties

In an attempt to define student disaffection, 30% of the interviewees refer to preschoolers who have difficulties in understanding the purpose of a learning activity. The disengaged preschoolers spend insufficient time-on-task, work at their own pace, delay, or even fail to complete a task, since they are not accustomed to do so and have difficulty in meeting the learning demands of the class. Teachers attribute this specific disaffection feature to the fact that the disengaged students are deprived of learning opportunities. (References in the interviews: 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 18, 20, 22, 23, 28, 29, 34, 35, 44, 45, 46, 53, 55, 59, 64, 76, 78, 79 [N. 24]).

"Taking into consideration a disengaged student of mine, I believe that he is not engaged, since he has learning difficulties and shortcomings in various areas; his family does not offer learning opportunities at him." (Interview No 35)

"...a disaffected student can be a child with learning disabilities and "gaps" which of being engaged" (interview No 46)

C. Inattention / Lack of Concentration

The participants (32,5%) defining student disaffection refer to those preschoolers who are inattentive and their concentration is easily-distracted. The disengaged students are used to wandering unjustifiably in the class (References in the interviews: 1, 8, 10, 12, 13, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 30, 32, 38, 40, 41,43, 45, 47, 48, 51, 54, 60, 61, 72, 76, 80/ N. 26]). The extracts from the following interviews are indicatives of this disaffection component:

"...the disengaged students exhibit absence of mind." (Interview No 10)

"They wander in the class looking for something else to attract their attention... their concentration is poor." (Interview No 32)

D. Adjusting Difficulty

According to 3,8% of the participant teachers, the disaffected preschoolers have difficulty in being unaccustomed to the school environment and in conforming to the rules defined by the group / class. These students have not yet developed the sense of belonging. (References in the interviews: 7, 22, 29, 80/N. 4).

E. Disinterest /Apathy/ Amotivation

Almost one-half of the interviewees (53,8%) consider indifference, apathy and amotivation as core manifestations of disaffection. Disaffected preschoolers are not

easily impressed and enthusiastic. They avoid learning activities due to their restricted intrinsic motivation (References in the interviews: 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 22, 24, 26, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 46, 47, 49, 50, 52, 54, 55, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 76, 78, 79, 80/ [N. 43]). The following excerpts indicate that interviewees consider indifference as a feature of disengagement.

"...They (disaffected preschoolers) do not answer to my questions; they do not "listen" to what is discussed in the group and make irrelevant comments; they do not make suggestions, and easily withdraw from group activities..." (Interview No 22)

"... (Indices of student disengagement are) the indifference and the opposition. Sometimes these students are indifferent, and other times show disruptive behaviour...." (Interview No 33)

"...they are indifferent; they refuse to make suggestions; they can't even find meaning to what is discussed". (Interview No 6)

F. Passivity/ Inertia

15% of the participating teachers consider the disaffected students being bored, exhausted, burned out; they "run out of" vitality and energy (References in the interviews: 5, 6, 7, 8, 21, 22, 23, 25, 31, 40, 47, 57 [N. 12]).

"...they do not take part in the discussion; they are lazy, bored and yawn all the time..." (interview No 47)

G. Resignation

According to the 18,8% of the participating teachers, the disengaged preschoolers withdraw in the face of challenges or difficulties. The teachers attribute resignation to students' low self-efficacy, considering their abilities ineffective (References in the interviews: 2, 3, 5, 11, 14, 15, 18, 19, 29, 30, 36, 37, 44, 56, 59 [N15]).

"...The disengaged student is distant, emotionally insecure, introverted ... not self-confident..." (Interview No 2)

H. Communication / Cooperation Difficulty

25% of the teachers that participated in our research, when they were asked to define student disaffection, referred to preschoolers that have difficulty in communication, peer interaction and cooperation. (References in the interviews: 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 17, 18, 25, 27, 29, 30, 42, 43, 44, 45, 55, 57, 59, 67, 73 /N. 20).

"...They are children who show anti-sociality; they are not familiar to play and work with others..." (Interview No 17)

"A student may be disengaged, because he is not accustomed to communicating and cooperating." (Interview No 2)

I. Isolation

17,5% of the teachers attribute anti-sociality signs to the disengaged students. According to teacher descriptions, students who show disaffection are isolated and thus marginalized even if the teaching is carried out in groups (References in the interviews: 11, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 22, 24, 25, 35, 39, 54, 63, 64 [N. 14]).

"These students are insecure; they are isolated and disengaged, in order to attract the attention of others." (Interview 11)

J. Hyperactivity/ Impulsiveness

In an attempt to define student disaffection 35% of the interviewees describe the children who display overactive and impulsive behaviour e.g they interfere into a discussion making irrelevant comments, without realizing the consequences of their actions. They do not know how to attract peers' /teachers' attention; with their disturbing behaviour break down the classroom cohesion and thus attract their negative attention. Teachers attribute immaturity to these students, as well. (References in the interviews: 3, 7, 10, 12, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 28, 30, 31, 33, 35, 42, 45, 48, 51, 52,59, 61, 62, 63, 66,68, 71, 72, 80 [N. 28])

K. Anxiety/Frustration/Stress

According to 11,3 % of the teachers, the preschoolers that display disaffection are anxious, stressed, depressed, or even grumpy and angry about their presence in the classroom. They can be overwhelmed by sadness, frustration and even self-blame displaying awkward behaviour with intense emotional outbursts. It can also be manifested with a prolonged difficulty in separating from parents. References in the interviews: 7, 9, 10, 25, 31, 31, 53, 66, 74 [N. 9]).

"In an attempt to define student disaffection, I' m considering a child in my class who finds it difficult to express and manage his emotions..." (Interview No 7)

"...A student who does not usually participate, ... may experience unfulfilled emotions, anxiety; his needs may not be met..." (Interview No 31).

L. Shame/ Introversion/ Hesitation

It is a critical component of disaffection that the participants (31,3%) consider as one of the most defining and indicative expression of the concept. Introverted students, as teachers describe them, are shy, hesitant and avoid taking initiatives; they even fear to engage in learning tasks expressing their experiences and needs. (References in the interviews: 2, 3, 5, 6, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 25 27, 30, 31, 36, 44, 45, 46, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 60, 74, 77 [N. 25]).

"...I refer to the isolated child who deals with solitary play. He does not express his feelings. He is a distant observer." (Interview 25)

"... the disengaged student is the shy, the frightened one, who does not take initiatives, but follows the others. In order to carry out an activity, he needs a "strong" classmate to help him." (Interview 5)

M. Mild Aggression / Disruption

The disengaged preschoolers, as 22,5% of the interviewees describe them, are often involved in quarrels, exhibit disruptive behaviour, even mild aggression. (References in the interviews: 1, 4, 9, 10, 22, 28, 33, 34, 35, 45, 50, 52, 55, 59, 60, 66, 77, 79 [N. 18])

N. Rudeness /Lack of Respect

Surprisingly, another disaffection feature, that 11,3% of the interviews mention, is the depreciation that some students demonstrate both toward the learning process itself and the members in which they involved. (References in the interviews 6, 12, 19, 23, 34, 44, 49, 56, 57 [N. 9]).The description given by a teacher is indicative of those mentioned above (interview No 19):

"...it's about the child who 's spoiled and rude,... he has no boundaries and respect."

According to the Greek teachers the features that most define the concept of disaffection are indifference / apathy, hyperactivity / impulsivity learning difficulties, inattention, and introversion / contraction / hesitation. Surprisingly, among the disengagement indices, educators mention rudeness /lack of respect as defining characteristic of the disengaged students which is not referred to in the relevant literature as defining components of the concept of disengagement (Table 1).

Table 1: Teachers' perspectives on student disaffection

	Teachers' perceptions on student disaffection	Occurrence (N)	Percentage %	Selection Order
Open-ended question 65: "Which are the defining features of student disaffection?"	Disinterest / Apathy / Amotivation	43	53,80%	1 st
	Hyperactivity / Impulsiveness	28	35%	2 nd
	Inattention / Lack of Concentration	26	32,5%	3 rd
	Shame, Introversion, Hesitation	25	31,3%	4 th
	Learning Difficulties	24	30%	5 th
	Communication / Cooperation Difficulty	20	25 %	6 th

4.2 Teachers' Perspectives on the Frequency that the Disaffected Students Display Disaffection Indices

The above mentioned data (open-ended question 65) are confirmed by the data from the close-ended questions 66-81, which have been quantitatively analyzed with the SPSS). At these questions the participating teachers assessed the frequency on which students in their class display various characteristics of disaffection. These characteristics - documented by international bibliography - were determined by the researcher. Interviewees' responses were categorized on a four-point Likert scale with the values corresponding to "4=always" "3=usually" "2= rarely " "1=never ". At the figure 2, is presented the mean of frequency of each disaffection indices.

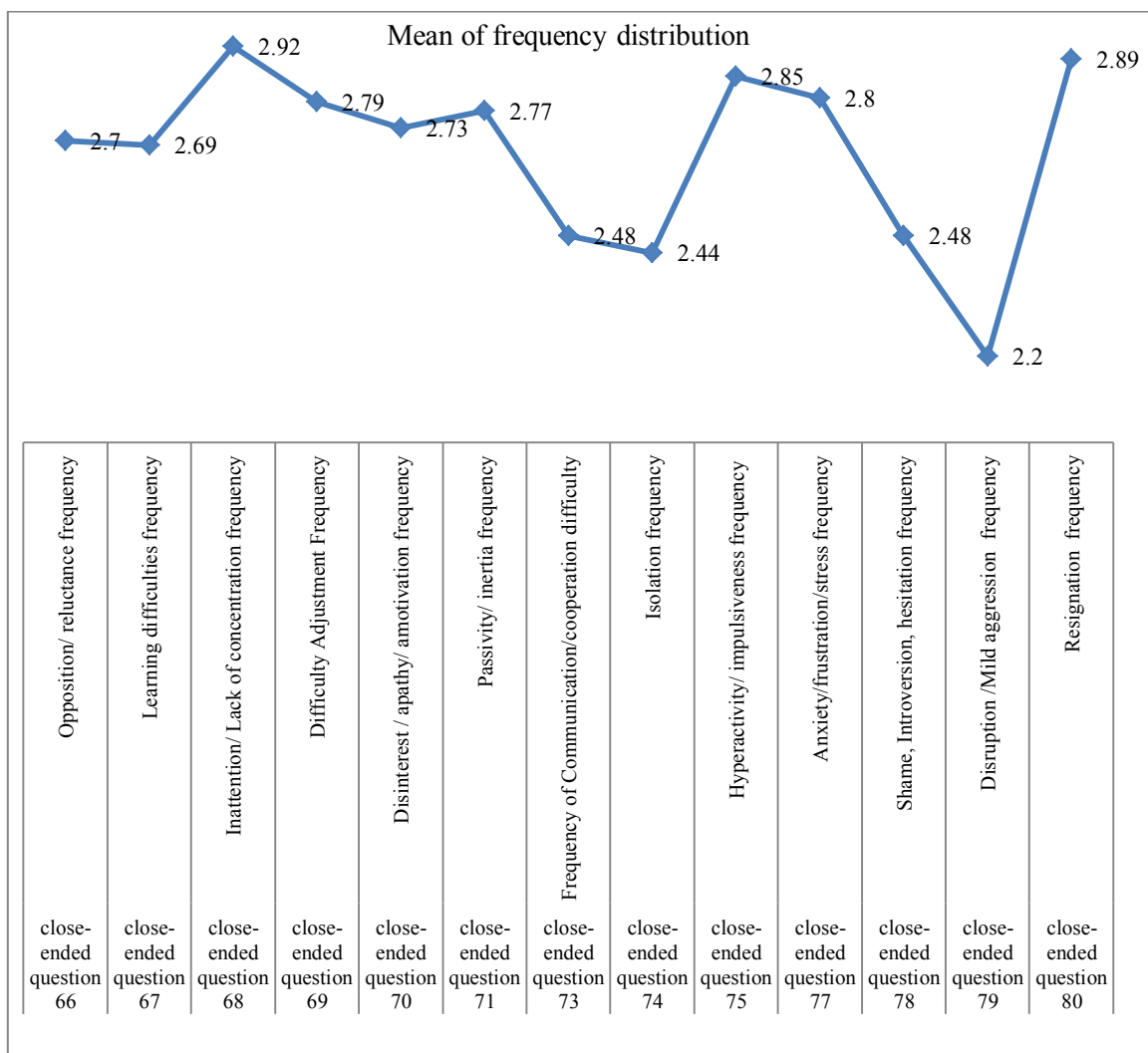


Figure 2: Teachers perceptions on the frequency at which the disengaged preschoolers display disaffection indices (mean of frequency distribution)

According to the data depicted in the mean of frequency distribution figure (figure 2), teachers argue that the frequency on which preschoolers in their class exhibit disaffection indices are quite high (usually). Most teachers' answers are placed in the

third category that corresponds to the word “usually”. Average values range from 2.2 (Close-ended question 79) to 2,92 (closed-ended question 68) which is the highest value.

- **Opposition/ Reluctance Frequency.** The frequency on which the disengaged preschoolers are negative and unwilling to be engaged is based on the quantitatively analyzed data to the close-ended question 66: ‘How often do your students show reluctance or refuse to participate in a learning activity?’. According to this data, the participant teachers admit that in their kindergarten class the disengaged students usually do not make an effort, are not diligent and willing to engage in learning activities (mean of frequency: 2,7).
- **Learning Difficulties Frequency.** According to the data of the close-ended question 67: ‘how often do your students have difficulties in understanding a learning activity and spending time-on-task?’, the participant teachers admit that the disengaged preschoolers usually have difficulties in understanding the purpose or the steps of an activity and spend insufficient time- on- task (mean of frequency: 2,69).
- **Inattention/ Lack of Concentration Frequency.** The data that came up by the close-ended question 68 ‘How often do your students are distracted and wander in the classroom?’ demonstrate that the interviewees report that in their class there are students who do not usually pay attention, but wander in the classroom (mean of frequency: 2,92) indicating that this disaffection feature is so common.
- **Difficulty Adjustment Frequency.** The interviewees were asked to estimate the frequency at which the disengaged students in their class have difficulty adjusting (Close-ended question 69). According to the participant teachers, in their class the disaffected preschoolers have usually difficulty in being accustomed to the school environment and in conforming to the class rules (mean of frequency: 2,79).
- **Disinterest / Apathy/ Amotivation Frequency.** According to the data of the close-ended question 70: ‘how often do your students show indifference, apathy or amotivation?’, the interviewees estimate that their disaffected students usually are indifferent and try to avoid learning activities due to their restricted intrinsic motivation (mean of frequency: 2,73).
- **Passivity/ Inertia Frequency.** Based on the responses to the close-ended question 71, ‘how often do your student stand idle and passive avoiding to reveal their interests, their goals, their expectations?’ we observe that the interviewees admit that the disengaged preschoolers in their class are usually bored, exhausted and passive (mean of frequency: 2,77).
- **Frequency of Communication/Cooperation Difficulty.** According to the data that came up with regard to the close-ended question 73 ‘how often do your students have difficulty in peer/teacher interaction and cooperation’, the interviewees admit that this specific disaffection indice is usual among the disengaged students on their class (mean of frequency: 2,48).

- Isolation Frequency. The interviewees' responses to the close-ended question 74 'how often are your students isolated/ marginalized?', indicate that the disengaged students in their class are usually isolated (mean of frequency: 2,44) .
- Hyperactivity/ Impulsiveness Frequency. According to the participant teachers responses to the close-ended question 75 ('how often do the disengaged students display overactive and impulsive behaviour?') the disengaged students usually display hyperactivity signs and impulsive/ disturbing behaviour in order to attract peers' /teachers' attention (mean of frequency: 2,85).
- Anxiety/Frustration/Stress Frequency. The interviewees' responses to the close-ended question 77 ('How often are the disaffected student anxious, stressed, frustrated or even angry about their presence in the classroom?') demonstrate that the disengaged students in their classroom usually show anxiety/ frustration /stress (mean of frequency: 2,8)
- Shame, Introversion, Hesitation Frequency. According to the participant teachers responses to the close-ended question 78 ('How often are the disaffected student in their class introverted and shy hesitating to take initiatives or express their experiences and needs?') the interviewees' admit that this specific disaffection characteristic prevails among the disengaged preschoolers of their class. (mean of frequency: 2,48)
- Disruption /Mild Aggression Frequency. According to the data that came up by the open-ended question 79 ('how often do your students demonstrate disruptive behavior, even mild aggressive outburst?') the participant teachers estimate that in their class the disengaged preschoolers usually display disruption/ mild aggression (mean of frequency: 2,2)
- Resignation Frequency. The participants were asked to estimate the frequency at which the disengaged students in their kindergarten class withdraw in the face of challenges or difficulties (Close-ended question 80). The data indicates that according to the teachers perspectives their disengaged students are usually resigned (mean of frequency: 2,89).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The findings of our research, part of which we presented above, show the different characteristics that the disengaged students display. Based on qualitative and quantitative data analysis, we infer that Greek kindergarten teachers attribute behavioral, emotional and cognitive indices to the concept of disaffection, confirming how multifaceted it is. Our findings agree with previous research data, (e.g. Skinner and Pizer, 2012; Skinner and Belmont,1993) and confirm them in practice, since Greek teachers figure out the disengaged students' profile of their class using characteristics already written in the relative literature.

In addition, teacher responses demonstrate that the frequency of these disaffection components is increased, even in preschool settings, implying that teachers are preoccupied with the phenomenon of student disaffection.

The variety of disengagement components also shows the difficulty both in identifying the disaffection phenomenon and in seeking appropriate pedagogical practices to limit it. As Skinner and Belmont (1993:571) comment “*although motivated students are easy to recognize; they are difficult to find. Research shows that across the preschool to high school years, children’s intrinsic motivation decreases and they feel increasingly alienated from learning.*”

The classroom has never been considered as heterogeneous with regards to student population as it is today. Never before, has the educational and research community been more preoccupied with the disengaged pupils. Student disaffection is a construct that resonates with most consumers of education, including students and parents (Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong, 2008) and presents an attractive focus for researchers and educators, in that compared to other predictors of academic success that are static (e.g., socioeconomic status, ethnicity), it is believed to be a malleable characteristic and therefore a more appropriate focus for interventions.

Future research should focus on exploring and evaluating classroom disaffection, taking into consideration students’ and teachers’ reports and perspectives. Classroom research is important to confirm what strategies are related to fostering engagement in order to provide teachers with new “*tools*” to enrich and enhance the learning process (Sakellariou & Tsiara, 2019; Sakellariou, Tsiara and Gessiou, 2015). It is postulated that an understanding of student disaffection might help educators prevent deleterious outcomes and promote positive ones for at-risk students. The need for further training and support for teachers in order to adopt engaging teaching strategies is stressed, as well (Sakellariou and Tsiara, 2017). It is important to help break the “*coercive cycle*” disaffection by providing teachers with positive behaviour management techniques and consequently improve at-risk student behaviour to desirable levels similar to their classroom peers.

At the same time, teachers are invited to modify the usual teacher-centred teaching practices and to set the students in the centre of the learning process (Sakellariou & Tsiara, 2019). Students’ voice which reflects their needs, preoccupations, interests, should be taken into consideration (Sakellariou & Tsiara, 2018; Sakellariou, 2012; 2005). The so called “*co-construction of knowledge*” is more urgent than ever, in order to combat the alarming disaffection increase. Where a climate of co-operation and collaboration is created, leading to a greater voice for students generally, engagement is enhanced.

5.1 Limitations

Interviews can provide a detailed descriptive account of how teachers construct meaning about classroom disaffection, which contextual factors are most salient, and how these experiences relate to engagement. However, interviews are not without problems. The knowledge, skills, and biases of the interviewer can all impact on the quality, depth, and type of responses. There are also questions about the reliability (stability and consistency) and validity of interview findings.

Additionally, we consider it important to mention that the results of this research as a whole should be interpreted with caution given the small size of the sample and be seen as a first step at the research level that aims to highlight important issues regarding the student disengagement.

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