Cultural construction of promoting resilience and positive school climate during economic crisis in Greek schools

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ABSTRACT

In this study, an evidence-based program aiming to promote psychological well-being and resilience within the context of Greek schools is presented. It is based upon a multidimensional model that synthesizes different theoretical domains, placing emphasis on different goals depending on the needs of the school community during unsettling times. Culture-specific characteristics of the economic recession are addressed, using a multilevel mixed-model participatory design, including needs assessment, pre-assessment and post-assessment. Overall assessment supported the program's effectiveness on teachers' resilience, students' goal setting, and the promotion of a positive school climate.

In recent years, crisis preparedness and intervention has grown considerably, aiming to facilitate healthy adaptation following crises among children, families, schools, and communities (Heath, Nickerson, Annandale, Kemple, & Dean, 2009; Jimerson, Brock, & Pletcher, 2005). Nowadays, the need for the development of a model aiming to cater for the needs of the school community during or after a crisis arises is more intense than ever. The change of socioeconomic status and the economic crisis that has affected a number of countries throughout the world have created a situation where intervention for the promotion of psychological well-being and resilience stands out as an essential need especially for children and adolescents.

This is especially the case for Greece, which has been severely affected during recent years by the economic crisis. The purpose of this article is to present the development, implementation, and evaluation of an intervention program, E.M.E.I.Σ.,[1] aiming at promoting resilience and positive climate in school communities. In order to develop an effective intervention and to cater for the specific needs of the school communities in the Greek educational system, several culture-specific factors needed to be taken into consideration, as well. In particular, the intervention was based on a three-axis framework that included the provision of school psychological services, the characteristics of the crisis, and the promotion of resilience and well-being.

Cultural factors under consideration

Provision of school psychological services

During the past few decades, the field of psychology has rapidly expanded in Greece. However, the provision of school psychological services in mainstream public schools remains limited despite the progress that has been made (Hatzichristou, Polychroni, & Georgouleas, 2007). This context constituted a challenge for the development of an alternative service delivery model in an effort to address the growing and unmet needs of different populations of the Greek educational system (Hatzichristou, 1998; 2004; 2011).

The data-based model of alternative school psychological services linking theory, research, and practice in the school environment led to the foundation of the Center for Research and Practice of School Psychology (CRPSP) in the Department of Psychology at the University of Athens (Hatzichristou, 2004). The main

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1. Ενδιαφερόμαστε (Care) - Μοιραζόμαστε (Share) - Ενθαρρύνουμε (Encourage) – Ισχυροποιούμαστε (Empower) – Συμμετέχουμε (Participate).

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goals and activities of the CRPSP are (a) promotion of university–school–community partnerships and collaboration; (b) education and preservice and in-service training for graduate students, school psychologists, teachers, and parents; (c) scientific research and publications; and (d) development, implementation, and evaluation of multilevel interventions in the school community. Within this context, a number of prevention and intervention programs have been developed and implemented in different educational and cultural contexts for the promotion of school well-being and crisis management.

Economic crisis

Several studies have demonstrated that the stress deriving from crisis, and economic crisis in particular, is positively related with several adversities both in familial (e.g., Falconier & Epstein, 2011) and school settings (Hamilton et al., 2009; Tomuletiu, Pop, David, Solovastru, & Buicu, 2011). A number of researchers have reported negative effects of the current economic crisis in Greece upon mental health (Economou, Madianos, Peppou, Patelakis, & Stefanis, 2013), and access to and provision of health services (Kentikelenis et al., 2011). Increased rates of stress, anxiety, depression, and even suicide attempts are associated with this broader mental health crisis (McDaid et al., 2013). However, the negative effects of economic crisis, especially in children, can be alleviated by the enhancement of adaptive psychological and behavioral coping strategies, the building of resilience, and the promotion of well-being (Conger & Elder, 1994; Van Hal, 2015). Due to the lack of provision of mental health services, it is imperative that intervention programs are implemented in schools.

The distinct characteristics of the current situation (i.e., that it is continuous and affects all the population) makes it difficult to apply existing crisis intervention models. Therefore, responding to the current situation, the Center for Research and Practice in School Psychology (CRPSP) of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens has developed a multilevel school-based crisis prevention and intervention model that promotes resilience and well-being in school communities (Figure 1).

The model and subsequent intervention programs were developed based on the existing literature on crisis intervention, psychological well-being, and resilience, while taking into account the extensive research findings regarding the culturally specific needs of the Greek schools (Hatzichristou et al., 2011). The development of the multilevel model included the following specific domains: (a) conceptual framework, with a synthesis of all the current trends, approaches, and research findings; (b) education and training for school administrators, educators, mental health professionals, undergraduate and graduate students, and the community; and (c) intervention, referring to all the multilevel intervention programs that have been developed and implemented.

Promotion of resilience

Research findings regarding the needs of the school community within the context of the economic crisis indicate the expressed need for psychological support of all school members. The promotion of psychological well-being and resilience seemed to be the first priority that any intervention should focus on.

Doll, Zucker, and Brehm (2004) define resilient classrooms as those having the following characteristics: academic efficacy, academic self-determination, behavioral self-control, caring and authentic teacher–student relationships, ongoing and rewarding relationships with classroom peers, and strong home–school collaboration. According to the same authors, it is important for students to have a voice and give feedback on how they perceive themselves as learners and how they perceive their relationships with teachers and classmates. This voice is provided by the class maps survey (Doll et al., 2004), which is a classroom-based tool for developing a classroom profile based on students' perceptions. Class maps can also provide teachers with helpful insight regarding the overall classroom climate and indicate specific areas of focus for improvement.

Furthermore, predicting students' classroom behaviors from personal (student) and contextual (classroom) characteristics may be associated with enhancements in student achievement, through modifying those attributes. This perspective may be well understood within the context of achievement goal theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), particularly as extended in the examination of classroom motivational structures in relation to student self-regulation in academic contexts (e.g., Ames, 1992), or even students' mental health (Somersalo, Solantaus, & Almqvist, 2002). Data regarding the two major components of goal structures, namely cooperation and competition, based on the intrinsic–extrinsic motivational distinction (Lepper, Corpus, & Iyengar, 2005), comprise a basis on which to expand the taxonomy of motivational discourse by including more elements of mastery and performance goal structures (Sideridis, 2007).

At a school level, Henderson and Milstein (2003) have described six basic factors that contribute to the promotion of resiliency in schools and that constitute the *resilience wheel.* These factors are (a) prosocial bonding, (b) clear, consistent boundaries, (c) life skills,
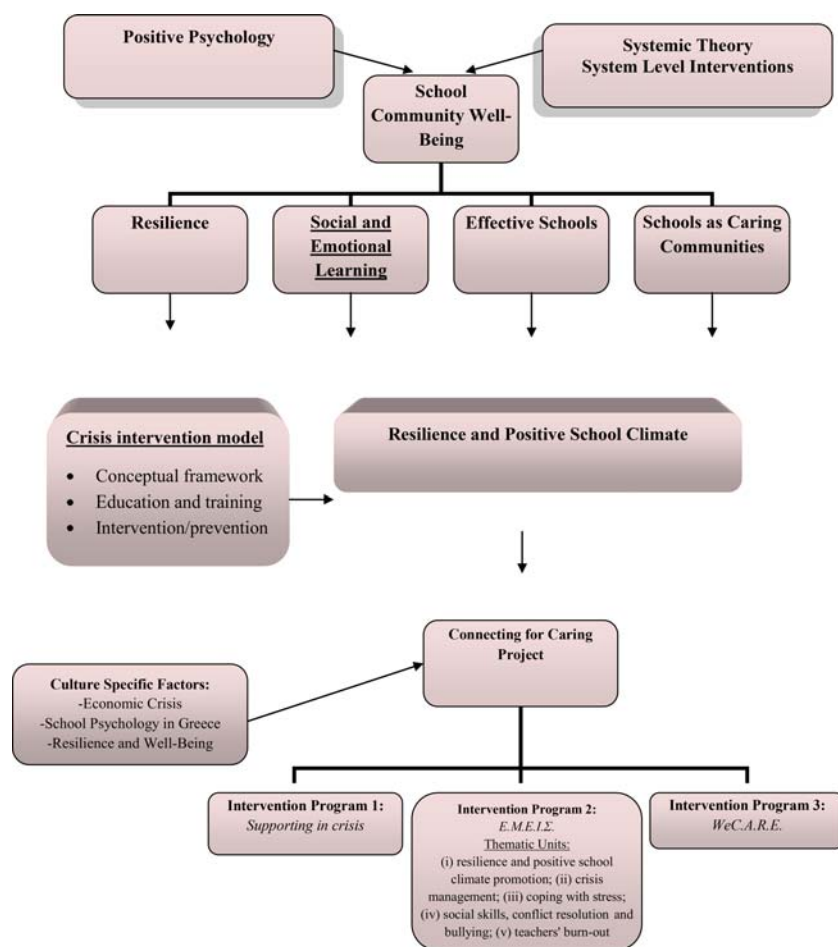
Figure 1. Conceptual framework: Multilevel approach of promoting resilience and positive climate in school community during unsettling times. *Note*. In this figure a multilevel approach of promoting school community well-being is depicted. Several intervention programs have been developed based on the current trends and theoretical models in the field of school psychology and aims to promote the psychological resiliency and positive school climate of the school community. Within the context of two basic theoretical trends (positive psychology and systemic approach) the concept of school community well-being is suggested. In addition, the basic approaches of school psychology such as resilience, SEL, effective schools, and schools as caring community are considered as basic conceptual axis and intervention fields for the enhancement of school community well-being and especially during Unsettling Times for the enhancement of positive school climate and resilient school communities. The culture-specific factors of the economic recession, the current status of school psychology services provision in Greece, and the need for promotion of resilience and well-being in the school community are taken into consideration, as well. Three intervention programs have been developed toward this purpose, while a crisis intervention model that has been suggested combining current trends, education, training, and intervention has also been included in the model providing additional and specialized framework for promoting resiliency.

(d) caring and support, (e) high, positive expectations, and (f) opportunities for participation. Teachers can apply the resilience wheel using specific tools and following specific methodological steps in order to design, develop, and implement specific action plans for promoting resilience at a school system level. The application of the conceptual approach for promoting school and community well-being also integrated the basic dimensions of the crisis intervention model (described in the previous section) within a comprehensive promotion of resilience and positive school climate in the school communities, addressing specific cultural factors of the Greek school context.

With regard to context considerations concerning evidence-based interventions, Nastasi et al. (2015) propose the term cultural (co-)construction "to refer to the process of dialog among equal partners across class, ethnic/racial, disciplinary, cultural, and other boundaries that integrates knowledge, values, perspectives, and methods derived from all parties, resulting in shared innovation" (p. 94). Cultural (co-)construction is addressed as one of the key factors in establishing and implementing evidence-based interventions, the other being (a) the adaptation of the program to the specific context and culture, (b) the participation and collaboration of important stakeholders, and (c) the application

of mixed-methods research designs (Nastasi & Hitchcock, 2016). Two important implications for this notion are that the participants in the dialog are responsible for the creation of meaning, identity, and coherence of ideas, and that ideas cannot be considered as predetermined by linguistic structures themselves (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995). Consequently, in designing and implementing prevention programs, an effort to ensure cultural sensitivity is warranted, in the attempt to reflect population beliefs, values, and norms relevant to the intervention (i.e., the cultural construct; Colby et al., 2013).

Evidence-based interventions

Within the context of the described multilevel approach that combines the important parameters of the school well-being model with the dimensions of the crisis intervention model (Hatzichristou, Issari, Lampropoulou, Lykitsakou, & Dimitropoulou, 2011), the Center for Research and Practice of School Psychology (CRPSP), University of Athens, in cooperation with the Society for School and Family Consultation and Research, have developed the Connecting for Caring project,[2] a multilevel prevention, awareness-building, education, and intervention project, with the generous donation of Stavros Niarchos Foundation. Based on a holistic approach to foster positive development, adjustment and support of children and adolescents in the school and in the family, this project included three school-based intervention programs (Hatzichristou, 2013; 2015; Hatzichristou & Adamopoulou, 2013; Hatzichristou, Yfanti, & Georgouleas, 2012): (a) Supporting in Crisis; (b) E.M.E.I.Σ program; and (c) the International WeC.A.R.E. program, developed and implemented with the participation of teachers and students from 11 different countries.

The E.M.E.I.Σ program (i.e., teachers' training and intervention program for the promotion of resilience and positive school climate in the school community) was developed and implemented during a school year (October to May) in schools in the broader area of Athens. Findings from the needs assessment revealed the need of school communities to enhance their resilience through a school-based intervention program. At the same time, as the financial crisis in Greece deepened, an effort was made to design and implement a recovery response intervention program that helps school community members to proactively build their resilience and strengthen their coping skills against the distressing effects of these challenging times.

The goal of the E.M.E.I.Σ. program was the promotion of positive climate in schools, in order to reinforce the individual and group resilience as well as the promotion and enhancement of internal strengths, motivation, and skills in the school environment. In addition, this program offers to the teachers an opportunity to strengthen their own resilience and, at the same time, to support and empower students in the classroom. An important goal is also to develop a broader supportive network for the school community by covering the intense needs for psychological support, which have emerged from the current economic crisis.

The E.M.E.I.Σ program included (a) specialized teacher training seminars, (b) development and implementation of structured classroom activities, (c) development of educational materials and booklets, (d) promotion of a school network through an electronic platform, and (e) needs assessment and evaluation of program effectiveness. These activities were implemented at three levels: (a) individual level for each student, where the goal is to strengthen and support each child, (b) classroom level, with the goal to create a positive climate and strengthen and support all the class members including the teacher, and (c) school unit level, with the goal to promote resilience and positive climate to all members of the school community.

The thematic units of the program were the following: (a) practical model of resilience and positive school climate promotion identifying values and goal setting, (b) crisis management in the school community, (c) coping with stress, (d) social skills, conflict resolution, and bullying, and (e) teachers' burnout. Each thematic unit included a specialized training session that presented the theoretical background and framework of the unit and especially designed and structured activities that teachers implemented weekly in their classrooms. The training seminars also involved supervision of the program implementation in classrooms by the scientific team members and especially designed experience-based activities for the teachers in small groups. The experiential activities created an opportunity for teachers to process and comprehend the concepts that were presented in the theoretical part, as well as to be better prepared to implement the suggested classroom activities. The program also included a closing ceremony where teachers presented examples of the implementation of the activities in their classrooms in an effort to promote best practices.

Evaluation of the E.M.E.I.Σ. Program

Sample

The participating sample consisted of teachers and students from elementary and secondary schools. Needs assessment questionnaires were administered to 141

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2. See www.connecting4caring.gr.

teachers who participated in the training seminars of the program (9% males and 91% females). Three of them were kindergarten teachers (2.1%), while 79 served in elementary education (50%) and 47.9% in secondary education.

The overall intervention group of students participating in the program consisted of 311 girls and 295 boys ($N = 606$), ranging from kindergarten to junior high school student. However, assessment was conducted with randomly selected students of the fifth and sixth grades of elementary school and of all junior high school grades ($N = 200$). In addition, a control group of students not participating in the project was elected (neighboring classes in the same schools).

Most of the elementary students demonstrated high and moderate achievement in school, according to their teachers' evaluation. Twenty-nine percent of fifth-grade students were reported as high achievers, 21 as moderate. Fourteen percent were evaluated as low achievers. Likewise, more sixth-grade elementary students demonstrated high (16.7%) and moderate (11.8%) performance than low performance (6.2%).

Evaluation for junior high school students' school achievement was conducted based on the marks they had received during the previous school year in the subjects of Modern Greek, Mathematics, History, and on the cumulative grade point average (CGPA). Seventy-four percent of first junior high school students and 35.3% of second junior high school students had high school performance. However, the majority of third junior high school students achieved moderate school performance (41.4%). In all school grades, only the minority of students achieved low school performance.

Measures

Evaluation was conducted in three phases: (a) at the beginning of the program, (b) before the program implementation, and (c) at the program completion. Teachers and students were the informants, assessing significant psychosocial dimensions at both personal and contextual level (Table 1). At the end of the program, they were both asked to evaluate its effectiveness. Finally, demographic data were collected.

Crisis effects

Teachers participating in training seminars of the "E.M.E. I.Σ." program were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding the crisis effects in schools (e.g., 'During this year, how many of your students' families have difficulty to cope with expenses?"). Students were asked to fill in a questionnaire evaluating their own personal needs for psychological support during the period of economic crisis; the questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions inquiring about the impact of economic recession in the school community and in their lives (e.g., "During this year ... my family has difficulty to cope with expenses?"). Multiple aspects of the economic crisis were explored, such as information resources, existing difficulties and emotional effects.

Personal factors

Students

Psychosocial adjustment

Social and emotional adjustment was assessed by the short version of the Test of Psychosocial Adjustment (Hatzichristou, Polychroni, Besevegis, & Mylonas, 2008). This scale consists of 44 items yielding two subscales: Social Adjustment and Emotional Adjustment. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the scale using a 5-point Likert ($1 =$ never to $5 =$ very much) ranged from .70 to .74.

Goal orientation

The Goal Orientation Measure (Sideridis, 2005) is a self-report 21-item questionnaire consisting of four subscales. The reliability (Cronbach's *alpha*) of the scale using a 4-point Likert ($1 =$ strongly disagree to $4 =$ strongly agree) scoring convention was .80.

Student engagement

Pupils' student engagement was assessed using the Student Engagement scale (SEI-Short-Form; Lam et al., 2010). The SEI consists of 18 items including three subscales, measuring cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Items were anchored on a 3-point Likert-type scaling ($1 =$ no, $2 =$ sometimes, $3 =$ yes).

Teachers

Teachers' stress

The *Perceived Stress Scale* (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) is a self-reported questionnaire that measures persons' evaluation of the stressfulness of the situations in the past month. It consists of 10 items (Likert scale $1-5$) yielding a total score of teachers' perceived stress. Its internal validity is reported as satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha $= 0.80$).

Teachers' resilience

The Personal Resilience Questionnaire (Warner, 2012) was designed to assess individuals' sense of resiliency.

Table 1. List of measures used in the evaluation.

Measures	Dimensions	Source of data	Evaluation Phase	Factors
		Teachers / Students	Needs Assessment	
Impact of economic recession in the school community and in the family		Teachers / Students	Needs Assessment	Contextual
Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen et al., 1983)	Teachers' perceived stress	Teachers	Pre-assessment, Post-assessment	Personal
Test of Psychosocial Adjustment (Hatzichristou et al., 2008)	A) Social Adjustment: (i) Leadership; (ii) Interpersonal Communication; (iii) Cooperation with Peers B) Emotional Adjustment: (i)Self Control; (ii) Managing Emotions; (iii) Empathy	Students	Pre-assessment, Post-assessment	Personal
Personal Resilience Questionnaire (Warner, 2012)	Seven Principles for Resilience: (i) set your targets and meaning in life; (ii) use your own unique strengths and potential; (iii) be optimistic; (iv) reach out to others; (v) generate positive feelings; (vi) maintain perspective; and (vii) be open-minded and flexible	Teachers	Pre-assessment, Post-assessment	Personal
Goal Orientation Measure (Sideridis, 2005)	(i) Mastery Approach; (ii) Performance Approach; (iii) Mastery Avoidance; (iv) Performance Avoidance	Students	Pre-assessment, Post-assessment	Personal
Organizational Commitment Questionnaire-Affective scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990)	Emotional commitment towards their school	Teachers	Pre-assessment, Post-assessment	Personal
Student Engagement Instrument (SEI-Short-Form, Lam et al., 2010)	(i) Cognitive Dimension; (ii) Affective Dimension; (iii) Behavioral Dimension	Students	Pre-assessment, Post-assessment	Personal
The Class Maps Survey (Doll et al., 2009)	(i) Teacher–Student Relationships; (ii) Peer friendships; (iii) Peer Aggression; (iv) Peer; (v) Home–school relationships; (vi) Academic Efficacy; (vii) Behavioral Self-Control; (viii) and Self Determination	Students	Pre-assessment, Post-assessment	Contextual
School as Caring Community Profile—II (SCCP-II) measure (Lickona & Davidson, 2001)	(i) Perceptions of Student Respect; (ii) Perceptions of Student Friendship and Belonging; (iii) Perceptions of Students' Shaping of Their Environment; (iv) Perceptions of Support and Care By and For Faculty/Staff; (v) Perceptions of Support and Care By and For Parents	Students	Pre-assessment, Post-assessment	Contextual
Classroom Goal Structures (Sideridis, 2005)	(i) Mastery goal structure; (ii) Performance goal structure	Students	Pre-assessment, Post-assessment	Contextual

It consists of 35 items in a 5-point Likert format, with levels of internal validity ranging from .86 to .92. Resilience is evaluated based on the scoring scale of the following seven (7) principles for building up resilience: (a) set your targets and meaning in life, (b) use your own unique strengths and potential, (c) be optimistic, (d) reach out to others, (e) generate positive feelings, (f) maintain perspective, and (g) be open-minded and flexible.

Emotional commitment

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire-Affective Scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990) assessed the level of teachers' emotional commitment toward their school. It consists of 8 items (Likert scale 1–7) giving a total score of teachers' feelings. Internal validity is reported as satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89).

Contextual factors

Classroom climate

The Class Maps Survey (Doll et al., 2010), a 37-item self-report measure, was administered in order to assess classroom climate. The questionnaire consists of six subscales anchored on a 5-point Likert type (1 = almost never to 5 = almost always). Five subscales describe relational aspects of the classroom, including Teacher–Student Relationships, Peer Friendships, Peer Aggression, Peer Conflict, and Home–School relationships. The remaining three subscales are Academic Efficacy, Behavioral Self-Control, and Self-Determination. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall scale was .90.

School climate

Teachers and pupils completed the School as Caring Community Profile–II (SCCP-II) measure (Lickona & Davidson, 2001), which assesses aspects of the school community and school relationships. Items were anchored on a 5-point rating scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .89 for the students' version and .88 for the teachers' version.

Classroom goal structures

The classroom goal structures (Sideridis, 2005) were defined as students' perceptions of their classroom environment, assessed through self-report. Items were anchored on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). Seven items defined a mastery goal structure and nine a performance goal structure. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .79.

First assessment phase: Needs assessment

Needs assessment was carried out in the participant schools as the basis for the intervention program. The first phase included exploring the impact of various dimensions of economic crisis on school community members and examining the psychosocial and emotional status and needs of the schools at both individual (teachers–students) and system level (class–school).

Evaluating dimensions of economic crisis impact on school community

Regarding the impact of economic crisis on school-children's lives, teachers reported that compared to the beginning of school year, students (a) came to school with significantly less pocket money (28.4%), (b) without lunch (19.1%), (c) could not afford participating in school excursions (49.6%), (d) or in cultural school events (46.8%), (e) could not afford basic school essentials (12.8%), (f) lacked new clothing and footwear (16.3%), (g) complained about physical discomfort at school (14.9%), (h) had too many unexcused absences (2.1%), (i) expressed more interpersonal behavior problems (31.2%), (j) expressed more intrapersonal behavior problems (23.4%), (k) had reduced extracurricular activities (34.8%), and (l) had fewer resources for attending after-school private tutorial classes (33.3%).

When asked, only 2.1% of the teachers reported no case of unemployment in the families of their students. The rest believed that at least one family of the students in their classroom was facing unemployment at the present time. Concerning families who have moved or are living in the same house with other relatives, almost 92% reported that at least one family of the students in their classroom was facing this condition. Teachers also reported that the deficiencies schools are facing, due to economic recession, are (a) lack of technical-material equipment (55.3%), (b) maintenance problems (48.9%), (c) school safety and security problems (3.7%), (d) teaching staff deficiency (37.6%), (e) heating problems (33.3%), and (f) cleaning problems (30.5%).

When asked about their concerns with regard to the economic crisis at a personal level, teachers were mainly concerned with the following: (a) family issues (e.g., having a family, maintaining family happiness, children's education or career: 40.4%), (b) financial issues (39.7%), (c) living conditions and quality of life (25.5%), (d) unpleasant feelings (e.g. insecurity, confusion, pessimism, lack of resilience to cope with problems: 20.6%), (e) personal problems (e.g. undoing expectations, self-discrediting, absence of future goals and ambitions: 18.4%), and (f) social problems, such as social changes, starvation-deprivation-impoverishment of people, and

lack of solidarity (13.5%). Responses to the question, "What worries you the most at a professional level with regard to the economic crisis?" demonstrated that 84.4% of teachers were seriously concerned with their personal job-related state (e.g., dismissal, working conditions, lack of quality). A significant percentage (17.7%) also worried about the negative or unpleasant feelings they experience in relation to their job, such as pressure, insecurity, anxiety, and concern for coming changes.

Regarding the impact of the economic crisis on students' life, it was found that compared to the previous school year things had deteriorated or, at best, had remained the same. Compared to the previous year, 60% of the students reported that their pocket money had remained the same and 30.1% that it had decreased. Eighteen percent reported less participation in cultural school activities, while 58.7% reported almost the same level of participation. Nineteen percent participated less and 49.2% at the same level in extracurricular activities; 8% reported less participation in school excursions, and 64.4% the same level of participation as the previous year. Sixteen percent had fewer resources for attending after-school private tutorial classes and 58.1% remained at the same level this year. Six percent report that they have school essentials to a lesser extent than last year, 63% to the same extent as last year, while 10.1% report that their school snack is less and 76.5% the same as last year. It should be pointed out that, as many students reported, answering "the same" does not necessarily mediate the problem, but rather indicates that the shortage problem remained at the same low levels as the previous year.

With regard to the impact of economic crisis on students' family life, it seems that the largest percentage of students (59%) refer to the family's difficulty to cope with expenses ($N = 394$). Twenty-two percent ($N = 147$) report that at least one parent has lost his or her job, while 6.5% ($N = 44$) report that their families have changed residence, as a consequence of the economic crisis. It should be pointed out that, although the positive reply rate is lower than the negative reply rate in the two last questions concerning loss of employment and moving house, still these rates are noteworthy. No statistically significant differences were found between answers provided by elementary and secondary school students.

The impact of economic crisis on students' school and family life was also investigated with the use of open questions, such as: "What worries you more in the economic crisis? (concerning yourself, your family, for school)." Content analysis of both elementary and secondary students' questions brought about similar concerns classified in the following categories: (a) Financial Problems (inability to cover essential expenses),

(b) Shortage of Food and other essentials, (c) Parents' Emotional State, (d) Change of Residence and life conditions, (e) School Needs, (f) Future Prospects.

Assessment of anxiety, attitude toward school, and resilience

Teachers often experience job-related stress and professional burnout due to the nature of their profession. A great percentage of participants (48.8%) reported high stress levels, while 50.2% reported moderate stress levels.

The majority of teachers reported "moderate resilience" (65.5%), maintaining that although they possess certain strategies to cope with difficulties, these are not always adequate to ensure their ability to handle adversities in a steadily effective way, and therefore their resilience needs enhancement. "High resilience" was reported 31% by the teachers, meaning that these individuals succeed in most cases in handling adversities in an effective way. The two extreme scoring categories, that is, "very low resilience" and "great resilience," had the lowest rates (1% and 3% respectively).

Teachers' and students' perception of school as a caring community

Data processing of the teachers' answers before the implementation of the intervention produced average scores in all factors. Questionnaire scales Support and Care among the Staff and Support and Care From and To Parents had the highest mean values ($M = 4.23$ and $M = 4.05$, respectively). The scales Students' Respect and Students' Friendship and Feeling of Belonging scored respective mean values of 3.31 and 3.16. The lowest mean value was for Students' Active Involvement in School Process ($M = 2.75$). Furthermore, the answers of elementary and secondary school teachers were compared with the Student's t-test. Overall, elementary school teachers reported higher scores than secondary school teachers (Table 2).

Students reported higher mean values in the Support and Care among the staff ($M = 4.16$), as well as in the Support and Care From and To Parents subscale ($M = 4.16$). Subscales Students' Respect and Students' Friendship and Feeling of Belonging presented respective mean values of 3.33 and 3.11, while the lowest mean value was reported in the Students' Active Involvement in School Process subscale ($M = 2.91$).

As with teachers, comparing answers with the Student's t-test provided by elementary and secondary school students proved of particular interest. All mean values for elementary school students were higher than junior high school students (Table 3).

Table 2. Mean values, standard deviations, t-test, degrees of freedom and statistical significance for SCCP-II subscales for teachers per educational level.

SCCP-II Subscales	Primary education		Secondary education				
	M	S	M	S	t	df	P
Perceptions of student respect	3.49	.62	3.11	.53	3.81	131	<.001
Perceptions of student friendship and belonging	3.30	.16	3.01	.59	2.84	131	<.001
Perceptions of students' shaping of their environment	2.94	.58	2.56	.58	3.78	130	<.001
Perceptions of support and care by and for faculty/staff	4.37	.42	4.06	.56	3.63	128	<.001
Perceptions of support and care by and for parents	4.16	.47	3.92	.51	2.75	127	<.01

Note. 1 = rarely; 2 = sometimes; 3 = as often as not; 4 = more often than not; 5 = almost always.

Second assessment phase—Final assessment

Upon program completion, overall assessment was carried out with reference to multiple dimensions concerning its utility, usefulness, and effectiveness, as well as the experience teachers gained from their participation in the training seminars and working groups. Primarily, teachers were asked to evaluate students' interest in the program and participation rate. Results indicated high rates of positive answers in all relevant items. Almost 80% of the participants responded in a positive way (answers "quite a lot" and "very much"), denoting great interest and participation on behalf of the students.

Similarly, teachers reported high satisfaction rates from participating in the program. More than 80% gave positive answers (moderately, quite a lot, very much), when asked about the impact of the program implementation on important aspects of both their personal and school life.

Finally, results manifest that teachers evaluate quite positively their participation in training seminars and informal exercises. More specifically, a large percentage of the teachers (91.4%) evaluated as "quite good" and "very good" the experience they gained from participating in the educational and training seminars of the E.M.E. I.Σ. Program, while almost 90% of the teachers evaluated as "quite good" and "very good" the experience gained from participating in experiential activities in the seminar working groups.

Assessment of the program with reference to economic consequences

One main goal of the intervention was to support students who strongly experience consequences of the economic crisis. Data deriving from questionnaires were analyzed after the implementation of the program. According to this analysis, those students who during the initial needs assessment had expressed strong concerns about the economic crisis and reported that their family faced financial difficulties, demonstrated higher rates of satisfaction concerning the utility of the program compared to the rest of students. That is, they reported that they benefited from the program more than their peers who had not been experiencing consequences of the economic crisis so intensively. More specifically, students facing economic crisis felt that the program helped them more to cope with their difficult emotions, handle their stress, and improve their peer relations. These students also felt that they managed to achieve the personal goals they had set at the beginning of the implementation, in comparison with their peers who reported less economic straits (Table 4).

Assessment of the program in relation to achievement

With regard to elementary school students' assessment and satisfaction from the implemented program, most participants gave answers that ranged from "moderately" to "very much." Most schoolchildren favored the topics discussed in the classroom during the program hour, as well as the activities. Furthermore, they enjoyed participating in the activities and the voting process at the conclusion of each thematic unit. Regarding high school students' assessment of their satisfaction from the implemented program, most answers ranged between "moderately" and "very much." Most adolescent students (over 85% in all items) expressed moderate to great

Table 3. Mean values, standard deviations, t-test, degrees of freedom and statistical significance for SCCP-II subscales for students per educational level.

SCCP-II Subscales	Primary education		Secondary education				
	M	S.D.	M	S.D.	t	df	P
Perceptions of student respect	3.29	.66	2.91	.58	−7.04	544	<.001
Perceptions of student friendship and belonging	3.47	.71	3.15	.64	−5.42	537	<.001
Perceptions of students' shaping of their environment	3.12	.82	2.68	.69	−6.89	571	<.001
Perceptions of support and care by and for faculty/staff	4.30	.54	3.98	.57	−6.75	532	<.001
Perceptions of support and care by and for parents	4.32	.59	3.98	.54	−7.18	578	<.001

Note. 1 = rarely; 2 = sometimes; 3 = as often as not; 4 = more often than not; 5 = almost always.

Table 4. Mean values, standard deviations, *t*-test, degrees of freedom and statistical significance of questions answered by primary school students for the assessment of program.

How much did the Program help you to ...	Financial problems of family		Non-Financial problems of family				
	M	*S.D.*	*M*	*S.D.*	*t*	*df*	*P*
... express your feelings?	3.5	1.11	3.3	1.21	1.27	196	ns
... cope with your difficult emotions?	3.58	1.05	3.18	1.06	2.58	194	<.01
... handle your stress?	3.39	1.13	2.97	1.29	2.39	195	<.05
... improve your relationships with your peers?	3.61	1.03	3.27	1.36	1.99	195	<.05
... achieve the personal goals that you had set at the beginning of the Program?	3.66	1.09	3.3	1.19	2.17	195	<.05
How much did the Program help your class achieve the goals set at the beginning of the Program?	3.44	1.18	3.12	1.27	1.81	196	Ns

satisfaction from the topics, the activities, the discussions, the graphs, and the participation in the program.

Elementary school students also gave a quite high rate of positive answers to all relevant items concerning the utility of the implemented Program. They felt that they benefited from the program in expressing and coping with their difficult emotions, handling their stress, improving their peer relations, and achieving the goals set at the beginning of the program, both by themselves, as well as by the whole class. Likewise, secondary school students' assessment of the utility of the implemented program was manifested with a high rate of positive answers to all relevant items. Students felt that they benefited from the program in expressing and coping with their difficult emotions, handling their stress, improving their peer relations, and achieving the goals set at the beginning of the program, both by themselves, as well as by the whole class.

Mean differences between low, moderate, and high achievers were identified, regarding elementary students' assessment upon the utility of the program. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests showed that children with moderate school performance scored higher compared to their peers with low and high performance, in two items: "How much did the Program help you: (a) cope with your difficult emotions and (b) achieve your personal goals set at the beginning of the Program" (Table 5). It is also important to point out that low-performance students scored higher at the question, "How much did the Program help your class achieve the goals set at the beginning of the Program?" compared to the other

children ([$M_{\text{low-achievers}} = 3.63$, $M_{\text{moderate-achievers}} = 2.97$, $M_{\text{high-achievers}} = 3.34$, $F(2, 195) = 3.13$, $p < .05$]).

Furthermore, content analysis of high school students' responses to the open question, "What do you think the program has helped you with?" produced the following categories: (a) improvement of relationships, (b) improvement of behavior, (c) expression of emotions, (d) setting goals, (e) self-knowledge or self-esteem. Also, when asked about the topics that they remembered discussing in class, high school students mentioned all topics that were covered throughout the program. Finally, 95% of the elementary students and 87.4% of the adolescent students responded positively to the inquiry whether the program should go on the following school year.

Multilevel modeling

The impact of the implementation of the program on school climate and several personal resiliency factors for both teachers and students was assessed using Multilevel Structural Equation Modeling (MSEM).

Findings show that the intervention was effective in relation to certain factors of all questionnaires used for teachers (Table 6). In particular, changes were found after the intervention in relation with SCCP dimensions, such as Perceptions of Support and Care by the Faculty/Staff (i.e., caring and respect that students, parents and other faculty, and staff, have toward faculty and staff), Perceptions of Student Friendship and Belonging (i.e., student caring, respect, and kindness for one another),

Table 5. Mean values, standard deviations, *F*-test, degrees of freedom and statistical significance of questions answered by primary school students for the assessment of program per school performance.

How much did the Program help you ...	Low-achievers *M*	Moderate-achievers *M*	High-achievers *M*	*F*	*df*	*P*
... cope with your difficult emotions?	3.22$_b$	3.95$_a$	3.77$_b$	4.19	2 / 121	<.05
... achieve the personal goals that you had set at the beginning of the Program?	3.44$_b$	4.08$_a$	4.00$_b$	3.06	2 / 121	<.05

Note. Significance identified by different letters (post-hoc analysis).

Table 6. Fixed effects for outcomes that were significantly different post-intervention (teachers).

Fixed Effect	Coefficient	Standard error	t-ratio	Apr. d.f.	p-value
		Environment			
Intercept-Pre, γ_{00}	2.73	.062	43.857	26	<.001***
Slope-Post, γ_{10}	.36	.053	6.819	26	<.001***
		Staff			
Intercept-Pre, γ_{00}	4.23	.035	120.357	26	<.001***
Slope-Post, γ_{10}	.16	.055	2.836	26	.009**
		Respect			
Intercept-Pre, γ_{00}	3.32	.061	54.263	25	<.001***
Slope-Post, γ_{10}	.30	.056	5.258	25	<.001***
		Belongingness			
Intercept-Pre, γ_{00}	3.16	.062	50.703	26	<.001***
Slope-Post, γ_{10}	.36	.056	6.338	26	<.001***
		Goals			
Intercept-Pre, γ_{00}	4.09	.058	70.530	26	<.001***
Slope-Post, γ_{10}	.11	.048	2.319	26	.029*
		Feelings			
Intercept-Pre, γ_{00}	3.82	0.039	98.363	25	<.001***
Slope-Post, γ_{10}	0.36	0.053	6.819	25	.076†
		Flexibility			
Intercept-Pre, γ_{00}	3.95	0.043	91.508	26	<.001***
Slope-Post, γ_{10}	.09	0.037	2.562	26	.017*
		Reaching Out			
Intercept-Pre, γ_{00}	4.17	0.025	169.777	26	<.001***
Slope-Post, γ_{10}	.08	0.041	1.845	26	.076†

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .05$ one-tailed test.

Perceptions of Students' Shaping of Their Environment (i.e., students' attempts to influence the behavior and actions of others and the overall well-being of the school), and Perceptions of Student Respect (i.e., respect for other students, staff, and school property). Changes were also identified after the intervention in relation with personal resilience dimensions, such as Connect to Your Purpose and Meaning in Life (i.e., the sense of purpose and meaning an individual feels for his or her life), Generate Positive Feelings (i.e., the level that an individual controls negative feelings and try to generate positive feelings after an adversity), Persevere by Being Open-Minded and Flexible (i.e., open-mindedness and a flexible problem solving approach), Reach Out to Others (i.e., the ability to ask and offer help).

In Table 7, findings indicate that the intervention was effective in relation to certain factors of all questionnaires used for students. The grouping variable reflects the experimental manipulation (control vs. experimental conditions). In particular, changes in favor of the experimental versus the control group were found after the intervention regarding the SCCP subscales Perceptions of Support and Care by and for Faculty and Staff, Perceptions of Student Friendship and Belonging, Peer Cooperation, as well as the quality of teacher–student relationships measured in class maps.

Discussion

The current study addressed the evaluation of an evidence-based intervention in schools, intended to promote positive climate and resilience for students and teachers, who experience the hardships of Greek economic crisis. Furthermore, the culturally specific

Table 7. Fixed effects for outcomes that were significantly different between experimental and control groups as a function of the intervention (students).

Fixed Effect	Coefficient	Standard error	t-ratio	Apr. d.f.	p-value
		Staff			
Intercept-Control, γ_{00}	3.55	.019	186.413	3	<.001***
Slope-Experimental, γ_{10}	.12	.031	3.783	199	<.001***
		Belongingness			
Intercept-Control, γ_{00}	3.25	.103	31.646	7	<.001***
Slope-Experimental, γ_{10}	.14	.042	3.329	346	<.001***
		Cooperation			
Intercept-Control, γ_{00}	3.90	.117	33.235	7	<.001***
Slope-Experimental, γ_{10}	.20	.108	1.833	364	.068†
		Relationship with teachers			
Intercept-Control, γ_{00}	2.52	.089	28.345	7	<.001***
Slope-Experimental, γ_{10}	.14	.072	2.005	374	.046*

Note. *** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .05$ one-tailed test.

characteristics of the crisis are highlighted by the key stakeholders in the school setting.

The research was conducted in Greek public schools and highlighted the consequences of economic crisis in the school community. Elementary and secondary school teachers stressed the changes in children's lives due to income reduction (e.g., inability to participate in school activities), as well as the increase of problems regarding interpersonal and intrapersonal behavior of children and adolescents. They also expressed their personal concerns regarding their own difficulties in their everyday life, but mainly their intense anxiety and distress about how to support their students.

Respectively, the results from all students' answers confirm the existence of an important percentage of children and families that experience economic difficulties, as well as feelings of fear, distress, and sorrow regarding their conditions of life, their future, their school, and their familial life. These findings are in agreement with recent studies that delineate the adversities of the economic crisis in the Greek society (e.g., Simou & Koutsogeorgou, 2014). The consequences of economic crisis in the social and emotional state of teachers and students and the fact that supporting students and promoting resilience and positive climate in schools constituted a basic demand of teachers confirm the necessity of intervention programs in schools (Hatzichristou et al., 2011; Hatzichristou & Adamopoulou, 2013).

The evaluation of psychosocial dimensions regarding teachers referred to their level of stress and resilience as well as their perception of their school as a caring community. The data revealed that teachers experience a high level of stress and a moderate level of resilience. These findings confirm teachers' need for help and support (Tomuletiu et al., 2011). Furthermore, the need for support and intervention is stressed by the fact that their perceptions of their schools as caring communities are at a moderate level. The difference between the perceptions of elementary and secondary school teachers point out the increased needs for support, especially for secondary school teachers.

The results regarding students' perceptions of the school climate also elect the necessity of intervention in order to enhance students' positive feelings and perceptions towards their school, but also to promote their social and emotional dexterities and resilience. Students who participated in the program seemed to have improved their relations with members of the school community. This implication highlights the students' need to relate with an adult either in the school setting (staff or faculty) or in the family (parents, relatives), which is critical in every crisis situation (Heath et al.,

2009). Especially for the economic crisis, this seems to be a crucial protective factor.

One of the most important findings of the final assessment is the fact that the students, who in the initial phase of evaluation (needs assessment) were found to have been more affected by the economic crisis, were those that were more benefited by the intervention program. Those students in both school levels expressed at a significantly higher level that they were helped by the program to cope with their difficult emotions, to handle their stress, and to achieve their personal objectives that they had set at the beginning of the program. This finding is extremely important since the program's main goal was to promote resilience of vulnerable children and to support students who were experiencing more intensely the consequences of the economic crisis. The chance that was provided to those children to express themselves, and in particular to be assisted in finding ways to cope with their intense and difficult emotions as well as their stress, helped them achieve their goals and cater for their increased needs at a psychosocial level.

Another criterion of vulnerability was considered to be low school performance, especially for the Greek educational system, where there is an emphasis on academic performance. An interesting finding is that the students with the lowest school performance reported higher goal achievement after the program implementation. This is particularly important since students with poor performance usually have low self-confidence. Therefore, they find it extremely difficult to recognize personal benefits and to admit personal success. The implementation of the program seems to have offered to these students a double benefit: (a) enhancement of their sense as members of a team and (b) experience of achievement and success as members of a team. It was also found that students with a medium school performance especially benefited from the program in coping with their difficult emotions and achieving their goals.

The analysis of teachers' answers also showed a great acceptance of the program and recognition of its effectiveness and its utility at multiple levels for their students and themselves both at a personal and professional level. Teachers also evaluated very positively their participation in the seminars and expressed their feeling that they were significantly supported in order to implement the program and to provide help to their students. The data analysis showed significant differences after the implementation of the program in relation with important dimensions of school climate, resilience, and psychosocial adjustment both at an individual and at a system level.

The effectiveness of the program was quite evident in relation with certain students that were considered more

vulnerable such as students with increased anxiety due to economic crisis or students with low school achievement and performance. It seems that there was a differentiation on the program's effectiveness depending on the particular needs of each student group based on the students' answers. That is, students recognized different benefits, depending on their personal needs. Finally, students as well as teachers recognized the utility and the effectiveness of the program, reporting their satisfaction from their participation and stressing the necessity of continuation in the schools.

The present work focused on the implementation of a multilevel intervention program promoting resilience and schools as caring communities. This approach was further evolved incorporating a culture-specific crisis intervention model as a response to the emerged needs of the school communities during the economic crisis in Greece. The distinct features of the economic crisis led to a need to differentiate the focus of the intervention programs. The specific characteristics of the economic crisis were identified, through its impact upon the well-being and resilience of the teachers and students. Furthermore, particular groups of the school population (e.g., low achievers) in need of support were highlighted. Primarily, the goal of the intervention program was to provide immediate support to the members of the school community, while in the second year the focus geared mainly toward the promotion of resilience and positive school climate (Hatzichristou, Adamopoulou, & Lampropoulou, 2014). Evidence from the program assessment supported its effectiveness with teachers and students in the school context. Since the economic crisis affects not only Greece but other countries as well, the proposed multilevel approach can form the basis for the development of a transnational model of resilience building during unsettling times that can be especially adopted and applied in several other educational and cultural settings.

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