

# **The need to apply social workers to school units of general and special education, in order to prevent social inclusion of educational pupils with special needs: Teachers' opinions**

Tsiavea Foteini

*PhD Student*

*Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, Ukraine*

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## **Abstract**

The research aims in investigating the teachers' opinions about the need to apply social workers to school units of general and special education, in order to prevent social inclusion of educational pupils with special needs. The sample is consisted of a total of 120 both general and special education teachers. The questionnaire was distributed online, using a Google form. According to the results the participants mostly support that their students face more often integration problems, school racism and family problems. The teachers themselves seem to work and communicate more with school counselors and with KEDDY, however they rarely notice an incident that needs special treatment. Also, they more often use positive reinforcement for the students with special educational needs or discuss with them, while they support that parents are the ones who usually express problems. As for the teachers' opinions about social workers, they occasionally know the status of a social worker. Also, they agree more that the role of a social worker is reassuring, supportive and advisory, however the participants support more that student and teacher counseling is an important field, that social workers can contribute to. Furthermore, most of the teachers strongly disagree that the role of the social worker within the school can have a negative effect on their educational role. Lastly, they agree on a higher level that the student counseling is an activity that corresponds to the role of social workers. Furthermore, the majority of the participants agree that the social workers would help with the schools' problems, but occasionally they seek the help of a social worker or psychologists to deal with a problem of one of their students. Also, they mostly believe that social workers should do an intervention at the request of the teacher and focus mainly on the disagreements between teachers and students or professional problems of teachers. Additionally, the teachers would enjoy to work with a social worker 2 to 3 days per week on a moderate level.

**Key words:** teachers' opinions, social workers, general and special education

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## **I. Introduction**

The term children with special educational needs refers to children who have difficulties in learning and communication skills, as a result of which they need support in order to cope with the learning and social requirements. This support occurs by modifying the curriculum and teaching so that they can cross the cognitive thresholds in time, socialize and make full use of their potential. This support in the school context is achieved through special education. Special education involves deliberate efforts to intervene in the learning process at three levels: recruitment, rehabilitation and compensation. More specifically, it is the individualized design-specific intensive and goal-directed teaching, with teaching methods resulting from research and frequent measurements of student performance (Heward, 2011).

The education of children with special educational needs acquires greater complexity in the context of the school integration of children in the general school classroom. School integration is defined as the process in which all children participate in the educational process to the greatest extent possible and in an environment with as few restrictions as possible (Christoforaki, 2011).

The concept of the inclusion of children with special educational needs in general schools has been integrated into the educational policy of most countries of the modern world institutionally, in the context of the defense of the fundamental rights of the child according to which every child should have equal access to health, knowledge and education (Koursoumba, 2011). The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989), the Unesco initiative that resulted in the Salamanca Declaration

(1994) and the previous Warnock Report (1978) are pivotal milestones. for the individual internal developments of the educational policy in the countries that collaborated. For Greece, the most recent institutional framework of educational policy regarding people with special educational needs and disabilities was defined in 2008 and contained a number of innovative decisions regarding the concept of inclusion (Deropoulou-Derou, 2012).

In addition to the institutional framework, problems arise in the educational practice of integration and integration of children with special educational needs and disabilities for which the adult population of the school, the teaching staff and the families of the children as well as the health professionals who participate with planned interventions in the school and social life of these children. This effort to integrate and integrate is framed by social work in education, which is a multifaceted intervention plan at all levels of school life (Openshaw, 2008).

The main concern of social workers is to achieve equal access, integration and active participation of all students in the educational process by removing the obstacles that children encounter. The operation is laborious and many requirements arise in order to achieve this goal. The educational community is a microcosm of the wider social network of each community, which is constantly changing with direct influences in the school as well. In this network, social workers are called to intervene to help children in social integration and access to knowledge, maintaining a critical attitude towards the challenges they are called to face (Kallinikaki & Kasseris, 2014).

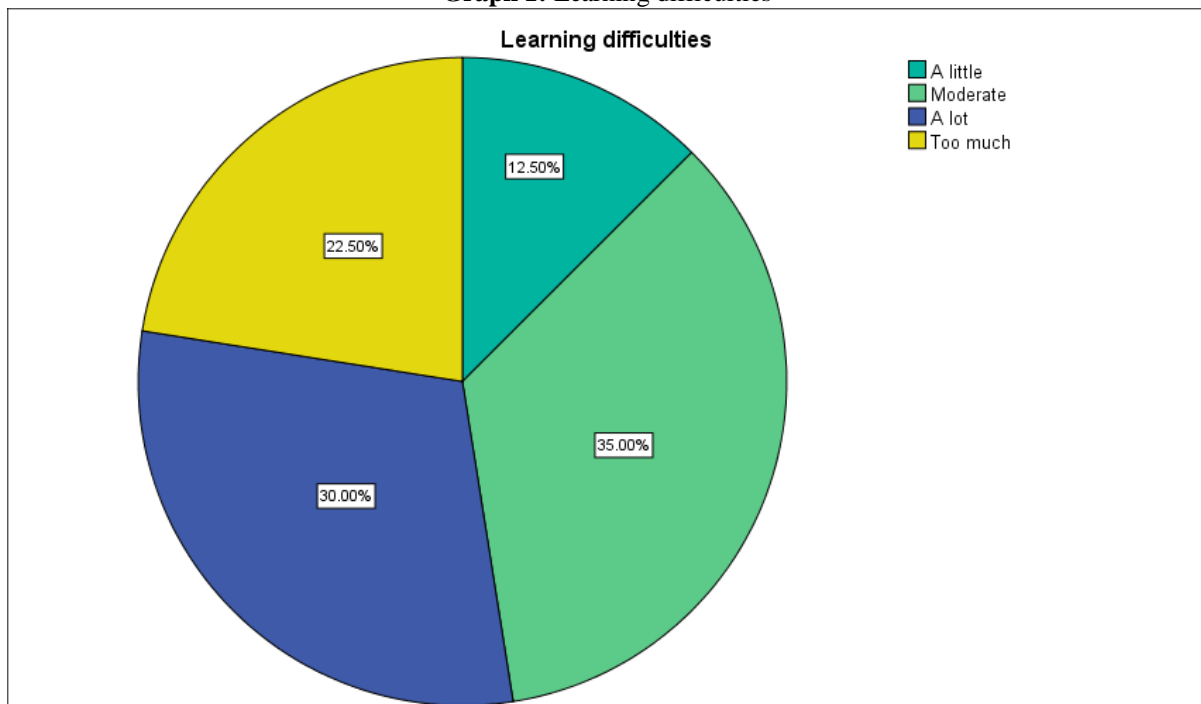
## II. Methods

The research aims in investigating the teachers' opinions about the need to apply social workers to school units of general and special education, in order to prevent social inclusion of educational pupils with special needs. The sample is consisted of a total of 120 both general and special education teachers. The majority of the participants are males, while their ages range mostly from 36 to 50 years old. Furthermore, most of the participants work in quite big schools with more than 200 students and have not continued their studies, other than getting their basic degree.

The questionnaire was distributed online, using a Google form. The file, besides the questionnaire and its possible answers, contained an introduction letter which familiarized the teachers with the aims of the research and informed them about their voluntarily participation, the anonymity of their answers and the estimated time that it would take them to complete the survey. The Google form was uploaded to social media groups related to educational and other subjects that would interest teachers.

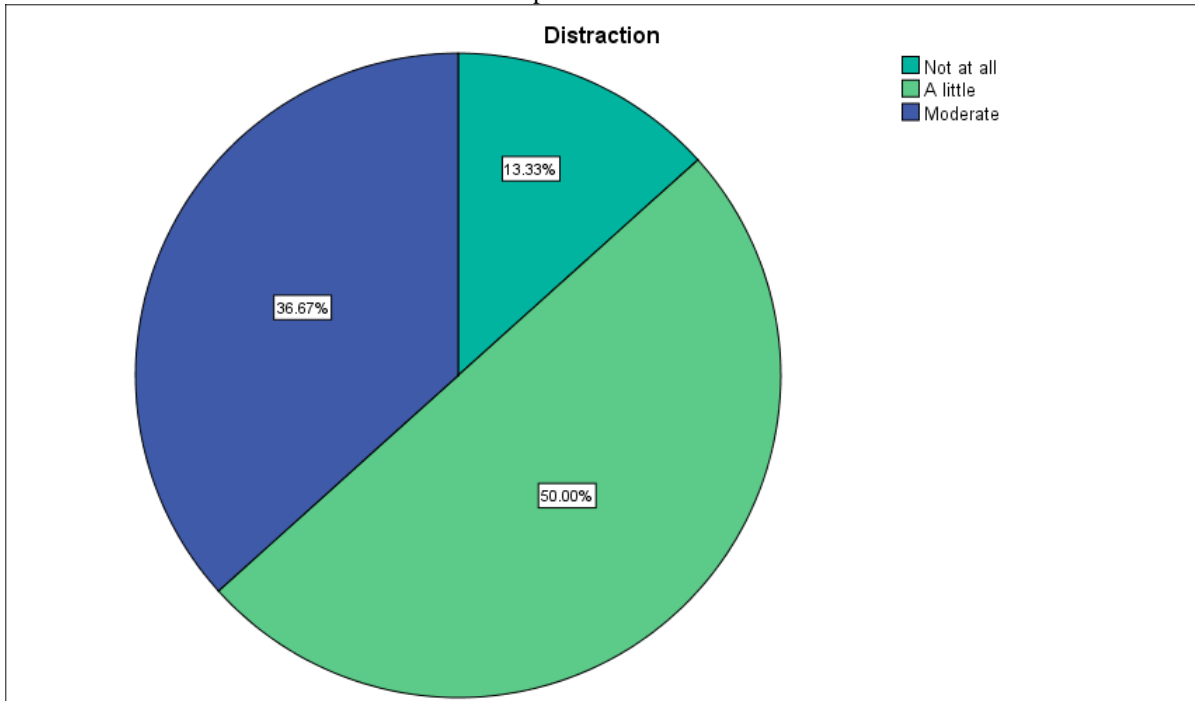
## III. Results

**Graph 1: Learning difficulties**



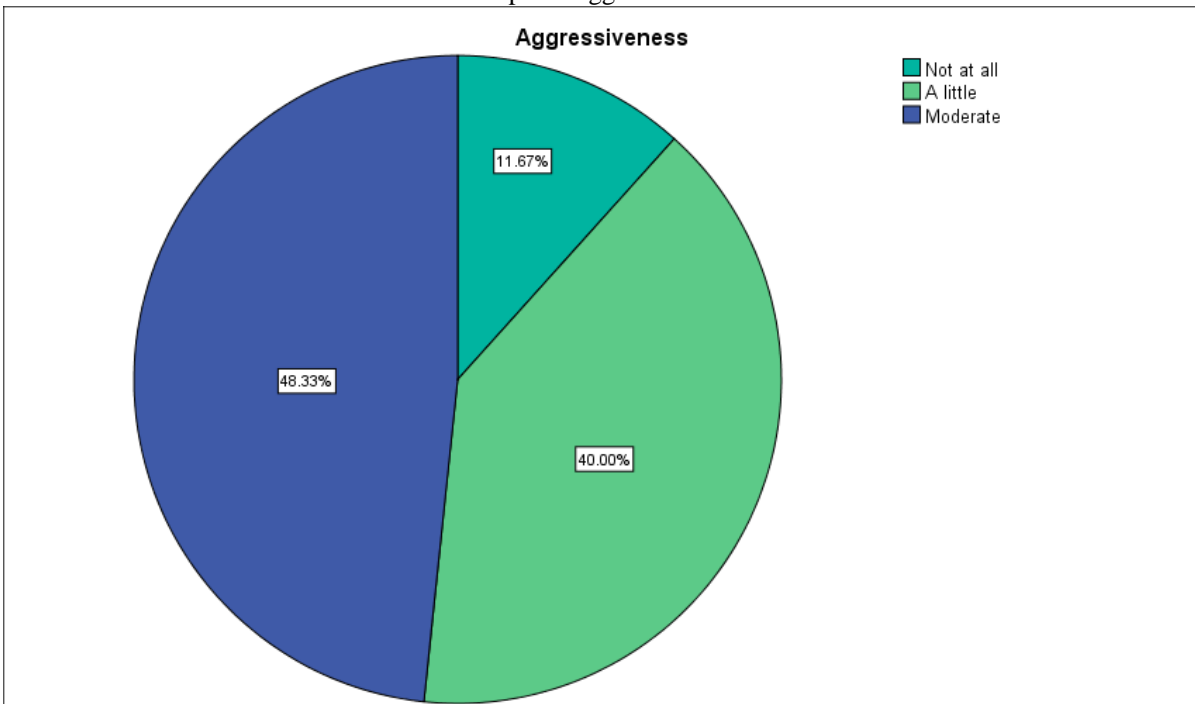
In Graph 1, whether distractions are problems that have to be solved by social workers' interventions is analyzed. The participants who support those interventions are a little important to overcome this difficulty reach 50%, while 36.7% characterize it as moderately important. Also, only 13.3% of the participants do not think the interventions in that case are important at all.

Graph 2: Distraction



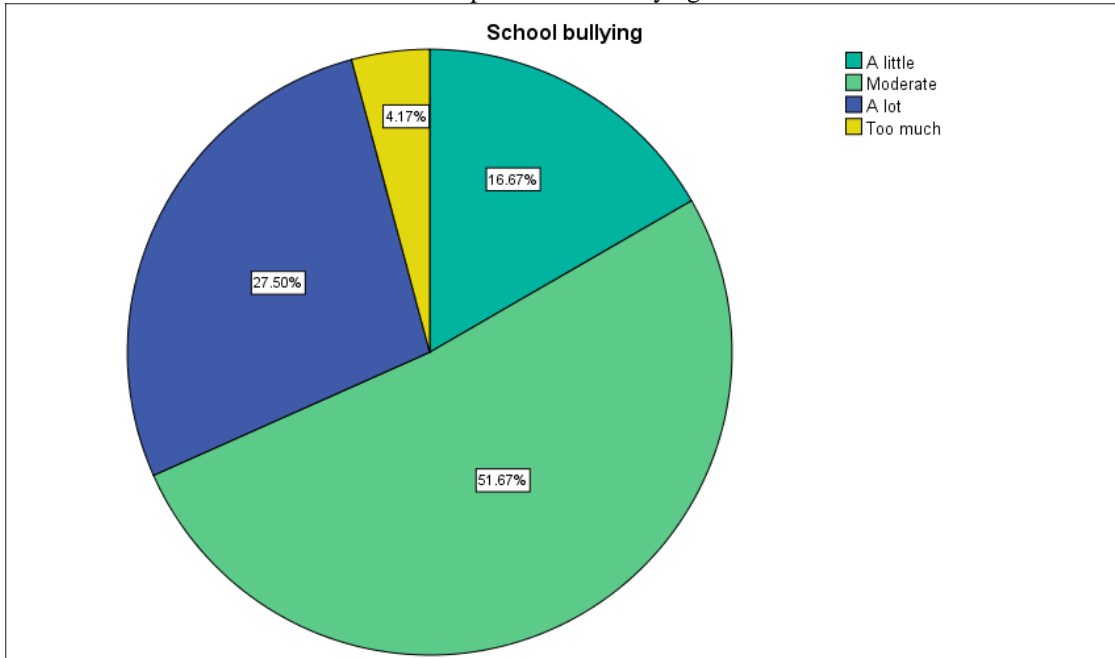
In Graph 3, it seems that 48.3% of the participants support that in case of aggressiveness the social workers' interventions are moderately important, while 40% find that they are a little important. Also, the participants who believe that the interventions in that case are not important at all, occupy 11.7%.

Graph 3: Aggressiveness



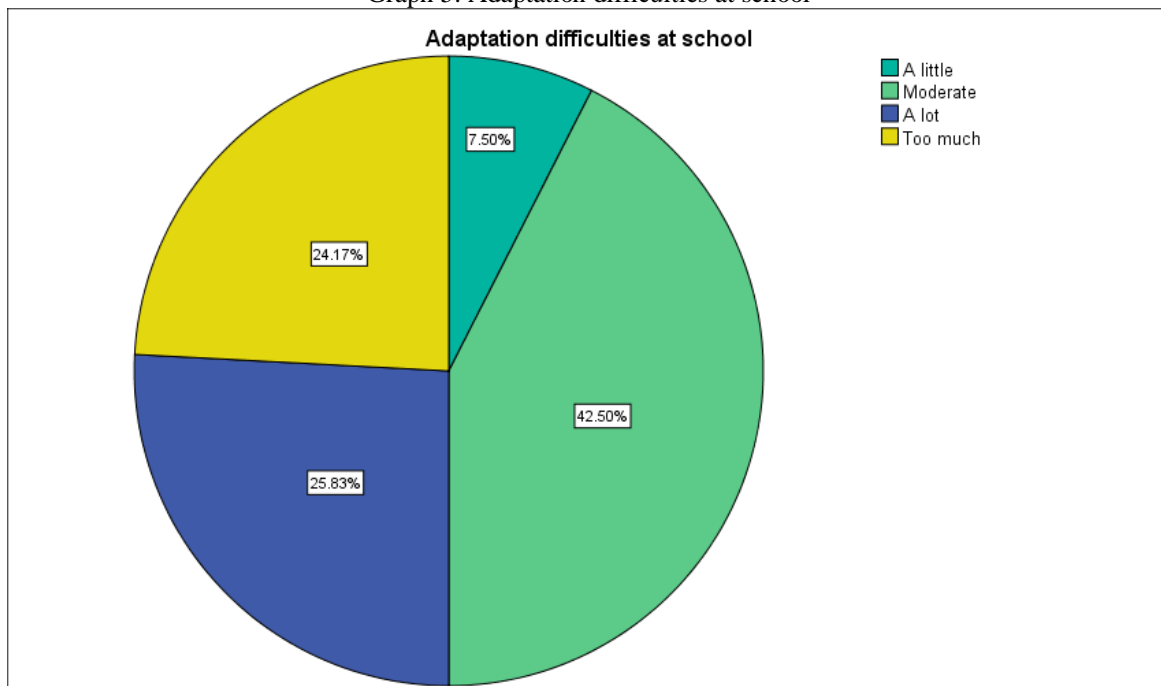
Continuing, in Graph 4, the importance of social workers' interventions in case of school bullying is analyzed, according to the participants' opinions. The teachers who believe it is moderately important reach 51.7%, 27.5% occupy the participants who believe it is a lot of important and 16.7% find that it is a little important. Also, only 4.2% of the teachers, state that the social workers' interventions about school bullying is too much important.

Graph 4: School bullying



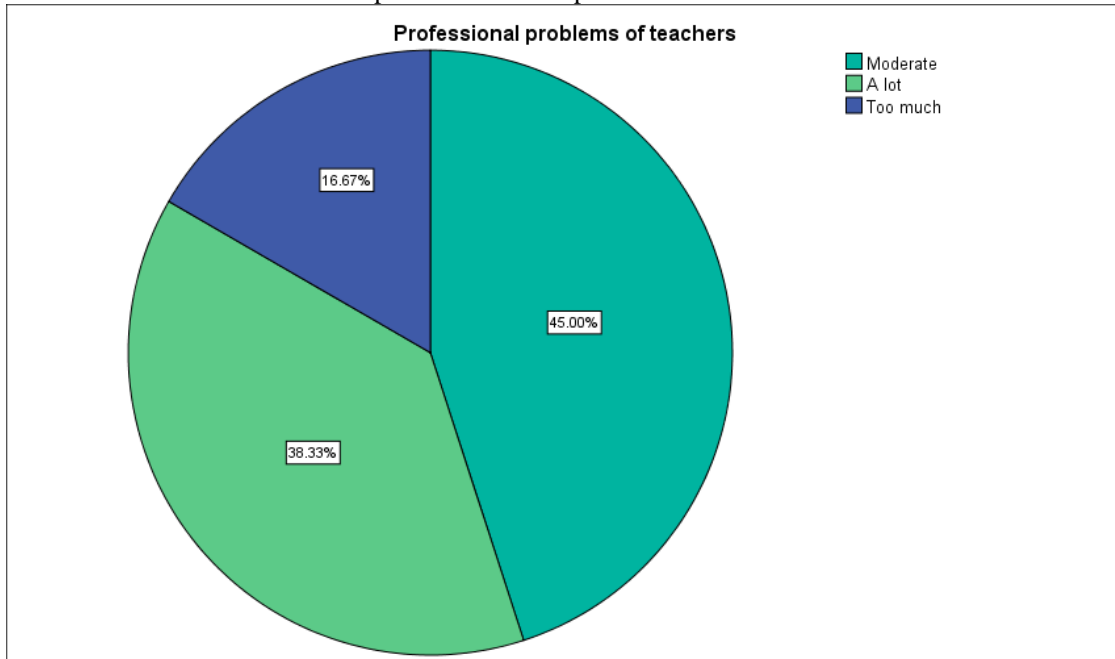
In Graph 5, it seems that the participants who support that the social workers' intervention to adapt the difficulties at their school are moderately important reach 42.5%. The participants who believe those interventions are a lot of important reach 25.8%, 24.2% find them too much important and 7.5% a little important.

Graph 5: Adaptation difficulties at school



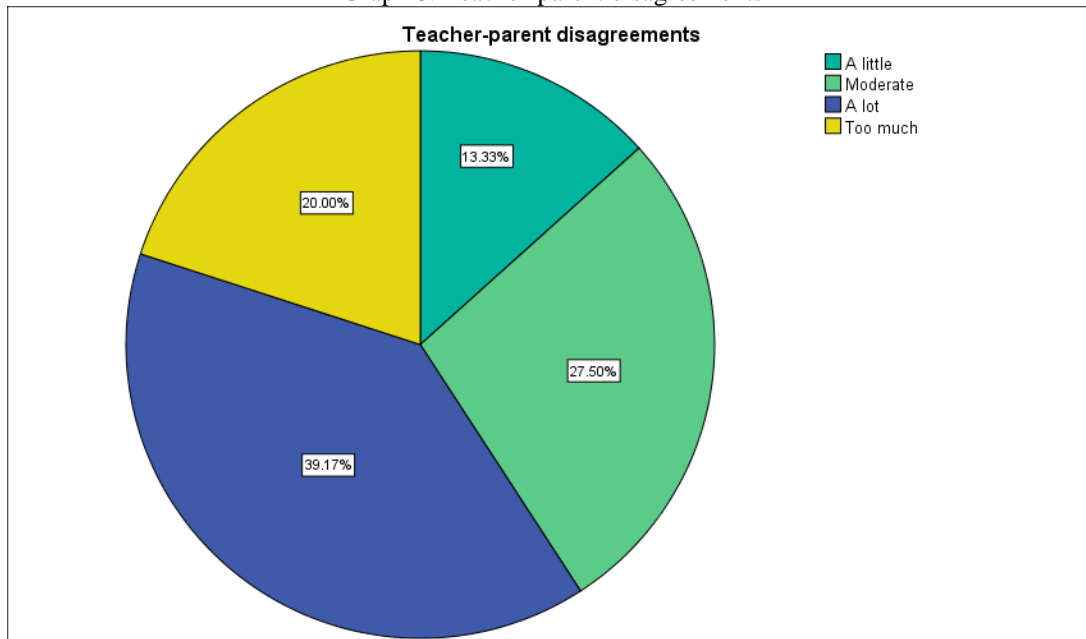
In Graph 6, the participants' opinions about the importance of the social workers' intervention when it comes to the professional problems of teachers, is investigated. The teachers who believe that in such a case the interventions are moderately important reach 45%, while 38.3% occupy those who believe it is a lot of important. However, 16.7% of the participants support that they are too much important.

Graph 7: Professional problems of teachers



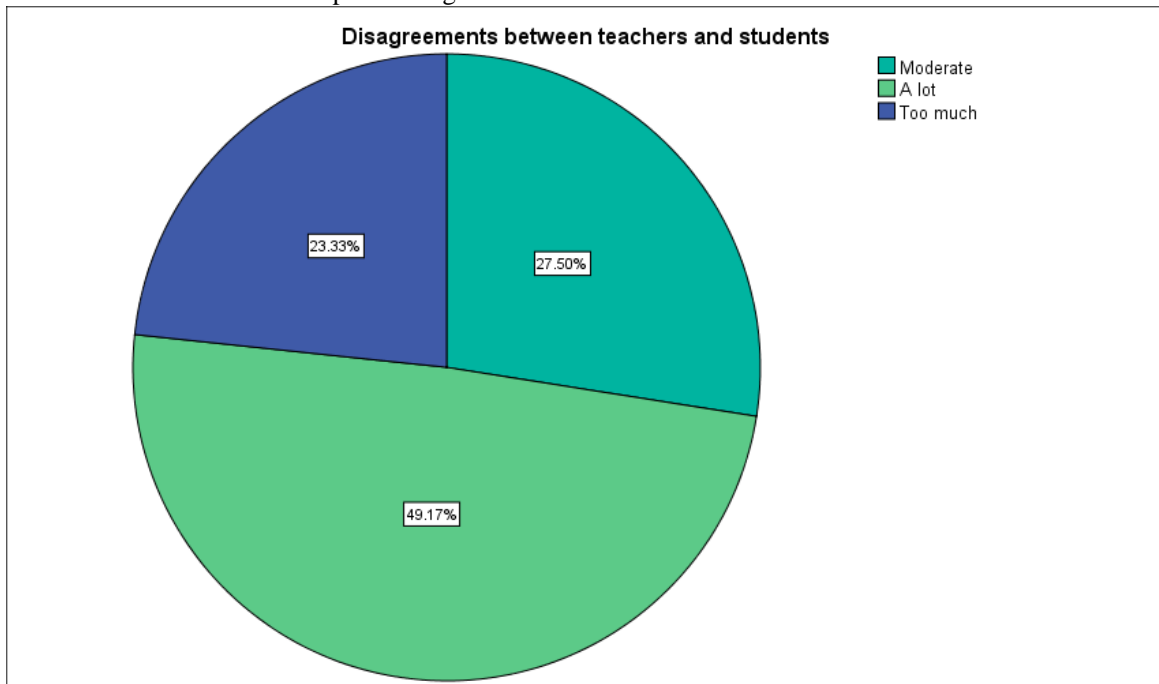
In Graph 8, the importance of the social workers' interventions when it comes to teacher and parent disagreements, the 39.2% of them find them a lot of necessary. Also, 27.5% of the participants think of them are moderately important, 20% as too much of importance and 13.3% find them a little important.

Graph 8: Teacher-parent disagreements



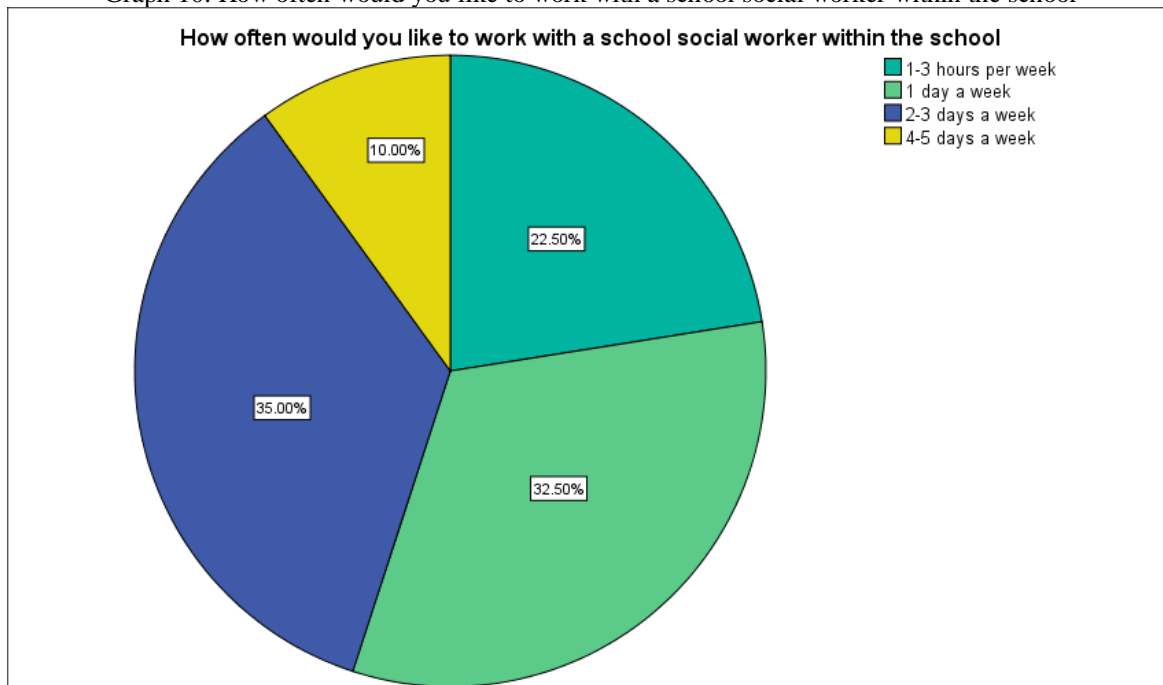
In Graph 9, the participants' opinion about the necessity of the social workers' interventions in case of disagreements between teachers and students is analyzed. 49.2% of the teachers find this kind of interventions a lot of important, 27.5% believe it is moderately important, while 23.3% of them believe it is too much important.

Graph 9: Disagreements between teachers and students



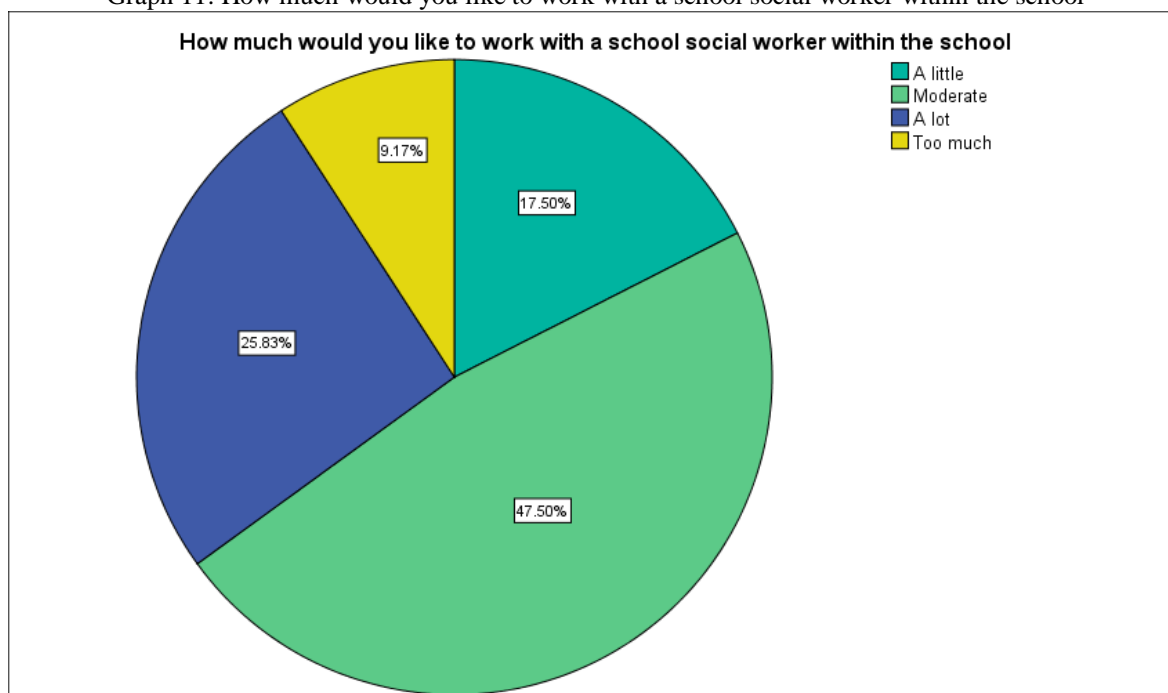
In Graph 10, the frequency in which the participants would enjoy to work with a school social worker within the school is presented. The participants who would enjoy to work 2 to 3 days per week reach 35%, while those who support that they would like to work for 1 day per week reach 32.5%. Also, the teachers who would like to cooperate with social workers 1 to 3 hours per week reach 22.5% and the rest 10% belongs to the participants who would like to work with social workers 4 to 5 days per week.

Graph 10: How often would you like to work with a school social worker within the school



In Graph 11, it becomes clear that 47.5% of the participants moderately would like to work with a school social worker within the school, while 25.8% would enjoy that a lot. As for the participants who want to cooperate with a social worker a little or too much represent the 17.5% and the 9.2% respectively.

Graph 11: How much would you like to work with a school social worker within the school



#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The present thesis analyzed teachers' opinions about the need to apply social workers to school units of general and special education to prevent social inclusion of educational pupils with special needs. In total 120 teachers participated, most of them males from 36 to 50 years old with a bachelor degree. Also, the majority works in a school with more than 200 students.

Continuing, the participants mostly support that their students face more often integration problems, school racism and family problems. The teachers themselves seem to work and communicate more with school counselors and with KEDDY, however they rarely notice an incident that needs special treatment. Also, they more often use positive reinforcement for the students with special educational needs or discuss with them, while they support that parents are the ones who usually express problems.

As for the teachers' opinions about social workers, they occasionally know the status of a social worker. Also, they agree more that the role of a social worker is reassuring, supportive and advisory, however the participants support more that student and teacher counseling is an important field, that social workers can contribute to. Furthermore, most of the teachers strongly disagree that the role of the social worker within the school can have a negative effect on their educational role. Lastly, they agree on a higher level that the student counseling is an activity that corresponds to the role of social workers.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants agree that the social workers would help with the schools' problems, but occasionally they seek the help of a social worker or psychologists to deal with a problem of one of their students. Also, they mostly believe that social workers should do an intervention at the request of the teacher and focus mainly on the disagreements between teachers and students or professional problems of teachers. Additionally, the teachers would enjoy to work with a social worker 2 to 3 days per week on a moderate level.

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