

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.

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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 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

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

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I. INTRODUCTION

The theory of social work was shaped by two dominant trends: the influence of psychoanalysis, and theories of Psychology and Sociology, and the internal evolution of the methodology of the profession itself, in correlation with the feedback experience resulting from practical applications and research. Social work is broad, and constantly changing, as it involves accumulated knowledge, clinical practice, research, and dynamically changing social reality, which acquires specific characteristics at each specific time and place of application (Bachman & Comeau, 2010).

The applications of social work in education are holistic, as they focus on the interaction of individual and social environment and at the same time selective as they compose theoretical approaches to better achieve goals such as supporting individual and social rights, enhancing students' skills. According to Ainscow (2005), the holistic approach refers to a multilevel approach that combines intervention on a small, medium and macro level utilizing cross-methodical social work. It draws from systemic thinking which, as analyzed and subsequently, introduces the concept of wholeness and emphasizes the interaction relations between the individual and the environment. Difficulties are addressed through the use of strong points and resources available in the environment of the individual, family, group, or community.

The methodology of social work and clinical intervention includes the identification of the problem, the empowerment of the individual, the promotion of the change of attitudes but also the conditions of his life through the systematic interaction with the environment (Buscaglia, 1993). The focus of social work on the individual-environment relationship allows the study of social conditions as they influence and co-construct human behaviors. Determining the conditions at a specific time, identifying and understanding the dynamics of relationships, the emphasis on individual responsibility for change through dynamic interaction with the environment are the perspective of understanding and dealing with psychosocial problems and help prevent involvement of children in harmful behaviors.

The person-environment interaction is at the heart of systemic theory. It perceives the dysfunctional behavior as a symptom of a more general dysfunction of the whole system, in this case the school, which arises through specific processes that need study and investigation. But because the school does not operate in a vacuum, on the contrary each school is in a specific context (community, city, country, etc.) and is part of this wider system, school social work adopts the ecosystem approach. According to her, each student is an integral part of various other social systems, such as school, family, neighborhood, peer group. This perspective allows the school social worker to broaden his / her understanding of students' difficulties and problems and to identify potential new goals for intervention (Damyanov, 2009). Therefore, any problems are not attributed to the student, but are treated as difficulties that arise from his interaction with the environments in which he is integrated. From this perspective, the demands of academic achievement combined with the social conditions of the school can be significant challenges for students experiencing emotional or learning difficulties. Consequently, social work interventions have a dual focus, on empowering students to develop and cultivate functional management skills of their difficulties, and on improving the conditions in their environment. As Kelly (2010) confirms, social work in school performs a dual function as it responds to the complexity of the environment along with the complexity of the individual.

This perspective, through double focus, gives the school social worker the opportunity to complete a unique mission at school, ie to support the student, while intervening in those conditions of the school community, family, neighborhood, which are aggravating for already vulnerable students. This view is based on the Strengths based model and empowerment (Berzin-Cosner & O'Connor, 2010).

The strengths approach adopts a structured methodology that aims to bring about change in individuals and wider systems. According to the definition given by Kelly (2010) the approach of the strong points concerns a strategy of targeted change, which is achieved through the identification and recognition of the positive points and the possibilities inherent in the individuals, and in the systems that they are part of and with which they interact. Social work, focusing on the individual and the environment, seeks its resources and strengths, in order to manage in the best possible way the difficulties that arise. The goal of the interventions that adopt this approach is to support individuals so that they can "chase" their dreams and make them come true. It is a process of searching for the forces and resources that are inherent in a system and revitalizing it. According to the strengths approach, the possibility of achieving inspired and positive change depends on these factors (Ainscow, 2005).

The concept of empowerment refers to the critical awareness of the situation, to the activation of the forces and resources of the individual, the family, the group and the community. According to Constable (2005), the goal of empowerment is to activate the individual to consider himself capable of coping with the problem. Identifying and reinforcing the factors that may contribute to the effective treatment of the situation by the individuals themselves is the main feature of social work. Empowerment seeks to enhance self-esteem, enhance problem-solving skills, cultivate awareness in order to develop self-awareness, enhance the process of setting and achieving goals.

An ecosystem view of the school and the groups that make it up allows its functional connection with the surrounding community, institutions or other groups. Comprehensive and thorough investigation and assessment of students' needs and the conditions that characterize the systems in which they are integrated and operate (community, school, family) is the key to planning social work interventions in school (Constable, 2005). In this context, multilevel interventions are applied to individuals, families, communities that aim to mobilize and support them to manage difficulties and problems. They focus on the student-individual and the environment in which he operates, as a single system that is in a constant process of interaction and interaction.

From this perspective, the emergence of problems in school communities is important to study both in terms of relationships and dynamics within them, as well as in terms of the dynamics and processes of the wider community to which they belong.

In summary, the intervening social worker studies the conditions in which a phenomenon occurs, tries to interpret it and highlight its effects on the relationship between students and their school environment. It studies the behaviors that are expressed in a specific time and place in relation to the context in which they occur (Ainscow, 2005), and attempts interventions individually, in groups of teachers and students, in families and communities in order to change the behaviors and attitudes that cause difficulties and problems. Classroom behavior is studied and analyzed in the broader context in which it manifests. The focus in this case concerns the school environment and the cultivation of self-esteem, a climate of acceptance, a sense of "belonging" of students in this environment. The support of the individual and social rights of students from vulnerable social groups, as well as the protection from violence and discrimination, characterize the interventions and the main objectives of social work in education (Kelly, 2010).

II. METHODS

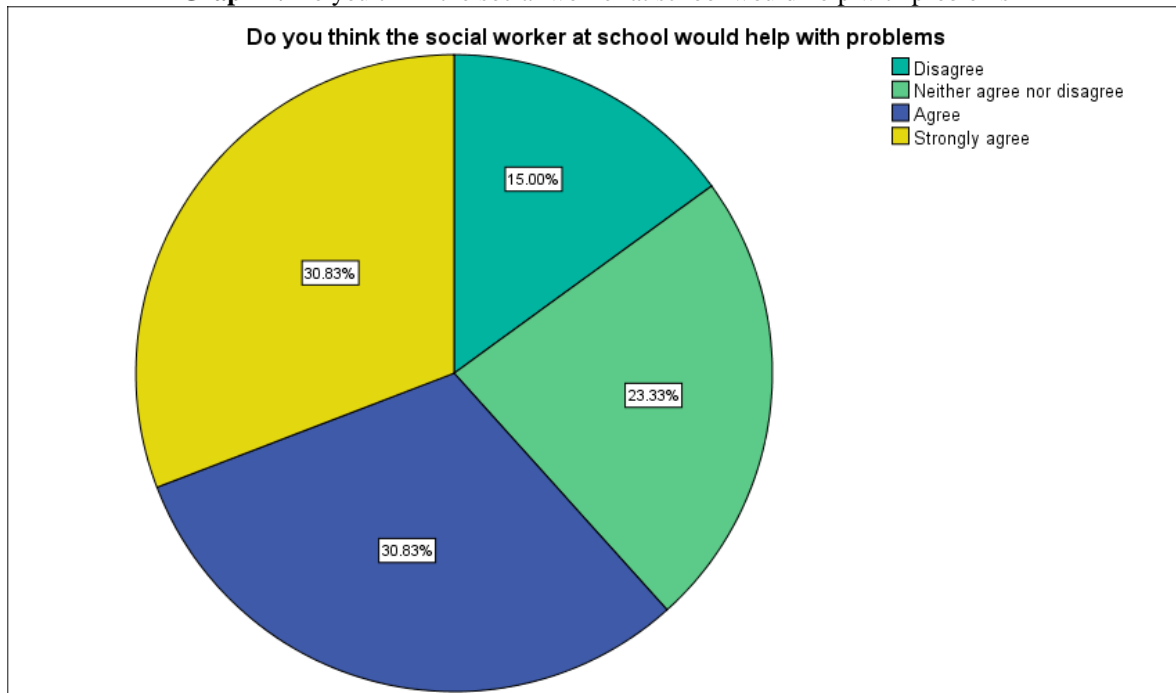
The research aims in investigating the teachers' opinions about the need to apply social workers to school units of general and special education, in order to prevent social inclusion of educational pupils with special needs. The sample is consisted of a total of 120 both general and special education 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

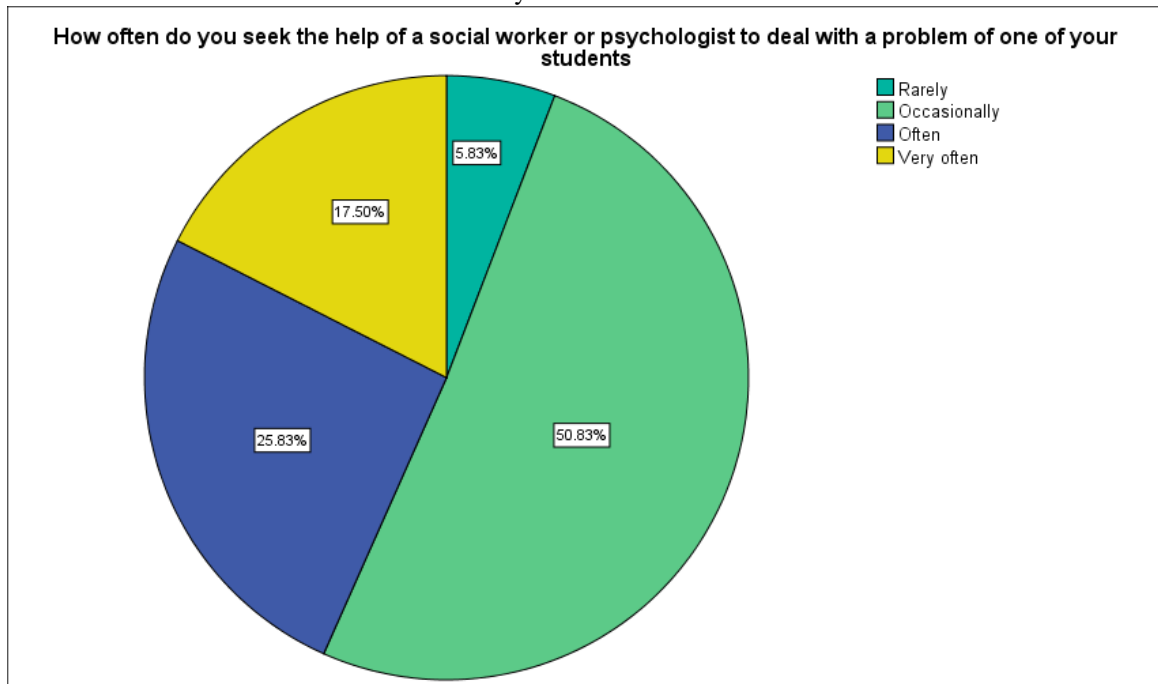
In Graph 1, whether the social worker would help with the problems at school is analyzed, according to the participants' view. The teachers who strongly agree or agree occupy 30.8% each, while the participants who neither agree nor disagree reach 23.3%. Also, the participants who disagree with this opinion represent the 15% of the sample.

Graph 1: Do you think the social worker at school would help with problems



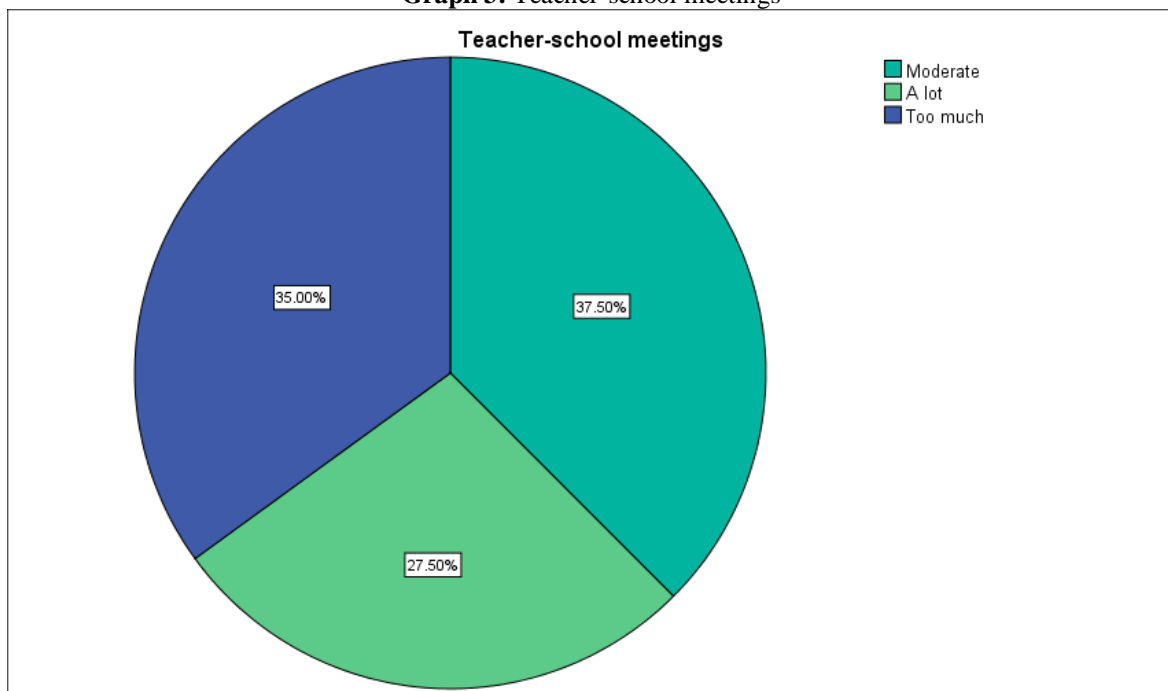
In Graph 2, it seems that 50.8% of the participants occasionally seek the help of a social worker or psychologist to deal with a problem of one of their students. The participants who often seek such help reach 25.8%, 17.5% belongs to those who very often seek help and only 5.8% rarely seeks such kind of help.

Graph 2: How often do you seek the help of a social worker or psychologist to deal with a problem of one of your students



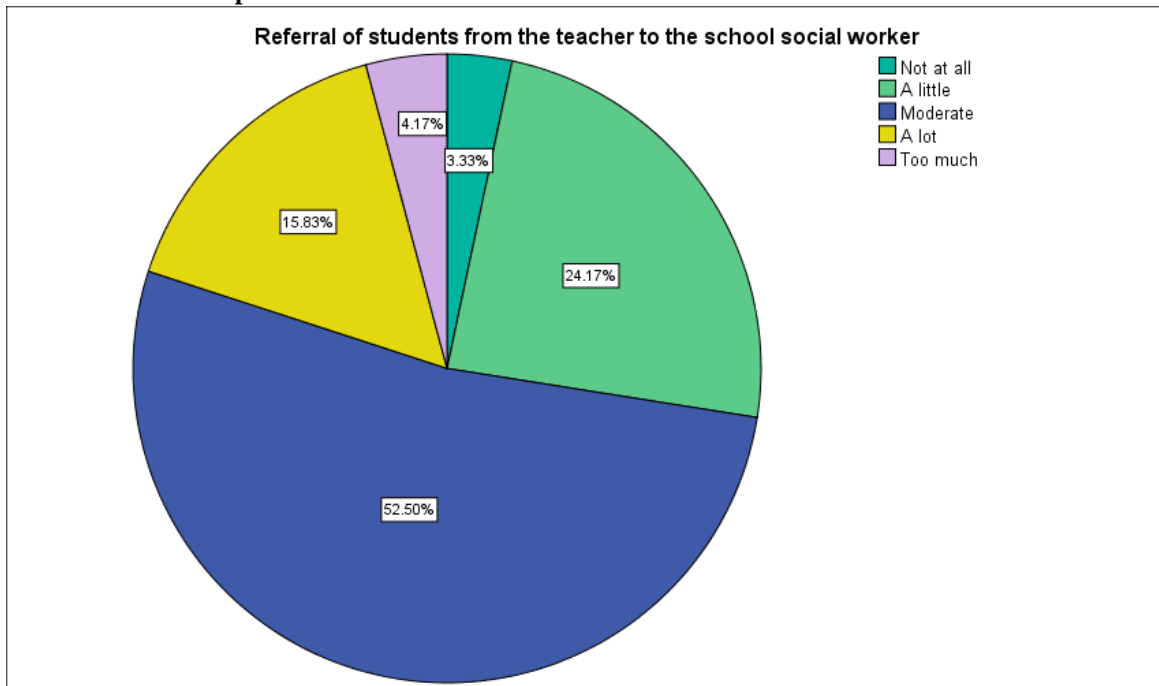
In Graphs 3 investigates the participants' opinions about the forms of cooperation that they would like to have with the social workers of their schools.

Graph 3: Teacher-school meetings



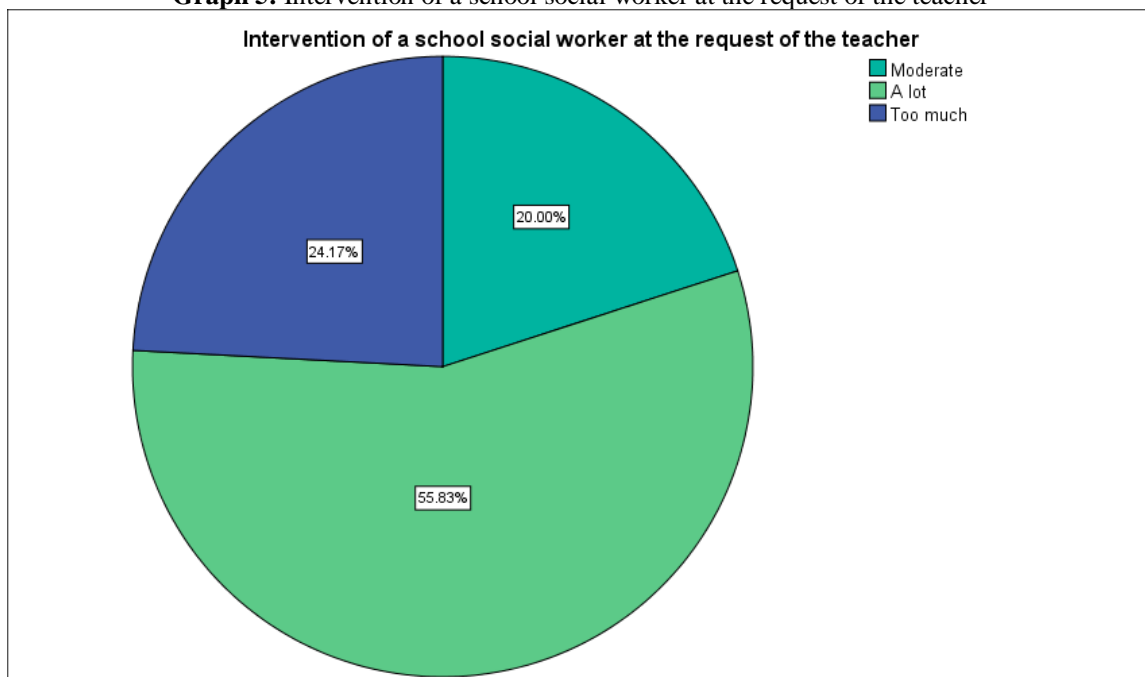
In Graph 4 it seems that the 52.5% of the participants moderately agree that they would enjoy to cooperate with the social workers to the referral of students from the teacher to the school social worker, 24.2% agree a little and 15.8% agree a lot. As for the participants who would enjoy such a cooperation too much occupy 4.2% and 3.3% belongs to the participants who do not wish for such a cooperation at all.

Graph 4: Referral of students from the teacher to the school social worker



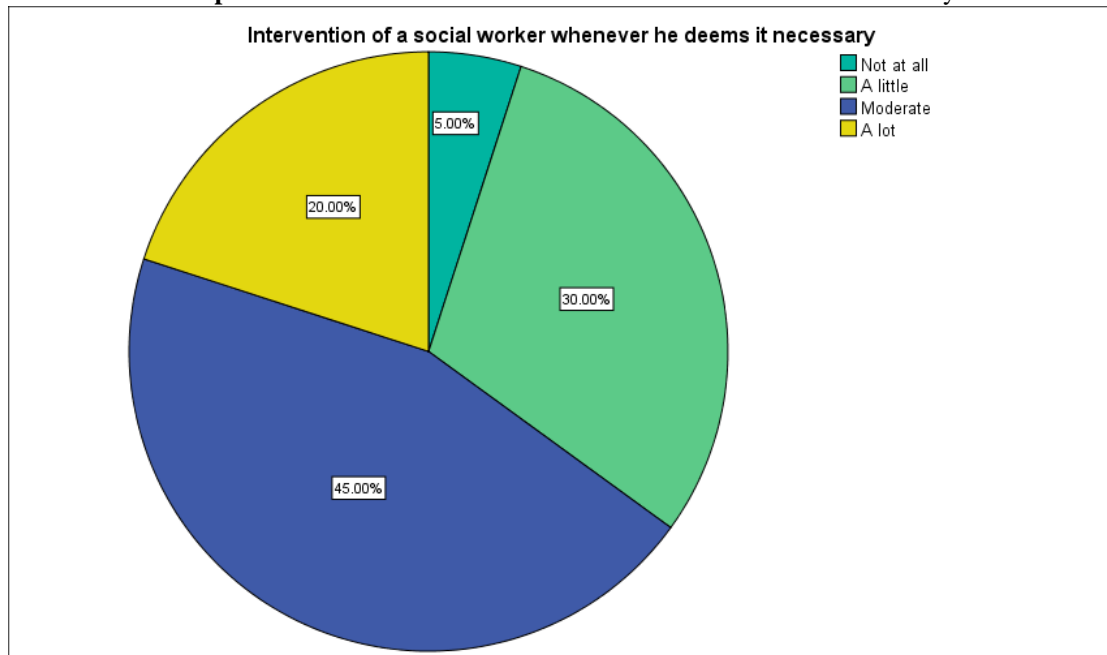
In Graph 5, it is revealed that 55.8% of the participants would enjoy the intervention of a school social worker at the request of the teachers. The participants who would enjoy this too much occupy 24.2%, while those who would want this cooperation on a moderate level reach 20%.

Graph 5: Intervention of a school social worker at the request of the teacher



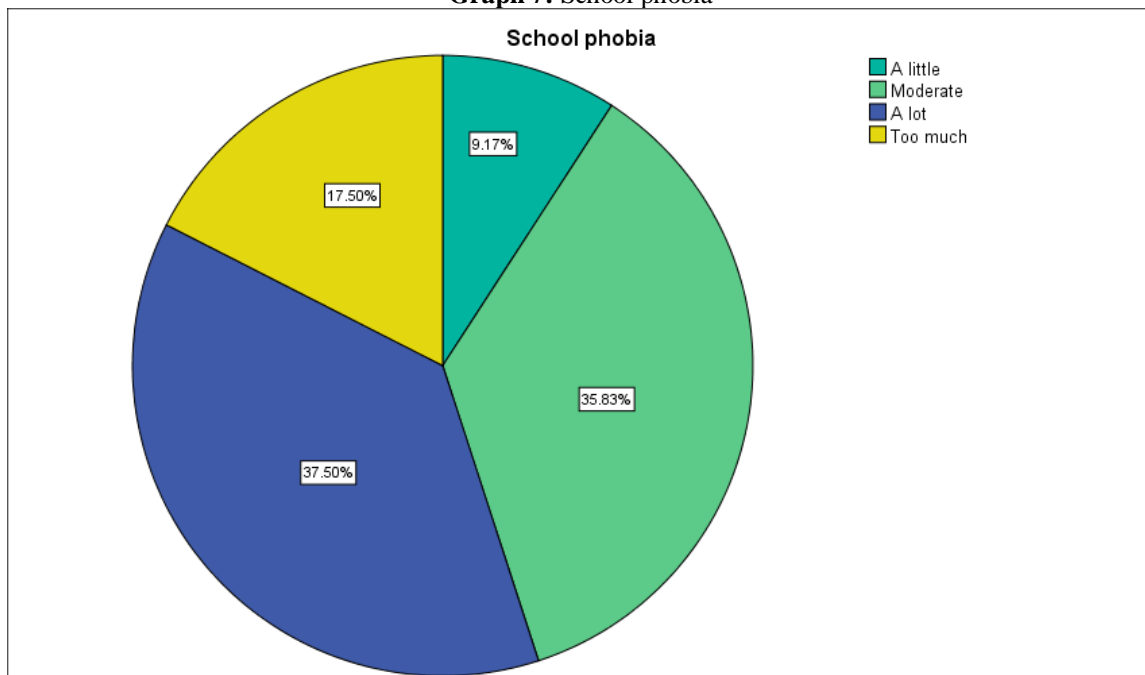
In Graph 6, it seems that 45% of the participants would enjoy an intervention of a social worker whenever they deem it necessary. The participants who would enjoy it a little occupy 30%, 20% belongs to those who would want that a lot and 5% does not wish such a cooperation.

Graph 6: Intervention of a social worker whenever he deems it necessary



In Graphs 7 it seems that 37.5% of the participants support that for the intervention of the social workers is a lot of necessary in case of school phobia. The participants who believe it is moderately necessary reach 35.8%, 17.5% support it is too much necessary and 9.2% support it is a little necessary.

Graph 7: School phobia



IV. CONCLUSION

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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