

MANAGING RISKS ARISING FROM CONFLICTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION: A ROMANIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the risks associated with conflicts in school environment, with focus on bullying, communication issues and tensions between teachers, students and parents. Conflicts are a challenge in primary school education, with a big impact on the emotional wellbeing, social relationship and academical performance of the students. Data was gathered from students, teachers and parents using a structured questionnaire. Findings of the research show that conflicts are most frequent present between students, determined primarily by lack of communication and discipline, causing school – family tensions, lack of motivation for learning and social isolation. Even if the collaboration between teachers and parents is at a satisfactory level, the conflicts management resources are perceived as insufficient. This research highlights the importance of conflict management tools, such as good communication, socio-emotional learning initiatives.

KEYWORDS: *communication, conflict management, primary education, school risks.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The school environment has a high importance in the development of the children at all levels, academical, social and emotional. In primary school education conflicts are inevitable, arising from differences in term of communication, discipline and personality. Some conflicts can be constructive for the students, necessary in the process of learning resilience and critical thinking, but unmanaged conflicts determine significant risks at multiple levels.

Previous research in the field (Jiang et al., 2025) shows the effects of the risks related with school conflicts, such as anxiety, low academic performance, social isolation, depression, low self-esteem, between others (Cedeno Anchundia & Obaco Soto, 2023). Therefore, these effects go beyond classroom and school environment and could lead to reduced motivation for learning and tensions between the school and family (Yang et al., 2025). The unmanaged conflicts can erode the trust in the educational system in general (Cardona, 2024). It is essential to understand how conflicts appear in primary school education and their related risk, in order to be able to manage them, through a series of preventive measures.

This study explores the risks associated with school environment conflicts, with focus on bullying, communication and tensions among students, teachers and parents. These conflicts determine a considerable influence on academic performance, social relationships and emotional wellbeing of the students, representing a significant challenge in primary school education. Therefore, these concerns are addressed further by analyzing the students, parents and teachers perceptions regarding the risks, causes and frequency of school conflicts. Primary data was gathered through a structured

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questionnaire, which was descriptive statistical analyzed, with the objective to find the most frequent types of conflict and their impact. This paper contributes to the growing body of knowledge in the field of managing risks arising from conflicts in the primary education system.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Jiang et al. (2025) believes that students who are victims of bullying develop various disorders, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which contribute to an inferiority complex, social anxiety and even the appearance of suicidal tendencies. At the same time, it is believed that emotional states can trigger different reactions, and it is also important how they are managed so that they do not have an impact on mental health. Some studies show that school conflicts also affect academic performance, it is important to manage correctly so that they do not have negative effects on school results (Cedeño Anchundia & Obaco Soto, 2023).

Conflicts arise within individuals or groups, sometimes being difficult to resolve, having negative results, which is why organizations try to avoid their occurrence (Zhou et al., 2025) especially at the educational level. The risks generated by the emergence of conflicts can be major and can affect primary school students in different ways. Emotions are the ones that influence behavioral changes, generating chain actions that contribute to the emergence of conflicts and aggressive manifestations (Cardona, 2024).

Sleep is affected by the occurrence of conflicts, and the tension generated by its poor quality contributes to a state of irritability (Park & Sprung, 2015), thus contributing to decreased primary school students attention at school and agitation during classes and may result in conflict between them and teachers. Burnout, the psychological reaction to emotional stress, manifests itself through exhaustion, depersonalization, and inefficiency (Laughman et al., 2016). Conflict experiences have several stages that can influence mental state. Exhaustion can contribute to overexertion of the body and contribute to students' chronic fatigue, lack of energy or appetite.

Depersonalization can affect students' social life or cause them to become defensive in conflict situations and become violent. Ineffectiveness can change students' perspective about themselves and can even contribute to the emergence of impostor syndrome, which implies a decrease in motivation.

When they have problems at home or at school, some children and adolescents have aggressive behavior in everyday life, which can contribute to substance use, joining delinquent groups and illegal activities, low grades at school, health problems and the development of inappropriate behavior, especially aggressive behavior with other peers (Lopez Sosa et al., n.d.).

Family problems can also affect students at school, as they may become aggressive with other classmates or lose their focus in class. Low grades can affect relationships with teachers and contribute to the appearance of conflicts with them. Parents who have symptoms of burnout can generate conflicts with their own children, negatively affecting both parties involved (Yang et al., 2025). People who face conflict situations, bullying, even at work, experience health problems and stress (LIN et al., 2025), in the same way, students are affected. Another risk generated by conflicts in education is that the traumas developed by students, if not managed properly and the conflicts are not resolved, it will affect the student who will become an adult. In such situations, traumas can affect their entire life.

Graf et al. (2025) believes that there should be additional measures in managing bullying situations, anonymous feedback mechanisms, courses through which students can participate in various activities, teamwork, debates, sessions in which they can discuss personal experiences, and which would help them better understand these situations and help them identify and manage them correctly. According to studies conducted in primary school that proved that aggressors understood and defended each other, including friendships that started between the same students, they argue that certain circles of friends influenced each other to choose the same victims (Tanaka et al., 2025).

Emotional intensity represents the individual's affective experiences, with studies showing that positive emotions are associated with physical and mental health, while negative emotions intensify adaptation difficulties and the risk of mental problems (Chiang et al., 2024). Negative emotions caused by conflicts at school can generate tensions in relationships between colleagues, teachers or the parent-child relationship.

The school environment is not only a space for education but also a space in which students develop social relationships, learn to express their emotional feelings and the chances of conflicts increasing, it is very important that teachers do not have a passive or neutral approach because it risks amplifying tensions (Alexandrache, 2014).

Students change their mood depending on different situations, they can interact with those around them either with an optimistic or a negative attitude, and the role of teachers is to mediate conflict situations in an effective way (Remache-Bunci et al., 2023). Conflicts that arise in the school environment show that there are dysfunctions in the system or in the relationships between the people involved, also, it can be considered a constructive conflict, its management contributes to an improvement in the academic environment (Medranda et al., 2023).

Some conflicts arise when behaviors are not compatible (Horan & Su, 2025), students can become stressed when they can't cope with limited time, have too much homework, and can't manage their energy effectively. Role conflict leads to an imbalance and accentuates negative states (Kulik, 2025), in this context, students feel the fatigue of responsibilities and may even develop an internal conflict. Study results show that developing critical thinking in primary education can help prevent and manage conflicts who can have negative outcomes among children if ignored (Albor-Chadid & Rodríguez-Burgos, n.d.).

School leadership has an important role in managing conflicts, because leadership styles directly influence the efficiency or inefficiency of the organization (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020). The organizational culture in which students learn is very important, because the attention paid to conflicts starts directly from the school leadership. If conflicts that arise between school employees are not resolved, it is possible that those between students will also be ignored.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire-based survey was conducted to conduct the research. The questionnaire was distributed to all relevant actors for the educational process at primary and secondary levels in Bucharest: teachers, students and parents. The sampling method used was snowball sampling, which has the advantage of relatively rapid distribution and collection of responses from the surveyed subjects. The survey had 63 respondents among teachers, students and undergraduates. The distribution of respondents is presented in the Research results section.

The distribution of the questionnaire and data collection was carried out using Google forms. This tool was chosen for the speed of completing the questionnaire and collecting data, as well as for the high degree of trust among those surveyed (most of whom are users of email accounts and other related services provided by Google, including Classroom in the case of students and teachers).

The questionnaire used included 12 questions dedicated to: the status of the respondents, the frequency and typology of conflicts, potential risks and their impact, methods and measures that can be adopted to reduce conflicts at the level of school organizations. From a methodological perspective, all phases of risk and conflict management are represented, with an emphasis on their identification and prevention.

The results obtained in the questionnaire are presented as descriptive statistics, determining the weights for each type of response in the total amount of responses for each question of the questionnaire. This form of analysis of the results was preferred because the research is ongoing and the sample size does not allow, at the current intermediate stage, more advanced statistical calculations.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The majority of respondents to the questionnaire survey were parents, accounting for almost half of the responses (Figure 1). They are followed by teachers, with a third of the responses, and finally by students, whose respondents account for less than a quarter of the respondents to the questionnaire survey. The lower share of responses from students may indicate either the low degree of importance they attach to the questionnaire topic or a certain reluctance to answer questions that correspond to such a topic.

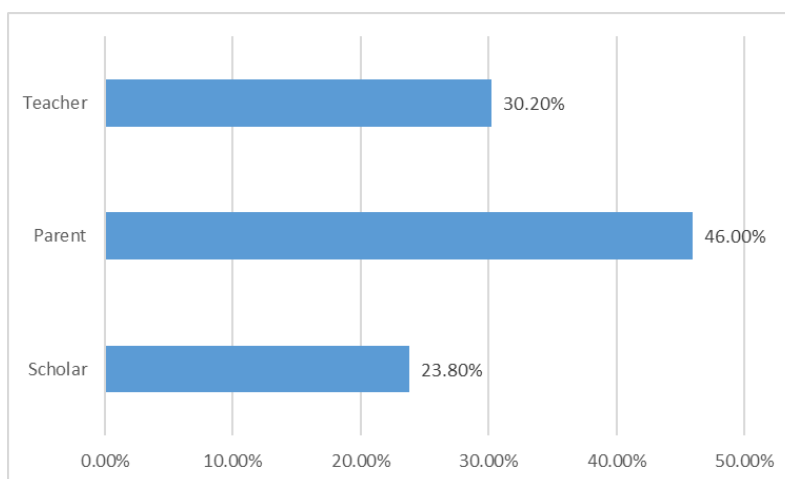


Figure 1. Current status
Source: own calculations based on survey data

Regarding the frequency of conflicts (between students, between students and teachers, between teachers and parents), the structure of the responses presented in Figure 2 shows that these are considered frequent by half of the respondents. Almost a third of them consider that conflicts occur rarely. Lower weights in the structure of the responses belong to those who considered that conflicts occur with very high or very low frequency.

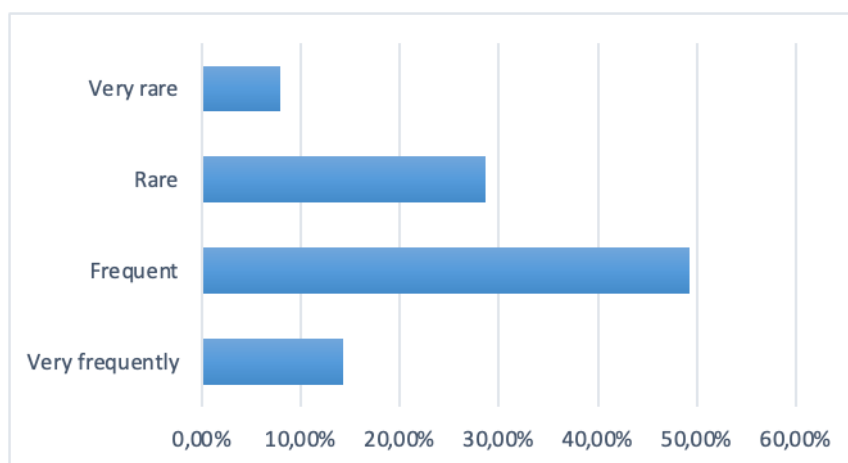


Figure 2. Frequency of conflicts (between students, between students and teachers, between teachers and parents)
Source: own calculations based on survey data

The overwhelming majority of the respondents to the questionnaire believe, according to Figure 3, that conflicts and conflict situations occur mainly between students in the form of bullying or misunderstandings. The fewest respondents believe that conflicts occur between students and teachers. Less than a quarter of those surveyed believe that conflict situations are generated by the teacher-parent relationship.

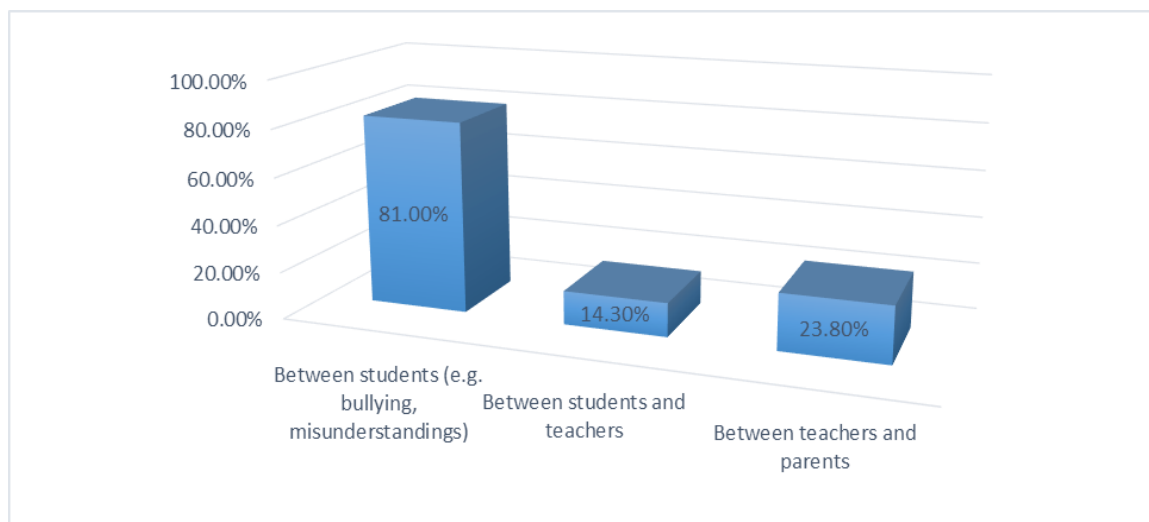


Figure 3. The most common types of conflicts
 Source: own calculations based on survey data

Lack of communication is, in the opinion of a third of the respondents to the questionnaire, the main cause of conflicts that arise in the school environment. It is followed by differences of opinion regarding the rules of discipline and lack of respect. However, the two causes are closely related and together constitute more than half of the perception of the respondents to the questionnaire, which denotes their importance from the perspective of the potential for generating conflicts. These opinions arise in the conditions in which, in the territorial area of the respondents, there are clear regulations that regulate the rules of discipline and good conduct in organizations in the educational field.

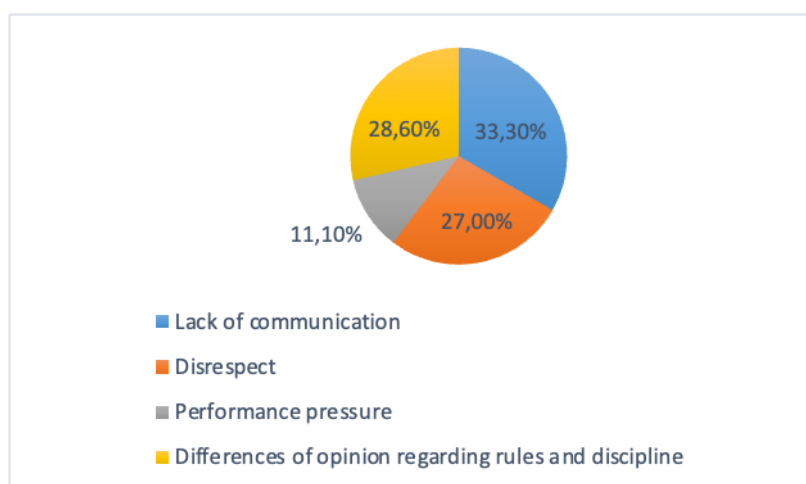


Figure 4. The main causes of conflicts in school
 Source: own calculations based on survey data

According to the data presented in Figure 5, the share of those who consider that conflicts affect to a large extent and to a very large extent the emotional state of those involved is overwhelming among the respondents to the questionnaire (over half of the respondents in both categories, given that multiple answers were allowed for this question). This denotes the perception of a high intensity of conflicts between the actors involved in school organizations, which in turn generates a large or very large emotional impact.

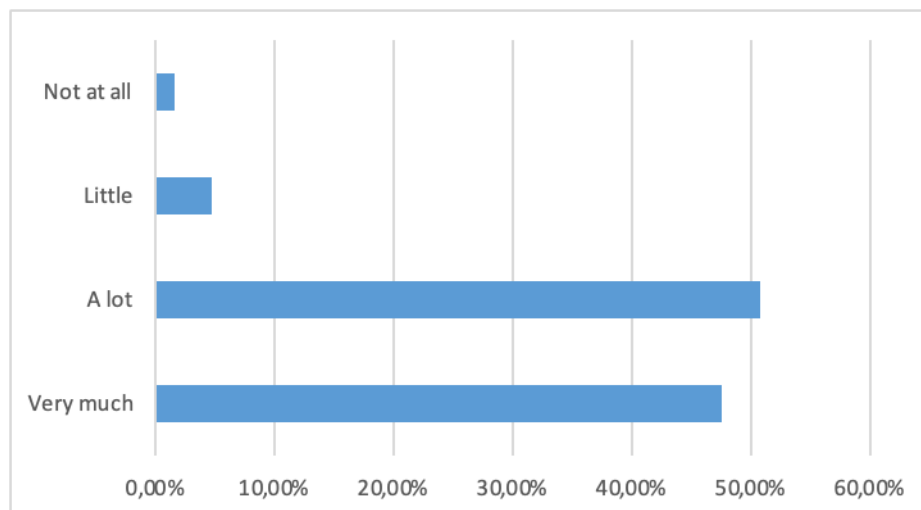


Figure 5. The extent to which conflicts affect the emotional state of those involved

Source: own calculations based on survey data

The main risk of school conflicts, according to the data presented in Figure 6, is that of social isolation/exclusion, with more than two-thirds of respondents mentioning this answer. Two other risks, with similar relative weights, but exceeding one-third of the answers, are the tensions that arise between family and school and the decrease in motivation for learning. School conflicts divert the attention of those involved in the learning process to other topics/subjects, having negative effects on motivational processes and implicitly on the level of knowledge accumulated by students. Fewer respondents mention the increase in absenteeism or school dropout, but these remain risks with a significant impact not only on the educational process but also on career and professional life prospects.

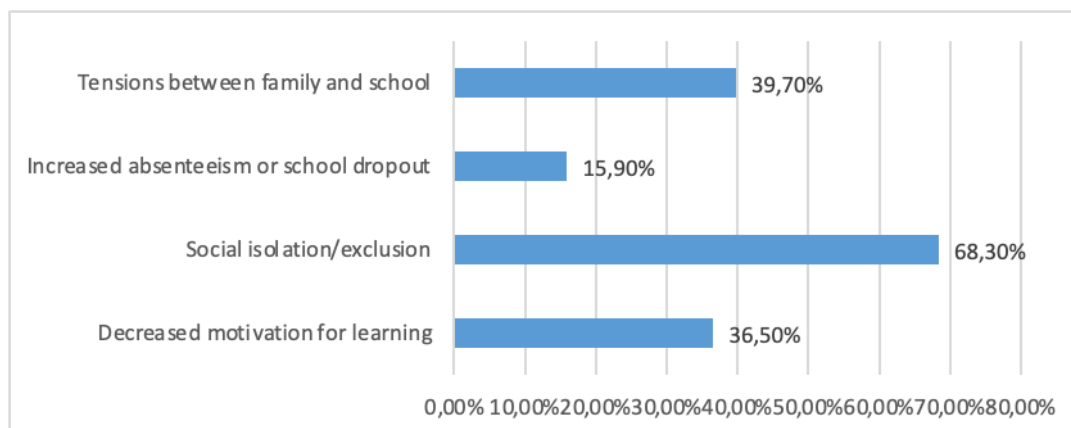


Figure 6. Risks observed as a result of school conflicts

Source: own calculations based on survey data

Most respondents considered that students respond aggressively as a reaction to conflicts (Figure 7), this response clearly standing out from others such as seeking support from parents or teachers. Less than a quarter of respondents considered that students seek to avoid conflict situations and not be involved in them as a potential reaction. Dialogue is, paradoxically, the least frequent reaction of students to conflict situations.

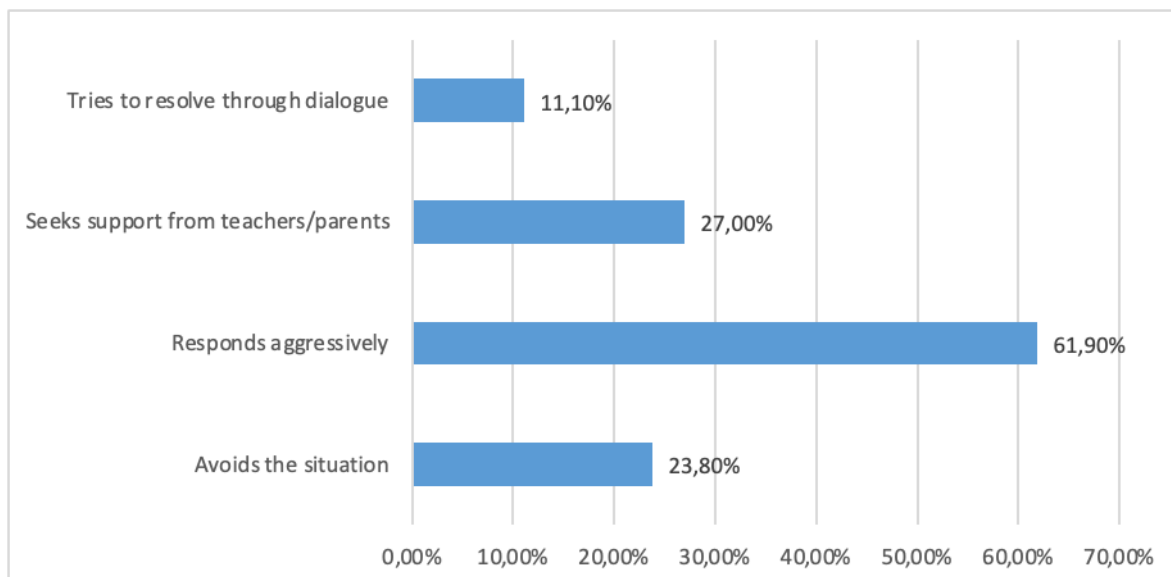


Figure 7. Students' reaction to conflicts

Source: own calculations based on survey data

Table 1 presents the responses to the question on the Extent to which teachers and parents collaborate to prevent or resolve school conflicts. The data show the level of collaboration between teachers and parents in preventing or resolving school conflicts. It is observed that the majority rate the collaboration as 'Good' (38.1%) or 'Satisfactory' (38.1%). A percentage of 19% consider the collaboration to be very good, while only 4.8% rate it as poor. Thus, there is a good basis for cooperation, but also room for improvement to achieve excellent collaboration.

Table 1. The extent to which teachers and parents collaborate to prevent or resolve school conflicts

No.	Response	Share in total responses
1.	Very good	19.00%
2.	Good	38.10%
3.	Satisfactory	38.10%
4.	Poor	4.80%

Source: own calculations based on survey data

When asked about the existence of a sufficient level of resources in the school for conflict management (school counselor, educational programs, mediation activities), almost half of the respondents considered that these exist but constitute only a part of what is needed (Figure 8). Only a quarter of the respondents considered that the level of resources in the school for conflict

management (school counselor, educational programs, mediation activities) is sufficient or that there are very few resources.

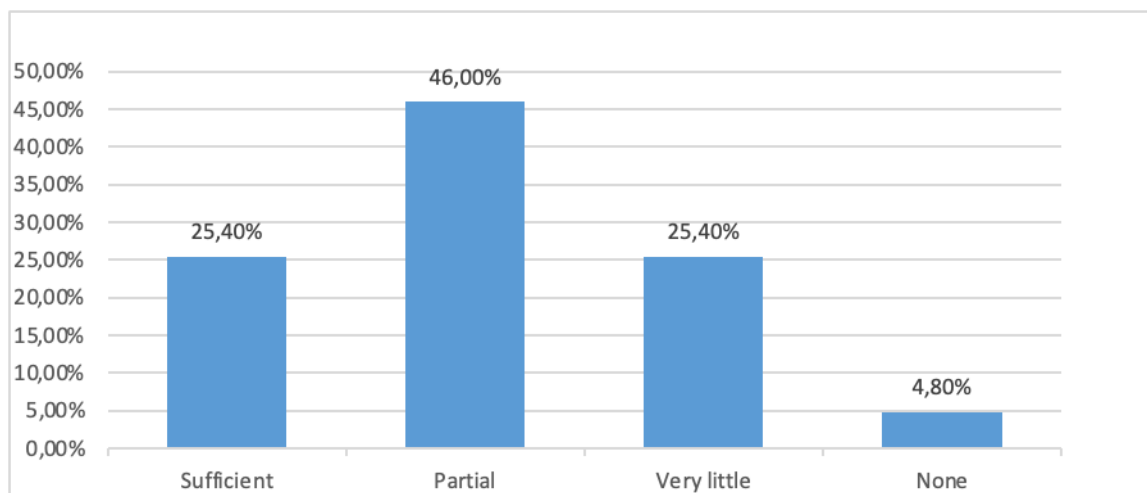


Figure 8. The existence of a sufficient level of resources in the school for conflict management
 Source: own calculations based on survey data

A very high percentage of respondents consider that conflict prevention is very important from the perspective of a good functioning of school organizations (almost three quarters of respondents, according to the data in Figure 9). This shows the awareness of the need for preventive actions, the early identification of conflict-generating sources and the adoption of conflict resolution strategies/tactics at the level of school organizations. Thus, it is noted, at the level of perceptions of the surveyed respondents, the importance given to exercising the forecasting function within school organizations, including in conflict management.

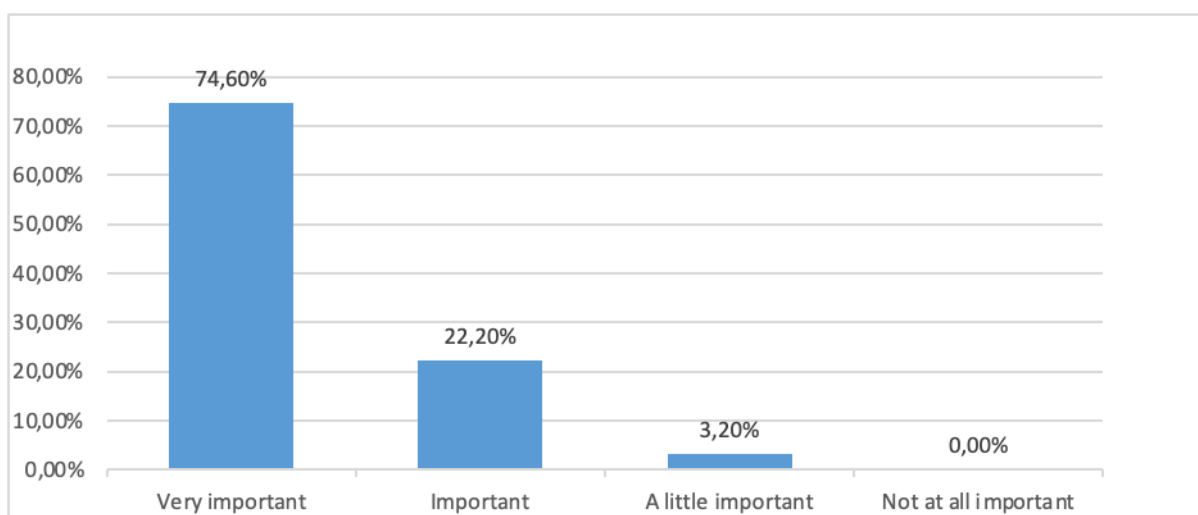


Figure 9. The importance of conflict prevention for the proper functioning of the school
 Source: own calculations based on survey data

According to the data presented in Table 2, the methods considered most effective for reducing school conflicts show that the focus is on improving communication between students, teachers and parents (42.9%). Socio-emotional development activities for students are also important (34.9%),

while the involvement of a school counselor or mediator is mentioned by 6.3% of respondents. Clear and consistently applied rules are seen as useful by 15.9% of participants. Thus, communication and socio-emotional education represent the main pillars of conflict prevention.

Table 2. The most effective methods for reducing school conflicts

No.	Response	Share in total responses
1.	Improving communication between students, teachers and parents	42.90%
2.	Socio-emotional development activities for students	34.90%
3.	Involvement of school counselor/mediator	6.30%
4.	Clear and consistently enforced rules	15.90%

Source: own calculations based on survey data

Awareness of the importance of conflicts within school organizations leads to a relatively high desire to participate in workshops/programs dedicated to conflict management, revealed by a large part of the questionnaire respondents. Thus, we can consider that all actors involved in the educational process (teachers, students, parents) are aware of the importance of conflict management at the level of school organizations and of improving training in this area.

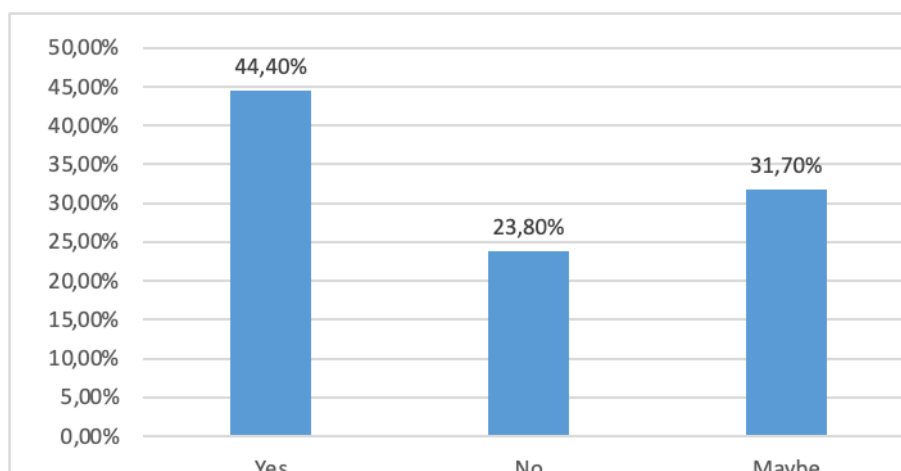


Figure 10. Willingness to participate in workshops/programs dedicated to conflict management

Source: own calculations based on survey data

The responses to the questionnaire-based survey seem to indicate a significant perception of the importance of conflicts in school organizations, of the potential risks/effects generated from the perspective of the viability of the educational process, the emotional balance and the lives of subjects involved in conflict situations. Hence the perceived need to participate in workshops/programs dedicated to conflict management.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The study surveyed 63 people about conflicts in schools. Almost two-thirds said they had been directly exposed to conflicts, and the other reported that such experiences were frequent in their

daily school life. Many linked these conflicts to negative effects, such as stress or anxiety, sadness or hopelessness and their ability to focus in class was reduced. Others noted increased irritability, sleep problems, and even tensions spilling over into family life.

The results also revealed systemic gaps. More than half of students said their schools had no clear conflict resolution procedures, only a few felt comfortable reporting bullying to teachers, but the majority expressed interest in workshops to build skills like collaboration and emotional regulation. These findings underline the urgent need for stronger anti-bullying frameworks, better reporting mechanisms, and the inclusion of socio-emotional learning in the curriculum. At the same time, school leadership and teacher competence remain critical for managing conflicts effectively. Strengthening family support and promoting healthy routines, like good sleep, could also help reduce the impact of conflicts on students.

Projects can be used a conflict reduction mechanism in schools. Projects in schools significantly reduce conflict by fostering collaboration, shared responsibility, and emotional skills. Project-based learning (PBL) dismantles rigid hierarchies and encourages prosocial behavior (Thomas, 2000; Kokotsaki et al., 2016), while socio-emotional learning (SEL) activities strengthen empathy and communication, lowering behavioral problems (Durlak et al., 2011). International initiatives such as Erasmus+ partnerships reduce bias and intergroup tensions, supporting UNESCO’s principle of “learning to live together” (Schweisfurth, 2015; UNESCO, 2017). Programs involving peer mediation or anti-bullying ambassadors promote mutual responsibility and reduce disciplinary issues (Burrell et al., 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Likewise, school–community projects decrease aggression and isolation (Billig, 2007; Catalano et al., 2012), while restorative practices improve teacher–student relationships and lower suspension rates (regory et al., 2016; Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). Finally, digital collaboration projects offer safe, inclusive environments that further prevent bullying and conflict (Voogt et al., 2013; Yang, 2017).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The research paper *Managing Risks Arising from Conflicts in Primary School Education: A Romanian Perspective* confirms that conflicts in primary school education are frequent and impactful, generating risks related with students’ academic progress, emotional health and social integration. The results demonstrate that lack of communication, discipline and inconsistent application of school rules are among the main causes of conflict, while bullying and misunderstandings between students remain the most common forms. Social isolation, reduced learning motivation and tense relations between family and school, were identified as the most severe risks, reflecting the deep emotional consequences of unmanaged conflicts. Although collaboration between parents and teachers is generally perceived as satisfactory, the availability of specialized resources to manage the conflict remain limited.

These findings highlight the importance of proactive strategies in conflict prevention and management. The questionnaire results highlight that the most common risks include social isolation, reduced motivation for learning, increased stress and anxiety and family tensions. Strengthening communication among students, teachers, and parents, integrating socio-emotional learning into the curriculum and enhancing institutional support systems are essential steps toward reducing the related risks. Project based initiatives, peer mediation, community involvement and digital collaboration tools provide innovative tools for transforming conflict situations into opportunities for cooperation, resilience and growth.

From a policy perspective, the results highlight the urgent need to establish clear anti-bullying frameworks and reliable reporting mechanisms that encourage students to disclose incidents without fear. Policymakers should also support intercultural and community-based projects, as well as the adoption of digital collaboration environments, to foster inclusion. By combining preventive

policies, educational systems can significantly reduce the risks generated by conflicts and promote a culture of respect, safety and cooperation in primary education.

The study has few limitations because it relies on quantitative self-reported data, which cannot prove cause and effect. To strengthen future research, longitudinal designs and peer-network analyses should be employed, alongside triangulation with teacher reports and school records. Such approaches would allow for a deeper understanding of the structural dynamics of conflict and its evolving effects on students' well-being and educational trajectories.

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