International Journal of School Social Work

Volume 11 | Issue 1 Article 1

April 2025

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Recommended Citation

Farmaki, Styliani and Kandylaki, Agapi (2025) "Music and Art in School Social Work with Socially Isolated and Marginalized Students: A Participatory Action Research Enhancing the Educational Inclusion During COVID-19.," *International Journal of School Social Work*: Vol. 11: Iss. 1. https://doi.org/10.4148/2161-4148.1132

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Music and Art in School Social Work with Socially Isolated and Marginalized Students: A Participatory Action Research Enhancing the Educational Inclusion During COVID-19.

Abstract

This article presents and discusses a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project, which was conducted shortly after the outbreak of COVID-19 (March 2020) by the first author (researcher) in collaboration with thirteen School Social Workers (SSWs) (co-researchers-interveners), 11 from Greece and two from Cyprus. The SSWs performed an original "quarantine video-song" composed by the researcher and dedicated to all students, entitled *"We've Not Forgotten You"*. They promoted it publicly and used it as a tool in 15 tailor-made, arts-based, brief, systemic interventions to help enhance the educational inclusion of students who faced intense social isolation and marginalization challenges.

The main findings on how educational inclusion was enhanced are illustrated hereby by three indicative case studies, i.e. one migrant student, one student with chronic illness and disability, and a "whole school of Roma students". Music and art were linked to the students' interests and pandemic-related issues and offered them opportunities to strengthen their "voices" regarding the emerging challenges. Depending on the case, the interventions' focus expanded from the individual and family level to the classroom, school, and community level. The interventions contributed to self-expression, empowerment, highlighting of strengths, and coping with transitions. They also enhanced the sense of school belonging and recognition, promoted interdisciplinary and inter-school collaborations, and strengthened the school-family-community relation. The SSWs, as co-researchers and members of a group coordinated by the researcher, exchanged feedback, and reflected collectively on the interventions, coming up with proposals for future action to enrich school social work practice during COVID-19 and beyond.

Keywords

school social work, participatory action research, music- and arts-based systemic interventions, social isolation and marginalization, educational inclusion, COVID-19

Cover Page Footnote

Ethics statement: The study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Democritus University of Thrace, Greece (approval#56463/480/03-07-2020). Written informed consent for participation was obtained from all the participants. Acknowledgements: The research work was supported by the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI) under the HFRI PhD Fellowship grant (Fellowship Number: 560). Disclosures: The authors report no conflict of interest.

This article is available in International Journal of School Social Work: https://newprairiepress.org/ijssw/vol11/iss1/1

Introduction

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and urged countries to implement quarantine measures to limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2 (Clair et al., 2021). More than 180 countries suspended school operations, causing a sudden disruption to the learning and well-being of 85% of the world's student population (World Bank, 2020a). A few months later, schools reopened with special measures, reshaping daily school life (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2020).

In Greece, schools were closed during the first quarantine (March-May 2020) and offered optional synchronous and asynchronous distance learning. SSWs[1] were called by the state to support school community members remotely through email, web platforms, telephone, and chat. By law, the purpose of this transition was to maintain contact, to implement experiential activities for empowerment and to provide counseling (Ministerial Order 41070/GD4). Schools re-opened shortly before the end of the school year (May-June 2020) with distances measures, fixed groups during breaks, and class divisions into sub-groups that operated in rotation. Students belonging to high-risk groups for COVID-19 or those with high-risk family members, continued staying at home (Ministerial Decision 51888/GD4).

SSWs in Greece and worldwide were exploring innovative methods and intervention tools to address the unique challenges of the pandemic (Kelly et al., 2020). A main goal for them was to enhance the educational inclusion of students facing severe social isolation and marginalization challenges, both during the suspension and the reopening of schools (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020), while strengthening resilience, a sense of belonging, emotional bonds, and social interconnectedness among school community members (Page et al., 2021; Vaillancourt et al., 2021). This article discusses a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project that arose from and sought to respond to these needs, drawing on music and art in school social work practice.

[1] The term "School Social Worker" (SSW) is used in this article to define the framework for the provision of social work services in schools. In Greece, School Social Work is not recognized as a distinct professional specialization. Social Workers are eligible to work in schools if they hold a bachelor's degree in social work and a National License to practice. They are hired by the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs as permanent or temporary staff. They work at all levels of education within both mainstream and special education schools, as well as in the Centers for Education and Counseling Support, which are responsible for assessing students' educational needs (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2020). In Cyprus, Social Workers work as members of District Committees of Special Education and occasionally in schools under pilot programs (Panagiotopoulos, 2016).

The challenge: students facing social isolation and marginalization during COVID-19

During the quarantine, many countries shifted the educational process from its physical space to online learning (Larsen et al., 2022). Students were not allowed to meet in person with peers, friends, teachers, and extended family members. There was a high risk of them experiencing insecurity, stress (Usher et al., 2020), mental health problems, restricted support networks and resources (Brooks et al., 2020), and additional family stressors, such as parental job loss, income reduction, family conflict, illness, or death (Larsen et al., 2022).

Students were divided into those who could take classes online and those who could not. The latter had limited participation in education through printed handouts, educational TV programs or were completely excluded from education (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2020). Students with special educational needs (SEN), disabilities, or those from burdened social environments faced a loss of their daily school routine and difficulties with autonomous learning via email, tele-classes, and attached files (Antoninis, 2020).

Students from vulnerable social groups, such as Roma, refugees, migrants, and those living below the poverty line or in remote rural areas, became severely isolated and marginalized due to lack of access to the internet and telephone, technological illiteracy, or limited support for quality learning at home (Antoninis, 2020; Parsitau & Jempkemei, 2020). These challenges "were added" to issues some students already faced at school (European Public Health Alliance, 2020; Hummel, 2020), including socialization difficulties, social withdrawal (Rubin et al., 2009), discrimination, bullying (Petkovska, 2015), limited sense of school belonging (Prince & Hadwin, 2013), unstable attendance, and dropout (Munn & Lloyd, 2005).

When schools reopened after the lockdown, students with little or no prior participation in distance learning were at risk of further isolation (World Bank, 2020b). Those who, due to vulnerability, did not return to school continued to be deprived of contact with other members of the school community and what was shared in the classroom. Those returning to school might have felt anxious about the new reality, finding it difficult to remain distant from their classmates-friends (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2021).

The creative reaction: writing an original song of empowerment during the lockdown

The researcher (first author) observed SSWs on Greek social media expressing concerns about the challenges mentioned above, as well as a need for mutual support and feedback to remain effective in their role (International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW], 2020). With a background in school social work, systemic therapy and music, the researcher was working on a PhD thesis on music and art in school social work at the time. At the encouragement of her

Supervisor (second author), she redirected the focus of the thesis towards developing an action research project to respond to the emerging needs posed by the pandemic.

First, she had an online meeting with another SSW who was looking for alternative ways to reach students cut off from education. Together, they wrote lyrics to send a message of support, hope, and empowerment to all students, aiming to reach the most isolated and marginalized ones. The researcher then set the lyrics to music and with her guitar, composed the original song under the title *We've Not Forgotten You*:

(Verse A) We've not forgotten you; we'll meet again,
All creation will see the sun and will be smiling on us.
(Chorus) Our worries will be gone, and we'll be together,
With knowledge our strength and love in our souls, and love in our souls.
(Verse B) We'll be back at school, things will be as they were,
And we'll hold each other tight, everything like a celebration.

The PAR project's concept and initial design

This first remote, music-based collaboration between the researcher and the SSW inspired the conception of the PAR project, empowering many more SSWs to join as co-researchers-interveners, develop knowledge experientially to address real problems (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), improve their practice, and create changes in their lives and in the lives of those they supported (Baldwin, 2012). The idea was for the SSWs to collectively perform the song in a video, following the pattern of "quarantine music videos", which had contributed to the resilience of the stay-at-home population (United Nations [UN], 2020). This video-song would then be used as a tool to develop arts-based systemic interventions for students facing social isolation and marginalization, aimed at enhancing their educational inclusion.

Enhancing educational inclusion through music- and arts-based systemic school social work interventions

Educational inclusion, in the context of the PAR project, was viewed as an ideal that can never be fully achieved but required continuous efforts to enhance meaningful participation in education. This involved changing practices, culture, and policies while reducing barriers and pressures of exclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). In line with this philosophy, the PAR project motivated the participating SSWs to support socially isolated and marginalized students in accessing and actively participating in learning and school life, and to contribute to making education more effective for all (Yadav, 2016). They would leverage resources and

strengths at various levels —micro-, meso-, and macro- (Openshaw, 2008)— while considering the broader socio-cultural and political contexts (Payne, 2020). The needs assessment, intervention and reflection process would focus on the inter-systemic interactions among students, families, teachers, and schools, avoiding the perception of students' difficulties as individual weaknesses, in line with the systemic approach (Schlippe & Schweitzer, 2016).

The SSWs would integrate music and art into systemic, multi-faceted interventions with individuals, groups, families, schools, and communities (Whipple, 2015), tailored to the needs of each case, while considering the constraints of their work context and the boundaries of the profession (Jackson, 2015). The arts would be used as intervention tools for self-expression, communication, and empowerment, highlighting the main area of intersection between art and social work, which differs from that of art (in) therapy or art (in) education (Huss, 2018b). The arts would focus on pandemic-related themes, engaging children in music, story writing, poetry, drawing, dance, drama (Frost, 2005), and helping them build resilience (Netter, 2020; Park, 2020; UN, 2020).

Potential roles of the participating systems in the PAR project

The PAR project was grounded in the values of partnership, empowerment, and social change (Barbera, 2008), aligned with the systemic approach (Burns, 2007), and aimed at enhancing educational inclusion (O'Hanlon, 2003) and promoting inclusive practices (Messiou, 2012).

The SSWs were best suited to act as co-researchers and interveners in the PAR project. Having already established trusting relationships with students and families, they could identify and mobilize some of the most socially isolated and marginalized students despite school closures. As members of a professional group, they would exchange feedback and reflect collectively on the interventions applied, propose future actions, and enrich school social work practice with the arts.

The participating students would have the opportunity to express themselves, raise their "voice" and co-construct change through music and art during a time of uncertainties. Other members of their systems, such as parents, teachers, and classmates (depending on the case) could strengthen the systemic character of the interventions and enhance their impact on educational inclusion.

The researcher would take on multiple roles in the PAR project acting as coordinator, co-singer in the video- song, co-researcher, co-intervener (contributing with her musical skills when needed), and facilitator of the SSWs' group.

PAR methodology followed

Recruiting SSWs to join the PAR project

An open call was initially launched on two informal Greek Facebook groups, acting as professional support spaces, to recruit SSWs for the PAR project. Within the first three days, 22 SSWs expressed interest. They were informed via email about the song, the researcher's background, the concept and initial design of the PAR project, and the criteria for participation. These criteria included: working with students facing social isolation and marginalization; willingness to collectively perform a video-song and use it as a tool for further action; interest in integrating music and art into systemic intervention; commitment for a period of four months (from March 2020 to the end of the school year in June 2020), with a flexible degree of participation depending on the circumstances encountered in the pandemic, both professionally and personally.

Finally, 13 SSWs consented to participate, 11 from Greece and two from Cyprus. In Greece: three participants were employed in a program for the inclusion of Roma students in mainstream primary schools; four worked in a program for the inclusion of students with disabilities and special education needs in mainstream primary and secondary schools; another three were employed in special education primary and secondary schools; one participant worked at a "Center for Education and Counselling Support" (CECS). In Cyprus two SSWs were employed in mainstream primary schools under a pilot program. All participants were employed on fixed-term contracts for one school year. Six had several years of experience in schools, while seven were new to this field. Twelve were women and one was a man, with their ages ranging from 26 to 36 years old. None of the SSWs were professional artists, but some had previously used arts in their school-based work. Most of them did not know each other or the researcher, and they met for the first time online during quarantine.

Co-creating the collective video-song

The researcher held an initial online meeting with the 13 SSWs to get to know each other, familiarize them with the song and the PAR project, and establish a shared vision of educational inclusion. She then conducted one-on-one online rehearsals to help the SSWs improve their singing in terms of tone, expressiveness, and synchronization with the guitar accompaniment, which was recorded by an external musical partner. Since they had no previous singing experience, the researcher encouraged them to overcome their inhibitions about performing in front of a camera, focusing not on the aesthetic outcome but on their willingness to sing with their authentic voices for their students. They all videotaped themselves performing the song from home, adhering to instructions about lighting and other technical requirements. The researcher gathered the videos, sorted out the parts that each SSW performed best, organized the solo and choral parts, and did the video editing. An external video editor partner finalized the video-song and subtitled it in

both Greek (to be accessible to people with hearing problems) and English (to be accessible to non-native Greek speakers). The video-song can be found in Farmaki (2020) on We've not forgotten you - School Social Workers from Greece & Cyprus - YouTube.

Co-displaying the video-song in public

The researcher presented the complete version of the video-song to the group of the SSWs during a second online meeting. The SSWs expressed their emotions regarding the outcome and decided to publicly share it to raise awareness about students' socio-emotional needs during quarantine, as well as the role of SSWs as frontline school professionals. They uploaded the video-song to social media, where it quickly garnered thousands of views, attracting attention from academics, politicians, education executives, and socio-educational websites. The video-song was featured in local and national mass media outlets in both Greece and Cyprus, receiving honorary recognitions from the National Associations of Social Workers in both countries. Additionally, the researcher and several participating SSWs were invited to give interviews and write articles in the press about the role of music and art in school social work, further enhancing the profession's visibility.

The research question

Having at their disposal a collective video-song as the main intervention tool, which had gained momentum and stemmed from their own experiential participation, the SSWs and the researcher jointly explored and undertook action on the research question: *"How can music- and art-based systemic social work interventions contribute to enhancing the educational inclusion of socially isolated and marginalized students during COVID-19?"* To delve deeper into this overarching question, the researcher developed four sub-questions:

1. What are the challenges of social isolation and marginalization faced by the target student?
2. How are music and other forms of art integrated into systemic intervention to achieve meaningful goals for the case towards inclusion?
3. What changes are observed, how do music and art contribute to these changes, and what is their impact on inclusion?
4. What reflections and proposals emerge for further enhancing inclusion in the future?

From identifying challenges and integrating the arts into systemic intervention to observing changes and proposing future strategies, these sub-questions aligned with the core processes of social work intervention, approaching

educational inclusion from a holistic perspective and highlighting how professional practice can be combined with PAR.

PAR process and data collection methods

To address the research question, specific stages of the PAR process—common to all participating SSWs— were followed. Each stage corresponded to a sub-question and aligned with a distinct research axis. The PAR process, along with the tools used for data collection at each stage and axis, is presented below. Discussions "between" participants, rather than solely interviews (which, in traditional research, extract data "from" participants), were encouraged as a means of reflecting on critical issues, and providing feedback (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013).

➢ Stage 1: Case assessment

Axis 1. Social isolation and marginalization challenges faced by the target student

Each SSW, in collaboration with the researcher:

- discussed the conditions of their educational context during quarantine, including the social isolation and marginalization challenges faced by students, and identified a student (or group of students) experiencing such challenges to participate in the PAR project (*interview/discussion between the SSW and the researcher).*
- approached the target student and their parents, presented the video-song and the PAR project, obtained consent for their participation, and discussed their educational and life conditions during quarantine *(SSW's entry into the field, notes from initial discussions with the target student's family).*
- conducted a case assessment based on the systemic approach, by examining: the school's operation style during quarantine; the emotional, social and educational needs, difficulties, barriers and opportunities for the student; the socio-cultural conditions in their environment; the interactions and communication patterns within or between their systems (peers, class group, teachers, family, school and community), and their strengths, interests, and resources (*discussion between the SSW and the researcher which incorporated a review of older case files and updated information from the SSW's notes of the previous step).*

❖ This process provided data on the social isolation and marginalization challenges faced by the target student within their context, laying the groundwork for designing the intervention.

➢ Stage 2: Intervention design, implementation and evolution

Axis 2. Integration of music and art into systemic intervention to achieve meaningful goals toward inclusion

Each SSW, in collaboration with the researcher:

- designed a brief quarantine intervention inspired by the video-song by 1) setting systemic goals tailored to the specific needs of the case, such as expanding social networks, creating inclusive groups, empowering participants, enhancing strengths, improving the quality of relationships within a system (e.g., class) or between systems (e.g., family-school), or inducing broader systemic changes at the school level; 2) identifying key participants (other members of the student's system) who would be meaningful to involve and defining how they could contribute; 3) selecting art forms aligned with participants' interests, and themes related to the pandemic; 4) exploring available means of communication, such as phone calls, video calls, chats, emails, neighborhood visits; and 5) deciding on whether the researchers' musical skills would be beneficial to the intervention *(discussion between the SSW and the researcher).*
- engaged the members of the target student's system, presented the video-song and the PAR project, obtained consent for their participation, and discussed their role and actions in the intervention (*SSW's notes from their initial discussions with the other members of the target student's systems)*.

❖ This process provided data regarding the initial steps of integrating music and art into systemic intervention to promote inclusion.

- implemented the intervention under constant reflection with the target student and other participants, following a participatory, co-constructive approach. This involved modifying the intervention and the use of arts based on their contributions and creative ideas, prioritizing their "voices", and thus co-constructing change *(activity diary kept by the SSW and the researcher, notes from their participatory observations of arts-based meetings and initiatives, written feedback discussions between the SSW and the researcher, records of the artworks created, and notes from their reflective discussions with the participants on the artworks, the course, and the outcomes of the intervention).*

❖ This process provided data on the continuous integration of music and art during the implementation of the intervention.

When the state announced the reopening of schools for one month until the end of the school year

The SSWs' group under the coordination of the researcher:

- decided to continue their interventions within the schools, emphasizing that art could play a transformative role in addressing the unprecedented challenges expected to arise due to the pandemic. They discussed the difficulties

encountered so far and exchanged feedback, ideas, and encouragement to prepare for the next phase of schools' reopening *(SSWs' group discussion).*

Each SSW (acting independently of the researcher):

- either expanded their quarantine intervention within the school setting, seeking to maximize its impact at multiple levels (class group, school, community), or initiated a new one, again linked to the video-song, to address the new challenges emerging in schools. Those SSWs who did not return to school due to COVID-19 related vulnerabilities continued their interventions remotely *(at the end of the school year, each SSW was interviewed by the researcher regarding how they developed their intervention, the specific actions and practices they utilized, and the observations they made during its implementation).*

❖ This process provided data on how the arts were integrated into the intervention during its evolution within the school.

- Stage 3: Impact assessment

Axis 3. Changes observed, music and art contribution to these changes, impact on inclusion.

Each SSW, in collaboration with the researcher:

- engaged in a reflective discussion on the progress of the intervention from its initiation during the quarantine to its completion within the school. The goal was to identify changes for the target student and other systems, with an emphasis on the unique role of the arts in these changes and their impact on inclusion *(this discussion was based on a review of the notes from participatory observations and discussions with the participants, the transcribed texts from the discussions and interviews between the SSW and the researcher, and the artworks created, with a focus on exploring their functions and meanings while considering the responses of student-creators and others to them, Huss & Sela-Amit, 2019; Vodde & Gallant, 2002).*

❖ This review process was not an in-depth data analysis, but rather an additional reflective step that served both the next stage (proposal development) and the strengthening of the researcher's analysis, who was expected to revisit the research material later.

- Stage 4: Future-oriented reflection

Axis 4. Reflection and proposals for the future of the case toward inclusion.

Each SSW, in collaboration with the researcher:

- reflected on the obstacles and challenges they encountered, as well as the ways in which they addressed them, putting the focus on developing proposals for the future of the case in terms of inclusion, based on the principle that educational inclusion always has room to be enhanced (extending from individual support to the changing of the school culture, climate, strategies, and practices in place) *(discussion between the SSW and the researcher).*

The SSWs, as members of the SSWs' group:

- presented their interventions to the SSWs' group and collectively reflected on how the arts could be further utilized to promote inclusion for the case in the future and to enrich school social work practice during the pandemic and beyond *(SSWs' group discussion coordinated by the researcher).*

❖ This process provided data on proposals for the future toward inclusion, both from the SSWs and the researcher, as well as from the SSWs' group.

Epistemological paradigm

The PAR project was based on the constructivist paradigm, where all systems involved, including the researcher, co-created a new reality based on their subjective perceptions and interactions with each other and the environment (Schlippe & Schweitzer, 2003). The co-researchers "co-constructed" knowledge, enriched school social work practice and made recommendations for future actions (Smeijsters et al., 2011). The target students and other participants in the interventions contributed their perspectives and artistic expressions to the identification of challenges, the redesign and implementation of the interventions, and the reflection on their impact. The art forms and the ways in which they were used were not strictly predetermined but evolved constructively, shaped by the choices of the interveners and the contributions and ideas of the participants.

Ethical issues

The PAR project was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Democritus University of Thrace. Written informed consent for participation was obtained from all participants. The SSWs were informed they could leave the PAR project at any time; however, they could not withdraw their participation from the video-song, as it was the main tool of intervention for all the SSWs. Due to their public exposure in the video-song, their identity could not remain confidential, but the details of the schools in which they worked would not be disclosed, nor would those of the students and other participants.

The SSWs followed a protocol for approaching the target students and other members of their systems, which included explaining the aim of the project, its participatory philosophy, and its role in the researcher's doctoral thesis. They

presented the video-song through available means and documented the selection of participants. Participants were informed about the types of research data that would be collected, including personal, social, family, and school life information existing prior to and during the pandemic, as well as the artworks created within the PAR project. Confidentiality was ensured by withholding the identities of the participants, the names of the schools where they worked and by excluding any identifiable features in the artworks or any sensitive personal data.

Participants were allowed to contact the researcher for any concerns and could withdraw from any arts-based activity or from the entire project at any time, with the assurance that their cooperation with their SSW would not be affected. They were also given the opportunity to co-construct the activities and co-determine the timing of their implementation. Special attention was given to ethical considerations in conducting research with minors using technological means. Parents of the students were informed about the telephone and online meetings held with their children and were invited to be present if they wished. Remote video or audio recording was not permitted, so note-taking was preferred.

Limitations

The PAR project required commitment, flexibility, time investment from the co-researchers (Cameron, 2007), and constant vigilance due to changes provoked by the pandemic, making it a challenging and demanding endeavor. Of the 13 SSWs, one withdrew after the public display of the song for health reasons related to the pandemic and did not apply any interventions, while three other SSWs contributed with two interventions each. All students proposed by the SSWs to participate accepted the invitation, except for one who could not be located, one who withdrew due to relocation, and one who was initially not interested. In their place, other students were nominated. The reasons for the wide acceptance of the project were, according to the participants, the resonance and special message of the SSWs' song, the trust they had in the SSWs, the collective nature of the project, including students from different areas and being supervised by the University, and the students' need to be creatively active during the lockdown.

Being part of the researcher's doctoral thesis, the PAR project risked overshadowing the SSWs' priorities, potentially causing them to feel driven by external expectations (Gosin et al., 2003) or disadvantaged due to a lack of specialized musical skills. To address this, the researcher provided them space for autonomous action, offering her musical skills when helpful for enriching practice, giving them the opportunity to develop the interventions independently within the schools, and engaging in ongoing reflective discussions to address any issues of power dynamics early on (Isenberg et al., 2004). Furthermore, the researcher's background might have influenced the framing of themes and the interpretation of

qualitative data. This potential bias was addressed through ongoing reflection and feedback with each SSW throughout the PAR process (Tuckett, 2005).

Data analysis methods

Data collection and analysis were intertwined with undertaking action from the starting point of the PAR project (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Each stage was based on what was already known and proceeded evolutionarily. The SSWs were involved in various PAR stages: i.e. data collection, analysis, implementation of intervention, and reflection on findings (Van Rooyen & Gray, 1995), following processes of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Upon completing all four stages, the researcher revisited the collected materials for each intervention, including notes, artworks, and transcribed discussions/interviews, and conducted a qualitative thematic analysis, treating each intervention as a case study (Crowe et al., 2011). Coding was employed to identify key points and emerging themes within each PAR axis. Triangulation was achieved by synthesizing various data sources for each intervention, ensuring the validity of the findings and minimizing the risk of misinterpretation.

The central themes and key points from diverse sources were integrated into a cohesive narrative for each intervention. This narrative followed the chronological sequence of events, incorporated theoretical connections, and was enriched by relevant data extracts, such as participant quotes and artworks, ultimately presented in a separate case study report. Each report was structured into four sections corresponding to the four PAR axes: the first included the systemic assessment of the challenges of social isolation and marginalization faced by the target student; the second explored the ways in which the arts were integrated into the systemic intervention from its initial implementation to its completion; the third examined the changes observed, the role of the arts in these changes, and their impact on inclusion; and the fourth focused on the reflections and proposals for further enhancing inclusion in the future. The SSWs provided feedback on the reports further enhancing their credibility.

Findings

Fifteen music- and arts-based systemic interventions were carried out. Eleven of these were initiated during the quarantine period (via phone calls, chats, videocalls, and neighborhood visits), with seven subsequently evolving within the schools. Additionally, four interventions were implemented directly inside the schools and the CECS after the lockdown. Various art forms were utilized, including singing, songwriting, video-making, drawing, collage, story writing,

poetry, comics, murals, drama, and photography. Twenty-six students, mostly having diverse cultural backgrounds, SEN, or disabilities, were deeply engaged in the PAR project. Moreover, the song and arts-based activities inspired by it reached hundreds of students, their families, teachers, and community members.

For the purposes of this article, the main findings from three selected interventions—summarized from the case study reports and organized by PAR axis—are presented and discussed. These interventions focus on a migrant student, a student with chronic illness and disability, and students at a school exclusively attended by Roma. The SSWs are identified by numbering, the target students by pseudonyms, and other participants by their roles in relation to these students.

"Success recipes"

Axis 1. Social isolation and marginalization challenges faced by the target student

James, a 10-year-old student attending the 4th grade of a mainstream primary school in a rural town, was part of a large immigrant family. He was relocated to the area and enrolled in the school three months before the quarantine. Previously, he had attended another school in a different city, where he had experienced racism and discrimination. SSW1 observed that James was socially withdrawn, expressing feelings of inferiority about using the Greek language. His only interactions at school were with his two younger brothers. The teacher had not made specific efforts to integrate him into peer groups, and the lockdown further inhibited his socialization and adaptation process. During quarantine, James faced additional pressures as he was the only student in his class who did not participate in tele-education due to the lack of technological equipment. Instead, he walked to the school daily to collect educational handouts left for him by his teacher, maintaining contact only with the school principal.

Axis 2. Integration of music and art into systemic intervention to achieve meaningful goals toward inclusion

SSW1 contacted James through the school principal's telephone during one of his visits to collect educational handouts. She introduced him to the SSWs' song, discussed its message, and encouraged him to creatively respond to it in his own way. Through further communication with his mother, SSW1 discovered the family had recently acquired a laptop but hesitated to inform the school, fearing it might cause inconvenience. As a result, James continued to miss out on tele-education. To address this, SSW1 shared the video-song with the family, encouraging James to participate. Shortly after, James responded with a creative video of his own. With his mother's support, he presented traditional cooking recipes from his own culture

as though hosting a TV show. He also learned to sing the SSWs' song fluently in Greek and taught it to his siblings. Together, they performed this song along with five additional Greek songs during a video call with SSW1. For the first time, James also invited a classmate to his house, enabling him to connect to the online class using the newly acquired laptop.

To further empower James, SSW1 adapted the SSWs' song into a personalized version titled *James Has Talents*. She replaced the original lyrics with new ones inspired by their conversations during quarantine. The personalized song was crafted to reflect meaningful aspects of James' life and to project new inclusion opportunities for him:

(Verse A) James has talents, he cooks, he sings,
He looks after his siblings and loves them a lot.
(Chorus) When he goes to school, he happily learns,
During breaks, he plays and laughs with his classmates (X2).
(Verse B) He has made new friends, they play together every day
In the schoolyard and then in the neighborhood.

The first verse emphasized James' cooking and singing skills while highlighting his strong bond with his siblings. The second verse referenced his classmate's visit, suggesting the potential for closer friendships at school and in the neighborhood. The chorus placed James within a post-lockdown school environment, envisioning him learning, playing and laughing with his peers, thereby promoting inclusion.

The researcher performed the adapted song with her guitar, recording it in a video that SSW1 shared with James and his family during a video call. Watching the performance, James felt proud, realizing that SSW1 and the researcher had collaborated to musically portray elements of his life. His family reacted emotionally, celebrating James' talents, and acknowledging the support provided by the school and the PAR project.

When the school reopened after the lockdown, SSW1 presented the original and adapted versions of the song to James' class, with his consent. This placed James at the center of his classmates' attention, offering a stark contrast to the marginalization he experienced during quarantine. The class expressed admiration for James and inspired by the songs, they collaborated to create a new class song about school life during the pandemic. Using a rap beat found on YouTube, the students brainstormed lyrics together. SSW1 wrote all their suggestions on the whiteboard and organized them to ensure that every student had input in the song's creation. James actively and confidently participated in the process. The result was a rap song titled *Our School is the Best.*

We see each other again, what a pleasure, what a joy.

We have a canteen and spacious desks here.
We used to be a lot of kids, but there's only half of us left.
We used to play so well, we were a crazy bunch,
now there's only half of us left, and the craziness is gone.
Thursday today, gymnastics, and art, and after that comes math.
Physics starts next year and we're nervous.
Geography is coming up; the teacher will be yelling at us.
The school principal, who is also a funny man,
will teach us history and close the school again.
The school year will end, and we'll go to the islands.
We'll say goodbye to each other and see you next year.

Through their lyrics, the students expressed how the absence of half of their classmates due to COVID-19 affected their mood and play, highlighting the pandemic's impact on their social and emotional well-being. They also emphasized the return of the school schedule as a step toward normalcy and described their hopes for the next school year, looking forward to a brighter future. The title of the song reflected their perception of the school as a protective environment during a time of crisis. The students enthusiastically sang their song for many days, performing it in the classroom, hallways, and schoolyard. Upon the school principal's request, the lyrics were posted on the school's main bulletin board for everyone to see. Furthermore, SSW1 was invited to present the entire intervention at a teachers' meeting as an example of good practice in using music initiatives to promote James' educational inclusion and to strengthen the class group's resilience.

Axis 3. Changes observed, music and art contribution to these changes, impact on inclusion

The intervention helped compensate for James' exclusion from tele-education, providing him with opportunities that he had been previously deprived of. The SSWs' video-song inspired him to showcase his skills and cultural background through a cooking video, helping him overcome shyness and gain a sense of achievement. His cooking video not only demonstrated his talents but also communicated aspects of his culture. Additionally, the SSWs' song motivated him to practice Greek and explore more Greek songs. Through this process, James elaborated on his own interests, skills, and potential, taking initiatives to express himself. A clear indicator of his empowerment was his decision to invite a classmate over and return to school with newfound self-confidence, "exposing" himself to the class by sharing the personalized version of the song created for him by SSW1.

The researcher's video-song served as a way of celebrating James' abilities within his family, strengthening their trusting relationship with both SSW1 and the

school. It also opened the door for his classmates to get to know him better. Although James did not have direct exposure to the classroom, he was introduced in an alternative way, through the researcher's musical performance, which ensured positive impressions. As a result, his classmates began to approach him during break times to play together, and teachers emphasized what they had learned about him through the song. The attitude of the school system changed, shifting James from a position of social isolation and marginalization.

The focus on enhancing James' inclusion had a positive impact on the other students as well. It inspired the creation of an inclusive rap song that incorporated everyone's contributions, fostering resilience in the face of the pandemic. Through this song, the voices of the classroom were heard, addressing the emerging challenges of the pandemic (such as the absence of peers and negative moods), while also expressing the resources of strength (like the school schedule as a return to "normality" and hope for the future).

Axis 4. Reflection and proposals for the future of the case toward inclusion

It remained important for James to strengthen his bonds with his classmates through organized activities and to improve his Greek language skills through incentives tailored to his interests. An intercultural music and cooking project could be organized in which students (with or without the participation of their parents) could present songs and recipes from different traditions. James could demonstrate his cooking skills at school, giving others the opportunity to learn about aspects of his culture. By building on his strengths, such an activity could offer socio-educational benefits for all.

The SSWs' group emphasized the importance of using James' case as a role model to raise awareness among teachers about the educational inclusion of other migrant students. Although discriminatory attitudes were not prevalent at this school, room for improvement was identified, particularly during the pandemic. Having been sensitized by this intervention, the school principal could encourage the educational staff to take further inclusion initiatives in the future. Training sessions on how to use music and art in welcoming new students and teaching Greek to foreign language learners could also be organized.

"I'm well for you"

Axis 1. Social isolation and marginalization challenges faced by the target student

Lucas, an 8-year-old student attending the 2nd grade of a mainstream primary school in a rural town, had chronic heart disease, and had recently been diagnosed with moderate intellectual disability. Due to his regular surgeries and

hospitalizations, he was often absent from school and had significant learning gaps. He had not developed bonds with his classmates, and his teachers kept their distance, disagreeing with his attendance at a mainstream school and finding it difficult to meet his needs. Lucas repeatedly expressed to SSW2 that he felt unwelcome and unaccepted at school, and there was ongoing conflict between his family and the teachers. Despite efforts by SSW2 and the school principal to enhance his educational inclusion, the rift in the family-teacher relation and his feelings of rejection could not be resolved. Lucas had to be hospitalized again for one month during the lockdown, in complete isolation, and was unable to participate in tele-education. The family then decided to enroll him in a special education school at the beginning of the next school year, following the recommendation of the special education needs assessment committee.

Axis 2. Integration of music and art into systemic intervention to achieve meaningful goals toward inclusion

SSW2 maintained regular phone contact with Lucas' mother during his hospitalization to provide support but was not allowed to communicate directly with the student. When he returned home from the hospital, he expressed the wish to communicate with SSW2. Shortly after, they connected via video call in an emotional atmosphere. SSW2 presented the SSWs' video-song, dedicating to Lucas in the presence of his mother. She told him that she had kept him in her thoughts while singing in the video and that she "had not forgotten him" during his time in hospital. She then asked him to sing the song together, knowing this would bring him joy, as he liked music and often expressed himself through singing.

They began to sing, but when they reached the lyric *We'll be back at school, things will be as they were*, Lucas reacted with discomfort, stating that he would not meet her at school because his mother had arranged for him to enroll in another school. SSW2 then replaced the word "school" with the word "park", re-sang the lyric as *We'll meet in the park, things will be as they were,* and proposed they meet in the park once he fully recovered. The student seemed relieved by the lyric substitution and looked forward to meeting SSW2 in the park. He even expressed his wish to invite the school principal, who he felt close to, to their meeting.

Lucas then spontaneously started improvising a song with his own pop melody, rhythm, and lyrics, as a response to SSW2's song-message:

I'm touched that you haven't forgotten me.
I'm touched by everything you have done.
That's why I'm well. I'm well for you.
And you should know that whatever you need, I will be there for you.

His voice was melodic, and his performance was expressive. The lyrics reflected his emotional depth and acknowledgment of SSW2's support. Particularly the phrase *I'm well for you* could be interpreted in two ways: "I'm well thanks to you", and "I am well to see you being well too", reflecting the genuine reciprocal relationship that had developed between them.

Building on the message of Lucas' spontaneous song, SSW2 assured him she would be by his side during the transition to the special education school. She reflected positively on the change, stating that Lucas' talents and inclinations would have room to be expressed in the new school, where he would experience a meaningful school life and holistic care. Both the student and his mother appeared comforted. The intervention concluded after this one remote meeting, as the student needed rest. However, they scheduled another meeting in the park later in the summer, with SSW2 committing to ensure the school principal would be present.

Axis 3. Changes observed, music and art contribution to these changes, impact on inclusion.

Although it was a one-off intervention, it sought to provide the student and his mother emotional support, safety, and stability within a fluid life context of distress and transitions characterized by burdened family climate due to multiple hospitalizations, conflict with teachers, complete alienation from school during quarantine, and forthcoming enrollment in the special education school. The SSWs' video-song was tangible proof of SSW2's interest in the student, sealing the emotional closeness that existed between them and acting as a counterbalance of optimism and hope against the prevailing negative mood in the family. It was also a stimulus that, because it was musical, fell within Lucas' interests and activated him in the lockdown despite his aggravated state of health.

The SSWs' song had unexpected effects that unfolded gradually. The lyric *We'll be back at school* brought to the surface the student's difficult feelings about changing school. This required sensitive handling. Rather than initiating a detailed discussion that could have overwhelmed Lucas, SSW2 chose to use lyric substitution, instilling hope for the future and suggesting a feasible meeting in the park. Indicative of the student's encouragement was that he expressed immediate relief, requested the presence of the school principal at the meeting and proceeded to a spontaneous song's improvisation to dedicate it to SSW2.

Lucas' song highlighted the relationship with SSW2 as a source of strength during crisis, which was differentiated from the feelings of school alienation and rejection he was experiencing. It also gave SSW2 the opportunity to positively reframe his transition to the new school and provide hopeful feedback for the future, assuring of her continued support and the new school's ability to pay special attention to his talents and interests within a caring environment. Although Lucas'

inclusion in the mainstream school was not possible, the intervention acted as a counterbalance to his previous negative feelings and helped bridge the gap toward a more promising future at his new school.

Axis 4. Reflection and proposals for the future of the case toward inclusion

SSW2 should take specific actions to ensure the expectations she raised with Lucas and his mother are not disappointed. First, she should fulfill her promise to meet him at the park, ensuring the participation of the school principal, while explaining the special significance of the meeting: Lucas would be able to disengage from his old school by saying goodbye to the two most supportive figures before transitioning to his new school life. SSW2 should also lay the groundwork for a smooth transition by informing the new school's social service about Lucas' background and his previous traumatic school experiences. She could also suggest the use of a welcoming song on his first day to help him feel familiar with the new environment and school staff.

The SSWs' group considered it crucial for SSW2 to communicate Lucas' musical talent and his ability to express thoughts and feelings through singing to the new school. Lucas could present songs and musical improvisations as a means of fostering positive interactions within the class group. The special education staff could organize music-based school and community activities, with his active participation, in an environment of acceptance, cooperation, and recognition of his abilities. This would serve as a remedy for his past traumatic school experiences. It was also noted that SSW2 would need to gradually help Lucas with emotional separation as he adjusted to the new context.

"Spring resources"

Axis 1. Social isolation and marginalization challenges faced by the target student

SSW3 did not focus on one student's case because she was working in a mainstream primary school attended exclusively by Roma students who faced massive educational exclusion during quarantine. The school remained without a principal due to a prolonged sick leave, and there was no provision to fill the vacancy in time, nor was any support provided to teachers for the organization of an effective tele-education system. Even if that had been the case, most students would still not have been able to participate due to the lack of technological equipment and their families' unpreparedness to support distance learning. The abrupt disconnection from school was perceived by Roma students and their families as a sign of disregard and indifference to their educational needs. Teachers similarly experienced feelings of abandonment and devaluation, discovering that

there was no provision to meet their increased needs, even in a time of crisis. They worked in an overburdened school, which the local community considered substandard, without knowing how to meet their role demands in these circumstances.

Axis 2. Integration of music and art into systemic intervention to achieve meaningful goals for the case

SSW3 was mobilized to bring change to a situation that seemed to be a stalemate for all systems involved. First, she gave interviews to local media to publicize the SSWs' video-song and foreshadow the intervention that would follow. She then created an informal Facebook group and invited 18 student families with internet access to watch the video-song there. Additionally, she phoned 13 more families and sang the song to them live, encouraging them to learn it and share it with others she could not reach. Soon, the song became known throughout the Roma settlement and was sung by children and families across neighborhoods.

Inspired by the song's lyrics, teachers created educational activities and shared them in the Facebook group to maintain contact with students. Based on the lyric *all creation will see the sun and will be smiling on us*, SSW3 encouraged group members to take pictures of nature or create drawings about spring, which had started to offer its light and flowers to creation, serving as resources of strength amid confinement. Student participation was limited, but the activity managed to motivate most teachers and foster optimism and hope. The images were curated by SSW3 into a collective collage entitled *Resources of a different spring.*

When the school reopened, intense school drop-out was observed, as this phenomenon predated and was exacerbated by the pandemic. Classrooms looked empty, with only a few students attending. The division of classes into rotating sub-classes further confused Roma families, complicating attendance. To address this issue, encourage students to return and foster resilience, SSW3 took the initiative to organize an inclusive inter-arts project. This was done in interdisciplinary collaboration with the arts teacher and a class teacher-choreographer, inspired by the video-song and the "spring collage". The project was held daily during school hours in the schoolyard to ensure social distancing, and any student who attended school could participate. News of the project spread quickly throughout the Roma settlement, prompting more and more students to return to school to take part in it.

The inter-arts project resulted in various artworks, such as a song cover in Romani, an adaptation of the song's lyrics to the melody of the Latin song *Que te la Pongo* by Garibaldi, and a music-dance performance featuring breakdance and cheerleading choreography accompanied by a student band and choir. Additionally, a "boat collage" incorporating the "spring collage" and portraits of the students was placed in a prominent spot at the school entrance. The momentum gained from the

project inspired teachers and students to create murals based on themes from the song's lyrics. Teachers were so motivated that they came to school after hours to paint the exterior walls, gradually building connections with Roma residents who approached them to help. Other residents passing by praised the teachers for their initiative and the visible changes at the school.

Utilizing the resources of the SSWs' group, SSW3 collaborated with another SSW from the PAR project, who was working in a school also attended by Roma students. The two schools connected via video call for an inter-school meeting. In the presence of their teachers, students presented the artworks they had created, inspired by the song, in an atmosphere filled with enthusiasm and pride.

Axis 3. Changes observed, music and art contribution to these changes, impact on inclusion

The intervention disrupted the school's "stagnation" during lockdown and addressed the feelings of disdain and abandonment experienced by both students and teachers, which perpetuated the distance between them. SSW3 focused on all school sub-systems. By using the song as a central tool, she managed to reach students even in the most remote shacks of the settlement. The spread of the song throughout the neighborhoods provided an emotional uplift to Roma residents. Families began changing their attitudes toward the school, expressing satisfaction that genuine interest was shown for their children, and that something meaningful was "offered" to them, making them feel happy and connected to the school. Carried along by the song's dynamic, teachers became active stakeholders in the endeavor. Their empowerment was evident as they created educational activities, took pictures of nature, and returned to school more alert and engaged, moving away from passivity and resignation.

The inter-arts project proved transformative, counteracting the school's underperformance caused by dropouts and fragmented attendance after the lockdown. It fostered resistance to fragmentation and brought a sense of continuity to the educational process. The SSWs' song permeated every aspect of the project, providing thematic coherence across activities, such as dance, music, collage, and murals. Students were given the opportunity to express themselves creatively through various art forms and took on roles aligned with their interests in an inclusive, safe, flexible, and collaborative context. The project not only kept them within the school but also attracted others who might not have returned otherwise, resulting in a 70% increase in school attendance.

The teachers did not revert to frustration but remained mobilized, actively participating in interdisciplinary art collaborations, taking initiatives to transform their school through murals, and establishing contact with Roma residents. Both students and teachers became active agents in changing the school environment and

climate. Their efforts were appreciated by members of the local community, who gradually moved away from stereotypes about the school being substandard. Furthermore, students were networked with peers from other schools through the song and their artworks, gaining recognition beyond their school's and community's boundaries through an inter-school online collaboration.

The intervention brought about systemic change at the school by reducing student dropout, improving the school climate, enhancing the sense of school belonging, and empowering both students and teachers. It also alleviated prejudices about the school's quality, strengthened its extroversion and openness, and improved relationships between the school, families, and the community. The perception of the school as marginalized was transformed through the activation of its stakeholders' collective power. Music and art served as the vehicle and catalyst for this transformative change.

Axis 4. Reflection and proposals for the future of the case toward inclusion

The school's systemic change emerged as an "opportunity in crisis" under the pressure of the pandemic. The challenge for the future was to ensure this transformation would not be temporary or fragmented but become an integral part of the school's strategy with long-term sustainability. Arts-based activities and interdisciplinary collaborations could be formally embedded within the curriculum. Additionally, a new inter-arts project focusing on the school's and the Roma settlement's history, actively involving Roma residents, could be implemented. Art-based collaborations with other schools and socio-cultural institutions in the community could also be systematized.

Nevertheless, the SSWs' group recognized that long-term change required essential state support, particularly in terms of funding and teacher empowerment. Presenting the inter-arts project to educational authorities could serve as an alternative and impactful way to request tangible support, raising awareness of the school's increased needs and the willingness of its stakeholders to engage creatively despite obstacles. Furthermore, having students and teachers publicize the intervention in local media could amplify their voices within the community, challenge prejudices, and exert further pressure on decision-makers.

Discussion

The research question is subsequently addressed for each case through synthesizing the key findings related to the sub-questions/research axes that guided the PAR project and linking them to theory. In the first case, the intervention contributed to the educational inclusion of James, a 10-year-old migrant student recently enrolled in the school, who experienced social withdrawal due to

difficulties in using the Greek language and integrating into the class group. His participation in tele-education was also limited compared to his classmates, as it was primarily through educational handouts. The intervention provided him with the opportunity to engage in at least one school activity during the lockdown, activating his creativity through the SSWs' video-song and connecting him with his skills and talents (Kelly, 2015). The student was empowered (Yadav, 2016) by taking initiatives such as cooking, video-making, socializing, and practicing Greek through singing. SSW1's lyrics and the researcher's video-song captured and highlighted his strengths in the context of his family and classroom (McFerran-Skewes, 2004), reinforcing his confidence (Laiho, 2004). Following the school's reopening, this experience inspired the creation of a class rap song, incorporating all students' "voices" (Messiou, 2013) and building their resilience during the pandemic (Netter, 2020; Park, 2020; UN, 2020). The intervention positively influenced how teachers and classmates approached James, leading to a shift from his marginal position at school (Schlippe & Schweitzer, 2016). It also underscored the need for teachers to raise awareness of the literacy and socialization needs of James and other migrant students, while promoting intercultural contact within the school and community through music and art.

In the second case, the intervention contributed to the educational inclusion of Lucas, an 8-year-old student with chronic illness, mental disability, unstable school attendance, and traumatic experiences of rejection at school, who had been hospitalized in isolation during the quarantine. His family had decided he would move to a special education school at the beginning of the next school year. By using the SSWs' video-song and dedicating it to the student, SSW2 provided him with emotional support (Huss, 2018a) in a safe context that aligned with his musical interests, during a period of family distress and pending changes in his school life. The lyrics of the song surfaced his feelings of discomfort (Sakamoto, 2014) regarding the mainstream school, while the SSW's on-the-spot lyric change (Lefevre, 2004) instilled hope for a face-to-face meeting in the park, attended by the school principal, as a symbolic farewell. The student expressed himself through an impromptu song (Baker, 2015), highlighting his relationship with SSW2 as a resource of strength and hope, inspiring her continued support. Although his inclusion in the mainstream school was not possible, the intervention proved beneficial for his smooth transition to the special education school (Huss, 2018a). It also demonstrated the importance of communicating his musical skills and interests to the new school, so that music-based initiatives could be applied as a remedial measure to his past experiences of exclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

In the third case, the intervention contributed to the educational inclusion of all students at a mainstream primary school attended exclusively by Roma children who faced massive educational exclusion during the quarantine, experiencing alienation and indifference, while their teachers felt abandoned by the state and

helpless. The SSWs' song, which spread throughout the settlement, uplifted the students and their families, fostering a sense of belonging to the school (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Inspired by the song, teachers were activated (Catterall & Waldorf, 1999), developed educational activities, and created a collective spring-themed collage using pictures of nature (Heinonen et al., 2019). Following the school's reopening, school dropout was addressed through the implementation of an inter-arts project (Dreeszen et al., 1999) inspired by the SSWs' song and the spring collage. The project was based on interdisciplinary collaboration (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006) and included song covers, dance, collage, and murals. It engaged every student returning to school, promoted teachers' involvement with Roma residents, and challenged stereotypes about the school being substandard. Through the inter-school artworks' presentation, the students were networked (Lubben et al., 2015) and received recognition beyond their region (Cologon, 2014). The school emerged from the margins by harnessing and unleashing the creative potential of its members. The intervention triggered systemic change at the school, which, although it emerged as an opportunity during a crisis, could also become part of the school's future strategy and a benchmark for advocating state support and strengthening the voices of the school stakeholders in the local community.

The three selected cases highlighted the pivotal role that music- and arts-based systemic social work interventions can play in enhancing the educational inclusion of socially isolated and marginalized students during COVID-19 and beyond. Reflecting Helguera's (2011) concept of social practice, the SSWs' video-song brought social issues to the forefront, ensuring wider visibility, and served as a "communicative act" that inspired interventions, shaping new relationships and realities of inclusion within educational communities. The interventions were carefully tailored by the SSWs and the researcher to meet the specific needs of each case, generating changes that spanned from the individual student and their family to the classroom, school, and broader community (Nissen, 2019; Whipple, 2015).

By integrating the arts with students' interests and addressing the unique challenges posed by the pandemic, the interventions effectively confronted exclusions, emphasized students' strengths, "voices," concerns, and emotions, while creating opportunities for future inclusion. As members of the SSWs' group, the practitioners reflected collectively on the interventions, proposed future actions, and enriched school social work practice. The combination of music, art, and systemic school social work within the PAR framework made a profound difference, achieving outcomes that might not have been possible through traditional social work methods (Sinding et al., 2014).

Conclusion

This article presented a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project conducted shortly after the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020. The project was led by the researcher in collaboration with 13 School Social Workers (SSWs) (co-researchers and interveners) from Greece and Cyprus. The SSWs performed and publicly promoted an original "quarantine video-song", titled *We've Not Forgotten You*, dedicated to all students who were off school during the lockdown. They then used the song as a tool in 15 tailor-made, arts-based, systemic interventions with students who were facing social isolation and marginalization, as well as with other members of their systems (class groups, peers, teachers, families, schools, and communities), to enhance educational inclusion.

Through the analysis of three selected cases, this study highlighted the contributions of interventions utilizing singing, songwriting, video-making, collage, and murals to foster inclusion on multiple levels: student empowerment; highlighting students' strengths within the family and classroom; evoking creative actions within class groups; shifting teachers' and peers' attitudes; providing emotional expression and support; facilitating smooth transitions to special education when mainstream inclusion is no longer feasible; strengthening the sense of school belonging; reducing school dropouts; establishing interdisciplinary and inter-school collaborations; and enhancing school-family-community relations.

The PAR project facilitated the collaboration between the SSWs and the researcher, as well as their reflection within the SSWs' group, to promote social change and innovative practice for educational inclusion. In the following school year (2020-2021), the SSWs developed the PAR project on their own initiative. With the researcher's discreet support, they organized the arts-based practices resulting from the first quarantine period, and, building on these, they created new interventions to meet the needs of the second quarantine, spreading music and art across the new schools where they were recruited. They even presented their fieldwork at scientific workshops, linking it to academia and thus empowering themselves professionally (Gosin et al., 2003; Greenwood & Levin, 2000).

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