Educational strategies to support the inclusion of displaced pupils from Ukraine in Italian schools

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The war in Ukraine caused a huge number of displaced people in a very short time. Amongst the refugees were many school-age children who needed to continue studying in the schools of the host countries. Host schools and teachers had to arrange inclusive strategies to integrate the displaced pupils. This study analysed the factors that facilitated the inclusion of displaced pupils from Ukraine in Italian schools during the first months of the war. We involved in the study 208 teachers from all Italian areas working at all school levels who welcomed 461 Ukrainian pupils in their classrooms. The teachers completed an online qualitative instrument in which they had the opportunity to describe their experience from a personal and a professional point of view. The findings revealed five main factors that affected the effectiveness of inclusion. On these bases, some educational guidelines are provided to support teachers and schools in arranging successful contexts and actions to welcome and include displaced children.

Introduction

To date, "millions of children and young people have fled Russia's invasion of Ukraine and arrived in the European Union" (EC, 2022:1). Since the 24th of February 2022, a huge number of people have suddenly had to leave their homes and towns to find safety in European countries. As stated in Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022, "these persons might benefit from temporary protection […] establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection" (EC, 2022:1).

Amongst those people, thousands of young pupils had to move to a new country to save their own lives and create conditions to rebuild a new everyday life. All displaced school-aged children and adolescents needed the possibility to "have a place in a school of the host country to enjoy their right to education" (EC, 2002:3).

In this paper, we present the factors that facilitated the inclusion of displaced pupils and the educational strategies carried out by Italian teachers to create comprehensive learning environments at all school levels. In particular, teachers were asked to describe their experience in welcoming Ukrainian pupils, underlining both personal and professional aspects. The study aimed to highlight the factors and strategies used throughout the different phases of inclusion in Italian classes. Teachers

told us how they included Ukrainian pupils from the initial days to progressive integration through the improvement of interactions between teachers and pupils, amongst Italian and Ukrainian pupils, and amongst teachers and pupils' Ukrainian families. Finally, the teachers explained how they supported the pupils' learning processes through both classroom activities scheduled during normal school hours and outside activities scheduled during "extended learning time" (Flecha, 2015) beyond school hours, perhaps in cooperation with sport clubs or educational associations.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical bases of this study are located at the intersection of intercultural and refugee education for children and adolescents who experienced sudden war situations with high levels of war-related stress. The displaced pupils from Ukraine experienced school contexts characterised by intercultural methods and approaches, so they could be considered migrants; at the same time, they were also refugees who experienced a sudden and stressful war situation. In addition, Ukrainian pupils maintained relationships with their schools in Ukraine, so the activities were a combination of on-site and online activities between Italian and Ukrainian classrooms (UNHCR, 2022b). There were frequent cross-border movements because "most participants (81%) expressed

their hope to return to their home communities as soon as possible. They were anxious to reunite with friends and family and worried about those who stayed behind. However, respondents highlighted a shared uncertainty about the future which impacted their ability to form secure long-term plans" (UNHCR, 2022a:3). In addition, 9% of respondents planned to move to another host country within the next month (UNHCR, 2022a).

From the teachers' point of view, teachers who had experiences of intercultural education in multicultural classes composed of pupils from diverse areas of the world noticed that the intercultural approaches and methods were not sufficient to address this particular situation. Consequently, it was necessary to blend and integrate the approaches from these different fields to develop new styles and methodologies. The EAC - DG Education and Culture, specifically the Working Group on Schools, organised a peer learning focus session on "Enhancing enrolment of displaced children from Ukraine in EU host country schools". During this session, which took place on December 7, 2022, one participant declared that "the Ukrainian refugees are, from one important point of view, completely different compared to what we are used to. Unlike the other refugees, they do not intend to stay in our countries, they are continuously hoping to go back home; this creates an entirely different attitude and motivation towards schooling" (comment during EAC working group on school – 07/12/2022).

Preconditions for an inclusive school

To ensure effective inclusive processes, it is necessary to define the concept of inclusion and indicate the main issues faced by an inclusive environment.

Concerning the notion of inclusion, (UNESCO 2000) specified that inclusive education aims to remove all barriers to education and ensure the participation of those vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation. Additionally, according to Booth and Ainscow (2014), inclusion in education should be characterised by the following points: equal valuing of all pupils and staff; increasing the participation of all pupils in education; reducing barriers to learning and participation for all pupils, not just those with disabilities or with special education needs; considering the differences amongst pupils as a resource for learning, not a problem to be overcome; increasing the role of schools in building communities and their values; cultivating mutually supportive relationships between schools and communities; and recognising that inclusion in education is an aspect of inclusion in society.

Strategies for enhancing inclusive processes involve a range of issues that can be grouped into the following nine areas. Pedagogical issues refer to difficulties in accepting the rules of a new educational system, adapting to new learning activities, and mastering learning materials (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Psychological issues concern difficulties in concentration, socialisation, pronounced anxiety, and sensitivity (de Boer & Kuijper, 2020). Social issues are related to potential improper conduct with peers and teachers, relationships with other families, and problems of adaptation to socially accepted rules and norms. Cultural issues involve a possible lack of knowledge of cultural specificities, values, societal norms, and cultural differences as well as fear of losing their own culture (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2006). Linguistic issues are linked to a lack of skills in understanding and speaking the host language. Issues related to curricula can involve differences between schools' programmes (Koehler & Schneider, 2019). Family engagement is associated with parents' involvement in school activities (Hamilton, 2013; Naidoo, 2015; Walker, 2014; Serna & Martínez, 2019). Teachers' readiness issues refer to the level of teachers' preparation to work in multicultural contexts and how to arrange courses to enable teachers to design effective learning environments for all children (Glazzard, 2011). Ultimately, school readiness issues involve the availability of resources, policies, and systemic support (Round et al., 2015; Chiner & Cardona, 2013; Wodcock & Woolfson, 2019).

Inclusive strategies for pupils in migrant contexts

When people migrate, they bring with them behaviours, ideologies, customs, and knowledge that are deeply altered in the new processes of living in a foreign country. Migration generates social and cultural transformations and therefore contributes to the social and cultural transformation of the migrant population.

Several studies (Taylor, 2008; Block et al., 2014; Grigt, 2017; Hilt, 2016; Vogel & Stock, 2018) have focused on the analysis of inclusive strategies through direct immersion in mainstream classes. However, this policy may have an inverse effect on exclusion. Zembylas (2011:155) stated that "without tailored support, language and content integrated learning, mentors, limited or non-existent multilingual language assistance, cooperation with parents and local communities, this policy of 'sink or swim' lays the ground for the emergence of zones of exclusions".

The culture of migrant children is inextricably linked to their mother language. Language can be defined as a special product of culture, a crucial sign system that fulfils three functions: communicative (communication), cognitive (cognition) and pragmatic (practical impact on the world). Kakos (2022) analysed the impact of multilingual teaching assistants (MTAs) on the inclusion of migrant and refugee pupils and demonstrated how MTAs engage in truth and active communication with migrant pupils and have a positive impact on inclusion.

Migrants may have a different attitude towards a foreign culture. One of the radical responses to forced migration is dislike of the hosting culture and the new way of life. The sociocultural adaptation of migrant children is a complex, multistage process. Migrant children face cultural differences and the possibility of not being accepted by the hosting society. Inclusive class and peer collaboration may mitigate this process.

Li et al. (2022) demonstrated that peer involvement together with class management by teachers has a positive impact on inclusion and "that collective integration is a key mediator that can facilitate the alleviation of adolescent anxiety" (p. 38). In the same study, parents' involvement and communication were associated with the likelihood of reducing anxiety and increasing inclusion.

Enhancing the inclusion of migrant children also depends on the environment and access to educational sources and technologies that support migrant children in overcoming linguistic and social barriers. The use of technologies ensures migrant children's involvement in educational processes by creating opportunities to participate equally in class activities (Scifo et al., 2020).

The use of digital devices represents further strategies for improving migrant pupils' inclusion (McGill et al., 2014). For instance, augmented reality can offer many opportunities to support inclusive activities in classrooms (Pellas et al. 2018; Cabero-Almenara et al., 2019). In addition, the lack of standardisation of learning experiences (Chen et al., 2017) and the availability of a wide range of applications (Kamphuis, Barsom, Schijven, & Christoph, 2014; Toled & Sanchez, 2017) allow teachers to adapt their programmes and methods for pupils to become more inclusive.

Inclusive strategies for refugee and asylum-seeking pupils

For refugees and displaced pupils, migration means facing additional issues and potential barriers. One of the greatest barriers to inclusion is post-war trauma, which involves psychological and behavioural aspects and the desire to return as soon as possible. The difference between migrant children and refugee/displaced pupils from war contexts is the higher level of vulnerability.

Taylor and Sidhu (2012) showed the school's role in including refugee pupils by reconciling and increasing the sense of belonging and adaptation process. Kaysılı et al. (2019) focused on the difficulties that teachers and school administrators faced in working with Syrian displaced pupils. The difficulties were language diversity, instructional activities linked to the language barrier, lack of parental involvement

because of poverty and lack of cultural sources, social status anxiety linked with poverty, and problems balancing instructional activities between refugees and natives. Furthermore, this study introduced a new barrier, 'blaming each other', as the authors explained: "Refugee parents defined their positions through discriminations and marginalisation within the society that they witnessed and the blaming and exclusion that their children were exposed to. Native parents stated that refugee pupils are threatening and dangerous to their children. School directors claimed that the refugees do not care about their children and education" (p. 116).

Similarly, Kelcey and Chatilla (2020) focused on the role of school as a system for the inclusion of refugee children. In the context of the inclusion of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the authors analysed teachers' and principals' views on inclusion. The findings were about the negative impact of "bureaucratic proliferation and the ad hoc policy-making" (p. 14) and the limitation of financial aid. Ndijuye (2019) stressed the difficulties in language instruction within a study about the inclusion of refugee children in Tanzania. For these reasons, refugee and displaced pupils need an inclusive teaching model with specific characteristics in comparison with learning environments that welcome economic migrant children.

Teachers' role

Working with children from different cultural backgrounds requires considerable effort. In addition, working with displaced children requires high preparation and a high level of awareness because of shock events.

Teachers are an essential component of culturally responsive education (Gay, 2002). Creating a classroom atmosphere where pupils' cultural background is recognised as a critical education component can help to create the conditions for pupils to feel valued and belong to the class community (Brown, 2004): "For refugee children, schools are experienced as the most important place of contact with members of local host communities, playing an important role in establishing relationships supportive of integration" (Ager & Strang, 2008: 172). Regarding the psychosocial needs of refugees, Anis et al. (2021) showed that supportive teachers significantly impact the quality of education. Furthermore, they demonstrated the importance of the welcoming role of the school environment. Walick and Sullivan (2015) noted that if teachers understand the cultural background of migrant and refugee pupils, it will be easier to respond to their educational needs and, consequently, develop inclusiveness. A careful design of educational activities in harmony with the culture of pupils represents the principal condition for successful inclusion (Miles & Bailey-McKenna, 2017; McDermott & Varenne, 1995).

Cooc and Kim (2023) found that teachers who have more refugee pupils in their classes are "more likely to adapt their teaching to the cultural diversity of the pupils and ensure that pupils with and without migrant backgrounds worked together, raise awareness of cultural differences amongst pupils, and reduce ethnic stereotyping" (p. 5). Additionally, the authors showed that teachers with refugee pupils tend to have more intercultural preparation and more desire for additional training.

Research design

Context

Before presenting the aims and the research questions, it is necessary to describe the context of Italian schools. Italian legislation requires that all pupils with any kind of educational need must be integrated into regular classes. The guidelines for welcoming and integrating foreign pupils (MIUR, 2014) state that all minors have the right to be included in public schools completely free of charge. Minors can be enrolled both at the beginning of the school year and throughout the year. Teachers must

create the conditions to integrate and include minors in the most effective way.

The first documents regarding how to welcome Ukrainian pupils were issued in March 2022 (MIUR, 2022a; 2022b). The first document was issued at the beginning of March and was entitled "Accoglienza scolastica degli studenti ucraini esuli" (How to welcome the displaced Ukrainian pupils). It addressed the initial emergency situations of arranging, for example, psychological and linguistic support. The second document was issued at the end of March and was entitled "Studenti profughi dall'Ucraina" (Displaced pupils from Ukraine). It outlined new forms of intercultural education in the context of the emergency situation. The third document was issued on April 15 (MIUR, 2022c). This document aimed to describe how schools and teachers should address the integration and inclusion of Ukrainian pupils. It indicated rules for how to manage the administrative issues linked to the enrolment of Ukrainian children, write personal development plans for each pupil to establish the most effective educational strategies, and assess pupils to ensure the validity of their educational paths.

Aims and research questions

This study aimed to investigate the educational strategies carried out by teachers to support the inclusion of displaced pupils from Ukraine in Italian schools. The overall research question can be expressed as follows: what were the factors that sustained the effectiveness of displaced pupils' inclusion? Further subquestions were identified: (a) What were the strategies used by teachers throughout the different phases of pupils' inclusion in Italian classes? (b) What were the strategies used by teachers to include displaced pupils with specific learning difficulties and difficulties linked to social, cultural or economic disadvantages and disabilities (SEND)? (c) What were the most successful educational actions carried out inside and outside the classroom? (d) Were the teachers prepared to establish inclusive strategies to face an emergency situation?

Instrument, procedure, and participants

To answer the research questions, a qualitative research design was chosen. It was fundamental that teachers felt free to explain their experiences with displaced pupils in depth. For these reasons, the researchers chose a qualitative option to allow teachers to emphasise difficulties and opportunities. The procedure was based on a questionnaire composed of seven open-ended questions. The questions were based on the OECD Report on refugee education integration models (Cerna, 2019). This report stated that "successful and meaningful inclusion of displaced learners in quality education programmes is not only about enabling them to learn. It also requires action to address their social and emotional needs alongside their academic support needs" (EC, 2022:4). The report outlined three main dimensions:

- learning needs (e.g., help children have meaningful and relevant classroom experiences, overcome barriers to learning such as the language of schooling, catch up on missed academic content, and adjust to the new education system and curricula);
- social needs (e.g., help children communicate with others, including nondisplaced children, feel a sense of belonging and bonding, and develop a strong personal identity);
- emotional needs (e.g., help children feel safe, cope with separation, loss, grief, and trauma by restoring self-awareness, self-control, and build their interpersonal skills).

On these bases, the questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section included variables focused on the demographic and school/educational characteristics of the participants: gender, age, teaching experience, role (class or special education teacher), school level, Italian area, number of pupils involved, and teaching experiences with pupils

Table 1

Demographic and school/educational characteristics of participants.

	Participants	%
Gender		
Male	11	5.29
Female	195	93.75
I don't wish to say	2	.96
Age		
…−29	6	2.88
30–39	21	10.11
40–49	61	29.33
50–59	92	44.23
60-…	28	13.45
Teaching experience (years)		
…−9	38	18.36
10–19	49	23.67
20–29	68	32.85
30–39	43	20.77
40-…	10	4.35
Teacher's role		
Class teacher	184	88.41
Special education teacher	27	11.59
School level		
Kindergarten	12	5.79
Primary (grades 1–5)	71	33.82
Lower secondary (grades 6–8)	76	36.71
Upper secondary (grades 9–13)	49	23.68
Italian area		
Northern area (Emilia-Romagna, Friuli, Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte, Trentino, Valle d'Aosta, Veneto)	151	72.46
Central area (Lazio, Marche, Toscana, Umbria)	25	12.08
Southern area and islands (Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sardegna, Sicilia)	32	15.46
Number of Pupils per area		
Northern area	286	62.04
Central area	76	16.48
Southern area and islands	99	21.48
total	461	
Number of Pupils with SEND		
economic, social and linguistic disadvantages	2	
SpLD	3	
Mild disability	3	
Severe disability	3	
total	11	
Experiences with pupils coming from war areas		
Never	159	76.33
Sometimes	41	19.81
Often	3	1.44
Every school year	5	2.42

coming from war areas. The second section included seven questions focused on the research subquestions listed previously:

1 Can you tell us how you managed the initial days when you welcomed the Ukrainian pupil(s) into your classroom/school?
2 After the initial phase of welcoming, can you tell us how you supported the integration of the Ukrainian pupil(s) into your classroom/school?
3 What educational strategies have you used to support the learning development of the Ukrainian pupil(s)?
4 Have you had the opportunity to work with Ukrainian pupil(s) with special needs (SpLD and/or disability)?
5 Has your school promoted outside educational activities scheduled after usual school hours? Has your school contacted external associations?
6 Were you able to effectively include the Ukrainian pupil(s)? Did you feel prepared to face an intercultural emergency situation?

The questionnaire was completed online by 208 teachers. As shown in Table 1, the participants were mainly female class teachers distributed amongst all ages, teaching experiences and school levels. Most teachers (76.33%) had no previous experience with pupils coming from war areas. There were 461 Ukrainian pupils who were distributed mainly in the northern regions of Italy. Eleven pupils had special needs. At the beginning of May, 105,516 Ukrainian citizens and 41,454 minors had requested temporary protection in Italy. At the same time, the Italian schools enrolled 22,788 Ukrainian pupils distributed in all Italian regions. The chi-square goodness-of-fit test revealed that the sample of pupils involved in this study followed the distribution of Italian cases ($\chi^2 = 5.415$ with df 2 $p < .067$). Therefore, we can state that the sample was representative of the population of Ukrainian pupils enrolled in Italian schools.

The qualitative–quantitative data analysis procedure

The coding process was split into three main steps based on grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The first stage is called 'open coding' and is defined as an analytic process aimed at identifying the dimensions and the properties of the concepts (codes) included in the text: "In this phase, the text is first read and reread to identify relevant parts of the text relating to the research questions" (De Smet et al., 2019:5). The second stage is called 'axial coding'. In this
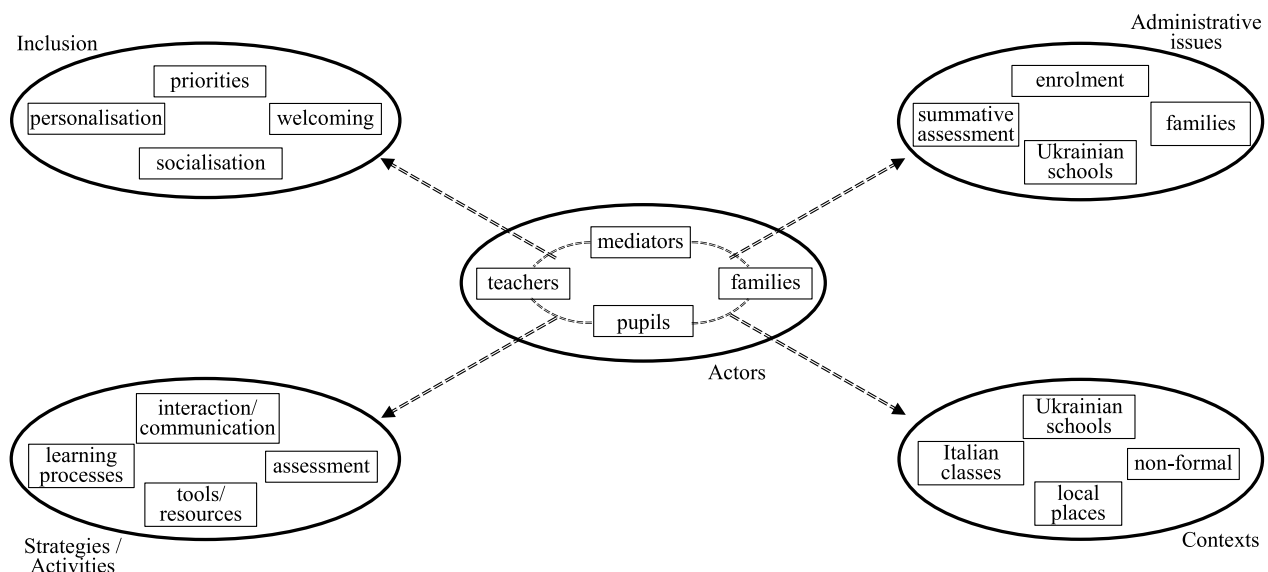

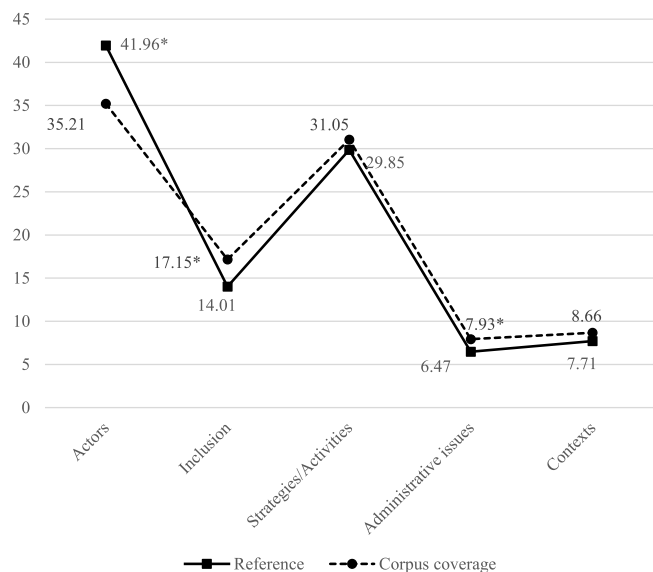**Fig. 1.** Map of categories and sub-categories.

Fig. 2. Percentage comparison of category references and corpus coverage.

phase, the researchers divide the codes into categories and subcategories "in order to refine the first initial classification of codes" (De Smet et al., 2019:5). In the last stage, named 'selective coding', the researchers integrate all codes and categories, "interpreting the data, selecting the main categories and identifying the connections amongst categories and codes" (Parmigiani et al., 2020:114).

We also performed quantitative analyses (Green, 2001; Srnka & Koeszegi, 2007) "by presenting the data in the form of a table or figure, a joint display, that simultaneously arrays the quantitative and quantitative results" (Guetterman et al., 2015:555). In the following tables, included into the supplementary materials, we indicate the categories, the subcategories, the code occurrences, and the percentage of respondents who cited that code as well as some meaningful sentences written by the teachers involved in the study. Moreover, to investigate the significance of the main categories, we examined the potential significant differences between the percentages associated with the number of references of each category and the corpus coverage of the same category. Finally, we completed chi-square analyses to underscore the differences between the demographic and school/educational

characteristics of the participants, considering school level, teaching experience, and teachers' age as variables. Specifically, we calculated the number of teachers who mentioned a specific code. Then, we analysed the value of the Pearson's chi-square test and the value of adjusted standardised residuals (ASR) to pinpoint the specific differences amongst the groups of teachers since the contingency tables were not 2 × 2.

Data analysis and findings

Map of categories affecting the effectiveness of displaced pupils' inclusion

The qualitative data analysis highlighted five main categories: Actors; Inclusion; Strategies/Activities; Administrative issues; and Contexts. Fig. 1 presents the map of these categories included in the ellipses. Then, each category was further divided into subcategories included in rectangles inside the ellipses.

From a quantitative point of view, we calculated the percentage of references linked to each category, and we estimated the percentage of the corpus covered by all references included in each category. In this way, we could appreciate the significance and weight of the five principal categories within the study. Fig. 2 shows the results. The chi-square analysis revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the percentage levels connected to the categories 'Actors', 'Inclusion', and 'Administrative issues.' The χ^2 value was 58.258 with df 4 and $p < .000$. The ASRs were -7.1, $+4.2$, and $+2.7$, respectively. The critical value of z for ASR in a two-tailed test (5 × 2) is 2.49.

Actors

The central category of the entire analysis is represented by 'Actors', which was cited by 192 teachers with 1115 references (35.21% of corpus coverage). As shown in Fig. 1, the protagonists of the displaced pupils' inclusion in the Italian schools were pupils, teachers, families, and mediators, considered in this study as subcategories. Moreover, Figs. 3a and 3b specify the main codes and subcodes related to each actor and the connections with the other categories. Fig. 3a details the main codes and subcodes of the left side of the map, including the 'Inclusion' and 'Strategies/Activities' categories, which are the categories with the largest corpus coverage after the Actors category (17.15% and 31.05%, respectively).
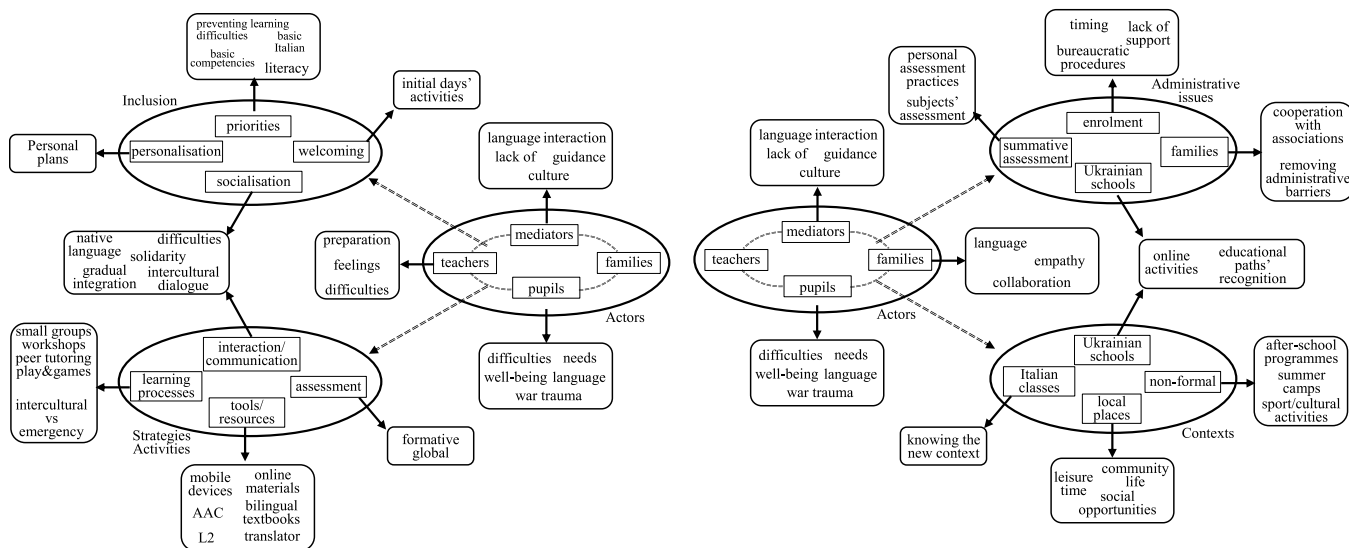

Fig. 3. a– Map of codes and sub-codes: Actors, Inclusion, and Strategies/Activities
b– Map of codes and sub-codes: Actors, Administrative issues, and Contexts

Pupils

The 'Pupils' subcategory was cited by 115 teachers (55.29% with 275 references). Teachers reported large amounts of data regarding the pupils' approach to life in the school context. The researchers decided to split this subcategory into five main codes: Emotions, Needs, War Trauma, Well-being, and Difficulties. Table 2 (supplementary materials) shows the codes and subcodes included into this category.

A total of 19.71% of teachers (58 references) talked about pupils' emotions. Some teachers underlined the emotions linked to the pupils' status: 'The pupils were disoriented and partly scared and hungry.' In contrast, some teachers reported serenity and the pupils' relief about being in a safe place: 'The pupil was always peaceful and joyful to be in Italy and in our school context.'

The code 'Needs' (11.06% of teachers with 23 references) described how teachers tried to understand the pupils' needs. Pupils needed to have personal time and activities, see parents when they felt unsafe, and have specific care and supplemental attention to be included by their Italian peers: 'The principal need was to make him feel good with his mates'. Additionally, some teachers reported the pupils' need to express what they had 'inside' through drawings, showing pictures, and telling friends what happened to them: 'A pupil shared pictures of his destroyed town with his mates.'

Another important code is represented by 'War trauma'. Thirty-two teachers (38 references) noticed symptoms of traumatic status experienced by the pupils. Some pupils did not talk about themselves: 'The pupil did not mention anything concerning his family situation after saying what happened to him'. Other pupils had emotional crises (weeping, anxiety attacks, aggressiveness, etc.): 'There was behaviour of justified discomfort expressed with anxiety and inconsolable weeping to teachers.' In some cases, teachers described the pupils' experiences to explain the harshness of their experiences: 'We had moments of high pressure with one child. He was taken from the rubble. He still had signs on his face and body'. The chi-square analysis showed that lower secondary teachers (ASR -2.7) encountered fewer situations of pupils with war trauma ($\chi^2 = 10.894$ with df 3 and $p < .012$). In fact, 29.58% and 33.34% of this code's coverage was cited by primary teachers and upper secondary teachers, respectively. Additionally, teachers with a high level of seniority (40 years and more, ASR $+2.5$) encountered more situations of pupils with war trauma ($\chi^2 = 12.289$ with df 4 and $p < .015$).

Twenty-seven teachers (29 references) explained activities aimed at improving the pupils' well-being. Teachers used all their efforts to 'make this experience less traumatic by trying to think about school time as a 'chance for wellness' through the warm and welcoming environment created with the help and empathy of the school children: 'The children took care of their new mate; they were collaborative, welcoming and respectful.'

The code 'Difficulties' highlighted some critical aspects concerning complications that some pupils faced in their relationship with teachers. This code was split into subcodes named 'Improper conduct', 'Lack of integration' and 'Linguistic barriers.' Thirty-three teachers (46 references) reported some improper conduct, probably linked with the difficult emotional status of the pupils: 'The pupil was very introverted. He didn't show any interest in school activities', and 'The pupil had moments of deep sadness. She didn't have any interaction with peers.' Ultimately, some teachers underlined some communication difficulties: 'A pupil suddenly stopped doing her activity because she got frustrated by her communication difficulty'. The quantitative analyses revealed a statistically significant difference regarding the upper secondary teachers (ASR -2.9), who declared a lower level of difficulty with the pupils they welcomed in their classes ($\chi^2 = 9.819$ with df 3 and $p < .021$). In fact, 50.28% of this code's coverage was cited by primary teachers. Additionally, the oldest teachers (more than 60 years old, ASR $+3.2$) declared having faced more difficulties than the other teachers ($\chi^2 = 10.561$ with df 4 and $p < .032$).

Teachers

The 'Teachers' subcategory was cited by 180 teachers (86.54%), with 206 references. This subcategory was composed of three main codes: Preparation, Difficulties and Feelings. Table 3 (supplementary materials) shows data and sentences related to this category.

The 'Preparation' code was cited by 82 teachers (93 times). Only 18 teachers felt prepared to face such a complex emergency situation, and 42 teachers declared that they were totally unprepared. Twenty-two teachers had the opportunity to follow ongoing courses: 'I attended courses to obtain materials to be used in the initial phase of welcoming pupils into the classroom.'

Thirty-six teachers faced some forms of difficulties. Specifically, 20 of them (with 26 references) indicated 'Linguistic barriers' as the main obstacle to be overcome. Almost all teachers reported some feelings they experienced. There were 333 references categorised as positive (many teachers expressed more than one feeling). Some examples are enriching (37), touching (28), engaging (17) and challenging (17). Furthermore, there were 143 negative feelings, such as difficulty (26) and frustration (11). Ultimately, 37 teachers (40 references) underlined the importance of the contribution of experienced teachers in special education and Italian as a second language.

Families

The 'Families' subcategory was cited by 49.52% of teachers (126 references). They stated that Ukrainian families represented a key factor for supporting pupils' inclusion. This subcategory included three main codes: Language, Empathy and Collaboration. Table 4 (supplementary materials) shows the codes and subcodes included into this category.

The 'Language' code was cited by 33 teachers (41 times), underscoring the importance of communication with pupils' families to sustain the inclusion process, which was facilitated, in some cases, by a parent or a relative who had lived for a long time in Italy and was able to speak Italian: 'Fortunately, the pupil's father could speak Italian.' From a quantitative point of view, this code revealed a statistically significant difference regarding the school level as a variable. Chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 33.981$ with df 3 and $p < .000$) showed that primary teachers (ASR $+5.6$) considered this code particularly important compared to the scores of lower secondary (ASR -3.4) and upper secondary teachers (ASR -2.7). A total of 75.76% of this code's coverage was cited by primary teachers. The code 'Empathy' was cited by 9 teachers 11 times. The main focus was to create a strong interpersonal relationship with pupils' families to understand their needs and offer the ability to cooperate. The code 'Collaboration' (48 teachers for 61 references) indicated the level of collaboration with families. Forty-one teachers (with 54 references) stated that they had good levels of collaboration with Ukrainian families: 'Practical approaches were chosen in close relationship with the family to understand the pupil's needs.' Only 7 teachers (with 7 references) experienced a lack of collaboration.

Mediators

The 'Mediators' subcategory was cited by 130 teachers (62.51%) with 164 references and included five main codes: Language, Interaction, Lack of mediators, Guidance and Culture. Table 5 (supplementary materials) shows the data related to the codes included into this category. Mediators were represented by specific professionals appointed by local schools/institutions or volunteers able to speak Ukrainian. Mediators played a crucial role in facilitating inclusive processes since they were able to establish a strong relationship between teachers, displaced pupils, and their families. Mediators also fostered the initial literacy of the displaced pupils in the Italian language and helped Italian teachers and pupils understand the Ukrainian language. The code 'Interaction' underlined the relevance of the mediator in building meaningful relationships amongst the actors: 'In the interaction with the family, the

support of the cultural mediator was crucial.' The code 'Lack of mediators' had great relevance since 31 teachers (37 references) complained about the total absence of this important professional: 'The school requested language and cultural mediators, but they were not assigned, and the school didn't receive any support.' Some teachers protested because the number of hours allocated for the cultural mediator was not enough: 'We used the assistance of a cultural mediator for only 15h, which was completely insufficient'. Chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 7.302$ with df 2 and $p < .026$) revealed that primary teachers (ASR+2.3) complained about the lack of mediators more than upper secondary teachers (ASR −2.3); 54.84% of this code's coverage was cited by primary teachers.

Inclusion

The second category represents the initial aims and activities implemented by the teachers to welcome and progressively integrate the displaced pupils in the Italian schools. This category was cited by 163 teachers with 191 references (17.15% of corpus coverage). This category included four subcategories: Welcoming, Priorities, Socialisation and Personalisation. The subcategory 'Welcoming' (cited by 59 teachers with 76 references) refers to the activities carried out during the first days to welcome the new pupils: 'She had been welcomed by teachers and mates in a joyful way. Since the first moments, we tried to make her feel at ease through games and socialising activities to include her peacefully'. The quantitative analysis showed that primary teachers (ASR 4.1) organised many welcoming activities compared to the other school levels ($\chi^2 = 17.972$ with df 3 and $p < .000$).

This subcategory was connected with 'Priorities', which was cited by 118 teachers (154 references) and indicated the most important things to do during the first weeks, particularly developing basic skills in the Italian language to develop interaction and socialisation with teachers and peers (83 teachers with 117 references): 'The priority was to give them instruments to socialise and express their needs so that they could use the new words in everyday life.' The subcategory 'Socialisation' represented a close consequence of the previous one. This subcategory was cited by 135 teachers (179 references) and included activities for gradual integration into classes (33 teachers with 46 references), especially being supported from a linguistic point of view by people (friends, relatives, etc.) who had lived in Italy for a long time: 'We had valuable help from a Moldavian pupil who spoke Ukrainian.'

The 'Personalisation' subcategory indicated all activities aimed at creating specific and tailored educational paths for displaced pupils to facilitate their learning development. In particular, 60 teachers (70 references) wrote personal development plans (PDPs): 'We wrote a personal plan based on the competencies' pupil underlining compensatory tools and dispensatory measures.'

Strategies/activities

The 'Strategies/Activities' category was the most important category together with Actors. This category was cited by 185 teachers (with 793 references and 31.05% of corpus coverage) and included four subcategories: Assessment, Tools/Resources, Learning processes, and Interaction/Communication (shared with the 'Inclusion' category).

Starting from a technical point of view, as shown in Table 6 (supplementary materials), teachers used many tools and resources. Teachers used digital translators (59 teachers with 72 references) principally during the first days/weeks in addition to online/digital materials (34 teachers with 41 references) with the support of mobile devices (26 teachers with 36 references). They also used bilingual textbooks/materials (23 teachers with 26 references) with a version in Ukrainian and a version in Italian/English, materials for AAC (augmentative and alternative communication) and materials completely in English (39 teachers with 49 references).

From a methodological point of view, teachers underlined the importance of arranging collaborative activities in small groups (59 teachers with 80 references) and basing them on peer-to-peer interactions amongst pupils (73 teachers with 95 references). Additionally, teachers organised game-based learning activities (27 teachers with 33 references). The quantitative analysis showed that primary teachers (ASR 2.5) organised many educational activities using play and games compared to the other school levels ($\chi^2 = 14.737$ with df 3 and $p < .002$). The assessment strategies were mainly focused on formative methods (30 teachers with 31 references) to observe the displaced pupils' learning processes from a global point of view.

A significant methodological issue is represented by the code called 'intercultural vs. emergency' (see Fig. 3a). As indicated in the theoretical framework, this code refers to a situation at the intersection between intercultural and refugee education. The Ukrainian pupils were displaced children living in a temporary condition who expressed the hope of returning to their hometowns as soon as possible. Consequently, teachers emphasised this circumstance, declaring, on the one hand, that they used methods and planned activities already used with other foreign pupils (17 teachers with 21 references). On the other hand, 18 teachers (with 24 references) affirmed that the usual teaching methods used in intercultural situations were not sufficient and that they had to set up specific activities for this new context.

Administrative issues

Fig. 3b details the main codes and subcodes of the right side of the map, including the 'Administrative issues' and the 'Contexts' categories, which were the categories with the smallest corpus coverage (7.93% and 8.66%, respectively).

The Administrative issues' category was cited by 83 teachers with 92 references. This category focused on four main subcategories: Enrolment, Families, Summative assessment, and Ukrainian schools. The 'Enrolment' subcategory (41 teachers with 51 references) referred to the bureaucratic procedures and the timing needed to formally enrol the displaced pupils. Teachers underlined the difficulties related to including the pupils in a very short amount of time. In addition, some pupils could not regularly attend school activities. Fortunately, many associations supported families with formal procedures (15 teachers with 16 references). The 'Ukrainian school' subcategory concerned the recognition of Ukrainian school paths to coordinate the activities carried out in Italy (17 teachers with 19 references).

The most important subcategory was represented by 'Summative assessment' (54 teachers with 99 references). As indicated in the document 'Accoglienza scolastica per gli studenti ucraini. Indicazioni operative' (MIUR, 2022c), the school year (or a portion) spent in Italy must be validated and recognised formally. Therefore, Italian schools had to arrange several forms of summative assessments so that displaced pupils could pass the exams. To do so, teachers faced different difficulties: translating the assessment tests, adapting the tests to Ukrainian subjects, and comparing the different levels required in the two school systems. For these reasons, many teachers (28 with 32 references) prepared personal assessment strategies. In some cases, teachers assessed only specific subjects (maths, arts, etc.

Contexts

Despite the low level of corpus coverage, the category 'Contexts' denotes an important point of this study because it represents the close connection between the activities carried out at school and the activities implemented by associations, municipalities, and private institutions outside the school. This category was cited by 104 teachers (with 205 references) and shows how important it is to activate many and various educational paths in both a formal and a nonformal way. This close relationship between formal and nonformal contexts was crucial to welcome and effectively include displaced pupils in society.

The 'Contexts' category includes four main subcategories: Italian

classes, Local places, Nonformal schools and Ukrainian schools. This last subcategory is shared with the 'Administrative issues' category. The most significant subcategory is represented by nonformal activities, which was cited by 93 teachers with 162 references. Teachers underscored the importance of arranging after-school programmes (32 teachers with 37 references), workshops and courses to learn Italian as a second language (19 teachers with 21 references), sport and cultural activities (21 teachers with 26 references), and summer camps (35 teachers with 39 references): 'Teachers and parents organised parties and afternoons in the park to make the family feel close'; 'We contacted an artistic gymnastics association that allowed the child to register free of charge.'

Discussion

The map of categories presented in Fig. 1 and specified in Figs. 3a and 3b visualises the key factors in welcoming and effectively including displaced pupils. In particular, these factors are closely related to pupils and families who moved suddenly from their country due to a war situation with the intention of returning as soon as possible.

The data analysis highlighted five main categories that were correlated with each other. The main category included the actors: pupils, teachers, families, and mediators. All these actors played a key role in developing effective inclusion activities. Despite the difficulties, pupils should be available to use their emotional energy and resources to face new educational situations, new friends, and new languages. Teachers must be available to arrange new learning environments and be flexible to create new relationships with pupils, families, and mediators. Families need to be accompanied in new social contexts, and mediators must be able to strengthen the relationships amongst the actors.

To discuss the results in depth and give clear and well-defined indications of how to create inclusive strategies in problematic situations such as that represented by displaced children, it is necessary to emphasise some points regarding each actor involved in this study.

First, as stated by de Boer and Kuijper (2020), displaced pupils bring with them emotions and specific needs. Consequently, administrative staff and teachers should focus their attention on pupils' feelings and needs to avoid difficulties and anxiety and try to facilitate and enhance soft welcoming and integration steps. It is necessary to remove or at least minimise administrative barriers and potential bureaucratic proliferation, as indicated by Kelcey and Chatilla (2020), so that families and pupils can immediately feel educational attention and care. Family engagement represents a crucial factor, confirming the issues raised by Serna and Martínez (2019) and Naidoo (2015). In this way, pupils can experience well-being in new educational contexts despite linguistic, communication, and other difficulties. The data collected in our research also confirm the findings of Li et al. (2022) concerning the role of family/parents on reducing the anxiety and increasing the inclusion.

Teachers had to rearrange their classes and restart a new school year in March when the displaced pupils began to come to Italian and European schools. Most teachers underlined the lack of preparation to face emergency situations and expressed the need for further possibilities of training, reinforcing the ideas presented by Cooc and Kim (2023).

The quantitative analysis did not show any statistically significant differences between teachers who had previous experiences with displaced children and teachers who had never faced this situation. This means that welcoming Ukrainian pupils represented a particular and specific situation. This peculiar situation represents a result that is in contradiction with the findings of Cooc and Kim (2023). These authors affirmed that teachers that have more experiences with refugees are likely to change their teaching approach.

In addition, teachers needed support represented by mediators who were able to overcome linguistic barriers. Both Kakos (2022) and Ndijuye (2019) underscored the importance of linguistic issues as a decisive factor in ensuring the effectiveness of inclusive activities. The high number of positive feelings shows that teachers were satisfied with the

activities arranged in such a short time. The findings about positive feelings contradict the study of Kelcey and Chatilla (2020) that underlined the negative impact of short term or ad hoc arrangements policies. In the meantime, our data about the negative feelings, indicating that teachers needed more support and resources, confirm the research data obtained by Kelcey and Chatilla (2020) about financial aid.

Families of displaced children emphasised linguistic issues to interact more effectively with teachers to develop good collaboration with school institutions. These findings are in contradiction with the research results of Kaysılı et al. (2019) that added a new barrier: 'blaming each other' that can be linked to the linguistic barriers. In our study the linguistic obstacles can be overcome effectively by mediators. In this way, mediators represented a key element because they allowed all actors to interact successfully and solve problems. Schools that lacked mediators struggled to carry out effective inclusive activities, as stated by Zembylas (2011).

The second largest category concerned the strategies/activities put in place to implement inclusive methods. To arrange meaningful activities, teachers needed bilingual materials (books, pictures, concept maps, etc.), so they tried to find them online. While the pupils were increasingly integrated through game-based activities, teachers initiated many peer activities in small groups. As indicated by Li et al. (2022), the role of peers was very fruitful because displaced children felt that they were included in developing informal relationships with their mates.

The 'Inclusion' category showed the importance of initial activities that focused on basic priorities and aimed to identify personal needs and personal development plans for each displaced pupil. In parallel, the 'Administrative issues' category represented the technical actions to enrol displaced pupils as easily as possible and to avoid the perception of administrative obstacles. From an educational point of view, administrative issues should be concentrated on setting up personal summative assessment strategies and writing a school report with the aim of validating the school year for displaced children. This matter is strictly related to the recognition and comparison of the educational paths provided in the host country (in this case, Italy) and those provided in the pupils' country of origin (in this case, Ukraine), as indicated by Koehler and Schneider (2019).

The last category, 'Contexts', represented an important issue because it allowed children and their families to be included in the whole cultural and social context in which the school was located. Ager and Strang (2008) emphasised the role of nonformal and outside activities that should be included in the personal development plan since they represent a significant aspect of the entire social life. Nonformal activities can help and support teachers in arranging an enlarged and wider learning environment. Collaboration with associations, sports teams and cultural organisations was important for making school activities effective.

The quantitative analysis showed the relevance of the differences between the number of references and the weight of the five main categories, as shown in Fig. 2. The categories 'Actors' and 'Strategies/Activities' comprised 71.81% of the total number of references. This means that almost three out of four teachers focused their attention on these two categories. However, these two categories covered a lower proportion of the overall corpus (66.26%). The categories 'Inclusion' and 'Administrative issue' comprised a lower number of references (14.01% and 6.47%, respectively), but they covered a higher proportion of the corpus (17.15% and 7.93%, respectively). This means that teachers cited the codes linked to those categories fewer times, but they expressed their ideas and comments with more detail. In this way, teachers indicated and underlined the value and importance of these codes, indicating that they were crucial for establishing good and effective inclusive strategies.

Ultimately, the number of pupils with specific learning difficulties and difficulties linked to social, cultural, or economic disadvantages and disabilities was too small (11 pupils, 5.29%) to highlight specific strategies and activities for them.
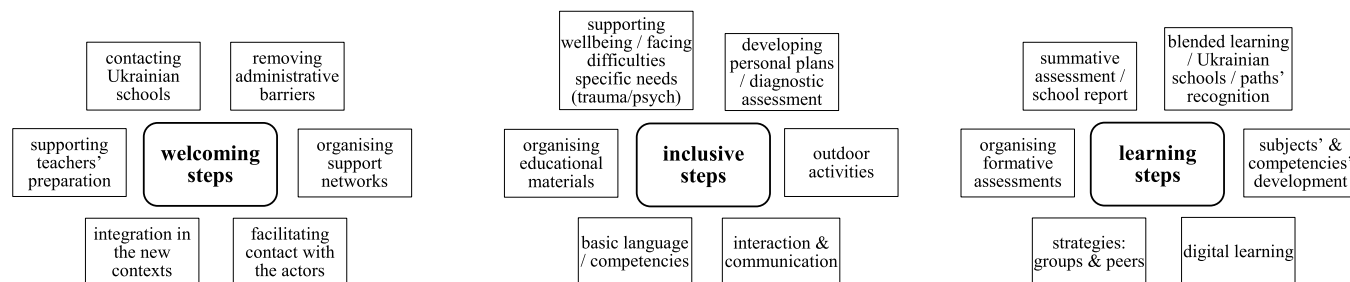
Fig. 4. . Guidelines for welcoming displaced pupils.

Conclusions and implications for policy and practice

In the discussion, we presented the answers to the research questions. In this last section, we would like to underline the implications for policy and practice, emphasising the contribution of this study to designing and arranging effective inclusive processes for displaced pupils.

Based on the analysis and the discussion, this study suggests the creation of guidelines that principals and teachers can follow to welcome and include displaced pupils. Fig. 4 shows three main stages: welcoming, inclusive, and learning steps.

The welcoming steps concern three main aspects: administrative, teacher preparation and setting up the context. Host schools should address administrative matters to reduce technical procedures (documents, declarations, etc.) and should contact, if possible, the school attended by the pupils in their home country. Regarding teacher preparation, host schools should invite teachers to attend CPD courses about intercultural and refugee education and teaching their native language as a second language in multilinguistic classrooms so that they can be prepared to welcome displaced children. Setting up the context refers to supporting contacts amongst actors with the support of mediators and creating networks with external associations to integrate displaced pupils and families in local communities.

The inclusive steps include further points: identifying pupils' needs to avoid trauma and support well-being, creating personal plans, developing learning resources for basic language/competencies with digital and print materials, fostering interaction and communication, combining inside and outside activities, and developing local networks.

The learning steps cover the development of learning, intended as a combination of competencies and subjects. We can identify three perspectives: educational strategies, particularly collaborative activities with the support of peers and digital activities that are carried out, if possible, together with the school attended by the pupils in their home country; the development of subjects and competencies, focusing and comparing the local curricula with those of the pupils' country of origin; and balancing formative and summative assessment strategies to, on the one hand, promote the individual qualities of each pupil and, on the other hand, write a school report to guarantee the validity of school year in both the host country and the home country.

We believe that by following these guidelines, host schools and teachers can be prepared to arrange inclusive learning environments and welcome easily displaced pupils and their families in critical intercultural and emergency situations.

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All procedures performed in this study, that involved human participants, were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional committee and with the Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Supplementary materials

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:10.1016/j.ijedro.2023.100255.

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