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Mothers' Perspectives on School–Family Collaboration in Supporting Children with Dyslexia: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: This qualitative study explored mothers' perspectives on collaboration with teachers in supporting children with dyslexia. The study involved ten mothers of children aged 6–12 years with a formal diagnosis of dyslexia attending public primary schools in Western Macedonia, Greece. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings generated five main themes: a) quality of collaboration, b) forms and frequency of communication, c) facilitating factors, d) barriers to collaboration, and e) proposed improvements. Participants described collaboration as largely inconsistent and dependent on individual teachers' practices rather than embedded within a systematic school-wide framework. Teachers' empathy, clarity of communication, differentiated instructional practices, and supportive school organisation were identified as key facilitators of effective collaboration and contributors to children's academic and psychosocial well-being. Regular and structured communication was associated with greater parental trust and reduced anxiety, whereas infrequent or

reactive communication often generated uncertainty and frustration. Several mothers reported being excluded from decision-making processes and the need to justify their child's learning difficulties to school personnel. Key barriers included limited teacher training in dyslexia, inadequate coordination among professionals, and insufficient specialist support. The study highlights the need for systematic teacher training in dyslexia and the establishment of structured, consistent collaboration mechanisms between schools and families. Strengthening these dimensions may improve academic and psychosocial support for children with dyslexia. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of fostering inclusive, empathetic, and well-organized school–family partnerships as a key component of effective special education practice.

Keywords: learning disability, teacher–parent communication, inclusive education, elementary school, mothers' experiences.

Introduction

The effective support of children with dyslexia remains a significant challenge within contemporary educational systems. Dyslexia is one of the most common specific learning difficulties. It is associated not only with persistent reading and writing difficulties but also with broader psychological and emotional consequences for students. Research has shown that children with dyslexia frequently experience frustration, reduced academic self-concept, anxiety, and decreased motivation toward learning (Gibby-Leversuch et al., 2021; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020). These experiences may negatively influence both academic performance and overall well-being. Consequently, modern educational frameworks emphasise the importance of inclusive educational practices and coordinated support systems that address both the academic and psychosocial needs of students with learning difficulties.

Research problem

In the context of inclusive education, collaboration between schools and families has been widely recognised as a critical factor in supporting children with learning difficulties. Effective school–family partnerships have been associated with improved academic outcomes, stronger emotional adjustment, and greater student engagement in learning processes (Goodall, 2021; Goodall & Montgomery, 2023). Parents possess valuable knowledge regarding their child's learning profile, strengths, and needs, while teachers contribute pedagogical expertise and professional experience in educational practices. When these perspectives are combined through constructive and consistent collaboration, the support provided to the child becomes more coherent and effective.

Despite the recognised importance of collaboration, research suggests that school–family partnerships are not always implemented effectively. Barriers such as limited teacher training in learning disabilities, insufficient communication structures, time constraints, and differences in expectations between parents and educators may hinder effective collaboration (Grüter et al, 2024; Leslie, 2020). In many cases, the quality of collaboration depends largely on individual teacher initiative rather than on structured institutional practices, leading to inconsistencies in support for students with dyslexia.

Parents of children with dyslexia often face significant emotional and practical challenges, particularly following the diagnosis of their child's learning difficulty. Previous research indicates that parents may experience feelings of uncertainty, stress, and frustration as they attempt to understand and support their child's educational needs (Wilmot et al., 2023). When educational institutions fail to provide clear guidance and consistent communication, parents may feel excluded from the decision-making processes concerning their child's education.

An additional reason that highlights the necessity of the present study concerns the importance of qualitative research in understanding the complex experiences of families of children with dyslexia. Qualitative research is particularly valuable for exploring lived experiences, emotional responses, and relational dynamics between families and schools (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Such approaches allow researchers to examine how parents interpret their child's diagnosis, how they experience collaboration with teachers, and how these interactions influence their emotional well-being and engagement in the educational process.

In the context of dyslexia, such qualitative insights are particularly important because the condition extends beyond academic difficulties and includes significant psychological and social dimensions. Research has shown that children with dyslexia often experience emotional distress related to repeated academic challenges, while parents may face anxiety and uncertainty regarding how to effectively support their child (Gibby-Leversuch et al., 2021; Wilmot et al., 2023).

Despite the growing international literature on dyslexia and inclusive education, important gaps remain in understanding school-family collaboration, particularly in specific cultural and educational contexts. Much of the existing research has focused on cognitive characteristics, diagnostic processes, and intervention strategies, while comparatively less attention has been given to the lived experiences of parents and the relational dynamics between families and schools (Gibby-Leversuch et al., 2021; Wilmot et al., 2023). Addressing this gap is particularly important for understanding how to strengthen collaboration between schools and families in practice. Research consistently demonstrates that meaningful parental engagement and effective school-family partnerships play a significant role in students' academic development, emotional well-being, and participation in learning (Goodall, 2021; Goodall & Montgomery, 2023). By focusing on mothers' perspectives and lived experiences, the present study aims to contribute to the limited body of qualitative research on dyslexia within the Greek educational context.

Research focus

In the Greek educational context, research on dyslexia has largely focused on diagnostic procedures, linguistic processing difficulties, and instructional interventions (Kostaras et al., 2024; Polychroni et al., 2024). Although these areas are essential, relatively little attention has been paid to the psychosocial experiences of families or to how parents navigate communication and collaboration with educational institutions. Consequently, there is still limited understanding of how parents interpret their child's learning difficulties, how they perceive the support provided by schools, and how these experiences influence their engagement with the educational system.

Furthermore, existing research in Greece has relied predominantly on quantitative methodologies, which, although useful for identifying patterns and trends, may not fully capture the complexity of parental experiences and the contextual factors that shape school-family relationships. Qualitative research offers the opportunity to explore these experiences in depth, providing rich insights into how parents perceive educational support, interpret their child's diagnosis, and negotiate collaboration with teachers and school structures (Levitt, 2021).

Research aim and questions

The present study aims to provide deeper insight into the relational, emotional, and institutional factors that shape school-family collaboration and to inform more inclusive educational practices and support systems that better respond to the needs of children with dyslexia and their families.

To address this aim, the research was guided by the following research questions:
(a) How do mothers evaluate their collaboration with teachers?

- (b) What forms of communication do they have with teachers, and how frequently do they communicate?
- (c) What factors strengthen collaboration with teachers?
- (d) What factors hinder collaboration with teachers?
- (e) What interventions do they propose to improve their collaboration with teachers?

Literature Review

Dyslexia is widely recognised as a neurodevelopmental learning difficulty that primarily affects reading accuracy, decoding, and spelling despite adequate intelligence and educational opportunities (Fletcher et al., 2025; Samudra & Senarath, 2021; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020; Snowling & Hulme, 2021). Research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience has identified several underlying mechanisms associated with dyslexia, including phonological processing deficits, rapid automatized naming difficulties, and limitations in working memory (Samudra & Senarath, 2021; Vandermosten et al., 2020). Contemporary perspectives increasingly conceptualise dyslexia as a multidimensional condition shaped by interactions among cognitive processes, neurological development, and environmental factors (Ozernov-Palchik & Gaab, 2020; Reid, 2021; Ramus, 2024). Neurodevelopmental studies further emphasise that dyslexia reflects differences in how the brain processes written language and phonological information, rather than a lack of effort or motivation (Ozernov-Palchik & Gaab, 2020; Ramus, 2024).

Educational research has also contributed to a shift in how dyslexia is addressed within school systems. Inclusive education frameworks emphasise that educational environments should adapt to the diverse learning needs of students rather than expecting learners to conform to uniform instructional practices (Mitchell, 2020; Norwich, 2022; Sharma et al., 2022). Within this perspective, dyslexia is increasingly viewed as a condition that requires supportive learning environments, differentiated instruction, and flexible teaching strategies (Deroncele-Acosta & Ellis, 2024). Evidence suggests that classrooms implementing inclusive pedagogical approaches promote greater engagement and participation among students with learning difficulties (Hattie, 2021).

Beyond academic difficulties, dyslexia is associated with significant psychological and social consequences that may influence students' educational experiences and overall well-being. Research consistently demonstrates that students with dyslexia are more likely to experience frustration, lower academic self-esteem, and increased anxiety related to school performance (Boyes et al., 2020; Gibby-Leversuch et al., 2021; Kalka & Lockiewicz, 2021). These emotional challenges often arise from repeated academic difficulties and may negatively affect students' motivation, engagement, and sense of competence in the educational environment (Georgiou et al., 2024; Iqbal et al., 2023).

The impact of dyslexia extends beyond the individual student and frequently affects family dynamics. Parents of children with dyslexia often report experiencing stress, uncertainty, and emotional strain while supporting their child's learning needs and navigating educational systems (McNally et al., 2021; Nalavany et al., 2021; Woodcock, 2020). Qualitative research has highlighted that many parents experience frustration and feelings of helplessness when attempting to secure appropriate educational support for their child (McNally et al., 2021; Woodcock, 2020). The diagnostic process itself may also present challenges for families, including delays in diagnosis, financial costs, and difficulties accessing specialised support services (Anthony et al., 2024).

Families often assume a central role in supporting children with dyslexia by assisting with homework, coordinating communication with teachers, and seeking additional educational support services. Although parental involvement can positively influence literacy development and academic motivation, it may also

place considerable demands on families, particularly when institutional support is limited (Stephenson et al., 2024). Research has also highlighted the importance of the home literacy environment in supporting reading development, as positive parental attitudes toward learning have been associated with improved literacy outcomes among children with learning difficulties (Li et al., 2024).

Within inclusive education frameworks, collaboration between schools and families has been identified as a key factor in supporting students with learning difficulties. Parental engagement in education has consistently been associated with improved academic achievement, stronger emotional adjustment, and increased student motivation (Castro et al., 2021; Hill, 2022; Kim et al., 2021). Models of school–family collaboration emphasise the importance of open communication, shared decision-making, and mutual respect between educators and parents (Epstein, 2021; Hornby & Lafaele, 2023). When families and schools collaborate effectively, they can develop coordinated strategies that better address the individual learning needs of students with dyslexia.

Despite the recognised benefits of school–family collaboration, several studies have identified barriers that may hinder effective partnerships. These barriers include limited teacher knowledge of dyslexia, insufficient communication structures between schools and families, and institutional practices that do not fully recognise parents as equal partners in educational decision-making (Garbacz et al., 2021; Murray et al., 2021; Leslie et al., 2024). In many cases, parents of children with dyslexia report that they must actively advocate for their child’s educational needs, often assuming responsibilities that educational institutions might otherwise be expected to fulfil (Garbacz et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2021).

Empirical studies have also demonstrated that structured parental involvement in educational activities can significantly improve literacy outcomes for students with dyslexia. Research examining home-based reading interventions has reported improvements in reading fluency and comprehension when parents actively participate in structured learning activities (Piao & Rangra, 2024). Meta-analytic evidence further suggests that parental engagement can substantially impact students’ academic performance across diverse educational contexts (Fatimaningrum, 2021).

Although the importance of inclusive education and parental engagement is widely recognised, important research gaps remain. Much of the existing literature has focused primarily on the cognitive aspects of dyslexia, diagnostic procedures, and instructional strategies, while comparatively little attention has been paid to the lived experiences of families and the relational dynamics between parents and educational institutions. Qualitative research approaches provide valuable opportunities to explore these experiences in depth and to understand better how parents perceive educational support and collaboration with schools (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Nevill & Forsey, 2023).

Furthermore, much of the existing research has been conducted in North America and Northern Europe, where educational systems and support structures for students with learning difficulties are relatively well established (Snowling & Hulme, 2021). Consequently, there is a need for context-sensitive research that explores school–family collaboration within specific national and cultural contexts. In the Greek educational system, research on dyslexia has largely focused on diagnostic procedures and linguistic processing difficulties, while relatively limited attention has been given to the psychosocial experiences of families and their collaboration with schools (Kostaras et al., 2024; Polychroni et al., 2024).

Addressing this gap is particularly important for developing more inclusive educational practices and improving support systems for children with dyslexia. By examining parents’ lived experiences and perspectives, qualitative research can provide deeper insight into the relational and institutional factors that influence school–family collaboration. Such insights may contribute to the development of educational practices and policies that better respond to the needs of students with learning difficulties and their families.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research design in order to explore mothers' perceptions and experiences of collaboration with schools in supporting children with dyslexia. Qualitative methodology was considered particularly appropriate for the purposes of this research because it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, meanings, and interpretations within their social and educational context (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Levitt, 2021). Unlike quantitative approaches, qualitative research enables researchers to capture complex social interactions and subjective perspectives that are difficult to examine with standardised measurement tools (Tisdell et al., 2025).

The research process followed several stages commonly associated with qualitative research. Initially, the research design was developed to align with the study's aim and research questions. Subsequently, the sampling strategy was defined, and participants were selected based on their relevance to the research topic and their experience with school–family collaboration related to dyslexia. The next stage involved developing and organising the semi-structured interview guide, designed to explore mothers' experiences of communication and collaboration with teachers and schools.

Following the development of the interview guide, the interviews were conducted, and the data were collected. The interview data were then transcribed and systematically analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes in the participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Finally, the findings were interpreted and presented in relation to the research questions and the existing literature on dyslexia, parental involvement, and school–family collaboration.

Sample and Participants

Ten mothers of children aged 6–12 years with a confirmed diagnosis of dyslexia, attending public primary schools in Western Macedonia of Greece, participated in the research. A purposive sampling strategy was used to include mothers actively engaged in their children's education (Campbell et al., 2020). (Table 1)

Table 1

Participant	Child's Age (years)	Grade	Maternal Involvement	Family Structure	Number of Siblings
S1	7	1st	High	Single-mother	0
S2	8	2nd	High	Nuclear	1
S3	9	3rd	Moderate	Divorced	2
S4	6	1st	High	Nuclear	0
S5	10	4th	High	Divorced	0
S6	11	5th	Moderate	Nuclear	2
S7	12	6th	High	Nuclear	0
S8	7	1st	Moderate	Nuclear	1
S9	9	3rd	High	Divorced	2
S10	8	2nd	High	Nuclear	1

Characteristics of the Study Participants

Instrument and Procedure

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to explore mothers' experiences of collaborating with schools to support children with dyslexia.

The questions were designed to allow participants to describe their experiences, perceptions, and reflections in depth while maintaining a consistent structure across interviews. The interview guide was informed by existing literature on school-family collaboration, parental involvement in education, and dyslexia support (Hornby & Lafaele, 2023; Goodall, 2021; Wilmot et al., 2023) (Table 2).

Table 2

Interview questions

Section	Question No.	Interview Question
A. General Information	Q1	How many children do you have?
	Q2	What is the age of the child with dyslexia?
	Q3	Which grade is your child currently attending?
	Q4	How did you react when your child was diagnosed with dyslexia?
	Q5	Approximately how long have you known about your child's dyslexia diagnosis?
	Q6	Could you tell me a few things about yourself and your experience as a parent of a child with dyslexia?
B. Experiences of Collaboration with the School	Q7	How would you describe your collaboration with the teachers who work with your child?
	Q8	What forms of communication do you have with the school (e.g., meetings, phone calls, written notes)? How often do you communicate?
	Q9	Which aspects of this collaboration do you believe are most beneficial for your child?
	Q10	What difficulties or obstacles have you encountered in your collaboration with teachers?
	Q11	Do you feel that your opinions and concerns are taken into consideration by the school? Could you describe such an experience?
C. Factors that Strengthen or Hinder Collaboration	Q12	In your opinion, what factors contribute to effective collaboration between you and the school?
	Q13	What factors do you believe make this collaboration more difficult or hinder it?
	Q14	How would you describe the role of school leadership (e.g., principal, educational advisors) in this collaboration?
	Q15	How do personal factors (e.g., time availability, knowledge, communication skills) influence your collaboration with teachers?

D. Suggestions for Improvement	Q16	What changes or improvements would you suggest in order to make collaboration with the school more effective?
	Q17	Are there any services or support programs that you believe would help parents of children with dyslexia?
	Q18	How do you think schools could strengthen parental participation in school activities or in school life more generally?

The interview guide consisted of four main sections. The first section included general demographic and background questions related to the family and the child's educational context. The second section focused on mothers' experiences of collaboration and communication with teachers and school staff. The third section explored factors that may facilitate or hinder effective school-family collaboration. Finally, the fourth section invited participants to propose ways to improve collaboration between families and schools. The semi-structured format allowed the interviewer to ask follow-up questions as needed to obtain richer descriptions of participants' experiences.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted between May and July 2025. The researcher conducted all interviews. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were carried out either in person or via video conferencing. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymised to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2021). This approach aligns with qualitative research standards, where the adequacy of qualitative data is determined by the depth and richness of the analysis rather than by sample size (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Levitt, 2021). Sample adequacy was supported by the depth and recurrence of patterned meaning across interviews. In later interviews, data largely elaborated existing themes rather than generating substantively new thematic patterns, indicating informational redundancy and supporting the sufficiency of the sample for the analytic aims of the study. This process ensured that the data were sufficiently rich and comprehensive to address the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The analysis involved familiarisation with the data, systematic coding, theme development, and iterative refinement. To enhance rigour, reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process, ensuring continuous critical reflection on potential biases and assumptions and minimising their influence on the findings.

The researchers' positionality should also be acknowledged. The study was conducted by a university lecturer in psychology and a psychologist, both with academic backgrounds in psychological sciences but without direct professional involvement in the education system. This perspective may have influenced data interpretation, particularly regarding expectations about school-family collaboration. To address this, reflexivity was systematically applied throughout the research process. The researchers engaged in continuous critical reflection regarding their assumptions, expectations, and potential biases, both during data collection and analysis. Reflexive notes were maintained to support transparency and enhance analytical rigour, thereby contributing to the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Ethical considerations were strictly followed, including informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw (Levitt, 2020). To enhance research rigour, prolonged engagement with the data, systematic coding procedures, and the use of verbatim quotations were employed to ensure credibility and authenticity (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Levitt, 2021).

Some limitations should also be acknowledged. The relatively small sample size limits the statistical generalizability of the findings. At the same time, the specific geographical context of data collection may restrict the transferability of the results to other educational settings.

Results

The thematic analysis of the interviews revealed five main themes, according to the research questions: (a) quality of collaboration with teachers, (b) forms and frequency of communication, (c) barriers and challenges to collaboration, (d) facilitating factors, and (e) proposals for improvement.

At the beginning of the interviews, mothers were invited to reflect on their initial reactions to their child's diagnosis of dyslexia. The diagnosis was described as a pivotal moment for all families. Initial reactions ranged from shock, denial, and guilt to relief. Mothers of younger children often reported greater confusion and uncertainty, whereas those whose children received a delayed diagnosis described feelings of anger and frustration. Despite these differences, the diagnosis also functioned as a turning point, prompting mothers to re-evaluate their approach to their child's learning and to seek closer collaboration with the school.

(a) Quality of collaboration with teachers

Mothers' experiences of collaboration were mixed, ranging from trust and partnership (four mothers) to feelings of isolation and unequal responsibility (six mothers). As one participant noted: "At the beginning there were difficulties, but over time the teachers understood the child's needs better." (S1) "The teacher was there from the beginning, supporting my child and their needs." (S9)

In contrast, six mothers reported feelings of loneliness and disproportionate responsibility: "I felt like I was fighting alone." (S4)

Empathy, differentiated instruction, and recognition of each child's individuality emerged as central elements of effective collaboration. When teachers adopted individualised approaches and shared goals with families, collaboration became more meaningful, and children demonstrated greater emotional stability and responsiveness to learning.

However, the majority of participants identified a strong inconsistency across teachers. The quality of support often depended on the individual teacher rather than a unified school-wide strategy, leading to variability and uncertainty: "Last year's teacher informed us regularly... while this year there is no substantial communication." (S3) "The way the child's difficulties are handled seems to depend heavily on the classroom teacher." (S10)

(b) Forms and frequency of communication

Communication was mainly conducted through monthly meetings, telephone contact, and written notes, according to six mothers' responses. In some cases, a structured and consistent communication model was observed: "There are regular meetings once a month, which help a lot in monitoring progress." (S2) "There was systematic communication through scheduled meetings." (S3) "The teacher kept us regularly informed... and we could contact her whenever a difficulty arose." (S6)

In other cases, communication was sporadic and mainly reactive, activated primarily during periods of difficulty. Even when described as constructive, three mothers expressed a need for more frequent and

systematic communication: “Communication is good when it happens, but we would like more regular updates.” (S7)

Structured and consistent communication appeared to be associated with increased trust, better coordination, and reduced maternal anxiety, as seven participants stated.

(c) Facilitating factors

Eight mothers identified several facilitating factors, including open and honest communication, consistency, empathy, regular feedback, individualized approaches, the involvement of specialist professionals, and a focus on the child’s strengths: “They see us as a team.” (S1) “Collaboration with specialists and focusing on the child’s strengths helps address difficulties more effectively.” (S3) “When there is open communication with the teacher... we feel that we can better support the child at home.” (S6)

(d) Proposals for improvement

The majority of the responses converged around four main areas: institutionalised and structured meetings, systematic teacher training on dyslexia, increased presence of specialists in schools, and the development of mother support programs: “It would be very helpful to have scheduled meetings throughout the year...” (S2)

“Teachers need to receive more training on dyslexia.” (S5)

“It would be very helpful to have specialists in schools...” (S10)

Overall, mothers did not simply call for more communication, but rather for a structured, consistent, empathetic, and evidence-based model of collaboration.

(e) Barriers and challenges

The main barriers identified by seven mothers included limited teacher knowledge of dyslexia, lack of differentiated instruction, heavy workload, insufficient coordination among teachers, limited administrative involvement, and a lack of specialist support.

Particularly strong were the accounts of having to justify their child’s difficulties: “I feel like I have to prove that my child has a real problem.” (S5)

“Sometimes I felt that the child’s difficulties were not taken seriously and were attributed to a lack of effort.” (S8)

A conceptual confusion between equality and equity was also evident, as differentiation was often perceived as a “privilege” rather than a pedagogical necessity.

School administration was described as formally responsible but only partially engaged: “The school administration seems to take action mainly when a problem arises.” (S6)

Overall, there was a lack of a systematic framework to support children with dyslexia, as well as insufficient coordination among the administration, specialists, and teachers.

A final question invited mothers to add any additional information they considered relevant. However, none of the participants chose to add further comments, as they felt that the questions included in the semi-structured interview had already fully addressed their need to discuss their child’s learning difficulty.

Discussion

The present study explored mothers' perspectives on school-family collaboration in supporting children with dyslexia. The findings highlight that collaboration is a multifaceted process shaped by emotional responses, teacher practices, and institutional structures. This perspective is consistent with previous research emphasising that effective school-family partnerships are influenced by both relational and organisational factors (Hornby & Lafaele, 2023; Goodall, 2021).

A central finding concerns the pivotal role of the dyslexia diagnosis as a turning point for families. Consistent with previous research, diagnosis was associated with a wide range of emotional reactions, including shock, uncertainty, and, in some cases, relief. Previous studies have similarly reported that parents of children with dyslexia often experience complex emotional responses following the identification of learning difficulties, including stress, confusion, and emotional strain (Nalavany et al., 2021; Wilmot et al., 2023). Importantly, the diagnosis also functioned as a catalyst for re-evaluating parental engagement and strengthening collaboration with the school. This finding supports previous research suggesting that a diagnosis of learning difficulties may encourage parents to take on a more active role in advocating for their child's educational needs (Leslie et al., 2024).

The results further indicate that the quality of collaboration is strongly influenced by teachers' empathy, communication practices, and ability to implement differentiated instruction. When these elements were present, mothers reported a sense of partnership and trust. Similar findings have been reported in studies highlighting that respectful communication and teacher understanding are key factors in building effective parent-teacher relationships (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023). Conversely, the absence of these elements often led to feelings of isolation and unequal responsibility, reinforcing previous evidence that parents of children with learning difficulties may feel that they carry a disproportionate burden in supporting their child's education (Stephenson et al., 2024).

A key issue identified in this study is the inconsistency in teacher practices. Mothers' experiences varied significantly depending on the individual teacher, highlighting a lack of a coherent school-wide approach. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that the effectiveness of support for students with dyslexia often depends on individual teacher initiative rather than structured institutional frameworks (Grüter et al., 2024; Leslie, 2020). These results therefore reinforce the need for systemic policies and coordinated practices to ensure continuity and consistency across educational settings.

Communication emerged as another critical dimension of collaboration. Regular and structured communication was associated with higher levels of trust, reduced parental anxiety, and improved coordination between home and school. These findings are consistent with research emphasising that ongoing communication and shared decision-making are essential components of effective school-family collaboration (Epstein, 2021; Hill, 2022). In contrast, sporadic and reactive communication contributed to uncertainty and frustration, highlighting the importance of establishing systematic communication practices within schools.

The role of facilitating factors, such as empathy, open communication, consistency, and collaboration with specialists, further underscores the importance of relational and organisational elements in fostering effective partnerships. These findings support previous research demonstrating that collaborative practices involving teachers, families, and specialists contribute to more effective educational support for students with learning difficulties (Hornby & Lafaele, 2023).

At the same time, several barriers were identified, including limited teachers' knowledge of dyslexia, a lack of differentiated instruction, a heavy workload, and insufficient administrative support. Similar barriers have been reported in previous studies examining challenges in implementing inclusive education

practices (Grüter et al, 2024; Leslie, 2020). Particularly noteworthy are the accounts of mothers feeling the need to “prove” their child’s difficulties, which reflects tensions between families and educational institutions that have also been documented in research on parental advocacy for children with learning disabilities (Leslie et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the perception of differentiated instruction as a “privilege” rather than a pedagogical necessity indicates a broader conceptual misunderstanding that may hinder inclusive practices. This finding echoes arguments in the literature emphasising the need for greater awareness and professional training among educators regarding inclusive education principles and the diverse learning needs of students (Florian, 2021; Mitchell, 2020).

Finally, the findings emphasise that school administration plays a limited yet crucial role in shaping collaboration. The absence of a systematic, coordinated framework to support students with dyslexia suggests that collaboration often relies on individual initiatives rather than institutional policy. Previous research similarly highlights the importance of leadership and administrative support in establishing effective inclusive practices and sustainable collaboration between schools and families (Hornby & Lafaele, 2022).

It should be noted that, beyond the limitations related to sample size and the restricted geographical area (Western Macedonia of Greece) already acknowledged in the Methodology section, additional limitations should be considered. Specifically, the study included only mothers, and therefore, fathers’ perspectives on school–family collaboration were not represented. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study captures participants’ perspectives at a single point in time and does not account for possible changes in collaborative relationships over time. Finally, the findings reflect mothers’ subjective experiences and perceptions, which may not necessarily align with teachers’ perspectives on the same collaborative processes. These limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the findings and may inform directions for future research.

Overall, the study suggests that effective school–family collaboration should be understood as a structured, systemic, and relational process. It requires not only individual commitment but also institutional frameworks that promote consistency, shared responsibility, and inclusive practices. Strengthening teacher training, improving communication structures, and enhancing administrative support are essential steps toward achieving this goal.

Conclusion

This study highlights that effective school–family collaboration is a fundamental component of inclusive education for children with dyslexia. The findings demonstrate that collaboration is shaped by teachers’ empathy, communication practices, and the presence of structured institutional support.

When mothers are not actively engaged in decision-making processes, feelings of exclusion and reduced trust may emerge, potentially undermining educational outcomes. Mothers should be recognised as active partners in the educational process rather than being treated as supplementary contributors.

The study underscores the need for systemic improvements, including teacher training, structured communication mechanisms, and institutional support systems. Strengthening these elements is essential for fostering equitable and inclusive educational environments that support both academic achievement and psychosocial well-being.

Suggestions for future research

Future studies should include larger and more diverse samples and consider mixed-methods designs that integrate qualitative and quantitative data to strengthen the broader applicability of findings. Further research should examine how educational policies and school structures shape mother–teacher collaboration across contexts. Studies comparing mothers’ and fathers’ perspectives, as well as research exploring teachers’ perspectives on the same collaborative relationships, are also needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. Longitudinal studies should investigate how collaboration evolves as children progress through different school years, while intervention research should evaluate the effectiveness of structured collaboration models designed to strengthen school–family partnerships. Comparative studies across different Greek regions and European educational systems would further contribute to understanding the contextual and systemic factors that influence collaborative practices.

From a practical perspective, it is recommended to enhance teachers’ professional development by emphasising differentiated instruction, empathy, and participatory decision-making. Moreover, establishing stable, institutionalised mechanisms for communication and collaboration with families is essential to ensure consistency and sustainability in support practices. Future studies may benefit from incorporating methodological triangulation further to enhance the credibility and robustness of the findings.

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Conflict of Interest

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