



**5TH INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGY
CONFERENCE**

IN CRETE, GREECE

**GLOBAL SCHOOL
PSYCHOLOGY, RESILIENCE
AND WELL-BEING IN THE
CONTEXT OF SCHOOLS,
FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

THURSDAY MAY 21 2026



**ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ
UNIVERSITY OF CRETE**

OUR INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Conference Volunteers

22 Undergraduate students from the course
of Prof. Matsopoulou "Seminar of School
Psychology" Spring 2026

Νικολέττα Κακαγιάννη
Καλλιόπη Κουμεντάκη
Μαρίνα Τσάκα
Ζουμπουλία Φασουλά
Άντζελα Σαμεται
Αρτεμης Φυτα
Ελένη Σαρρή
Χατζάκου Εύα
Μαριάνθη Κουταλέλλη
Χρυσίδα-Χρυσή Γενούζου
Κωτίδη Φιλομήλα

Παρασκευή Μπρόκου
Γεωργία Αρκουλάκη
Χρύσα Τζαγκαράκη
Βάρδα Ιωάννα Χαρά
Αικατερίνη Σηφάκη
Νίκη Μανουρά
Κωνσταντίνα Γρεβενίτη
Πέτρος Νικολόπουλος
Ισμήνη Πλαίτη
Μελίνα Χατζηστυλιανάκη
Φαίη Κωσταγιάννη

Visual theme

Baobab Tree.



The Baobab Tree can be found in Africa and it symbolizes Resilience with its sturdy trunk.

The back page of booklet is a sunflower signifying optimism, light and perspective in a bright future. Also is the sign of FLOURISH program.

22 Graduate students from the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Program [Resilience in Educational Contexts] Spring 2026

Estefany Afkerian
Zainab Abiodun
Novia Anggraeni
Yifan Xue
Saykat Biswas
Fernanda Meza
Ina Kerciku
Nadia Omumi
Nino Kalandadze
Kiran Bibi
Claudia Rivera

Md. Khurshid Rajib
Anahi Luna
Giovanna Pedrini
Doris Nyator
Minh Vu Thi Binh
Tabitha Barnes
Meghrig Sahakian
Aries Mercado
Sophie Trauner
Ignacio Watson Ferrer
Bisenk Paksoy

The International Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Program-**Resilience in Educational Contexts** has been implemented every year since 2024 by the **School Psychology Lab/Research Unit** of the department of Preschool Education under the leadership of Associate Professor **Anastassios Matsopoulos, Ph.D.**



Creative Visual Graphics Team

Yifan Xue
Fr. Konstantinos Niktaris
Estefany Afkerian
Aries Mercado
Prof. Anastassios (Tassos) Matsopoulos
Department of Preschool Education,
University of Crete, Crete.



PROGRAM

Greetings

University of Crete

9:30-10:00

Michael Ungar, Ph.D.
Dalhousie University Canada

Vassilis Kassis, Ph.D.

FHNW University of Applied
Sciences and Arts
Northwestern Switzerland

10:15 - 11 :00

Olympia Palikara, Ph.D.
University of Warwick
United Kingdom

11:00 - 11 :45

Prof.Linda Theron.

University of Pretoria
South Africa

11:45- 12 :30

12:30-13:15

Coffee Break

Lunch on your own

12:30-14:45

Greetings

Prof. Kristen Vargas

President of International
School Psychology
Association, US

15:00

Froma Walsh, Ph.D.

University of Chicago,
USA

Rachell Pierre- Louis, Ph.D.

Gaston Weitz, Ph.D.
Adelphi University, USA

15:15-16:00

16:00-16:45

Chris Perakis

Evloyias

Josefina Davila Vijil

Anastassios

17:15-18:00

Matsopoulos, Ph.D.

University of Crete, Greece.

18:00-18:30

Final Remarks & Questions

Anastassios Matsopoulos, Ph.D.

Musical Closing

By VASILIS SKOULAS,
Legendary Cretan Singer and Lyra player.

SPECIAL GUEST



Vasilis Skoulas

Buffet

Open Space in front of Amphitheatre D7
[Priority is given to all volunteers]

MICHAEL UNGAR

Family Therapist &
Professor of Social Work
at Dalhousie University, Canada
Research Chair in Child, Family
and Community Resilience.



NURTURING RESILIENCE: NINE WAYS FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITIES CAN HELP CHILDREN THRIVE

In this story-filled presentation, Dr. Ungar will show that children's resilience is much more than their individual ability to overcome adversity. It is just as much the result of how well their families, schools and communities work together to help vulnerable young people navigate their way to the resources they need for wellbeing, and whether those resources are made available to children in ways children experience as meaningful. In addition to exploring what resilience means to children from many different backgrounds, Dr. Ungar will also provide nine practical strategies parents, caregivers and educators can use to help children heal, no matter a child's emotional, psychological or behavioral problems.

Specific learning objectives for this presentation are:

1. To understand how children and families with complex needs use "problem" behaviours to enhance their resilience and wellbeing when more socially acceptable solutions are not available;
2. To become familiar with how to assess resilience;
3. To learn about nine resilience-promoting resources necessary for positive child development;
4. To discuss ways caregivers, educators and service providers can intervene to make childhood resilience more likely to occur.

VASSILIS KASSIS

Professor of Educational
Psychology at the School
of Education,
FHNW, Switzerland.



AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER? LONGITUDINAL RESILIENCE PATHWAYS OF ADOLESCENTS

Physical abuse by parents negatively impacts the well-being and mental health of adolescents, yet approximately 15–20% demonstrate resilience over time. We analysed this development longitudinally across three time points over two years using latent transition analysis. Our sample comprised approximately 1,800 early adolescents from 40 schools and 140 classes in Switzerland. We conceptualised resilience as a state of mental health characterised by an absence of mental illness and a presence of psychological and subjective well-being.

Our latent variable for identifying resilience comprised seven factors: a) feeling good (hedonic state) and b) functioning well (eudaimonic state). We identified a significant shift from Wave 1 to Wave 3, specifically a breakdown of the resilient pattern. Only around 30% of adolescents in the resilience pattern at Wave 1 remained resilient at Wave 3. We found that reducing peer rejection at school and promoting teacher support significantly fostered adherence to the resilience pattern over time. We identified violence resilience as a complex, multidimensional latent construct positively associated with hedonic and eudaimonic well-being rather than psychopathology.

Additionally, we were able to empirically validate ways in which schools can promote the positive development of abused students.

OLYMPIA PALIKARA

Professor of Educational
Psychology
Deputy Chair of the Faculty
of Social Sciences (External
Engagement)
University of Warwick



TEACHING THROUGH CRISIS: GLOBAL LESSONS ON TEACHER WELLBEING AFTER COVID-19

Teachers' wellbeing and mental health form the foundation of effective, equitable, and sustainable education systems. A growing body of research demonstrates that teachers' emotional health is closely tied to classroom climate, student outcomes, and staff retention, underscoring the need to understand the pressures they face and the support structures required to sustain them. These issues have taken on renewed importance in the postpandemic era, as teachers continue to navigate the lingering academic, social, and organisational disruptions caused by COVID19.

While the emerging literature has illuminated several dimensions of the pandemic's toll on teacher wellbeing, far less attention has been given to the recovery phase and how teachers are currently coping, adapting, and drawing on personal and institutional resources. This keynote will address this critical gap by presenting recent empirical findings from the Global Perspectives on Teachers' Wellbeing and Mental Health project—a large scale international initiative examining teachers' psychological wellbeing, stressors, and resilience in the years following the pandemic.

The presentation will highlight crossnational trends, contextual challenges, and protective factors, offering a nuanced understanding of teachers' ongoing support needs. It will also discuss implications for policy, school leadership, and intervention design aimed at strengthening teacher wellbeing in a rapidly changing educational landscape.

LINDA THERON

Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. HPCSA-registered (i.e., chartered) Educational Psychologist; an extraordinary professor in the Optentia Research Unit, North-West University, South Africa



WHEN SOCIETY FAILS YOUTH: LEARNING ABOUT RESILIENCE FROM AFRICAN YOUTH WHO ARE NEET

Drawing on past and in-progress mixed methods research with African young people living in stressed communities in South Africa, Linda Theron problematizes neat, narrow explanations of youth wellbeing in contexts of chronic stress. Using the case of youth who are not in education, employment and training (NEET), she shifts attention to the 'messy' mix of resources that are pivotal to youth wellbeing. This mix offers actionable insights for mental health practitioners and other service providers hoping to galvanise and sustain resilience when stress exposure is unrelenting, as well as pointers for the design of future resilience studies.

Prof. Theron's clinical and research interest is in African youth resilience to structural violence, with special interest in the multisystemic, contextually responsive resources that play into youth wellbeing. Linda's track-record of funded studies and 150+ publications align with this interest, as do the studies of 60+ postgraduate students whom she has mentored to study completion. In 2026, Utrecht University awarded Linda an honorary doctorate for her resilience research with African youth. Similarly, the National Research Foundation of South Africa rated Linda's resilience-focused work as internationally acclaimed. She is an elected member of the Academy of Science, South Africa (ASSAf).

KRISTEN VARGAS

Greeting from the
International
Association of School
Psychology (ISPA)
President



Dr. Vargas is a Distinguished University Professor in the College of Education and Human Development at Georgia State University. Dr. Vargas' research efforts include investigating students, staff, and teacher wellbe ing, mental hea lth, trauma-informe dpractices, creating safe and affirming classrooms, bullying/cyberbullying, and schoolclimate. Dr. Vargas is also the 2025-2027 Intemational School Psychology Association President.

FROMA WALSH

Clinical Psychologist and
Professor Emerita at
the University of Chicago and
Co-Founder/Co-Director,
Chicago Center for Family Health.



STRENGTHENING FAMILY RESILIENCE: SUPPORTING POSITIVE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Advances in resilience research recognize the interactive, multi-level systemic influences in overcoming adversity-- and the vital role of family relational supports. Dr. Froma Walsh will present her research-informed, family resilience framework, grounded in 3+ decades of research and extensive application in therapeutic practice and in school and community collaborations. This approach strengthens capacities in families facing serious life crises, traumatic loss, and persistent, multi-stress conditions. Dr. Walsh will highlight practice principles and key family processes that school psychologists and other professionals can target to support the educational success and positive development of at-risk children to enable them to thrive.

Dr. Walsh is the leading international expert on family resilience. Her research-informed Family Resilience Framework is applied globally in research, counseling, and community services to strengthen resilience in families facing adversity. This multi-level systemic approach, integrating relational and social influences, works collaboratively with schools and communities to support the positive development of at-risk children. Dr. Walsh is Past President, American Family Therapy Academy; the Past Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Marital & Family Therapy; and the recipient of many awards for her distinguished contributions to the mental health field. She is a valued speaker and consultant internationally. With 120+ scholarly/professional publications, her recent noted books are: *Strengthening Family Resilience* (3rd ed., 2016); and *Complex and Traumatic Loss: Fostering Healing and Resilience* (2023).

RACHELL PIERRE-LOUIS

Psychologist. PsyD

GASTON WEITZ

Psychologist. PsyD
Field Placement Director
Adelphi University School Psychology
Psy.D. Program



UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR IN STUDENTS: A BEHAVIORAL AND TRAUMA-INFORMED FRAMEWORK

Challenging behavior in students is one of the most frequently cited concerns among school psychologists and educators worldwide. Despite its universality, responses to challenging behavior vary widely and are often reactive, inconsistent, or disconnected from the underlying needs driving the behavior. This keynote presentation offers an accessible framework for understanding and responding to challenging behavior in ways that are evidence-based, culturally sensitive, and practically applicable across diverse school systems.

The presentation is structured around three interconnected components. First, a behavioral foundation is established with an emphasis on understanding behavior as purposeful communication that serves identifiable functions – including attention, escape, access, and sensory regulation. Second, trauma is introduced as an essential contextual lens, highlighting how Adverse Childhood Experiences and chronic stress shape the developing brain and manifest in classroom behavior that is frequently misread as defiance or non-compliance. Participants are invited to shift from asking "What is wrong with this student?" to "What happened to this student?" Third, the Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) are presented as a structured, collaborative process that integrates a trauma-informed lens, shifting practice from compliance-driven to compassion-driven, contextually grounded intervention.

Attendees will leave with a shared language, a practical planning structure, and a renewed orientation toward proactive, relationship-centered practice in our approach to working with students with behavior support needs.

RACHELL PIERRE-LOUIS



Dr. Pierre-Louis is a Bilingual Certified and Licensed School Psychologist in New York State, USA, with over 15 years of experience across diverse urban and suburban school settings. She is a faculty member in the School Psychology program at Adelphi University, where she integrates her school-based experience to train future school psychologists. In this role, she teaches, mentors, and coordinates field placements while bridging research with real-world practice. Her professional focus centers on trauma-informed practices in functional behavioral assessment and intervention, with recent work examining the extent to which these practices align with trauma-informed principles in schools and advancing more responsive approaches to student behavior.

GASTON WEITZ



Dr. Weisz is a licensed psychologist and experienced school psychologist with over 30 years of practice in school, clinical, and higher education settings. He is the Director of the School Psychology Doctoral Program and Director of Field Placements at Adelphi University, where he also teaches graduate courses in school psychology. His work focuses on PBIS, social-emotional learning, culturally responsive practice, ethics, and trauma-informed support. Dr. Weisz has presented and published widely on school psychology, advocacy, and student well-being, while also maintaining a private practice working with children, adolescents, adults, and families.

CHRIS PERAKIS EVLOYIAS

Faculty, Erasmus Mundus Joint
Master- FLOURISH, Resilience
in Educational Contexts,
International Consultant in
Special Education



THE UNIFIED NET:CONNECTING SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TO BUILD GLOBAL RESILIENCE

This presentation will introduce "**The Unified Net**," a simple way for schools to work together. Instead of focusing only on what a student "cannot do," we look at how to change the school environment so they can succeed. When the psychologist (who understands the "why") and the teacher (who knows the "how") work as one team, they can create a safety net that protects all students but mainly support the most vulnerable students. Professor Perakis will help us learn how :

1. To Change the Language: Stop using labels that only describe problems. Learn to see "different abilities" as a valuable part of the school.
 2. To break Down Walls: Create "Resilience Plans" where teachers and psychologists share the same goals for a student's happiness and learning.
 - 3 Help Everyone: Learn how a "bridge" built for a student with special needs actually helps every student in the school feel more secure and capable.
- This presentation is a call to action for educators everywhere. By building better bridges together, we don't just help one child; we create a kinder, more inclusive world for everyone.

2024 UNESCO Inclusion Award recipient.Prof.Perakis has led professional development globally, founded Greece's first Holistic Learning Support Center at ACS Athens, and organized the Annual Learning Differences Conference for a decade. Since 2010, she has chaired the Inclusive Education SIG at ECIS and contributed to various educational organizations.

JOSEFINA DAVILA VIJIL



ANASTASSIOS MATSOPOULOS

RETHINKING RESILIENCE IN ENVIRONMENTS OF INJUSTICE: A RELATIONAL AND LIVED EXPERIENCE MODEL.

Dominant resilience frameworks have largely conceptualized resilience as an individual capacity, trait, or outcome emerging after adversity. While these approaches have contributed important insights, they remain limited in their ability to explain how resilience operates in contexts where adversity is ongoing, structural, and shaped by conditions of injustice.

This paper argues for a reconceptualization of resilience as a relational praxis centered on lived experience (of people) an active, situated process through which individuals and communities sustain dignity, coherence, and agency under constraint. Drawing on Global South epistemologies, lived experience, and relational understandings of resilience, this conceptual paper explores how resilience is produced through every day practices of care, meaning-making, emotional regulation, and connectedness.

Particular attention is given to the microsystem level, where resilience is often enacted in everyday life, where people as caregivers, as families, and at the community level work together to create conditions of safety, stability, and support even when broader systems remain unstable, hostile, or unjust.

Rather than understanding resilience as recovery after hardship, this paper approaches it as an ongoing and relational process shaped in the midst of adversity itself which borders and may explain resistance to injustice. The authors propose a conceptual model organized around three interrelated mechanisms: sense-making, emotional grounding, and relational connectedness, to better explain how resilience is sustained in unjust environments and it may take the form of resistance. In doing so, the paper contributes to resilience scholarship by offering a more contextually grounded framework for understanding resilience as lived practice by the individual or within a community of people who are also experiencing adverse conditions.

JOSEFINA DAVILA VIJIL



Josefina Dávila Vijil is a Nicaraguan psychologist and educator with experience in trauma-informed care, early childhood, teacher training, and family support in contexts of adversity. She has worked across education, research, and community initiatives, psychosocial support and healing spaces under political repression. She is a graduate student in the Erasmus Mundus Master's in Resilience in Educational Contexts (FLOURISH) in the final stage of her dissertation, exploring mothering in exile and how Nicaraguan mothers foster resilience in their children.

ANASTASSIOS MATSOPOULOS



Associate Professor of School Psychology and a bilingual permanently certified school psychologist in the US, Greece and Cyprus. He has considerable teaching, clinical and research experience in the US and Europe in the areas of mental health, resilience and prevention programmes in schools. He has been involved in various EU and international projects in resilience education, well-being, teacher consultation, parent education and family resilience. Dr. Matsopoulos has numerous publications in resilience and socio-emotional health, he is the Founder and First Elected President of the Hellenic Association of School Psychology (HASP, 2021 Affiliate Member of ISPA).

GET IN TOUCH

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Αξιολόγηση

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