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VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS IN KOSOVO

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Abstract

This overview is a summary of the results which we have obtained in the course of our study, related to the problem of violence in Kosovo schools.

We have carried out our research work trying to focus on tasks that were in front of us, and consulted reference texts and other relevant data related to the phenomenon of violence in schools, the factors causing it, and in particular the consequences of violence on the progress of education process. We have carried out the process of the collection and processing of data collected through the questionnaires and conducted the statistical processing of data and identified various statistical parameters (percentage, arithmetical mean, standard deviation, etc.). In addition to the interpretation of the findings of the research, this study also provides our opinion and suggestions on the ways of curbing and eliminating this problem in our schools.

Key words: Violence, school, education process and learner - children.

1. Introduction

Violence in schools is currently considered a problem occurring frequently in Kosovo, but also in other societies (schools) all over the world. That being so, we do believe that opting for the topic “Violence in schools and its impact in the education process” was both becoming and necessary to be studied. Moreover, based on the information from the media and from other subjects, such occurrence in Kosovo is not only present but is also quite spread out and this fact is currently acknowledged by all.

The necessity to develop appropriate and safer conditions in the education process prompts the need and the request of theresearchers to deal with this

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occurrence always in the function of providing alternative possibilities for the abatement of such occurrence in our schools. Identifying sources or factors causing it, in particular identifying consequences of violence is the obligation of today's researchers, part of which we have taken over to carry out.

There is an immense interest for non-appearance of violence in schools by an ever-increasing spectre of factors, both from learners, teachers, parents, etc. as well as from researchers and the entire society. This does not, however, mean that sufficient work was and is being done in this aspect, for as long as we live with its presence in school premises, up to the level of depriving a learner of his/her life and the attempt to commit such an act.

Therefore, the presence and the extent of violence in schools, namely the mere existence of such occurrence, is the crucial fact that obliges researchers to deal with it, always with the purpose of providing their contribution. This developing occurrence is an evil calling to be seriously dealt with by key state factors, including academic circles as well as teachers, learners and parents.

During the course of the research we will identify persons (learners, teachers) and different forms and levels of violence, so that we will be able to confront with the current state of affairs with the possibility of preventing these societal phenomena. Our emphasis falls on the impact of violence in the overall education process.

Violence in schools takes different forms and shapes. Unfortunately, sometimes learners might not realize the designated permissible borderline of normal behaviour or up to what level is such borderline exceeded. Learners usually tend to understand as an unacceptable form of violence only the aggressive conduct followed by an open physical conflict, such as brawl, torture with firearms, injury, etc. Meanwhile, other forms of violence, usually preceding physical violence which at the same time are instigators of causing physical harm to others, are underestimated either by learners and their parents or by school personnel. Psychological violence and its effects are quite often not comprehended as violence, meaning that in front of us (researchers) emerges the basic task to understand the problem, contribute and provide essential explanation of the notion of violence.

Violence, this harmful and dangerous social problem, above all affecting people's lives, is an issue that requires serious study and which should preoccupy and oblige us all to utilize all our competences and our potential in preventing it, thus providing our society the opportunity for a better wellbeing.

Given that the occurrence of violence in schools and its direct impact on the progress of education process is a phenomenon our main goal is to measure it as accurately as possible, to measure its development as well as to provide our proposals for the prevention of such occurrence.

2. Context

Following a centuries-long time period, the country this study is taking place in – Kosovo, has brought its occupation to an end and is now breathing as a free and independent country, though Kosovo continues to be characterised by extremely huge political issues and problems, in the first place, but also with socio-economical ones.

Kosovo is the last unit of the former Yugoslav Federation that accomplished its independence as the outcome of a gory war resulting with numerous people killed, many others missing, many wounded and, to the present date, with no accurately calculated material damage. “The War of the Liberation Army (1997-1999) and NATO air strike intervention in spring 1999 brought to an end the Serbian genocide over the Albanian population of Kosovo”.¹ Kosovo new state, declared on 17th February 2008 and recognized by over 100 countries, continues to face the incessant opposition of its neighbouring country, Serbia, which claims to re-extend its sovereignty over Kosovo territory.

Therefore, being a small country with a population of nearly two million according to the recent statistics, emerging from war with immense economic and human losses, with an education system that has been subjected to reforms in the recent years, thus creating a detachment from the past occupation also in the field of education, as well as in all other areas of social life, Kosovo is a country with numerous social problems.

Facing the phase of re-construction, construction and consolidation in all aspects of social life, as a new state, it continues to have an unstable economy that is characterised by a low budget, a high percentage of population living in poverty and also with an enormous rate of unemployment.

In this context, country’s education system, despite the development, construction of new contemporary schools, despite the numerous advancement trainings for teachers, despite the reform interventions in the entire education system endeavouring to advance it, etc., still leaves a lot to be desired.

The traditional school, which in terms of findings in literature belongs to the past, continues to be present in practice with some of its characteristics even in

¹ www.wikipedia.org

the present days. It has been identified that violence in schools today does not differ a lot from the one in the past whereby even today the teacher gives himself/herself the right to administer violence on the learner and the occurrence of this phenomenon has been identified also in the relations among learners, as well.

Kosovo education process continues to be challenged by many factors amongst which violence remains to be a challenge on its own.

“Numerous studies and surveys have already confirmed that successful teachers maintain a rather organized classroom, they play an important role in the classroom but they also include learners in the process of planning and organizing”². Given that violence in schools is evident, are teachers sufficiently trained to avoid it? Is the school entirely modern? How prepared are we to prevent or eliminate violence as a permanent destructive force of the school and its attendants? These issues call for discussion.

Although progress is made and there is an increased interest for more investment in Kosovo education system, there is still a lot to be done. The investments that Kosovo is currently making in education, position it among many European developed countries; however, these investments have been made and are mainly being made in terms of modernising schools, school premises and providing contemporary school equipment without sufficiently directing such investments towards increasing the level of teachers’ professional development.

3. Violence in Kosovo Schools

Violence in schools is a notion that is heard a great deal by everyone in Kosovo. As we have already stated, researches on this phenomenon are not lacking. In Kosovo, where this study took place, based on the data generated by instruments of our study and based on the methods we applied to complete it, violence and its impact is not only evident but is also a phenomenon with a great deal yet to be studied.

The findings in literature, while reviewing it, and upon browsing media in our country, also provide numerous factual data that violence in Kosovo schools is present in all of its forms, and that it continues to leave grave consequences in the entire education process. Consequences of psychological and physical violence on learners have been elaborated at length and they have escalated to the point where violence in schools even claimed learners’ lives. This is also documented with media reports which are based on the reports issued from information departments of Kosovo Police. Since we are dealing with a problem which, inter alia, has attacked not only the quality of life and the quality of learning in schools but also

² Bardhyl Musai, Education psychology, Tirana 1999, p. 30.

the life itself, the subject of our study is therefore quite concerning. Violence, as it is generally thought of and as it is already known, is the reasonable cause of a range of evils related to a person's personality and, besides that, it poses a threat to the very life of that person.

Whereas, concerning the factors which enable the occurrence and presence of violence in school, World Health Organization (WHO) has identified environmental factors that are present in Kosovo, namely in its schools:

Socio-economic inequality, urbanism and overpopulation;

Speedy economic development, accompanied by a high unemployment rate amongst the young people;

Impact of public information means;

Social norms supporting violent behaviour;

Availability of weapons, and

Post-conflict situation.³

In light of the above, violence in Kosovo schools has its instigating factors which have to be taken into consideration during the course of any study related to this issue.

"We still remain a traditional society which is based on solving problems by use of force. In fact, the models which students learn in their families and in general society in the community, they attempt to apply such models also in schools. This is first".⁴

3.1.Forms of Violence Occurring in Schools

It is obvious that regardless of the extent and forms of violence that is present in schools, it always leaves certain psycho-physical consequence on the child's development. In one way or the other, these consequences will accompany the future personality of the child during his entire life. It was often discussed about violence classification and, quite often, such classification ended up in physical violence and psychological violence. For research purposes, in this study

³UNICEF-Kosovo: Study on Violence against Children in Kosovo Schools, 2005, p. 19.

⁴ <http://www.evropaelire.org/a/24931033.html>

we shall not only discuss about physical and psychological violence but we shall also examine another form of violence, namely the form of combined violence.

Table no.6. Types of violence occurring in school

Types of violence		Frequency	Percentage	Acceptable Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Physical violence	129	21.6	22.4	22.4
	Psychological violence	106	17.7	18.4	40.9
	Combined violence	340	56.9	59.1	100.0
	Total	575	96.2	100.0	
Missing	Refuses to respond	23	3.8		
Total		598	100.0		

Table no. 6 shows data on the types of violence occurring in schools, data were provided by students themselves, out of which 340 stated that the combined violence is the form of violence most often taking place in schools, 129 stated that it is physical violence, 106 stated it is psychological violence and 23 of the respondents refused to provide a response.

Based on the data provided in figure 5, it results that combined violence is the first with a high percentage of 56.9%, followed by physical violence with 21.6% and psychological violence with 17.7%.

Table 7: Data related to other forms of violence presented in percentage

	Frequency	Percentage	Acceptable Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
No comments	584	97.7	97.7	97.7
Valid Yes	10	1.7	1.7	99.3
No	4	.7	.7	100.0
Total	598	100.0	100.0	

To the question: Indicate other forms of violence if you have noticed, in this case a great number of learners did not provide any comment at all, whereas 1.7% of learners recorded other forms of violence, while 0.7% stated that there are no other forms of violence apart from the ones listed above.

3.2. Psychological Violence

Although it is the most difficultly detected form of violence, psychological violence occurs in schools and it even leaves considerable consequences on the subjects experiencing it, and these subjects are usually learners. Emotional violence implemented by teacher over a learner is not the only relation of exercising it. It “is exercised by way of verbal and non-verbal assault or with negligence and intentional exclusion by learner’s peers”⁵ and thus the density of its application increases including all relations within the school: teacher-student, student-teacher and student-student.

Psychological violence is a form of abuse, wherein abusers often times make a lot of efforts to keep their victims silent by applying threatening measures. Abusers fear a lot from revealing their inability or being held accountable for their actions.

⁵Prof.Mr.Sc. Muhamet Q. Mazreku, Violence among students and its typology. SHB: “Berati”, Prizren, 2012, p. 64.

This makes sense if one bears in mind the fact that violence is conducted exactly to camouflage inability. People who commit violence are really incompetent persons.

The main purpose of violence is to hide incompetence. Violence has no connection of whatsoever with management or similar issues. Psychological violence is not management. Therefore, all those persons who commit violence are actually hiding their incompetence. The level of psychological violence indicates the level of incompetence. The abusers blame others for their own incompetence, for the following reasons:

- To avoid confronting with their own incompetence.
- To avoid taking responsibility as a consequence of their actions and the impact such actions have on the others.
- To lessen fear that their real self might be revealed. They are weak and incompetent individuals.
- To distract attention from their own incompetence.
- This is the way how incompetent and aggressive employees maintain their job in an unsafe and badly managed environment.

Violence is a failed manner of performance. After every harassment, discrimination, prejudgment, abuse, persecution, conflict and violence, is hidden psychological violence.

According to the research data, it appears that besides the various forms of violence there is also an encouragement from teachers themselves to cause violence between learners and teachers, meaning that in some cases, and according to evidence, 34% of students responded that it is the teacher who in certain cases causes direct violence by offending students in different forms.

3.3.Physical Violence

Among the forms of violence we have addressed in this study, physical violence is the most obvious and also the most extreme form of violence which is usually associated with or preceded by psychological violence.

“Physical violence includes any direct physical assault on the victim, namely any situation in which an individual or group of peers causes pain or injury

to another individual or group of persons with the purpose of subduing, humiliating, intimidating or changing his/her stance".⁶

Physical punishment of learners seems to lead to a very complex situation which results not only with physical injury of the victim/learner, in this case, but also results to a great extent with sustained psychological harm, leading even to loss of self-confidence which is not only necessary but is also indispensable in becoming a success-oriented person.

"Children and young persons with low self-confidence may have difficulties in accomplishing their life needs – making friends, providing answers in the classroom or even deciding what to have for breakfast"⁷, and when facing with violence their self-confidence is shaken and suffers a decline.

3.4. Combined Violence

The two aforementioned forms of violence, psychological violence and physical violence are rarely encountered as being applied separately. Usually, violence combined of these two forms, namely emotional and physical violence occurs in schools.

Violence experienced by students comprises one of the general causes of "problematic behaviour"⁸ which appears in all areas of young people's lives.

⁶ Prof.Mr.Sc. Muhamet Q. Mazreku, Violence among students and its typology. SHB: "Berati", Prizren, 2012, p. 84.

⁷ Nora J. Krantzler, PhD, MPH and William M.Kane, PhD, CHES: Emotional and Mental Health", ALB-MED, Prishtina, 2008, p. 20.

⁸ Ibid. p. 20.

3.5.Relations in which School Violence Occurs

3.5.1. Teacher-Learner Violence

Table no.8 Data related to teachers insulting learners

	Frequency	Percentage	Acceptable Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid Yes	392	65.6	65.6	65.6
No	206	34.4	34.4	100.0
Total	598	100.0	100.0	

The table above shows that 65.6% of learners stated that they are continually insulted by teachers, compared to 34.4% who stated that they are never insulted by their teachers.

Data indicate that this is a significantly high figure for teachers who apply insults and abusive language towards children as a means of education, which are both concerning and a cause of instigating conflicts.

Table no. 9: Data on the violence between learner and the teacher

	Frequency	Percentage	Acceptable Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid Yes	136	22.7	22.7	22.7
No	462	77.3	77.3	100.0
Total	598	100.0	100.0	

The research showed that there are fewer cases of brawls between learners and the teaching staff. Out of the total number of respondents to this research, 77.3% stated that there is no brawl between students and teachers, 22.7% stated that they had such cases. Nevertheless, these data should also be concerning for us because no matter how rare they are, they still do occur.

3.5.2.Learner-Learner Violence

Tablono. 10: Data on violence between learners

	Frequency	Percentage	Acceptable Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid Yes	554	92.6	92.6	92.6
No	44	7.4	7.4	100.0
Total	598	100.0	100.0	

Based on this research, one can observe that violence which occurs and which represents a high percentage of occurrence is the one between learners, 92.6% out of the total number of respondents confirmed the phenomenon of violence occurring in schools

3.5.3.Learner-Teacher Violence

Table no. 11: Data related to the insulting of teachers by learners

	Frequency	Percentage	Acceptable Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid Yes	273	45.7	45.7	45.7
No	325	54.3	54.3	100.0
Total	598	100.0	100.0	

According to the data presented in figure above, the percentage of students insulting teachers is 45.7%, whereas 54.3% state that there are no insults in the learner-teacher relation. Therefore, based on these data one can presume that the cause of conflict may also be insults directed to teachers.

3.5.4.Violence Against School Inventory

Table no.12. Data on damaging school inventory

	Frequency	Percentage	Acceptable Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid Yes	348	58.2	58.2	58.2
No	250	41.8	41.8	100.0
Total	598	100.0	100.0	

Based on the data presented in figures drawn from the research, learners provided data of 58.2% claiming that there are different types of damaging of school inventory compared with 41.8% of those claiming that this does not exist.

3.5.5. Violence in Relations Learner- Learner from Different Schools

Table no. 13. Data on the altercation of students with students from different schools

	Frequency	Percentage	Acceptable Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	287	48.0	48.0	48.0
Valid No	311	52.0	52.0	100.0
Total	598	100.0	100.0	

According to the data drawn from the research and presented in figure above, students provided data of 48% claiming that there are altercations between learners of a certain school with learners from different schools, whereas 52% claimed that such occurrence does not exist.

3.5.6.Violence in relations between sexes: boys - girls

Table no. 14: Data on altercations between students in boys – girls relation

	Frequency	Percentage	Acceptable Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid Yes	305	51.0	51.0	51.0
No	293	49.0	49.0	100.0
Total	598	100.0	100.0	

According to the data presented in the diagram above, 51% of students responded that there are conflicts, violence between girls and boys, whereas 49% responded that there is no violence caused between sexes.

3.5.7.Violence on Learners by Persons from outside the School

Table no. 15: Data on violence on learners from persons outside the school

	Frequency	Percentage	Acceptable Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid Yes	200	33.4	33.4	33.4
No	398	66.6	66.6	100.0
Total	598	100.0	100.0	

According to the data presented in the diagram, students provided data of 33.4% that there is threatening from persons who are not part of their school, whereas 66.6% claimed that there is no threatening from outside. The percentage of 33.4% is by all means a data sufficient to claim that there are threats from persons outside the school, which can manifest violence of different types.

4.Conclusions

In conclusion of this study we have endeavoured to provide some results – conclusions which were drawn from the research work we have accomplished. We do believe that these results will contribute to a great extent to the educational work in our primary schools. We will make efforts to provide answers to our research questions, such as: What are the forms of violence occurring in school? What is physical violence? What is psychological violence? What is combined violence? What are the extent and relations in which violence occurs? What are the instigating factors of school violence? What are the consequences of violence? What is the impact of violence, with special emphasis on students' success? What is the impact of violence on their behaviour at school? What is the impact of violence on the behaviour of learners in relation to the teacher? What is the impact of violence on students' behaviour among each-other? What is the impact of violence on the behaviour of students outside the school? What are the factors influencing prevention? What is the role of the family in prevention of violence? What is the role of the school? What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of Pedagogical-Psychological Service in preventing violence in schools and the role of the Social Worker?

- Violence is present in Kosovo schools; this is also confirmed based on the data we have obtained from respondents;
It was found that there is physical violence, psychological violence, as well as combined violence in our schools. However, respondents did not provide any data regarding any other type of violence in schools.

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