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THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN THE PREVENTION OF PEER VIOLENCE

The school has a very important role in the education of students. At the same time, all children should have equal chances to realize their right to education without discrimination. In addition, they have the right to be protected not only from discrimination, but also from any form of violence, abuse and neglect. Today, a special problem is peer violence, which has different forms and can manifest itself in different environments, both in the physical and in the digital environment. Therefore, it seems that today's education system requires a different approach.

In the paper, we will first of all point out the rights of the child, which are guaranteed by both international documents and national regulations, as well as the role of the school in their realization. Bearing in mind that we deal with the subject of peer violence in our work, our research is limited to pointing out the importance and role of the school in the prevention of peer violence, bearing in mind that one of the rights of the child is protection from any form of violence. In the first part of the paper, we will first point out the international documents that guarantee these rights, and then the content of national regulations. In the second part of the paper, we will point to the results of the author's research from the previous period, and then to the research we conducted in June 2021, on a sample of about 500 students from the territory of different cities in the Republic of Serbia, which concerns digital peer violence. In this way, we would like to point out the need for a more active involvement of the school in the process of preventing peer violence even in those situations when it does not take place physically in the school, but its participants are students of the school.

Keywords: *role of school, prevention, peer violence*

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1. Introduction

The role of the school in the prevention of peer violence is a very important topic that is dealt with not only by scientific literature, but also by a large number of experts from different fields. Her role in the aforementioned area enables the realization of the child's right to be protected from any form of violence.

By assuming obligations from the ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child (Law on the Ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Official Gazette of the SFRY*-supplement: International Treaties No. 15/90 and *Official Gazette of the FRY*-Supplement: International Treaties, No. 4/96 and 2/97) the state has assumed the obligation that every individual, as well as institutions, protect the rights of the child and to improve his position both in the family, as well as in institutions and the entire social community. (Žunić-Cicvarić & Cicvarić, 2010: 2).

According to Article 29 of the Convention, and the recommendation of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, states should improve the quality of education through curriculum reform, include training on human rights and children's rights in curricula, organize programs and activities to promote tolerance, peace and cultural understanding diversity in order to prevent intolerance, violence and discrimination, both in school and in society (Žunić-Cicvarić & Cicvarić: 17).

Even before the aforementioned Convention, international documents guaranteed the rights of the child. According to the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child from 1924, every child must have the means necessary for his normal material and spiritual development.[1] Unlike the aforementioned document, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child provides that the child enjoys special protection and that the law must provide him with oporunities and means for healthy and proper physical, psychological, moral, spiritual and social development in conditions of freedom and dignity. In implementation of those rights, the best interests of the child must be taken into account.[2]

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[1] Available at: http://www.un-documents.net/gdrc1924.htm, Accessed 11.9.2022.

[2] Item 2 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child from 1959. Stated according to Children's Rights in International Documents (2011), Belgrade: Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Protector of Citizens, 90. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/serbia/sites/unicef.org.serbia/files/2018-08/Prava_deteta_u_medjunarodnim_dokumentima.pdf, Accessed 11.9.2022.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was also ratified by the Republic of Serbia, the contracting parties undertook to implement adequate legal, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, abuse, negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse or negligent treatment, mistreatment or exploitation (Article 19 of the Convention). This implies not only the adoption of laws and by-laws, but also the adoption of various plans and programs and their implementation in practice. Therefore, at the institutional level, in order to suppress peer violence, the school should undertake a large number of preventive activities.

UNHCR believes that providing education and organizing activities for children can contribute to the prevention of violence. One of the recommendations of the mentioned organization is to encourage both parents and children for continuous education and participation in various organized activities in order to influence the prevention of aggression and violence. Accordingly, the school is the environment in which such activities can be carried out, act as an incentive for the prevention of violence and improve the role of parents in preventing any form of peer violence. One of the basic goals of education would be to reduce the impact of negative behavior models on students in order to reduce peer violence (School-based violence prevention, A practical handbook, 2019: 2).[3]

The basis for undertaking various activities aimed at preventing peer violence is contained in the legal and by-laws adopted at the level of the Republic of Serbia. However, their implementation depends on the readiness of various social factors to react in a timely manner and to get involved in the prevention program in an adequate way.

2. The legal basis for the prevention of peer violence at the level of the Republic of Serbia and the definition of violence

The basic principle of education and upbringing implies that all children have the same right to education and upbringing and that they have equal chances for it without discrimination. In addition, the basic principles include respect for human rights and the rights of every child and student with respect for human dignity, fostering cooperation and tolerance, as well as commitment to basic moral values and full respect for the rights

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[3] Available at: https://www.unicef.org/media/58081/file/UNICEF-WHO-UNESCO-handbook-school-based-violence.pdf, Accessed 11.9.2022.

of children and adults. In order to implement the stated principles, it is necessary to achieve the goals of education and upbringing by providing welfare and support for the overall development of children and students, as well as providing a stimulating and safe environment for the overall development of children and students, developing non-violent behavior and establishing zero tolerance towards violence (Article 7 of the Law on the Basics of the Education System, *Official Gazette of the RS*, no. 88/2017, 27/2018 - another law, 10/2019, 27/2018 - another law, 6/2020 and 129/2021).

Every child in an educational institution has the right to be protected from discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect (Article 79, paragraph 1, item 4) of the Law on the Basics of the Education System). Accordingly, it is necessary for the school to undertake a series of activities and adopt a plan and program of action aimed at preventing peer violence.

Violence is a big problem for children's development. If it is not acted upon in a timely manner, it can leave lasting consequences on the individual. Peer violence has different forms, and they are defined in more detail by the Rulebook on the protocol of behavior in the institution in response to violence, abuse and neglect (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, no. 46/2019 and 104/2020). In accordance with the mentioned act, it means any form of verbal or non-verbal behavior once done or repeated that has the effect of actually or potentially endangering the health, development and dignity of the child, student or employee. [4]In addition to the above, there are other definitions of violence. According to the Education and Skills Committee of Great Britain, bullying means behavior that is aimed at endangering not only physical, but also psychological health and includes, hurting, provocations, making fun of, making negative comments, hitting, pushing, taking things, sending inappropriate messages via e-mail, sending inappropriate photos via the Internet, gossiping, removing children from the peer group and spreading false and offensive information (Bullying, House of Commons, Education and Skills Committee, The Stationery Office, London, 2008: 8, stated according to Đorić, 2009: 148). It seems that peer violence used to be most often associated with physical violence. However, today the concept of peer violence is much broader.

This is also recognized in the Rulebook on the protocol of behavior in the institution in response to violence, abuse and neglect. The aforementioned act recognizes both physical and psychological (emotional), social and digital violence. Physical means behavior that

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[4] See: Vujović, R. (2020) The Child's right to dignity and bodily integrity – European standards and Case Law, in: Yearbook Human Rights Protection: The right to human dignity, (Zoran Pavlović, ed.), no 3. Novi Sad: Provinicial Protector of Citizens – Ombudsman and Institute for Criminological and Sociological Research, 75-92.

can lead to actual or potential physical injury to a child, student or employee, as well as physical punishment of children and students by employees and other adults. Mental means violence that leads to immediate or permanent endangerment of the mental or emotional health and dignity of a child, student or employee. Although it seems that it was previously neglected, today social violence is also recognized as a form of violence. According to the Protocol, it means any exclusion of the child and participant from the peer group and various forms of social activities, separation from others, non-acceptance based on diversity, denial of information, isolation from the community and denial of meeting social needs.

It should be borne in mind that some new forms of violence can affect children to a greater extent, and it is very difficult to detect them by the school, unlike, for example, physical violence. This is the case with digital violence, which, according to the same Rulebook, means the misuse of information technologies that can result in the injury of another person and endangering their dignity. The mentioned type of violence is manifested by sending messages by e-mail, sending messages via SMS, MMS, via a website, chatting, participating in forums, social networks and the like. This type of violence is the most dangerous, because potential abusers are separated due to the distance, i.e. lack of direct contact, as well as the victim's unwillingness to oppose the act of violence at the moment. That's why it happens very often on social networks or applications for exchanging phone calls and messages (eg Viber). The fact that in recent years more and more young children have their own profiles on social networks is particularly worrying. Thus, according to the policies of the Facebook company, a person who opens a profile on that social network must be at least 13 years old at the time of its opening. However, this is not taken into account by the said company *ex officio*, but parents can report that a person under the age of 13 has opened a profile on the said network, as well as delete the profile of their minor child (stated according to Kostić, 2017: 421).

Given the fact that children cannot be deprived of communication in the digital environment, which in the era of the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus has proven to be extremely useful, the Committee on the Rights of the United Nations has issued General Comment No. 25 (2021) on the rights of the child in in connection with the digital economy. Item 4 of the aforementioned Comment states that children's rights must be respected, protected and realized in the digital environment as well. The realization of these rights must be based on the following principles: non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, respect for the views of the child (Part III of the General Comment). If children undertake acts of violence in the digital environment, the contracting states should follow preventive, protective and

corrective legal approaches towards children who are involved in peer violence either as perpetrators. In addition, they need to take adequate institutional measures in order to prevent violence in such an environment (paragraph 82).[5] This implies the undertaking of adequate measures by the school, which performs a very important role in the process of education and upbringing.

3. Obligations of the school in the prevention of peer violence

The school's obligation is to ensure respect for human rights and the rights of every child and student with respect for human dignity and to provide education and upbringing in a democratically organized and socially responsible institution that fosters openness, cooperation, tolerance, awareness of cultural and civilizational connections in the world, commitment basic moral values, values of justice, truth, solidarity, freedom, honesty and responsibility in which respect for the rights of children and students is fully ensured (Article 7, paragraph 1, item 3) of the Law on the Basics of the Education System).

In order for the school to fulfill its legal obligations, it is of particular importance to achieve quality communication with students during the teaching process and to observe problems from the students' perspective. The authors especially emphasize the importance of openness in the communication between teachers and parents, which is later reflected in the communication between students. Thus, teachers provide a desirable model with their way of communication, which can have a positive effect on the relationship and communication among peers, and on the development of students themselves (Popović, 2014: 78 and 77). This contributes to the achievement of one of the general goals of education and upbringing, which consists in providing a stimulating and safe environment for the overall development of children, students and adults, the development of non-violent behavior and the establishment of zero tolerance towards violence (Article 8, paragraph 1, item 2) of the Law on the Basics of the Education System). Achieving that goal enables the realization of students' right to protection from discrimination, violence and abuse (Article 79, paragraph 1, item 4 of the Law on the Basics of the Education System). The realization of the right to this protection also represents an obligation for other students to respect the personality of other students (Article 80, Paragraph 1, item 5) of the Law.). The law stipulates that any form of

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[5] General comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, Committee on the Rights of the Child. Text in english is available at: https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/053/43/PDF/G2105343.pdf?OpenElement, Accessed 11.9.2022.

violence, both physical and psychological, social, sexual, digital and any other violence and abuse of students is prohibited in school (Article 111, paragraph 1 of the Law).

According to the protocol of actions in the institution in response to violence, abuse and neglect, the department head, educator, teacher and professional associate have the duty to ensure the protection of the child and student from arbitrary or illegal interference in his privacy, family, home or correspondence, as well as protection from illegal attacks on his honor and reputation. This is exactly why it is important to have a violence prevention program at the school level, as well as internal procedures for dealing with such situations.

Although school employees do not have to directly undertake an act of violence, they can create a situation that can be a source of student dissatisfaction, so it can manifest itself in the form of peer violence (Popović: 81). It is, for example, it can reflect through favoring certain students or excessive and frequent criticism. In addition, the authors state that teachers can even have a direct influence on the occurrence of peer violence at school. So they, for example, they can be violent, perceive violence, react in the wrong way or remain indifferent to its occurrence (Olweus 1993, stated according to Popović: 81).

The effective response of teachers should include constant monitoring of students and taking quick and direct action, without ignoring suspicious cases. In addition to the direct influence, the authors highlight the importance of the indirect relationship of teachers through their relationship with students and teaching (Popović: 81). That is why the continuous training of teachers in order to acquire skills for the prevention of peer violence in schools is of great importance. Sometimes teachers are not even aware that they have contributed to its appearance with their own behavior.

The manner in which the school acts in case of suspicion of peer violence is not prescribed in detail by the Law, but rather by the Rulebook on the protocol of actions in the institution in response to violence and abuse. According to that act, the school should implement preventive activities that raise the level of awareness and sensitivity of children, students, parents and employees to recognize all forms of violence, foster an atmosphere of cooperation and tolerance, respect and constructive communication, and build an environment where violence is not tolerated. abuse and neglect, improve the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to create a safe and supportive environment and to respond constructively to violence. However, if the violent behavior is repeated and if the educational work was not effective, if the consequences are more severe, if it is violence and abuse by a group towards an individual or if the same person commits repeated violence and abuse at the first level, the school has an obligation to at the internal level

of the implementation of the pivot measure. Bearing in mind that some forms of violence such as verbally and socially transferred into the digital space, the question can be raised as to how to react if this type of violence occurs outside of school, but between peers who attend the same school, bearing in mind that it is not defined by a legal provision. The conclusion is that different interpretations are possible. However, bearing in mind that the obligations of students are stipulated by the Law, as well as the definition of digital violence, which can also happen outside of school, it is our opinion that even in such situations the school must react if it is a question of communication between children from the same class or school. (Kostić, 2021: 1700). Violence in the digital space can be even more dangerous than what happens in direct contact. Namely, it is characterized by three characteristics. The first is reflected in the permanence of messages sent to peers in the digital environment. There is also the ease and freedom of sending insults, which is conditioned by the lack of direct communication, while the third characteristic is the invasive approach of negative texts that are delivered via computer or phone (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007: 93; Stanković, 2019: 14).

The school should take the prevention of violence, abuse and neglect seriously and plan the activities that contribute to the realization of that goal with a development plan and an annual work plan. It should contribute to the creation and improvement of a safe environment. In addition, the existence of a program for protection against violence is also important. It is created based on the analysis of the state of security of all aspects of the school environment, the presence of various forms and intensities of violence, abuse and neglect, the specificity of the institution and the results of self-evaluation and evaluation of the quality of the institution's work.

This points to the need for careful monitoring and analysis of the state of peer violence at the school level throughout the year, and not only during the period of preparation and development of the violence protection program. The protection program defines preventive and intervention activities, responsible persons and the time dynamics of their implementation. It must define preventive measures and activities that will be carried out in everyday life and work within the framework of educational, teaching and extracurricular activities, measures for professional development of employees in order to improve competencies for preventive work, timely detection, recognition, response to violence, abuse and neglect, ways of informing about obligations and responsibilities in the field of protection from violence, abuse and neglect, development of content and methods for increased educational work with the aim of developing self-responsible and socially responsible behavior, development of procedures for early recognition of the risk of violence, abuse and neglect, improvement of ways of responding to violence, abuse

and neglect, division and strengthening of roles and responsibilities when acting in cases where there is a suspicion of the existence of violence and abuse, planning and planning the form and content of work with children and students, that is, those who suffer, commit or witness violence, abuse and neglect, planning the way, form and content of cooperation with the family, local self-government unit, competent organizational police unit, center for social work, health service, judicial authorities and determination of monitoring, evaluation and reporting methods. A special part of the program should refer to designing ways of monitoring, evaluating and reporting to the institution's authorities on the implementation and effects of the protection program, especially in relation to the frequency of incident situations and the number of reports, the representation of different forms and levels of violence, abuse and neglect, the number of injuries, the frequency and number of educational and disciplinary procedures against students and disciplinary procedures against employees, the number and effects of operational protection plans, training in the prevention of violence, abuse and neglect and the need for further training, the number and effects of actions that promote cooperation, understanding and help of peers, as and the degree and quality of parents' involvement in the life and work of the institution (Rule on the Protocol of procedure in institutions in response to violence, abuse and neglect). This should be approached seriously, bearing in mind the seriousness of the consequences of peer violence. The results of the research by Schneider and other researchers on the impact of the Internet and traditional forms of violence on psychological stress in 20,406 high school students in the USA show that students who were exposed to both types of violence had worse academic results than other respondents. Among those students, depressive symptoms, the presence of suicidal thoughts, a tendency to self-harm and suicide attempts were also recorded. In addition, the results show that the negative consequences of peer violence in the digital environment are even greater than traditional forms of abuse (Schneider, 2021; Vaillancourt *et al.*, 2017: 370).

However, the fact that many schools do not take a serious approach to solving the problem of peer violence is worrying. On the websites of most schools, programs for the prevention of peer violence, protection programs, and reports on the state of peer violence and the measures taken to combat it are not clearly highlighted. Although a number of activities are undertaken at a higher level with the aim of preventing and empowering teachers and students in opposing peer violence, it seems that there are no clear and reliable indicators in schools on the basis of which it would be determined which measures were actually taken in terms of prevention and ways of responding to reported cases of peer violence. If peer violence is reported, this type of reporting is mostly

contained in the annual reports on the school's work. However, it seems that it would be useful if the reporting on it was highlighted, and the information was available to all interested parties.

One of the key findings according to the results of the regional research on the state of violence against children in schools in Southeast Europe is that schools react less to cases of psychological violence, as well as that local communities have social norms that do not encourage children to report violence and that the community itself tends to tolerate psychological violence. A lack of preventive and educational programs was also observed, while those that already exist in schools are considered insufficiently efficient and effective (Milojević & Lazor Obradović, 2021: 2). Children lack confidence in community institutions, as well as their ability to provide them with adequate protection. In addition, a lack of trust in internal school mechanisms regarding prevention and protection from peer violence was also observed. Despite the children's conviction that in case of peer violence they could talk to teachers and school pedagogues, the research also showed that the dominant attitude is that more should be done to change the way of responding to violence (Milojević & Lazor Obradović: 19).

4. Causes of peer violence and students' attitude towards peer violence

Violence is a phenomenon that should by no means be ignored. According to research, the consequences of peer violence can have a negative impact in later life, both on partner and parental relationships (Ilić, 2021: 37).

The causes of peer violence are different. One of them is the desire to prove oneself and belong to a group of peers. If that group justifies and encourages violence, it will have an impact on the behavior of every individual who is part of the group. Individuals who want to belong to it try to adapt to the behavior, value system and attitudes of the members, thus accepting some socially unacceptable behaviors (Ilić: 34).

Some minors resort to peer violence because they think it's fun or they do it to get revenge for some behavior that an abusive person has taken towards them (Ferrara *et al*., 2018: 2). The authors even believe that sometimes peer violence is not directed by any previous provocation, and one of the ways of manifestation can be exclusion from the peer group (Bulat Rajhvan & Ajduković, 2012: 168). Bearing in mind the internal nature of aggressive behavior towards a person, as well as the intention to cause harm, some authors distinguish between peer violence and peer abuse. Referring to Olweus (1999) in his paper the authors Bulat Rajhvan & Ajduković state that certain behavior can be

considered peer bullying if it is aggressive behavior or intentional harm to another person, which is repeated and lasts for some time and characterized by an imbalance of power in those interpersonal relationships (Bulat Rajhvan & Ajduković: 168).

The results of research conducted in Croatia in 2005 indicate that pre-adolescent children commit more violence towards others, and that the frequency of violent behavior increases if children feel rejected or unsafe in the school environment. (Buljan Flander *et al.*, 2007: 171). This can represent a vicious circle, because according to some research, minors commit violence because of acceptance, i.e. in order not to feel rejected. In addition, minors who feel rejected exhibit the highest degree of direct or indirect aggression (Selmivelli, 2000, stated according to Vasić *et al.*, 2018: 78).

According to a 2014 study on peer violence in Niš and Vidin, students cited as a reason the attention of students who perpetrate some form of violence on themselves (40%), then different educational styles of violent students (18%), and the inability to resolve conflicts, as well as the inability to resolve the conflict, except by resorting to violence (17%) (Report on the prevalence, types and causes of peer violence in Niš and Vidin, 2014: 8).

The respondents stated that the reasons also depend on the type of peer violence. Thus, electronic violence is manifested most often due to the anonymity it provides, because such a method of communication encourages doing what otherwise would not be possible, while the cause of verbal violence is most often cited as disagreement in opinion, attitudes and religious beliefs. In addition, jealousy and the division of society into popular and unpopular, as well as different styles of clothing, opinions and behavior, are cited as reasons. Students of primary schools in Vidin are, for example, cited as the main reason for mutual differences between students, which leads to the manifestation of power and intolerance between students. Violent students draw attention to themselves, and those who suffer violence withdraw into themselves, which leads to the deepening of differences and the impossibility of resolving violence (*Ibid*: 9). In the same research, the students, for example, as the most pronounced form of violent behavior they emphasized verbal, followed by physical, social, sexual and electronic violence (*Ibid*:13).

As verbal and social peer violence can be transferred to the digital environment, we were interested in the perception of verbal and social peer violence in the digital environment during the COVID-19 virus pandemic, given that the presence of children on the Internet due to isolation increased during that period, and there was also an increased risk of digital violence. The research was conducted through a questionnaire, and 500 respondents from

elementary schools from the territory of Belgrade, Novi Bečej, Kragujevac and Smederevo participated in it. Bearing in mind the fact that minors are increasingly using digital technologies and opening profiles on social networks, as well as the fact that the frequency of peer violence is very common in the pre-adolescent period, the sample consisted of students aged 10-14. The largest number of respondents, even 44.2% of them, believe that more violence is represented on social networks and applications for exchanging telephone calls and messages than in person, 36.8% declared that it is equally represented both on social networks and in schools, while 19% respondents believe that peer violence is more common in school during direct communication (Kostić & Ranaldi, 2022: 92). This indicates the need for a comprehensive approach to solving the problem of peer violence. Plans and programs of the school for solving peer violence, measures related to the prevention of gang violence in the digital environment must also be included.

According to the results of the research, a total of 68.1% declared that they know who they should turn to if they suffer verbal violence, 18.1% that they do not know who they should turn to, but believe that the insult cannot harm anyone, not even him. In contrast to them, 10.3% of respondents declared that they do not know who they should turn to if they suffer verbal violence, and 3.5% know who they should turn to, but would never turn to them because they believe that no one can help them in those situations. This indicates that education should also include teaching students how to react to violence and prevent their own victimization and is exactly why education and building trust between teachers and students is important (Kostić, 2021: 1705).

When it comes to the trainings that have already been conducted on the topic of preventing peer violence in the digital environment, 11.9% of respondents declared that they were completely useless, a large number of respondents, 39.4%, declared that they were very useful, and 39.4% that the trainings were useful, but that they should be adapted to the age of the minors attending them. This leads to the conclusion that trainings in this area are very useful and that the school should organize this type of training more often with the prior development of strategies at the institutional level (Kostić & Ranaldi: 91 and 92).

5. Conclusion

Although, at the national level, the Law on the Basics of the Education and Training System, and the Rulebook on the Protocol of Behavior in the Institution and the Response to Violence, Abuse and Neglect provide the basis and method of response of school

institutions to peer violence, it seems that it is still necessary to make additional efforts in order to the system of protecting children from peer violence was improved. Bearing in mind the increasingly frequent use of digital technologies in the mutual communication of minors, it seems that verbal and social violence is taking on a new form and that it is necessary to take adequate measures to suppress this new form of violence. This was recognized by the United Nations Organization, so in accordance with this, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a General Comment on the rights of the child in relation to the digital environment in 2021. Although digital violence can be perpetrated at any time and outside of school, it should take adequate measures to prevent it. This primarily refers to measures of an educational and educational nature, but also to measures that adequately respond to the reporting of such cases.

According to the research results, although children have no problem reporting cases of peer violence to teachers and psychologists, there is still no confidence in the effectiveness of the school system's response. This forces the conclusion that it is necessary to improve the response system through various mechanisms. First of all, although peer violence is reported most often in the annual report on the school's work, we believe that trust would be improved to a greater extent if the report on this phenomenon were published on the school's website. When it comes to creating a program for the prevention of peer violence, it should not be understood as a formal obligation, but risk assessment and security analysis should be approached seriously at the school level, taking into account cases and situations from the previous period.

When it comes to education, it seems that it should take place continuously, not only for the teaching staff and psychologists, but also for the students themselves. Based on the research conducted in June 2021, it can be concluded that a large number of students evaluate the educational programs of the school in the field of prevention of peer violence as very useful. In addition, a large number of students believe that such education should be adapted to the age of the students.

The largest number of respondents from the survey conducted in June 2021 believe that violence is equally prevalent both in school and in the digital environment. In times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 virus pandemic, an increasing number of students use information technologies and applications to exchange calls and messages, thus increasing the possibility of becoming victims of peer violence in the digital environment. Therefore, it is necessary to work on empowering students in order to prevent their own victimization, as well as familiarizing them with the most adequate way of reacting to this type of violence, so that it does not happen that conflicts from the virtual environment are

transferred to physical environments such as school, which can result and physical violence among children.

In order to prevent this type of violence, in addition to parents, the school should also play an important role. Bearing in mind that digital violence is also committed outside of school, as well as after classes, the school should also take adequate measures to prevent and prevent this type of violence if students from its school participate in it. Because of this reason it is first of all necessary to develop adequate action programs and establish a relationship of trust between children and teaching staff. Also of great importance is the establishment of cooperation mechanisms between the school and parents, through inclusion in various educational programs and workshops of the school on the topic of prevention of peer violence.

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