

# SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND STUDENT WELL-BEING IN SERBIA

## Research Findings and Recommendations





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October 2025

Council of Europe

**Serbian edition:  
НАСИЉЕ У ШКОЛАМА И  
ДОБРОБИТ УЧЕНИКА У СРБИЈИ  
Налази истраживања и препоруке**

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*All terms used in the text in the masculine grammatical gender include the masculine and feminine genders of the persons to whom they refer.*

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# Preface

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**H**ow? Many questions rose in recent years in response to the attempts of the education system to improve its preventive and educational work amid the influx of news coming from the educational system and portraying school violence as dominant, thereby referring to primarily peer violence, violence against teachers, and teacher violence against students. Despite all the protocols, training, and other measures the Ministry of Education prescribed and implemented, the public formed an opinion based on the media reporting that “the education system generates violence.” We knew that portrayal of the fact that violence is exhibited in the interaction between children at school is a consequence of school naturally being the place where children spent most of their day, and not because the school itself generates violence, understanding also that each child has their own habits and values that they bring from their families. Nonetheless, the school had a responsibility to improve its preventive measures and to consistently act in situations of all types of violence, whenever they happen.

The May 2023 tragedies shocked and left us taken aback over the brutality of two young men, one who was a juvenile and the other who had just turned eighteen. Nineteen persons died, most of whom were children and youth, with many others injured in tragedies which did not have their prehistory or an indication that they could have occurred, one taking place in a school and the other amid a holiday mood where the youth only wanted to be happy. All of us had questions and a need to restore a sense of control over what was happening in the various roles that life has assigned to us or that we have chosen ourselves: the parental, upbringing role, the role of those who need to continuously improve their knowledge in a constantly changing world, the role of those who create and promote the new so called “social values” and... I could go on and on...

**WHY?** There were many examples of peer violence in which we recognised dysfunctional families with clear signs of parental incompetence and violent behaviour in the family, although this was not so clearly recognised in the above-mentioned examples. There was no educational or economic deprivation in the family, which, according to the prevailing theory and stereotypes, is often a trigger for violence...

The young lives of future composers, poets, artists, doctors, lawyers, professors, future mothers and fathers have been lost... Their parents will feel pain their entire lives and will not live to be grandparents through their children. There is no answer to this question – Why?

We have recognised that the goal of the Ministry of Education, which continuously takes care of prevention and wellbeing of children, is to return the feeling of safety and predictability. Besides the psychological support provided to everyone affected by the tragedies, children, teachers, and parents of deceased children, it was important to ensure systemic support for the future and to provide answers to questions.

Immediately after the tragic events in May, the Ministry of Education once again began reviewing the already prepared amendments to legal acts and by-laws in the area of protection from violence. By listening to the proposals of all representatives of the competent institutions, civil society organisations and all members of the Council for the Prevention of Peer Violence, the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System was amended and adopted in November 2023. The key changes related to the improvement of procedures of acting in situations of violence and other risky situations that may occur in a school environment. The amendments to by-laws, which regulate in more detail the steps of action for school employees in the area of prevention and intervention, were adopted in 2024. The *Rulebook on the Protocol for Acting in Response to Violence, Abuse and Neglect* clarified more precisely the dilemmas that existed in practice and explained in more detail in which complex situations of violence and/or risky situations can employees remove a student from immediate educational activities, while including other mechanisms in supporting the child and family and preventing endangerment of the child's right to education. In the same Rulebook we have also defined, for the first time, the procedures for acting within the education system in crisis situations. Another by-law, the *Rulebook on Socially Useful or Humanitarian Work in Educational Institutions*, sought to further strengthen the role of employees in creating an accepting and supportive environment through planning and implementing socially useful and humanitarian work within the annual plans for the prevention of school violence and achieving competencies for democratic culture among students with an aim of fostering tolerance, critical thinking, but also empathy, understanding of diversity etc.

The Ministry knew it was necessary to pause at some point and take a look at where we were standing and in which direction we needed to go after all the events that had shaken the education system. That moment of pausing and observing where we stood and where we were going was marked by the implementation of the national research within the project of "Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools", which included students, parents, teachers, professional associates, and principals of primary and secondary schools across our country. Its methodology reflects the complexity and sensitivity of the peer violence phenomenon. For the first time in the last ten years, we have research in the area of protection from violence on a representative sample that included nearly 5,200 respondents from 77 primary and secondary schools, using a complex methodological approach. The scales and questionnaires used in the research aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of peer violence, its potential causes and the correlation between suffering and perpetrating violence, to define key areas in the education system that need to be improved in order to create a safe and supportive school environment, to understand the specific characteristics of the dynam-

ics of cyberbullying, which was further emphasised in this research, as well as to understand the forms of violence in the interaction between students and school employees. In addition, through this research, we intended to gain insight into the forms of violence to which students are exposed and to identify protective and risk factors, as well as define specific practical recommendations and clear guidelines for creating educational policies for the purpose of improving the comprehensive system of protecting children from violence.

Having in mind the sensitivity of the moment for the education system in which the support was provided, and the importance of the results of this research, we owe immense gratitude to our colleagues from the Council of Europe and the expert team who worked on developing the methodology, implementing the research, and defining practical recommendations for the further development of the education system in the area of protection from violence. We would also like to thank the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany for acknowledging the importance of this challenge and to the Federal Republic of Germany for the donation that enabled the Council of Europe to implement this project, along with Serbian researchers, experts, and the Ministry of Education.

I would like to thank you all for the trust, commitment, and support we have received through the results and recommendations guiding our future work in the process of restoring trust in our collective capacity to overcome challenges and crises.

We believe that the research results will be important not only to the education system and education policy makers, but also to the professional public, practitioners, parents, the media, and the general public in creating a common value system that will be the foundation of a safe and supportive environment for all children and society as a whole.

Because children are the most important!

**Prof. Snežana Vuković, PhD,  
Assistant Minister,  
Ministry of Education,  
Republic of Serbia**

**D**eciding which policies to introduce requires evidence-based research that involves all stakeholders. This is especially important in the education sector, which includes numerous actors, from ministry officials to teachers and students.

This is precisely the aim of the project “Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools” in Serbia and the most comprehensive National Survey on Peer Violence and Student Well-Being. Prompted by the tragic school shooting in Belgrade in May 2023, this research was prepared by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Ministry of Education. The project is funded by Germany.

The research includes interviews with around 5,000 participants and explores school violence from different perspectives – including school employees, students and their parents – which sometimes differ. The specific characteristics of gender-based violence and cyberbullying are also explored. Regarding the latter, a strong correlation has been established between online and offline victimisation.

Based on this research, the project has prepared Recommendations for creating educational policies and plans for decision-makers to further enhance the safe school environment. In order to achieve this goal, the recommendations are divided into short, medium, and long term for decision-makers and schools, ensuring both immediate and sustainable changes.

Besides aligning the recommendations with national and institutional policies to promote a safe and inclusive environment, the recommendations have also been adapted to respond to the Council of Europe Education Strategy “Learners First” 2024–2030. The three pillars of the Strategy call for the renewal of the democratic mission of education, the promotion of social inclusion, and the responsible adoption of digital innovations – all three as prerequisites for the safe school environment.

Unfortunately, violence and bullying in schools are present in all European countries. That is why the Council of Europe Education Department, through its intergovernmental programme, is also developing a toolkit for a democratic and inclusive school culture with a special resource entitled “Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools”. This resource is expected to be published at the end of 2025.

We hope this National Survey will pave the way for increased dialogue between students, parents, and teachers about bullying and peer violence in schools, as well as ways to work together in combating them.

**Sarah Keating,  
Head of Division,  
Education Department,  
Council of Europe, Strasbourg**

# Acknowledgements

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**W**e would like to thank our colleagues from the Ministry of Education, Snežana Vuković, PhD, and Mihreta Fejzula, for their continuous cooperation and professional support throughout all stages of the preparation and implementation of the research.

We also extend special gratitude to the teachers and mentors for democratic culture who took part in the fieldwork phase of the research and, through their dedication and professionalism, contributed to the successful implementation of the study in 77 primary and secondary schools across Serbia:

Aleksandra Jovankin Aleksić, Maja Aleksić, Brankica Antonijević, Slavica Atanacković, Nataša Berić, Margarita Berček, Andrijana Božanin, Milan Vukić, Aleksandra Dimitrijević, Valentina Dimitrijević, Nada Dimović, Dragana Dickov, Ajhana Dukadjinac, Tijana Đokić, Danijela Žukovski, Nataša Zečević, Penka Zlatković, Zoran Ignjatović, Jelena Stojković Ilić, Suzana Ilić, Nebojša Ilić, Ivana Ilić, Danijela Janković, Slađana Jevtić, Marina Jelisijević, Nada Jelić, Milica Jovanović, Svetlana Jovanović, Gabrijela Jovičević, Mariana Karabaš, Snežana Knežević, Gorica Kovačević, Olivera Kostić, Aleksandra Kostić, Dragana Krstić, Sandra Radović Lazarević, Zorana Lepe-dat, Jasmina Marković, Ivan Marković, Mersada Mašović, Sofija Milenković, Srđan Milodanović, Mirko Milojević, Danijela Milošević, Marsela Eskenazi Milutinović, Jelena Mihajlović, Ivana Mladenović, Marija Mladenović, Mileva Mojić, Nataša Đorđević Paović, Svetlana Paunović, Slađanka Perić, Gordana Perović, Stanislava Petrov, Marija Petrović, Vesna Petrović, Ivana Pecikoza, Zorica Prpa, Dragana Ristić, Jasna Savić, Vladimir Savić, Savka Segedinac, Mirjana Stevanović, Jelena Stefanović, Velina Stojković, Dušica Tričković, Slobodanka Cvetković, Aleksandra Cimbajević, Stela Šarović, Gordana Šobot, Svetlana Šovljanski, and Sanja Štrbac.

In the same way that the entire research team, assembled by SeConS Development Initiative Group, participated in developing the questionnaire and organizing the study, the research report itself is also a collective product of the research team members.

The chapters *“School Violence as a Problem,” “About the Research,”* and the introductory section of *“Results”* were written by D. Popadić, Z. Pavlović, and D. Kuzmanović.

The chapter *“School Violence from Employee Perspective”* was written by D. Kuzmanović; *“School Violence from Parents’ Perspective”* by Z. Pavlović; *“School Violence from Students’ Perspective”* by D. Popadić; *“Specific Characteristics of Digital Communication and Cyberbullying”* by D. Petrović and D. Kuzmanović; *“Gender-Based Violence Among Peers in Serbian Schools”* by M. Babović; *“School Comparison (School as the Unit of Analysis)”* by Z. Pavlović and D. Popadić; and *“Conclusions and*

*Recommendations*” by D. Popadić, Z. Pavlović, D. Kuzmanović, D. Petrović, and M. Babović. Oliver Tošković wrote the section “*Sample*” within the chapter “*About the Research.*”

We would also like to thank all our colleagues in schools, without whose dedicated work, cooperation and contribution, the implementation of this research would not have been possible.

# 1. School violence as a problem

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**V**iolent children behaviour in the school environment poses one of the greatest challenges of modern education systems. Reducing violence and creating a safe school environment are one of the most important aims of all educational process participants. Many studies show that a school can fully meet its educational purpose only in a safe environment, which plays a key role in encouraging learning and the healthy development of students (e.g. Olweus, 1993; Cohen et al., 2009; OECD, 2009; Thapa et al., 2013; OECD, 2023).

The right to a safe school environment is one of the fundamental children's rights. By ratifying [the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), the Republic of Serbia undertook to implement measures to prevent violence against children and ensure the protection of children from all forms of violence in the family, institutions and the wider social environment. Educational institutions and the education system as a whole must protect children from violence and create a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Despite those aims, cases of violence in schools are common and can be extremely tragic, which is confirmed by numerous cases in our country and worldwide that draw the public's attention to this problem and cause great concern for society. This is what happened in May 2023, when a thirteen-year-old student used a gun to kill ten people (nine students and a security guard) and wounded six others in a Belgrade primary school. This tragedy not only shocked society as a whole, but also reignited numerous public and expert debates about the safety of schools and how student safety can be enhanced. Such discussions once again pointed to two strategic aims, which are mutually conditioned and intertwined: school must be a safe place where students will be protected from all forms of violence, and school must be a stimulating environment where students will feel comfortable and develop a sense of community.

As one of the key factors of socialisation, by promoting a culture of non-violence, the education and upbringing system can have a positive impact on the wider community. Besides reflecting the current social context, the school ethos – which represents the promoted values, assertive communication between all participants in the school system – directly influences the circumstances under which today's generations will shape social relations and values and behave like citizens. In the school environment, the adoption of positive values and respect

for human rights, changing attitudes towards violence and adopting models of non-violent behaviour may be systematically encouraged.

## 1.1. HOW SCHOOL VIOLENCE IS DEFINED IN THE RESEARCH

Many definitions of violence and related concepts may be found in scientific literature and official documents. In our research, “violence” will be considered actions aimed at causing harm to another person, or **intentionally and unjustifiably harming others**. To be more precise, we will state that violence means behaviour that meets the following three criteria: (1) it leads to psychological or physical harm to another person or the harm was a likely and foreseeable outcome, (2) there is an intention to harm another person, and (3) the harm is unjustified (Popadić et al., 2014).

Actions that unintentionally harm another person will not be considered violent (aggressive). Furthermore, even if a person is not injured, but the action was intended to hurt them, it will be considered violence. Regarding the criterion of unjustifiability, it is not always explicitly stated (especially when researchers refer to actions for which there is a consensus that they are unjustified), but it is clear that, both in the scientific literature and in everyday practice, whether an action is considered violent depends on the understanding of the broader social and normative context in which that action occurs. Violence includes hurtful actions that, within the norms considered valid in a given context, are considered unjustified (illegitimate, excessive, or inappropriate). Therefore, justified and appropriate punishment of a student will not be considered violence, even though it is aimed to be aversive, and giving a bad grade will also not be considered violence if it is deserved. Likewise, if a child refuses to socialise with another child they do not like, it will not necessarily be considered violence. It is important to emphasise this because the norms that researchers start from (and even they may not agree regarding the actions in the “grey area”), the norms that students start from, and the norms that school employees adhere to, are not always the same, so they will consider different situations as violence. Children will not consider as violence actions that are normalised within children’s subculture and will not think of them when adults ask them about violence in general. The extent to which violence is *socially* defined is evident when social conflict events are assessed from different interest and value stances.

Our definition of school violence is similar to the definition used in *the Rules on the Protocol for Acting in Response to Violence, Abuse and Neglect* (hereinafter referred to as “the Protocol Rules”): “violence and abuse mean any form of one-time or repeated verbal or non-verbal behaviour that results in real or potential harm to the health, development, and dignity of a child, student, or employee.” (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 11/2024, p. 3). In this definition, the existence of intent is not explicitly stated, but we believe it is implicitly accepted. One of the reasons for the omission from the definition could be that, in practical situations of implementing the Protocol Rules, a statement of the actor would be sufficient for the

action not to be considered violent (“I was just kidding”, “I didn’t think it would hurt them”, etc.), or, for instance, the actor’s admission that they intended to hurt another person would be necessary in order to consider the subject action as violent. In cases where a dilemma exists regarding whether a situation is considered violence or not, by emphasising the consequence of the action, the focus is put on the statements and feelings of the person exposed to violence rather than the perpetrator’s statements.

We should also note that, although intent is considered an essential element of violence and aggressive behaviour in theory, when *measuring* the presence of violence, researchers often rely on the responses of persons who have been exposed to violence. In this way, the perpetrators’ intent ceases to be the researchers’ focus, as those who state they have experienced violence can only speculate about the perpetrators’ intentions and misinterpret them.

It is also important to note that *school* violence refers to any violence involving school actors, that is, it includes both peer violence and violence between students and employees, including children’s parents or legal guardians. It is not necessary for this violence to be occurring in the school environment, but it is important that the actors of the violent interaction are in the roles they have in the school context.

## 1.2. VIOLENCE TYPES

According to the Protocol Rules, violence and abuse may be physical, psychological (emotional), social, digital, or sexual. In addition to the above, violence and abuse also include: child and student abuse, violent extremism, human trafficking, exploitation, domestic violence, etc., although these forms of violence are not the subject of this research.

The basic division by which types of violence may be distinguished is into **verbal, physical and social violence**. Verbal violence is committed using oral or written, direct or indirect words and messages. Physical violence is an assault on a person’s body or property. Social (relational) violence means the damage to a person’s reputation and social relationships by gossiping and spreading lies or compromising material.

It should be noted that corporal punishment of children and students in educational institutions is explicitly prohibited as set out in Article 111 of the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 88/2017, 27/18 – other laws, 10/2019, 27/2018 – other law, and 6/2020, 129/2021 and 92/2023) and is therefore considered physical violence.

**Cyberbullying (online or digital violence)** differs from the usual face-to-face (offline) violence in the medium in which the violent interaction occurs. This type of violence uses digital devices (mobile phone, camera, computer, etc.) and is spread via the internet (by sending messages, videos, sharing offensive content, etc.). It may take all forms of offline violence, except for bodily injury: it includes insults, threats, gossip, social exclusion, etc. Cyberbullying has some specific char-

acteristics (for instance, it can be committed anonymously, at any time and in any place, it has an unlimited audience on the internet, and the act committed is permanent), making it at least as serious as traditional forms of violence (Popadić & Kuzmanović, 2016).

A special type of violence not distinguished by the method of perpetration (it can therefore occur in all of the above forms), but by the motives driving it, is **gender-based violence**. Under it, we mean any act of violence against a person because of their gender, sex, or sexual orientation. According to [the Council of Europe](#), gender-based violence includes, *inter alia*, sexual violence, sexual orientation-based violence, intimate partner violence, gender stereotyping, and sexual objectification. **Sexual violence** refers to threatening a person's sexual identity by belittling or forcing them into a form of sexual communication.

The categories of violence overlap, since violent acts may be classified by the manner in which they are perpetrated, the purpose of the act, and many other aspects.

**Bullying** is a form of violence that has been the subject of research in recent decades. It involves aggressive behaviour that is *repeated* over time and involves a power *imbalance* (Olweus, 1993). Our research does not only refer to bullying (within Olweus's definition) but also one-time violence between participants where there is not necessarily a power asymmetry (whatever that might mean).

### 1.3. RESEARCH IN THE WORLD AND SERBIA

Violent behaviour in the school environment is present in all countries and affects numerous children and young people. Besides harming students, it also negatively affects teachers, their motivation for work and the quality of teaching, as well as their functioning in an out-of-school environment.

At the global level, longitudinal studies are being conducted that also monitor the prevalence of violence in the school context. *The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (HBSC) study, which has been conducted in four-year cycles for over four decades, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), collects the data on experiences in the school environment in the context of health and health behaviour of young people. As far as violence is concerned, children were asked how many times they had been exposed to violence and how often they had perpetrated violence during the last few months (the following responses were provided: never; once or twice; two or three times a month; about once a week; and a few times a week). Children who have been exposed to bullying two or three times a month or more often than that in the last two or three months are considered to have been exposed to bullying. The findings of this study obtained in 2021/2022 (Cosma, Molcho & Pickett, 2024) point out significant differences in peer bullying in schools across countries or regions. They also show that boys perpetrate violence more often, both offline and online, compared to girls, while differences between ages (children surveyed are aged 11, 13, and 15) were not systematic. On average, 6% of adolescents stated they had committed vio-

lence two to three times a month in the last few months. One in ten said that they had been exposed to violence two to three times a month or more than that during the same period.

*The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*, the largest comparative study of scholastic performance of 15-year-olds, commenced in 2015 and assesses students' exposure to peer violence in schools. The students were given a list of nine forms of violence and asked to indicate how often they had experienced them in school during a period of one year (the following responses were provided: never or almost never; a few times a year; a few times a month; once a week or more often). The results of the PISA survey showed that peer violence was present in all countries, and the results of the 2022 cycle indicated a break in the previously observed trend of increasing violence. Despite this, peer violence in schools is very much present: in OECD countries, on average, 20% of students reported being exposed to violence at least a few times a month. In all countries, verbal and social violence are more common than physical violence (OECD, 2023). In Serbia, within the above survey, every third student (36%) reported they had been exposed to some form of school violence at least once in the past 12 months (Čaprić & Videnović, 2024). Students most often complained that unpleasant rumours were spread about them at least once during a year (21%), that someone made fun of them (18%), or that they were intentionally left out in various situations (14%). If these findings are compared with the previous cycle of PISA survey, a downward trend in violence is observed: previously, 44% of students had been exposed to some form of violence at least once in the last 12 months (Videnović & Čaprić, 2019).

We have to mention another significant international survey, *EU Kids Online*, in which Serbia was included in 2019. According to the findings of this survey, every fourth student aged 9–17 said that during the past year a fellow student had treated them in a cruel or rude manner, either in person or on the internet (Kumanović et al., 2019).

When it comes to national research on school violence, the most famous and extensive research was conducted, on several occasions in 2005–13, within the programme "School without Violence – towards a safe and enabling environment for children". The research included 3rd to 8th grade students from 237 primary schools in Serbia. 23% of students stated that they had experienced peer violence at least once in the last three months. However, when given a list of nine forms of peer violence, 65% of students indicated they had experienced at least one of those forms of violence at least once in the past three months. When it comes to violent behaviour, 21% of students stated they had perpetrated violence towards another student at least once in the last three months. When given a list of nine violent acts, 42% stated that they had behaved in one of such manners towards another student at least once in the last three months (Popadić et al., 2014).

We have listed these surveys not only to show their results, but also to illustrate that the methodology used in such surveys (definition of violence, time period, frequency, global assessment or assessment of specific actions, etc.) usually differs so much that it makes the comparison of the results impossible.

The *Special Report on School Violence prepared by the Ombudsman and the Youth Advisory Panel* (Stojanović, 2023) also addresses the issue of school violence, including both peer violence and student–teacher violence. This report, which contains a brief overview of the state and recommendations for its improvement, is also based on a survey conducted in 2022 with a sample of 390 students and 158 teachers from 18 primary and secondary schools in Serbia.

The *Report on the Causes of Violence in Society Affecting Children and Youth with Recommendations for Systemic Changes* is an important document providing an extensive analysis of the forms of violence in the education system and recommendations of systemic measures to eliminate them. This Report, which also addresses peer violence and violence between all actors involved in the education system, was prepared in 2024 as part of the initiative *May Platform – Society’s Response to Violence* by the Education Working Group.

## 1.4. PRESCRIBED NATIONAL PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES

Prevention and protection of children and youth from violence represents one of the priority national policies of the Republic of Serbia. Over the last two decades, activities have been undertaken to establish a strategic and legislative framework, as well as a comprehensive system for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including school violence.

The general framework of child-related policies was defined in 2004 in *the National Plan of Action for Children* (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2004). As part of this Plan, in 2005 *the General Protocol for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect* (Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy, 2005) was adopted, as were the special protocols for each sector within the protection system, including the education sector. *The Special Protocol for the Protection of Children and Students from Violence, Abuse, and Neglect in Educational Institutions* adopted in 2007, states that “educational institutions must ensure safe and optimal conditions for undisturbed stay and work, as well as protection from all kinds of violence, abuse, and neglect” (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, 2007, p. 7).

In Serbia, the first *National Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence for the Period 2009–2015* (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 122/2008) was adopted in 2008, and the second *Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence for the Period 2020–2023* (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 80/2020) in 2020.

After the *General Protocol for the Protection of Children from Violence* (Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography, 2022) was adopted, the *General Protocol for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect* from 2005 ceased to be valid.

In the *Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Serbia by 2030* – a special aim related to the development of teaching and learning in pre-university education, one of the measures is to **support educational institutions**

**in strengthening their educational function** (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 63/2021). Within this measure, **indicators** have been defined for evaluating measures aimed at reducing and preventing school violence: the number of newly accredited courses and newly trained representatives of the educational institution in the areas of protection from violence and discrimination and prevention of risky behaviour, and the number of informed students and parents who have accessed content in the areas of protection from violence and discrimination, preservation of mental health and prevention of risky behaviour.

The above *Rules on the Protocol for Acting in Response to Violence, Abuse and Neglect* (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 11/2024) stipulate the content and methods of implementing prevention and intervention activities, requirements and methods for risk assessment, methods of protection from violence, abuse and neglect, and monitoring the effects of the undertaken measures and activities. A school must plan and undertake activities aimed at preventing all forms of violence. These activities constitute an integral part of the *school’s annual work plan*, or the *programme for protection from violence, abuse, and neglect*. Every school needs to have a *team for protection against discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect* (hereinafter referred to as: the Protection Team), whose members are professional associates (such as psychologists, pedagogues), teachers, and school principals, but parents, representatives of the local community and student parliament, and, if necessary, appropriate experts (such as social workers, special pedagogues, doctors, and police representatives) may also be involved in its work. Students, parents, and employees work together to plan, design, and implement prevention activities.

The aims of **prevention** activities include raising awareness and sensitivity of students, children’s parents/legal guardians, and all school employees for recognising all kinds of violence; fostering an atmosphere of co-operation and tolerance, respect and constructive communication; developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to create a safe and stimulating environment and respond to violence in a constructive manner; getting to know the procedures for reporting and acting in case of suspicion or knowledge of violence; developing socioemotional competencies of students, parents and employees (self-awareness, awareness of others, self-regulation, responsible decision making, etc.).

In addition to prevention measures, the Protocol Rules also stipulate **intervention measures**, or the school’s response to violence, depending on the estimated level of violence. This evaluation is performed by the Protection Team. All forms of peer violence are classified in THREE levels, depending on the intensity, degree of risk, duration and frequency of violent behaviour, consequences, number of participants, age and developmental characteristics of students.

In the case of FIRST-level violence, activities are undertaken by the form teacher, or a teacher, in co-operation with the parent, in terms of enhanced educational work with the class community, a group of students and individually. Under certain circumstances, if educational work has not been effective or first-level violence is repeated (see the Protocol Rules for more details), the institution shall intervene by undertaking activities planned for the second or third level.

At the SECOND level, activities are undertaken by the form teacher in co-operation with a pedagogue, a psychologist, the Protection Team and the principal, with the mandatory involvement of parents, in terms of enhanced educational work. If the enhanced educational work is ineffective, the principal shall initiate educational disciplinary proceedings and impose an appropriate measure in accordance with law.

In case of violence evaluated as the THIRD-level peer violence, activities are undertaken by the principal and the Protection Team, with the mandatory involvement of parents and competent authorities, organisations and departments (Centre for Social Work, health service, police department, and other organisations and services).

Within the measures planned by the 2030 Education Strategy and at the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, in 2021, the National Platform for the Prevention of Violence “I Protect You” started operating, which is aimed at co-ordinating and strengthening intersectoral co-operation between all competent institutions in combating all forms of violence involving children. Within the National Contact Centre for Child Safety on the Internet, there is a platform “Smart and Safe”, that promotes the development of digital literacy and digital safety culture of all citizens.

By citing and presenting existing documents, our intention was to emphasise that, at the level of Serbian legal regulations, significant attention is paid to the organisation of schools as a safe environment for both children and employees. The legal regulations cover both prevention and intervention activities in situations when violence occurs. Existing legal acts precisely define forms of violent behaviour, stipulate the procedures for responding to school violence, and define the roles, rights, and obligations of all actors involved in the process. The subject of empirical research remains the extent to which the normative level coincides with the current practice in schools, how familiar persons in the school environment are with the legal regulations, how they evaluate them, and how successfully they implement them. Finally, only by inspecting the actual state of violence in schools can we say more precisely to what extent existing legal norms and practices are responsible (to be blamed or praised) for the current situation, and in which aspects possible changes would be most effective.

## 2. About the research

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### 2.1. BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION

The project *Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools* was implemented by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, with financial support from Germany.

The aim of the project is to prevent peer violence and support a safe school environment, in line with European standards. Furthermore, the project supports education policymakers, institutions and experts in the implementation of the existing education policy framework and develops the knowledge and professional competence of education system employees in order to prevent peer violence in schools.

As part of this project, a *national research on peer violence and student well-being in Serbian schools* was conducted. The main goals of the research were to understand the concept of school violence from the perspectives of students, parents and school employees, and to map key areas of school life in which intervention is necessary in order to create a safe school environment.

The SeConS Development Initiative Group, which was entrusted with the research implementation, assembled a team of experts for the organisation of the research, data analysis, and report writing: Prof. Dragan Popadić (team coordinator), PhD, Prof. Zoran Pavlović, PhD, Prof. Dobrinka Kuzmanović, PhD, Prof. Dalibor Petrović, PhD, Prof. Marija Babović, PhD, and Prof. Oliver Tošković, PhD

When explaining violence and its causes, we started from an ecological systems theoretical approach, according to which violence results from a complex interaction of intraindividual, interindividual, and social factors (Popadić, 2009).

On the one hand, the research had important theoretical goals: to understand the concept of peer violence; to theoretically define key areas of school life that are critical for intervention in order to ensure a safe and supportive school environment; to test the relevance of different theoretical models regarding the determinants and correlates of experiencing and perpetrating violence; and to explore the specific characteristics of the dynamics of digital and gender-based violence, as well as violence between students and adults and between school employees and parents.

On the other hand, the research also had numerous practical goals: to collect data on the scope and intensity of violence and violent behaviour among students; identify protective and risk factors; and define practical recommendations for interventions aimed at preventing school violence and improving the quality of school life. In particular, the research aimed to determine the extent and frequency of (1) exposure to violence and (2) violent behaviour, and (3) their cor-

relation with individual factors (sociodemographic characteristics, dispositions and skills), family (socio-economic status, parental mediation, parental skills, attitude towards children) and school factors (beliefs and perceptions of employees, characteristics of the school environment, quality of school climate), and with (4) indicators of children's social and emotional well-being (integration into the school community, sense of security, life satisfaction, existence of emotional difficulties). Special focus was placed on the specific characteristics of digital and gender-based violence, and violence between students and adults.

## 2.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Some of the research questions this research attempted to answer are:

- ▶ How many students are exposed to peer violence and what forms of peer violence are most common?
- ▶ Who is violent towards them, where and why? How do they react in such situations and who do they turn to for help?
- ▶ What personal, family, or school characteristics are associated with exposure to violence?
- ▶ How is exposure to violence related to indicators of student emotional and social well-being?
- ▶ How many students perpetrate violence against their peers and what forms of violence are the most common?
- ▶ Who are the students perpetrating violence, in terms of their personal, family and school characteristics?
- ▶ How do students respond when they witness violence?
- ▶ What do they think about the causes of school violence and the ways to combat it? How do students evaluate the measures undertaken by the school?
- ▶ What are the forms and frequency of violent interactions between students and teachers?
- ▶ What are the experiences and testimonies<sup>1</sup> of parents about violent interactions between students? How do they explain the causes of violence?
- ▶ How do parents evaluate their personal competence for addressing such situations, and how do they evaluate the actions of the competent institutions?
- ▶ How do exposure to violence and violent behaviour depend on parents' attitude toward children and/or attitude toward school?
- ▶ What are the experiences of school employees with violence? How many teachers suffer violence from students? How many teachers believe there is a problem of parental violence against employees?

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1 When we refer to parents, we mean children's parents or legal guardians. In some parts of the text, the phrase "children's parents/legal guardians" will be used, and in others, for brevity, only "parents" will be used.

- ▶ Do they react when violent interactions occur and how? How informed and involved are they in school procedures and activities related to the prevention of violence?
- ▶ How do they evaluate the safety of the school environment?
- ▶ How do employees explain the causes of violent behaviour? What do they think about the effectiveness of violence prevention procedures and the school's ability to influence the reduction of violence?
- ▶ How consistent are student, parent, and teacher evaluations of different aspects of violent interactions?
- ▶ Are there any characteristics of the school environment that are connected with exposure to or perpetration of violence, or that represent protective or risk factors?

### 2.3. VARIABLES

Having in mind the described goals and research questions, it is clear that the research includes numerous variables. They partially overlap in the three main respondent groups. Here we will only describe them briefly, listing the main general indicators and their individual indicators shown in the questionnaires. The nature and purpose of the used variables will be further explained in the following sections (primarily in the description of the used instruments and the overview of the results).

As far as students are concerned, there are several groups of variables and indicators. The following were primarily observed: **sociodemographic variables** (sex, age, scholastic performance, socio-economic status, number of household members, family structure, developmental and learning difficulties, parenting style), **use of the internet, social networking websites, digital tools** (time spent on the internet, types of online activities, evaluation of a student's digital competence compared to the competence of peers, parents and teachers, etc.), **student attitude towards school** (number of good school friends, sense of belonging to school), **perception of school climate** (perception of personal safety at school, perception of the attitude of school employees towards a student, involvement in school activities), and **socioemotional competence** of students (emotional difficulties, values, attitudes, and skills). The most extensive section consisted of indicators of the student perspective on violence and included the following indicators (and their specific criteria): **exposure to peer violence** (frequency of individual forms of offline and online violence, prevalence of gender-based forms of victimisation and sexual victimisation, circumstances of victimisation – who the violent persons are and where the violence occurs, exposure to offline and online violence during schooling, exposure to partner violence, reasons for exposure to violence, responses to exposure to violence, immediate and delayed reactions to exposure to violence, who vulnerable students turn to for help and what kind of help they receive), **violent behaviour of students** (frequency of individual forms of offline and online violent behaviour, prevalence and correlates of gen-

der-based violence and sexual violence, reasons for violent behaviour, perceived adult reactions to violent behaviour), **roles in violent interactions** (frequency of different roles in a violent interaction), **student beliefs and actions related to a violent interaction** (reactions when witnessing peer violence, opinions on the causes of school violence, opinions on ways to combat school violence, perception of measures undertaken by a school to prevent violence and intervene if it occurs, involvement in school activities related to violence prevention), **violence between students and adults** (exposure to violent behaviour by teachers, violent behaviour towards teachers, reasons for perpetrating violence), **exposure to cyberbullying** (frequency of exposure to individual forms of cyberbullying, characteristics of students exposed to cyberbullying, reactions to exposure to cyberbullying, frequency of cyberbullying, characteristics of violent students, students as witnesses of cyberbullying). Based on indicators of suffering and perpetrating violence, indexes of **victimisation** and **violence** were also created. The content of these measures and the methods of their creation are described in more detail in the section with the overview of the research results.

Similar variable groups were also observed among the children's parents/legal guardians. Included are **sociodemographic variables** (sex, age, level of education, family financial situation, household structure, child's developmental and learning difficulties), **attitude towards children** (description of own parenting style, other parent's parenting goals, satisfaction with child's achievements, evaluation of the child's perception of the school, their problems in communication with teachers, perception of a child's trust, how openly they talk), **digital skills, practices and experiences** (communication of the child regarding internet use, informing parents about internet safety, parents' evaluation of child's involvement in cyberbullying, evaluation of own competence to respond in cases of cyberbullying, how parents evaluate the consequences of students' use of digital technologies, parents' opinion on school's ability to educate students in digital skills and reduce cyberbullying, parents' evaluation of their own and child's digital skills, etc.), **perception of safety at school** (perception of the appropriateness of the school's response in cases of school violence, how much of a problem is school violence), **perception of the child's involvement in a violent interaction** (whether the child complained about exposure to violence, whether the child perpetrated violence at school, whether the parent was called in because of the child's involvement in a violent interaction, how satisfied the parents are with the actions of the competent institutions), **personal competence** (advice to a child in case of exposure to violence, evaluation of own competence to react in case of child's involvement in a violent interaction), **personal theories on violence** (parents' opinions about the causes of violence at school, the prevalence of gender-stereotypical interpretations of the causes of violence, parents' opinions about the efficiency of measures for combating school violence and the school's ability to reduce violence), **parents' relationship with the school** (frequency of attending parent-teacher conferences, relationship with teachers and professional associates, familiarity with school activities aimed to reduce school violence, initiation of prevention activities or socially useful and humanitarian work, parents' opinion on the necessary support, etc.).

Finally, the employees were asked about the following: **sociodemographic variables** (position in the school, sex, age, total period of service, and period of working in their area of expertise), **digital skills, practices and experiences** (how employees evaluate their own and students' digital skills, the consequences of students' use of digital technologies, the existence of rules on the use of mobile phones at school, encouraging students to use mobile phones, evaluation of the prevalence and severity of cyberbullying in schools, the school's ability to reduce cyberbullying, etc.), **evaluation of the safety of the school environment** (evaluation of the school atmosphere, ways to increase the authority of teachers, frequency of certain forms of violence, evaluation of the extent to which different forms of violence pose a problem for the school, evaluation of the trend of increase or decrease in violence in the last two years), **personal theories on school violence** (how employees perceive children who suffer violence and children who perpetrate violence, causes of violent behaviour, effectiveness of violence prevention procedures, the school's ability to reduce violence, employee opinions on personal competence for preventing and responding to violence), **personal experiences with violence occurring at school** (suffering violence by students and parents, response to observed or reported violence, opinion on the school's response to violence, awareness of school prevention measures and programmes, personal involvement in prevention measures and programmes, need for education, etc.).

In addition to the individual measures used in the individual and aggregate analysis, several relevant school characteristics were also observed: **school structure** (number of students, sex and ethnic structure, number of separate classes, number of teaching employees and professional associates), **safety of the school environment** (presence of video surveillance, physical security, fenced school yard, lighting of the schoolyard and surroundings, teacher supervision, control of entry into the facility, and school-based police officers), **educational resources** (student achievements, number of students with disciplinary measures against them), **activities related to school safety** (existence of a system for recording violent behaviour, violence protection programme, activities for the prevention of violence in the annual report, an active student parliament, peer teams, etc.). Furthermore, for each school, the following variables that were reviewed when sampling schools were also observed: **region** (Belgrade, Vojvodina, Eastern and Southern Serbia, Western Serbia and Šumadija), **type of area** (urban/rural), **school size** (small/large), and **level of education** (primary/secondary school).

## 2.4. INSTRUMENTS

The data were obtained using online questionnaires created for the purposes of this research, based on the instruments used in previous similar surveys (Kuzmanović et al., 2019; Popadić et al., 2014). Three questionnaires were used: for students, school employees, and children's parents/legal guardians (Appendices 1, 2 and 3), in numerous versions.

**Questionnaire for students.** With notably rare exceptions, students answered questions by choosing one or more of the provided answers, or by providing ratings on, most often, 5-point scales. There were two versions of the question-

naire: one for 5th-grade primary school students (the questionnaire for younger students) and another for 7th-grade primary school students as well as 1st and 3rd-grade secondary school students (the questionnaire for older students). These versions differed in the number and content of questions. The questionnaire for younger students did not include questions that, based on the experience of the researchers and piloting the questionnaire, were evaluated as not being understandable or developmentally appropriate for students of that age. The questionnaire for younger students had 64 questions (requiring 224 individual responses), while the questionnaire for older students was slightly longer and had 69 questions (requiring 265 individual responses). On the first page of the questionnaire, there is basic information about the research and instructions for completing the questionnaire, as well as a consent statement for participating in the research (only students who agreed to participate were able to continue with the questionnaire). The last page contains explanatory text and information about whom students may contact if they need support. The questionnaire for students had a version for boys/young men and girls/young women, and was translated into three national minority languages – Hungarian, Croatian, and Bosnian, because the sample included schools in which children attend classes in the said languages.

**Questionnaire for employees.** The questionnaire had 64 questions (requiring 172 individual responses). Just like the questionnaire for students, this questionnaire almost exclusively included closed-ended questions with suggested responses, which were answered by selecting one or more answers or giving ratings on scales. The questionnaire was intended for three basic categories of school teaching staff: principals, (class and subject) teachers, and professional associates. They completed slightly different versions of the questionnaire that differed in the number of questions. This questionnaire was not translated to national minority languages, and there was no need for different versions for men and women because of formal addressing.

**Questionnaire for children's parents/legal guardians.** It contained 50 questions (requiring 153 individual responses) with suggested answers and, like the version for students, it was translated into Hungarian, Croatian, and Bosnian (there were no versions for men and women).

The questionnaires were made on the online platform *SurveyMonkey* and respondents accessed them via the domain *digitalnapsimenost.rs*. Parents and students completed the questionnaires under a pre-agreed code, for the creation of which they received detailed instructions, which enabled their responses to be matched.

## 2.5. SAMPLE

The research was to be performed in Serbia, on a representative sample of primary and secondary schools, and was to include three groups of respondents (5th and 7th-grade students of primary schools and 1st and 3rd-grade students of secondary schools, **parents/legal guardians** of students, and **school employees**, including teachers, principals, and professional associates). According to the databases of the Ministry of Education available via the open data portal (<https://opendata.mpn.gov.rs/>), 545,215 students attended primary education in 1,272

schools in the previous school year, and 232,457 students attended secondary education in 577 schools. Art schools (music schools, etc.), schools for children and students with developmental disabilities, and private schools were excluded from this list when creating the sample, since, according to the study design, it was not planned to conduct research in those schools.

Based on all of the above, the sample was designed as a stratified cluster sample. From the database of all primary and secondary schools, 49 primary and 29 secondary schools were sampled, proportionally distributed across four regions (Belgrade, Vojvodina, Southern and Eastern Serbia, and Šumadija and Western Serbia). Besides the region, school size was used as an additional stratum, so that the proportional distribution of big schools (with over 600 students) and small schools (with less than 600 students) corresponds to their distribution in the population (Tables 1 and 2). The urbanity of the school location was not used for explicit sample stratification, but we nonetheless tried to ensure that schools from both rural (with up to 5,000 inhabitants) and urban (with over 5,000 inhabitants) places were represented in the sample. It should be noted that, in rural areas, there are almost no big schools, and there are very few secondary schools, that is, they mostly have small primary schools.

Table 1: Parity of population and planned sample of primary schools, by region and school size

Region	Population			Sample				
	No. of schools	% of schools	% of big schools	No. of schools	% of schools	% of big schools	students	
							N	%
Belgrade region	190	≈ 17	≈ 57	8	≈ 16	≈ 62	382	22%
Vojvodina	350	≈ 30	≈ 21	15	≈ 31	≈ 26	529	30%
Southern and Eastern Serbia	279	≈ 24	≈ 22	12	≈ 24	≈ 25	363	21%
Šumadija and Western Serbia	331	≈ 29	≈ 28	14	≈ 29	≈ 28	468	27%
Total	1,150			49			1,742	100%

Table 2: Parity of population and planned sample of secondary schools, by region and school size

Region	Population			Sample				
	No. of schools	% of schools	% of big schools	No. of schools	% of schools	% of big schools	students	
							N	%
Belgrade region	99	≈ 20	≈ 43	6	≈ 21	≈ 67	276	21%
Vojvodina	138	≈ 27	≈ 22	8	≈ 27	≈ 25	352	27%
Southern and Eastern Serbia	125	≈ 25	≈ 20	7	≈ 24	≈ 43	275	21%
Šumadija and Western Serbia	140	≈ 28	≈ 31	8	≈ 28	≈ 37	392	30%
Total	502	100		29	100		1,295	100%

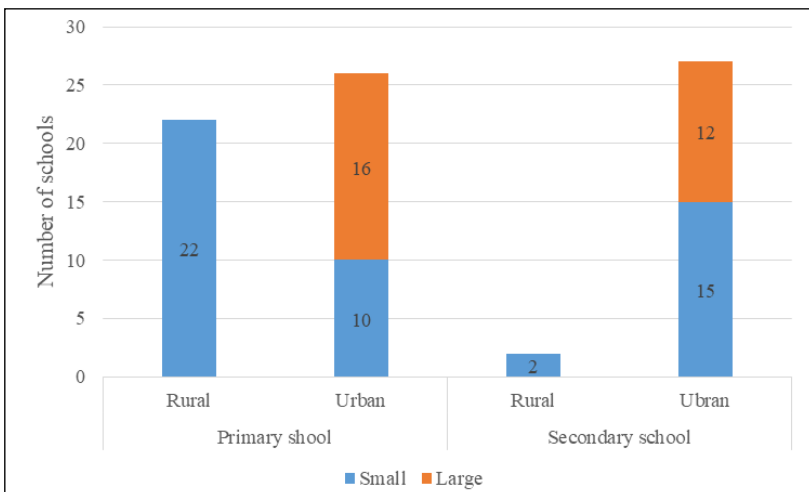
The number of schools was determined so that, considering the average class size in each of the sampled schools, the planned sample size of 2,400 students is reached by surveying two classes from each school. The planned sample size was determined according to the minimum estimated prevalence of severe forms of peer violence (about 2%), so that the survey includes around 50 students who had suffered such forms of violence.

Having in mind the estimated potential sample attrition of approximately 20% (due to parents not giving consent, students refusing to participate, inappropriate completion of questionnaires, or student absence), the initial student sample was created to be approximately 20% larger than the planned size. According to the available data on class sizes and the described sampling plan, 1,742 students from 49 primary schools were to be sampled, as well as 1,302 students from 29 secondary schools.

Onsite part of the research was co-ordinated by the Council of Europe’s project team, with the support of the Ministry of Education. Examiners were instructed to survey one 5th and one 7th-grade class in each selected primary school, and one 1st and one 3rd-grade class in each selected secondary school. The first class was chosen in each grade of each school, since small schools have only one class (e.g. 5–1, 7–1, or I-1 and III-1). After first contacting them, five primary schools and one secondary school declined to participate, and they were replaced by other schools planned according to the sample design. For each sampled school, one backup school from the same region was planned, similar in type (primary or secondary), size (large or small), and location urbanity (urban or rural). In the course of the research, another primary school declined its participation. Since it was a backup school for the initially selected one, and the sample already included another primary school from the same location, a replacement was not sought.

Out of the schools that participated in the research, 48 are primary and 29 are secondary, 53 are in urban areas and 24 in rural, 49 are small and 28 large. Out of the secondary schools, 9 are gymnasiums, 17 are vocational schools, and 3 are mixed schools. Chart 1 shows the structure of schools regarding type (primary/secondary), size, and urban/rural location.

Chart 1: Number of schools regarding type, size, and location urbanity



At the end of the research, 1,916 students properly completed the questionnaires, 1,018 of which are primary school students and 898 secondary school students (Table 3). The final number of students is about 400 less than planned, which, in addition to the predicted 20% attrition rate, also stems from inappropriately projected class sizes based on available databases, that is, in reality, the classes were actually slightly smaller than in the databases available via the open data portal.

Table 3: Distribution of students surveyed by region and school type

	Primary schools		Secondary schools	
	No. of students	% of students	No. of students	% of students
Vojvodina	273	27	271	30
Belgrade region	204	20	181	20
Šumadija and Western Serbia	283	28	236	26
Southern and Eastern Serbia	258	25	210	24
Total	1,018	100	898	100

Besides students, their parents also participated in the survey. One parent of each student was planned to complete the questionnaire. Considering the survey was anonymous, students and parents filled out codes known only to them, which they themselves created. Based on them, the questionnaires were planned to be paired during the analysis. A total of 1,207 parents filled out the questionnaire. However, many students used the same codes for completing the questionnaire (for example, 44 students chose “123456” for the code), not all parents completed the questionnaire, and in many cases, there was a code only in the student or parent questionnaire, which is why only 914 questionnaires for students and their parents were successfully paired. Based on them, analyses of linking and comparing students’ and parents’ responses were done. A more detailed structure of the sample of parents who participated in the survey is shown in the chapter “School Violence from Parents’ Perspective”.

Finally, in the sampled schools, principals, professional associates, and teachers completed the questionnaires. A total of 2,009 employees (1,811 teachers, 143 professional associates, and 55 principals) filled out the questionnaires and were included in the final sample. A more detailed structure of the sample of employees who participated in the survey is shown in the chapter “School Violence from Employee Perspective”.

To conclude, **the final sample consists of 1,916 students (1,018 primary school students and 898 secondary school students), 1,207 parents, and 2,009 employees from 48 primary and 29 secondary schools in the Republic of Serbia.** Since the percentage of children and youth attending primary education in the Republic of Serbia is between 98% and 99.8%, and the percentage of those attending secondary education is increasing, having gone from 85% to 95%, the surveyed sample may be considered representative of students of the surveyed ages (5th and 7th grades of primary schools and 1st and 3rd grades of secondary schools).

## 2.6. RESEARCH METHOD

### 2.6.1. Questionnaire piloting

Before the main survey, a pilot survey was organised, the aim of which was to check the *understandability of the questionnaire* – its questions, terms, procedures – and the *time* required to complete the questionnaire. For this purpose, a cognitive interview was performed with 11 children, of which 8 girls and 3 boys, aged 10–17. The children were asked to read the questions and suggest responses aloud and “think aloud” while responding, as well as seeking clarification and asking the examiner follow-up questions whenever necessary. Members of the research team conducted the cognitive interviews.

The main conclusions drawn from the pilot study related to (1) indicating incomprehensible or confusing words and phrases, (2) questions or parts of questions with which there was a problem (for example, it is unclear, too long, complex), and (3) the child’s overall reactions during the survey (for example, to the questions about unpleasant experiences, various types of discontent, indicators of boredom or interest). These conclusion formed the basis for final changes to the questionnaire and instructions for completion.

A lower number of parents and employees completed the preliminary version of the questionnaire for parents and employees, with the same purpose (checking understandability and duration) and outcomes (final changes to the questionnaire before the main survey).

### 2.6.2. Examiner training

The onsite part of the research was performed by school employees – 72 examiners who, as part of the Council of Europe’s project *Quality Education for All*, received continuous training for eight years in the area of developing competence for a democratic school culture.

The examiners played a key role in the quality and smooth performance of the survey and onsite data collection. As part of the preparation for survey implementation, a Survey Implementation Protocol for school principals and examiners was prepared, and research team members conducted a three-day training course for examiners and a one-day training course for principals, during which participants received all information about the research, materials, and procedures. Another purpose of the training was to further validate all materials and survey procedures, and it served as the basis for their subsequent and final corrections.

### 2.6.3. Complying with ethical norms: letter of consent and approval of the Ethics Committee

The research was planned and implemented in accordance with the ethical principles of scientific research, which ensure respect for the dignity and well-being of all research participants, especially children, as a sensitive social group.

Firstly, participation in the research was **voluntary**, which means that respondents independently decided whether they wanted to complete the questionnaire, by providing informed consent. Informed (or valid) consent means that respondents were informed in advance about all details related to the research that could affect their decision to participate. They were informed about the **person conducting the survey**, about the **survey subject and goal**, and what the respondent's task is. Consent for the school's participation in the research was given by the school principal before training for examiners and principals. When it comes to students (minors), written consent to participate in the survey was first given by the children's parents/legal guardians, and then by the children themselves. That is to say, only the students who agreed to participate and whose parents/legal guardians gave written consent for participation could participate in the survey. All necessary consents were obtained before completing the questionnaires. Respondents were also able to withdraw from completing the questionnaire at any stage, without suffering any negative consequences, of which they were explicitly informed in the informed consent.

Participation in the survey was **anonymous**, both for each group of respondents and for the schools. This means that respondents were not asked to enter their first and last names, or any other personally identifiable information when completing the questionnaire, and the names of the schools that participated in the survey will not appear in any public documents, such as this report. The data obtained during the research are stored in accordance with the highest ethical research standards and personal data protection regulations, as well as the **Council of Europe Regulations on the Protection of Personal Data**, and only the project research team has access to them.

Finally, another important ethical principle for conducting scientific research is that the research **must not harm respondents in any way**. Considering that the topic of our research could potentially upset some respondents, primarily children, all respondents (students, parents, employees) received an explanation after the survey, that is, they received specific information about who and how they can contact if they are worried or afraid for their safety, or if they want to see useful advice and information, report violence, etc. The text of the explanation was an integral part of the online questionnaire, and each student also received a paper document version after completing the questionnaire (adults received explanations only online).

The implementation of the research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade (Protocol #2024–61), and the Council of Europe's Data Protection Unit.

#### **2.6.4. Main survey organisation**

The main methodological setting of the survey included a few key aspects that determined the course of research preparation and implementation. As stated above, the questionnaires were planned to be administered completely online to

all three groups of respondents. Regarding students, this meant that completing the questionnaires had to be organised in computer labs, and parents and employees were to receive links to the questionnaires electronically, via Viber groups or bulk emails. The entire survey procedure was planned to last for two consecutive school periods, without a break. Finally, the implementation of the survey in schools was planned for between 25 November and 6 December 2024, and for employees and parents between 25 November and 13 December 2024. The surveys were conducted within the said time periods.

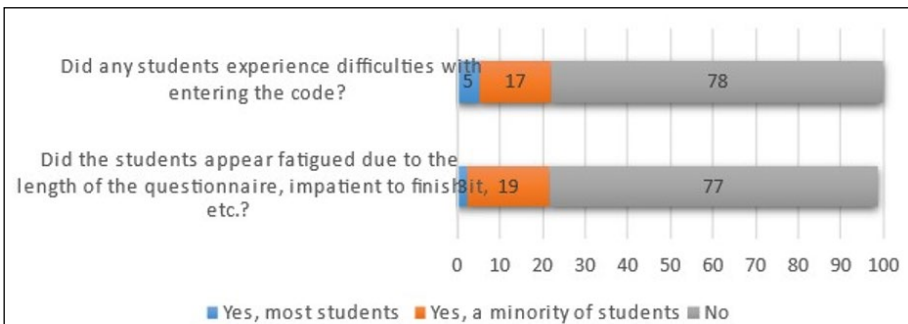
### 2.6.5. Course and conditions for student survey

The reports delivered on the performed surveys show that the number of male and female students surveyed in individual classes ranged from 1 to 30. In only 10 classes (7%) there was no sample attrition, that is, all students received parental consent, gave their own consent, and completed the questionnaire, while in other cases, from 1 to as many as 24 students from the class were absent. In other words, between 4% and 100% of students of a class were surveyed (62% on average).

Different scenarios for the survey were planned depending on the number of students completing it and the availability of computers or computer labs in the school. However, about four fifths of the classes were surveyed with all students in one computer lab at the same time, which was the most desirable option. Some students (16% of classes) completed the surveys by being divided into two groups that completed questionnaires simultaneously in two classrooms, while nine classes (6%) completed them by having students divided into two groups that successively completed the questionnaires.

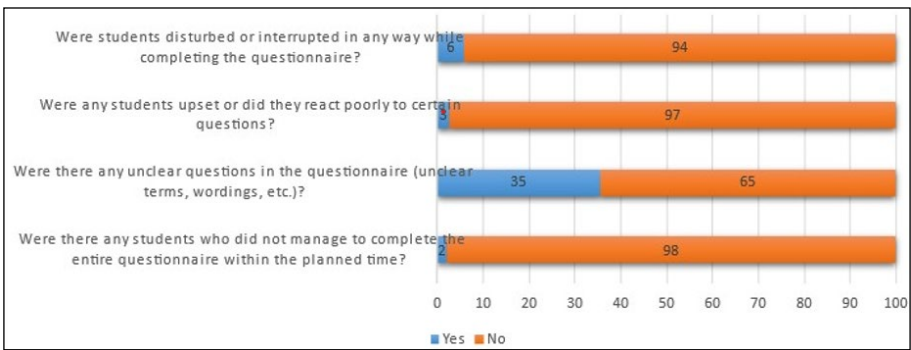
In general, the research was conducted with no major problems (Chart 2). According to the examiners' reports, most students very rarely had problems with entering the code or the duration of the questionnaire. In the worst-case scenario, about one fifth of the surveyed classes had minor or major problems of this kind. In most classes, there were no problems at all.

Chart 2: Number of students who had problems with the code or were tired due to the duration of the questionnaire



This may be illustrated further (Chart 3). Only three classes had students who did not manage to complete the questionnaire within the planned two school periods; however, it was only three students. Very rarely (in 6% of cases) there was some disruption of students during the completion of the questionnaires, while in four classes, the examiners reported students reacting negatively to certain questions in the questionnaire. Negative reactions were observed regarding questions about the evaluation of the family financial situation and the listing of family members in the case of divorced parents. Some students refused to answer such questions, which they were allowed to do.

Chart 3: Number of students who had difficulty completing the questionnaire



Slightly bigger problems were observed regarding ambiguities in the questionnaire, which were relatively common and occurred in two thirds of classes. Ambiguities regarding the contents of the questions referred to certain *unclear terms and phrases* (“consistent punishments”, “genetic predisposition”, “sexual orientation”, “derogatory”, “attentive”, “anxious”, etc.); *meaning of the question* (what the question about family members refers to; “can thick chains (jewellery) also be weapons”; what the phrase “digital content” refers to; understanding longer constructions, etc.); or some *procedures* (ranking of responses; possibility of choosing multiple suggested answers; entering the number of younger/older siblings, etc.). It is important to note that there were comments indicating that verbal violence was not perceived as violence.

The examiners received clear instructions on how to act in such situations and what kind of additional explanations they should and could give, which they successfully did in all of the above cases.

Occasional technical problems (power outages, internet connection problems, problems with certain computers, the difficulty of the youngest students to use computers) were resolved in co-operation with the school’s IT specialist. Also observed were occasional positive reactions from students who were interested in the questionnaire and very satisfied with the opportunity to express their opinions on issues that were significant to them. In certain cases, such topics were

further discussed with the onsite examiner after the survey was completed. The examiners most often reported that the survey went smoothly.

Having in mind the frequency and nature of difficulties before and during survey implementation, it can be concluded there were no problems that could have significantly impaired the quality of the obtained data.

## 3. Results

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**T**he overview of the obtained results is grouped into several larger units (or chapters):

1. School Violence from Employee Perspective.
2. School Violence from Parents' Perspective.
3. School Violence from Students' Perspective.
4. Specific Characteristics of Digital Communication and Cyberbullying.
5. Specific Characteristics of Gender-Based Violence.
6. School Comparison.

A few general remarks must be made before presenting the results.

1. Since the data were obtained through questionnaires, it is important to emphasise something that sometimes may be overlooked, but is implied in surveys – **the analysed data are the statements of the respondents**, which may not always reflect the objective state. For the sake of simplicity and brevity, respondents' answers are sometimes presented as objective facts. For instance, if we say that 7% of students mocked someone else's appearance, that means that 7% of students *stated* they had mocked someone's appearance. Likewise, if 57% of parents say that their children reported having perpetrated violence, it should be kept in mind that this is a *report* of a parent – which means that some parents may not be exactly familiar with the given situation, do not remember it, or are unwilling to provide an honest response. Similarly, data on teacher violence is related to the percentage of students who reported having suffered such behaviour, the percentage of teachers involved in violence prevention programmes reflects the percentage of those who reported participating in such programmes, etc. Generally, this remark is applicable even to basic sociodemographic data; for example, if we say that 47% of respondents are over 30, this means that 47% of respondents *reported* being over 30 – assuming that respondents accurately know and honestly indicate their age.

Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that the surveyed students, parents, and teachers did not formulate their responses, but rather selected them from a list. For the sake of brevity, when the text states that 95% of parents describe their parenting style as authoritative, it is implied (hence not specifically emphasised) that this percentage of parents have chosen one of the offered parenting descriptions that researchers interpret as authoritative, and that the parent would prob-

ably describe their own parenting style differently if they were to provide their own description.

## 2. **Conclusions were drawn based on statistical analysis of the obtained data.**

This analysis includes descriptive data, but also an assessment of the correlation between variables (for example, between victimisation and violent behaviour) or the difference between groups (such as the difference in victimisation between boys and girls). Statistical analysis allows us to assess the likelihood that observed associations or differences stem from chance, relying on the calculated level of statistical significance. If we stick to a statistical significance level of .01, it means that we will consider an observed difference to be the result of chance until the probability of it being the result of chance is less than 1 in 100. Only then will we be inclined to view the observed correlation as real.

Statistical significance also depends on the number of observed cases, or the sample size. In large samples (for instance,  $N > 1,000$ , like our samples of students, parents, and employees), even very small correlations may be statistically significant: correlations greater than .08 are significant at the .01 level, and correlations greater than .06 are significant at the .05 level. However, such low correlations are usually so low that they have no practical significance. This is why, in large samples, only the correlations equal to or greater than .10 were identified as significant. Correlations that were lower but statistically significant at the .01 level were not treated as significant in a practical sense.

On the other hand, the smaller the sample, the greater the uncertainty as to whether a difference or correlation is the result of chance or a systematic factor, so in smaller samples a stronger correlation (larger difference) is necessary to be more certain that it is not random. In the school sample, where  $N = 77$ , correlations of .22 are significant at the .05 level, and correlations over .30 are significant at the .01 level. Samples were also small in cases when we compared subgroups of respondents. This is why we considered the same strength of correlation in one (larger) sample to be statistically significant and systematic, while in another (smaller) sample, we refrained from drawing such a conclusion and considered the correlation random.

3. One thing should be noted regarding terminology. In this paper, we started from the definition of violence as an act intended to harm someone. This definition covers a very wide range of actions, from the ones where there is very little intended or actual harm to another person, to cases of serious injuries. We would like to point out **the difference between this use of the term and the use that is common in everyday speech**. In everyday speech and practice, the term “violence” is commonly used for severe cases of aggressive actions, and sometimes even only for physical assaults and injuries. People, especially children, are still not ready to call certain actions covered by our definition (which is standard in psychology papers) violence, or to consider them violent behaviour. One should take these different meanings into account when reading the paper. Attention should be paid to whether the term “violence” is used within the meaning of our definition, or whether respondents are reporting something *they* consider violence.

Other terms that will be used may also cause confusion. In everyday communication, the terms of “victimisation” and “bullying” refer to suffering and perpetrating more severe forms of violence, but we will use them for exposure to all actions that are covered by our definition of violence, and therefore also for exposure to relatively mild actions that were not intended to cause serious harm or had no severe negative consequences.

Furthermore, we will comply with the practice of the Ministry of Education and avoid using the terms “bullies” and “victims” for persons who are perpetrators of acts covered by our definition of violence and persons who suffer such acts, due to the strong negative emotional charge that accompanies them, and because they may seem to imply permanent dispositions of the persons to whom they refer. We will use terms such as “perpetrators of violence”, “children who were violent”, “persons who suffered violence”, and “children exposed to violence”.<sup>2</sup> Generally, in international scientific and professional literature, the terms “victim” and “bully” have become commonly used and are inevitable in the papers for the standard classification of roles in violent interactions (bully, victim, bully-victim). In any case, we by no means intend to ascribe overly strong qualifications to the terms used, nor to “stick labels” that could imply someone’s enduring dispositions and behaviour patterns, or to express negative moral judgment. We need to point out that these are *technical terms* that are used as variable names and which, when transferred to the environment of everyday communication, may take on a different, incorrect meaning.

4. In this connection, it would be useful to clarify another thing which may cause confusion, and arises both from the questionnaire and the subsequent statistical data processing. **Certain opinions, attitudes, or feelings we use to describe respondents are not their self-descriptions, but rather things we attribute to them.** These measures are created based on different individual responses from respondents. For instance, based on the responses regarding how many good school friends they have, how safe they feel at school, whether they like going to school, and other things, we formed a score that we named *integration into the school community or school atmosphere evaluation*, without the students directly stating how integrated into the school community they feel. Measures related to victimisation and violence are also covered by such constructed measures. As described in more detail below, a student would fall into the category of victimised individuals, who suffered violence, if they confirmed that they had experienced at least one of the listed violent acts (someone insulted them, threatened them, etc.), or into the category of non-victimised individuals if none of the listed events happened to them. We will evaluate whether a student suffered violence or not, not the student, and they might not agree with our evaluation.

5. In this paper, **masculine forms will refer to persons of both sexes.** For instance, the phrase “teacher violence against students” refers to violence perpetrated by teachers of any sex against students of any sex, instead of using expressions such as “male/female teacher violence against male/female students”. The same rule

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2 The terms children “suffering violence” and children “perpetrating violence” would incorrectly indicate the permanence of the behaviour, and therefore a permanent characteristic of the child.

applies to other categories, such as principals, parents, legal guardians, or employees. This usage is both grammatically correct and intended to avoid overloading the text with double forms of nouns and pronouns, which would reduce readability (for instance, “few male/female students who suffered violence reported it; his/her parents...”). When sex distinction is necessary, we will use the phrases such as “male and female teachers” or “male and female students”. When words such as “students” or “teachers” are used, we will try to make it clear whether they are used generically to include both sexes or to refer specifically to the male sex.<sup>3</sup>

Considering that the National Research on Peer Violence and Student Well-being in Schools in Serbia covers many topics relevant to the problem of school violence, viewed from the perspectives of various school actors – students, employees and children’s parents/legal guardians, and having in mind that school employees and students are a fairly heterogeneous group, it was challenging for the researchers to provide a meaningful and comprehensive overview of the results obtained. We decided to present the results related to the classic form of violence, or face-to-face violence, which is the focus of this research, separately for each group of respondents, and in the following order: school employees, children’s parents/legal guardians, and students. After that, research findings are presented related to the specific characteristics of digital communication and cyberbullying, in parallel for all three groups. The final part of the research results refers to the specific characteristics of gender-based and sexual violence, as well as comparisons of schools across a range of relevant measures.

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3 Translator’s note: Grammatical observations refer to Serbian language structures and may not align precisely with English equivalents.

# 4. School violence from employee perspective

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## 4.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

### Description of employee sample

This chapter shows the research results related to employees in the schools included in our sample. The sample consists of 2,009 respondents, of whom 90% are teachers (21% class teachers<sup>4</sup> and 79% subject teachers<sup>5</sup>), 7% are professional associates, and 3% principals. The respondents are working in primary (60%) and secondary schools (40%) in Serbia. Women are significantly more represented in the sample than men (78% compared to 22%), which is common in surveys including employees in educational institutions. The average age of the respondents is 47, they have an average of 19 years of work experience in their area of expertise and have worked for 15 years in their current position. In the sample, employees are proportionally represented from four geographic regions, and small and large schools, while three quarters of respondents work in schools in urban areas.

### School environment safety

#### *School atmosphere*

- ▶ Most employees (around 70%) are satisfied with their relationship with students, colleagues, and school management members; half of them are satisfied with the relationship they have with their parents, and a quarter with the attitude of the Ministry of Education towards the school.
- ▶ Compared to teachers and professional associates, principals are significantly more satisfied with the relationships between different stakeholders in school life, including the Ministry's attitude towards the school.

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4 Translator's note: A class teacher is a primary school teacher responsible for teaching all core subjects to the same class of students in grades 1 to 4. Typically, the role requires a degree in education.

5 Translator's note: A subject teacher specialises in teaching one or more specific subjects (such as mathematics, physics, or geography) to different classes of students, typically from grades 5 to 8 in the Serbian education system.

- ▶ Two thirds of employees believe that students do not show enough respect towards adults at school (more often in big than in small schools), while a quarter of them acknowledge a similar attitude of adults towards students. Employees who believe students are more likely to show disrespect towards them and their colleagues are also more likely to believe that their colleagues behave in the same way towards students.
- ▶ Almost three quarters of employees say that parents behave aggressively and disrespectfully towards school staff, with most of them believing there are only few such parents, but more than one tenth (12%) claim that there are many of them.
- ▶ According to almost two thirds of employees, few parents are willing to co-operate with the school in implementing violence prevention programmes. Half of employees believe there are only few such parents, even when their child expresses violent behaviour.
- ▶ Different factors may contribute to increasing the reputation of teachers in society: from creating a more positive image of teachers in the media and society, better protection by competent institutions, less pressure from parents and less political influence on school operations, to better salaries for teachers.

### *Prevalence of violence*

- ▶ According to the evaluation of all three employee categories, verbal violence is the most common form of violence among students (only 7% of employees report it not being present in their school, 80% report it occurring rarely or occasionally, and 13% report it occurring daily).
- ▶ Over three quarters of employees believe that students are (occasionally) perpetrating physical violence against their peers, a quarter report it happening often, while half of employees say that fights occur between groups of students in their school, and a quarter state that fights occur with students from other schools.
- ▶ According to employees, verbal and physical violence are more prevalent among primary school students, while sexual harassment and fights with students from other schools are more common among secondary school students.
- ▶ Two thirds of employees report that students are verbally aggressive towards teachers, and more than half report that parents are also violent towards employees.
- ▶ Secondary school employees more often say students are verbally abusive towards them, but they also report their colleagues being verbally abusive towards students. Violent behaviour among employees is also more pronounced in secondary than primary schools.
- ▶ One fifth of employees report students displaying physical aggression towards teachers, but also report that 5% of students are suffering physical aggression by teachers.

- ▶ Almost half (45%) of employees believe that violence is the same problem today (29%) and lesser problem (16%) than it was a few years ago, while a quarter (26%) think it is a bigger problem.
- ▶ Women are more likely to believe that school violence is increasing, while men are more likely to believe that the situation has remained unchanged or that it has improved. Urban school employees slightly more often report an increase in violence compared to rural school employees.

## **Personal theories on school violence**

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### *Characteristics of children suffering and perpetrating violence*

- ▶ Children exposed to violence are perceived by employees as quiet and withdrawn, but also as provocative and aggressive, of different social statuses (somewhat more often of lower than higher), different scholastic performances (somewhat more often lower), and different sexes (at younger ages, more often boys; at older ages, more often girls).
- ▶ Employees believe that, among students who express violent behaviour, there are also children of different social statuses (more often higher), different scholastic performances (more often lower), both girls and boys (slightly more boys, especially at younger ages), and popular and unpopular children (more popular ones).

### *Causes of violence*

- ▶ Most employees (78%) state that the main cause of violence is bad family influence, and slightly less (around 70%) say it is the bad media influence and the social value system.
- ▶ According to employees, factors concerning school climate and inappropriate curricula and teaching methods least affect violent student behaviour, which is consistent with the previous research findings.
- ▶ Employee perceptions of the causes of violent student behaviour are connected with their perception of the effectiveness of various measures in combating violence.

### *Effectiveness of violence reduction measures*

- ▶ When evaluating the effectiveness of different anti-violence measures, employees give significantly greater importance to extracurricular than school-based factors.
- ▶ According to three quarters of employees, consistent punishment of students is the most effective measure in combating violent student behaviour (only one tenth rate it as ineffective). Employees who believe in the school's capacity to prevent violence are less likely to advocate for student punishments.

- ▶ After punishment, the most effective anti-violence measures are better co-operation between schools and parents, developing non-violent communication skills, greater support from professional associates, and improved co-operation between students and teachers (60–70% rate this measure as very effective).
- ▶ The least effective measures from the perspective of employees are more interesting teaching methods, more interesting extracurricular activities, and greater presence of a school-based police officer (around 40% of employees rate these measures as very effective).

### *School's ability to reduce violence*

- ▶ Over half of employees (53%) believe that schools can significantly influence the reduction of violence using their mechanisms. On the other hand, almost half of the employees believe that the school's abilities are limited – 41% believe that the school can do little, while 6% believe that it is completely powerless when it comes to solving this problem.
- ▶ Even fewer (32%) believe that schools can more significantly impact the reduction of cyberbullying.
- ▶ Employees with better relationships with colleagues, students, and parents have more faith in the effectiveness of school mechanisms for combating violence.
- ▶ The evaluation of the school's ability to influence the reduction of violence significantly positively correlates with the evaluation of the effectiveness of all anti-violence measures – most notably with interesting extracurricular activities and modern teaching methods.

### *Personal competence for combating violence*

- ▶ All three employee categories rate their own competence for solving problems related to violent student behaviour very highly (average score on a 10-point scale was 9).
- ▶ Employees who have personally experienced violence from students rate their own ability to resolve violence problems slightly less.
- ▶ Despite highly rated personal competence, most principals (94% in primary schools, 68% in secondary schools) and two thirds of teachers and professional associates express the need for additional training in the area of prevention and response to violence.

### *Employee personal experiences with school violence*

- ▶ Most employees in our sample do not feel threatened at school.
- ▶ Twelve per cent of teachers, 7% of principals and 5% of professional associates were exposed to violent behaviour by students (insults, threats, or physical violence).
- ▶ Twenty-four per cent of principals, 21% of professional associates, and 12% of teachers were exposed to violent behaviour by parents.

- ▶ Exposure to violence by students and parents is significantly positively correlated. Employees who are more satisfied with their relationships with students, colleagues, and parents are less likely to report being exposed to violence by students and parents.
- ▶ A significantly higher percentage of employees (40% of the total sample) report their colleagues being exposed to violence by parents during the previous and current school year.

## **Responding to violence**

### *Students and parents turning to employees for help*

- ▶ Students who are exposed to violence at school or who witness violence are least likely to turn to teachers for help (half of the teachers have never had students turn to them for help), and most likely to turn to professional associates.
- ▶ When students turn to them for help, the largest percentage of teachers and principals, in both primary and secondary schools, proceed to consult with professional associates.
- ▶ Few employees “turn their heads away” and leave the students to solve the problem of violence on their own; most of them try to always respond appropriately. On the other hand, when adults are involved in violent interactions, a slightly smaller percentage of them respond.
- ▶ Most employees are not aware that students at their school have reported suffering violence by employees, and secondary school employees report this slightly more often than primary school employees.
- ▶ Nearly all employees in the sample believe that their school responds appropriately when students are exposed to peer violence, and most believe that over half of their colleagues respond consistently and promptly.
- ▶ The most serious obstacles to implementing the Protocol for acting in response to school violence are difficulties in co-operating with parents (58% of employees) and the social welfare system (28%), while the least serious obstacle is perceived to be the poor functioning of the Protection Team (14%).

### *Implementation of school prevention measures and programmes*

- ▶ Most principals (92%) and professional associates (81%) and over half of teachers (58%) claim that their school updates violence prevention programmes every year in accordance with the school situation assessment.
- ▶ The greatest percentage of employees believe that the school occasionally organises activities that encourage mutual co-operation between students, teachers, and parents.
- ▶ According to the opinion of most employees, schools organise support activities for students who suffer, witness, or perpetrate violence.

- ▶ About two thirds of employees are actively involved in prevention and educational activities related to violence.
- ▶ Principals assess the school situation as significantly better, in many aspects, compared to teachers.

## 4.2. INTRODUCTION

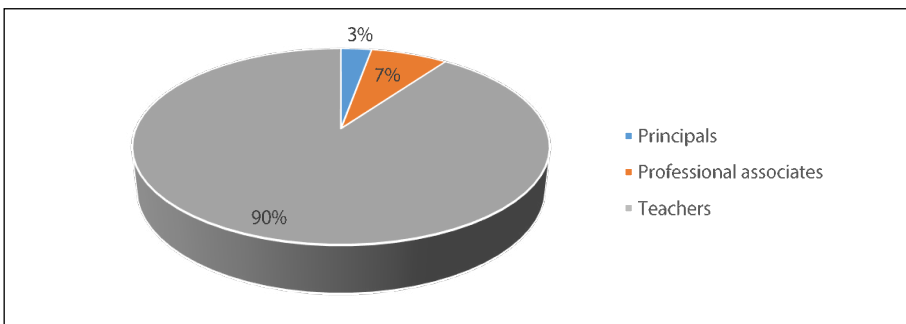
This chapter shows the research results related to employees. The research covered three categories of school employees: class and subject teachers, professional associates, and principals. All employees completed an online questionnaire (Annex 3), created for the purposes of this research, which has 64 questions grouped into several thematic units. Most questions were answered by all employees. However, the questionnaire has a few questions that were answered only by teachers, professional associates, or school principals.

An overview of the results begins with a detailed description of the employee sample structure. That is followed by a section on the evaluation of safety of the school environment, the frequency of certain forms of violence and their severity. In the subsequent section, we will explore the personal theories of school employees regarding violence – how they perceive children suffering and committing violence, what causes violence, and what measures are most effective in combating violent student behaviour. We paid significant attention to considering how employees evaluate their own competence in preventing and responding to violence, the need for additional education, and the school’s ability to reduce violence.

## 4.3. SAMPLE STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

The employee sample includes a total of 2,009 respondents, of whom 1,811 are teachers (90%), 143 professional associates (7%), and 55 principals (3%)<sup>6</sup> (Chart 4).

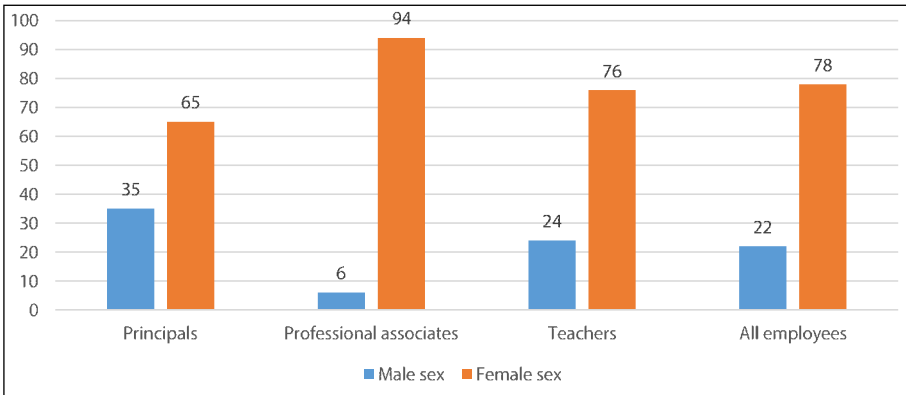
Chart 4: Sample structure with regard to school employee positions (%)



6 Over a quarter of principals did not complete the questionnaire (31% of primary school principals and 24% of secondary school principals).

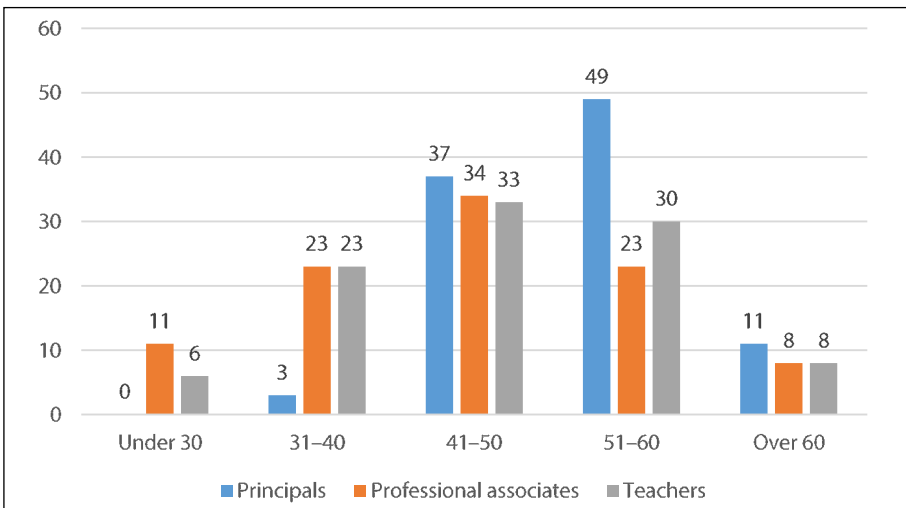
The sample consists of 1,568 women (78%) and 434 men (22%). Sex disproportions are common in research involving employees in educational institutions, where women traditionally make up the majority of the staff. As can be seen in the chart below, the disproportion between women and men is most pronounced in the subsample of professional associates, and least pronounced in the subsample of principals.

Chart 5: Sex structure of the employee sample (%)



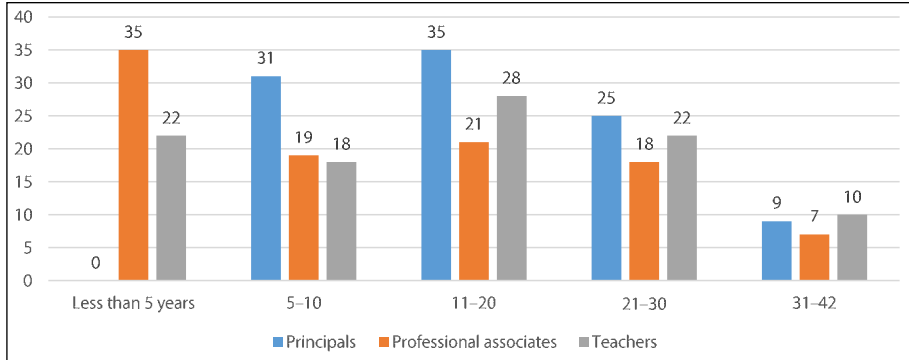
The average age of employees in the sample is 47, with the age ranging from 24 to 66 years. The greatest number of employees (33%) are in the age group between 41 and 50. The least respondents in the sample are under 30 (7%) and over 60 (8%) (Chart 6). Out of the three groups of employees, principals are the oldest age group (53 on average), followed by teachers (46 on average), while professional associates are the youngest (45 on average).

Chart 6: Employee age structure (%)



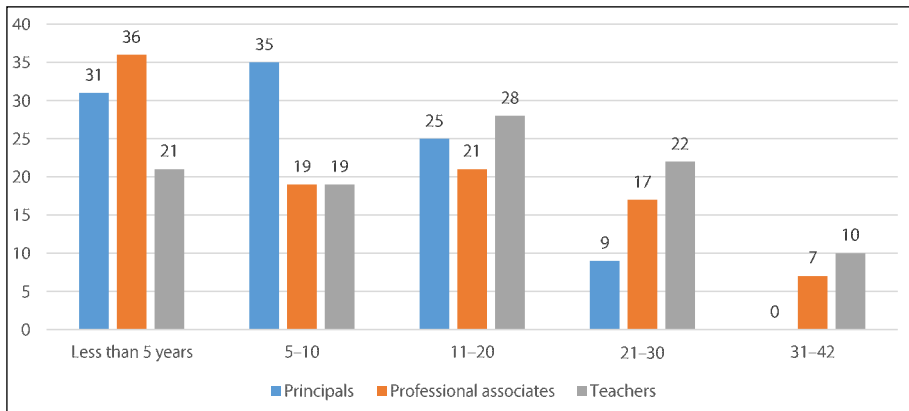
On average, principals have worked in their area of expertise the longest (for 26 years), followed by teachers (19 years), and professional associates (16 years). Most employees from all three categories have been working in their area of expertise for between 11 and 20 years (Chart 7).

Chart 7: Years of working in the area of expertise (%)



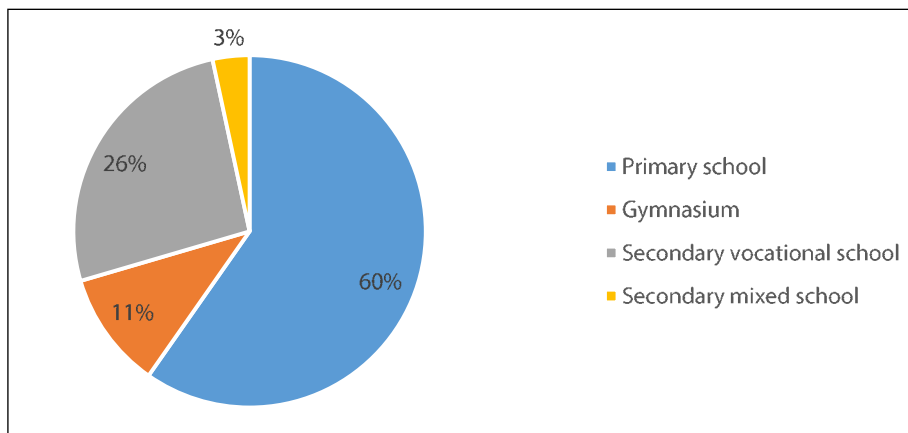
On the other hand, principals have worked in their current positions the shortest (nine years on average), professional associates slightly longer (12 years on average), and teachers for the longest period (15 years on average). Most respondents have worked in their current positions for up to 20 years (Chart 8).

Chart 8: Years of working at current position (%)



The sample includes 1,200 primary school (60%) and 809 secondary school (40%) employees. The greatest number of secondary school employees work in vocational schools (26%), followed by gymnasiums (11%), and mixed schools (3%) (Chart 9). Mixed schools are secondary schools with general education and vocational modules. They are most often located in smaller towns and are usually the only schools available in the area.

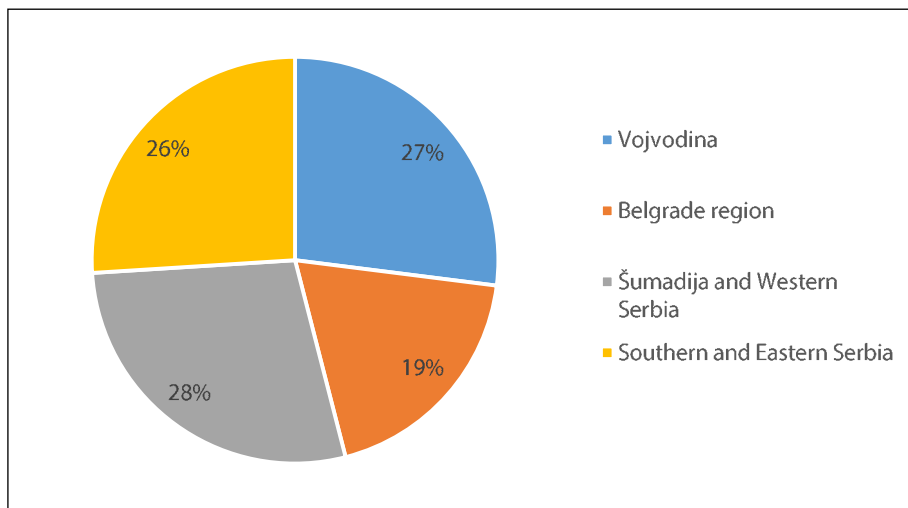
Chart 9: Structure of the employee sample by school type (%)



In primary schools, the questionnaire was completed by between 3 and 66 teachers per school (22 teachers on average). In secondary schools, the questionnaire was completed by between 2 and 64 teachers (25 teachers on average).

The sample schools were classified into four strata, or geographical regions: Belgrade, Vojvodina, Eastern and Southern Serbia, Šumadija and Western Serbia. The following chart shows that the percentage of employees in the Belgrade region is somewhat lower, while other regions are equally represented in the sample.

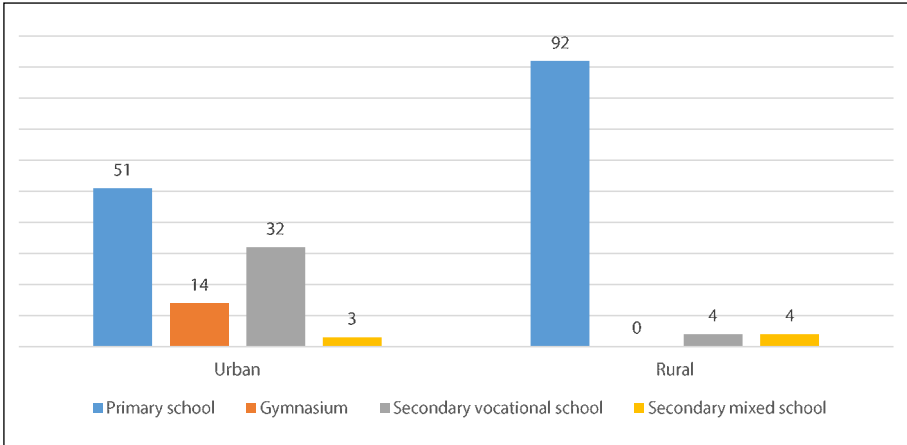
Chart 10: Regional distribution of the employee sample (%)



Schools also differ by the size of the place where they are located: rural (up to 5,000 inhabitants) and urban locations (over 5,000 inhabitants). More than three

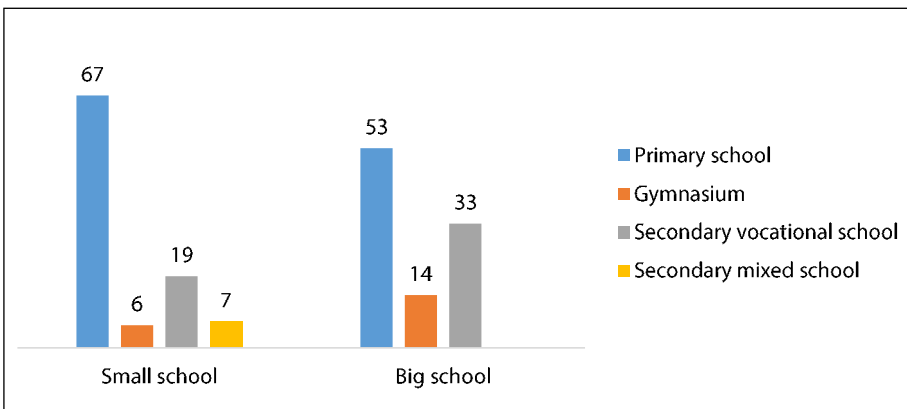
quarters of respondents (78%) are employed in schools in urban locations. Almost all respondents (92%) from schools in rural areas are employed in primary schools. As a rule, secondary schools are located in urban areas (Chart 11).

Chart 11: Sample structure by location size (%)



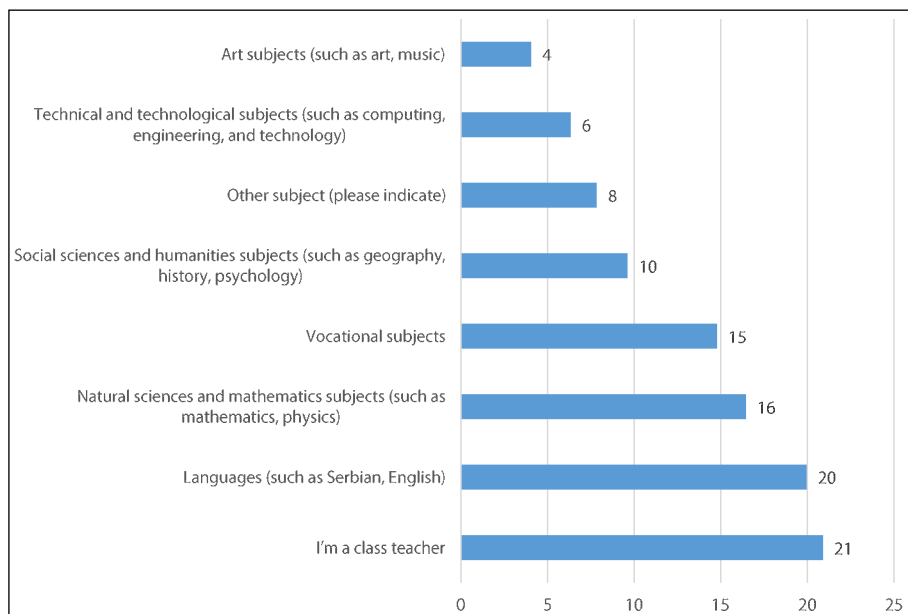
Finally, schools differ in size; schools with up to 600 students are treated as small, and schools with over 600 students as big. Big and small schools are proportionally represented in the total sample (52% compared to 48%). Among respondents from big schools, more respondents are employed in gymnasiums and vocational schools (47%), which may be significant in subsequent analyses when comparing big and small schools (Chart 12).

Chart 12: Sample structure by school size and type (%)



Since a majority of the employee sample consists of teachers, we were also interested in what subjects they teach. One fifth of the teachers in the sample (21%) are class teachers, and the rest are subject teachers (Chart 13).

Chart 13: Subjects of teachers (%)



However, when we asked teachers which grades they teach, it turned out that 27% of them teach students in lower primary school grades. This difference stems from the fact that subject teachers, especially foreign languages and civics teachers, teach both lower and higher primary school grades.

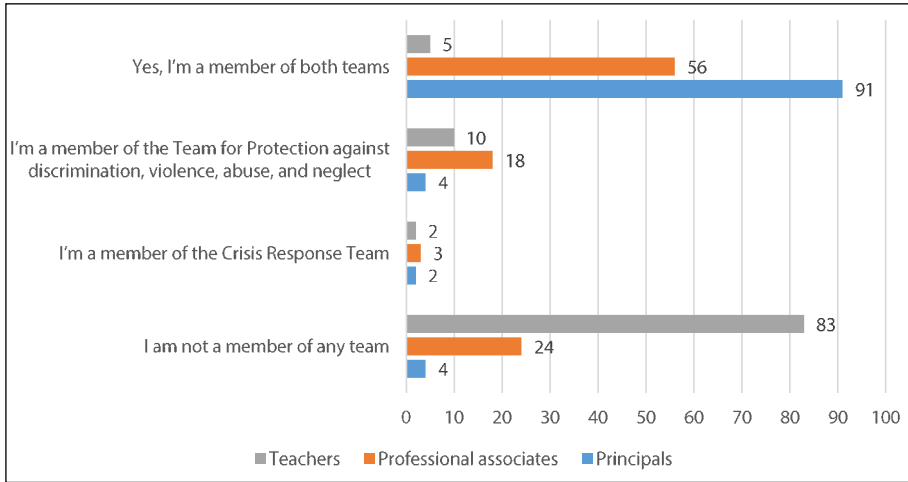
Most teachers (94%) teach a maximum of four grades.

We asked teachers whether they were form teachers in the current or the previous school year – over half (56%) answered yes, while only 7% said they were class teachers. Among form teachers, 23% were class teachers and 77% were subject teachers (which means that some class teachers also reported being form teachers). If we are talking only about subject teachers, over half of them (56%) stated they were form teachers.

All employee categories were asked if they were members of the Protection Team and the Crisis Response Team. We need to note that, according to the Protocol Rules (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 11/2024), schools are obliged to establish the Protection Team, which is responsible for prevention and intervention activities aimed at preventing school violence. To respond more effectively in crisis events, schools must, within the Protection Team, form a Crisis Response Team (which becomes active in the event of a report of an explosive device, fire, threat of an armed or terrorist assault, etc.).

Nearly all principals and over half of professional associates are members of the Protection Team and the Crisis Response Team (Chart 14). On the other hand, most teachers are not members of any teams. One fifth of professional associates in the sample are not involved in the work of the Protection Team. Considering that, according to the Protocol Rules, a professional associate is a mandatory team member, we assume that these schools have more than one professional associate.

Chart 14: Membership in expert teams (%)



Professional associates were asked to what extent in the previous school year, within their working hours, they were engaged in various tasks within their responsibility (the task list was adapted based on [the Rulebook on the Programme of all Forms of Work of Professional Associates](#)). They provided their responses by distributing 100% of their work time across nine tasks shown in the table below. The table shows the minimum and maximum values of professional associates' engagement in individual tasks (in percentages), as well as the average and standard deviation. We observed that some professional associates did not engage in certain tasks at all, which probably indicates that there is an internal division of tasks between professional associates in schools.

Table 4: List of professional associates' tasks

List of professional associate' tasks:	N	Min (%)	Max (%)	5% and less	M (%)	SD (%)
Planning and organisation of educational work, monitoring and evaluation of school's work	136	0	40	25	12	6.95
Collaboration with teachers, form teachers, and the principal	138	3	50	6	16	6.86
Collaboration with parents	134	0	30	27	10	5.57
Working with students	138	0	85	2	26	13.56
Educational practice research (analytical research)	129	0	20	74	5	4.17
Participation in the work of professional bodies	136	0	20	38	9	3.85
Co-operation with other institutions (schools, social welfare and health authorities)	131	0	20	65	7	4.06
Professional development	139	0	20	56	7	11.81
Preparation for work and keeping work documents	139	0	60	34	11	8.3

Professional associates spend most of their time working with students (on average, 26% of their total working time), while they spend significantly less time on other tasks: co-operation with teachers, form teachers, and the principal (16%), planning and organisation of educational work, monitoring and evaluation of the school's work (12%), preparation for work and keeping work documents (11%), co-operation with parents (10%). On average, they spend less than 10% of their total working time on all other tasks.

It should be noted that, according to the [Rulebook on Continuous Professional Development and Advancement of Teachers, Educators, and Professional Associates](#), professional associates must complete at least 44 hours of professional development during the school year within their full-time work ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 109/2021). The table above shows that more than a half (56%) of persons surveyed spent less than 5% of their working time on professional development, as well as that some of them reported not receiving professional development during the previous school year. As expected, older professional associates ( $\rho = -.12$ ), with more years of service in their current position ( $\rho = -.19$ ) and in their area of expertise ( $\rho = -.15$ ) spend less time on professional development.

There is no significant statistical difference between professional associates in primary and secondary schools in terms of the time they spend doing different tasks.

Older professional associates ( $\rho = .20$ ), with longer professional experience ( $\rho = .19$ ) and longer service in their current position ( $\rho = .13$ ) are more engaged in working with students. On the other hand, the participation of professional associates in the work of school's professional bodies is negatively correlated with age ( $\rho = -.22$ ), years of working in the area of expertise ( $\rho = -.26$ ), and years of service in the current position ( $\rho = -.22$ ).

One of the few questions in the questionnaire that were to be answered only by school principals related to the self-assessment of their leadership, organisational, management, and communication skills. The data in Table 5 show that principals rated all four groups of their skills with a high average rating, ranging from 8.5 to 8.9 (on a 1-to-10 scale). The evaluation of one's own skills is not related to the principal's age, sex, years of work in the area of expertise and in the current position. A high and significant positive correlation was found between evaluations of different skills, since leadership, organisational, and management skills are interconnected and essential for the successful performance of managerial jobs.

Table 5: Self-assessment of skills by principals  
(minimum, maximum, average rating and standard deviation)

Self-assessment of skills by principals	N	Min	Max	M	SD
Leadership skills	59	5	10	8.5	1.04
Organisational skills	59	6	10	8.8	.94
Management skills	59	6	10	8.5	1.07
Communication skills	59	6	10	8.9	1.06

## 4.4. SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT SAFETY EVALUATION

In the broadest sense, a safe school environment provides protection from all forms of violence to all participants in school interactions. Examiners agree that this is a complex phenomenon that stems from the interaction of various factors, both inside and outside the school, including social, political, economic and environmental aspects (Đurić, 2007; Popadić, 2009; Popović Čitić & Đurić, 2018). Among the factors at the school level that influence the perception of school safety, notable are trust, respect, and partnership between all participants in the educational process (Mitchell et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2018). To gain a whole picture and take appropriate prevention and intervention measures, both at the level of individual schools and at the systemic level, all aspects of school environment safety need to be comprehensively reviewed.

The literature describes several methods and indicators for evaluating the school environment safety. The following aspects of school functioning are usually used as school safety indicators: physical and technical (school's internal and external security system), social and psychological (school social climate), and the quality of the school's co-operation with parents, local community institutions, and the wider social environment (Đurić, 2007). In Serbia, in 2013, with the support of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Technological Development and UNICEF, and as part of the project "School without Violence – towards a safe and enabling environment for children", an Instrument for the Assessment and Self-Assessment of the Safety of Children and Employees in the School Environment (SES Instrument) was created and empirically validated (Plut et al., 2014). Within the Instrument, 19 indicators of school environment safety (that were operationalised over 131 components) were developed and classified in three areas: safety of the physical environment, preventive actions of the school, and prevalence of violent events and safety risks in the school. Using the SES Instrument, the school can record the state of safety of its environment, monitor it, and compare it with the state of safety in other schools and globally. One of the main advantages of the Instrument is that the evaluation of school safety is based on the responses of all actors in school life. In our research, besides students, school employees are an indispensable source of information regarding the school environment safety. Within this research, we paid the most attention to aspects of school safety related to school preventive actions and the prevalence of various forms of violence.

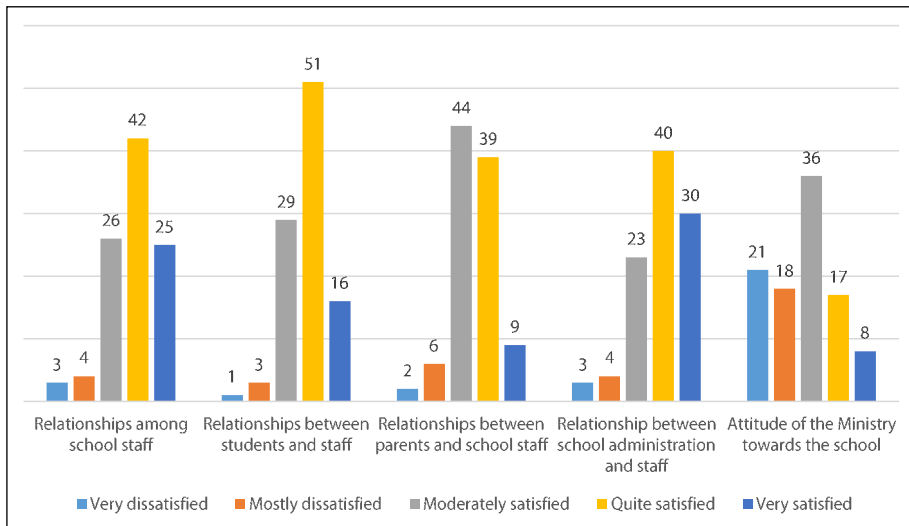
### 4.4.1. School atmosphere evaluation

School atmosphere, as one of the aspects of school climate, is one of the key indicators of the school environment safety. Research consistently points to an association between school climate factors not only with the presence of violence but also with other types of school problems (Kuperminc et al., 1997; Popadić, 2009; Đorđić, 2019). School climate plays a significant role in creating a healthy and positive school atmosphere. It is the "heart and soul of the school" (Freiberg, 1998; Freiberg & Stein, 2005). The school atmosphere refers to subjective aspects of the school climate, such as the feeling of safety of all participants in school life, inter-

personal relationships, and the overall mood at school. Some authors emphasise that the school atmosphere is the most important element in the school domain that affects students. Safe schools encourage responsible behaviour and mutual respect among all stakeholders (McCloughlin et al., 2002).

In our research, the evaluation of the school atmosphere by employees was based on their satisfaction with the relationships between different actors of the educational process, both at the school level (between students, staff, and management), and outside it (relationships with parents and the Ministry of Education). Most employees are more or less satisfied with all relationships.

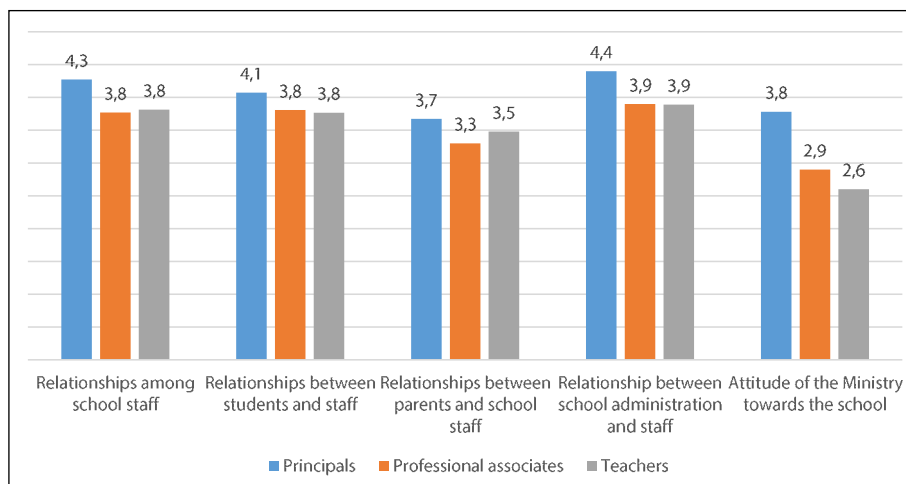
Chart 15: Employee satisfaction with relationships between different actors (%)



Employees in the sample are more satisfied with relationships in the school, especially among adults (over two thirds are fairly or very satisfied), than with relationships with parents and the Ministry of Education’s attitude towards the school (over one third are very or mostly dissatisfied). As can be seen from the data presented in the chart below, the evaluation of the three employee categories (expressed through average ratings on a five-point scale) differ to a very little extent, except regarding the issue of satisfaction with the Ministry’s attitude towards the school. Only in this case, the results of the one-way analysis of variance show that there is a statistically significant difference between the three employee categories, with principals being the most satisfied with this relationship ( $F(2, 1806) = 24.2, p < .001, \eta^2 = .026$ ). Even though the difference between employees in terms of the perception of the Ministry’s relationship with the school is statistically significant, the effect size is small, indicating that the position in the school explains a relatively small part of the variability in the evaluation of this relationship and that the differences between the three employee categories are practically negligible.

Regional differences did not prove to be statistically significant when controlling for the employees’ position in the school.

Chart 16: Employee satisfaction with relationships between different actors (average rating)



Employees' responses to five statements on the satisfaction with relationships between different actors in the school and outside it are significantly correlated (correlation coefficients range from .29 to .60). The weakest correlation is with satisfaction with the Ministry's attitude towards the school (but here too its intensity is moderate, ranging from .29 to .39). Therefore, **employees who are more satisfied with one relationship (for example, with school colleagues) are more often satisfied with other relationships (such as with students, management, and parents)**. This might mean that a favourable climate and the quality of interpersonal relationships at school affect the overall sense of satisfaction. Furthermore, it may indicate that employees prone to constructive communication and with good relationships generally have a more positive attitude towards different actors in the education system. Considering that this is a correlation, we cannot claim that one relationship directly influences another; it is possible that there is some broader factor (such as school culture, management style, personal beliefs, and employee attitudes) that simultaneously affects all relationships.

Based on the responses to five statements on the satisfaction with different relationships, which, as already mentioned, are interconnected (the reliability coefficient is above the acceptable value,  $\alpha = .79$ ), we calculated an average score, or a measure of satisfaction with relationships between various actors in school life. In comparing the three employee groups by observing this measure, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference regarding the position in the school ( $F(2, 1419) = 14.038, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.019$ ). Principals are more satisfied with the relationships between different actors in school life, compared to teachers and professional associates, while there is no significant difference between these two employee groups. However, the effect size ( $\eta^2$ ) indicates that the difference is small and likely has no practical significance. Considering their position in the school, principals do not have direct and daily interactions with students and employees, and therefore cannot gain a complete and realistic picture of the mu-

tual relationships between the different actors in school life. Furthermore, since the name of the school was a mandatory question in the questionnaire, this could have affected the degree of honesty of the principal's response.

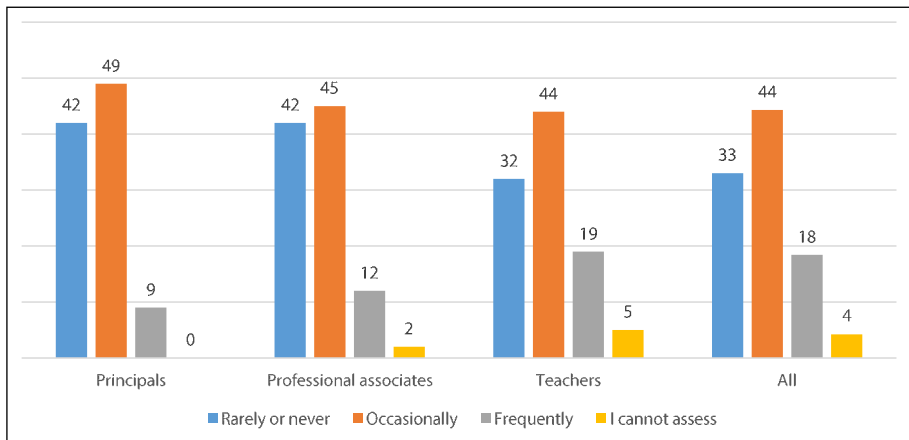
Employees with longer service in their current position are slightly less satisfied with interpersonal relationships in the school, relationships with parents, and the Ministry's attitude towards the school ( $\rho = -.14$ ).

Another indicator of the school atmosphere is the **mutual respect between students and employees**. While nearly two thirds of employees (62%) believe that students (to a greater or lesser extent) show disrespect towards adults at school, a significantly smaller percentage of employees (25%) claim that adults show a similar attitude towards students. This difference may indicate that there are different standards of expected behaviour, but also a potential lack of recognition of employee behaviour that students may perceive as disrespectful.

The employees' evaluations are not entirely consistent: almost one fifth of teachers (19%) and around one tenth of professional associates (12%) and principals (9%) believe that students often show disrespect towards employees (Chart 17).

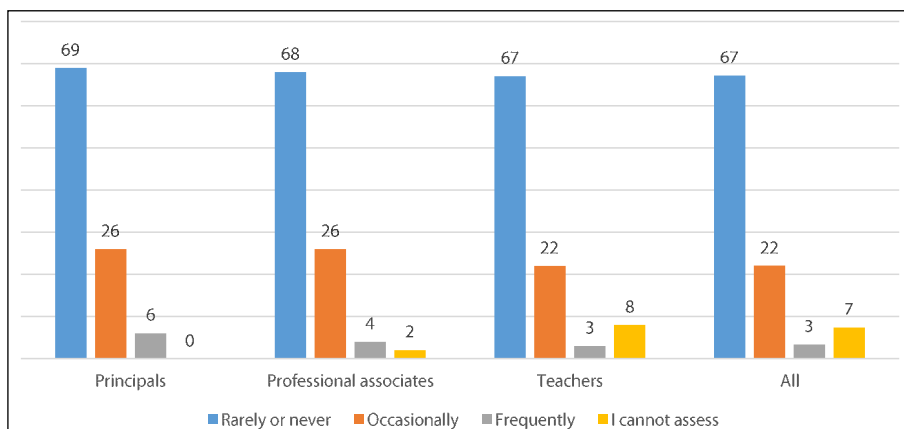
Teachers, who are in direct daily communication with students, may have a clearer insight into their behaviour, while professional associates and principals, who are not involved in the teaching process, may not perceive the same relationship dynamics. These data indicate the importance of taking into account teachers' perspectives when creating strategies for improving school climate and interpersonal relationships.

Chart 17: Students do not show enough respect towards employees (%)



The percentage of employees in the sample is not negligible – **one quarter of teachers and almost one third of principals and professional associates believe that their colleagues (occasionally or often) do not show enough respect towards students** (the difference between the evaluations of the three employee groups is not statistically significant) (Chart 18). From the student perspective, these percentages are likely higher.

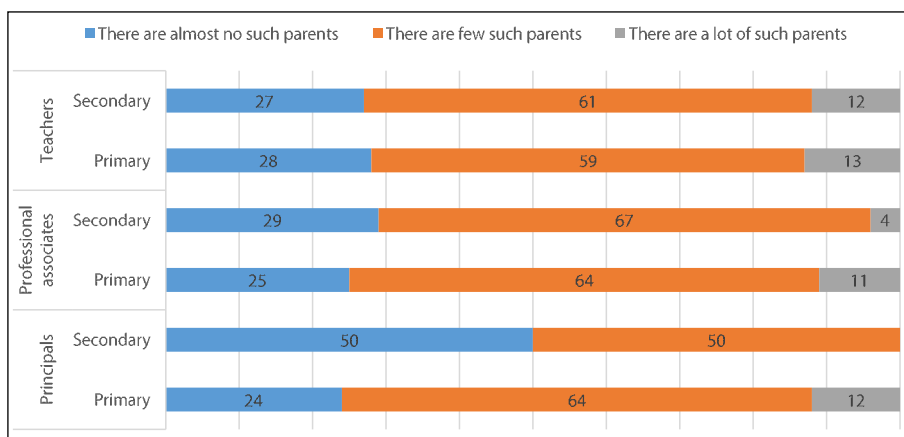
Chart 18: Employees do not show enough respect towards students (%)



With their attitude and way of communication, teachers may influence the development of student social skills, their views, and attitudes towards authority. This is supported by the finding that **employees who believe students are more likely to show disrespect towards them and their colleagues are also more likely to believe that their school colleagues behave in the same way** towards students ( $\rho = .36$ ). This correlation suggests that school relationships likely work on the principle of reciprocity – teachers who show respect towards students are more likely to be treated similarly in return. Research indicates that one of the most important factors in preventing violent behaviour among students is a positive relationship with adults (Popović Ćitić & Đurić, 2018). Students who are treated disrespectfully by teachers, or who perceive their behaviour as disrespectful, are more likely to become targets of violence by other students. Successful schools foster a culture where every child feels important and respected.

We also surveyed how employees perceive parents' behaviour, or to what extent parents show inappropriate and aggressive behaviour towards school employees (Chart 19).

Chart 19: Parents behave aggressively and disrespect employees (%)

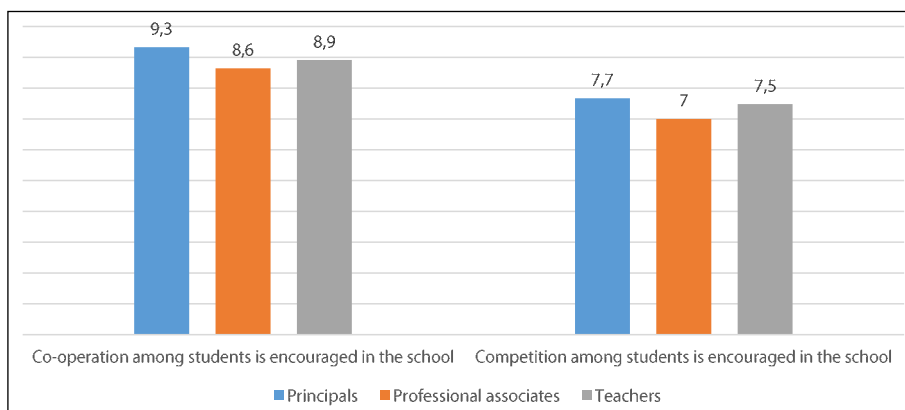


More than one quarter of employees (28%) claim there are almost no such parents or, in other words, **almost three quarters of employees (72%) believe that there are parents who behave aggressively and inappropriately towards school staff**. Most employees (60%), both in primary and secondary schools, believe that there are few such parents. However, there are some (12%), mostly among teachers, who believe that many parents behave in this way. Judging by the responses of principals and professional associates, aggressive behaviour of parents towards teachers is less prevalent in secondary compared to primary schools.

Employees who express a lower level of satisfaction with the relationships between key actors in the educational process are more likely to report a higher number of aggressive and rude parents ( $\rho = -.32$ ). According to employees, where disrespect by students is more prevalent, it is also more often expressed by parents ( $\rho = .34$ ). Behavioural patterns and the culture of family relationships are transferred to school life. The relationship between perceptions of school employee behaviour and parents' behaviour is also significant, but has weaker intensity ( $\rho = .19$ ). From the employee perspective, there are slightly more parents in big schools who treat school staff with disrespect compared to small schools ( $V = .16$ ).

We also asked employees to what extent their school **encourages co-operation and competition among students** (they provided responses on a ten-point scale; the degree of agreement varied from "not at all" to "very much"). The chart below shows the average ratings for three employee groups. It is clear that the average ratings are very high, especially for co-operation (ranging from 8.6 to 9.3) and slightly lower for competition (ranging from 7 to 7.5). Differences between employee categories are small and not related to sociodemographic variables.

Chart 20: Encouraging co-operation and competition among students (%)



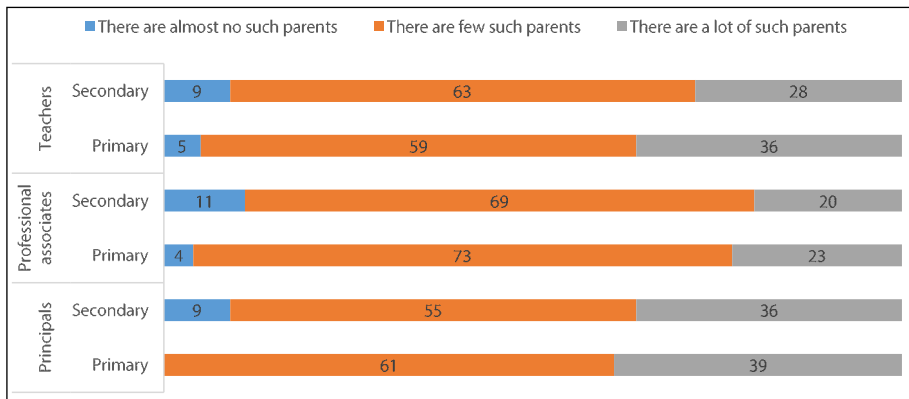
A significant positive correlation was established between **encouraging competition and co-operation** among students ( $\rho = .43$ ). According to the employee evaluation, schools that encourage co-operation also encourage competition. It is obvious that employees did not perceive the competition negatively, as something that disrupts relationships between peers, but rather associated it with competitions among the most successful students organised at the levels of schools, municipalities, cities, etc. It was also shown that employees who are more

satisfied with relationships within the school and with significant actors outside it are more likely to report encouraging co-operation ( $rho = .43$ ) and competition among students ( $rho = .22$ ).

Parents' willingness to co-operate with the school in implementing violence prevention programmes has been recognised in literature as one of the key prevention measures. In addition to students and employees, parents are also actively involved in violence reduction programmes, including the most famous Olweus's whole-school programme, which served as a model for later programmes (Roland, 2000).

We were interested how the situation in schools looks like when it comes to this issue, that is, how employees perceive it (Chart 21).

Chart 21: Willingness of parents to co-operate in implementing violence prevention programmes (%)

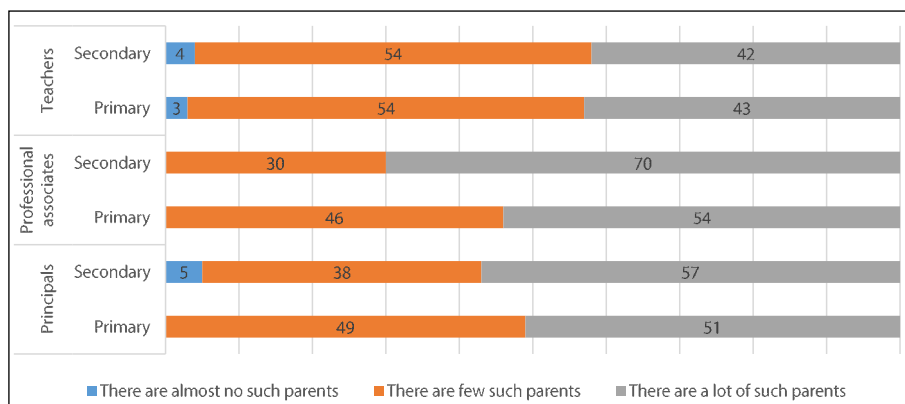


Most employees (between 55% and 73%, depending on their position in the school and school type) believe that few parents are willing to co-operate in implementing violence prevention programmes. The data show that in secondary schools parents are less willing to engage in prevention activities compared to primary schools (there is a consistency between the evaluations of principals, professional associates, and teachers). **The older the children, the less interested and willing parents are to co-operate with the school when it comes to preventing violence.**

We need to point out that, according to the Protocol Rules, the school must inform parents of their rights, obligations, and liabilities stipulated by the law, the Protocol Rules, and other by-laws and general acts. One of the tasks of the Protection Team is to inform parents and involve them in prevention and intervention measures and activities the school implements. Parents also have a legal obligation to actively co-operate with the school in protecting students from violence.

On the other hand, significantly more parents are willing to co-operate with the school when their child perpetrates violence. From the perspective of principals, and especially professional associates, there are more such parents in secondary than primary schools (Chart 22).

Chart 22: Parents' willingness to co-operate when their child perpetrates violence (%)



A significant correlation was established between satisfaction with relationships between all school actors and the perception of parents' willingness to co-operate with the school, both in preventing violence ( $\rho = .35$ ) and implementing intervention measures when their child perpetrates violence ( $\rho = .34$ ).

The evaluation of parents' willingness to co-operate with the school is not related to sociodemographic characteristics of employees (sex, age, years of service). The difference between class and subject teachers in evaluating parents' willingness to co-operate with the school in implementing violence prevention programmes is statistically significant ( $t(1489) = 4.15, p < .001, d = 0.26$ ), but has a small to medium effect, in favour of class teachers. When it comes to parents' willingness to co-operate if their child perpetrates violence, there is no significant difference between the evaluations of class and subject teachers.

#### 4.4.2. Evaluation of ways to increase teacher authority

According to the previously shown findings, a significant percentage of employees in the sample think that students and parents, as well as competent state institutions, do not show them sufficient respect. In recent decades, the teaching profession has been facing a serious crisis – fewer people want to work in educational institutions, teacher attrition is increasing, and interest in enrolling in teacher universities is constantly declining. This suggests a global problem of teacher shortages and indicates that 44 million new teachers will be needed in primary and secondary education by 2030 (UNESCO, 2023).

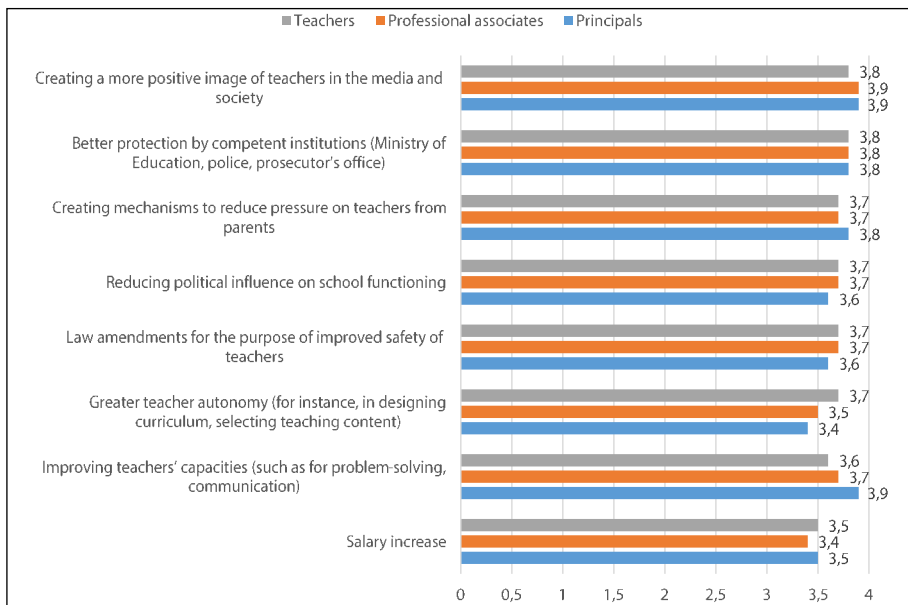
Teachers are dissatisfied with their social reputation and the status of their profession, which affects their motivation to work, job satisfaction, and, indirectly, scholastic performance, the quality of relationships with students, and the overall school atmosphere. Many analyses done for the purposes of creating educational policies at the global level indicate the necessity of improving the status of teachers and their competitiveness in the labour market (OECD, 2005). Simultaneously, research shows that the quality of teachers and their competence have a crucial impact on student learning and performance (Chetty et al. 2014; Teodorović, Milin

& Stanković, 2019), and that teachers, especially their beliefs, are the most influential factor in student success in the learning process (Hattie, 2023).

We were interested in how employees in our sample evaluate the contribution of various factors to increasing teacher authority and their social reputation. Respondents rated on a four-point scale, and the average ratings were very high (for all eight factors, ranging from 3.4 to 3.9) (Chart 23).

According to the opinion of all employee categories, all proposed measures are very important for increasing teacher authority. Even though creating a more positive image of teachers in the media and society was rated as the most important factor, and better salaries for teachers as the least important, the differences were negligible, making it impossible to meaningfully rank these factors.

Chart 23: Factors that can contribute to increasing teacher authority (average ratings)



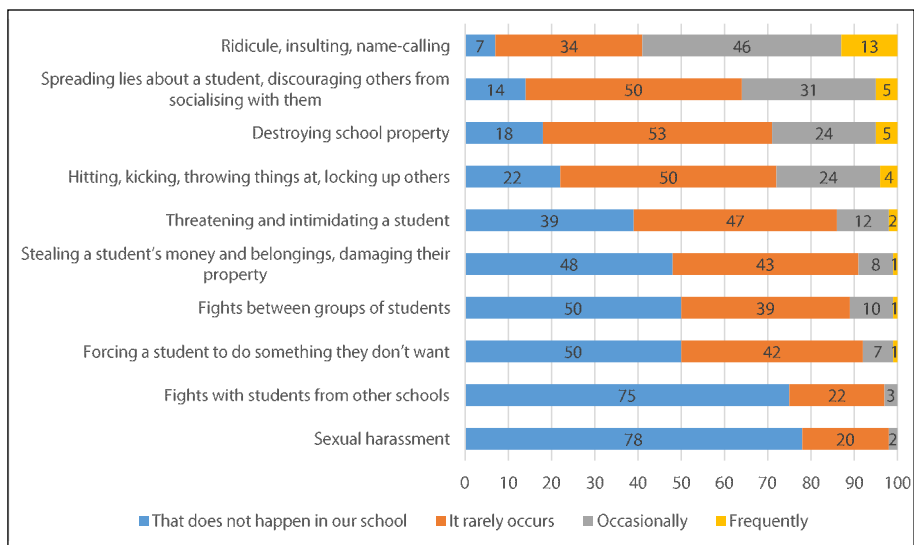
#### 4.4.3. Estimation of frequency of certain forms of violence

The frequency of violent student behaviour is one of the key indicators of the school environment safety. Employee evaluations of the frequency of student violent behaviour do not need to be consistent with students' self-assessments. Teachers are not equally sensitive to all forms of student violence. For some forms of violence, they may be a more reliable source of information than for others (Popadić et al., 2013).

In the present survey, employees assessed how often various forms of violent behaviour were present during the current and previous school year – both among students and in direct interactions between students and adults (one of the following chapters will provide details about violence in the digital environment).

The following chart shows the frequency of different forms of violence among students, from the employee perspective, as well as the average ratings.

Chart 24: Frequency of different forms of violent behaviour among students (%) and average ratings



Different forms of **verbal violence** (mocking, insulting, name-calling) are most common among students – only 7% of employees claim they do not occur in their school, while 13% report them occurring daily. Although slightly less common, other forms of verbal violence are also present in schools, such as spreading lies, exclusion from groups, threats, and intimidation. In addition to verbal violence, employees also observe **physical violence** among students – over three quarters of them believe that students hit, shove, kick, throw things at, and lock each other up, although this mostly happens occasionally. Fights between groups of students and with students from other schools are significantly less common (reported by between half and a third of employees), and along with sexual harassment, they represent the least frequent form of violent student behaviour. Previous research of a national sample shows that teachers are most sensitive to verbal and physical violence, and are less likely to notice problems caused by other forms of violence (Popadić et al., 2013).

Verbal violence is the most common form of violence among students in a school context from the perspective of all three employee groups.

The evaluations of teachers, professional associates, and principals regarding the prevalence of different forms of violence are quite consistent. This finding is not consistent with the findings of previous research, which show that the prevalence of peer violence varies when conclusions about it are drawn based on evaluations by different categories of school employees. Teachers tend to underestimate student vulnerability to violence – both the number of forms of violence and the number of students at risk of violence (Popadić et al., 2013; Popadić et al., 2014).

From the employee perspective, verbal violence is most pronounced among primary and secondary school students. According to employees, among **pri-**

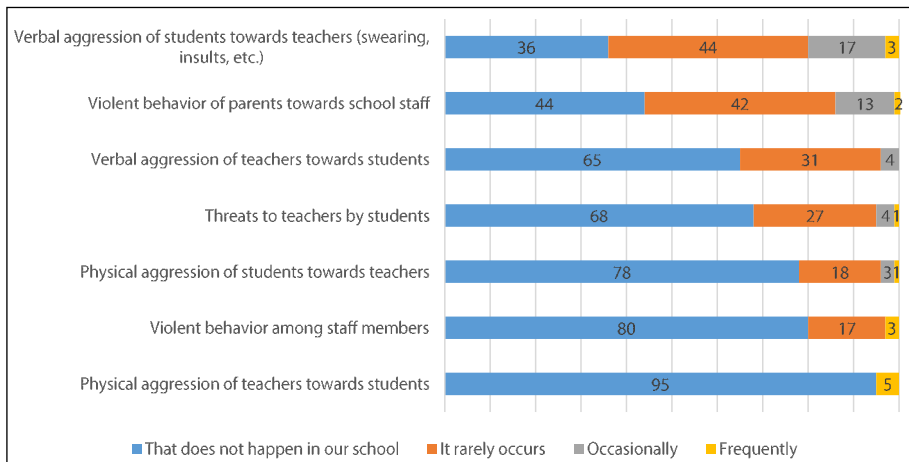
**primary school** students, the following forms of violence are more common: mocking, insulting, and name-calling ( $t(2003) = 5.77, p < .001, d = 0.26$ ); hitting, kicking, throwing things at, and locking up others ( $t(1991) = 10.83, p < .001, d = 0.50$ ); stealing money and destroying things ( $t(1993) = 2.59, p = .010, d = 0.12$ ); and forcing another student to do something they do not want to do ( $t(1987) = 2.72, p = .007, d = 0.14$ ). On the other hand, sexual harassment is more common among **secondary school** students ( $t(1961) = -2.98, p = .003, d = 0.14$ ). Even though the differences are statistically significant, the effect size is small ( $d < 0.20$ ), except for physical violence ( $d = 0.50$ ), which indicates a higher frequency of this behaviour among primary school students. Other differences have limited practical value.

The total score of perception of peer violence is negatively correlated with the total score of satisfaction with school relationships ( $\rho = -.34$ ), while, on the other hand, it is positively correlated with employee age ( $\rho = .14$ ), years of service in the area of expertise ( $\rho = .12$ ) and years of service in the current position ( $\rho = .15$ ). As expected, the evaluation of the prevalence of peer violence in school is highly correlated with the evaluation of the prevalence of violence in relationships between students and employees, school employees, and parents towards employees ( $\rho = .61$ ).

#### 4.4.4. Frequency of different forms of violent behaviour involving adults

Adults are also part of violent interactions in the school environment, as school employees or parents of students. In recent years, domestic media have increasingly reported on cases of school employees being exposed to violent behaviour by both students and their parents.

Chart 25: Frequency of different forms of violence involving adults (%) and average ratings



The following chart shows the frequency of different forms of violence between students and employees, parents and employees, as well as among employees.

The most common form of violence is verbal aggression by students towards teachers – 44% of school employees report this happening rarely, 17% occasionally, and 3% often. More than half of employees (56%) report violent behaviour by parents towards employees. On the other hand, more than one third of employees (35%) are aware of verbal aggression by teachers towards students, although they claim that this does not happen often. Physical violence also occurs between students and employees, with students being significantly more often physically aggressive towards teachers than vice versa.

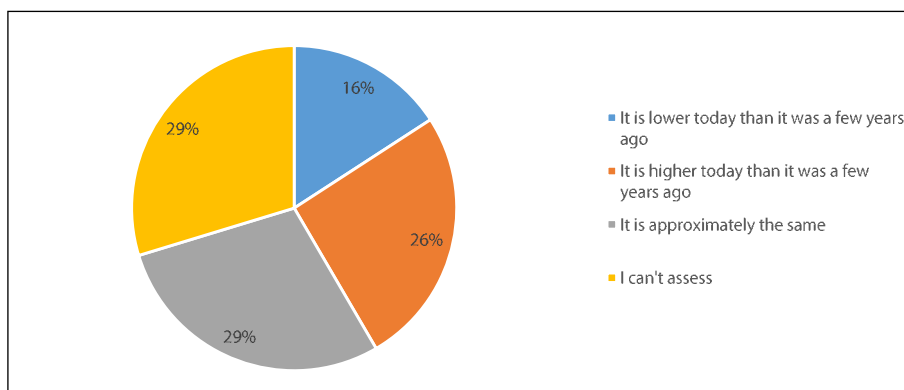
The previous chart also shows the average ratings of employees of certain forms of violence. The evaluations of principals, professional associates, and teachers are very consistent; the differences are nearly negligible. When it comes to evaluations by primary and secondary school employees, there are statistically significant differences in several forms of violent behaviour. From employee perspective, the following forms of violence are more common in secondary schools: verbal aggression by students towards teachers ( $t(1995) = -3.55, p < .001, d = 0.16$ ), threats by students to teachers ( $t(1994) = -2.71, p = .007, d = 0.12$ ), verbal aggression by teachers towards students ( $t(1987) = -4.68, p < .001, d = 0.21$ ), and violent behaviour between employees ( $t(1998) = -3.68, p < .001, d = 0.16$ ). The analysis results show that the above forms of violence are statistically significantly more present in secondary schools than in primary schools, but the effect sizes are small. Therefore, despite statistical significance, we cannot observe these differences as practically significant.

The total score of perception of violence between students and employees, among school employees and by parents towards employees is positively correlated with the sex of employees ( $\rho = .12$ ), years of service in the area of expertise ( $\rho = .12$ ) and years of service in the current position ( $\rho = .14$ ), while it is negatively correlated with employee satisfaction with school relationships, relationships with parents, and the Ministry of Education's attitude towards the school ( $\rho = -.44$ ). Evaluations of all forms of violence are highly correlated.

#### **4.4.5. Evaluation of the increasing or decreasing trend in school violence**

We asked employees whether the problem of violent school behaviour is bigger or smaller compared to a few years ago. Most employees believe that violence has not increased (29%) or has decreased (16%), while around a quarter (26%) of those surveyed state that violence is a bigger problem today than it was a few years ago. The percentage of persons stating they cannot provide an evaluation is not negligible.

Chart 26: Severity of the problem of violence  
– employee evaluation (%)



In the survey “School without Violence”, over two thirds of adults believed that violence among students was a bigger problem than before, almost one quarter believed that it was the same as before, and only 6% of employees believed that the problem of school violence decreased (Popadić et al., 2013).

An evaluation of the trend of violence in recent years indicates that opinions among school employees are divided. While some teachers (38%), professional associates (29%) and principals (17%) believe that violence has increased, others believe that the situation has remained the same or that it has even decreased. Principals, compared to teachers and professional associates, are less likely to notice an increase in violent behaviour. The difference in perception, although statistically significant, is not big, which means there is not significant discrepancy between different employee categories.

Differences exist when it comes to sex: women are more likely to believe that school violence is increasing (40%), while men are more likely to believe that the situation has remained unchanged (44%) or that it has improved (21%). However, considering the strength of the association ( $V = .15$ ), it can be inferred that sex is not a decisive factor in evaluating the trend of violence. The analysis also showed significant differences in school size and location, but such differences are also small. Urban school employees slightly more often report an increase in violence compared to rural school employees ( $V = .11$ ),

## 4.5. PERSONAL THEORIES ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE

### 4.5.1. Characteristics of children suffering and perpetrating violence

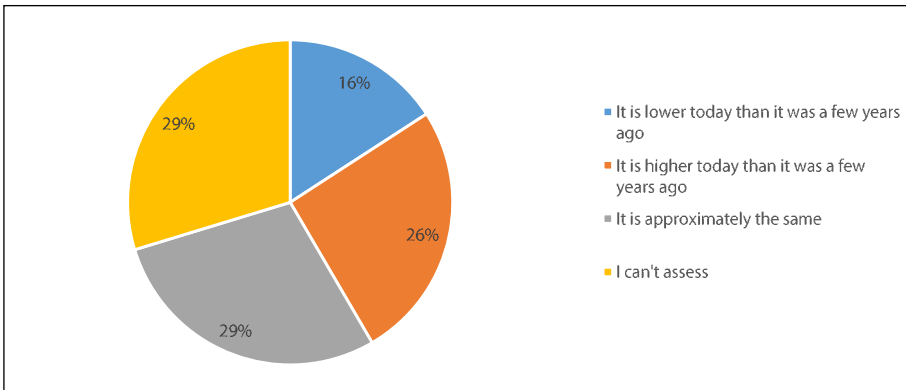
Ever since school violence has become a subject of scientific research, experts have tried to determine the specific characteristics of children who suffer and perpetrate violence in their interactions with peers. The answer to this question has significant practical implications, since it can contribute to the creation and implementation of effective prevention measures at the level of school and the

entire society. Researchers most often rely on teachers' evaluations, as they have the most direct insight into children's interactions in the school context, but they also consider professional associates, who, due to their position in the school, are most involved in solving problems related to violence. It is important to emphasise that the association between a child's role in a violent interaction and their characteristics does not indicate a causal relationship – children do not suffer violence because they are calm and quiet, or because they provoke others; it can also be a consequence of their exposure to violence. Furthermore, children suffering or perpetrating violence may find themselves simultaneously in both roles.

Firstly, we asked employees what students, in their opinion, most often suffer peer violence in school (exact forms of violence were not specified). Teachers, principals, and professional associates have similar attitudes – **most of them believe that quiet, withdrawn children and children who provoke others are equally exposed to violence.**

However, primary and secondary school employees have slightly different opinions about which children most often suffer peer violence, although the difference is not big. The following charts show comparative results for different employee categories, and differences between primary and secondary schools.

Chart 27: Characteristics of children suffering violence – quiet and withdrawn or aggressive (%)



Secondary school employees, compared to primary school employees, are more likely to believe that quiet children and children who provoke their peers are not at equal risk, rather, they are slightly more likely to believe that quiet and withdrawn children suffer violence ( $V = .14$ ). Based on the findings presented above, from the perspective of school employees, primary school-age children are more impulsive, less skilled at controlling their emotions, and more prone to direct displays of verbal and physical aggression. Therefore, provocative behaviours may provoke more violent reactions from peers and more often lead to conflicts.

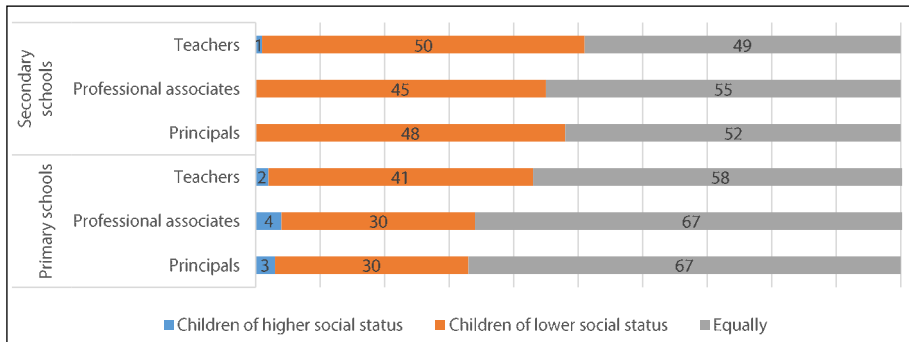
The literature discusses several profiles of children suffering violence. Typical targets of violence are *passive victims* – quiet, insecure, fearful, and oversensitive children who respond to violence by withdrawing. However, also exposed to violence are *provocative victims* – irritable, restless, aggressive children who provoke

other children (Olweus, 1978), and exhibit a mixture of anxiety and aggression, which makes them susceptible to assaults, but also prone to initiating conflicts (Schwartz et al., 2001). Such children are likely to be primarily violent, and thus become targets of violence.

In a study conducted as part of the “School without Violence” programme, around two thirds of teachers describe students suffering violence as withdrawn, frail, and quiet, and around one tenth as children who provoke others (Popadić et al., 2013). This is in line with many foreign studies showing that children who have less social support and are shier and more insecure, have an increased risk of being exposed to peer violence (e.g. Olweus, 1993; Perry et al., 2001).

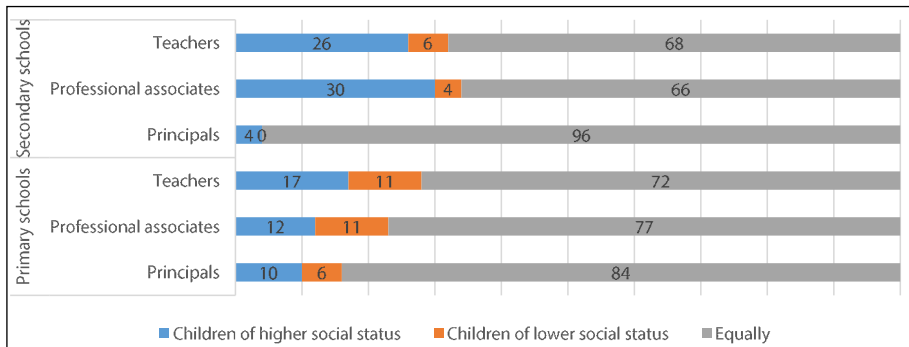
With regard to the social status, there is agreement among employees that children suffering violence are **either children of lower social status, or both** (Chart 28). Very few employees believe that children of higher socio-economic status are more susceptible to peer violence (only four secondary school teachers think this). Secondary school employees are slightly more likely to believe that children of lower social status are more exposed to violence, while primary school teachers are more likely to state that all students are at equal risk ( $V = .12$ ).

Chart 28: Characteristics of children suffering violence – social status (%)



We will now turn to the association between the socio-economic status of students and the perpetration of violence from the perspective of employees in the sample (Chart 29).

Chart 29: Characteristics of children perpetrating violence – social status (%)

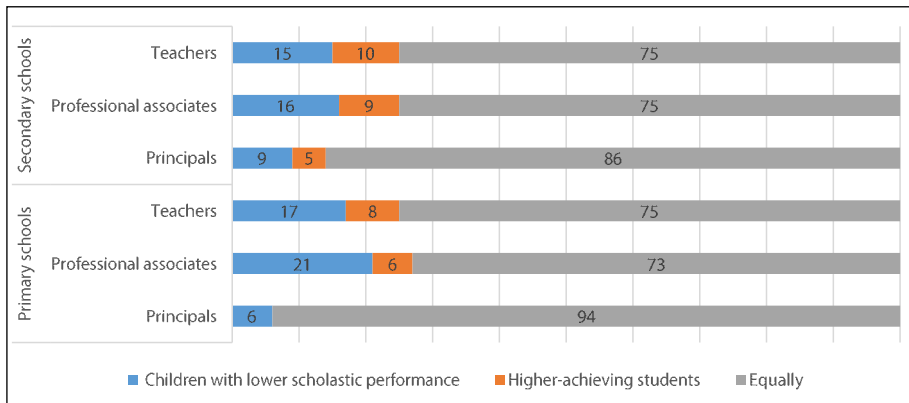


If we compare the data from the previous two charts, it is clear that, according to the evaluation of all three employee categories, there are significantly fewer children from families of lower socio-economic status among those who exhibit violent behaviour. In their opinion, peer violence is often perpetrated by children of higher social status to children of lower social status.

There is a statistically significant difference in the opinions of primary and secondary school teachers about which group of students is more often perpetrating violence, though this difference is not big ( $V = .12$ ). Although most primary and secondary school employees believe that violent children come from all social classes, secondary school employees are more likely to believe that violent children come from higher social status, while primary school employees are more likely to believe that violent children come from lower social status.

Most of employees in our sample (between 73% and 94%) believe that there is no significant difference in the **scholastic performance of students** suffering violence (Chart 30). Children with lower scholastic performance, especially from the perspective of professional associates, suffer violence somewhat more often than very successful students.

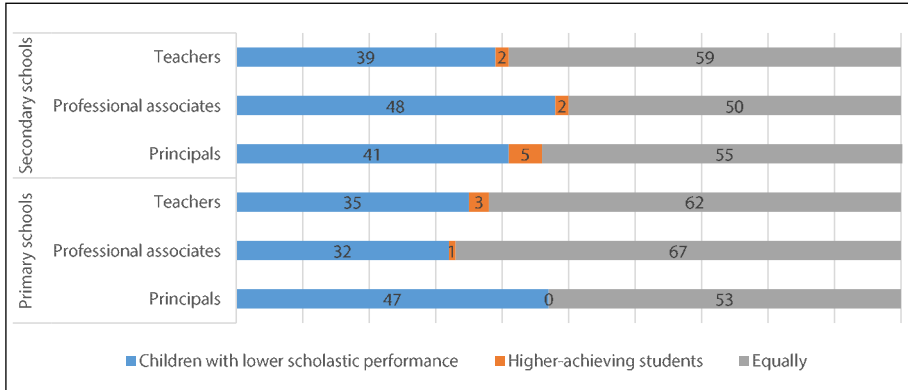
Chart 30: Characteristics of children suffering violence – scholastic performance (%)



It is commonly believed that children with lower scholastic performance, who feel insecure and rejected by their peers because of it, are more often being aggressive rather than suffering violence. The following chart shows the data on the association between scholastic performance and violent student behaviour in the school context.

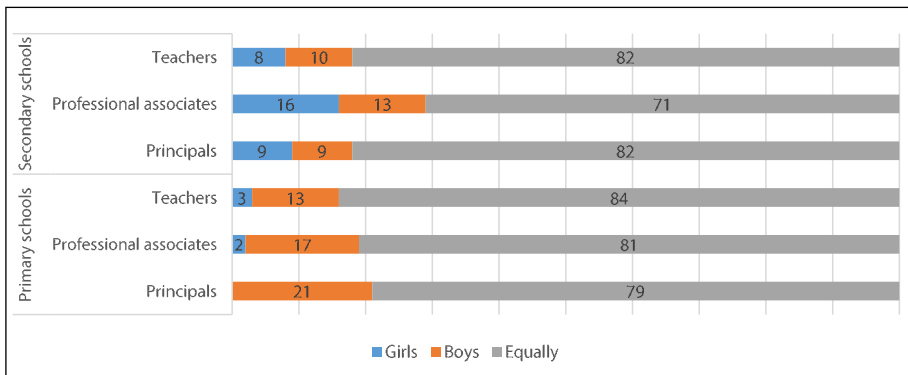
Our research confirms that, from the perspective of all employee categories in both primary and secondary schools, **far more students who perpetrate violence exhibit lower scholastic performance rather than very successful performance**, even though the majority opinion of all groups is that there is no difference regarding performance.

Chart 31: Characteristics of children perpetrating violence – scholastic performance (%)



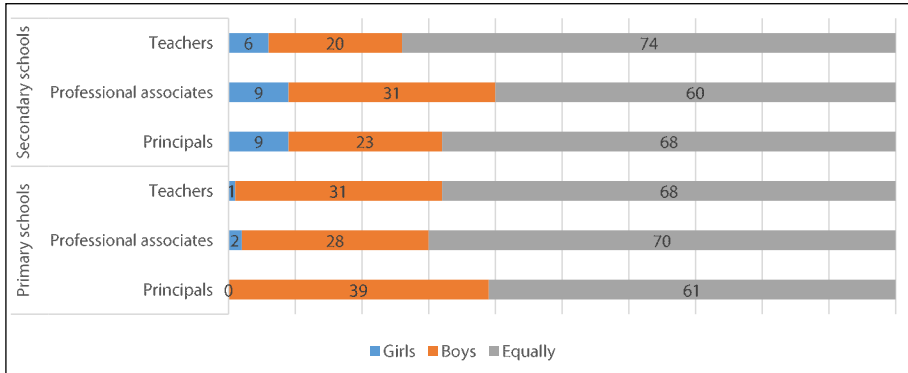
Finally, in addition to student age, the issue of **sex differences** is often the subject of analysis in research on peer violence. One of the common perceptions, one we could call a stereotype, is that boys are more prone to violent behaviour, while girls are more likely to suffer violence. This position was so dominant that early research on violence and abuse involved only boys (Olweus, 1978). If we compare the findings shown in the two charts below, it is clear that they do not support the said stereotype. The vast majority of employees (in both primary and secondary schools) believe that girls and boys equally suffer peer violence.

Chart 32: Characteristics of children suffering violence – sex (%)



Although most employees believe that girls and boys are equally exposed to violence, primary school employees are more likely to report that boys suffer violence, and secondary school employees more often report that girls suffer violence ( $V = .14$ ). The evaluations of teachers, professional associates, and principals are quite consistent.

Chart 33: Characteristics of children perpetrating violence – sex (%)

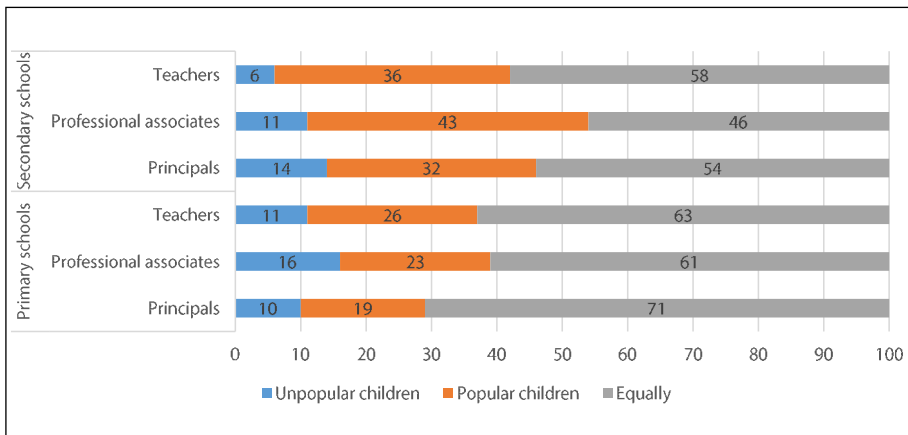


When it comes to perpetrating violence, the percentage is slightly lower, but still over two thirds of employees believe that sex is not a crucial factor. According to employees, more boys expressing violent behaviour towards their peers are in primary schools compared to secondary schools ( $V = .16$ ).

Therefore, according to the evaluation of the employees in the sample, in primary schools, both among those suffering and perpetrating violence, there are more boys than girls, while in secondary schools, boys are more likely to perpetrate and girls to suffer violence.

Another characteristic of children that may favour violent behaviour is the popularity in the peer group (Chart 34). According to our findings, primary school teachers are more likely to believe that unpopular children are violent, while secondary school teachers believe that popular children are the ones expressing violent behaviour ( $V = .13$ ), although the majority opinion of nearly all employee categories is that there is no difference in popularity.

Chart 34: Characteristics of children perpetrating violence – group popularity (%)



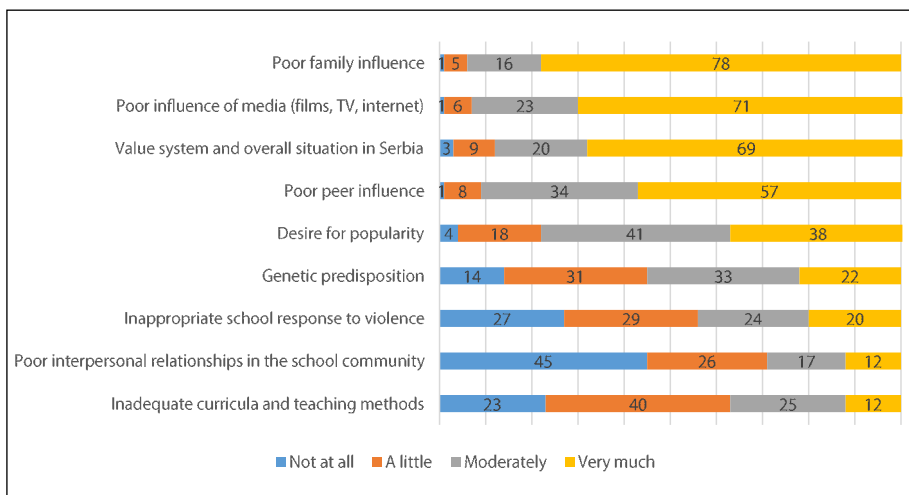
If we were to summarise the previous findings and create, so to say, the profile of a child who, from the perspective of school employees in Serbia, most often suffers peer violence, or perpetrates violence, we would first note that evaluations of the three employee categories are consistent to a high degree.

Employees believe that children suffering violence may be quiet and withdrawn, but also provocative and aggressive, of different social status (somewhat more often of lower than higher), different scholastic performance (somewhat more often lower), and different sex (at younger ages, more often boys, at older ages, more often girls). Among students who express violent behaviour, there are children of different social status (more often higher), different scholastic performance (more often lower), both girls and boys (slightly more boys, especially at younger ages), and popular and unpopular children (more popular ones).

### 4.5.2. Causes of violent student behaviour

We asked employees to what extent different factors (at the individual, school, and societal levels) affect violent student behaviour in school. The vast majority of employees (78%) state that the main cause of violence is bad family influence, and slightly less (around 71%) point out the bad media influence, while over two thirds of employees (69%) indicate the value system and the broader social context. In the “School without Violence” survey, teachers also rated a problematic family as the most responsible for violent student behaviour (the list of factors is almost the same, except that in our survey, another potential cause was added – students’ desire for popularity) (Popadić, 2009).

Chart 35: Causes of violent student behaviour (%) and average ratings



According to employees, the factors that **least affect** violent student behaviour are related to the **school climate and inadequate curricula and teaching methods**. In accordance with the previous research findings (Popadić, 2009; Plut et al., 2013), employees **underestimate the influence of poor interpersonal relationships in the workplace on violent student behaviour**. In the chapter related to the school atmosphere, it is shown that the level of satisfaction with relationships among employees is significantly positively correlated with satisfaction with all other relationships, including the relationship between employees and students.

Only a third of employees link school violence to the class content and teaching methods. On the other hand, **almost a quarter of teachers and half as many professional associates do not recognise at all the influence of inadequate curricula and teaching methods on violent student behaviour**. It is particularly interesting that professional associates in primary schools significantly more often state this than their colleagues in secondary schools (20% compared to 4%).

Research shows that the activities of teachers (and non-teaching staff), both those related to violence prevention, and other activities related to the development of pedagogical work and the creation of a positive school climate, are associated with the presence of violence in a particular school (Payne & Gottfredson, 2004). Various disciplines study how school, as a social institution fostering asymmetrical relationships and an uneven distribution of power among interaction participants, influences student behaviour. Attention is also focused on teaching methods and assessment of scholastic performance, as well as the organisation of physical space, which significantly shapes educational philosophy.

The previous chart also shows the average ratings of employees for each factor (a four-point scale). In analysing the factors that contribute to violent student behaviour, no statistically significant difference was observed in the opinions of principals, professional associates, and teachers.

In predicting the importance of individual factors causing violence, the sociodemographic variables of employees (sex, age, years of service in the area of expertise) are also irrelevant.

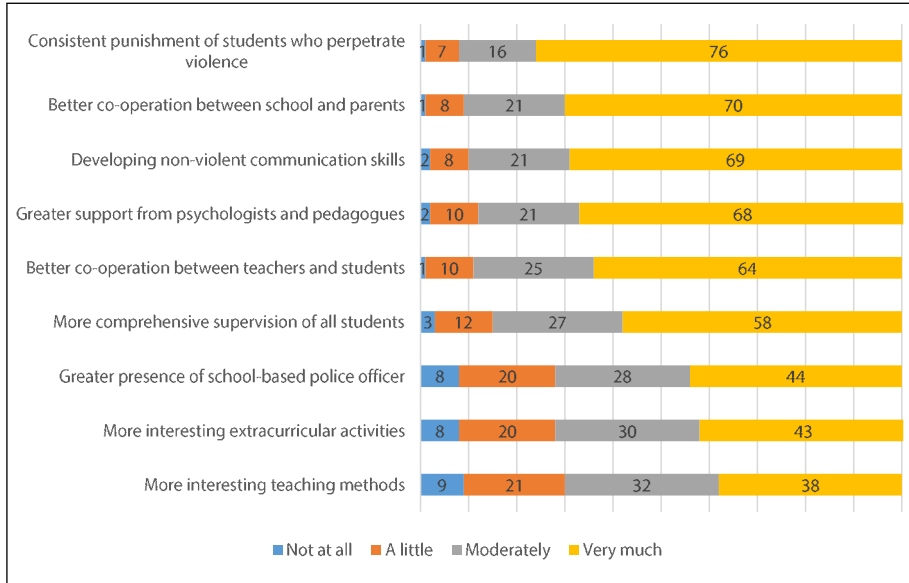
### **4.5.3. Effectiveness of various measures in combating violence from employee perspective**

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The way in which employees explain the causes of violent behaviour is related to their evaluation of the effectiveness of different measures in combating violence, as well as their evaluation of the school's and their own ability to reduce violence among students.

Employees evaluated (on a four-point scale) the effectiveness of nine different measures, most of which are within the school’s jurisdiction (Chart 36).

Chart 36: Effectiveness of various measures in combating violence (%) and average ratings



In the employees’ opinion, the implementation of each of the above measures could lead to an improvement of the school situation. Over three quarters of employees (77% of teachers, 69% of principals, and 66% of professional associates) believe that **consistent punishment is the most effective measure in combating violent student behaviour**, while only one tenth of employees rated this measure as ineffective. In the “School without Violence” survey (Plut et al., 2012), half of the teachers surveyed assessed student punishment as one of the most effective measures for preventing violence. The understanding that punishment can be effective in the short term by “putting out the fire”, but that it does not contribute to reducing violence in the long term, is strongly supported by numerous both old and recent scientific studies (e.g. Bandura, 1986; Archer & Nilsson, 1989). Strict punitive measures and often restrictive student discipline do not solve the problem of school violence, but often lead to its increase (e.g. Skiba et al., 2014; Gregory et al., 2017; Hirschfield, 2018). The use of strict disciplinary measures in schools (for example, suspensions, expulsions, and zero-tolerance policies) may lead to an increase in antisocial behaviour outside of school and heighten the risk of subsequent conflicts with the law, especially among at-risk youth (Skiba & Rausch, 2006; Hemphill et al., 2016; Hirschfield, 2008, 2018; Welch & Payne, 2012; Kupchik, 2016). Alternatively, measures such as positive student discipline, social skill development, and social-emotional learning are encouraged (Bear et al., 2022). Such measures not only contribute to maintain-

ing order in schools but also create equal opportunities for all students, improve their emotional well-being, encourage the development of self-discipline, and positively affect scholastic performance.

If employees consider that parents are most responsible for violence, then it was to be expected that over two thirds of employees (70%) would rate **better co-operation between parents and school** as one of the most effective measures in combating violence. School employees (it should be noted that 90% of our sample consists of teachers) tend to attribute responsibility for violence primarily to parents, and in the school – to psychologists and pedagogues – who, according to the dominant understanding, are most directly responsible for providing support to students who are involved in a violent situation, as well as developing non-violent communication skills.

In the “School without Violence” survey, the majority of employees (72%) indicated better co-operation between the school and parents as one of the most important ways to combat violence (Popadić et al., 2013). Other proposed measures were rated very similarly as in our survey. It is important to note that this survey was part of a comprehensive school violence prevention programme and was conducted primarily to assess the state of school safety and identify aspects that require improvement. It would be interesting to explore whether any schools included in the programme were also included in our sample and whether the programme provided the expected results.

The previous chart also shows the average ratings of employees obtained on individual measures in combating violence. All measures are given high importance (ratings range from 3 to 3.7, on a 1 to 4 scale). The differences in the average ratings of the three employee categories are very small.

The results of the one-factor ANOVA analysis indicate the existence of statistically significant differences between three employee categories regarding the perception of certain measures for combating school violence: more interesting extra-curricular activities ( $F(2, 1809) = 12.12, p < .001, \eta^2 = .013$ ), the use of more interesting teaching methods ( $F(2, 1801) = 11.67, p < .001, \eta^2 = .013$ ), the development of non-violent communication skills ( $F(2, 1807) = 6.10, p = .002, \eta^2 = .007$ ), and consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence ( $F(2, 1813) = 6.01, p = .003, \eta^2 = .007$ ). The effect sizes indicate that differences in perception of these measures are relatively small.

Employee perceptions of the causes of violent student behaviour are connected with their perception of the effectiveness of various measures in combating violence (Table 6). Nearly all relationships in the table are positive and statistically significant.

Table 6: Correlations between ratings of potential causes of violent behaviour and the effectiveness of anti-violence measures

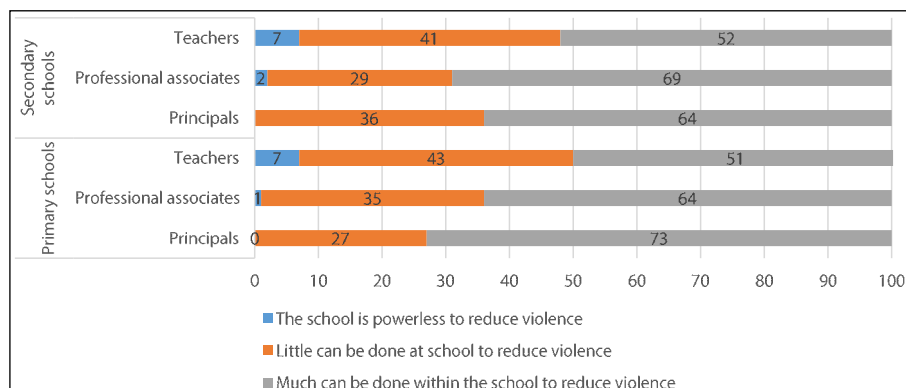
Violence prevention measures	Causes of violence among students								
	Family influence	Genetic predisposition	Peer influence	Media influence	Inadequate curricula and teaching methods	Value system and overall situation in Serbia	Inappropriate school response	Poor interpersonal staff relations	Desire for popularity
Better co-operation between school and parents	.28**	.07**	.24**	.23**	.09**	.16**	.17**	.11**	.21**
Better co-operation between teachers and students	.23**	.08**	.25**	.19**	.19**	.17**	.24**	.21**	.20**
Greater support from psychologists and pedagogues	.21**	.12**	.25**	.20**	.14**	.16**	.20**	.17**	.19**
Developing non-violent communication skills	.20**	.11**	.25**	.21**	.16**	.13**	.10**	.12**	.19**
Consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence	.24**	.08**	.24**	.22**	.08**	.21**	.14**	.04	.21**
More comprehensive supervision of all students	.17**	.19**	.17**	.20**	.15**	.11**	.16**	.12**	.20**
Greater presence of school-based police officer	.10**	.17**	.15**	.13**	.14**	.03	.06*	.07**	.16**
More interesting extracurricular activities	.08**	.05*	.14**	.13**	.27**	.06**	.14**	.20**	.15**
More interesting teaching methods	.06*	.06*	.13**	.10**	.37**	.06**	.18**	.22**	.11**

Note: Shown are Spearman's rho correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

#### 4.5.4. School's ability to reduce violence

We have established that employees, when evaluating the effectiveness of various anti-violence measures give significantly greater importance to extracurricular than school-based factors. Below we will show how they responded to a question that directly relates to their school's ability to reduce violence.

Chart 37: School's ability to reduce violence (%)



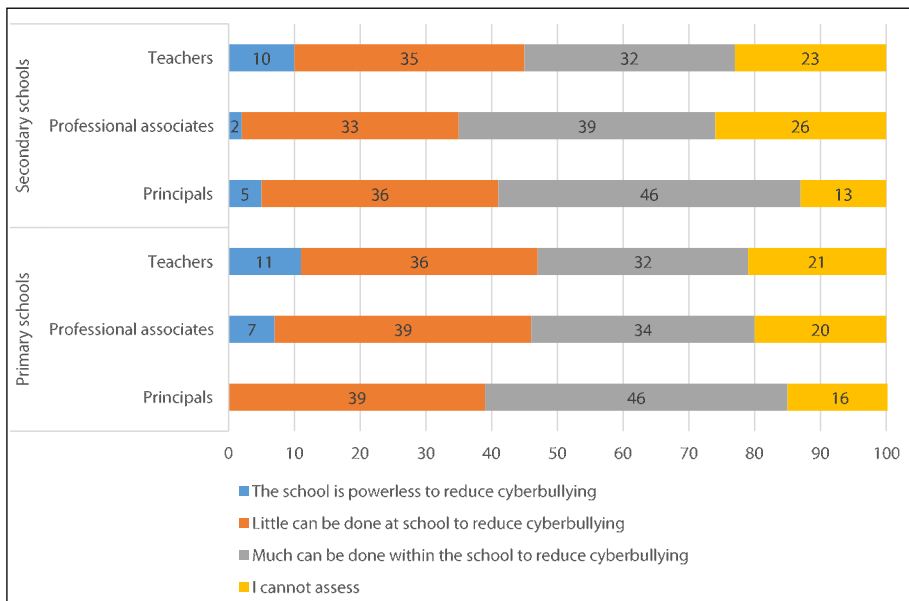
Only 6% of employees believe that the school is completely powerless to reduce violence. No principals, only two professional associates, and 109 teachers share this belief. **Over half of employees (53%) believe that schools can significantly influence the reduction of violence, while the remaining 41% show some reservations.** In the mentioned survey “Schools without Violence”, two thirds of teachers (67%) believed in the power of school to significantly reduce violence (Popadić, 2009).

Principals have slightly more confidence in the school’s internal mechanisms for preventing violence than teachers and professional associates. Although a significant correlation was established between the positions of school employees and their views on school’s influence on violence reduction, it is very weak and has no practical significance. In general, primary and secondary school employees share similar views on this issue.

Employees with **better relationships with colleagues, students, and parents have more faith in the effectiveness of school mechanisms for combating violence** ( $rho = .26$ ). Furthermore, employees who believe there are more parents who are willing to co-operate in implementing violence prevention programmes have more faith in the school’s abilities ( $rho = .19$ ). On the other hand, employees with longer service in their current position are slightly more sceptical about the school’s ability to influence this problem ( $rho = -.10$ ).

We were interested to see what employees thought about the school’s ability to reduce cyberbullying. Based on the data shown in the following chart, we can draw the conclusion that schools are less able to influence cyberbullying than traditional peer violence. A third of employees (32%) believe that much can be done at the school level to reduce cyberbullying. A similar finding was observed in previous surveys conducted on a national sample, when slightly more than one third of teachers believed that schools had the capacity to deal with cyberbullying (Popadić and Kuzmanović, 2016).

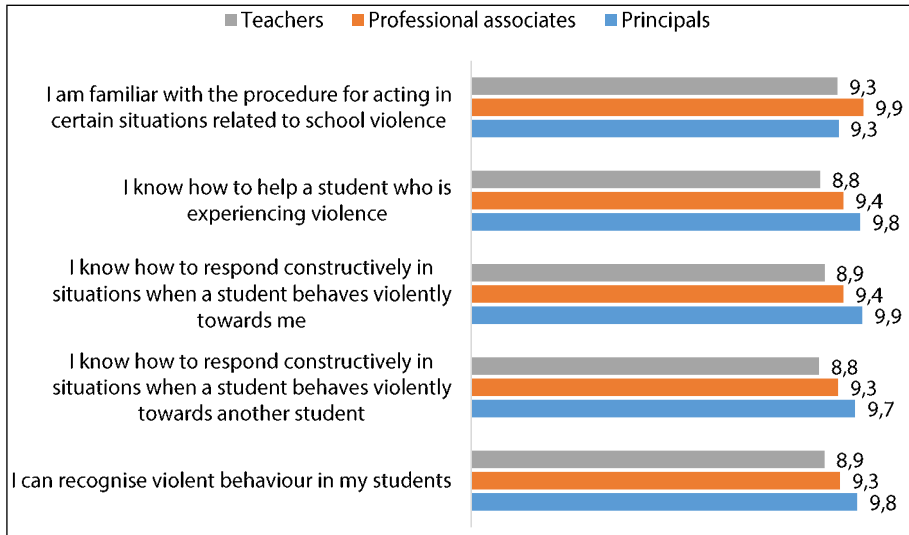
Chart 38: School’s ability to reduce cyberbullying (%)



## 4.6. PERSONAL COMPETENCE FOR COMBATING VIOLENCE – EMPLOYEE EVALUATION

We were also interested in how employees perceive their own competence for solving problems related to violent student behaviour (they responded on a 0 to 10 scale). As can be seen in the following chart, the average ratings are very high for all competencies.

Chart 39: Evaluation of personal capacities to solve problems of violence (average ratings)



It is interesting that teachers, on the one hand, underestimate the effectiveness of anti-violence measures that are within their jurisdiction, and on the other hand, they rate their own competence very highly. Previous research also points to this contradiction and high evaluations of one’s own competence, but still lower than in our research (Plut & Popadić, 2007; Popadić et al., 2014). The differences in the self-assessments of principals, teachers, and professional associates are very slight, and although statistically significant, they have no practical significance (the effect size is so small that there is no real impact).

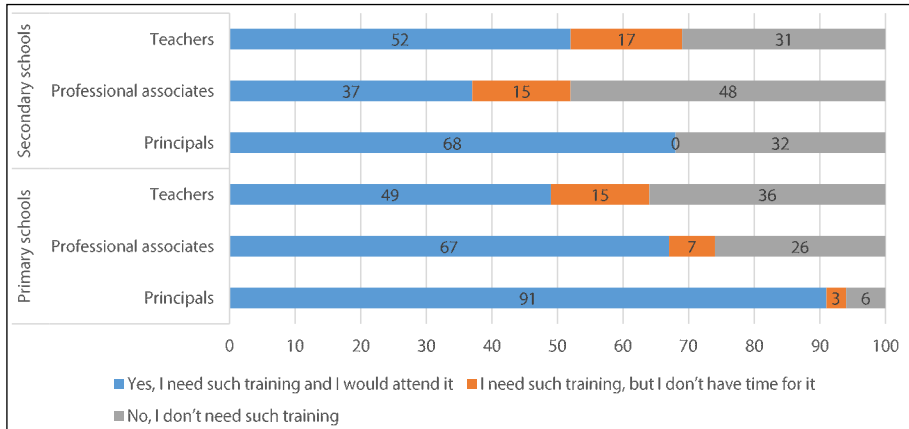
Based on five statements related to personal competence of employees, a single competency measure ( $\alpha = .90$ ) was created, which was correlated with other variables. Employees who better evaluate the school’s ability to reduce violence rate their own competence somewhat higher ( $\rho = .17$ ). Those who have personally experienced violence by students evaluated slightly lower their own ability to solve problems of student violence ( $\rho = -.11$ ).

### 4.6.1. Need for additional training in the area of prevention and response to violence

Considering employee self-assessment of competence, we will address their needs for additional training related to violence prevention and intervention.

Despite highly rated personal competence, most principals, both in primary schools (91%) and secondary schools (68%), and two thirds of teachers and professional associates express the need for additional training in the area of violence prevention (Chart 40).

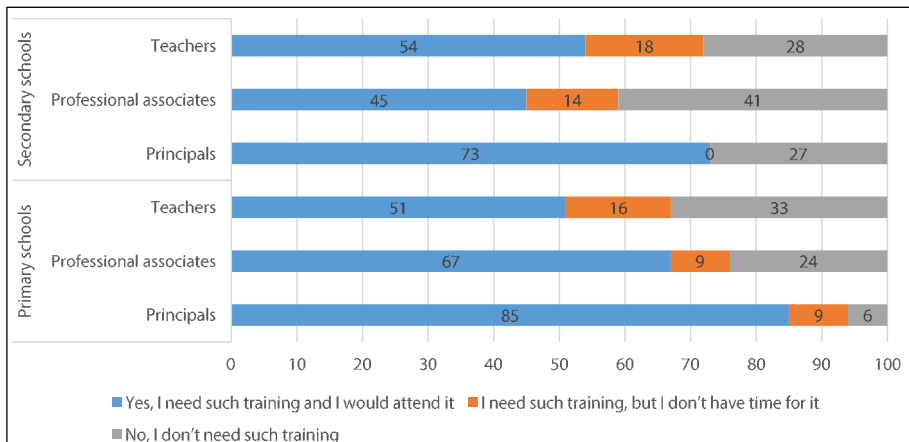
Chart 40: Need for additional training in the area of violence prevention (%)



A greater need for additional training on school violence prevention is expressed by the employees who have a higher rating on observed offline violence among students ( $V = .19$ ), violence in interactions between students and employees, school employees and parents towards teachers ( $V = .15$ ), as well as employees who believe there is more cyberbullying among students ( $V = .15$ ). The following factors positively correlate with willingness to attend such training: sex ( $V = .10$ ), age ( $V = .17$ ), years of service in the area of expertise ( $V = .11$ ) and in the current position ( $V = .11$ ), but the correlation is not strong. Finally, the need for additional training is more pronounced among employees who try to always respond in case of violence between students and employees ( $V = .11$ ).

Similar findings have been observed regarding employees' needs for additional training in the area of responding to violence (Chart 41).

Chart 41: Need for additional training in the area of responding to violence (%)



Most principals, both in primary (85%) and secondary schools (73%), over half of professional associates, and half of teachers are willing to attend additional training to acquire skills in responding to school violence. We need to remind that in one of the previous questions, employees rated very highly their own skills in responding to violence constructively and other personal skills. These findings indicate the need for further research, for instance, by applying qualitative methods, to determine the actual needs of employees and the association with the self-assessment of their competence.

With regard to the need for additional training, no statistically significant differences were established between employees in primary and secondary schools. However, women expressed a slightly greater interest in training compared to men. This association is not strong ( $V = .12$ ), but it is statistically significant.

The following table shows the associations between the previously described anti-violence measures and the school's ability to reduce violence, the need for additional training, and the evaluation of personal skills.

Table 7: Correlations of anti-violence measures and the school's perceived ability to reduce violence, the need for additional training, and the self-assessment of personal competence

	School's ability to reduce:		Need for additional training in the area of:		Personal skills evaluation
	school violence	cyberbullying	violence prevention	responding to violence	
Better co-operation between school and parents	.14**	.08**	.12**	.11**	.17**
Better co-operation between teachers and students	.16**	.11**	.14**	.14**	.13**
Greater support from psychologists and pedagogues	.15**	.08**	.14**	.13**	.13**
Developing non-violent communication skills	.19**	.11**	.20**	.19**	.17**
Consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence	-.02	-.01	.08**	.09**	.07**
More comprehensive supervision of all students	.11**	.06**	.14**	.12**	.15**
Greater presence of school-based police officer	.13**	.08**	.10**	.08**	.10**
More interesting extracurricular activities	.26**	.17*	.19**	.18**	.14**
More interesting teaching methods	.26*	.18*	.19**	.18**	.12**

Note: Shown are Spearman's  $\rho$  correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

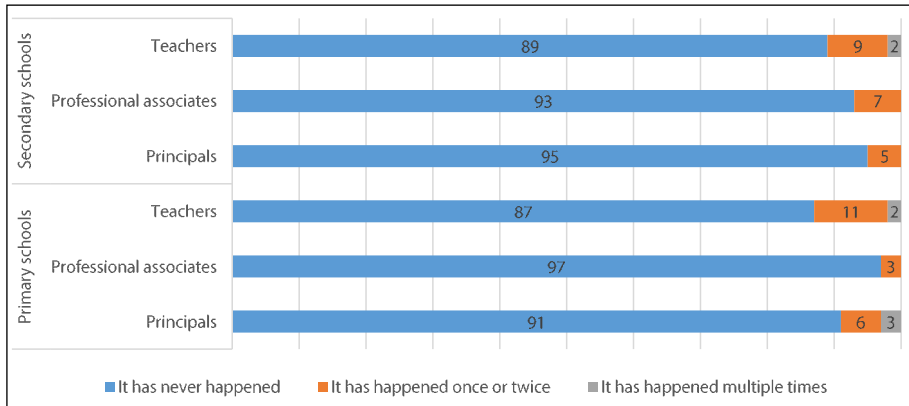
It is interesting that the evaluation of the school's ability to influence the reduction of violence significantly positively correlates with the evaluation of the effectiveness of all anti-violence measures – most notably with interesting extracurricular activities and modern teaching methods, except for **more consistent**

**punishment of students who perpetrate violence.** This finding suggests that employees who believe in the school’s capacity to prevent violence are more supportive of prevention and pedagogical approaches, while they do not believe that punishment is an equally effective measure. More consistent punishment is the only measure that is not significantly associated with either the evaluation of the need for additional training or the evaluation of personal skills for preventing and responding to violence. The greater the need for additional training, the more effective the above anti-violence measures are rated. A similar association was found with the self-assessment of skills.

## 4.7. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH VIOLENCE OCCURRING IN SCHOOLS

Most employees in our sample do not feel threatened at school (Chart 42).

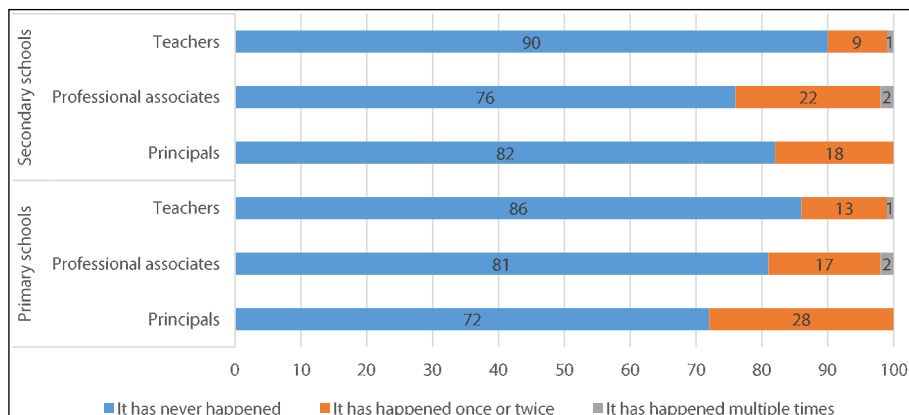
Chart 42: Exposure of employees to violent behaviour by students (%)



12% of teachers, 7% of principals and 5% of professional associates in the total sample were exposed to violent behaviour by students (insults, threats, or physical violence). This is most commonly reported by teachers (13% of primary school teachers and 11% of secondary school teachers). To most of them, this happened 1–2 times, but among teachers and principals in primary schools, there are some who report this happening to them multiple times (26 women and 3 men). Teachers have slightly more experience with this problem than the other two employee categories, but the difference is not pronounced enough to be considered significant in practical terms.

Twenty-four per cent of principals, 21% of professional associates, and 12% of teachers were exposed to violent behaviour by parents. Such experiences are most commonly reported by primary school principals (28%) and secondary school professional associates (24%), but they have only happened a few times. On the other hand, teachers and professional associates have faced these forms of violence multiple times, and among them there are more women (13) than men (3). Unfortunately, the type of violence is not known, which leaves room for further research so as to better understand the forms, causes, and consequences of this behaviour by parents toward school employees.

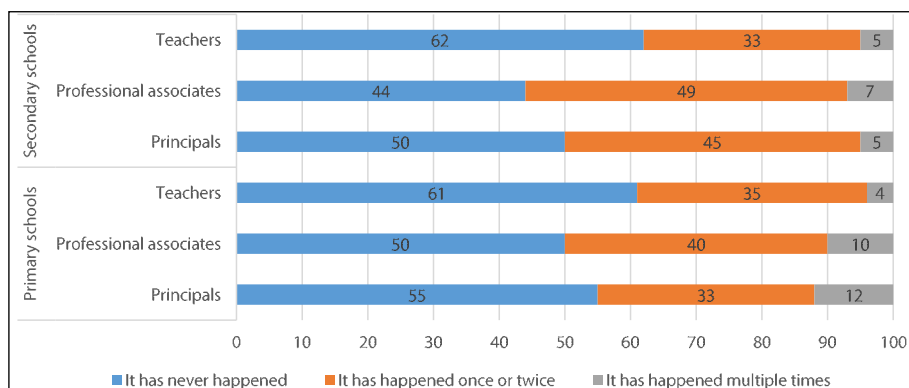
Chart 43: Exposure of employees to violent behaviour by parents (%)



Exposure to violent behaviour by students and parents is not significantly associated with sociodemographic characteristics of employees (sex, age, years of service, and years of work in the current position). No differences were observed between class and subject teachers. However, employees who are more satisfied with their relationships with students, colleagues, and parents are less likely to report being exposed to violence by students ( $\rho = -.20$ ) or parents ( $\rho = -.22$ ). **Exposure to violence of employees by students and parents is significantly positively correlated ( $\rho = .30$ ).**

A significantly higher percentage of employees (40% of the total sample) report their colleagues being exposed to violence by parents during the previous and current school year (Chart 44). Women are more likely than men to report parents behaving violently towards their school colleagues ( $V = .13$ ).

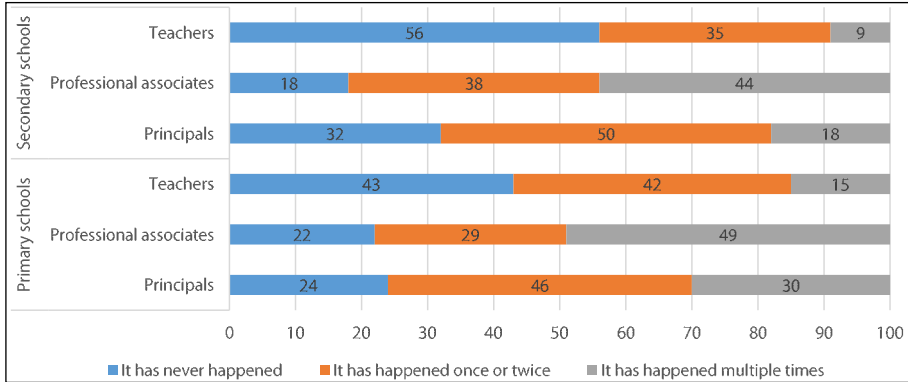
Chart 44: Exposure of colleagues to violent behaviour by students (%)



### 4.7.1. Turning to school employees for help

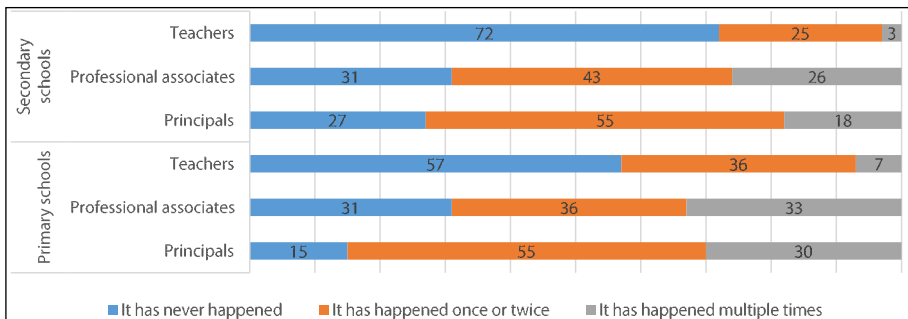
The following two charts show how often students and parents turn to primary and secondary school employees for help. In the total sample, 52% of teachers, 73% of principals, and 79% of professional associates report that students have turned to them for help during the current and previous school year. Students who are exposed to violence or witness it are least likely to turn to teachers for help.

Chart 45: Students turning to employees for help (%)



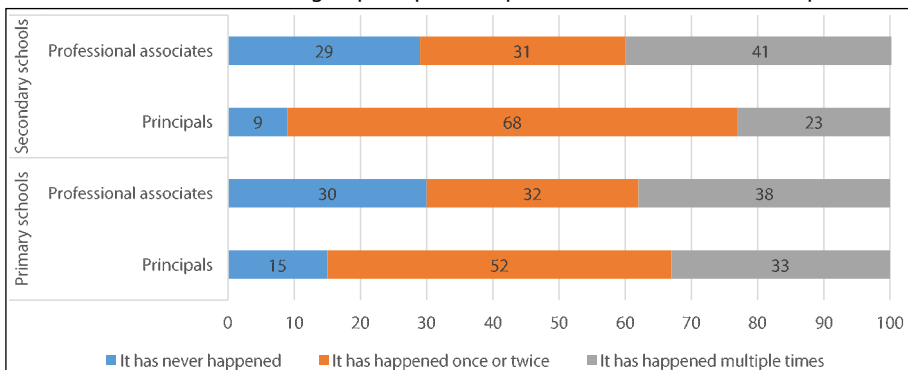
Based on the responses of employees, parents of primary-school-age children are more likely to seek help when their child has been exposed to violence or witnessed violent behaviour ( $V = .14$ ). They are more likely to seek help from form teachers ( $V = .27$ ) and members of the Protection Team ( $V = .22$ ). No significant differences have been found with regard to employee sex, age, and years of service.

Chart 46: Parents turning to employees for help (%)



Principals and professional associates were asked how often, during the last two school years, teachers had turned to them for help regarding violence that had occurred in school. In both primary and secondary schools, teachers are more likely to turn to professional associates for help than principals.

Chart 47: Teachers turning to principals and professional associates for help (%)



## 4.7.2. Responding to witnessed or reported violence

When students turn to them for help because they have been exposed to school violence or witnessed violent behaviour, employees react in different ways, depending on, *inter alia*, their position in the school. We need to state again that the Protocol Rules clearly define how employees are supposed to act in such situations, in accordance with the estimated level of violence. Respondents were offered a list of ten possible reactions and asked to choose five most often reactions. The ways of responding are ranked according to the teachers' responses. The following two charts show the differences in the responses of three employee categories in primary and secondary schools.

Chart 48: Employee response when students turn to them for help  
– primary schools (%)

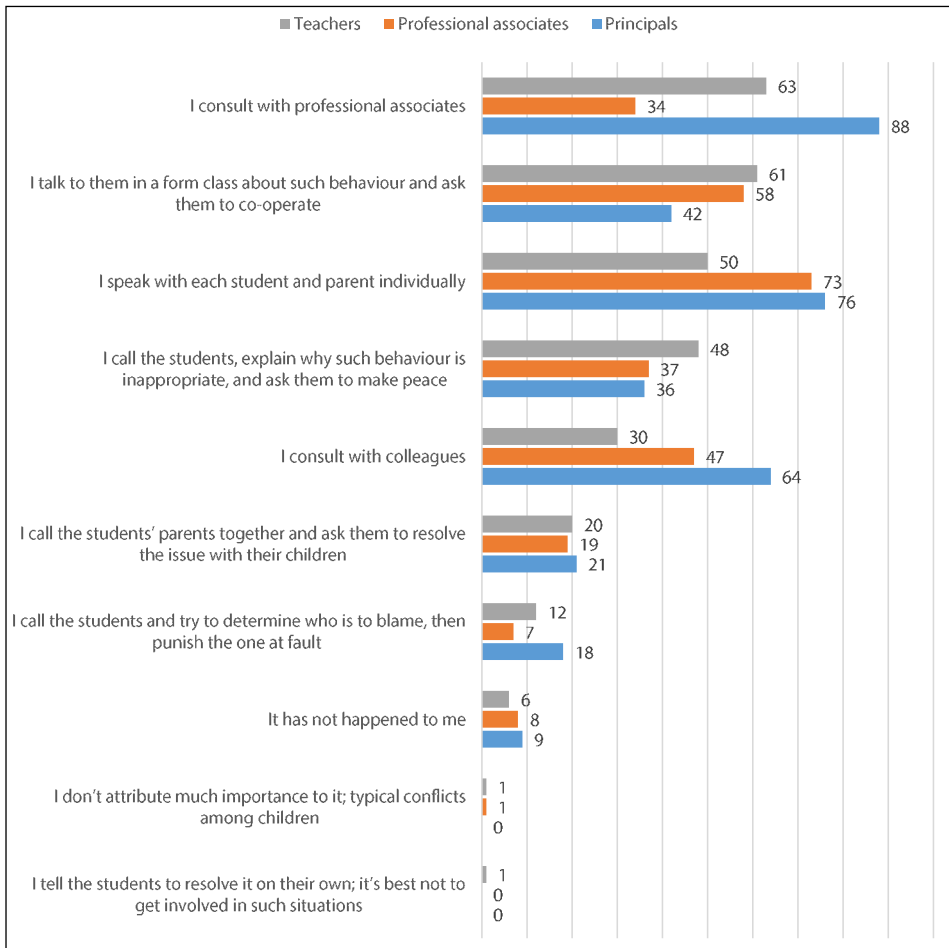
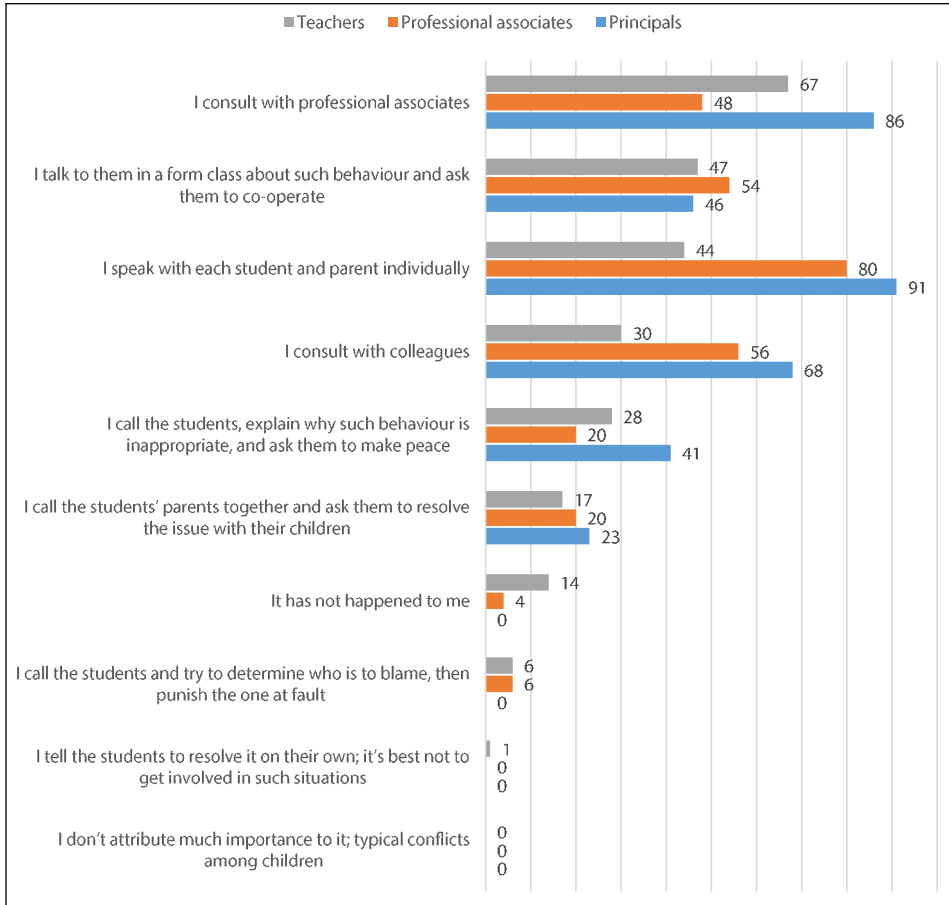


Chart 49: Employee response when students turn to them for help  
– secondary schools (%)



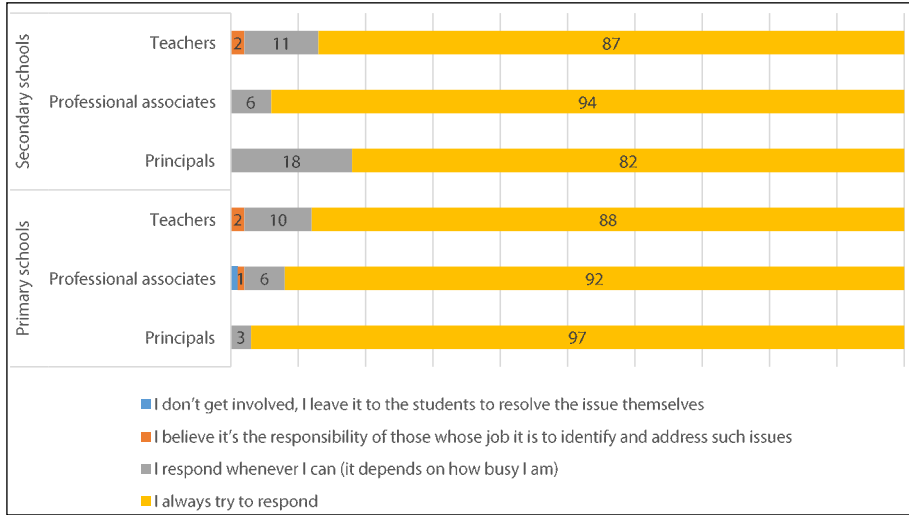
In both primary and secondary schools, the greatest percentage of teachers and principals report that, when students turn to them for help, they respond by **consulting with professional associates**. As previously mentioned, professional associates also report that they spend most of their working time working with students. On the other hand, if teachers **highly evaluate their competence in responding to violence, the question arises as to why over two thirds of them most often choose this measure**, that is, seeking support from experts, and more importantly, how they see their role in combating violence among students. Many studies show that the way teachers respond to violence is one of the key factors in combating violence.

Primary school teachers, as opposed to secondary school teachers, talk to students more often in homeroom classes than individually with the student and parent. Over three quarters of primary school principals (76%) and significantly more secondary school principals (91%) talk to the student and their parent. Al-

most none of the teachers state that they tend to minimise the problem and leave it to the children to solve on their own (only a few primary school employees say this, but we expect that younger children are indeed more prone to “childish squabbles” that are not intended to hurt or cause harm to others).

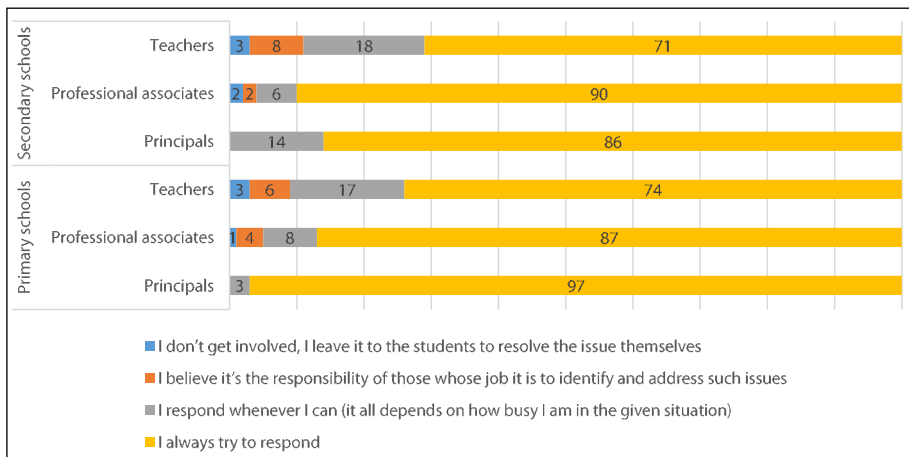
Only a few employees, when asked directly how they react when they notice violent student behaviour, respond by “turning their heads away” and letting the students solve the problem on their own; most of them try to always respond.

Chart 50: Reaction of employees who witness student violence (%)



On the other hand, when adults are involved in violent interactions, a slightly smaller percentage of teachers and professional associates try to always respond.

Chart 51: Reaction of employees who witness violence between students and employees (%)



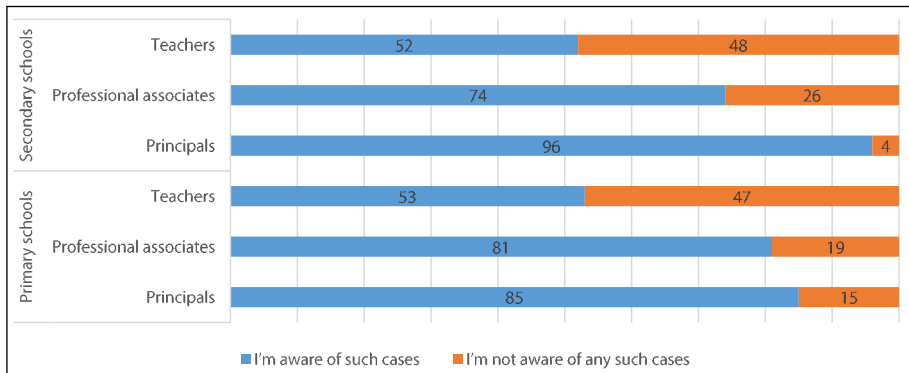
A smaller percentage of teachers (6% in primary schools and 8% in secondary schools) expect this problem to be solved by those who are formally responsible for it. According to the Protocol Rules, in cases of violence by a student towards an employee, the principal must take appropriate measures, that is, notifying the parents and the Centre for Social Work, initiating disciplinary proceedings, and imposing disciplinary measures, etc. However, this does not mean other employees are exempt from the responsibility to intervene. Teachers may not have direct insight into all interactions between children and adults, but their busyness should not be an excuse for non-intervention. It is worrying that in such situations, some employees leave the problem to the students entirely, expecting them to solve it on their own.

#### 4.8. OPINION ON SCHOOL RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE

According to the Protocol Rules, school response to violence involves a series of activities and measures to stop it, ensure the safety of all participants in violent interactions – both those suffering and those perpetrating or witnessing violence, reduce the risk of recurrence, mitigate the consequences, and monitor the effects of the undertaken measures.

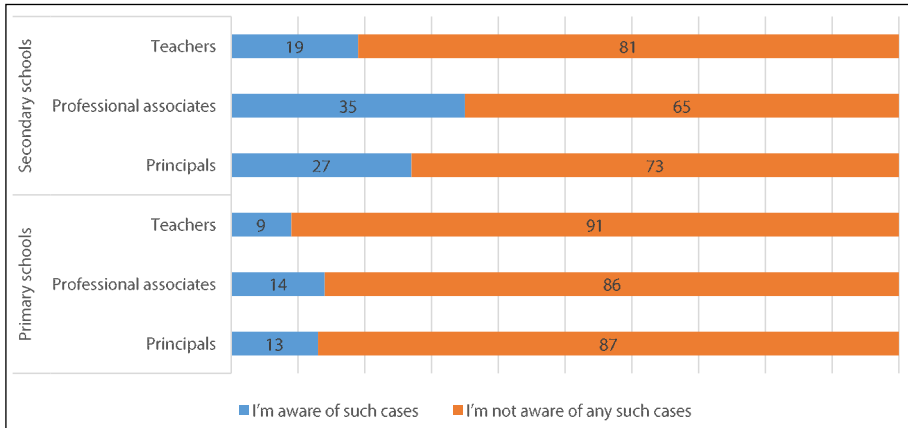
We explored the extent to which different categories of school employees are informed about violence reports by students and employees. Principals and professional associates are more often directly exposed to this type of information, but half of teachers also report being aware of such cases.

Chart 52: Employee awareness of violence reports by students (%)



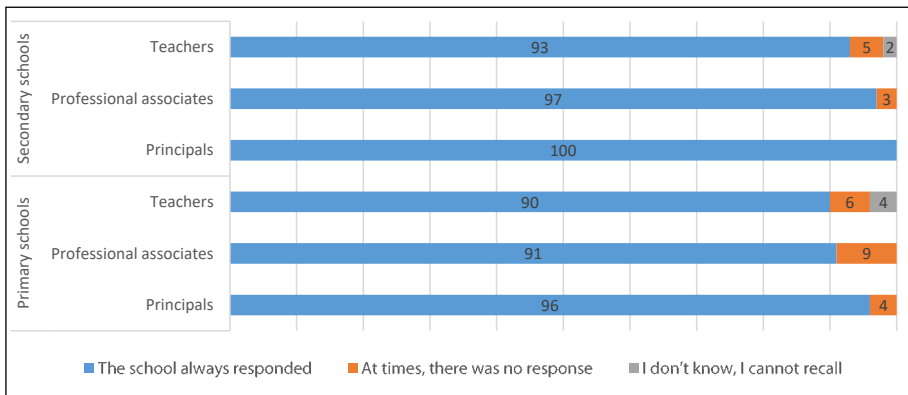
Most employees are not aware that students at their school have reported suffering violence by employees (Chart 53). Secondary school employees report this problem slightly more often than primary school employees. Teachers are less familiar with these situations than professional associates and principals, as they are less likely to be directly exposed to them.

Chart 53: Awareness of students reporting having suffered violence by employees (%)



Nearly all employees in the sample believe that their school responds appropriately when students are exposed to peer violence. A small percentage of teachers have no insight into how the school responds. One tenth of primary school professional associates and slightly fewer other employees believe that the school does not always react appropriately, or in accordance with regulations. It would be useful to determine the reasons for this and what the specific issues were in these cases.

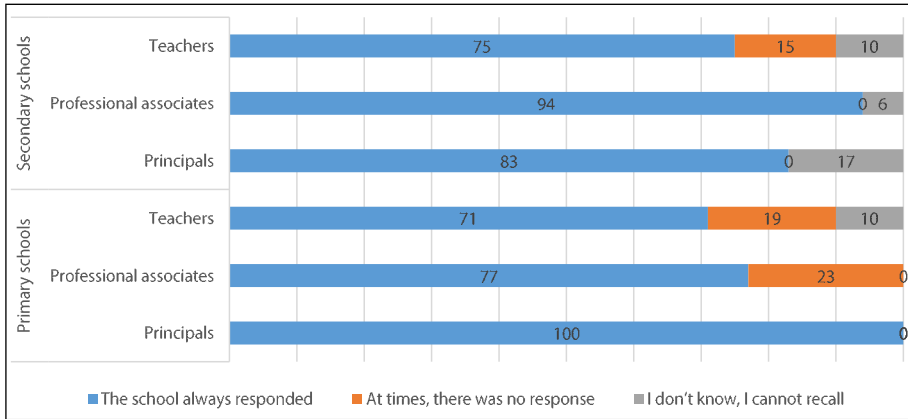
Chart 54: School response to students suffering violence by other students (%)



On the other hand, reactions are more often lacking when students suffer violence by employees.

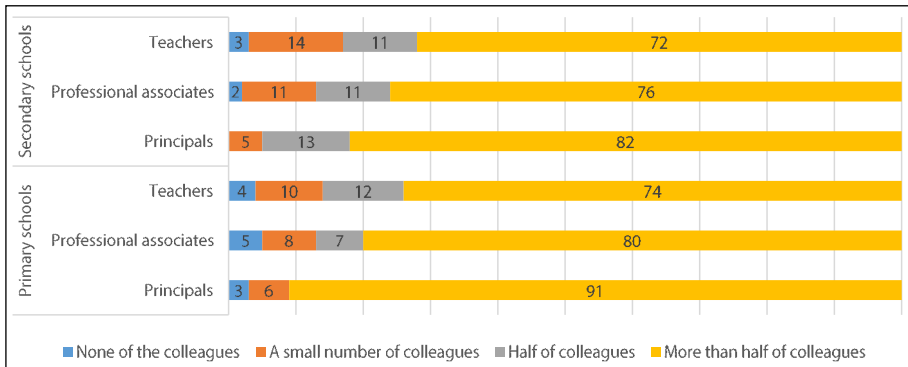
We were interested to see what employees thought about how their colleagues reacted to violent student behaviour (Chart 56). The majority of employees (between 72% and 91%) in all three categories, from both primary and secondary

Chart 55: School response to students suffering violence by employees (%)



schools, believe that **more than half of their colleagues respond to violent student behaviour promptly and consistently**. Unfortunately, a significant percentage of them believe that no one responds in accordance with the procedures or that only a few colleagues do.

Chart 56: Timely and consistent response of colleagues to violent student behaviour (%)

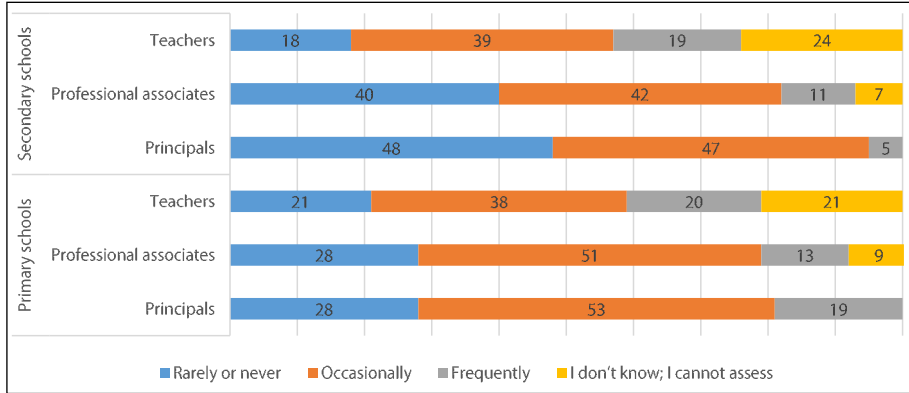


#### 4.8.1. Obstacles to implementing the protocol for acting in response to violence

We asked employees whether and how often they encountered obstacles in implementing the protocol for acting in response to violence in their school, and what types of obstacles they are. They were offered a list of six potential obstacles. **According to almost two thirds of employees, the most severe obstacle is that parents are unwilling to co-operate with the school** (Chart 57). Twice as many employees believe that this is not a common problem, or that it happens occasionally (40% compared to 20%), and it is more likely to be reported by teachers than by principals and professional associates. As already mentioned, better

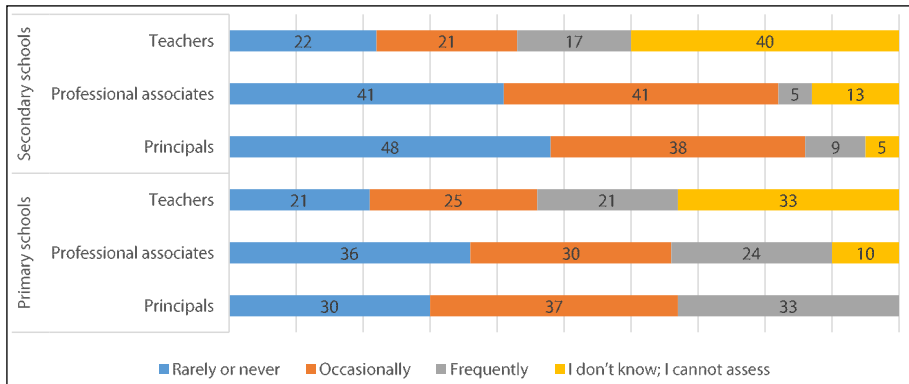
co-operation between parents and school has been assessed as one of the most effective measures in combating violence.

Chart 57: Parents do not co-operate with the school (%)



The second is difficulties in co-operation with the **social welfare system** (45% of employees). Primary school employees are more likely to complain about this than secondary school employees, and professional associates and principals are significantly more likely to complain than teachers, because they are more often communicating with the institutions in this system (Chart 58).

Chart 58: Difficulties in co-operation with the social welfare system (%)



Over one quarter of employees (28%) report occasional or frequent difficulties in co-operating with the **healthcare system**. On the other hand, over one third of them were unable to evaluate this (38% of the total sample), mostly teachers (Chart 59).

Over one fifth of employees (23%) believe that **their school colleagues**, mostly occasionally, are unwilling to implement the procedures prescribed by the Protocol for acting in response to violence. The percentage of persons stating they cannot provide an evaluation of the willingness of their colleagues to co-operate in such situations is not negligible.

Chart 59: Difficulties in co-operation with the healthcare system (%)

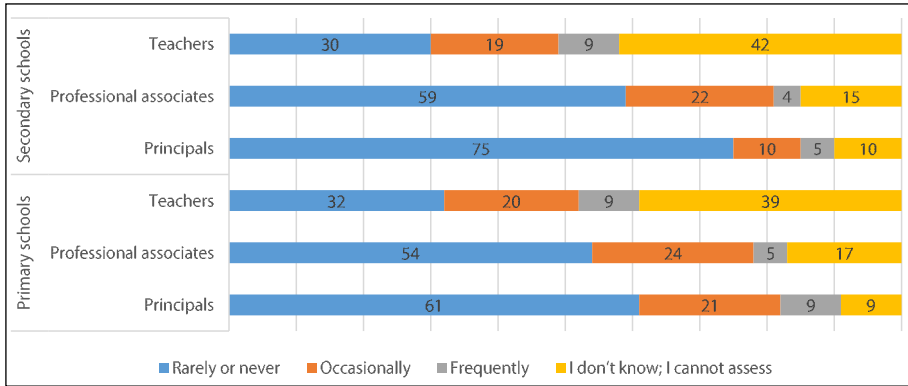
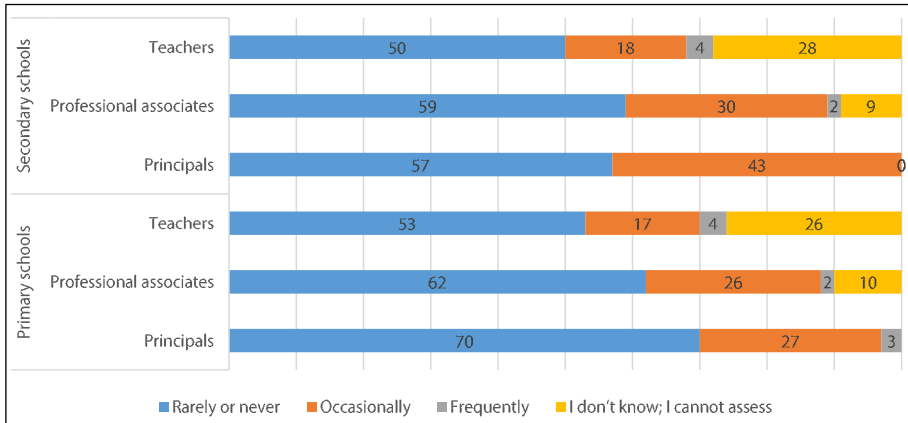
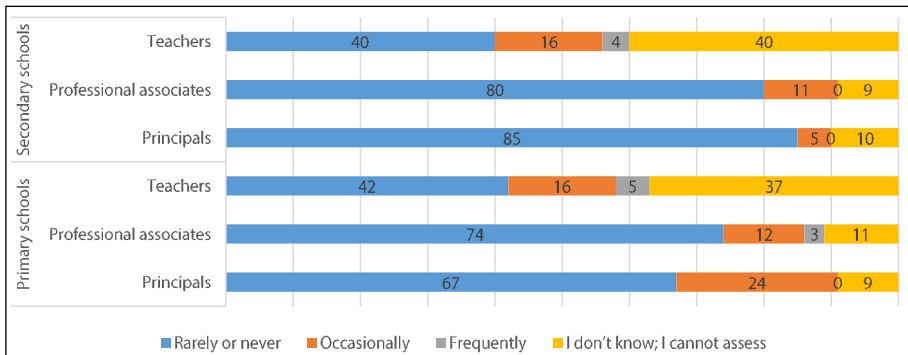


Chart 60: Employees are unwilling to implement the Protocol (%)



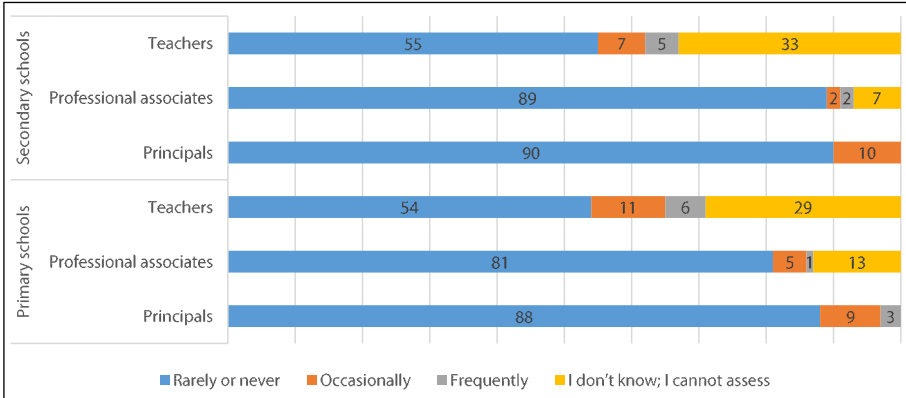
One fifth of employees believe that there are occasional and frequent difficulties in co-operation with the Ministry of Interior. Here as well, more teachers were unable to evaluate the quality of co-operation because, as is the case with the health and social welfare systems, they are usually not directly communicating with them.

Chart 61: Difficulties in co-operation with the Ministry of Interior (%)



Finally, the smallest percentage of employees (9% occasionally and 5% often) indicate poor co-operation and inefficiency of the Protection Team members as an obstacle to applying the Protocol. One third of teachers have no insight into the functioning of the Team.

Chart 62: Protection Team is operating poorly (%)

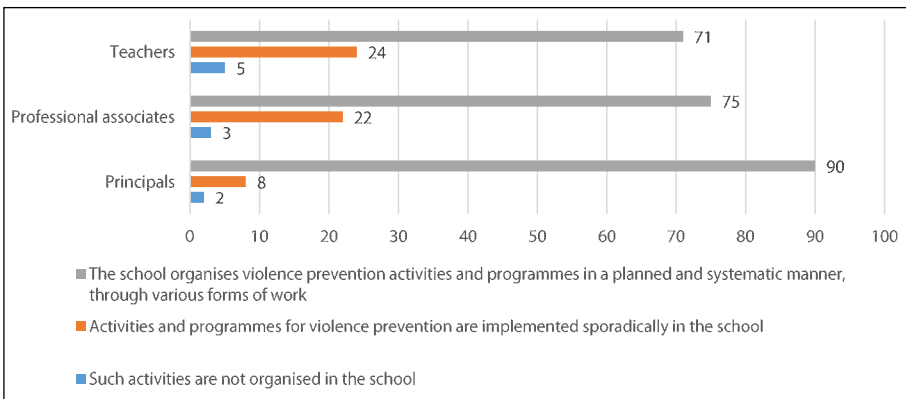


#### 4.8.2. Awareness of school prevention measures and programmes

Most principals (92%) and professional associates (81%) and over half of teachers (58%) claim that their **school updates violence prevention programmes every year** in accordance with the situation assessment. On the other hand, a significant percentage of teachers (40%) and more than one tenth of professional associates (14%) are not informed about this.

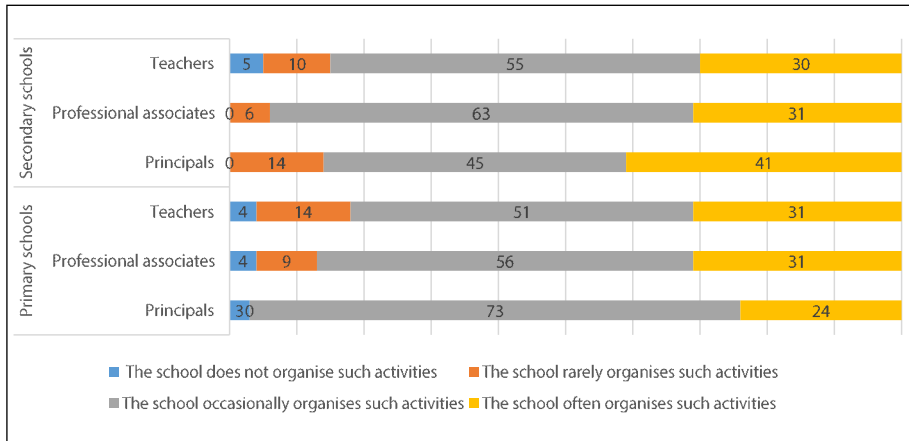
Most principals (89%) and fewer professional associates and teachers (around 70%) state that their school **organises violence prevention activities and programmes in a planned and systematic manner**, through various forms of work (Chart 63).

Chart 63: School has organised violence prevention activities and programmes (%)



The greatest percentage of employees believe that the school occasionally organises activities that encourage mutual co-operation between students, teachers, and parents (Chart 64). In order to gain a more comprehensive insight, employee responses should be compared with the responses of students and their parents.

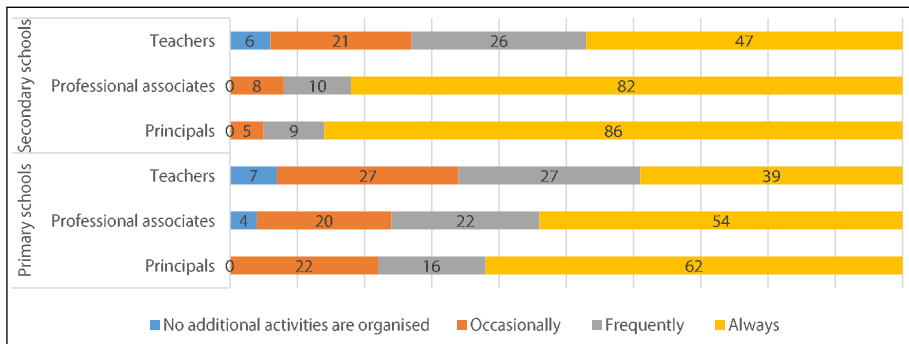
Chart 64: School has organised activities to encourage co-operation between students, teachers and parents (%)



School activities that encourage mutual co-operation are more frequently reported by the members of the Protection Team ( $V = .43$ ) and employees who were involved in school prevention activities ( $V = .29$ ). They are also reported slightly more often by employees who believe that the school organises activities to support students suffering or witnessing violence ( $V = .11$ ) and enhanced educational work for students perpetrating violence ( $V = .11$ ).

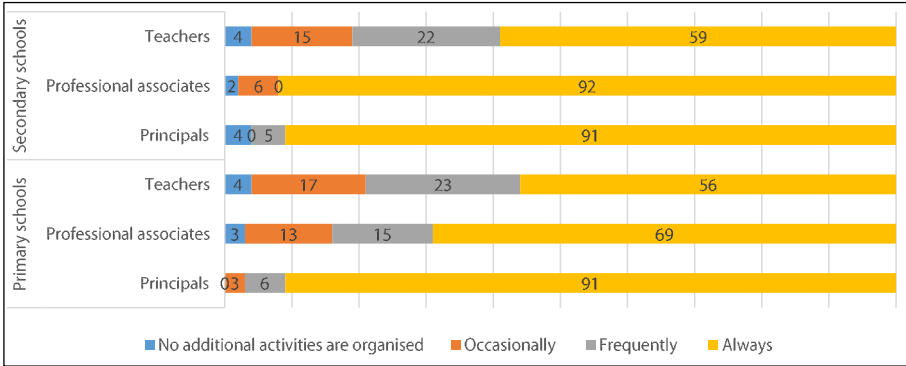
Most employees believe that schools always organise activities to support students suffering or witnessing violence, as well as students perpetrating violence (Charts 65 and 66).

Chart 65: School has organised activities to support students suffering or witnessing violence (%)



Principals are more likely to state that schools organise activities to support both students perpetrating ( $V = .11$ ) and suffering violence ( $V = .11$ ).

Chart 66: School has organised enhanced educational work for students perpetrating violence (%)

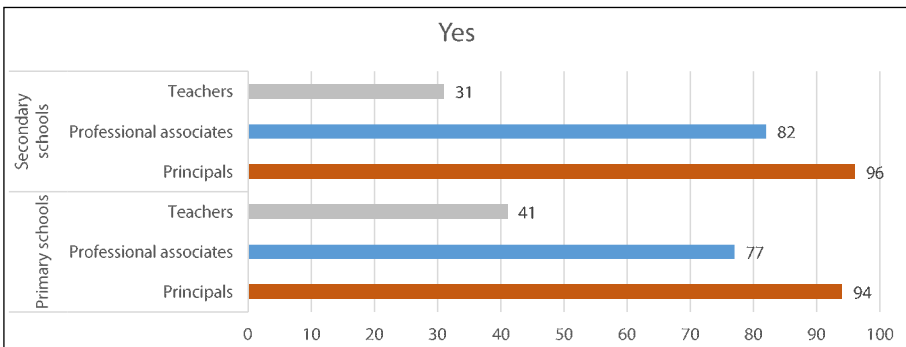


The above charts show that principals view violence prevention activities more favourably than teachers.

### 4.8.3. Personal involvement in prevention measures and programme

In the total sample, **over half of employees (58%)**, in the current or previous school year, **had been involved in school violence prevention activities**. Based on the data presented in the chart below, it can be concluded that principals and professional associates are significantly more often involved in prevention activities than teachers ( $V = .30$ ).

Chart 67: Involvement in school violence prevention activities (%)



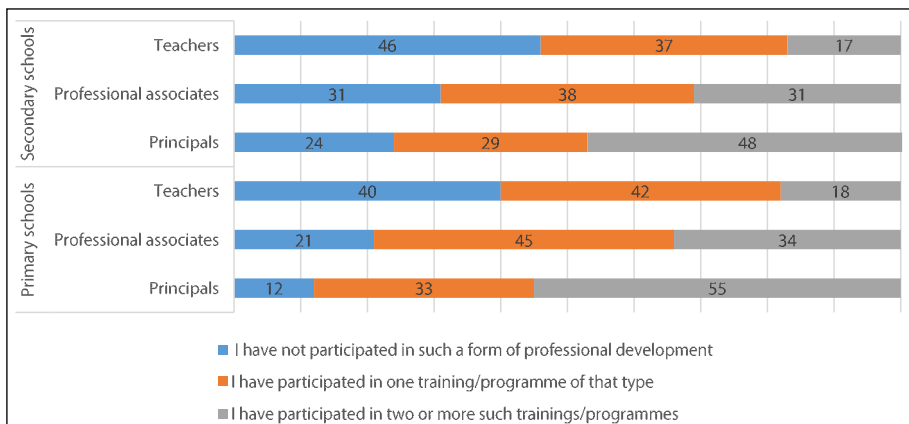
The following are more often involved in school violence prevention activities: Protection Team members ( $V = .49$ ), employees who highly rate their skills in

preventing and responding to violence ( $V = .26$ ), employees to whom students more often turn for help after being exposed to violence ( $V = .31$ ), persons who teach students how to behave when being exposed to violence or witnessing violence ( $V = .26$ ), and employees who are more satisfied with school relationships ( $V = .15$ ).

During the current and the previous school year, **60% of employees had been involved in professional development programmes for violence prevention** (40% of them attended only one training, 20% attended two or more trainings). Principals and professional associates attended such programmes more often than teachers. Almost half of teachers were not involved in professional development programmes for violence prevention. An interesting finding was that professional development programmes were more often attended by employees who reported being more often involved in prevention activities ( $V = .29$ ), highly rated their skills ( $V = .20$ ), were more willing to help students suffering violence ( $V = .26$ ), taught them how to behave properly ( $V = .15$ ), and were more satisfied with their relationships with all actors in school life ( $V = .15$ ), as well as by the Protection Team members ( $V = .17$ ).

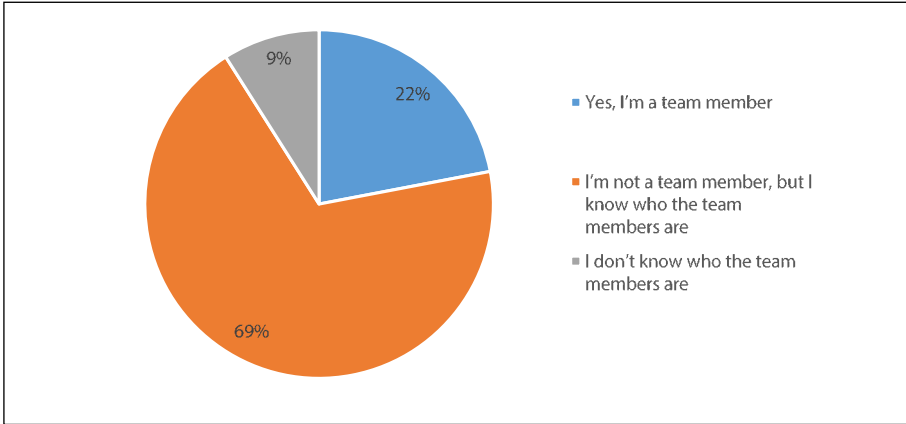
These findings show us that employees who have more experience (both in their area of expertise and with regard to violence prevention) and those who are more sensitive to the problem of violence are more willing to receive additional professional development, but also that it is important to encourage as many employees as possible to participate in violence prevention activities and programmes, especially taking into account that the frequency of attending professional development programmes is not correlated with the expressed need for additional education in the area of prevention.

Chart 68: Involvement in professional development programmes for violence prevention (%)



Therefore, it could be concluded that **around two thirds of employees are actively involved in prevention and educational activities related to violence.**

Chart 69: Awareness of school Protection Team members (%)

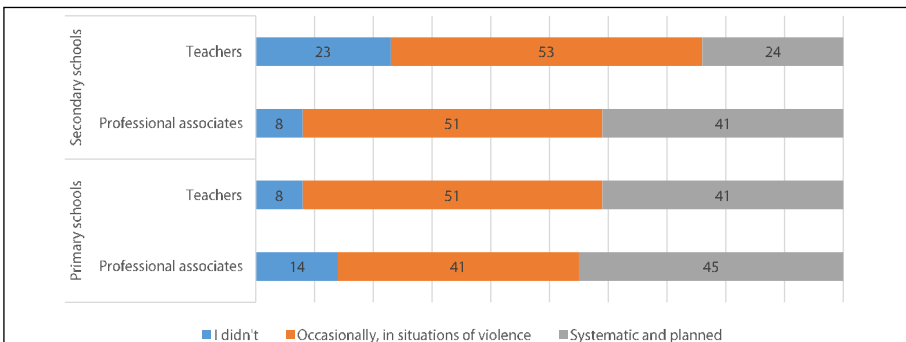


More than two thirds of employees are not the members of the Protection Team, but they know who the members are. The problem is posed by 9% of employees who do not know who the Team members are. More informed about the Protection Team members are employees with longer service in their area of expertise ( $V = .23$ ) and in their current position ( $V = .17$ ), as well as form teachers ( $V = .12$ ).

Teachers were asked whether, in case of violent behaviour in the classroom, they had been involved in the work of the Protection Team. Slightly more primary schools teachers (60%) than secondary school teachers (55%) were involved in the Team's work.

Most teachers and professional associates taught students what to do when they are angry, when they witness violence, or when others are being violent towards them, but half of them taught them occasionally, only in situations of violence.

Chart 70: Frequency of implementing educational activities with students (%)



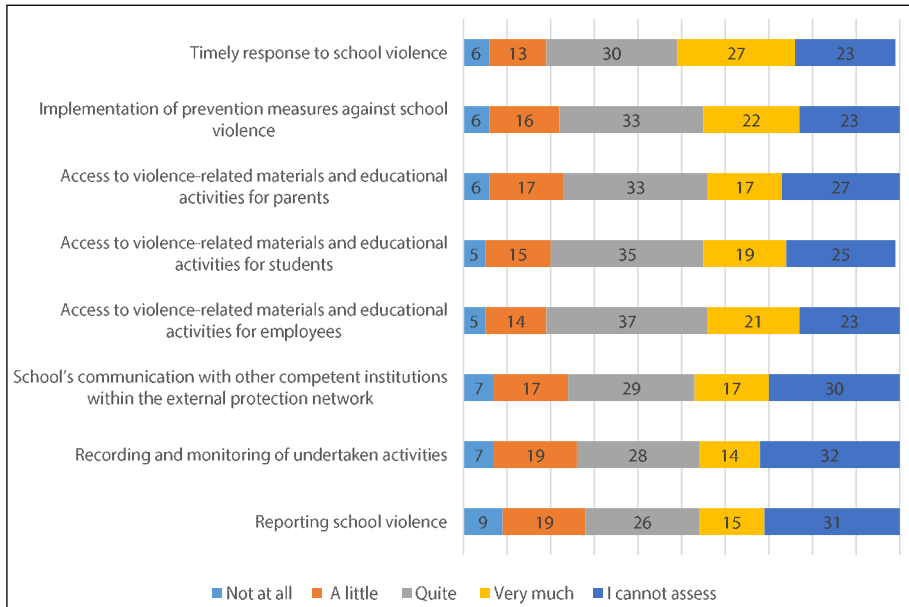
#### 4.8.4. Employee opinion about the platform “I Protect You” (Čuvam te)

We were interested in the extent to which, according to employees, the national digital platform “I Protect You” contributes to improving different aspects of preventing and responding to violence in the school context, starting from reporting, the school’s communication with other institutions, educational activities, etc.

Employee responses are presented in the following chart.

A part of employees (between 23% and 31%, depending on the aspect being evaluated) are unable to evaluate the benefits of this platform. Most employees (between 26% and 37%) are quite satisfied with the “I Protect You” platform.

Chart 71: Employee satisfaction with the “I Protect You” platform (%)



The average ratings of individual aspects of the “I Protect You” platform range from 2.6 (for reporting school violence) to 3 (timely response to violence). No statistically significant difference was observed between primary and secondary school employees and between principals, professional associates and teachers, either in individual aspects or in the overall rating of satisfaction with the “I Protect You” platform.

Since the ratings of individual aspects are intercorrelated (correlations range from .61 to .82), an average score, or a measure of satisfaction with the platform ( $\alpha = .96$ ), was created and correlated with other variables. Overall satisfaction with the “I Protect You” platform is not correlated with employee involvement in prevention activities to reduce school violence, or involvement in the work of the Protec-

tion Team, and it could be expected that these employees have more experience with the platform.

A more positive evaluation of the platform was given by employees who believed more in the school's ability to reduce violence ( $\rho = .18$ ) and who are generally more satisfied with the relationships between relevant actors in and outside the school ( $\rho = .29$ ).

Employees who have experienced violence by parents are slightly less satisfied with this platform ( $\rho = -.12$ ), as are the employees who report their colleagues experiencing violence by parents ( $\rho = -.18$ ). It is also interesting that satisfaction with this platform decreases with the evaluation of the frequency of violence between students ( $\rho = -.14$ ), students and employees ( $\rho = -.20$ ), and cyberbullying ( $\rho = -.21$ ).

# 5. School violence from parents' perspective

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## 5.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

This chapter is aimed to provide insight into school violence from parents' perspective.<sup>7</sup> The main questions that will be answered in this chapter are: what the attitude of parents towards their children is, how parents perceive school safety, the extent of their children's involvement in violent interactions, what the parents' competence in reacting to violent interactions and their understanding of the sources of violence are, what their relationship with the school is like, and what kind of support they would need. The analysis is based on responses from 1,207 parents, which is around two thirds of the parents of the children surveyed. Here we will present the main conclusions for each of the above questions, while a more detailed analysis and interpretation are on the following pages.

## 5.2. Parents' attitude towards their children and parenting practices

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- ▶ The survey has shown that the authoritative parenting style is the most prevalent. Few parents reported using the authoritarian or permissive style, and no parents reported using the uninvolved style.
- ▶ According to parents, most children (77%) have open communication with their parents about their problems and feelings. Parents highly rate open communication as an important child trait, as well as helping others, obedience, and ambition. The survey has also shown that younger, more educated, and wealthier parents are more likely to report open communication with their children, and mothers are more likely to be involved in such conversations than fathers.
- ▶ Most parents reject gender-stereotypical beliefs and parenting practices, such as the belief that girls are naturally more emotional or need more protection than boys. This attitude was more prevalent among less educated parents and parents from traditional, nuclear family structures (parents and a child or children).

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7 We need to note once again that, when we refer to parents, we mean children's parents and/or legal guardians.

- ▶ In general, parents express great satisfaction with their children's academic performance, and their relationships with peers and teachers.
- ▶ Almost two thirds of parents (61%) state their child enjoys going to school very much, which correlates with a more positive evaluation of the child's overall attitude towards school. Most parents say that no teachers are harsh to their child, lack understanding for them, or give them biased grades.
- ▶ The most frequently observed problem in communication with teachers is the perception that teachers' expectations are unrealistic. Problems in communication with teachers are a very important factor in parents' satisfaction with their child's school life.

### Perception of school safety

- ▶ Over half of parents (57%) believe that violence is a bigger problem today than it was a few years ago, while only a few (6%) believe that there is less violence.
- ▶ Parents believe that teachers generally consistently respond to violence, with three quarters of parents believing that this is true for most or all teachers.
- ▶ Parents who believe that teachers respond to violence less consistently tend to rate violence as a bigger problem, and vice versa. Therefore, parents' perceptions of violence seriousness depend partly on the school's ability and capacity to appropriately respond to violence.
- ▶ Parents believe that student violence is the biggest problem, and the next biggest problem is violence by students towards teachers. They are less concerned about violence by parents towards employees or between employees.

### Perception of the child's involvement in a violent interaction

- ▶ Relatively small number of parents have reported their children being exposed to violence since the beginning of the school year. The most common types of violence that children report to their parents are verbal, social, and physical violence by peers, and only few parents report violence by teachers (5%). According to parents' statements, approximately every second child (44%) has experienced at least one form of violence since the beginning of the school year.
- ▶ Few parents report their children's violent behaviour towards other persons (children or adults in the school). Cyberbullying is also rarely reported. According to parents, since the beginning of the school year, 6% of children have displayed violent behaviour at least once.
- ▶ Parents who report more frequent violence their children suffered also report more frequent violence perpetrated by their children. This indi-

cates that the suffering and perpetration of violence among children are associated phenomena.

- ▶ When school violence involves their child, parents are not always adequately informed about the measures undertaken. Half of parents (47%) were informed in a timely manner about the measures the school had undertaken, and only one third of parents of children involved in violent interactions were involved in the preparation of a protection plan. Similarly, parents whose children show violent behaviour at school are often not involved in designing a plan for enhanced educational work.
- ▶ Parents' opinions are divided regarding their satisfaction with the work of competent institutions and bodies, such as the School Administration, the Centre for Social Work, and the Ministry of Interior. However, very few parents (10% to 20%) provide such evaluations, as most of them indicated that there was no need for them to react.

## Personal competence for responding to violence

- ▶ When their child complains about having suffered school violence, parents generally respond in an "adequate" manner, advising their children to turn to school employees for help (over 75% of parents). Less than 5% of parents advise their children to retaliate in kind, while almost no parents tell them to ask their peers for help.
- ▶ Parents generally feel capable of responding when violence occurs, rating their abilities highly on a scale of 1 to 5, especially when it comes to "face-to-face" violence (45% rated themselves with 5). However, they feel less capable to respond in case of online violence (30% rated themselves with 5).
- ▶ The degree of confidence in one's abilities is not associated with varying reactions to violent interactions. Put simply, parents react similarly, regardless of how confident they are in their abilities.

## Personal theories on violence

- ▶ Most parents consider "external" or non-school factors (such as family and media) more important than school factors (such as school response to violence) as "causes" of violent behaviour.
- ▶ With regard to combating violence, the consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence was rated as the potentially most effective measure, slightly better than improved co-operation between teachers and students, greater support from psychologists and pedagogues, co-operation between schools and parents, or the development of non-violent communication skills.
- ▶ Most parents (59%) believe that schools can do a lot to reduce offline school violence, in real-life interactions, while evaluations on cyberbullying are more pessimistic (35% believe that school may significantly impact reducing violence).

- ▶ Parents' beliefs about the school's ability to reduce violence are positively correlated with the evaluation of the effectiveness of proposed measures, with parents who have greater trust in the school agreeing that the measures are more effective.

## Parents' relationship with school

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- ▶ The vast majority of parents report that they regularly attend parent-teacher conferences (90%), and their relationship with teachers and professional associates is mostly positive.
- ▶ Most parents (60%) are familiar with the procedures regarding violence, but differences in the degree of information are significant depending on the sex, age, and financial status of the parents. Parents who describe their relationship with the school more positively are better informed. The statements of parents whose children have suffered or perpetrated violence and whose children have not do not differ significantly. In other words, there is no difference between them with regard to degree of being informed by the school or familiarity with legal procedures.
- ▶ Few parents were aware of the existence of the Violence Protection Team or the activities of peer teams regarding violence prevention. Only one in seven parents is well-informed about the activities of student teams, and every second parent is unaware of whether prevention programmes for violence reduction have been implemented. Furthermore, most parents are not familiar with support activities for students who have perpetrated, suffered, or witnessed violence.
- ▶ Around half of the parents could not evaluate the usefulness of the "I Protect You" platform. Parents who use this platform often find that it improves the timeliness of responses to violence, prevention measures, and educational activities for parents.

## Parents' opinion on the necessary support

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- ▶ Between a third and a half of parents believe they do not need any of the offered forms of support regarding responding to violent interactions, parenting practices, or advice on the use of digital devices. Support regarding legislation and procedures for responding to school violence was evaluated as most needed. Next in importance are knowledge about children's developmental needs, communication and problem-solving, information on available support for children and families, and skills related to digital devices and the internet.
- ▶ Evaluations of the support necessary depend on parents' confidence in their capacity to address violent interactions (online or in school). Parents who are more confident in their abilities express less need for any type of support.

## 5.2. INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter addresses the topic of school violence from the parents' perspective and it is aimed at exploring parents' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours regarding this serious social problem. School violence affects both students and their families. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how parents perceive violence, how they respond to it, and how they view the role of the school in preventing and solving this problem.

Literature points to a series of family factors that are associated with perpetrating and suffering violence among children and adolescents, including inconsistent discipline, rejection and emotional coldness towards the child, as well as the use of harsh physical punishment (Bushman & Huesmann, 2010; Eron et al., 1991; Patterson et al., 2017; Popadić, 2009). For instance, many studies point to the "negative" outcomes of authoritarian and permissive styles of parenting on adolescent aggression, emphasising the protective role of authoritative parenting (Anjum et al., 2019; Chan et al., 2018; Masud et al., 2019). However, parenting styles depend on demographic factors such as socio-economic status, education, age, sex, and place of residence of parents (Hadjicharalambous & Demetriou, 2020), which suggests that, in analysing their significance for violent interactions between children, it is important to also consider parents' characteristics. Some other research highlights the importance of secure bonds and positive family relationships in violence prevention. Family cohesion is a protective factor against various forms of violent behaviour (Franke, 2014), while, for instance, negative communication with the father is closely related to violent behaviour in adolescents (López et al., 2008). Other factors, such as family structure, also play an important role. Social isolation and loneliness are important risk factors for violent behaviour, and they may be more pronounced in single-parent families, as well as aggression of children from such families, as shown by some studies (Antognoli-Toland, 2001; Summers & Bakken, 2006). Last, but not least, are the quality of parents' relationships with school employees and their involvement in school life. Greater involvement of parents in school life, information sharing between the school and parents, more positive relationships with employees, and parents' perceptions of the school's (and their own) capacity to solve the problem of violence are just some of the preventive and protective factors (Chen & Astor, 2011; Lesneskie & Block, 2017; Malm et al., 2017; Song et al., 2019). All of this points to the potential importance of a series of associated factors.

The subsequent analysis begins with a detailed insight into the attitudes of parents towards their children, as well as their parenting aims and values. We will consider how parents evaluate their child's development, school challenges, and their communication with teachers. In addition, special attention was paid to the perception of school safety, the evaluation of the adequacy of school response to violence, and parents' perceptions of their children's involvement in violent interactions. Parents' self-assessments of their competence to respond in cases of violence will be analysed, as well as what they advise their children in such situations. In this context, we will also explore parents' opinions on the causes of violence, the effectiveness of school measures for combating violence, and oppor-

tunities for mitigating this problem using prevention activities. We will also explore the relationship between parents and the school, including their activity at parent–teacher conferences, awareness of procedures on violence, and initiatives that parents take to contribute to reducing school violence. The role of different support platforms, such as “I Protect You”, and the necessary support that parents consider important for the prevention of violence will be examined in particular.

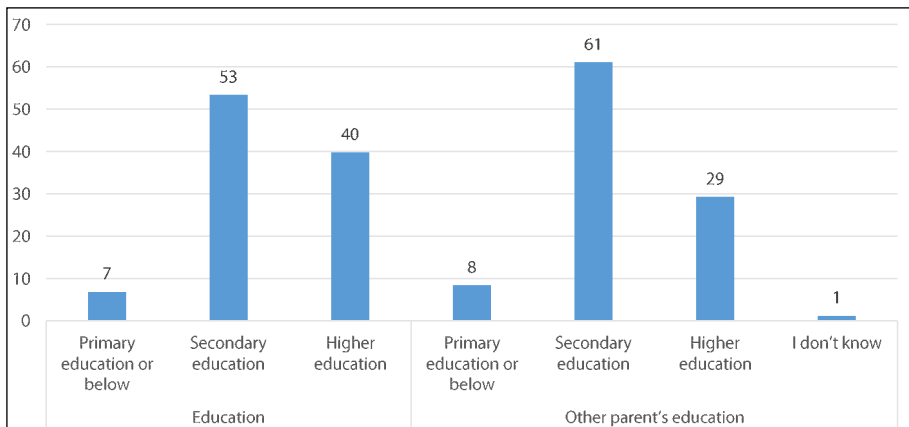
### 5.3. SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The survey involved 1,207 parents from Serbia (excluding Kosovo and Metohija) and all four main statistical regions: Vojvodina (30%), Belgrade (19%), Šumadija and Western Serbia (23%), and Southern and Eastern Serbia (28%)<sup>8</sup>. The sample included somewhat more parents of primary-school-age children (58%) than secondary-school-age children (42%). Three quarters (76%) of parents live in urban areas.

The questionnaires could have been completed by either parent, but were disproportionately completed by mothers (84%) than fathers/legal guardians (16%). The age of the surveyed parents ranges from 27 to 70 (42 on average), or, in other words, over three quarters of the parents are in the middle-aged category (36 to 50), while around one tenth of the parents are in the younger (under 35) or older (over 50) categories.

Over half of the parents who completed the questionnaire had graduated from secondary school, 40% had higher education, while the number of parents who graduated only from primary school or had lower education was the lowest. The sample structure is similar if we consider the education of the other parent (according to the parent who completed the questionnaire; Chart 72).

Chart 72: Parent education

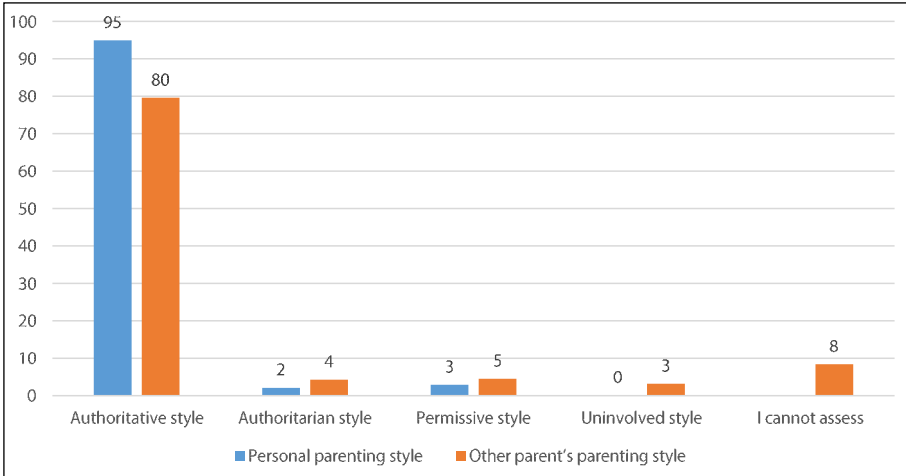


Evaluations of families’ financial situations indicate that families with a relatively good financial status are prevalent among the respondents (Chart 73). Almost

8 The data on regional representation, and the variables of school type and grade described below, are available for around three quarters of the total number of parents (914).

two thirds of parents (64%) said that their family had no problem with purchasing more expensive items, or that they could buy almost anything they wanted. There are far fewer families (10%) with bigger financial difficulties, who have problems with (small) purchases, or do not have enough money for basic living needs.

Chart 73: Family financial situation



Considering the family structure, half (50%) are nuclear families consisting of parents and child/children, while there are many fewer multigenerational or extended families (11%), and single-parent families (13%). In one quarter of families (25%), another structure of its members was observed (for example, one parent, a child, and a relative).

Parents also reported difficulties of their children (chronic illnesses, disabilities, sensory difficulties, movement, speech, or learning difficulties). The vast majority of children do not have any difficulties, and the most commonly reported are sensory (vision or hearing) difficulties, but even these are very rare (8% of children). 14% of children, out of seven surveyed, have at least one difficulty.

Very few children have transferred schools so far (7%). Those who have, most often transferred due to moving or peer problems, but also for other reasons, such as dissatisfaction with school's work, school major, transportation problems, or other family reasons.

Based on the presented data on the sample structure, it is clear that the sample is disproportionately mothers, as well as parents with a higher level of education and better financial status. The question of whether the parent sample is representative of the parent population cannot be answered, as opposed to the student sample, because no data on relevant characteristics of the parent population are available (we must keep these specific characteristics in mind when interpreting the following data). It is also clear there is very little variability in parents' responses to certain questions (for instance, regarding children's difficulties), and such "measurements" will be of little use in later analyses.

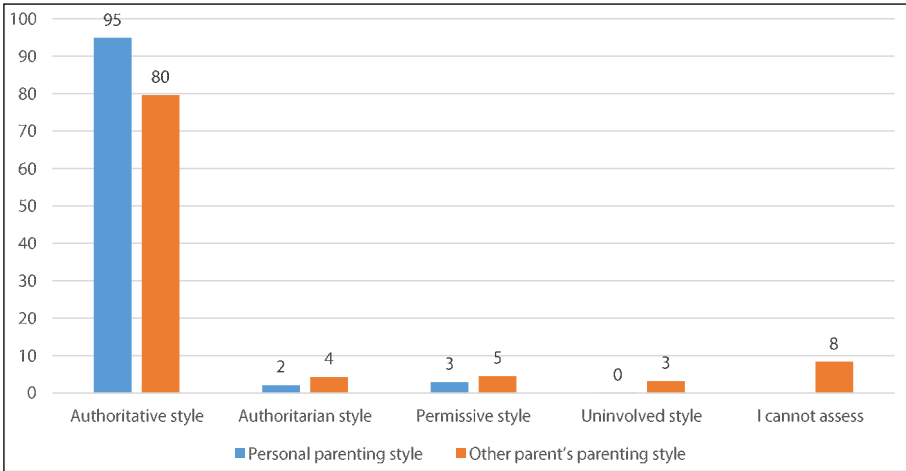
## 5.4. PARENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN AND PARENTING PRACTICES

In the context of overall development, the family and parenting influence play a key role. In this research, we analysed from several different aspects the issue of parenting practices, the differences between parents and families with regard to this, as well as their significance.

The first among them are the characteristics of parenting styles. The literature usually discusses several main characteristics of parenting practices, such as discipline strategies, warmth in relationships, or quality of communication, which, combined, are viewed as different parenting styles. Most often, three or four styles are distinguished (Baumrind, 1967, 1991; Maccoby, 1994; Maccoby & Martin, 1983), which are also discussed in this research. The **authoritative style** is characterised by closeness, setting reasonable restrictions on the child, and open communication. Parents encourage children to make their own decisions and take accountability for their actions, and children respect and trust their parents. The **authoritarian style** involves strict control and one-way communication. Parents make decisions that children must obey, and relationships are often tense and rigid. The **permissive or indulgent style** involves parents who do not impose any restrictions on the child, although they are often warm and caring. The **uninvolved or neglectful style** is characterised by parents who are not involved in their children's lives and neglect their needs. Studies show that the best "results" in terms of emotional regulation, social competence, or educational performance are achieved with the authoritative style (Awiszus et al., 2022; Jadon & Tripathi, 2017; Retnowati & Sukmawaty, 2024), in which parents strive for a balance between warmth, engagement, and freedom, with mutual respect and open communication. In the introduction to this chapter, the importance of such a parenting style for the problem of violent interactions has already been mentioned.

This research has shown that the **authoritative style is the most frequently used parenting style**, both on a personal level, and as the rated parenting style of the other parent (Chart 74). Only around every twentieth parent states that they are characterised by some other parenting style, in particular, authoritarian or permissive, while no one uses the uninvolved parenting style (according to their statements). Similar evaluations were made for the other parent, whose parenting style is perceived as less authoritative, and they are also occasionally, though extremely rarely, attributed some of the other three styles. While this data is promising, it should be kept in mind that this is a highly desirable response, and thus at least partly influenced by each parent's tendency to think of themselves and/or present themselves in the "best" light in surveys.

Chart 74: Parenting styles (%)



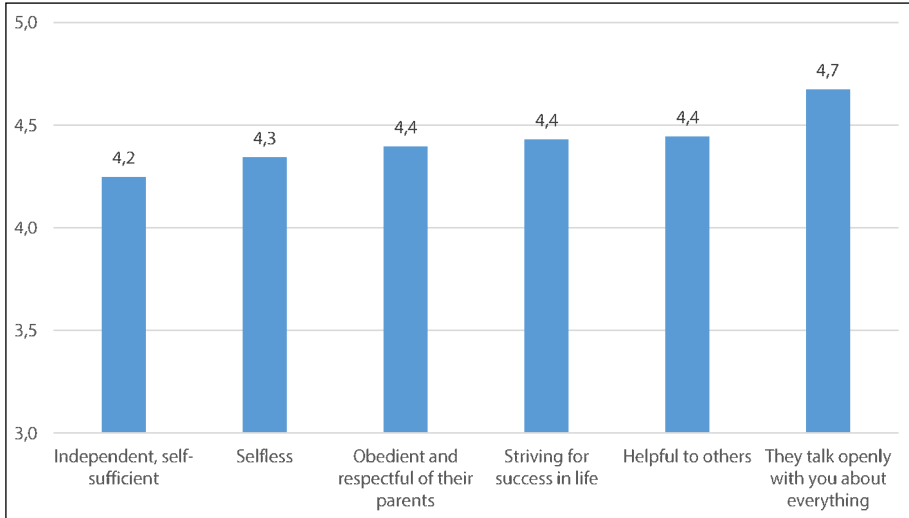
Furthermore, when the ratings of one's personal parenting style and the other parent's parenting style are viewed together, it shows that the authoritative *family* parenting style is dominant. In this sense, four fifths of families (80%) are characterised by the same, authoritative style of both parents, while in one fifth of families there is a combination, or in other words, differences exist in the parenting practices of the two parents. Since the practices of both parents are important for evaluating the parenting style to which a child is exposed, in further analysis we used this combined indicator which, again, only distinguishes between the "pure" authoritative style and the group of "mixed" parenting practices. Such mixed parenting style shows that parenting practices vary significantly with regard to some parental characteristics. The authoritative style is more common in families with better financial situation ( $V = .15$ ), and families with younger primary-school-age children ( $\rho = .10$ ); it is also much less common in incomplete families than in nuclear and extended families ( $V = .29$ ).

Additional data also speak in favour of the positive atmosphere in the relationship between parents and children. **According to parents, most children (77%) often talk about their problems and feelings with their parents.** One fifth of them (19%) do this occasionally, and very few families (3%) are characterised by a lack of openness in communication. Even though there are some significant differences in the frequency of open communication with parents – it is rated more positively by younger, more educated, and better-off parents, as well as parents in families with an authoritative parenting style – they are negligible. The only significant difference is related to the parents' sex: children talk more openly with their mothers ( $\rho = -.11$ ).

Openness in communication is also given great importance in another way. When asked to rate how much importance they gave to different traits that a child can learn or acquire in the family, **openness in communication seems to be the most important trait** (on average, 4.7 on a 1 to 5 scale; Chart 75). The ratings of the other analysed traits are also usually high (all are 4 on average). In this regard,

helping others, listening to parents, and striving for success in life are equally important, followed by selflessness and, finally (although still highly rated), independence and self-reliance.

Chart 75: Estimated importance of characteristics that can be acquired in the family (average values)



The evaluation of various children’s characteristics is also related to the characteristics of the parents, especially with regard to certain desirable characteristics (Table 8). Older parents place slightly less importance on obedience than younger ones, as do more educated parents compared to less educated parents. With the level of education, the importance placed on independence and openness also increases.

Family financial situation is associated with a generally greater importance of the analysed traits, primarily independence, helping others and openness, but also obedience and children’s achievements. Obedience is valued more by parents of younger children and parents from rural areas. The evaluations of parents from families with different structures do not differ significantly in any case.

Expectedly, the evaluation of openness in communication is also correlated ( $\rho = .26$ ) with a greater frequency of children talking to their parents about their feelings and problems, indicating at least partial alignment between parenting ideals and practice. However, there is no significant difference in evaluation regarding family’s parenting style.

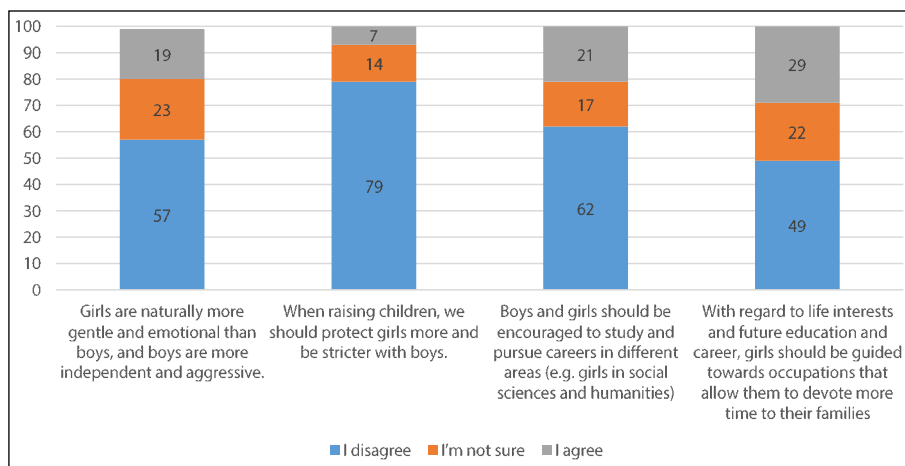
Table 8: Correlations between the evaluation of children's characteristics and parents' sociodemographic characteristics

Children's characteristics	Sex	Age	Education level	Other parent's education level	Family financial situation	School type	Type of area
Independent, self-sufficient	.08**	.04	.18**	.13**	.12**	.08*	-.01
Obedient and respectful of their parents	.01	-.18**	-.16**	-.09**	.12**	-.12**	-.11**
Helpful to others	.07*	-.07*	-.02	-.02	.11**	-.03	-.06
Selfless	.03	-.05	-.05	-.06*	.09**	-.05	-.04
Striving for success in life	.02	-.03	-.08**	-.03	.10**	-.08*	-.00
They talk openly with you about everything	.09**	-.04	.12**	.11**	.13**	.06	-.05

Note: Shown are Spearman's rho correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Among parents, **disagreement with gender-stereotypical parenting practices is also prevalent** (Chart 76).

Chart 76: Attitude towards gender-stereotypical beliefs and parenting practices (%)



Although the degree of agreement with the analysed statements varies, most parents disagree with the opinions that girls are naturally more emotional and gentle than boys, or that they need to be more protected. A similar disagreement is present with regard to guiding boys and girls towards gender-typical professions and occupations. The stated views are, at best, accepted by around one quarter of parents.

The attitude towards *gender stereotyping* of parenting practices depends on the characteristics of the parents (Table 9), primarily on their education level. Parents who are more educated tend to be more strongly opposed to the view that girls are more gentle and emotional and require more protection while growing up,

and especially to the view that different-sex children should be guided towards different professional and educational choices. It is particularly significant that parents' sex is a far less important factor in these attitudes and is more significantly associated only with the view on the different nature of boys and girls. Mothers are less likely than fathers to agree with this view. These views also depend on family structure – parents from “traditional” (nuclear or extended) family structures are more likely to agree with these views compared to incomplete (single-parent) families, especially regarding the need for girls to be more protected while growing up ( $V = .10$ ).

Table 9: Correlations between the acceptance of gender-stereotypical beliefs and parenting practices and sociodemographic characteristics of parents

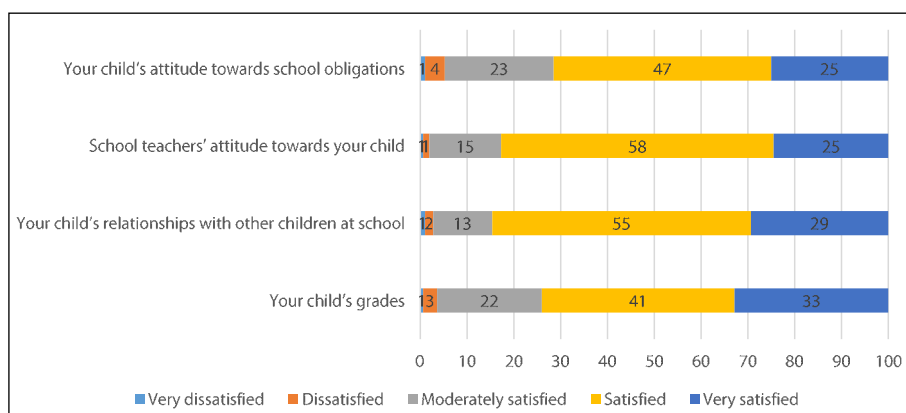
	Sex	Age	Education level	Other parent's education level	Family financial situation
Girls are naturally more gentle and emotional than boys, and boys are more independent and aggressive	-.12**	-.04	-.17**	-.14**	.02
When raising children, we should protect girls more and be stricter with boys	-.08**	-.03	-.10**	-.10**	-.04
Boys and girls should be encouraged to study and pursue careers in different areas (e.g. girls in social sciences and humanities)	-.02	-.16**	-.28**	-.18**	-.09**
With regard to life interests and future education and career, girls should be guided towards occupations that allow them to devote more time to their families.	-.05	-.16**	-.20**	-.14**	-.03
Acceptance of gender-stereotypical beliefs (overall score)	-.09**	-.14**	-.27**	-.27**	-.04

Note: Shown are Spearman's  $\rho$  correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

The association of these attitudes with education potentially indicates a more liberal view of children and upbringing in general. This is further supported by the correlation with the valuation of children's characteristics. The valuation of independence and autonomy is negatively correlated with all four attitudes (correlations ranging from  $-.13$  to  $-.16$ ), which means that parents who give greater importance to children's individuality are more strongly opposed to these gender-stereotypical views compared to parents who value individuality less (correlation with the overall score is  $\rho = -.19$ ). Similar could be said for the valuation of openness (correlations range from  $-.11$  to  $-.16$ ), while, on the other hand, parents who value obedience more are more likely to agree with the view that girls' career choices should be restricted by family obligations ( $\rho = .13$ ).

**In general, parents are satisfied with different aspects of their children's scholastic performance and their attitude towards school** (Chart 77). The vast majority of parents are (very) satisfied with their child's scholastic performance, their attitude towards other children at school and school obligations, and teachers' attitude towards their child.

Chart 77: Satisfaction with various aspects of child's school life (%)



Parents are somewhat more satisfied with their child's social relationships (with peers and teachers) than with their achievements and attitude towards their obligations, but, at best, only one in twenty parents is dissatisfied<sup>9</sup>.

The only significant correlation between ratings of different aspects of attitudes towards school and sociodemographic characteristics of parents was observed between satisfaction with school grades and the level of education, or family financial situation. More educated parents and parents with better financial status are more satisfied with school grades than less educated parents and parents with worse financial status (Table 10).

Table 10: Correlations between satisfaction with various aspects of attitude towards school and sociodemographic characteristics of parents

Aspects of attitude towards school	Sex	Age	Education level	Other parent's education level	Family financial situation	School type	Type of area
Your child's grades	-.01	.07*	.18**	.19**	.15**	.05	-.04
Your child's relationship with other children at school	-.01	.01	.04	.02	.14**	-.01	.04
Teachers' attitude towards your child	.03	-.02	.03	.00	.10**	-.12**	-.09**
Your child's attitude towards school obligations	-.06	.03	.05	.08**	.13**	.01	.03
Satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school (total score)	-.01	.03	.10**	.13**	.17**	-.01	-.03

Note: Shown are Spearman's rho correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

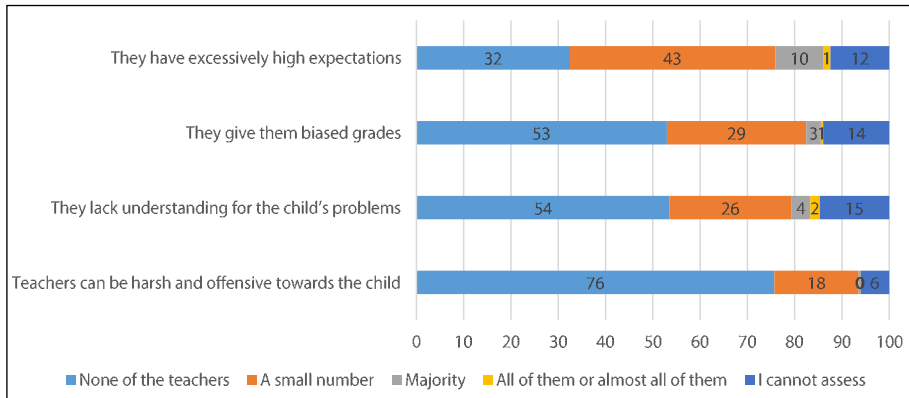
9 The evaluations of these different aspects are significantly and positively intercorrelated (correlations range from .35 to .69), so we could speak of a general measurement of satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school ( $\alpha = .77$ ).

Parents mostly agree on the question of how much their children like going to school. **Almost two thirds of parents (61%) state their child enjoys going to school very much**, while only 3% say that they don't like going to school at all. There are no significant variations in these ratings with respect to parents' socio-demographic characteristics or parental values.

Perceived love of a child for school is, however, significantly associated with parental satisfaction with the child's attitude toward different aspects of school life. The more a child is perceived to enjoy going to school, the more positive the evaluations of their attitude towards school life are, and vice versa (correlation range from .22 to .39). It could be said that this is just an additional indicator of the general assessment of parents' satisfaction with their child's attitude towards school.

The previously shown positive ratings of the teacher's attitude towards the child are also visible in more detailed and specific estimations of the problems that the child may have in communication with teachers (Chart 78). **Between one half and three quarters of parents state that no teachers are harsh to their child, lack understanding for them, or give them biased grades.** At best, around one fifth of parents report any of these happening; almost no parent reports that these apply to all or almost all teachers.

Chart 78: Parents' evaluation of a problem in the child's communication with teachers (%)



The most negatively rated aspect of teachers' attitudes towards children are teachers' expectations, which are mostly rated as too high<sup>10</sup>. There are no significant and prominent associations with sociodemographic characteristics of parents or with parental values or parenting styles.

On the other hand, and we could say – as expected, the child's perceived problems in communication with teachers are significantly and intensely associated with the evaluation of the child's attitude towards different aspects of school life (Table 11). The more pronounced the problems in communication with teachers are, in any analysed form, the lower the parents' level of satisfaction with the

10 These four indicators may also be combined into a new measurement, the intercorrelation range from .26 to .49,  $\alpha = 74$ .

child's attitude towards all aspects of school life, as well as the child's perceived love for school.

Table 11: Correlations between satisfaction with various aspects of attitude towards school and problems in teacher–child communication

Aspects of attitude towards school	Teachers can be harsh to the child	They lack understanding for the child's problems	They give them biased grades	They have excessively high expectations	Problems in communication with teachers (overall score)
Your child's grades	-.09**	-.16**	-.20**	-.15**	-.23
Your child's relationship with other children at school	-.09**	-.18**	-.17**	-.12**	-.19
Teachers' attitude towards your child	-.35**	-.38**	-.42**	-.36**	-.38
Your child's attitude towards school obligations	-.11**	-.17**	-.18**	-.10**	-.21
How much does your child enjoy going to school?	-.11**	-.17**	-.15**	-.19**	-.18**
Satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school (overall score)	-.24**	-.26**	-.25**	-.39**	-.33**

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

The most intense negative relationships were observed, for understandable reasons, particularly with regard to the teachers' attitude towards children. However, it is worth noting that perceived problems in communication with teachers are significantly, and negatively, associated with all aspects of parents' satisfaction; they are a kind of a general "generator" of parents' dissatisfaction with the child's attitude towards school, even in the aspects that are only indirectly related to teachers (such as relationships with peers).

## 5.5. PERCEPTION OF CHILD'S SAFETY AT SCHOOL

Parental perception of their child's safety at school is an important aspect in the analysis of school violence, since their awareness of risks and potential threats in the school environment can significantly influence parents' reactions and support for prevention and interventions. At the same time, safety evaluation by parents may reveal potential inconsistencies between actual and perceived dangers, which is important for creating strategies that will improve school safety.

The findings of this research show that, above all, it could be said that certain pessimism is prevalent with regard to the extent to which violent interactions in schools pose a problem compared to a few years ago. To that question, **over half of parents answered that the problem of violence is bigger now**, while around one in twenty parents believe that there is less violence today. It is also important to state that a significant percentage of parents could not evaluate this. The ratings are uniform and do not depend on parents' characteristics. Only sex differences are slightly more pronounced and suggest that mothers, more than fathers, believe violence as a bigger problem today ( $rho = .12$ ). Attention should

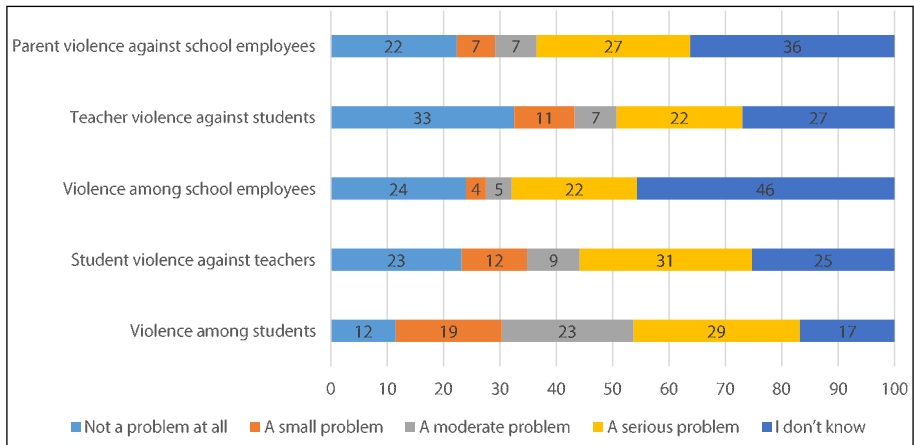
be drawn to the fact that the evaluations of parents and employees differ significantly. As we have seen in the previous chapter, half as many school employees (26%) share this pessimistic view on the increase in violence. Employees might have a more realistic picture of what is happening among students, but it is possible that they are also somewhat minimising the problem of violence.

On the other hand, **parents believe that the vast majority of teachers consistently respond to violence**; three quarters of parents believe this is true for most or all teachers. Here too, there are no significant differences among parents based on sociodemographic characteristics.

Since these two evaluations are negatively correlated ( $\rho = -.12$ ), which means that parents who rated the consistency of teachers' responses to violence lower are more pessimistic in their evaluations (and vice versa), it can be said that evaluations of the problem of violence depend on the school's capacity and willingness to act in cases of violence.

If we consider different types of violent interactions with regard to different "actors" of school life, **parents' evaluations of the severity of violence are most negative in the case of violence between students; over one fifth of parents consider it a major problem** (Chart 79). Almost one third of parents view student violence against teachers as a major problem. Nearly one quarter or one fifth of parents perceive violence by teachers against students, by parents against school employees, or between employees, as a major problem.

Chart 79: Evaluation of different forms of violence as a problem in the child's school (%)



Such differences in perception can be illustrated in the following way: most parents, half of them (52%), consider violence between students to be a serious problem (a combination of categories of "moderate problem" and "major problem"), as well as violence by students against teachers (40%), followed by violence by teachers against students and violence by parents against teachers (34% each) and, finally, violence between employees (27%)<sup>11</sup>. There are no significant differences in these

11 The evaluations of the prevalence of violence among different "actors" of school life are also significantly and intensely intercorrelated positively (correlations range from

estimations among categories of adults with regard to sociodemographic characteristics. Among the parents from the Belgrade region, there is a somewhat more pronounced perception of violence by parents against teachers ( $V = .14$ ).

Evaluations of violent interactions among different “actors” are also associated with other relevant views (Table 12). As expected, violence as a whole is perceived as a bigger problem by those who also consider each analysed type of violent interaction to be a bigger problem. In contrast, any type of violent interaction is rated as a minor problem by parents who report more teachers consistently responding to violence.

Table 12: Correlations between assessments of the severity of the problem of violence among different actors in school life and the overall assessment of the problem of violence, consistency of teachers’ responses, and problems in communication with teachers

	Violence among students	Student violence against teachers	Violence among employees	Teacher violence against children	Parent violence against employees	Prevalence of school violence (overall score)
Is violence a smaller, the same, or a bigger problem than it was a few years ago?	.12**	.12**	.15**	.10**	.09**	.13**
According to you, how many teachers always promptly respond to violent school incidents?	-.07*	-.05	-.15**	-.14**	-.07*	-.13**
Teachers can be harsh and offensive towards the child	.05	.04	.11**	.11**	.07*	.13**
They lack understanding for the child’s problems	.09**	.12**	.14**	.16**	.10**	.16**
They give them biased grades	.12**	.14**	.20**	.16**	.12**	.16**
They have excessively high expectations	.09**	.11**	.18**	.17**	.15**	.19**
Problems in communication with teachers (overall score)	.13**	.17**	.22**	.21**	.16**	.21**

Note: Shown are Spearman’s *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Finally, bigger perceived problems in communication between children and teachers are consistently and positively correlated with the evaluation of the severity of the problem of violence – the greater the communication problems, the

.68 to .83); where more violence is “observed” between, for instance, students, more violence is “observed” in other relationships as well, and vice versa (as in previous cases, here we combined the responses into a new measurement,  $\alpha = .96$ ).

more serious any type of violent interaction is considered to be. Having in mind that this is an analysis of the correlation between different perceptions of parents, and taking the necessary caution, we could draw an important conclusion that teachers play a very important role in the perception of violence in schools, because a consistent response to violence, as well as the quality of communication between teachers and students, potentially “leads” to a weaker perception of violence as a serious problem among parents.

## 5.6. PERCEPTION OF THE CHILD’S INVOLVEMENT IN A VIOLENT INTERACTION

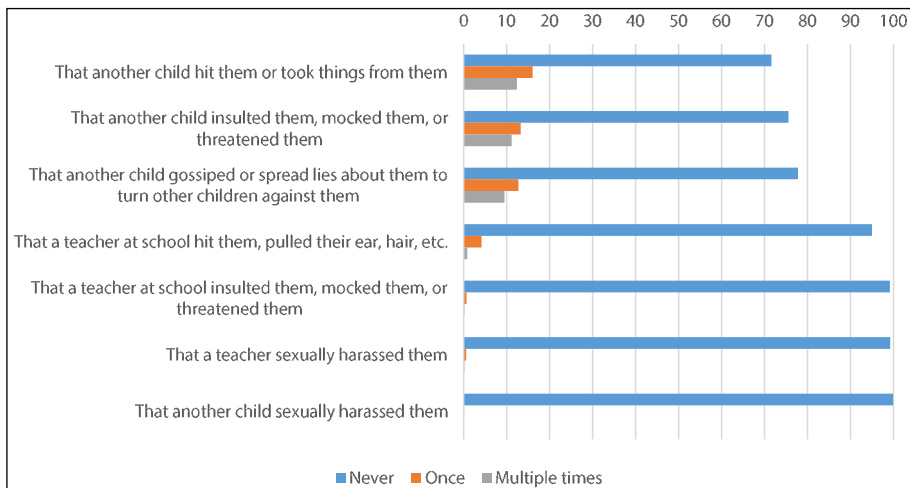
In the chapter focusing on students, we will examine in greater detail the prevalence of experiencing and perpetrating violence; ultimately, the students themselves are the primary or key “arbiters” for this type of assessments. However, parents’ perception of their children’s involvement in violent interactions also plays a key role in understanding the scope and nature of peer violence. Parents are often the first to notice changes in their children’s behaviour and can be an important source of information about whether children have experienced or perpetrated violence. Their understanding and assessment of the situation can significantly contribute to the early detection and prevention of violent incidents, as well as to the improvement of co-operation between the school and the family in solving this problem.

The data will be presented in two subsections: experiencing and perpetrating violence.

### 5.6.1. Experiencing violence

When asked to report on the type of violence their child had complained about, relatively few parents reported such incidents (Chart 80).

Chart 80: Frequency with which children turn to parents regarding different forms of violence (%)

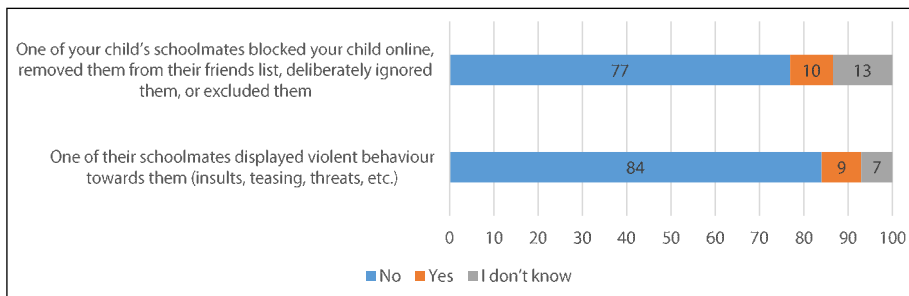


Taking into account violent interactions among children, **three quarters of parents report that their child has never complained to them about experiencing verbal (76%), social (72%), or physical violence (78%); reports of sexual violence are even less frequent (99% of parents state that this has never happened).** Put differently, between one fifth and one quarter of children complained to their parents about having suffered verbal, social, or physical violence once or multiple times, while less than 1% of children reported experiencing sexual violence.

Incidents of violent interactions between teachers and children are even rarer. According to parents' reports, verbal violence by teachers was experienced once or multiple times by one in twenty children (5%). Physical violence was experienced by 1% of children, while only one child's parents reported sexual violence.

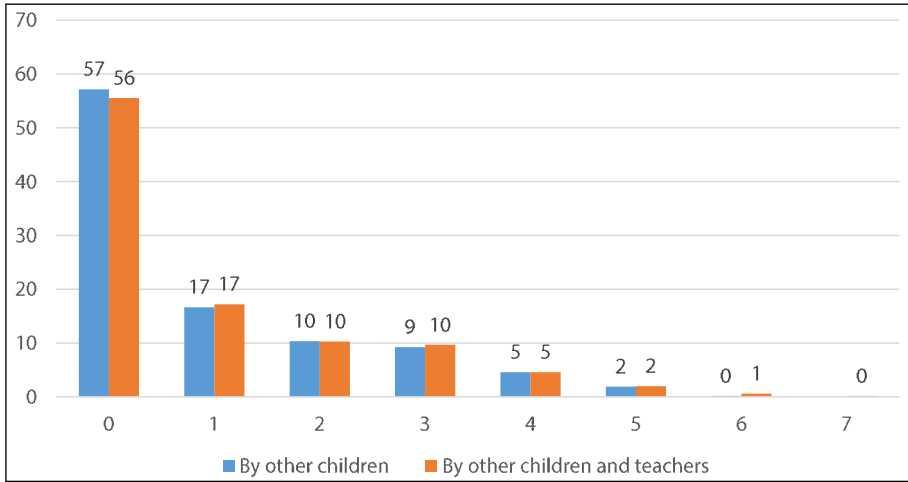
Incidents of cyberbullying also occurred with a similar, low frequency (Chart 81). **According to parents' reports, approximately one in ten children has experienced online insults and teasing, or some form of social exclusion.**

Chart 81: Cyberbullying among children based on parents' reports (%)



Taking into account all types of peer violence surveyed, **slightly less than half of the children (43%) have experienced some of the analysed forms of violence**, according to parents. Approximately every second child has experienced at least one form of peer violence (Chart 82). None of the children has experienced all six different forms. Including violence potentially perpetrated by teachers, the picture remains almost identical: almost every second child (44%) experienced at least one form of violence, while no child experienced all forms. No significant differences were observed in parents' reports with respect to their sociodemographic characteristics, and the only significant association identified was with the age of parents – younger parents reported slightly more forms of violence experienced by their children ( $\rho = -.14$ ). There is an association, although very low, between the assessment of the frequency of violence experienced and parenting style (parents from families with an authoritative parenting style report fewer instances of violent interaction). According to parents, children with disabilities are also slightly more exposed to violence compared to children without disabilities ( $\rho = .11$ ). Experiencing violence is also more prevalent in rural areas ( $\rho = -.11$ ) and in primary schools ( $\rho = -.12$ ).

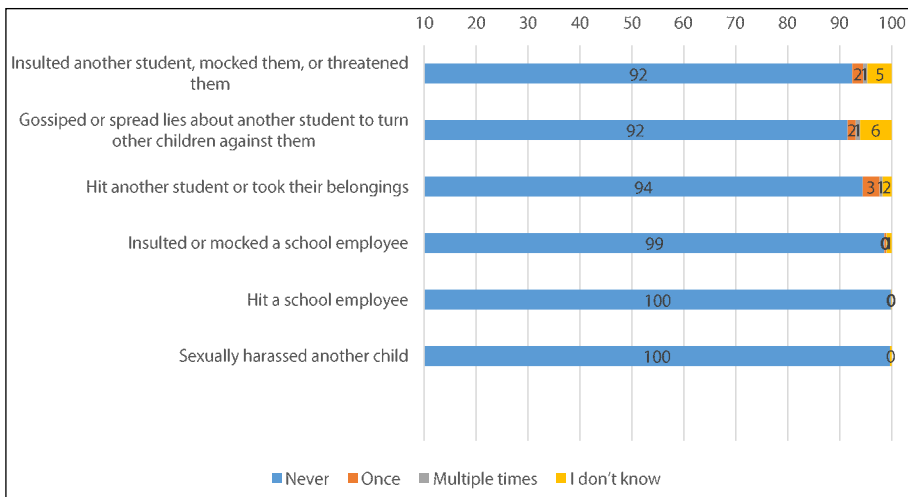
Chart 82: Number of different forms of violence children reported to their parents (%)



The violence experienced by children and reported to their parents can also be analysed in terms of its frequency (that is, taking into account how often it was experienced). If viewed in this way, the only relevant characteristic of parents is their age, with younger parents reporting a higher intensity of violence experienced by their children ( $\rho = -.14$ ). Similar associations were observed with the parenting style of parents and the presence of difficulties, as well as with the type of violence and the type of school (violence is more prevalent in rural areas and primary schools).

Furthermore, parents who report more varied and frequent violence experienced by their child also report lower satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school, greater problems in communication with teachers, and a more pronounced perception of violence in the school their child attends.

Chart 83: Frequency of child's violent behaviour according to parents' reports (%)

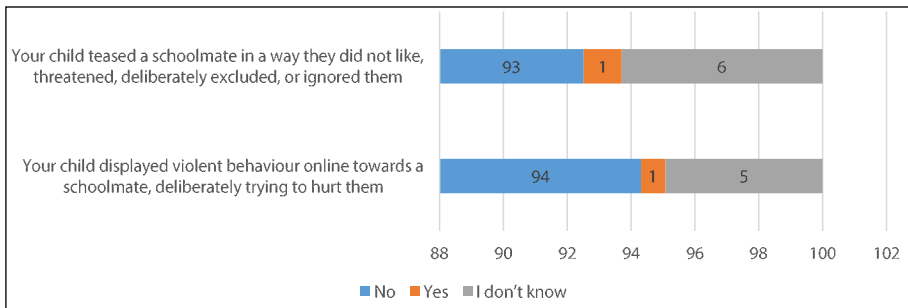


## 5.6.2. Perpetration of violence

Parents also responded to questions about whether their child engaged in violent behaviour at school. As in the case of suffering violence, **few parents report their child's violent behaviour, although in this case, their number is much lower** (Chart 83). Between 3% and 4% of parents report their child engaging in verbal, social, or physical violence. No parents reported sexual violence by their child against other children, and only a few (<1%) reported physical or verbal violence against teachers at school.

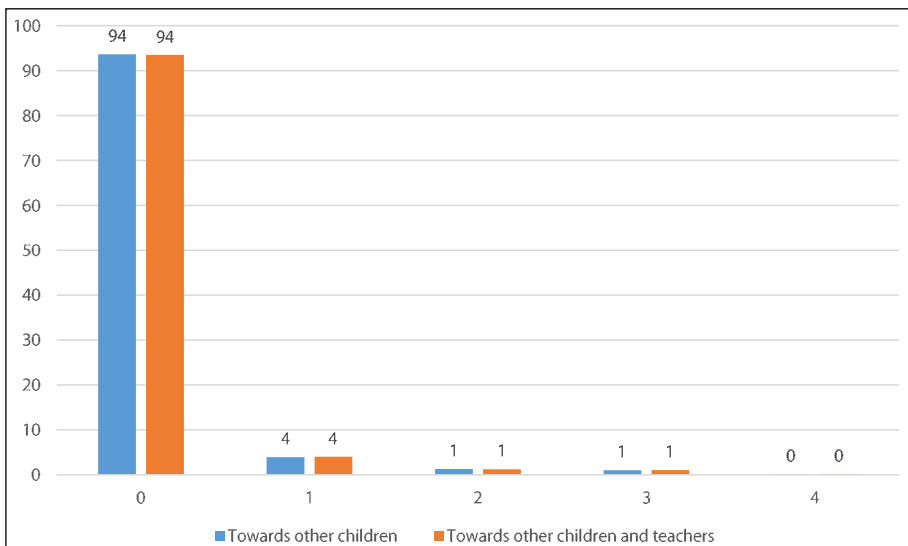
The same applies to cyberbullying, which was reported by very few parents (Chart 84). Only 6–7% of parents reported cyberbullying.

Chart 84: Perpetration of cyberbullying by children according to parents' reports (%)



If, as in the case of experiencing violence, we consider all forms of violence, it appears that **most parents report their child has never behaved violently**; 6% of parents report at least one form of violent behaviour by their children against other children and/or teachers (Chart 85).

Chart 85: Number of different forms of violent behaviour by children according to parents' reports (%)



Since these responses are highly homogeneous, it is unsurprising that they are not significantly associated with the parents' personal characteristics. Practically no category of parents reported their children engaging in violent behaviour more frequently; parents of primary school-aged children report it slightly more often ( $\rho = -.11$ ). There is also a significant association with satisfaction regarding the child's attitude towards school – parents whose children behaved violently are less satisfied ( $\rho = -.19$ ).

It should also be pointed out that parents who report their child experiencing more different forms of violence and more frequent violence, are at the same time those who report their child having perpetrated multiple forms of violence more frequently – as the number of different types of violence a child reported suffering increases, so does the number of different types of violence the child has perpetrated (in this case, we are referring solely to violence against other children; identical trends are observed when analysing measures that also include violence in child–teacher interactions). In other words, this correlation is positive ( $\rho = .28$ ). Furthermore, the more frequently a parent reports that their child has experienced more frequent or intense peer violence, the more likely they are to report their child perpetrating peer violence, that is, this association is also significant and positive ( $\rho = .27$ ). To reiterate, although we are referring here to the experience and perpetration of violence among children *as reported by their parents*, it is worth noting that in parents' reports, **experiencing and perpetrating violence are not independent dimensions, but rather connected phenomena – the more there is of one, the more there is of the other.**

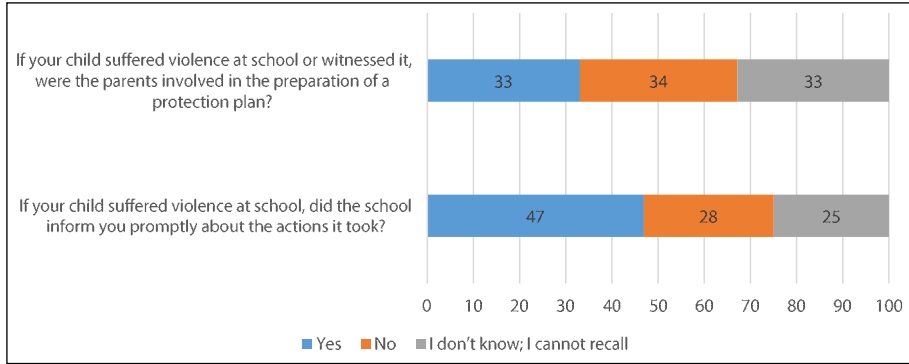
### 5.6.3. Parents' involvement in school intervention activities

When a violent incident occurs at school, there is an established set of procedures that, among other things, include timely communication between the school and parents, as well as the involvement of parents in activities aimed at resolving the problem. However, when asked if they had been called in to school due to their child's involvement in a violent interaction<sup>12</sup>, approximately half of the parents responded that the school had informed them in a timely manner about the actions it had taken; **in other words, half of the parents concerned stated they were not informed in a timely manner** (Chart 86). Far fewer, **only one third of parents, were involved in creating the protection plan**. It is worth noting that a significant percentage of parents responded that they did not know or could not recall whether either of these two things occurred. The data clearly indicate a lack of communication between schools and the parents of children who have experienced violence. However, even in the cases of experiencing or perpetrating violence, it is important

12 This question was intended only for parents who reported their child having experienced some form of violence (388 parents). However, due to inattention or other reasons, some parents who were not supposed to respond to this question, that is, parents who had previously indicated that their child had not experienced any form of violence – also answered it. Therefore, this analysis is based only on the responses of parents whose child has experienced any form of peer violence at least once.

to keep in mind that it is entirely possible for a child to have experienced or perpetrated some form of violence without the parent being aware of it.

Chart 86: Parents' involvement in intervention activities regarding violent interactions



More educated parents report being slightly better informed compared to parents with lower levels of education ( $V = .12$ ); nearly half of the least educated parents (47%) report not being adequately informed, in contrast to a quarter of the most educated ones (27%). Other parental characteristics were not significantly associated with reports of timely information sharing.

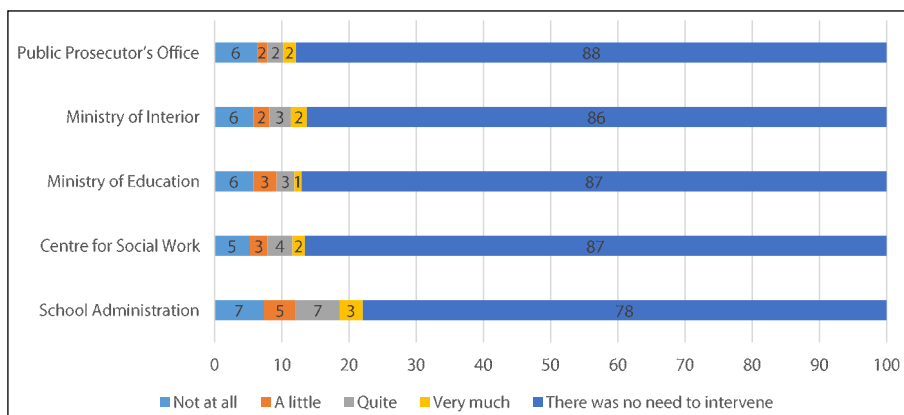
When it comes to the child's violent behaviour, here too, the patterns of communication between the school and parents are of low quality<sup>13</sup>. Of all parents whose child displayed violent behaviour at school, **fewer than half (44%) were involved in the development and implementation of an enhanced educational support plan, while 42% reported that they were not**. Due to the small number of parents included in this analysis, such data should be treated cautiously. Once again, parents' education is the only relevant factor ( $V = .33$ ; education level of the other parent  $V = .35$ ), though in a somewhat different manner: compared to less educated parents, more educated parents reported being less frequently involved in the development and implementation of the enhanced educational support plan.

Finally, in certain cases, responding to school violence, depending on its level of severity, involves a number of actions by other competent bodies and institutions, such as the School Administration, the Centre for Social Work, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Interior, and the Public Prosecutor's Office. When asked to rate their satisfaction with their actions, the vast majority of parents stated that there was no need to react (Chart 87)<sup>14</sup>.

13 This analysis was also conducted on a subsample of parents whose child had exhibited violent behaviour towards other students at least once. It should be noted that this is a small sample of parents (a total of 52).

14 This analysis was also performed solely on the subsample of parents whose child had experienced or perpetrated violence (a total of 381 parents).

Chart 87: Satisfaction with the actions of competent institutions (%)



Very few parents rated their satisfaction with the work of these institutions, and such ratings should be treated cautiously (this also indirectly suggests that there was no need for their involvement). If we were to interpret them, **parents appear to be more dissatisfied than satisfied, but their evaluations are in fact divided.** Due to the small number of respondents who provided ratings, an analysis of their association with parents' personal characteristics was not meaningful.

## 5.7. PERSONAL COMPETENCE FOR RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE

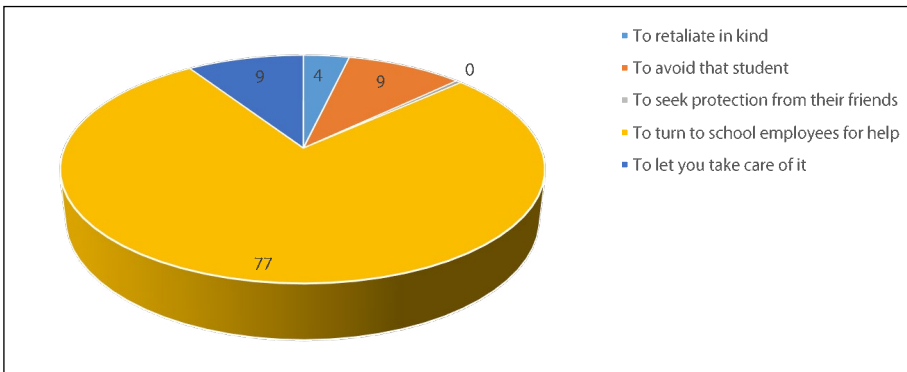
The manner in which parents respond to a violent school interaction involving their child, as well as their competence to address that situation, are very important for its successful resolution. Parents, as the primary and most important educators, have a responsibility to recognise signs of violence, provide support to their children, and co-operate with the school in solving the problem. It is therefore important to explore their willingness and capacity to respond appropriately, which may significantly influence the effectiveness of preventive and corrective measures in schools.

When asked how they would respond if their child complained that another student was bullying them, or what advice they would give, **most parents offered a response that could be classified as "appropriate" – they would advise the child to seek help from school employees** (Chart 88). Over three quarters of parents stated this. Far fewer parents would advise their child to leave the problem for them, that is, the parents, to resolve, or to retaliate in kind; one in twenty parents would advise their child to retaliate in kind, while almost none would suggest seeking help from school friends.

This question was answered by all parents, not only those whose children had experienced violent interactions; the responses were relatively uniform and did not depend on parents' personal characteristics. The only significant difference appears with regard to sex. Compared to mothers, fathers are more likely to advise their children to respond in kind rather than ask school employees for help,

which is a more frequent choice among mothers ( $V = .13$ ). There is no difference between parents based on whether their children reported experiencing violence or not. Parents of children who, according to parents' reports, have displayed violent behaviour were more likely to respond in such situation by advising their child to retaliate in kind or to avoid the child who is bullying them, rather than advising them to seek help from adults or to let the parents resolve the problem ( $V = .14$ ). Furthermore, advice to seek help from adults at school is more often given by parents who are more satisfied with their child's attitude towards school responsibilities and who report fewer problems in communication with teachers. It is worth noting that even in the case of these significant differences, the main advice from any category of parents would be to seek help from adults at school, while the only difference is how much priority it is given compared to the less frequent other options. The previously presented data on employees suggest that a large proportion of them reported that their students had turned to them for help (over a half of teachers and three quarters of professional associates), which could mean that such advice parents give to their children is actually implemented in practice.

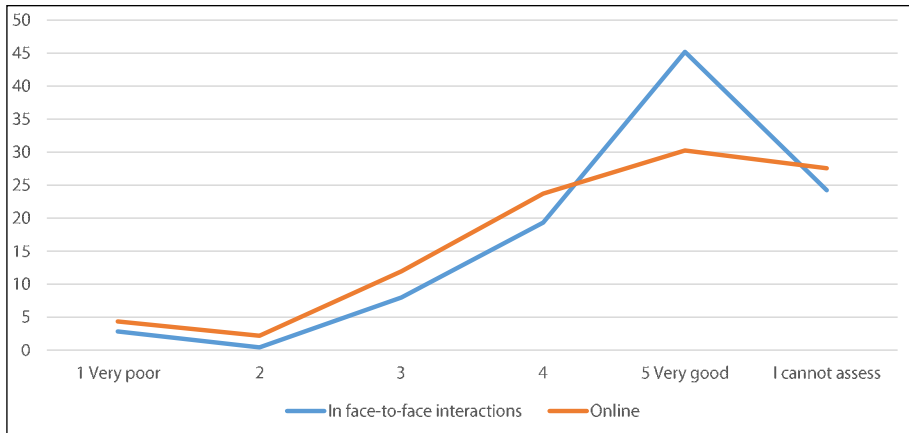
Chart 88: Types of advice parents would give their child who is bullied by peers (%)



Parents are also confident that they can handle situations when their child is involved in a violent interaction (whether they experience, perpetrate, or witness violence). On a scale from 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good), **most parents rate their skills in responding to situations of violent interactions as 4 or 5** (Chart 89). One third of parents rate their competence the highest in cases of violent interactions online and almost half do so for face-to-face interactions. It is easy to notice that parents are more confident in their abilities regarding face-to-face interactions (average on a five-point scale: 4.37) than in online interactions (4.01 on average). However, these two assessments are strongly and positively correlated ( $\rho = .67$ ) – the more confident someone is in handling violence in real-life situations, the more confident they are in their abilities to handle online interactions, and vice versa. It is also worth noting that around a quarter of parents in both cases are unable to evaluate their personal competence, and that parents and employees share the same level of confidence in their competence.

Self-assessment of personal skills does not depend on parents' personal characteristics; a very weak but significant correlation exists only with financial situation. A more favourable financial status is associated with slightly more positive self-assessments of competence ( $\rho = .10$ ). The assessments are also not dependent on the previously described experiential factors, such as victimisation or violent behaviour of the child. Similarly, the association between parents' response to violent interactions involving their child and their self-assessed competence is negligible.

Chart 89: Parents' self-assessment of personal capacities and skills for responding to violence (%)



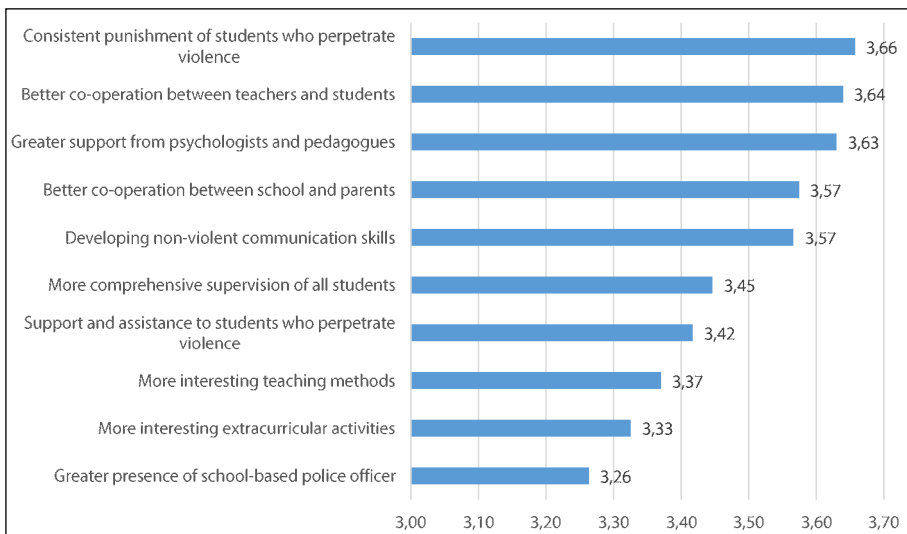
## 5.8. PERSONAL THEORIES ON VIOLENCE

Parents' beliefs about the causes of children's violent behaviour are highly relevant for the analysis of school violence for several reasons. Their beliefs about the causes of violent behaviour can shape the way they respond to conflict and intervene in situations that may potentially lead to violence. If parents believe that children's violent behaviour stems from, for instance, a bad environment or peer influence, that may lead to avoiding personal responsibility or providing insufficient support to the child in addressing the problem. Furthermore, parents who attribute violent behaviour to the child's personal traits, such as aggressiveness or low frustration tolerance, may be more focused on developing their child's social and emotional skills, while those who believe that behaviour stems from environmental or external factors might prioritise promoting a positive school environment. Finally, parents' beliefs are also important for violence prevention. When parents' beliefs about the causes of violence are rooted in the family or wider societal context, parents may be interested in co-operation with the school and adopting strategies that include both family and school interventions.

Previous research has shown that school employees consider non-school factors (for instance, problematic family) as far more important causes of violence

than school factors (Popadić et al., 2014). The parents surveyed in this research appear to share similar views (Chart 90). Although most of the suggested “causes” of violent behaviour were rated as important – for illustration purposes, five out of eight analysed factors had an average score above 3 on a four-point scale – **the top-rated factors were family and media influence** (although, it should be noted, the differences, especially between the highest-rated factors, were minimal). Three quarters of parents (75%) considered family influence a very important factor in violent behaviour, while two thirds (66%) said the same about the media.

Chart 90: Evaluation of the importance of the causes of violent behaviour (average ratings)



These are closely followed by two related factors – peer influence and the desire for popularity – as well as the generally negative social situation in Serbia. According to parents, the least important are the child’s genetic predispositions and two school factors – the school’s inappropriate school response to violence and inappropriate teaching programmes and methods, which were rated as the least important factors. It is worth highlighting what is clear in the presented chart: “genes” are, according to parents, considered equally important, or even more important, than certain school factors! A quarter of parents (24%) consider genetic predispositions a very important cause of violence, while a fifth (19%) consider inappropriate teaching methods and programmes very important. As could be seen in the previous chapter, the beliefs of school employees regarding the causes of violent behaviour are very similar to parents’ beliefs, both in terms of the significant role of the family and the media, and the relative neglect of in-school factors.

The importance attributed to the analysed causes of violence does not vary significantly with parents' characteristics, and only parents' level of education plays somewhat more important role. Parents with higher levels of education, compared to parents with lower education, attribute greater importance to the family ( $\rho = .20$ ), the value system and the general situation in Serbia ( $\rho = .23$ ), as well as the school's inadequate response to violence ( $\rho = .15$ ). The rated importance of other factors is not significantly associated with the level of education, while other sociodemographic characteristics are not significantly associated with any of the assessments.

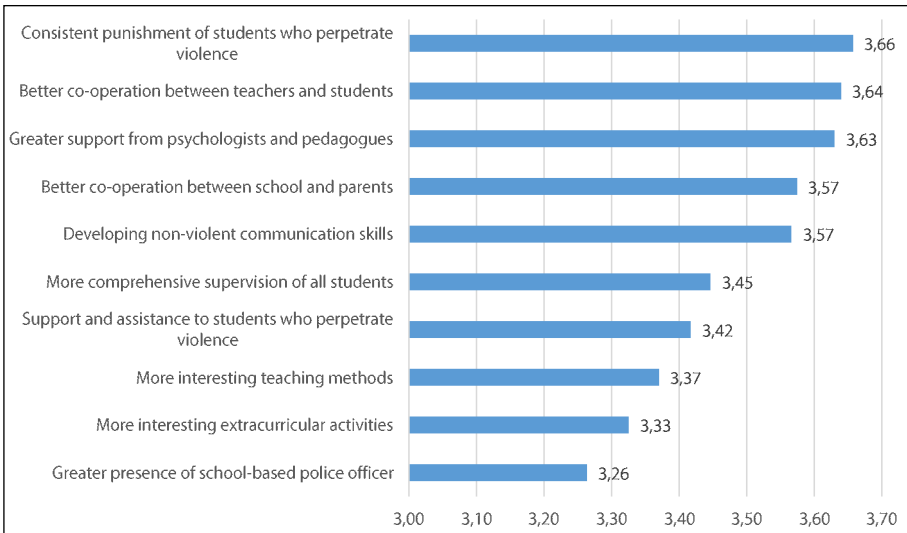
Certain previously described experiential factors or perceptions are associated with beliefs about the "causes" of violence. For instance, there is a correlation between the perception that violence is more prevalent today and the rating of the importance of the *value system and the general situation* in Serbia as causes of violence ( $\rho = .14$ ). Furthermore, *inappropriate school response to violence* as a cause of violent behaviour is most pointed out by parents who consider violence in student-parent-staff interactions to be a greater problem in the school, or by those who report that a smaller number of teachers respond inconsistently to violence ( $\rho = -.27$ ). Finally, parents of children who have suffered some form of violence, compared to children who have not, attribute somewhat greater importance to the value system and the general situation in Serbia ( $\rho = .12$ ) and the desire for popularity ( $\rho = .14$ ).

On the other hand, parents' responses to violence are weakly and poorly correlated with their beliefs about the causes of violence, and a significant correlation was observed only in the evaluation of the importance of the media. Those who respond to violence by advising their children to seek help from adults at school give the greatest importance to them.

Another aspect of understanding the nature and origins of violent behaviour, closely related to the previous considerations, is evaluations of the effectiveness of various anti-violence measures. Parents rated 10 different measures (using four-point scales, ranging from "not at all" to "very effective"), and their assessments were largely consistent. All proposed measures were rated as fairly effective (all average ratings are above 3), while the differences in perceived effectiveness of the analysed measures were minimal (Chart 91). **Consistent punishment of students who exhibit violence was rated as the potentially most effective measure** and was rated slightly better than *better co-operation between teachers and students, greater support from psychologists and pedagogues, co-operation between schools and parents, or developing non-violent communication skills*. Slightly lower ratings were given to measures such as *more comprehensive supervision of all students or special support and assistance for those who exhibit violent behaviour*, as well as *more engaging teaching methods and extracurricular activities, or a greater presence of a school-based police officer*. With some simplification, it could be said that parents' primary focus is on prevention actions aimed at improving the quality of relationships between all actors in the school process (students – parents – employees).

However, it should be noted again that the differences in perceived effectiveness are smaller than they seemed initially and are visible if, perhaps, we look at the differences in what is considered a *very effective* method. Accordingly, three quarters of parents consider consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence, better co-operation between teachers and students, and greater support from the school's professional services to be very effective; two thirds of parents consider very effective better co-operation between the school and parents, developing non-violent communication skills, or providing help and support to students perpetrating violence. The three lowest-rated measures are still rated as very effective by at least half of parents. It is worth mentioning that, as with the beliefs about the causes of violence, there is a high level of agreement between parents' and school employees' assessments regarding anti-violence measures. Compared to parents, employees somewhat value the development of non-violent communication skills more, and slightly less the co-operation between teachers and students, but the assessments are still very consistent. Particularly important is the emphasis placed on better co-operation between students and teachers, or between the school and parents, since this indicates willingness to co-operate in solving the problem of school violence.

Chart 91: Evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-violence measures (average values)



This consistency in responses implies that differences in ratings between different categories of parents were not expected, which is what the data show. The differences in this regard are few and, as in previous cases, of weak intensity. Compared to fathers, mothers generally consider all proposed measures more effective, although only some evaluations differ significantly; for instance, de-

veloping non-violent communication skills ( $\rho = .14$ ), support to students who perpetrate violence ( $\rho = .11$ ), or more comprehensive supervision of them ( $\rho = .14$ ). Compared to older parents, younger parents perceive stricter disciplinary measures as less effective, such as more comprehensive supervision of students who perpetrate violence ( $\rho = -.11$ ) or greater presence of a school-based police officer ( $\rho = -.16$ ). The same applies to more educated parents compared to less educated parents, while here additionally significant is the difference in terms of support and assistance to violent students who perpetrate violence ( $\rho = .13$ ). Most measures were rated as slightly more effective by the parents of primary school-age children compared to the parents of secondary school-age children, as well as by parents in urban compared to rural areas, but the differences were very weak.

Here as well, we analysed in detail the association between evaluations of measure effectiveness and some previously discussed relevant beliefs about the causes of violence or experiential factors. Firstly and quite expectedly, **there are many meaningful correlations between parents' beliefs about the causes of violent behaviour and their evaluations of the effectiveness of anti-violence measures** (Table 13). More engaging teaching methods and extracurricular activities are perceived as more effective anti-violence measures by those who attribute the causes of violence to inadequate curricula and teaching methods. Similarly, the more accepted the belief that the causes of violent behaviour lie in the school's inadequate responses to violence, the more the proposed measures that would supposedly lead to more appropriate school responses, such as greater support from pedagogues and psychologists or better co-operation between students and teachers, are considered effective. Greater effectiveness of punitive or disciplinary measures (stricter discipline, more comprehensive supervision, greater presence of a school-based police officer) is seen among those who attribute greater importance to genetic predisposition as a source of violent behaviour. However, it is worth mentioning that nearly all of the correlations shown in the table are significant and positive. This practically means that the effectiveness of (nearly) all proposed measures is rated more highly by those who consider all suggested sources of violent behaviour more important, and vice versa – nearly every proposed anti-violence measure was rated as less effective by those who consider any of the analysed causes of violence less significant. The suggested sources of violence, and the appropriate anti-violence measures, are perceived as less important by the parents who may view the causes of violent interactions and, consequently, the ways to address them, as stemming from other sources.

Ratings of the effectiveness of proposed measures are also associated with other relevant perceptions and beliefs. Parents who perceive violence among students or by students against teachers as a bigger problem in their child's school are more likely to advocate for the presence of a school-based police officer, more comprehensive supervision of all students, and more consistent punishment of children perpetrating violence (correlations ranging from .10 to .15).

Table 13: Correlations between ratings of potential causes of violent behaviour and the effectiveness of anti-violence measures

Evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-violence measures	Evaluated causes of violence							
	Family influence	Genetic predisposition	Peer influence	Media influence (films, TV, internet)	Inadequate curricula and teaching methods	Value system and overall situation in Serbia	Inappropriate school response to violence	Desire for popularity
Better co-operation between school and parents	.14**	.14**	.16**	.19**	.18**	.16**	.19**	.21**
Better co-operation between teachers and students	.16**	.13**	.15**	.19**	.18**	.16**	.16**	.20**
Greater support from psychologists and pedagogues	.12**	.12**	.15**	.20**	.16**	.17**	.17**	.22**
Developing non-violent communication skills	.17**	.11**	.19**	.23**	.17**	.22**	.16**	.23**
Consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence	.19**	.19**	.21**	.24**	.12**	.22**	.15**	.22**
Support and assistance to students who perpetrate violence	.15**	.10**	.13**	.15**	.20**	.21**	.13**	.16**
More comprehensive supervision of all students	.09**	.24**	.19**	.20**	.14**	.10**	.14**	.23**
Greater presence of school-based police officer	.03	.18**	.15**	.14**	.12**	.01	.09**	.20**
More interesting extracurricular activities	.07*	.14**	.12**	.17**	.20**	.12**	.11**	.23**
More interesting teaching methods	.12**	.16**	.16**	.16**	.26**	.18**	.15**	.22**

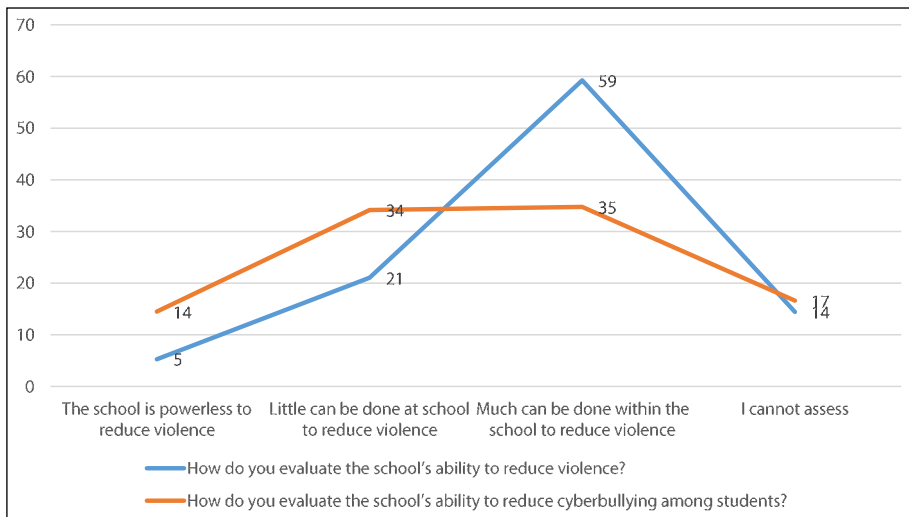
Note: Shown are Spearman's  $\rho$  correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Interestingly, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures is not associated with the child's experience with violence (suffering or perpetrating it), but it is associated with the parents' responses to a violent interaction. Therefore, parents whose reactions involve passive-avoidant or confrontational approaches (retaliating in kind or avoiding the bully) evaluate co-operation between the school and family as a far less effective way of combating violence, compared to those who respond by advising their child to turn to adults at school for help ( $V = .11$ ). These parents also consider other types of procedural and school measures more effective: co-operation between students and teachers ( $V = .10$ ) and greater support from the professional services ( $V = .10$ ).

Finally, a general evaluation of the school's ability to reduce school violence indicates that most parents believe that **the school can do a lot to reduce school violence** (Chart 92). Around a quarter of parents believe that the school can do little or nothing about this. **The evaluations are significantly more pessimistic with regard to the possibility of reducing cyberbullying; around a third of parents believe that the school can do a lot**, while some of them think that

the school's abilities in this area are small, and every seventh parent believes that the school is powerless in terms of reducing cyberbullying. Despite these obvious differences, the two evaluations are highly and positively correlated ( $\rho = .58$ ), which means that parents' beliefs about the school's abilities are not so dependent on the type of violence – the more confident a person is in the school's abilities to reduce "face-to-face" violence, the more confident they are in its abilities regarding cyberbullying and vice versa. Parents' evaluations are also very similar to those provided by employees, both in terms of the majority (more than half) who believe in the school's abilities, and somewhat greater pessimism regarding the reduction of cyberbullying.

Chart 92: Parents' opinion on the school's ability to reduce violence (%)



Beliefs about the school's abilities are not significantly correlated with any socio-demographic characteristic of parents, but they are correlated with other relevant perceptions and beliefs, primarily with the evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-violence measures (Table 14). All proposed anti-violence measures were rated as more effective by the parents who more positively rated the school's ability to reduce both violence at school and cyberbullying. Such findings are understandable if we take into account the fact that the proposed anti-violence measures are mostly in the "jurisdiction" of schools, and therefore dependent on the school's ability to implement them effectively. Only consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence is considered an equally (un)successful measure, regardless of beliefs about the school's abilities.

Overall evaluations of schools' capacities do not depend on the perception of the problem that violence between different school actors poses in the school the child attends, or the child's direct experience with violent interactions.

Table 14: Correlations between the beliefs about the school's abilities to reduce school violence and cyberbullying and the evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-violence measures

Evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-violence measures	Evaluation of the school's ability to reduce...	
	school violence	cyberbullying
Better co-operation between school and parents	.17**	.13**
Better co-operation between teachers and students	.19**	.16**
Greater support from psychologists and pedagogues	.20**	.17**
Developing non-violent communication skills	.16**	.14**
Consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence	-.01	.00
Support and assistance to students who perpetrate violence	.11**	.12**
More comprehensive supervision of all students	.13**	.09**
Greater presence of school-based police officer	.15**	.13**
More interesting extracurricular activities	.20**	.18**
More interesting teaching methods	.15**	.16**

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

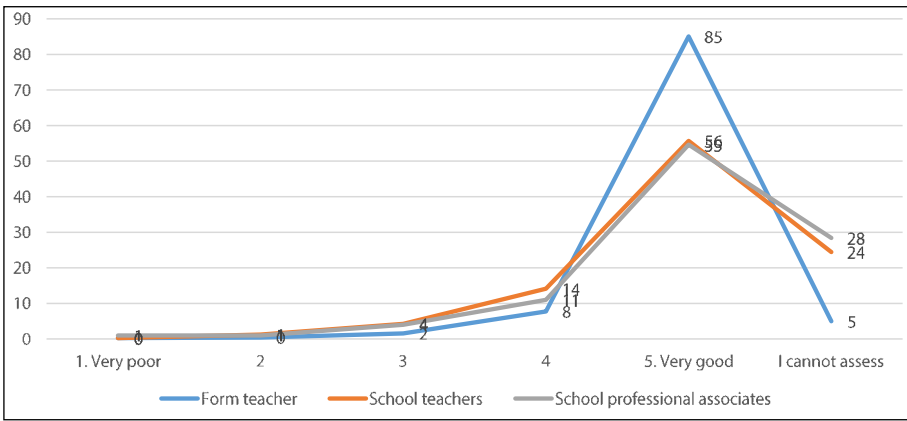
## 5.9. PARENTS' RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHOOL

The parents' relationship with the school their child attends – or how involved they are in school activities, what kind of relationship they have with school employees, and how informed they are about procedures regarding violence or the school's prevention activities – is very important in terms of understanding the parents' perspective. Generally speaking, we could assume that greater parents' involvement and better relationship with the school may be an important protective factor against child's exposure to violent interactions. This kind of relationship could help in the early recognition of potential problems, such as violence, and provide for a swift response. Parents who are better informed about procedures regarding violence and actively participate in prevention activities create a safer environment for their child, which positively affects their development, scholastic performance, and emotional well-being. Ultimately, this could be related to the previously discussed parents' perceptions of the school's ability to address the problem of violence.

When it comes to regular attendance at parent–teacher conferences, **nine out of ten parents state that they attend them regularly**. Only one in ten parents attends parent–teacher conferences occasionally (9%) or rarely (1%). Since most parents responded similarly, it is not surprising that there are no differences in attendance at parent–teacher conferences based on the parents' sociodemographic characteristics. More educated parents attend parent–teacher conferences somewhat more regularly compared to less educated ones, but even such differences are very small.

The relationship with teachers and professional associates is also mostly positive (Chart 93). **The vast majority of parents rate the relationship with the form teacher with the highest mark (on a 1 to 5 scale), while the evaluations of the relationship with teachers and professional associates are somewhat more negative. Still, more than half of the parents describe the relationship as very good;** around two thirds of parents are on the positive end of the five-point scale (in the case of form teachers, this is as many as nine tenths of parents). In other words, few parents state that their relationship with teachers and professional associates is bad (although the number of those who could not evaluate the quality of the relationship is not negligible).<sup>15</sup>

Chart 93: Parental evaluation of relationships with teachers and professional associates (%)



Here too, there are no significant and more intense associations with sociodemographic characteristics. The only significant difference in parents' evaluations exists with regard to the family financial situation; parents from better-off families rated all three relationships more positively (correlations range from .10 to .15). The attendance at parent-teacher conferences is also not associated with the evaluation of the quality of relationships with employees. However, a child's experience of suffering peer violence is associated with slightly weaker evaluations of relationships with the form teacher ( $V = .10$ ), teachers ( $V = .14$ ), and professional associates ( $V = .20$ ). Similarly, the relationship of parents of children who have exhibited violence is consistently more negative (with correlations ranging from .13 to .17).

The evaluation of the quality of relationships with school employees is closely associated with the previously discussed problems in communication with teachers and satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school (Table 15). It is easy to identify the main and expected patterns in the presented relationships:

15 Evaluations of employee relationships are positively and highly intercorrelated (correlations range from .48 to .81;  $\alpha = .80$ ) – the more positively one relationship is rated, the more positively the other two are rated, and vice versa.

the more positively the relationship with employees is rated, the more positively the parents' satisfaction with their child's attitude towards school and school responsibilities is rated, and vice versa. Similarly, parents who report specific problems in child-teacher communication rated their relationships with the form teacher, school teachers, and professional associates much more negatively. As expected, this is most closely correlated with the quality of relationships with the teachers.

Table 15: Correlations of the evaluations of the quality of relationships with school employees, satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school, and problems in communication with teachers

Satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school and problems in communication with teachers	Evaluation of the relationship with...		
	form teacher	school teachers	school professional associates
Your child's grades	.15**	.18**	.16**
Your child's relationships with other children at school	.16**	.20**	.14**
School teachers' attitude towards your child	.21**	.39**	.30**
Your child's attitude towards school obligations	.13**	.17**	.12**
How much does your child enjoy going to school?	-.11**	-.20**	-.13**
Teachers can be harsh and offensive towards the child	-.15**	-.31**	-.28**
They lack understanding for the child's problems	-.15**	-.31**	-.28**
They give them biased grades	-.20**	-.39**	-.34**
They have excessively high expectations	-.12**	-.32**	-.24**
Satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school (total score)	.21**	.30**	.24**
Problems in communication with teachers (total score)	-.14**	-.30**	-.24**

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \**p* <.05, \*\**p* <.01.

**Most parents say were informed by the school about procedures for acting in response to school violence** (60%); a quarter say that they were not (29%), and the rest are not sure (11%). Still, the number of parents who report receiving information is higher than the number of those who report being very familiar with legal procedures for responding to violence. Parents are literally "divided" on this issue – **an equal number state they know no more than the fact that procedures exist (47%), or that they are very familiar with the procedures (47%)**. Few parents say they are not familiar at all (6%).

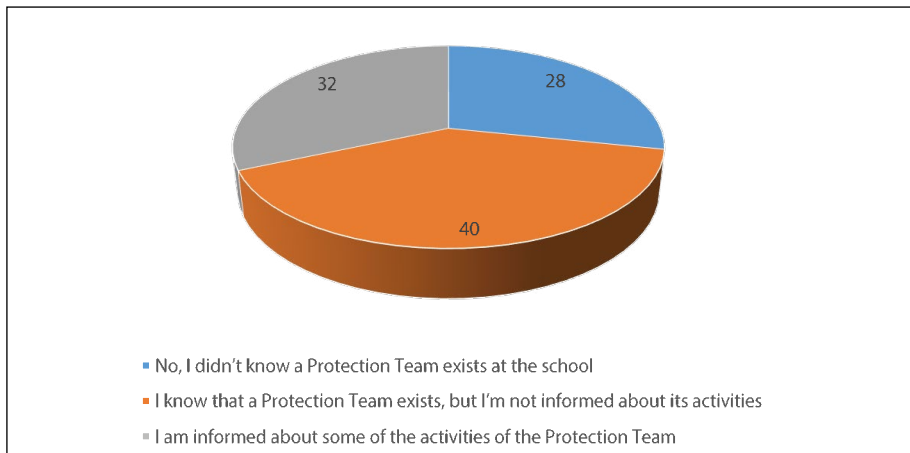
Different categories of parents differ significantly in terms of their familiarity with the procedures. Compared to fathers, mothers are more likely to report being familiar with legal procedures (48%: 41%) and being informed by the school (61%: 50%). Furthermore, older parents are less likely to report being informed by the school about the procedures. Similarly, parents from families with the worst financial situation are the least informed about the legal procedures (*V* = .111). For illustration purposes, in this group, a fifth of parents report being familiar with the procedures (22%), compared to 10% of parents from families

with the best financial situation. Surprisingly, the statements of parents whose children have experienced or perpetrated violence and whose children have not do not differ significantly, which means that there is no difference between them with regard to degree of being informed by the school or familiarity with the procedures. Parents' degree of being informed is closely associated with the quality of their relationships with school employees; parents who rate their relationships with teachers and professional associates more positively are by far better informed.

In this regard, even more important are the data suggesting that **relatively few parents are informed about the existence and activities of the Protection Team** (Chart 94). A quarter of parents are not even aware of the existence of the Protection Team (which exists in every school); 40% of parents know no more than the fact that the Team exists, while one third of parents are informed about certain activities of the Team.

There are no differences between parents with regard to personal characteristics, but parents who have a more positive relationship with the form teacher ( $\rho = .12$ ), teachers ( $\rho = .21$ ), or professional associates ( $\rho = .23$ ) are better informed about the Protection Team's activities. Once again, parents' perception of their child's experience with violent interactions is not a relevant factor.

Chart 94: Level of awareness of the Protection Team's activities (%)



Similar conclusions are also derived from the data on parents' level of awareness of student teams' activities aimed at preventing violence and any prevention activities organised by the school. **One in seven parents (15%) are well informed about student teams' activities**; a third (35%) report not being informed at all, while half report being partially informed (50%). Similarly, **most parents (58%) are not familiar with the fact whether prevention programmes aimed at reducing violence have been implemented**; a quarter are aware of such activities (27%), and around one in twenty parents (6%) have participated in some of them.

Even without a more detailed review and comparison of the responses of parents and employees by school, there is a clear discrepancy in their ratings, since the vast majority of employees state that such activities are implemented in a planned and systematic manner (this is reported by over 70% of teachers and associates and almost 90% of principals).

More informed about student teams' activities aimed at preventing violence are mothers, compared to fathers, the youth ( $\rho = -.10$ ), and, perhaps unexpectedly, less educated parents ( $\rho = -.14$ ). Once again, the quality of relationships with school employees seems to be an important factor – parents who describe more positively their relationships with the form teacher ( $\rho = .16$ ), teachers ( $\rho = .25$ ), or professional associates ( $\rho = .24$ ) are better informed. Parents of children who have suffered violence are somewhat less informed about the activities of peer teams ( $\rho = -.10$ ).

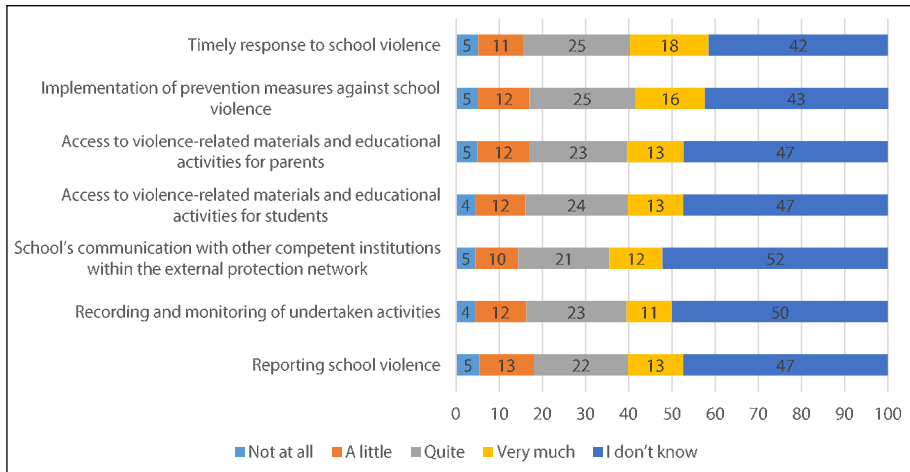
**Most parents (59%) do not know whether the school has organised special support and educational activities for students who have exhibited violent behaviour, experienced violence, or witnessed it.** Of those who do, one third (32%) say that such activities exist, while one in ten parents state that such activities did not exist. It is worth noting that, as in the case of prevention activities, the vast majority of school employees say that such activities are performed frequently or always. Furthermore, very few parents (4%) initiated activities related to school violence prevention or civic engagement activities. The activities initiated by the few parents included various *humanitarian actions* (aimed at supporting ill children; children from Kosovo and Metohija; or children from socially vulnerable families); *informal activities* (for instance, gatherings outside school, organising joint activities); actions aimed at certain *school procedures* (for instance, intervention in specific cases of violent interactions, establishing contact with professional services, organisation of additional homeroom classes, alerting parents to a potential case of violence, additional meetings with the form teacher or with the parents of children exhibiting violent behaviour); contacting *competent institutions* (for instance, talking to the police); as well as certain interventions aimed at resolving a violent interaction (for instance, threatening to withdraw children from school if the school does not respond, and changing the composition of the class).

Parents who have a more positive relationship with the form teacher, teachers and/or professional associates are more likely to report special support activities, while the relationship with employees was not an important factor with regard to initiating activities, which is generally at a very low level. Parents of children who have experienced violence are more likely to report that the school has not organised any additional support ( $V = .12$ ), which is also true for parents of children who have perpetrated violence.

In this respect, for several years now, parents have had access to the “I Protect You” platform, which provides important information and resources regarding procedures for acting in response to violence, as well as parenting practices in

general. However, based on the parents’ responses in this survey, the potential of this platform is relatively underused, since **many parents say they do not know to what extent it can help with a range of response procedures in cases of violence** (Chart 95). This is possibly due to them not being familiar with the work or existence of this platform. Persons who provided evaluations mostly reported that the “I Protect You” platform is fairly or highly effective in improving different aspects of the procedures for responding to violence. The evaluations are quite uniform, but the most positively rated aspects are the improvement in the timeliness of responses to school violence, the implementation of prevention measures against school violence, and access to violence-related materials and educational activities for parents.

Chart 95: Evaluations of different aspects of the national digital platform “I Protect You” (%)



The rating of other aspects is also approximately the same and, in the worst-case scenario, one third of parents believe that the platform provides great benefits (ranging between 33% and 43%). On the other hand, around 15% of parents believe that the platform provides little or no benefits to them. However, the main conclusion regarding the “I Protect You” platform is that most parents are not able to evaluate its functionality.

An analysis of the correlations between the evaluations of platform usefulness in a subsample of parents who provided ratings<sup>16</sup> suggests that parents differ in their evaluations with regard to personal characteristics, as well as taking into account the relationship with school employees (Table 16).

16 These subsamples of parents refer to the number of parents who provided a “valid” response to each of these questions, that is, did not respond with “I don’t know”; the number of parents in the subsamples ranges between 560 and 682 parents for different questions.

Table 16: Correlations between the evaluations of the usefulness of various aspects of the “I Protect You” platform and parents’ personal characteristics and their relationship with school employees

	Sex	Age	Education level	Other parent's education level	Family financial situation	School type	Type of area	Relationship with the form teacher	Relationship with school teachers	Relationship with school professional associates
Reporting school violence	-.02	-.09*	-.18**	-.13*	.13**	-.12**	-.15**	.14**	.22**	.26**
Recording and monitoring of undertaken activities	-.04	-.11*	-.19**	-.19**	.09*	-.15**	-.17**	.12**	.23**	.24**
School's communication with other competent institutions within the external protection network	-.03	-.07	-.16**	-.21**	.10*	-.15**	-.12*	.14**	.28**	.30**
Access to violence-related materials and educational activities for students	-.04	-.08*	-.10**	-.15*	.11**	-.17**	-.09	.09*	.26**	.30**
Access to violence-related materials and educational activities for parents	-.05	-.12**	-.13**	-.23**	.14**	-.14**	-.08	0.07	.24**	.27**
Implementation of prevention measures against school violence	-.04	-.14**	-.20**	-.23**	.12**	-.14**	-.10*	.11**	.22**	.26**
Timely response to school violence	-.03	-.11**	-.17**	-.20**	.12**	-.12**	-.07	.11**	.24**	.26**

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Greater benefits of the “I Protect You” platform, in terms of practically any of the analysed aspects, are more likely to be reported by younger parents compared to older parents, less educated parents compared to more educated parents, and better-off parents compared to parents with worse financial situation. It is also interesting that more positive evaluations are consistently given by parents who rate their relationship with the form teacher, teachers, or professional associates more positively. To reiterate, these are also parents who are more informed about various other aspects of the procedures and activities related to violence prevention, so this clearly also applies to this platform. Furthermore, it should be noted that, as pointed out in the previous chapter, employees consistently rated all analysed aspects of this platform more positively.

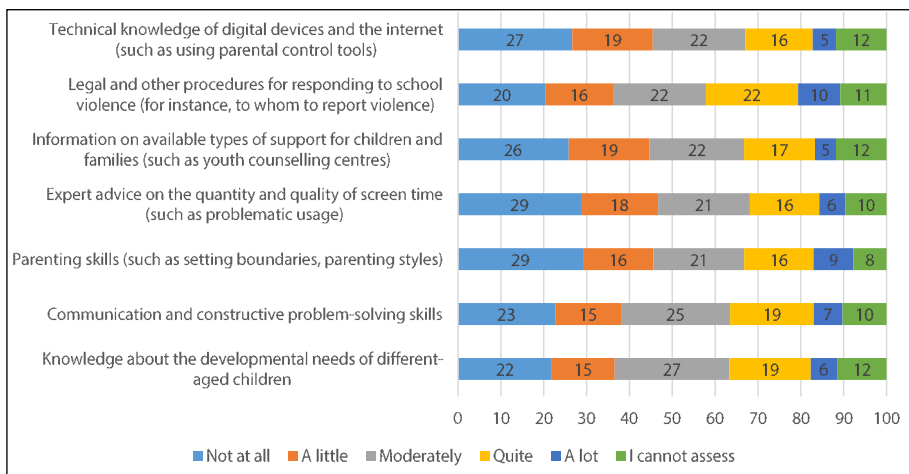
A child's experience with violent interactions is somewhat relevant to evaluating the usefulness of certain aspects of the platform. Parents whose children have experienced violence negatively rate the usefulness of the platform for improving the preventive measures ( $rho = -.12$ ) and timely response to violence ( $rho = -.12$ ).

## 5.10. PARENTS' OPINION ON THE NECESSARY SUPPORT

The last aspect of the parents' perspective on violent interactions in the school context was the analysis of the type of support they needed. Providing appropriate support to parents can improve their ability to adequately identify signs of violence, communicate with their children, and co-operate with the school. This support may include educational resources, training courses on parenting skills, or psychological support – all of which play an important role in creating a safer environment for children.

When asked to evaluate how much they need different types of support on a five-point scale, parents expressed quite divided opinions (Charts 96). **Between one third and nearly a half of parents** (between 37% and 47%) **report needing little or no support for each type of assistance suggested**. Support regarding legal and other procedures for responding to school violence appears to be the most needed type of assistance (with one third of parents stating that such assistance would be fairly or very necessary).

Chart 96: Parents' evaluation of the need for different types of support (%)



Assessed as the most needed form of support, based on average ratings, were legal and other procedures (average rating on a five-point scale: 3.17), knowledge about the developmental needs of children of different ages (3.07), communication and constructive problem-solving skills (3.03), followed by information on the available types of support for children and families (2.91), technical knowledge of digital devices and the internet (2.90) and, finally, parenting skills and advice on the quantity and quality of screen time (2.82). Still, it is clear that the differences in evaluations are small. This is also clear based on the fact that the evaluations of the listed types of support are very highly correlated (with all correlations being over .60), which means that a more pronounced perception of the need for one type of support is also associated with a more pronounced evaluation of all other types of support, and vice versa.

There are no significant differences in the evaluated needs between different groups of parents, that is, there is no significant correlation with the parents' sociodemographic characteristics; the biggest differences in parents' evaluations are related to their beliefs in their own abilities to address violent face-to-face or online interactions (Table 17). As expected, the more parents are confident in their own abilities to address violent interactions, the less they consider each of the listed types of support necessary, and vice versa.

A child's experience with violent interactions (suffering or perpetrating violence) is not significantly correlated with evaluations of necessary support.

Table 17: Correlations between the evaluations of the types of support necessary and one's own abilities to respond to violent face-to-face or online interactions

Evaluation of different types of support	Evaluation of one's own abilities to respond to...	
	school violence	cyberbullying
Knowledge about the developmental needs of different-aged children	-.12**	-.09*
Communication and constructive problem-solving skills	-.15**	-.13**
Parenting skills (e.g. setting boundaries, parenting styles)	-.23**	-.21**
Expert advice on the quantity and quality of screen time (e.g. opportunities and risks, problematic usage)	-.22**	-.19**
Information on available types of support for children and families (e.g. youth counselling centres, free online help centres)	-.18**	-.13**
Legal and other procedures for responding to school violence (to whom and how to report violence, etc.)	-.14**	-.14**
Technical knowledge of digital devices and the internet (e.g. using parental control tools)	-.17**	-.19**

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

# 6. School violence from students' perspective

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## 6.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

This chapter is aimed at presenting school violence from the perspective of students and has several parts. Firstly, the sociodemographic and psychological characteristics of the children who provided responses will be presented. Afterwards, the ways in which a child may be involved in a violent interaction will be shown, including exposure to peer violence and teacher violence, as well as violence by children against peers and teachers. The frequency of such interactions will be shown, their circumstances, how the child responds to and explains them, the consequences of exposure to violence, the reasons for experiencing and perpetrating violence, and the associations between the child's characteristics and their involvement in violent interactions. Students' beliefs and actions related to violent interactions at school will also be discussed – their causes, the most effective measures, and how they perceive the measures the school is undertaking to combat violence.

The correlation between different aspects of involvement in violent interactions and the child's sociodemographic and psychological characteristics will be explored in detail in order to increase understanding of the occurrence of school violence and enhance prevention measures.

The results in this chapter are based on responses from 1,916 students from 77 schools. A portion of the results was obtained by matching a child's questionnaire with the questionnaire completed by their parent. That was possible for 48% of the children in the sample. In the summary, some of the main findings will be presented.

### Social integration into the school community

- ▶ The vast majority of students are integrated into their peer group at school and rate the school atmosphere as positive. Ninety-four per cent of them have two or more good friends at school, and almost no student feels lonely at school.
- ▶ The vast majority say (as completely or mostly true) that they feel a sense of belonging at school, that they feel safe at school, that teachers respect

them as individuals, that other students are kind and willing to help them, and that their class is harmonious.

- ▶ Less than half of students like going to school (40%); 24% of them do not like going to school, but the reason for this, as other responses show, is not problems in the peer group. Two thirds of parents whose children state they do not like going to school say their child likes going to school.
- ▶ The greater degree of integration into the school community is exhibited by younger students from rural schools, who have better scholastic performance and no reported developmental or learning difficulties. It is more pronounced in children whose parents attend parent–teacher conferences more regularly and who are more satisfied with the attitude of school employees towards the child.
- ▶ More likely to participate in activities organised by the school were younger children, higher achieving students, and those with more pronounced prosocial attitudes and communication competence.

### Sense of security

- ▶ The vast majority of children perceive school as a safe place, but the percentage of children who view some aspects of school as unsafe is not negligible.
- ▶ One in five students, more often in primary than in secondary schools, report that there are groups of students in their school who bully other students.
- ▶ Seventeen per cent of students have heard of or seen someone bring a knife, weapon, or similar objects to school that could be used in a fight (more in urban than rural schools).
- ▶ Seventeen per cent of them have heard someone offering drugs to others at school or in its vicinity (more in urban than rural schools, and more in secondary than primary schools).
- ▶ The sense of security is associated with better integration into the school community. It is more pronounced in children with no difficulties and children from rural and small schools.

### Perceived attitude of teachers towards students

- ▶ Most students believe teachers (most of them, but not all!) have a good attitude towards students, that they care about them and undertake the required measures regarding school violence.
- ▶ One in ten students show great dissatisfaction with the teachers' attitude towards students, reporting that none of the teachers have a good attitude towards students.
- ▶ Younger students, students with better scholastic performance, those who are better integrated into the school community, and those with a

greater sense of security have a more positive view of teachers' attitudes towards students.

- ▶ Parents of children who were more dissatisfied with teachers' attitudes toward students were also more dissatisfied with the attitudes of school teachers toward their child and the child's attitude towards school obligations.

## Values, attitudes, and competence

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- ▶ Prosocial attitudes (including valuing human dignity and respect for rights, appreciation of cultural diversity, democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law) were highly agreed upon. Over 80% of students also agreed with the statements used to assess communication competence – empathy, co-operation, and responsibility.
- ▶ Prosocial values and communication competence were more prominent among girls and higher achieving students. They were positively correlated with integration into the school community and a sense of security.
- ▶ Prosocial attitudes were not correlated with age or emotional difficulties, but communication competence was more pronounced in younger students and negatively correlated with emotional difficulties.

## Emotional difficulties

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- ▶ A significant number of students had a range of emotional difficulties. Over one third of students reported worrying a lot, one in four said they feel nervous in new situations and easily lose self-confidence, and that they often suffer from headaches, stomach aches, and nausea, while one in five said they found it difficult to relax, that their palms often sweat and their heart rate is fast. Only 28% of students reported not having any of these problems, and one in four students complained about three or more of the listed emotional problems.
- ▶ Emotional difficulties were more prominent among older students, girls, children from urban schools, among those who have learning or developmental difficulties, among those who perceive the school atmosphere as poor and unsafe, and the teachers' attitude as poor.
- ▶ Emotional difficulties were least prevalent among children whose both parents used an authoritative parenting style and most prevalent among those whose one parent was uninvolved, more so than in cases where parents were strict.

## Satisfaction with aspects of one's life

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- ▶ Students expressed great satisfaction with various aspects of their lives. Seventy-five per cent of students rated their satisfaction with family re-

relationships with the highest scores (9 and 10 on a 0 to 10 scale), followed by 55% for satisfaction with their current life, 49% for relationships within the class, and 37% for their scholastic performance.

- ▶ Satisfaction with their current life was rated from 0 to 4 by 25% of students, family relationships by 37% of students, and relationships in the class by 36% of students.
- ▶ A greater sense of life satisfaction was expressed by younger students, girls, students with better grades, students with no developmental or learning difficulties, students from rural schools, those with better financial situation, better social integration into the community, fewer emotional difficulties, more pronounced prosocial attitudes, higher communication competence, a stronger sense of security, and a more positive perception of teachers' attitudes toward students.

### **Participation in extracurricular activities**

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- ▶ Nearly all children are involved in some kind of extracurricular activities in the school or outside of it. Most of them are involved in sports activities (59%).
- ▶ Children involved in sports activities showed better integration into the school community, fewer emotional difficulties, and greater satisfaction with life.

### **Exposure to peer violence**

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- ▶ Students indicated whether, and how often, in the last three months (since the beginning of the school year) they had experienced any of the 16 forms of offline and online violence from the list presented (the youngest students were provided with a list of 12 forms of violence). Sixty per cent of students reported having experienced at least one form of violence; 56% of them experienced offline violence, and 28% experienced online violence, while 24% experienced both. A strong positive correlation was observed between the prevalence of offline and online victimisation ( $\rho = .51$ ). The more a student experienced violence offline, the more they experienced it online and vice versa.
- ▶ The most common form of victimisation was verbal violence. Nearly every other student reported having experienced at least one form of verbal violence (insults, threats, mockery, online threats), 40% experienced offline or online social exclusion (gossiping, being left out of social media), while 16% experienced physical violence.
- ▶ Younger students were more exposed to violence compared to older students, as were those with developmental and learning disabilities.
- ▶ Victimisation was more pronounced among students who were less integrated into the school community, had more emotional problems, were

less satisfied, had a greater sense of insecurity, and students who exhibited weaker prosocial attitudes and lower communication competence.

- ▶ Victimization was not associated with sex, scholastic performance, financial situation, urbanity, and school size.
- ▶ Children whose parents used authoritarian and uninvolved parenting styles also had higher victimisation scores. The fewest cases of victimisation were observed among children whose parents employed an authoritative parenting style.
- ▶ Victimization was correlated with parents' dissatisfaction with the child's grades, dissatisfaction with the child's relationship with other children, and teachers' attitudes towards the child, as well as the child's attitude towards school obligations.
- ▶ Victimization was not correlated with parents' education, parenting goals, attendance at parent-teacher conferences, or satisfaction with the form teacher, teachers, and professional associates. It was also not correlated with the extent to which the child, according to parents, shares their feelings and problems with them.

## **Circumstances of violent interactions**

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- ▶ Students were more frequently exposed to violence by children of the same sex than by those of the opposite sex. Violence involving only children of the opposite sex was the least prevalent.
- ▶ Violence most often occurs within the same class, among same-aged children.
- ▶ Violence most frequently happens in situations when adult supervision is minimal – outside the school building or in the classroom when the teacher is absent. This also includes situations in which children are not involved in guided school-based activities.
- ▶ The most commonly cited reasons for violence are physical appearance, followed by attitudes and beliefs (more often mentioned by girls and older students), clothing, and grades. Ethnicity or religion, poverty, disability, and same-sex attraction are the least frequently mentioned reasons for violence.

## **Victimisation throughout schooling to date**

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- ▶ Twenty-seven per cent of them say that, in the course of their schooling, they have been exposed to verbal or physical violence by a student at least once, 12% report having been exposed to online peer violence, and 17% say that they have been bullied by the same student or group of students for a long time. In total, 34% of students reported having experienced at least one of these three forms of peer violence throughout their schooling.

- ▶ Among those who stated they had not experienced violence in the last three months, 15% reported having experienced it at some point during their schooling, but around half of those who reported having experienced some form of violence in the last three months now said that they had not been subjected to violence during their schooling, which suggests that students interpret the expression “being exposed to violence” differently, applying it only to more extreme forms of violence.

## Responding to violence

- ▶ Sociodemographic and psychological variables are correlated with the ways people respond to violence, but the correlations are neither strong nor consistent. Girls are more likely to seek protection from their parents, but not from school employees or peers, and are also less likely to retaliate and less likely to talk to the bully or try to appease them. Older students are less likely to seek protection from parents and employees, and more likely to retaliate and avoid the bully. Children who are better integrated and have more pronounced prosocial attitudes and communication competence are more likely to seek protection from parents and adults and less likely to retaliate against violence.
- ▶ Children whose parents employ an authoritarian parenting style are less likely to seek protection from their parents, while children who are more satisfied with their family relationships are more likely to do so.
- ▶ The more a child is victimised, the more likely they are to endure violence and try to appease or talk to the bully, while they seek protection from parents, employees, and peers just as often as other children. Children who have perpetrated violence are less likely to seek protection from their parents or to avoid the bully, but are significantly more inclined to engage in direct confrontation – retaliating themselves or with the help of friends.

## Consequences of exposure to violence

- ▶ Nearly every second student says they are not feeling upset by the violence they have experienced.
- ▶ The consequences that students recognise in themselves are serious. Children most often respond with anger, but besides this reactive emotion, which can also be functional, there are also longer-term consequences that manifest as somatisation and dysfunctional behaviour.
- ▶ Girls report more negative consequences, as do children of lower financial situation. The number of consequences is significantly positively correlated with emotional difficulties, lack of integration into the school community, dissatisfaction, sense of insecurity, and perceptions of teachers’ negative attitudes towards students.

- ▶ The number of negative consequences is positively correlated with the frequency of victimisation, but not with the frequency of perpetrating violence.

## Seeking help

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- ▶ Very few students, that is, only one in ten, keep quiet about having experienced violence. Two thirds of them report violence to their parents (12% only report it to their parents), half share it with their peers (friends and/or siblings), while 13% share it only with them. Twenty-seven per cent of them have not reported it either to their parents or school employees.
- ▶ Almost half (43%) shared it with at least one person from school, but 5% shared it *only* with someone from school. The majority of children share their experiences with others, including different people from their surroundings.
- ▶ Among those who turned to employees for help, 22% said that employees had not even tried to help them. Twenty per cent stated that employees tried to help but were unsuccessful, 30% stated they helped them to a certain extent, and 27% said they helped them a lot.
- ▶ Greater support from employees is reported by the youngest students, students who have better scholastic performance, children from smaller schools, children who have more pronounced prosocial attitudes and self-assessed communication competence, more satisfied children, those with fewer emotional difficulties, and children who are better integrated into the school community.
- ▶ Children who have exhibited violent behaviour against other children are less likely to report having received help from employees when they themselves suffered violence.
- ▶ Every second child who reported experiencing violence to their parents states that their parents reported it to the school. Girls and older students are more likely to state that their parents reported the violence. Parents who reported violence are more likely to say that they are very familiar with the procedures that the school is required to follow in case of violent student behaviour.
- ▶ The more violent the child was, the less likely they were to state that their parents would be willing to report the violence they have been subjected to.
- ▶ The vast majority of children are certain that their friends would help them if they experienced peer violence.
- ▶ Children who are better integrated into the school community, more satisfied with various aspects of their lives, have fewer emotional difficulties, possess a greater sense of security, demonstrate more pronounced prosocial attitudes, and exhibit greater communication competence feel more confident in receiving help from their peers.
- ▶ Both victimised and violent students were less likely to trust in their friends helping them.

## Violent student behaviour

- ▶ Twenty-eight per cent of students reported exhibiting violent behaviour towards another student at least once. Sixteen per cent of them perpetrated offline violence, 4% online, and 8% perpetrated both. A strong positive correlation was observed between offline and online bullying.
- ▶ The most common form was verbal violence. One in five students reported having perpetrated verbal violence (insulting, threatening, mockery, online threats), and every tenth has displayed physical violence.
- ▶ Boys were more likely to display violent behaviour compared to girls, both physical and verbal violence (this difference only exists with regard to offline violence, not online).
- ▶ Violence in children was not associated with age, scholastic performance, urbanity, or school size.
- ▶ The frequency of violence was correlated with all measured psychological variables: more pronounced emotional difficulties, greater sense of insecurity, perceived poor teachers' attitude towards students, weaker integration into the school community, greater dissatisfaction, less pronounced prosocial values, and lower communication competence.
- ▶ The frequency of violence was positively correlated with the frequency of victimisation ( $\rho = .42$ ): children who were more likely to perpetrate violence were more likely to be exposed to violence themselves.
- ▶ The lowest percentage of violent students was among children whose parents used an authoritative parenting style, while the highest percentage of violent students was among children whose parents used uninvolved and authoritarian parenting styles.
- ▶ Parents perceive fewer instances of victimisation and violence than their children report. They are more likely to be aware of instances when their child experienced violence than when they perpetrated it.

## Reasons for violent behaviour

- ▶ Children do not exhibit violence towards other children due to certain characteristics they do not get to choose (ethnicity, religion, financial situation, disability), but because of different attitudes and beliefs that are manifested in behaviour and appearance.
- ▶ The most prevalent reason for violent behaviour is retaliation for another child's actions, which then only continues an already initiated violent interaction.
- ▶ A significant percentage of students (26%) report having displayed violent behaviour towards someone who likes people of the same sex. This reason is more likely reported by boys than girls.

## Responses to violent behaviour

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- ▶ Fifty-three per cent of students state that no school employee has ever talked to them about their violent behaviour, 33% say that they have talked to them once or twice, while 14% state that they have talked to them multiple times. Employees were more likely to talk to boys than girls, as well as with students who have lower scholastic performance.
- ▶ Twenty per cent of them said that no family members had ever talked to them about their violent behaviour, 36% said that they talked to them once or twice, 36% that they talked multiple times, while 9% stated that it happened nearly every day. Conversations were more often held with older children.

## Roles in a violent interaction

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- ▶ Around one third of children were not involved in violent interactions (they have neither experienced nor perpetrated violence), and a similar percentage of children were only victims of violence. The percentage of children who have only exhibited violent behaviour is very small (4%), while one quarter of all children fall into the bully-victim category. There is a significant overlap between the categories of victims and bullies. Among those who were victims, 40% also displayed violent behaviour. Among those who exhibited violence, 86% were also victims.
- ▶ In the category of bully-victim, most of them have a long-term history of exposure to violence, dating back to earlier periods of schooling. Furthermore, compared to others, this group is more likely to complain about violence by teachers towards them, and was more likely to display violent behaviour towards teachers.
- ▶ Among bully-victims, the majority were children with some kind of difficulty. They reported the strongest sense of insecurity and the weakest integration into the school community. They were the least likely to rely on peer support and had the fewest friends at school.

## Violence in student–teacher interactions

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- ▶ Eighteen per cent of students experienced some form of violence by teachers during the course of schooling. Most often, it was verbal violence. Eighteen per cent of them reported that a teacher had insulted them at least once. Three per cent experienced physical violence, while 1% of students experienced online harassment.
- ▶ In the past three months, verbal violence (name-calling, mocking or insults by a teacher) was experienced by 11% of students, while 2% experienced physical violence (being hit, kicked, shoved, had their hair pulled, things thrown at them, etc., by a teacher). Twelve per cent of students experienced at least one or both of these types of violence.

- ▶ Children from big schools and older students were more likely to be exposed to teacher violence (in the past three months). Children who were less integrated into the school community, had a greater sense of insecurity, more pronounced emotional difficulties, a lower sense of satisfaction, experienced more negative consequences of peer violence, and had a more negative perception of teachers' attitudes toward students were significantly more likely to complain of teacher violence.
- ▶ No significant correlation was observed with regard to scholastic performance, sex, financial situation, prosocial attitudes, or communication competence.
- ▶ More likely to complain about teacher violence were children who displayed violent behaviour towards other children, as well as those who reported experiencing violence by their peers.
- ▶ Parents were less aware of their child's victimisation by teachers. Among the children who reported having experienced verbal violence by teachers once or more times, as many as 86% of their parents reported their children not having experienced it. Furthermore, according to the paired questionnaires, 12 children said that they had been hit by a teacher, yet only one parent was aware of it. Over half (55%) of parents of children who have experienced violence by teachers stated that no teachers were harsh and offensive to their child.
- ▶ Two per cent of students said that, since the beginning of the school year, they had insulted or threatened a teacher at school, and another 2% reported having physically assaulted a teacher. Three per cent of them exhibited at least one of these two types of violence towards teachers. This was most likely done by children who reported having difficulties and those who displayed violent behaviour towards other students.
- ▶ Since the beginning of the school year, around one in seven students have been involved in violent interactions with teachers, primarily as a victim of teacher violence.
- ▶ One in four students stated that, since the beginning of the school year, a student in their class had yelled at or insulted a teacher, and a smaller number of children (5%) claimed that, since the beginning of the school year, a student in their class had physically assaulted a teacher.

### **Students' beliefs and actions related to violent interactions**

- ▶ Virtually all students express a willingness to prevent peer violence when they witness it. The most frequently chosen response was to turn to adults for support, and only slightly less common response was to intervene on their own or invite other students.
- ▶ More likely to seek help from adults were children from rural schools, younger students, and girls.

- ▶ Children who suffered peer violence throughout their schooling were less likely to turn to employees for help. Students who perpetrated violence were also less likely to turn to adults for help, and more likely to join the aggressors or say it does not concern them.
- ▶ As the most significant causes of violence, students view the influence of peers and family, as well as the bully's desire for popularity. They consider less significant possible causes related to the organisation of school life or the state of society.
- ▶ When it comes to the effectiveness of measures against violent student behaviour, both students and parents tend to prioritise improving interpersonal relationships and communication in the school community, while placing less emphasis on those based on control and supervision.
- ▶ Students who engage in violent behaviour attribute less importance to the above measures compared to their parents, especially those related to improving mutual relationships (greater support from pedagogues and psychologists, improved co-operation between teachers and students, better co-operation between the school and parents). Opinions of victimised students regarding this matter do not differ from those of other students.
- ▶ Half of the students did not know whether or not a Protection Team existed in their school, a minority knew that such team existed, while one in ten students claimed that no such team existed.
- ▶ Two thirds of students stated they were familiar with the school's obligations in the event of violence. Older students and students who perpetrated violence were less familiar with them.
- ▶ One of the measures for preventing peer violence is the formulation of class rules that students can refer to in conflict situations. When asked whether they had agreed on rules in their class, 38% of students confirmed this, more so in rural schools, small schools, and in younger grades.
- ▶ One in four students stated that adults have never instructed them what to do when they are angry or arguing, 38% said that they are rarely instructed, and only one third of students reported that adults talk to them about it frequently. Children in rural schools, older students, and those who have not experienced violence were more likely to report being instructed in this regard.
- ▶ Every second student stated that they often or occasionally participated in school activities aimed at preventing violence, 29% of them did not participate in such activities, while 24% stated their school had not organised such activities.
- ▶ Children in rural schools and younger students are more likely to participate in such activities. No difference was observed in the involvement in such activities between those who had engaged in violent behaviour and those who had not, nor between those who had experienced violence and those who had not.

## 6.2. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents how the problem of school violence – its types, prevalence, possible causes and prevention measures – looks from a students' perspective.

School violence primarily concerns peer violence, and examining it from the students' perspective is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, students are the main actors in violent interactions – whether as victims, perpetrators, or witnesses. Such interactions often occur outside adult supervision and often go unreported, remaining unknown to both parents and school employees. Secondly, students are most familiar with the context in which violence occurs and their statements help us better understand the dynamics of violent incidents and the norms that contribute to them. Their responses provide insight not only into the prevalence of violence, but also its subjective experience and consequences. In addition to reporting whether they have been exposed to or displayed violence, students can describe how they perceive it, how much it bothers them, and how it impacts their emotional well-being, self-confidence, and attitude towards school. Therefore, understanding their perspective is essential for creating effective prevention and intervention measures. All of these reasons highlight the significance of the student perspective in researching violence in student–teacher interactions, which was also a focus of our research.

After presenting the sociodemographic and psychological characteristics of the students involved in this survey, which will be significant for understanding the results related to violent interactions, the findings will be grouped into several chapters. Firstly, the prevalence and intensity of different forms of victimisation will be presented, and their association with the sociodemographic and psychological characteristics of children and their family relationships. Shown will be the circumstances of violent interactions – where they occur and who the actors involved are, how children interpret their exposure to violence, how they respond to it, and what are its consequences.

The following section will present the prevalence and intensity of violent behaviour among students and its association with the sociodemographic and psychological characteristics of children and their family relationships. Subsequently, the specifics of violent interaction between students and teachers will be shown. Finally, we will present students' beliefs and actions related to violent interactions – what they do when they witness violence, how they view possible causes of violence and prevention measures, and how, in this regard, they perceive the measures their school is undertaking.

## 6.3. SAMPLE STRUCTURE

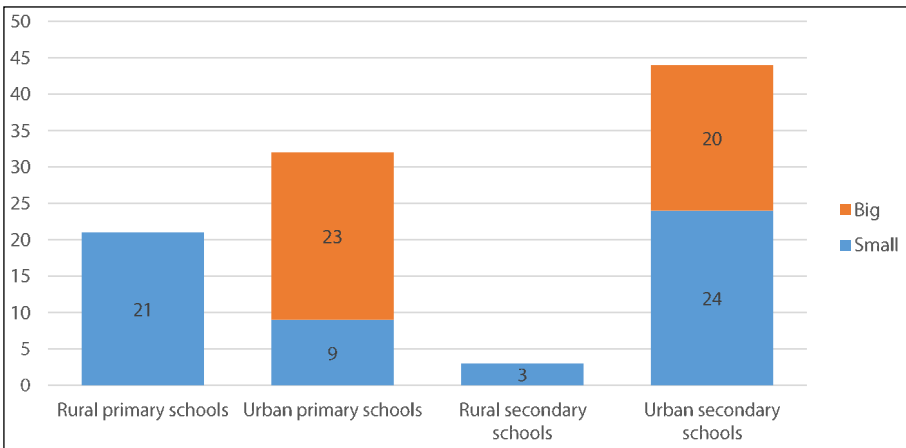
The survey involved 1,916 students from 77 schools. In some analyses, students' responses were compared with those of their parents, which required matching the student and parent questionnaires. In these analyses, matching student and parent questionnaires reduced the number of children to 914 (48% of the sample) – only for this number, based on an identification code, could the child's questionnaire be

paired with one of their parent's. In the reduced sample, the percentage of children from urban and large schools remained unchanged, the number of primary school students slightly increased (from 53% to 58%), and scholastic performance significantly improved (in the matched sample, 66% of students were the highest achievers compared to 56%). The percentage of children who experienced violence and those who displayed violent behaviour remained unchanged. In the vast majority of cases (84%), the parent questionnaires were completed by mothers.

The planned sample is representative at the school level, and was thus intended to also ensure the representativeness of the student sample. However, it is not possible to determine with certainty to what extent the sample structure in terms of sex, scholastic performance, or other variables may have been affected by the fact that a considerable percentage of the students included in the planned sample (38%) did not take part in the survey, either because they did not receive parents' consent or because they did not want to participate.

Approximately equal numbers of primary (53%) and secondary school students (47%) participated in the survey. One quarter of students attended rural schools, which are all small, while three quarters of students (76%) attended urban schools. Virtually all secondary school students attended urban schools, around half of which were small and half big. Two fifths of primary school students attended rural schools, all of which were small, and three fifths attended urban schools, most of which were big. Therefore, the total sample included 76% urban school students and 24% rural school students, as well as 57% students from small schools and 43% students from big schools (Chart 97).

Chart 97: Structure of the student sample by school size and urbanity (%)

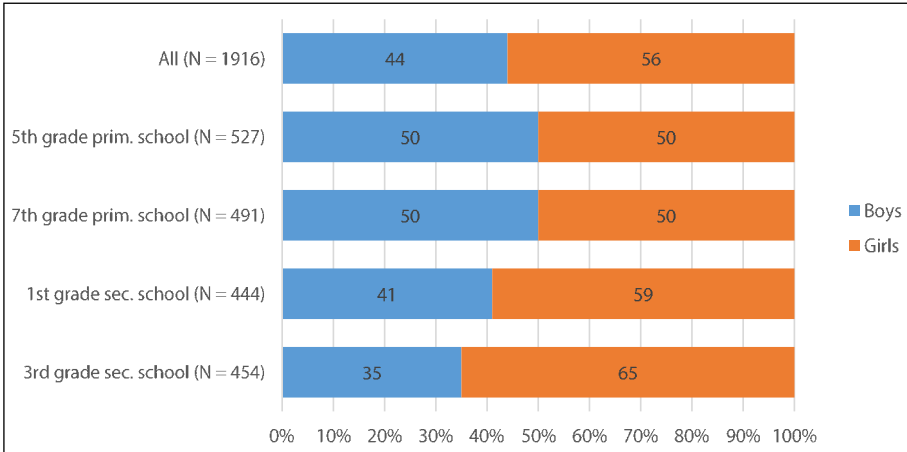


Among secondary school students, 59% attended vocational schools, 31% gymnasiums, and 9% mixed schools.

There were somewhat more boys than girls overall (56% compared to 44%), but the sex distribution varied by age groups. While the distribution was approxi-

mately equal in primary schools, there were more girls in the secondary school age groups (Chart 98).

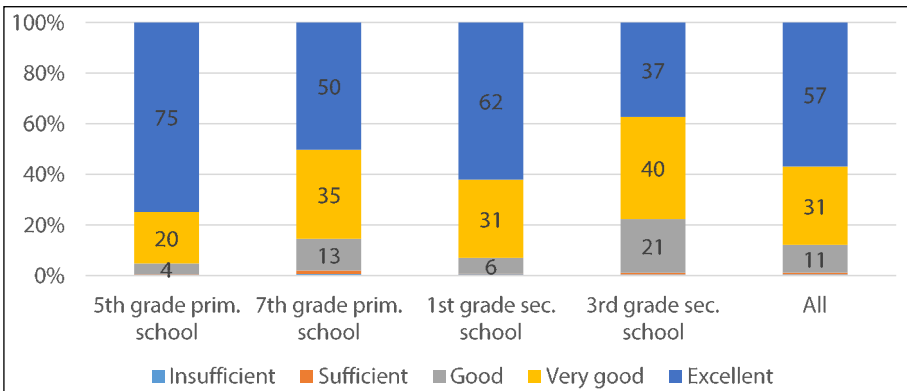
Chart 98: Sex and age structure of the student sample (%)



More than half of the students completed the previous school year with excellent scholastic performance, while there were virtually no students who failed or had sufficient scholastic performance (20 of them, or 1%), which effectively reduces school performance to three categories. At the end of the 4th and 8th primary school grades (which were the reference points for measuring scholastic performance of students in the 5th grade of primary and the 1st grade of secondary schools), there were almost no students with good scholastic performance.

Only among students in 3rd secondary school grades was there a more balanced distribution by scholastic performance (Chart 99). The percentage of students with excellent scholastic performance was lower in vocational schools – 24% in the 3rd grade.

Chart 99: Sample structure by age and scholastic performance (%)



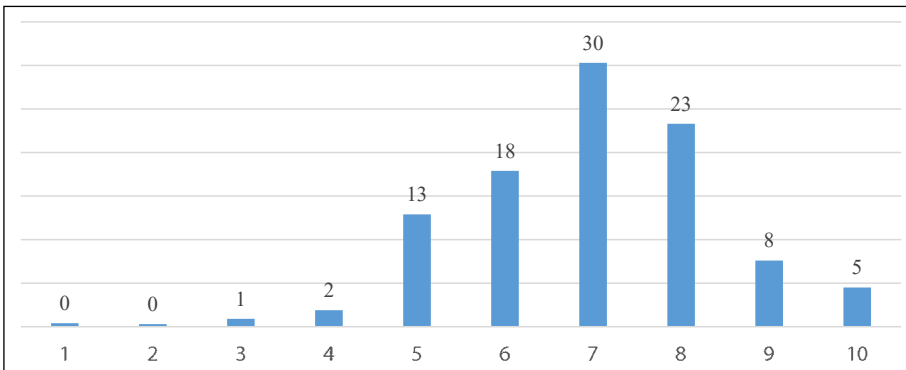
Eighty-five per cent of children live with both parents. One in five students (19%) have no siblings. Fourteen per cent of them come from incomplete families (11% live with their mother and 3% with their father). Five per cent of children come from incomplete families and have no siblings, while 9% of children live in extended households (with someone who is not their parent or sibling).

No difference was observed between children from rural and urban schools regarding family structure: among children from rural schools, 84% live with both parents and 18% of children have no siblings, while among children who attend urban schools, 86% live with both parents and 19% have no siblings. In 9% of households, there is another family member who lives there.

**Analysis of matched questionnaires shows that there are inconsistencies between the data on family members provided by children and parents.** Namely, for 23% of children who state they are an only child, their parent reports them having a sibling. Furthermore, 23% children reported having a sibling, but their parents said they only had one child. Information about whether other household members, such as the child’s grandmother, grandfather, or other relatives, live in the household, obtained from children’s and parents’ responses, matches in only 76% of cases. As many as 75% of children whose parents stated that other relatives live in their household reported no one other than their parents and siblings. On the other hand, 42% of parents whose children reported that someone else lives with them claimed that their household consists only of parents and children.

Students rated their family financial situation on a 1 to 10 scale with a high score of 7. Half of the students rated their financial situation with 7 or 8, while 12% rated it as extremely good (9 or 10). Sixteen per cent of them rated their family financial situation below average (from 1 to 5) (Chart 100).

Chart 100: Students’ assessment of family financial situation (%)



No difference was observed in the ratings between students from rural and urban schools (7.1 compared to 6.9). Younger students are more likely to perceive their family’s financial situation as better ( $\rho = -.14$ ). **The correlation between financial situation and student’s scholastic performance is weak** ( $\rho = .06$ ), and is somewhat higher if parents’ evaluation of financial status is taken into account

( $\rho = .10$ ). There is a certain level of agreement between children's and parents' evaluations of their financial situation, but it is far from perfect ( $\rho = .28$ ).

**Difficulties.** Students were asked if they had any of the following difficulties: chronic illnesses, disabilities, sensory impairments, mobility, speech, or learning difficulties. Most (80%) students indicated that they did not have any of these difficulties, while another 3% did not select any of the listed difficulties. The most common were learning difficulties (8%), sensory impairments (6%), chronic illnesses (3%), and disabilities and/or movement difficulties (0.6%). **Fifteen per cent of them reported having one difficulty, and 2.4% reported two or more difficulties. Difficulties are reported in equal numbers by both younger and older students, as well as by boys and girls.** Bearing in mind that the responses of children and their parents are not entirely comparable, as the list of difficulties presented to each group differed (parents were also asked whether their child might have psychological or behavioural problems, to which only 8 and 12 parents, respectively, out of 900 responded affirmatively), it can be concluded that **21% of students and 15% of their parents reported that their child has some form of difficulty.**

In the matched sample, there is some discrepancy in reporting difficulties between children and parents. **Among the students who reported having a difficulty, 61% of their parents said that the child does not have any difficulties, while among the students who deny having any difficulties, 8% of their parents said that the child has a difficulty** (perhaps such difficulties were not on the child's list). While 32 students report having a chronic illness, 24 of their parents deny it; on the other hand, while 13 parents say their child has a chronic illness, five of those children deny it. Six parents reported that their child has a disability, but none of the children did. Of the 64 children who report having sensory impairments, 29 of their parents deny it; and among the children who say they do not have sensory impairments, 4% are reported by their parents to have them. Learning difficulties are reported by 64 students, yet for 44 of them, their parents do not report such difficulties. Furthermore, 4% of parents of children who report not having learning difficulties say that their child does experience such difficulties.

**Parenting style.** In the questionnaire, students evaluated which parenting style best describes their parents/legal guardians with whom they live (more details can be found in the questionnaire in Appendix 1). **According to the children's responses (Table 18), their parents, both fathers and mothers, most often use an authoritative parenting style.** Most children (58%) state that both parents provide them with love, support and understanding, but also set clear rules. They are somewhat more likely to describe their mother this way than their father (78% compared to 70%, excluding children with one parent). The second most common style was the permissive style, equally present in both fathers and mothers. This style involves providing support and understanding and not setting any boundaries or rules of behaviour. One in ten children report that both of their parents are permissive. The authoritarian style, which consists of setting strict rules and punishing disobedience, is equally rarely used among fathers and mothers. The most rarely used is the uninvolved style, where the parent has no time for

the child, and is uninterested in their needs and feelings (4% of children state that one or both parents use this parenting style); almost no one reports that their mother neglects them.

Table 18: Parenting styles

		Father					Total
		authoritative	authoritarian	permissive	uninvolved	I can't say	
Mother	authoritative	58%	2%	9%	2%	4%	75%
	authoritarian	1.2%	1%	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	3%
	permissive	4%	1%	10%	1%	1.5%	17%
	uninvolved	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.7%
	I can't say	1%	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%	3%	5%
Total		64%	4%	20%	4%	9%	100%

No differences were observed between girls and boys in their descriptions of parenting styles of either fathers or mothers, between younger and older children, between children from rural and urban schools, nor between only children and those who have siblings.

**There is agreement between the descriptions of parenting styles provided by children and their parents.** If we take a look at the paired questionnaires, it is clear that, while 94% of fathers said they use an authoritative style, 3% a permissive style, and 2% an authoritarian style, 76% of their children said their father applied an authoritative style, 15% a permissive style, 4% an authoritarian style, and 1% an uninvolved style (the descriptions matched in 77% of cases). On the other hand, 96% of mothers described their parenting style as authoritative, 3% as permissive, and 1% as authoritarian, while 76% of their children described their mother's parenting style as authoritative, 16% as permissive, 3% as authoritarian, and 1% as neglectful. There was agreement between descriptions in 76% of the cases.

## 6.4. PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS

**Social integration into school.** Students' social integration into the school environment was calculated as an index based on nine indicators: the number of friends and ratings of the school atmosphere across eight indicators.

**The vast majority of students are well integrated into their peer group at school and positively rate the school atmosphere.** Ninety-four per cent of them have two or more good friends at school, and almost no student feels lonely at school. The vast majority say that they feel a sense of belonging at school, that they feel safe at school, that teachers respect them as individuals, that other students are kind and willing to help them, and that their class is harmonious. Still, despite positively rating the school atmosphere, only two fifths of students said that they like going to school. This number decreases dramatically with the length of schooling: while 58% of 5th grade students say they enjoy going to school, among 3rd grade secondary school students, this percentage

is more than halved (24%). There is a small percentage of those with negative experiences: Eight per cent disagree that teachers are friendly towards them, 7% that their class is harmonious, 4% that teachers respect them as individuals, and 4% that other students are kind and willing to help them. One per cent of them report not having any good friends at school, and 4% say they only have one. **Almost one quarter (24%) state they don't like going to school but, as other responses show, this is not due to problems in their peer group.** It is worth noting that parents do not perceive that their children dislike going to school, or at least they do not report it. A comparison of child and parent responses on paired questionnaires shows that **two thirds (67%) of parents whose children state that they do not like going to school say that their child likes going to school.**

Analysis of parents' responses in paired questionnaires also shows that integration into the school community is more pronounced in children whose parents attend parent-teacher conferences more regularly ( $\rho = .11$ ) and whose parents are more satisfied with school teachers ( $\rho = .16$ ), form teachers ( $\rho = .12$ ), and professional associates at school ( $\rho = .10$ ).

Chart 101: Evaluation of the number of good friends at school (%)

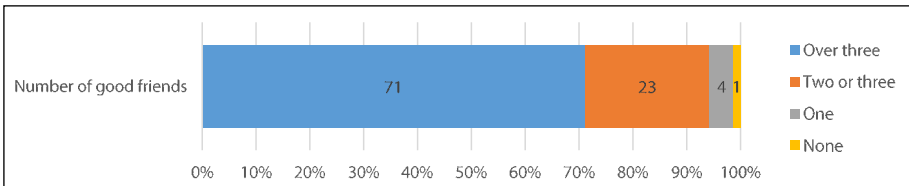
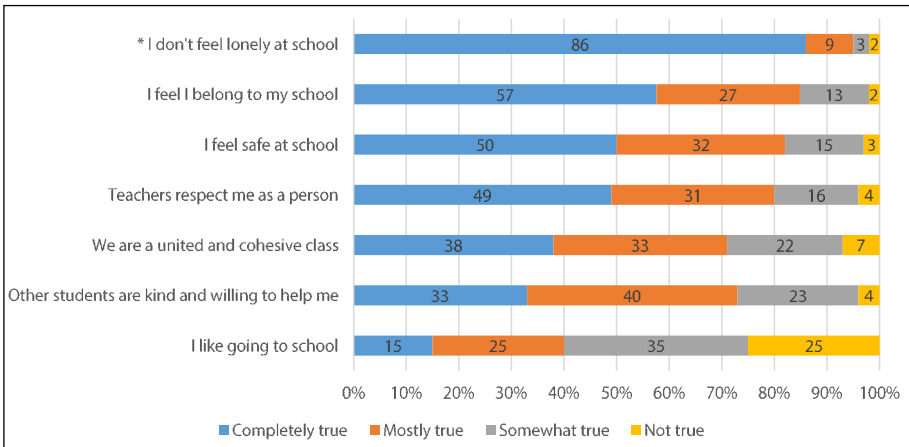


Chart 102: Students' attitude towards school (%)



Note: The statement in the questionnaire had an inverse meaning and read "I feel lonely at school". These are the recoded values (2% selected "completely true" for feeling lonely at school, etc.).

Social integration into the school community was more pronounced among younger students ( $\rho = -.31$ ), those with better scholastic performance ( $\rho = .18$ ),

those with no developmental or learning difficulties ( $\rho = -.19$ ), and among children from rural schools ( $\rho = -.15$ ). It was not correlated with sex or school size.

One of the indicators of the attitude towards school and integration into the school community is participation in activities organised by the school, such as workshops, and visits to the museum and theatre. When asked whether they participated in activities organised by the school, 64% of students responded affirmatively, 22% negatively, and 13% said the school has not organised such activities. If we exclude from the analysis children who stated that such activities were not organised, younger students ( $\rho = -.22$ ) and students with better scholastic performance ( $\rho = .14$ ) were more likely to participate in such activities. Participation was positively correlated with integration into the school community ( $\rho = -.14$ ), and was not correlated with sex, urbanity, and school size.

A special type of school activities for students are activities aimed at preventing violence. Nearly one quarter (24%) of students stated that such activities were not organised in their school, 29% said they did not participate in such activities, while 31% reported participating occasionally, and 16% often. It is hard to say whether or not the school actually organised such activities, since students' reports are not consistent. Only in one third of schools (36%) more than 80% of students (taking this percentage as a benchmark for consensus) agree on whether such activities are organised or not. We can safely say that such activities, if organised, are not sufficiently visible and do not involve a large number of students. If we exclude children who say that their school does not organise such activities, younger students ( $\rho = -.23$ ) and students from rural areas ( $\rho = -.17$ ) participate in these activities more often. Participation was correlated with integration into the school community ( $\rho = -.15$ ), and was not correlated with school size or sex.

One form of unsuccessful social integration may be the need for a child to **transfer schools** due to problems experienced within the school community. Only 4% of children said that they had already transferred schools due to certain disciplinary problems. However, the question is how reliable this data is, because in paired questionnaires, there are differences in responses of children and their parents. While 22 students reported having transferred schools due to certain disciplinary problems, 11 of their parents said they had not transferred schools. No parents said that the child transferred schools as a result of an educational and disciplinary measure.

**Sense of security.** Students may perceive the school they attend as a safe place, to a greater or lesser extent. Children's sense of security at school was calculated as an index based on their responses to six questions: whether there is a group of students at school who display violence and bully others; whether there are students in their class they are afraid of; whether anyone has brought a knife or similar dangerous objects to school; whether they themselves have brought such objects; whether anyone offers drugs to students at school or in its vicinity; and whether they feel safe at school (the statement "I feel safe at school" is also included in the score of integration into the school community).

**The vast majority of children perceive school as a safe place, but there is a significant number of children who view some aspects of school as unsafe.** Twenty-two per cent of them said that there is one or more groups of students in their school who display violent behaviour and bully other students (regardless of school

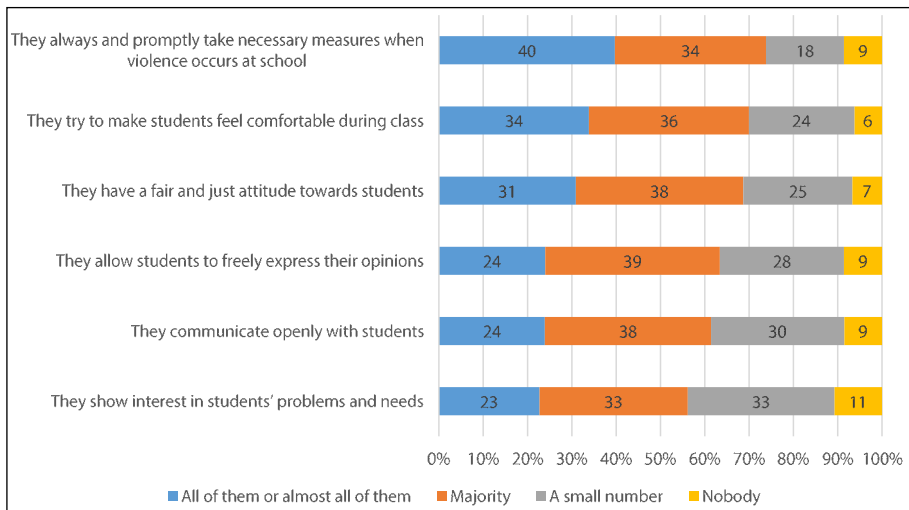
urbanity and size), more often in primary (27%) than in secondary schools (16%). Furthermore, 17% of students have heard or seen someone bring a knife, weapon, or similar objects to school that could be used in a fight (more in urban than rural schools, 18% compared to 12%; equally in small and large schools, and in both primary and secondary schools). Seventeen per cent of them have heard someone offering drugs to others at school or in its vicinity (more in urban than rural schools, 14% compared to 8%; and more in secondary than primary schools, 18% compared to 8%). Only 1% of students (17 of them) stated that they themselves had brought dangerous objects to school. Six per cent of them report that there are students in their class who they are afraid of, while 15% deny feeling safe at school.

A sense of security is correlated with integration into the school community ( $\rho = .30$ , excluding the common statement “I feel safe at school”), more pronounced in children who do not have developmental or learning difficulties ( $\rho = -.14$ ), and also more pronounced in rural schools ( $\rho = .12$ ) and small schools ( $\rho = -.10$ ). It was not correlated with age, sex, and scholastic performance, nor with participation in school-organised activities, either extracurricular activities or those related to violence prevention.

### 6.5. Perceived attitude of teachers towards students

Students evaluated how teachers at their school generally treat students (Chart 103). Most students believe teachers (most of them, but not all!) have a fair and just attitude towards students, that they care about them and undertake the required measures regarding school violence. They are less often described as openly communicating with students, showing interest in their problems and needs, and allowing them to freely express their opinions. This is the majority opinion of students, but it should be noted that a significant portion of children believe that only a small number of their teachers display such a positive attitude towards students, while **one in ten students are very dissatisfied with teachers’ attitude, claiming that no teacher possesses such qualities.**

Chart 103: Perceived attitude of teachers towards students (%)



From this group of questions, a common score for teachers' attitude towards students was derived. The older the students, the less positive their evaluations of teachers' attitude toward students are ( $\rho = -.24$ ). Students who perceived teachers' attitude towards students as more positive were better integrated into the school community ( $\rho = .51$ ), had a greater sense of security at school ( $\rho = .31$ ), and participated more often in school-organised activities ( $\rho = .12$ ). Higher achieving students provided more positive evaluations ( $\rho = .13$ ). No difference was observed in the evaluations of boys and girls.

Analysis based on paired questionnaires shows that children's evaluations are similar to their parents'. Parents of children who were more dissatisfied with teachers' attitude toward students were also more dissatisfied with the attitude of school teachers towards their child ( $\rho = .21$ ) and the child's attitude towards school obligations ( $\rho = .20$ ). These parents were more dissatisfied with their relationships with school teachers ( $\rho = .14$ ) and were more likely to believe that teachers are sometimes harsh and offensive to their child ( $\rho = .22$ ), that teachers lack understanding for their child's problems ( $\rho = -.17$ ), gave them biased grades ( $\rho = -.21$ ), and that they have excessively high expectations ( $\rho = -.20$ ).

**Values, attitudes and competencies.** A group of 10 statements concerned various attitudes and values – valuing human dignity and respect for rights, appreciation of cultural diversity, democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law, responsibility, self-efficacy, empathy (three statements), co-operation, and constructive conflict resolution (Table 19). The statements were divided into two groups; one referred to general attitudes and values that share a respect for others, and was called **prosocial values and attitudes**. The second group of statements was more personalised, focusing on the respondent's own behaviour in communication with others, and was therefore called **communication competence**.

All individual statements concerning attitudes and values were strongly supported (Table 19). There were 80–90% of students who agreed with the statements (except for the statement "When I plan something, I usually manage to achieve it", with which 70% of students agreed). Meanwhile, 3–8% of students disagreed.

Prosocial values and communication competence were somewhat more pronounced in girls ( $\rho = .11$  and  $\rho = .10$ ) and higher-achieving students ( $\rho = .14$  and  $\rho = .13$ ). They were positively correlated with integration into the school community ( $\rho = .33$  and  $\rho = .39$ ), more positive perceptions of teachers' attitude towards students ( $\rho = .26$  and  $\rho = .33$ ), sense of security ( $\rho = .14$  and  $\rho = .11$ ), participation in activities organised by the school ( $\rho = .11$  and  $\rho = .11$ ), and activities aimed at preventing violence ( $\rho = .11$  and  $\rho = .15$ ). The attitudes were not correlated with age or emotional problems, but communication competence was more pronounced in younger students ( $\rho = -.12$ ) and negatively correlated with emotional problems ( $\rho = -.12$ ).

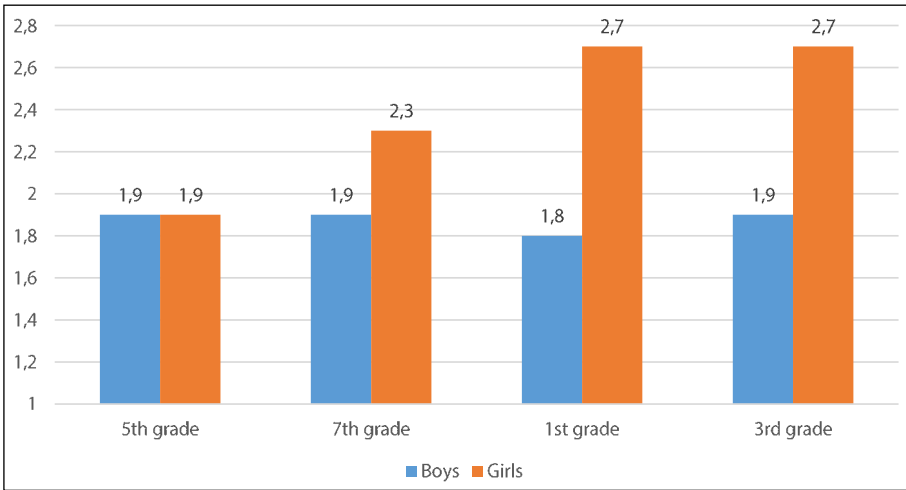
Table 19: Agreement with statements measuring prosocial attitudes and communication competence

		I completely disagree	I disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I agree	I completely agree
Prosocial values and attitudes	1. All children have rights that must be respected.	2%	2%	7%	30%	60%
	2. We should always try to understand people who are different from us.	.5%	1%	4%	28%	67%
	3. Laws should apply to everyone.	1%	1%	5%	18%	75%
	10. Every argument is best resolved through conversation.	2%	4%	11%	28%	55%
Communication competence	4. When I hurt someone's feelings, I always apologise.	2%	2%	10%	31%	56%
	5. When I plan something, I usually manage to achieve it.	2%	4%	24%	41%	29%
	6. I can easily notice when my friend needs help.	1%	2%	12%	40%	45%
	7. I try to be considerate of other people's feelings.	1%	2%	9%	40%	48%
	8. I try to help someone who is hurt, upset, or feeling sick.	1%	1%	6%	34%	58%
	9. When I do something with others, I always do my part of the work.	2%	2%	7%	36%	53%

**Emotional difficulties. Emotional difficulties are widespread among students** (Chart 104). They are not exclusively associated with school life, but they certainly are to some extent, and they definitely influence behaviour at school and their relationships with peers and employees. Over one third of students reported worrying a lot (36%), one in four said they feel nervous in new situations and easily lose self-confidence, and that they often suffer from headaches, stomach aches, and nausea, while one in five said they found it difficult to relax, that their palms often sweat and their heart rate is fast. **Only 28% of students reported not having any of these problems, and 24% of students reported having three or more of these emotional difficulties, each of which was severe.**

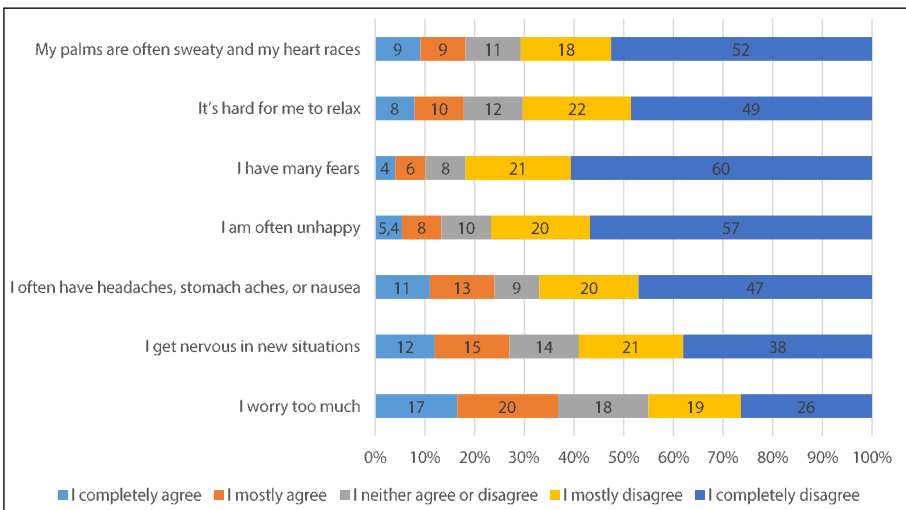
Based on seven indicators (Chart 105), an index of emotional difficulties was calculated. Emotional difficulties measured by this index were more prevalent in older students ( $\rho = .20$ ) and girls ( $\rho = .29$ ). While the prevalence of emotional difficulties in boys is approximately the same at all ages, in girls, it increases with age (Chart 104).

Chart 104: Correlations between emotional difficulties and sex and age (average values)



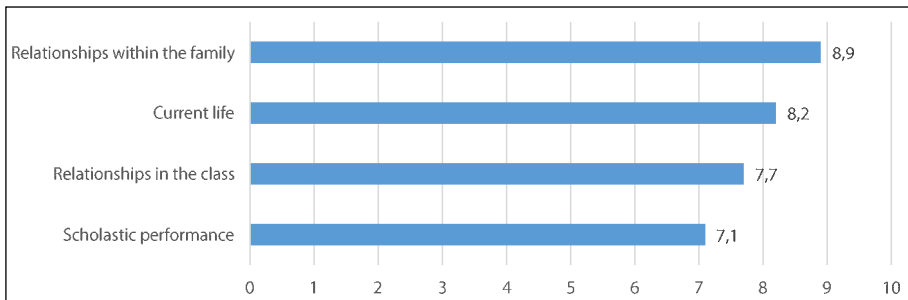
Emotional difficulties are more prevalent among children with certain developmental or learning difficulties ( $\rho = .26$ ), children who are less integrated into the school community ( $\rho = .35$ ), those who perceive the school environment as unsafe ( $\rho = .22$ ) and teachers' attitudes towards students as bad ( $\rho = .24$ ), as well as among those from urban schools ( $\rho = .16$ ). They were least prevalent among children whose both parents used an authoritative parenting style ( $M = 2.02$  on a 1 to 5 scale) and most prevalent among children whose one parent was uninvolved ( $M = 3$ ), more so than in cases where parents were strict. Emotional difficulties were not correlated with scholastic performance, nor with involvement in school and extracurricular activities.

Chart 105: Prevalence of emotional difficulties in students (%)



**Sense of satisfaction.** Feeling of satisfaction is related to the absence of emotional difficulties and strongly correlates with it ( $\rho = .48$ ); it was nevertheless calculated as a separate measure, based on the level of satisfaction with current life, scholastic performance, family relationships, and peer relationships in the class, rated on scales from 0 to 10. **On average, students expressed great satisfaction with these aspects of their lives** (Chart 106). Seventy-five per cent of students rated their satisfaction with family relationships with the highest scores (9 and 10), followed by 55% for satisfaction with their current life, 49% for relationships within the class, and 37% for their scholastic performance. It should be noted that satisfaction with their current life was rated from 0 to 4 by 25% of students, family relationships by 37% of students, and relationships in the class by 36% of students.

Chart 106: Students' satisfaction with various aspects of life (average ratings)

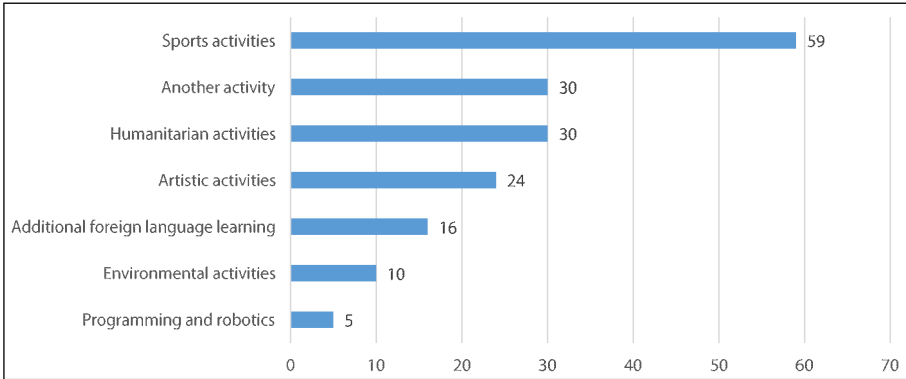


A greater sense of satisfaction was expressed by younger students ( $\rho = -.34$ ), girls ( $\rho = .11$ ), students with better grades ( $\rho = .24$ ), students with no developmental or learning difficulties ( $\rho = .22$ ), students from rural schools ( $\rho = .16$ ), those with better financial situation ( $\rho = .27$ ), with better social integration into the community ( $\rho = .64$ ), with more pronounced prosocial attitudes ( $\rho = .29$ ), higher communication competence ( $\rho = .41$ ), greater sense of security ( $\rho = .26$ ), and a more positive perception of teachers' attitudes toward students ( $\rho = .39$ ).

Satisfaction with family relationships was correlated with the parenting style. The most satisfied children were the ones who evaluated their parents' style as authoritative (on a 0 to 10 scale: 9.1 for those whose mothers use an authoritative style and 9.3 for those whose fathers use an authoritative style), followed by the permissive and authoritarian styles and, finally, the least satisfied were children whose parents use an uninvolved style (5.9 for children whose fathers have a neglectful style and 3.8 for children whose mothers use an uninvolved parenting style).

**Participation in extracurricular activities.** Students were asked whether they participated in various school or out-of-school activities, and they were able to select multiple answers. Only 7% did not select any activity from the list. **Most of (59%) students are involved in sports activities, 22% of them only in sports activities** (Chart 107).

Chart 107: Students' involvement in school and extracurricular activities (%)



No significant differences were observed in the types of involvement across ages, except for sports, where involvement decreases with age: involved in sports activities are two thirds of primary school students, 56% of 1st grade secondary school students, and 43% of 3rd grade students.

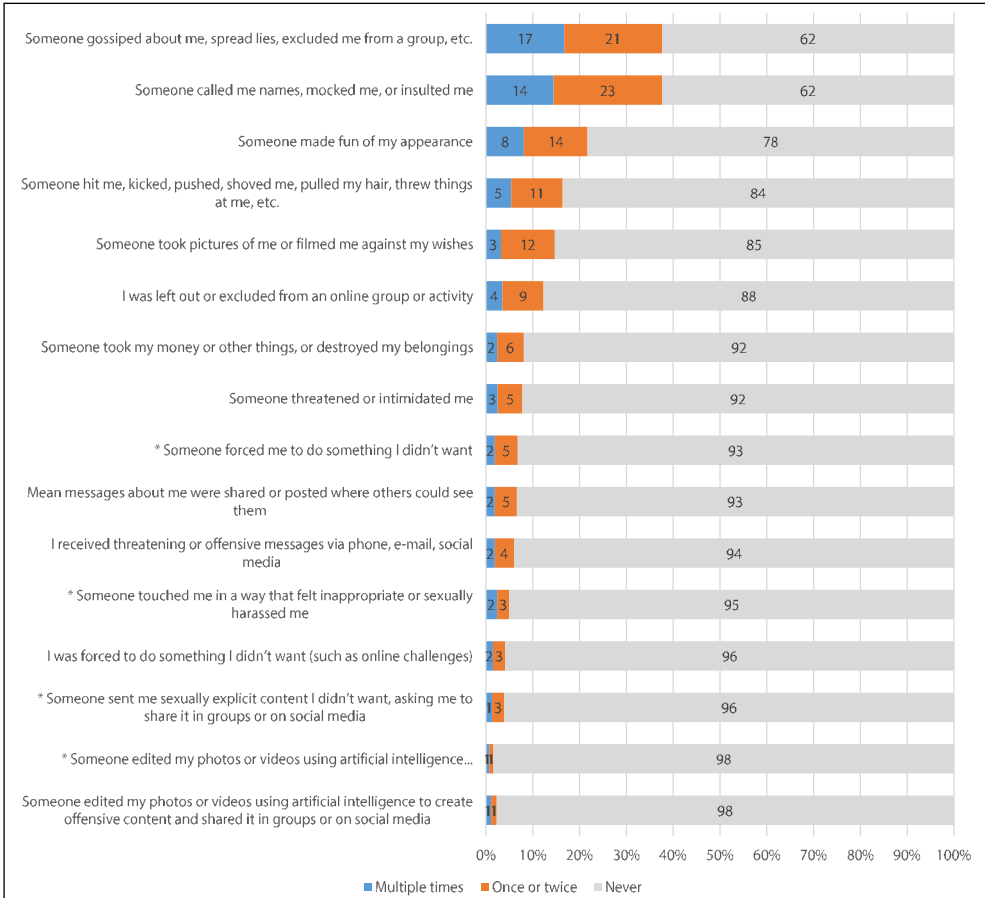
Children from rural schools are more likely to be involved in sports activities (69% compared to 56%,  $V = .12$ ); there are no other differences. No difference was found between big and small schools. Boys are more likely to be involved in sports activities (70% compared to 50%,  $V = .21$ ); while girls are more likely to be involved in artistic activities (32% compared to 15%,  $V = .20$ ). More successful students were more likely to be involved in sports activities ( $V = .10$ ), artistic activities ( $V = .18$ ), humanitarian activities ( $V = .17$ ), and foreign languages ( $V = .15$ ). Students involved in sports activities showed better integration into the school community ( $\rho = .14$ ), fewer emotional difficulties ( $\rho = -.17$ ), and greater satisfaction ( $\rho = .15$ ). Involvement in any type of activity was not correlated with either exposure to violence or perpetration of violence.

## 6.5. EXPOSURE TO PEER VIOLENCE AND ITS CORRELATES

Students' exposure to peer violence was measured in several ways. Firstly, students were presented with different types of offline and online violence and asked how often any of them had occurred since the beginning of the school year. Seventh grade primary school students and secondary school students were given a list of eight forms of offline and eight forms of online violence, while 5th grade primary school students were presented a list of 12 forms of violence (omitted forms are marked with an asterisk in the chart and the table). Based on the responses, the following were calculated: the presence of victimisation (as a dichotomous variable – whether the student experienced at least one form of victimisation or not) and the frequency of victimisation (the number of forms multiplied by their frequency). These two measures are very strongly correlated ( $\rho = .88$ ).

The most frequent forms of verbal violence are gossiping and insulting someone (Chart 108). **Nearly every other student reported having experienced at least one form of verbal violence (insults, threats, mockery, online threats), 40% experienced offline or online social exclusion (gossiping, being left out of social media), while 16% experienced physical violence.**

Chart 108: Exposure to individual forms of violence (%)

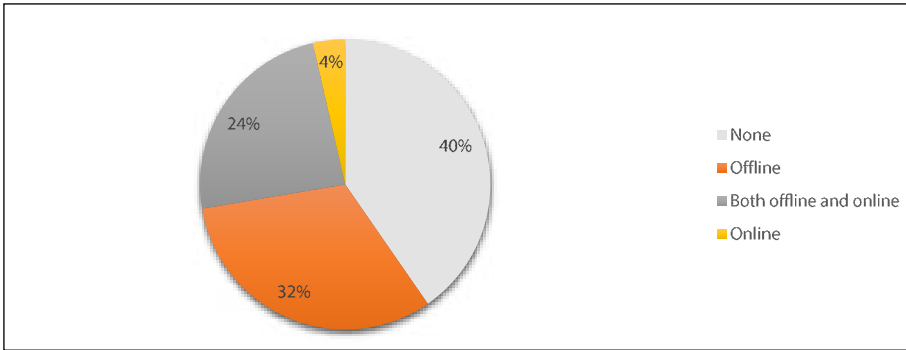


Note: The forms marked with an asterisk were not on the list presented to the youngest group of students. The statements were taken from the questionnaire for boys.

Sixty per cent of them reported having experienced at least one form of violence in the past three months. Fifty-six per cent of them experienced offline violence, and 28% experienced online violence, while 24% experienced both.

The correlation between the prevalence of offline and online victimisation is positive and relatively high ( $\rho = .51$ ) – the more a student experienced violence online, the more they experienced it offline and vice versa. The prevalence of offline and online victimisation is shown in Chart 109.

Chart 109: Types of victimisation (%)

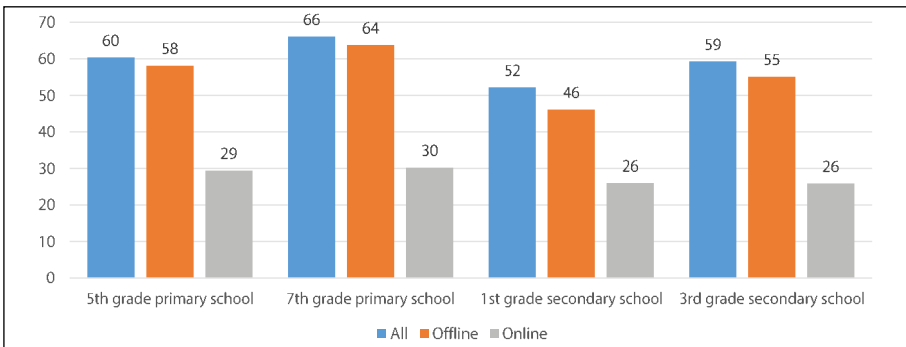


### Correlation between forms of victimisation and sociodemographic characteristics

When it comes to **sex** differences, no difference was observed between boys and girls in the prevalence and intensity of victimisation, either offline or online. The finding that peer violence affects boys and girls equally has been observed in previous studies, both domestic and international (Cosma, Molcho & Pickett, 2024; Marković, 2020; Popadić, Plut & Pavlović, 2014; UNESCO, 2019; Čaprić & Vide-nović, 2024). There are differences in some individual forms of victimisation. Boys were more often exposed to insults, beatings, and threats, while girls were more often exposed to gossiping. Of those complaining about insults, 43% were boys and 34% were girls, while 22% of boys and 12% of girls complain about beatings. Even sexual harassment is reported slightly more by boys (7%) than by girls (3%). When it comes to the prevalence to various forms of online violence, there were no sex differences.

Certain **age differences** were observed. The prevalence of victimisation was lower in secondary school-aged children than in primary school-aged children ( $\rho = -.16$ ), in particular, offline ( $\rho = -.18$ ), but not online. The decline in violence with age was also observed in our previous study (Popadić, Plut & Pavlović, 2014). Although new classes are formed in the 5th grade of primary school

Chart 110: Student victimisation and their age (%)



and the 1st grade of secondary school, victimisation is not greater in these grades; it is actually slightly lower than victimisation in the 7th grade of primary school and the 3rd grade of secondary school. Children at younger ages were more frequently exposed to insults, hitting, thefts, threats, coercion, and online coercion.

Students from rural schools were more likely to complain about physical violence (23% compared to 14%,  $V = .103$ ).

The frequency of victimisation, both online and offline, was not correlated with school size or urbanity. It was also not correlated with **scholastic performance**, although a positive correlation might have been expected, either because lower-achieving students may become easier targets for attack due to their lower status, or because victimised students, as a consequence of victimisation, may perform worse in school.

### Correlation with psychological characteristics

With regard to psychological variables, there was a high correlation with the frequency of victimisation, both offline and online (Table 20).

Table 20: Correlations of the level of victimisation and psychological characteristics

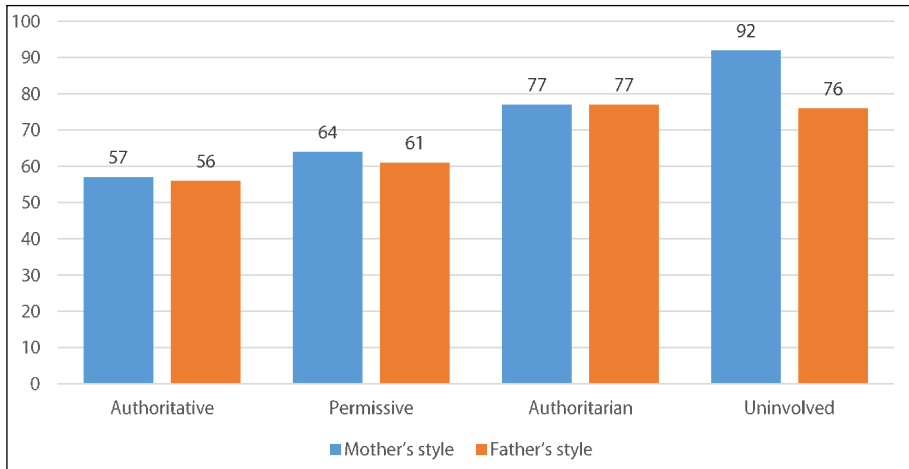
	Integration into the school community	Teachers' attitude towards students	Sense of security	Emotional difficulties	Satisfaction	Prosocial attitudes	Communication competence	Development and learning difficulties
Frequency of offline victimisation	-.30**	-.19**	-.41**	-.30**	-.30**	-.13**	-.11**	.18**
Frequency of online victimisation	-.24**	-.18**	-.30**	-.27**	-.27**	-.14**	-.14**	.15**
Frequency of victimisation	-.31**	-.21**	-.42**	-.32**	-.32**	-.15**	-.14**	.19**

Students who experienced higher levels of victimisation reported significantly more emotional difficulties, weaker integration into the school community, more negative attitudes towards school, a greater sense of insecurity, lower life satisfaction, and a more negative perception of teachers' attitude towards students. Students with developmental or learning disabilities were more exposed to violence (74% compared to 56%,  $V = .15$ ). Lower levels of victimisation were observed among students who demonstrated prosocial attitudes and communication competence. Victimisation was not correlated with participation in school and out-of-school activities, or with participation in programmes aimed at preventing violence.

Since this is a correlational research, we cannot speak with certainty about causal relationships. However, if the above measures are at least partially a consequence of victimisation, this suggests that victimisation has serious psychological and social effects on children. When considered from the opposite causal direction, it could be said that the psychological characteristics mentioned represent important protective factors. Children with better communication skills and who are better accepted in their environment are at lower risk of being exposed to peer violence.

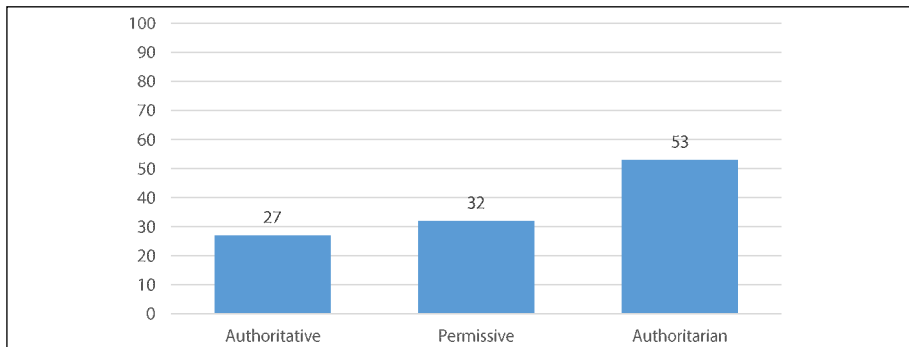
There was a correlation between victimisation and parenting style. A higher percentage of victimised students was observed among children whose parents used authoritarian or uninvolved parenting styles (Chart 111).

Chart 111: Student victimisation and parenting styles (%)



The same correlation was present when comparing student victimisation with parenting styles as described by the parents themselves in the parent questionnaire. The fewest cases of victimisation were observed among children whose parents employed an authoritative parenting style, and the most among children whose parents used an authoritarian style (no parents described their parenting style as uninvolved) (Chart 112).

Chart 112: Victimization by parenting style (%)



Regarding the correlation of victimisation with other variables from the parent questionnaire, it was correlated with parents' dissatisfaction with the child's grades ( $\rho = .15$ ), dissatisfaction with the child's relationship with other children ( $\rho = .20$ ), teachers' attitude towards the child ( $\rho = .14$ ), and the child's attitude towards school obligations ( $\rho = .16$ ). Victimisation was not correlated with family incompleteness, parents' education, parents' parenting goals, financial situation, attendance at parent-teacher conferences, satisfaction with the relationship with the form teacher, teachers, and professional associates, or with the extent to which the child, according to parents, shares their feelings and problems with them.

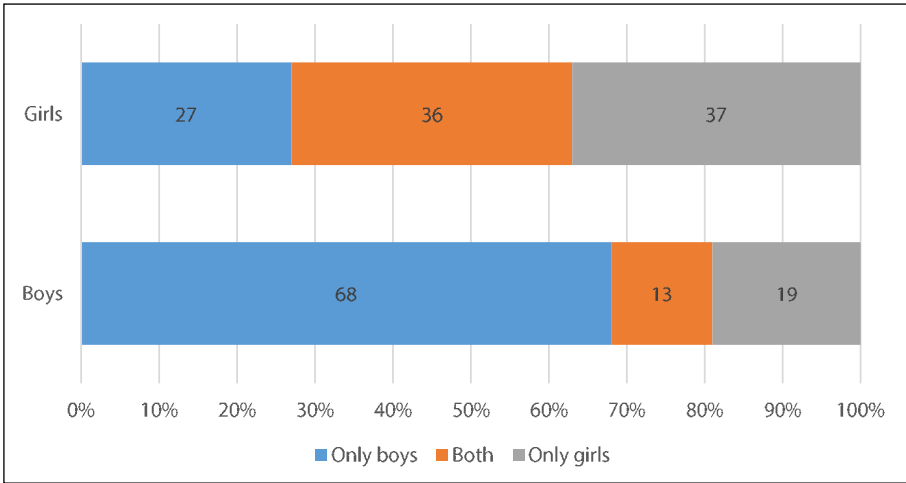
## 6.6. CIRCUMSTANCES OF VIOLENT INTERACTIONS

When students were asked about the circumstances of violent interactions (where the violence occurred, the age of those who acted violently, how many of them there were, etc.), our intention was that these questions should not be answered by students who had previously indicated that they had not experienced any of the listed forms of victimisation. However, since some students avoided stating whether they had experienced certain forms of violence, there was a theoretical possibility that these students, although they indicated they had not experienced any of the other listed forms of violence, may, in fact, have experienced the unchecked forms of violence. That's why they were also asked about the details of violent interactions, but because of them (to prevent those who had not experienced violence from having to respond about the circumstances of violence), a response option "No one has been violent towards me" was included. Surprisingly, about three quarters (between 72% and 76%, depending on the question) of those who indicated they had experienced at least one of the listed forms of violence now reported that no one had been violent towards them! This is why the five questions about the circumstances of violent incidents were answered, depending on the question, between 285 and 330 respondents, or between 15% and 17% of the total student sample.

What could be the cause of this drastic attrition and, some might contend, illogical responses? We believe the reason for this is that these questions do not refer to individual acts that we defined as violence (such as pushing, insulting, and gossiping), but rather use the term *violence* and ask students whether anyone had been *violent towards them*. It is clear that such a qualification of what happens among them (pushing, hitting, gossiping) is unusual and inappropriate from their perspective. It is probably reserved only for some drastic forms of violence. It is possible that children do not see this question as a continuation of the previous questions about forms of violence, but rather as opening a new topic – no longer about their hitting, gossiping, and similar behaviour, but a significantly more serious topic – violence against them. It is irrelevant that, as an introduction to the questions concerning specific forms of violence, it was stated that "when we say 'violence', we refer to all instances in which an individual deliberately subjects another to various unpleasant experiences or intends to harm or humiliate them through their actions or words. Friendly teasing and arguments, or accidental, unintentional harm and injury, are not considered violence".

Students were more frequently exposed to violence by children of the same sex than from those of the opposite sex – this likely reflects the way children group themselves within the school environment. Violence involving only children of the opposite sex was the least prevalent. While violence between boys typically occurs within the “male group”, girls’ violence is more distributed between sexes, placing them in a somewhat more complex position regarding the dynamics of violence (Chart 113).

Chart 113: Students’ evaluation of who was violent towards them (%)



Violence most often occurs within the same class (Chart 114). Furthermore, as reported by 54% of children, violence is most frequently perpetrated by children of the same age. Twenty-four per cent reported having been bullied by older children, 7% by younger children, and 15% by children of various ages.

Situations where a group of children bully one student seem to be rare, but violence is reported equally often as coming from a single individual or from a small group of two to three children (Chart 115).

Chart 114: Students’ evaluation of classes of violence perpetrators (%)

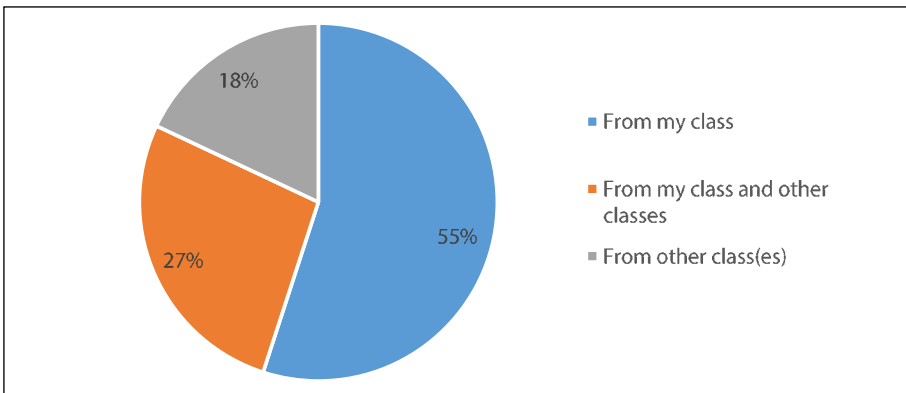
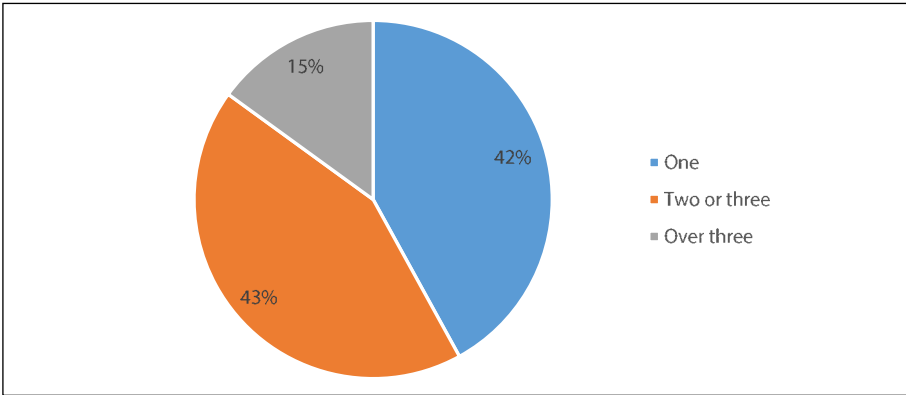
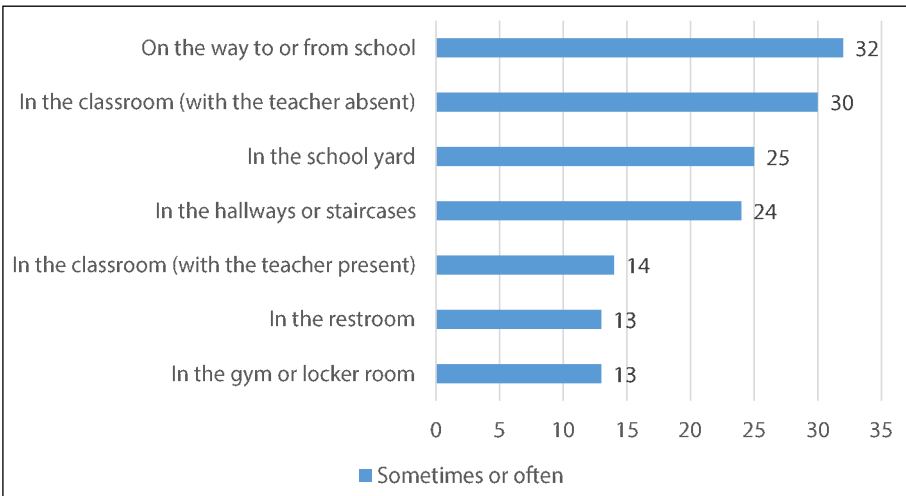


Chart 115: Students' evaluation of the number of students who were violent towards them (%)



Where are children exposed to violence? Students were presented with a list of seven locations, and they were able to select more than one (Chart 116). Since there was no alternative option “No one has been violent towards me” here, we will look at the responses of children who selected at least one location on the list (there were 565 such children). Seventy-four per cent of them selected only one location, 13% two locations, 13% several locations. Violence most frequently happens in situations when adult supervision is minimal – outside the school building or in the classroom when the teacher is absent. This also includes situations in which children are not involved in guided school-based activities.

Chart 116: Locations where violence occurred (%)



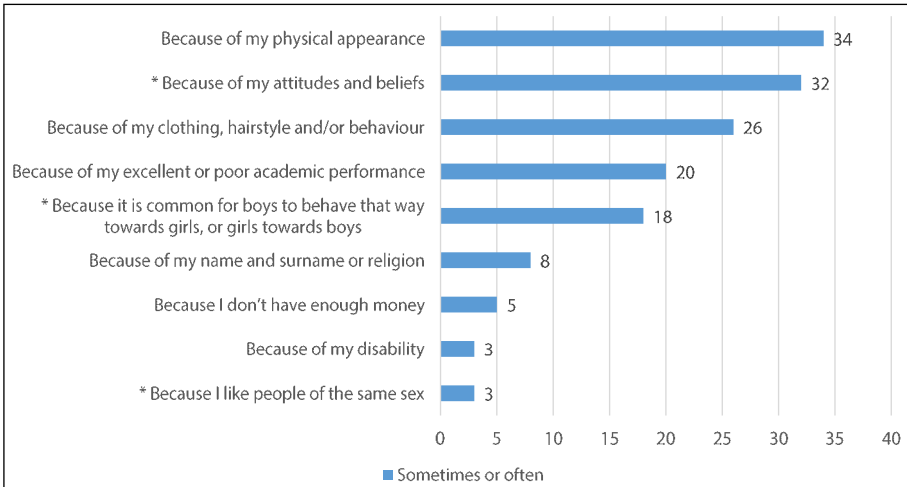
## 6.7. REASONS FOR VICTIMISATION

We asked the children what they thought were the reasons for being subjected to violence. They were presented with a list of nine possible reasons (Chart 117), and

for each of them, they were to indicate whether it was “never” a reason, “sometimes”, or “often”. Also available were the options “Maybe / I don’t know” and “No one has been violent towards me”. Although this question was also answered by students who had previously indicated that they had experienced at least one form of violence, there were also some who now indicated that no one had been violent towards them. The percentage of those who indicated that no one had been violent towards them ranged from 10% to 13%.

Among those who did not select the option “No one has been violent towards me”, the most frequently indicated possible reason for violence (“sometimes” or “often”) was physical appearance (girls were somewhat more likely to indicate it than boys, 36% compared to 31%), followed by attitudes and beliefs (more often reported by girls, 37% compared to 25%, and more often at older ages: Twenty-seven per cent among 7th grade students, 33% among 1st grade students of secondary schools, and 38% among 3rd grade students of secondary schools), clothing, and finally, grades. The reason “because it is common for children of the opposite sex to treat children of their sex this way” was selected more frequently by girls (21%) than boys (13%). Ethnicity or religion (“because of their name, surname, or religion”), poverty, disability, and same-sex attraction are the least frequently mentioned reasons. This does not necessarily mean that these characteristics are the least stigmatising for children, but rather that children with such characteristics are in the minority.

Chart 117: Perceived reasons for exposure to violence (%)



Note: The reasons marked with an asterisk were not on the list presented to the 5th grade students.

The above inconsistency of children’s responses can also be observed here. Among those who selected “disability” as a possible cause of violence against them, none had previously, when asked about difficulties, reported having any disabilities. Furthermore, among those who stated they were “sometimes” or “often” exposed to violence because they did not have enough money, half of them (53%) had previously rated their family financial situation as above average (with a score between 6 and 10).

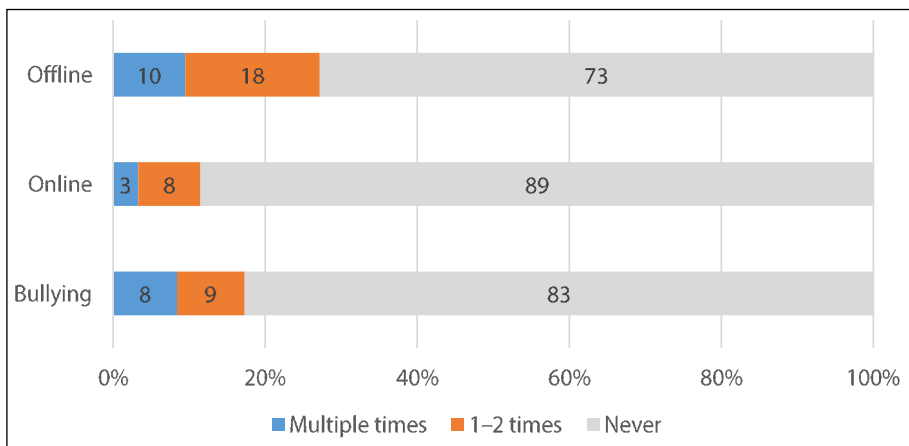
## 6.8. VICTIMISATION THROUGHOUT SCHOOLING

In order to see whether students have experienced victimisation at school, we also asked them whether they had been exposed to violence during their schooling to date, both in the current as well as previous grades (to reiterate, in the previously analysed questions, the time period which applied to the questions about experiencing violence was shorter, from the beginning of the current school year, that is, in the past three months). This percentage was expected to be higher than the percentage of those who experienced violence during the past three months, but in reality the opposite happened (Chart 118). While 1,117 students (60%) reported experiencing some form of violence since the beginning of the school year, only 636 (34%) reported having been exposed to verbal or physical peer violence throughout their schooling. Among those who stated they had not experienced violence in the last three months, 15% reported having experienced it at some point during their schooling. However, around half (53%) of those who had experienced peer violence during the past three months now stated that they had not experienced it during the course of their schooling.

One of the possible explanations is that some children understood that the phrase “being exposed to violence” referred to more extreme forms of violence, rather than those they reported having experienced since the start of schooling. Another possible explanation is that, when asked to reflect on their entire schooling to date, students only thought of more violent incidents, which are remembered even after that much time. It is also possible that some children, since they had just answered questions about the recent period, understood this question as an additional question about other incidents of violence they experienced outside of this period, in the past.

Twenty-eight per cent of them say that, in the course of their schooling, they have been exposed to verbal or physical violence by a student at least once, 12% report having been exposed to online peer violence, and 17% say that they have been exposed to bullying by the same student or group of students for a long

Chart 118: Exposure to violence throughout schooling to date (%)

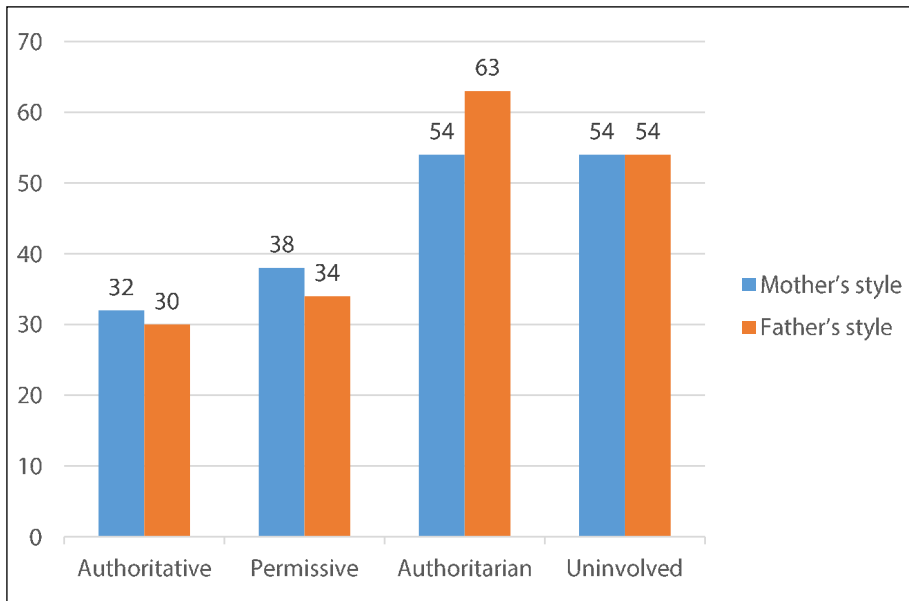


time. In total, 34% of students reported having experienced at least one of these three forms of peer violence throughout their schooling.

Children from urban schools were somewhat more likely to state they have been exposed to violence during schooling (37% from urban and 26% from rural schools,  $V = .10$ ). Students with at least one developmental or learning difficulty, compared to those without any difficulties, were more likely to complain about violence throughout schooling (51% compared to 30%,  $V = -.18$ ), particularly those with sensory, speech, or learning difficulties. Poorer children were also more likely to report this ( $\rho = -.15$ ). As was the case with victimisation during the past three months, victimisation throughout schooling was significantly correlated with all measured psychological variables: integration into the school community ( $\rho = -.25$ ), sense of insecurity ( $\rho = .30$ ), emotional difficulties ( $\rho = .27$ ), life satisfaction ( $\rho = -.30$ ), and communication competence ( $\rho = -.13$ ). No differences were found between sexes, school size, and prosocial attitudes. Children who were victimised more often throughout schooling were more frequently exposed to violence during the last three months as well ( $\rho = .44$ ), and were also more likely to exhibit violent behaviour ( $\rho = .27$ ).

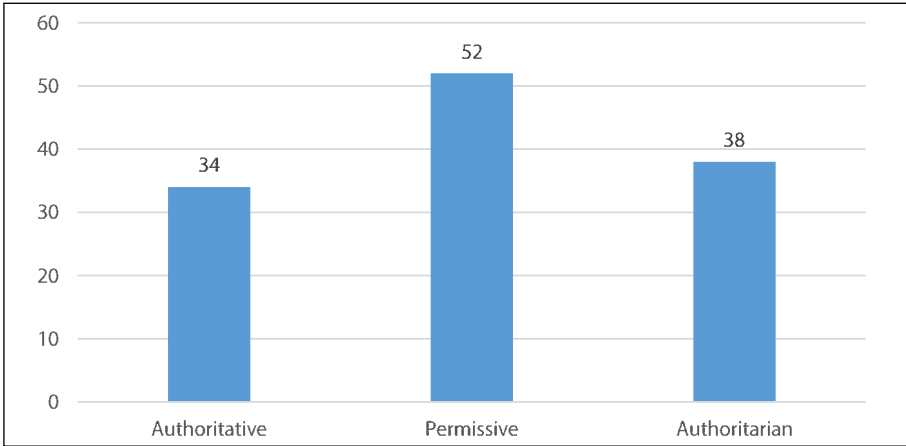
The highest percentage of victimised students was observed among children whose parents, according to the children's statements, used an authoritarian or uninvolved parenting styles (Chart 119). Having in mind parents' self-assessments, the highest number of victimised students were observed among children whose parents employed a permissive parenting style (no parents reported using an uninvolved parenting style) (Chart 120).

Chart 119: Victimization throughout schooling and parents' parenting style (according to children) (%)



Note: The numbers indicate the percentage of children who have experienced violence.

Chart 120: Victimization throughout schooling (%) and parents' parenting style (according to parents) (%)



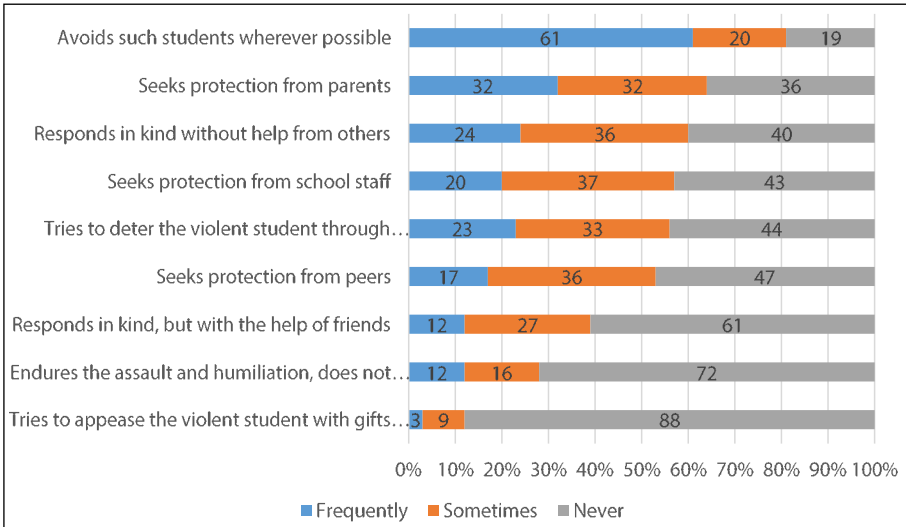
### Victimization throughout schooling and parenting styles

Parents' parenting goals were not associated with victimisation throughout schooling, except that children whose parents attributed greater importance to their children's obedience and respect towards parents were less likely to be victimised ( $\rho = -.12$ ). Children whose parents were less satisfied with their child's relationships with other children ( $\rho = -.13$ ) and with teachers' attitude towards their child ( $\rho = -.10$ ) were more likely to be victimised during the course of schooling.

### 6.9. RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE

We asked students who had experienced peer violence how they reacted to it. Children who reported having experienced at least one form of violence during the course of their *schooling* responded to this question. The number of these students was supposed to be greater than the number of students who had experienced some form of violence since the beginning of the school year. However, this reduced the number of those who had experienced violence and were expected to report on their reactions to it from 60% to 34%. In the questions about reactions to violence, there was an alternative option "No one has been violent towards me", which was selected by around one third of those who had just reported having experienced some form of violence! As a result, the number of children indicating whether they reacted frequently, occasionally, or never in the listed ways was reduced to around 530 students (28% of the sample). The reactions to peer violence of this group of students are presented in Chart 121.

Chart 121: Students' reactions when another student is violent towards them (%)



The most common strategy students apply when they are exposed to peer violence is avoidance. A slightly less used strategy, reported by 72% of students, is seeking protection from adults, parents, or school employees. Almost two thirds of students (62%) try to retaliate to the bully, on their own or with the help of friends. This strategy likely increases the risk of violence escalation. However, nearly one in three students tends to respond with passive endurance and adapting to the violent student.

As shown in Table 21, sociodemographic and psychological variables are correlated with how children respond to violence, although the correlations are neither strong nor consistent. Girls are more likely to seek protection from their parents, but not from school employees or peers, and are also less likely to retaliate and less likely to talk to the student perpetrating violence or try to appease them. Older students are less likely to seek protection from parents or employees, and more likely to retaliate and avoid the violence perpetrator. Children who are better integrated and have more pronounced prosocial attitudes and communication competence are more likely to seek protection from parents and adults, and less likely to retaliate against violence. Children who more positively perceived teachers' attitudes were more willing to seek help from employees when exposed to violence. The more frequently a child is victimised, the more likely they are to endure violence and try to appease or talk to the violence perpetrator, while they seek protection from parents, employees, and peers just as often as other children. Children who have perpetrated violence are less likely to seek protection from their parents or to avoid violence perpetrators, but are significantly more inclined to engage in direct confrontation – retaliating themselves or with the help of friends.

Table 21: Correlations between the ways of responding to violence and the sociodemographic and psychological characteristics of students

	Seeks protection from parents	Seeks protection from employees	Seeks protection from peers	Endures violence	Retaliates on their own	Retaliates with friends	Talks	Favours	Avoids
Sex	<b>.13**</b>	.01	.05	-.08	<b>-.10*</b>	-.08	<b>-.09*</b>	<b>-.10*</b>	<b>.12**</b>
Age	<b>-.11**</b>	<b>-.22**</b>	.06	-.01	<b>.11*</b>	.06	.03	<b>-.10*</b>	<b>.11**</b>
Socio-economic status	<b>.13**</b>	.04	-.01	<b>-.15</b>	-.00	.04	-.05	-.02	.02
Scholastic performance	<b>.13**</b>	.05	.07	.07	-.08	-.01	<b>.11</b>	-.08	<b>.10*</b>
Urban school	.06	-.08	-.01	.03	.04	-.01	.04	<b>-.14</b>	.07
Big school	.04	.01	-.05	.06	.04	-.01	.003	<b>-.14</b>	-.01
Attitude towards school	<b>.21**</b>	<b>.16**</b>	.07	-.05	-.08	.05	.09	.02	.04
Emotional difficulties	-.02	-.03	<b>.12</b>	<b>.21</b>	<b>-.13**</b>	-.08	.03	.03	<b>.12**</b>
Prosocial values	<b>.25**</b>	<b>.19**</b>	.01	-.01	<b>-.27**</b>	<b>-.18**</b>	<b>.16**</b>	.07	<b>.16**</b>
Communication competence	<b>.24**</b>	<b>.18**</b>	-.01	-.05	<b>-.19**</b>	<b>-.18**</b>	.08	.07	.08
Number of negative consequences	.06	<b>.13**</b>	.06	<b>.28</b>	-.07	-.02	.09	.09	<b>.10*</b>
Sense of insecurity	-.03	.06	.08	<b>.10*</b>	.04	.03	.01	.04	-.01
Teachers' attitude towards students	<b>.22**</b>	<b>.26**</b>	-.01	-.05	-.05	<b>-.10**</b>	<b>.18**</b>	-.03	<b>.19**</b>
Frequency of victimisation	-.01	.16**	.01	<b>.16**</b>	.02	.01	<b>.10*</b>	<b>.19**</b>	-.06
Frequency of bullying	<b>-.18**</b>	-.06	<b>.14**</b>	<b>.18**</b>	<b>.27**</b>	<b>.29**</b>	.02	<b>.19**</b>	<b>-.13**</b>

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Children whose parents use an authoritarian parenting style are more likely to report that they never seek protection from their parents (57% for fathers, 77% for mothers, compared to about one third among others), while those who are more satisfied with their family relationships are more likely to seek such protection ( $rho = .24$ ).

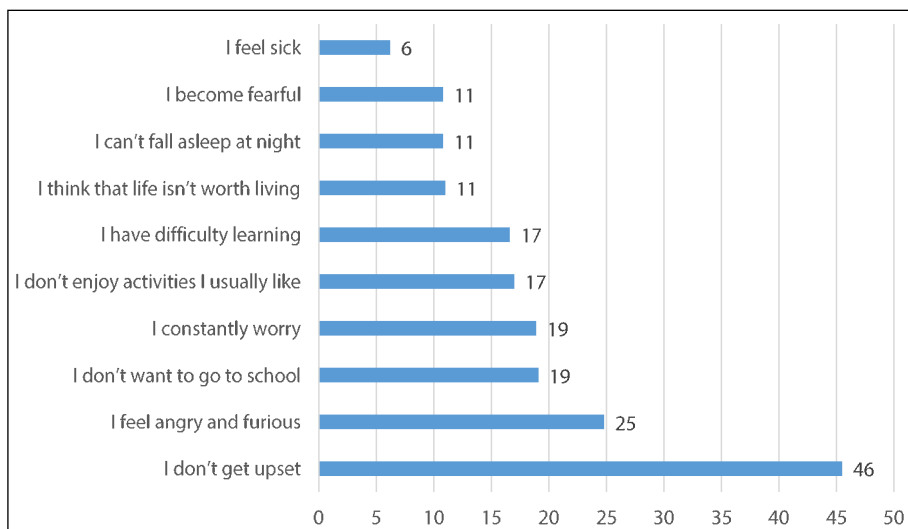
## 6.10. CONSEQUENCES OF EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

As already mentioned, actions that are labelled as violent can be of varying intensity, ranging from mild to traumatising. The consequences that a violent act leaves on a child depend on the severity of the act (this assessment is largely sub-

jective), as well as on the child’s psychological mechanisms that are activated at that point.

We asked students what consequences the violent acts they are exposed to usually leave on them. Children who previously reported having experienced any form of violence during their schooling responded to this question, which amounted to 44% of the total sample. Here as well, available was an alternative option “No one has been violent towards me”. Of those who responded, 49% indicated that no one had been violent towards them; the remaining 435 students, or 23% of the entire sample, evaluated the listed consequences of violence.

Chart 122: Delayed students’ reactions to peer violence (%)



Among those who reported that someone had been violent towards them, 43% did not select any of the listed negative consequences. Thirty per cent of them indicated one consequence, and 27% two or more.

The most frequent response from students was that they were not upset by the violence they had experienced. The frequency of this response may indicate that most violent interactions are of low intensity and that children easily overcome them. However, it may also be an attempt to trivialise what occurred, when violence within the peer group is normalised and the student sees no way to resist it. Yet, alongside this reaction, there is often a range of internalising responses, intense emotions, depressive states, and somatisation, which, if recurrent, may seriously threaten the child’s psychological well-being, self-esteem, and even their health. This finding was also observed in our previous research (Popadić, Plut and Pavlović, 2014). As expected and as concluded many times before, exposure to violence leaves many negative consequences, such as depressive symptoms (Rigby, 2007), anxiety (Boulton & Smith, 1994), somatic symptoms (Fekkes et al., 2006) etc.

Girls report more negative consequences ( $\rho = .17$ ). Furthermore, children with no developmental or learning difficulties were less likely to report negative consequences of victimisation they suffered (10% compared to 23%,  $V = .15$ ). The number of consequences is significantly correlated with worse financial situation ( $\rho = -.12$ ), as well as the entire range of psychological variables: emotional difficulties ( $\rho = .45$ ), dissatisfaction ( $\rho = .23$ ), weaker integration into the school community ( $\rho = -.25$ ), sense of insecurity ( $\rho = .14$ ), and more negative perceptions of teachers' attitude towards students ( $\rho = -.14$ ).

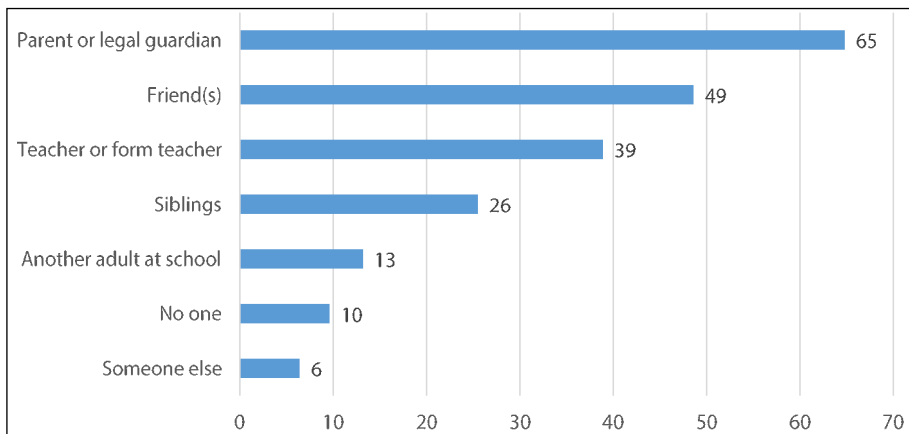
The number of negative consequences was not correlated with age, school urbanity and size, scholastic performance, or the fact whether the child had a sibling.

The frequency of victimisation was positively correlated with the number of negative consequences ( $\rho = .24$ ). The frequency of violence was not correlated with the number of consequences.

### 6.11. SEEKING HELP

Students who reported having experienced some form of violence from peers or employees throughout their schooling (44% of the total sample) were asked whom they had told about their experiences. Here as well, the option "No one has been violent towards me" was available and selected by 44% of children who had previously reported experiencing some form of violence; thus, 471 students (25% of the whole sample) responded to the question about whom they had told about having experienced violence.

Chart 123: Whom students told about their experience of violence (%)

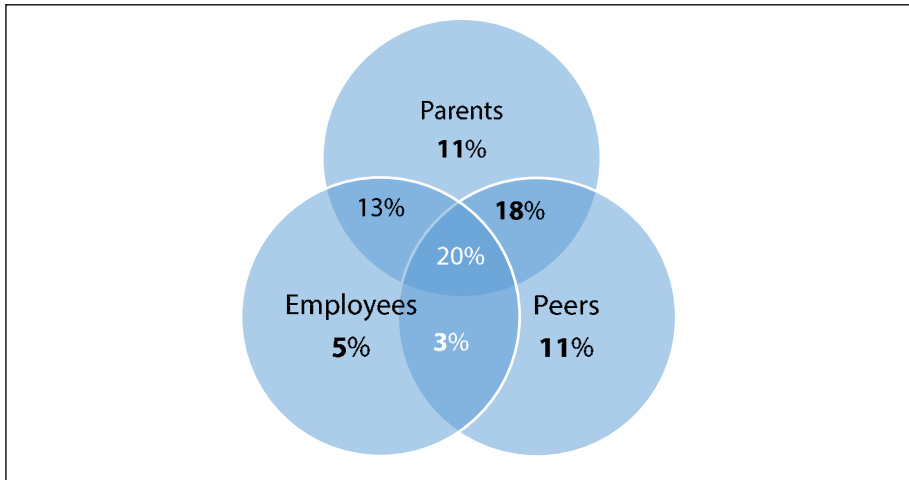


Very few students (only one in ten) remain silent about having experienced violence (it is important to point out that this refers to incidents that children tend to classify as violence). Nearly two thirds of them report it to their parents (11% only tell it to their parents), half share it with their peers (friends and/or siblings), while 11% share it only with them, not with adults. Almost half (43%) shared it with at

least one person from school, but 5% shared it *only* with someone from school. Children tend to share their experiences with different people from their environment – only one in four selected only one answer from the list. Seven per cent of them told only a friend, 11% only a parent, 4% only a teacher.

Almost one third (29%) shared it with someone in the family, but no one from school, while 8% shared it with someone from school, but not with their parents. Twenty-seven per cent of them told neither a parent nor an employee, and 34% told it to a parent and someone from school. In the following chart, we will try to illustrate this complicated network of persons to whom children turn.

Chart 124: Whom students turn to for help when they are exposed to violence (%)



Note: The remaining percentage up to 100% includes those who did not select any of the provided responses (13%) and those who selected "Other" among their answers (6%).

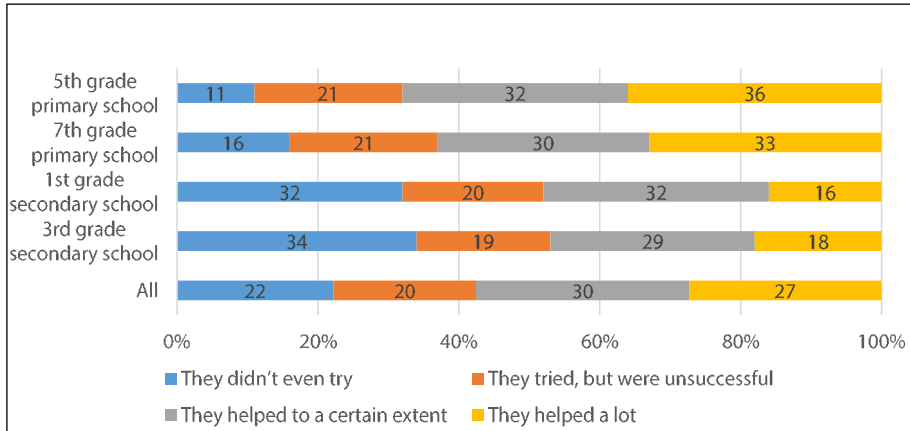
Only one in three students turns to school employees, which is half the number of students who turn to their parents. This, along with the fact that only 5% of students seek help exclusively from school employees, indicates that students perceive assistance from employees as insufficient or inadequate. One in ten students seeks support only from their peers, possibly driven by fear of being judged for asking adults for help. The same, significant percentage of them does not seek help from anyone, likely because of a lack of trust that anyone will help them. On the other hand, one in five students turns to all available sources of support.

Even though involving school employees in solving the problem of violence that a student experiences should be the primary and most effective measure, it is clear that only a small number of students turn to them for help, as if children do not believe that approaching employees would genuinely help them. How successful were school employees in helping children who turned to them for help? Only children who had previously stated that they had experienced some form of violence during their schooling responded to the question of whether teachers

or other adults at school helped them when they suffered violence. Now half of them (51%) responded that no one was violent towards them!

Almost half of the remaining 394 students had negative experiences: 22% said that employees had not even tried to help them, and 20% stated that they tried but were unsuccessful. 30% stated that employees helped them to a certain extent, and 27% said they helped them a lot (Chart 125).

Chart 125: Students' evaluation of school employee support in incidents of peer violence, age differences (%)



It should be noted that this is not about a belief that employees are unwilling or incompetent to provide support, nor about a lack of awareness of their obligations in cases of violence, but rather about what the students have experienced. It is obvious that the perceived assistance from employees is not uniform and that there are significant differences in students' experiences.

Younger students report greater support from employees ( $\rho = -.24$ ). Only 11% of children of the youngest age stated that adults had not even tried to help them, while this percentage is three times higher among secondary school students. Children from smaller schools report greater support from employees ( $\rho = -.11$ ), perhaps because students and teachers are more closely connected and there are more opportunities for direct conversations and interventions. Those who receive greater support are children with more pronounced prosocial attitudes ( $\rho = .17$ ) and communication competence ( $\rho = .14$ ), who are more satisfied ( $\rho = .26$ ), have fewer emotional difficulties ( $\rho = -.17$ ), and with a greater level of integration into the school community ( $\rho = .29$ ). No differences were observed between sexes, children from rural and urban schools, children with and without developmental or learning difficulties; there are also no associations with financial situation.

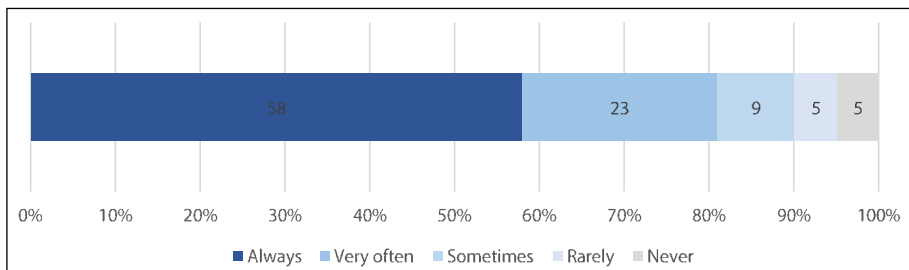
Children who have exhibited violent behaviour against other children are less likely to report having received help from employees when they themselves are victims ( $V = .12$ ). Among them, 27% said that school employees had not even tried to help them, compared to 18% among other students. It is quite possible that at least some of the violent actions committed by these children occurred after it became clear that they could not rely on adult support.

It appears that teachers' perceived willingness to help and their success in helping students largely depend on individual students' characteristics. Teachers might be less inclined to help children who confront them or who have conflictual relationships with their peer group.

We also asked the children whether any adult they live with reported to the school that they had experienced school violence. Here as well, 54% of children responded they had not in fact been exposed to violence. Of the remaining 372, 46% said that parents had reported the violence to the school and 54% said they had not. Older students are more likely to state that their parents reported the violence ( $V = .17$ ). Parents of girls are somewhat more likely to report violence than parents of boys (50% compared to 41%). No differences were found between rural and urban, small and big schools; there are also no associations with the child's scholastic performance. Parents' willingness to report violence perpetrated against their child was not associated with the child's integration into school, sense of security, emotional difficulties, or satisfaction. The more violence the child perpetrated, the less inclined their parents were to report violence when their child experienced it ( $\rho = -.17$ ). Parents who reported violence are more likely to say that they are very familiar with the procedures that the school is required to follow in case of violent behaviour – 52% compared to 40% among parents who did not report violence.

Peer help and support is one of the most important factors that could prevent violence, while trust in peers gives a child a sense of security at school. We did not ask children whether their peers had helped them (since that question would only be answered by those who had experienced violence), but rather what they think, whether their friends would help them if someone were to bully them at school. The responses are shown in Chart 126.

Chart 126: Expected support from peers in cases of exposure to peer violence (%)



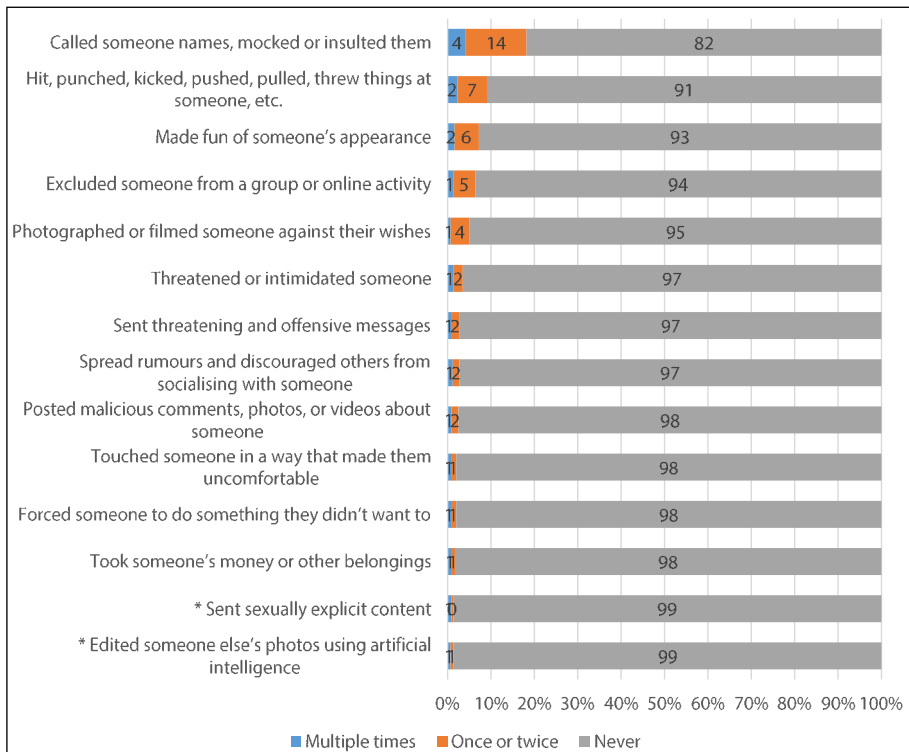
The vast majority of children are confident in the help of their friends. There are no differences between sexes, ages, rural and urban, and small and big schools. The more confident children are in the support of their peers, the better integrated they are into the school community ( $\rho = .27$ ), more satisfied with aspects of their lives ( $\rho = .27$ ), have fewer emotional difficulties ( $\rho = -.16$ ), a greater sense of security ( $\rho = .14$ ), more pronounced prosocial attitudes ( $\rho = .15$ ), and greater communication competence ( $\rho = .23$ ). Victimized students were less likely to trust in peer support ( $\rho = -.25$ ), as were violent students ( $\rho = -.15$ ).

## 6.12. VIOLENT STUDENT BEHAVIOUR AND CORRELATES

Students were asked to review a list of 14 types of violent behaviour (for the youngest students, two of these types, marked with an asterisk in the chart and tables, were omitted) and indicate whether they had engaged in any of these behaviours since the beginning of the school year, and if so, how often (never, once or twice, more frequently, or almost daily). Based on their responses, two measures were calculated: the presence of violence (whether a student had been violent at least once) and the frequency of violence (the number of violent acts multiplied by their frequency). These two measures were very strongly correlated ( $\rho = .98$ ). The frequency of individual violent acts is presented in Chart 127.

Insults are the most common form of violent behaviour, and approximately one in five students admits to having insulted someone. One in ten students have perpetrated physical violence at least once. All other forms of violence were very rare. Slightly over one quarter of students (28%) reported exhibiting violent behaviour towards someone at least once in any of the mentioned ways.

Chart 127: Frequency of specific forms of violence (%)

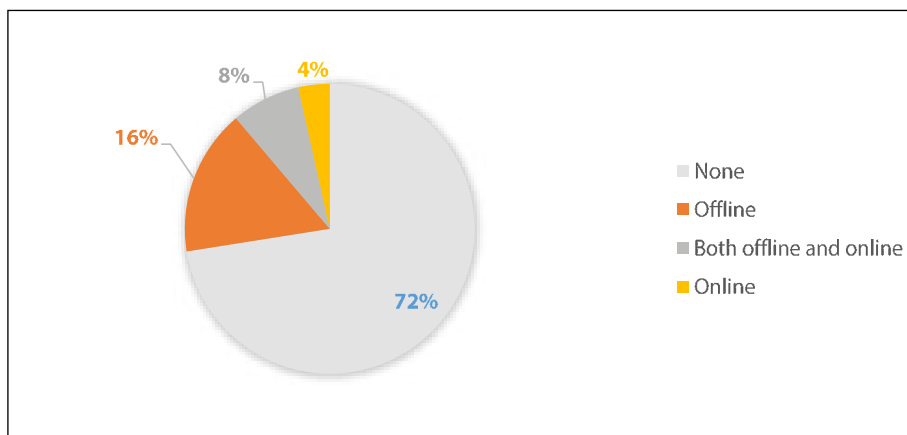


Notes: Actions that were not on the list for 5th grade students of primary schools were marked with an asterisk. The statements were taken from the questionnaire for boys.

The correlation between the frequency of offline and online violence is positive and moderate ( $r_{ho} = .41$ ). Children who bully others in person are also more likely to bully others online.

The prevalence of offline and online violence is presented in Chart 128. The fewest children display violence exclusively online. In other words, online violence is just one more way in which children inclined to perpetrate violence against their peers may exhibit their violent behaviour.

Chart 128: Types of violence (%)



Children’s violent behaviour was not correlated with age or scholastic performance. A previous study (Popadić, Plut & Pavlović, 2014), where the age ranged from 3rd to 8th grade of primary schools, showed an increase in violence with age and no association with scholastic performance. Even though one might expect that lower-achieving students would be more violent, either because they are frustrated with their underachievement and status, or because lower academic performance and violent behaviour may have common roots, a significant finding is that violent behaviour is a form of interaction equally common among both higher-achieving and lower-achieving students (it should be pointed out again that here, scholastic performance practically ranged from good to excellent).

Although, as we have seen, there was no difference in exposure to violence between boys and girls, boys were significantly more likely to display violent behaviour than girls (36% compared to 21%,  $V = .16$ ), and were also more prone to both verbal and physical violence. Even when it comes to relational violence, while 5% of boys admitted to having at least once spread rumours about another student and turned others against them, only 1% of girls reported doing the same. However, this difference in violence perpetration only exists in offline violence (32% compared to 17%,  $V = .17$ ), but not in online violence (14% compared to 10%,  $V = .06$ ).

The difference in violent behaviour between boys and girls is regularly observed (Cosma, Molcho & Pickett, 2024; Popadić, Plut & Pavlović, 2014; UNESCO, 2019; Čaprić & Videnović, 2024), and is usually interpreted as originating from differences in the socialisation patterns to which boys and girls are exposed. Roughness in direct in-

teractions and displays of physical dominance are perceived within peer groups as normal for boys, and even desirable, whereas such behaviour in girls is usually condemned. Such norms are not present in online communication, and perhaps this is the reason why online violence is equally accessible to boys and girls.

Children who reported having a difficulty were more likely to exhibit violence (24% compared to 42%,  $V = .16$ ), with violence being most prevalent among students who reported having learning difficulties ( $V = .13$ ). Children with worse financial situation were slightly more likely to be violent ( $\rho = -.10$ ). Among only children and those who have siblings, there was an equal number of violence perpetrators and an equal number of victimised people. There was also a possibility that children with siblings, due to different socialisation patterns compared to only children, generally have different levels of victimisation and violence in the school environment. However, we did not obtain such findings. Some findings suggest that the *nature* of the relationship between siblings affects peer relationships at school and that children who have violent relationships with their siblings are more likely to perpetrate peer violence at school (Johnson et al., 2014; Sabah et al., 2022; Wolke & Skew, 2012).

No difference was found in the number of violence perpetrators or the frequency of violence between children from small and big, or rural and urban schools. No association was observed with participation in extracurricular or school activities. Students who attended violence prevention programmes exhibited violence just as often as students who did not attend such programmes.

Just like the frequency of victimisation, the frequency of violence was positively correlated with all measured psychological variables (Table 22): emotional difficulties, learning and development difficulties, sense of insecurity, weaker integration into the school community, sense of life dissatisfaction, and perceived poor teachers' attitude towards students. It was negatively correlated with prosocial values and communication competence.

Table 22: Correlations between violence frequency and psychological characteristics

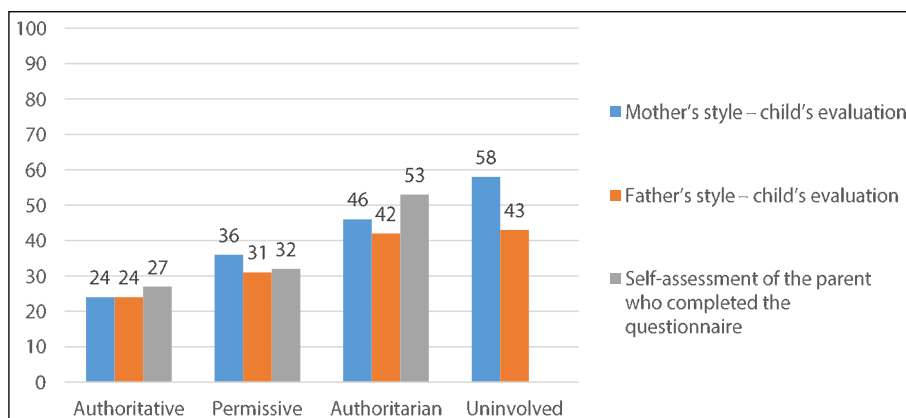
	Integration into the school community	Teachers' attitude towards students	Sense of security	Emotional difficulties	Life satisfaction	Prosocial attitudes	Communication competence	Development and learning difficulties
Frequency of offline violence	-.23**	-.17**	-.30**	-.11**	-.23**	-.24**	-.25**	.15**
Frequency of online violence	-.16**	-.15**	-.18**	-.11**	-.14**	-.14**	-.15**	.15**
Frequency of violence	-.24**	-.19**	-.29**	-.13**	-.24**	-.25**	-.25**	.17**

It appears that student who perpetrated violence are not marginalised, lonely children. They are no different from other children in terms of the number of good friends they have, and most report having many friends among their classmates that they follow on social media. Yet, they are significantly less satisfied with relationships in the classroom and have lower sense of belonging in the school. It is possible that violence perpetrators establish social networks within the school that provide them with sufficient social support, but they identify less with the school community and norms.

A significant finding, discussed in more detail below, which was also obtained in an earlier research (Popadić, Plut & Pavlović, 2014), shows that the frequency of violence was positively correlated with the frequency of victimisation ( $\rho = .42$ ). Children who engaged in more violence were also children who were more frequently exposed to peer violence.

With regard to parenting styles, the lowest percentage of violent students was among children whose parents used an authoritative parenting style, while the highest percentage of violent students was among children whose parents used uninvolved and authoritarian parenting styles. The same pattern is seen when parenting styles are determined based on parents' rather than children's responses (although no parents reported using an uninvolved parenting style) (Chart 129).

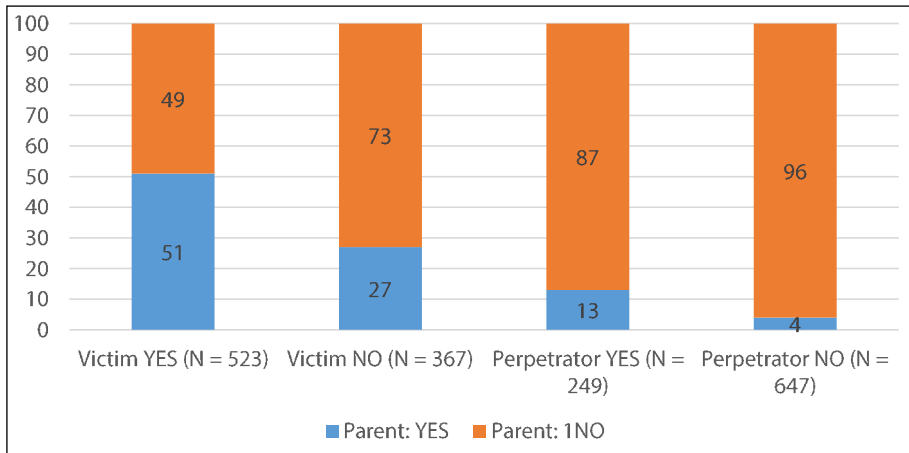
Chart 129: Students' violence and parenting styles (%)



Children's violent behaviour was more prevalent among those whose parents were dissatisfied with the teachers' attitude towards the child ( $V = .17$ ) and the child's attitude towards school obligations ( $V = .18$ ), as well as among those whose parents reported that the child rarely shared feelings and problems with them ( $V = .10$ ). There was no correlation with family incompleteness, parents' level of education, financial situation, parents' advice to the child on what to do if someone bullies them, parents' parenting goals, regular attendance at parent-teacher conferences, dissatisfaction with relationships with other children or teachers' attitudes towards the child.

Parents are generally aware of fewer instances of victimisation and violence than their children report. They are more likely to be aware of instances when their child experienced violence than when they perpetrated it (Chart 130). Among children who engaged in violent behaviour, only 13% of their parents reported it (see column 3 in Chart 130). Among children who experienced violence, 49% of their parents did not recognise it (see column 1 in Chart 130).

Chart 130: Agreement between parents' and children's reports on whether the child suffered or perpetrated violence (%)



One reason is probably that a large portion of violent incidents are trivial from the child's perspective for them to report it to their parents. Indeed, 38% of the parents whose children said they were not upset by the violence they had experienced also said that their child had not reported any violence perpetrated against them, while 60% of the parents whose children reported at least one negative consequence stated that their child had reported experiencing violence. However, the fact remains that many children do not talk about their unpleasant experiences involving other children, and far fewer tell them about their own violent actions, therefore not giving their parents the opportunity to help them. What is the reason for that? At least in part, it is the belief that parents will not be able to help them and the fear of being judged.

### 6.13. REASONS FOR VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

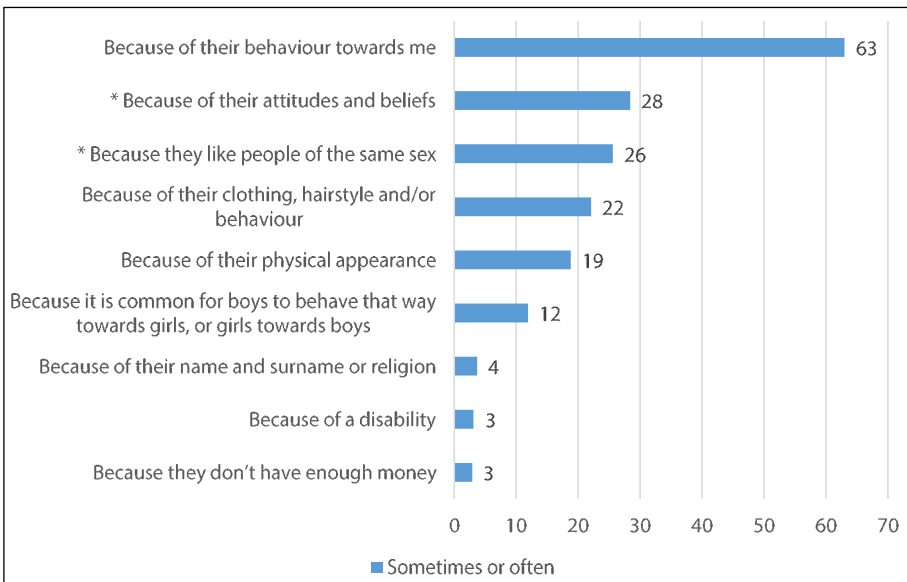
In the question regarding the reasons for their violent behaviour (Chart 131), an alternative option was also available: "I have never behaved violently towards anyone". This alternative response was selected by around 12% of children who had previously indicated that they had expressed some form of violence at least once. Reasons were indicated by about 360 older and 130 younger students.

Children do not exhibit violence towards other children due to certain characteristics of such children (ethnicity, religion, financial status, disability), but because of different attitudes and beliefs that are manifested in behaviour and appear-

ance. The most prevalent reason is retaliation for another child’s actions (63%), which then only continues an already initiated violent interaction. From the previous table (Table 21), which shows the correlations between responses to violence and sociodemographic and psychological variables, it can be seen that children who have exhibited violent behaviour are significantly more likely than other children to respond to violence by retaliating, either on their own or with the help of friends.

A significant percentage of children who exhibited violence selected “because they like people of the same sex” as the reason for their violence. This reason is more likely reported by boys (32%) than girls (17%). It is somewhat more common among students from schools in urban areas (28%) than among those from schools in rural areas (19%). This does not necessarily mean that these students are less tolerant of such phenomena, but rather that it may be less prevalent or visible in rural areas. In general, it could be concluded that aggressive acts towards peers serve as a way of enforcing norms, as a communicative message directed at those who have different attitudes, values, or appearance.

Chart 131: Reasons for violent behaviour (%)



Note: Reasons that were not on the list for 5th grade students of primary schools were marked with an asterisk.

## Responses to children’s violent behaviour

When asked whether any of the school employees had talked to them about their violent behaviour, 19% of those who had previously indicated on the list at least one violent act they perpetrated, now responded that they had never exhibited

violent behaviour. Among the remaining 526 students, 53% state that no school employee has ever talked to them, 33% say that they have talked to them once or twice, while 14% state that they have talked to them several times. No difference was found between urban/rural and small/big schools, nor in students' age. Employees were more likely to talk to boys than girls (54% compared to 37%,  $V = .18$ ), as well as with students who have lower scholastic performance ( $\rho = -.21$ ). It is unknown whether employees were informed of the students' violent acts, and whether the violence was such that it required employees' reaction.

When asked if any of their family members had talked to them about their violent behaviour, 17% now reported never having perpetrated violence. Among the remaining 435 students, 20% state that no family member has ever talked to them, 36% say that they have talked to them once or twice, 36% several times, and 9% almost daily. There are no differences between students from rural and urban schools, small and big schools, or between sexes. Conversations were more often held with older children ( $\rho = .11$ ) Here as well, it is unknown whether family members were informed of the students' violent acts, and whether the violence was such that it required their reaction.

## 6.14. ROLES IN A VIOLENT INTERACTION

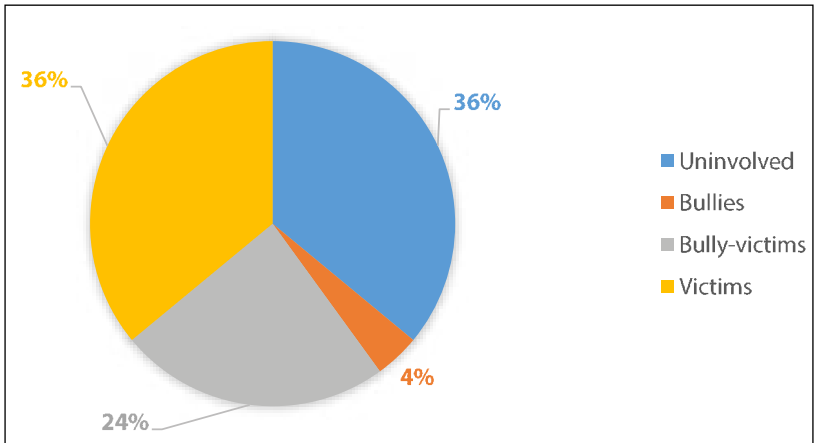
Searching for characteristics that distinguish children who have experienced violence from those who have perpetrated it may suggest an image in which, when discussing violent interactions, there are, alongside children who are not involved in violent interactions, two more groups: those who perpetrate violence and those who suffer it, and that violent interaction occurs between these two groups of children. This, one might say, often accepted and stereotypical image is, however, inaccurate. Violent interaction is, above all, typically a group phenomenon rather than a dyadic relationship, and it involves additional roles. In addition to the roles of bully and victim, some authors distinguish the roles of assistant (who actively helps the bully), reinforcer (who encourages the bully's aggressive behaviour), defender (who actively protects the victim), and outsider (who stands aside and does not get involved) (Marković, 2020; Salmivalli, 1999). A similar typology was proposed by Olweus and his colleagues, who, within a bullying episode, identify not only the bully and the victim but also the roles of follower (who joins in the bullying), supporter (who supports the bully but does not take an active part), passive supporter (who does not display open support), possible defender (who disapproves of the bullying but does nothing), defender and disengaged onlooker (Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999).

If violence perpetration and exposure are viewed over time, the expectation that bullying and victimisation are two opposing ends of a single dimension, and that their measures are negatively correlated, proves to be incorrect. Research consistently shows that bullying and victimisation are not only not negatively correlated, but they are not even independent dimensions; rather, they are significantly positively associated: the more frequently a child is suffering violence, the more likely they are to display violent behaviour towards others (for instance, Bizumic et al., 2009; Čolović, Kodžopeljić & Nikolašević, 2014; Popadić, Plut & Pavlović, 2014; Schwartz et al., 1997; Veenstra et al., 2005).

Treating the perpetration and suffering of violence as two separate but interconnected dimensions has led researchers to distinguish four roles in violent interactions: children who are not involved in violent interactions (those who have neither experienced nor perpetrated violence), bullies (children who have perpetrated violence but have not experienced it), victims (children who have been victims of violence but have not displayed violent behaviour), and children who have both suffered and perpetrated violence against other children. This fourth category of children has been referred to using various terms: provocative victims (Olweus, 1978, 2001), aggressive victims (Schwartz et al., 2001), and bully-victims (Boulton & Smith, 1994).

The prevalence of these roles in violent interactions (we will refer to these roles using the standard technical terms commonly used in academic literature: bully, victim, bully-victim, uninvolved) is obtained by combining the indexes of victimisation and bullying and is shown in the following chart:

Chart 132: Roles in a violent interaction (%)



The charts show that around one third of children were not involved in violent interactions, and the same number of children were only victims of violence. The percentage of children who have only exhibited violent behaviour is very small (4%), while one quarter of all children both suffered and perpetrated violence. Among those who were victims, 40% also displayed violent behaviour. Among those who exhibited violence, 86% were also victims. This significant overlap between the categories of victims and bullies was also indicated by the previously described finding regarding the high correlation between the categories of bullying and victimisation ( $V = .33$ ) and the frequency of bullying and victimisation ( $rho = .42$ ).

There is a certain, but not particularly noticeable, difference in the distribution of these categories between boys and girls. Among boys, half of those who experienced violence displayed violent behaviour themselves. One third of girls who experienced violence also exhibited violent behaviour. If we consider children who perpetrated violence, among boys, there is a slightly higher percentage of those who only engaged in violent behaviour.

Chart 133: Roles in a violent interaction – boys (%)

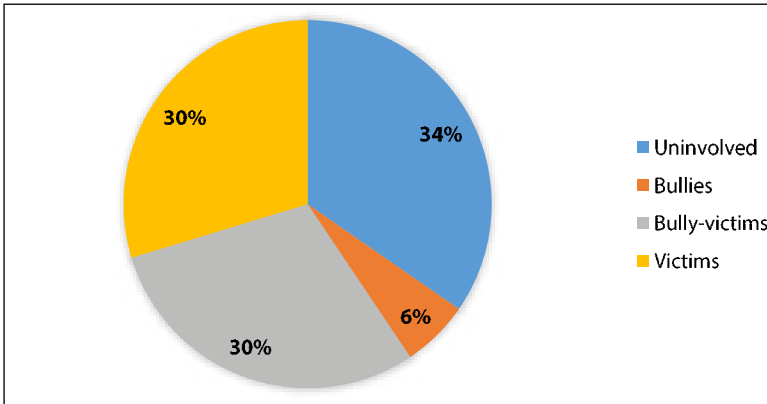
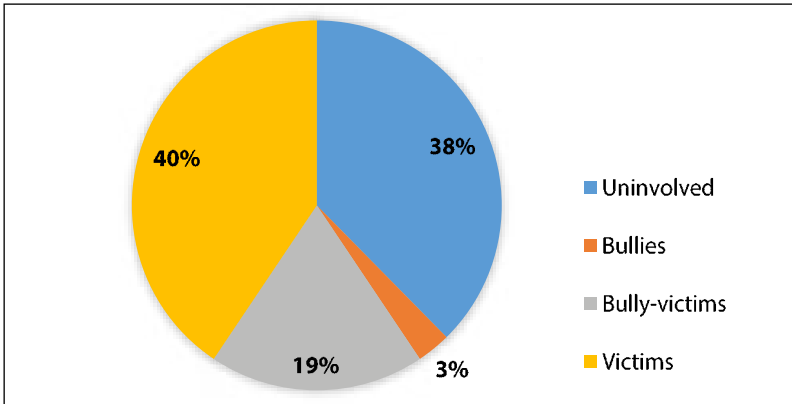


Chart 134: Roles in a violent interaction – girls (%)



These groups also differ regarding whether students have been exposed to violence throughout schooling, as well as regarding their involvement in violent interactions with school teachers (Charts 135 and 136).

Chart 135: Roles in a violent interaction and exposure to violence throughout schooling (%)

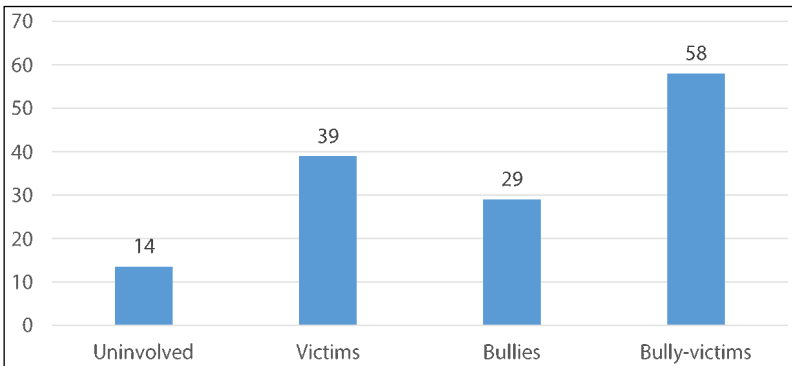
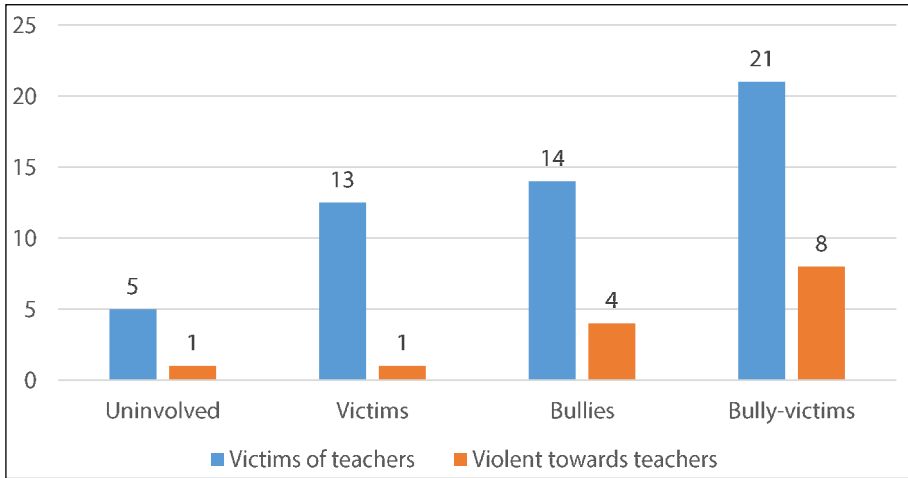


Chart 136: Roles in a violent interaction and involvement in violent interaction with teachers (%)



In the category of bully-victims, most of them have a long-term history of exposure to violence, dating back to earlier periods of schooling. Compared to others, this group is more likely to complain about violence by teachers towards them. Moreover, they most often display violent behaviour towards teachers. Among children who display violent behaviour towards teachers, two thirds fall into the category of bully-victim, 10% are from the uninvolved category, 8% are from the victim category, and 6% are from the bully category.

## Development and learning difficulties

Students from these four categories differed in the extent to which they reported having difficulties. Most of those who have some kind of difficulty were found among bully-victims. As many as 33% of bully-victims reported having a difficulty, compared to 19% of victims, 14% of bullies and 12% of those uninvolved. The differences were observed in reporting learning difficulties – they were reported by 14% of uninvolved children, 29% of bullies, 39% of victims, and 58% of bully-victims.

## Emotional difficulties

Emotional difficulties are more prevalent in victims and bully-victims than in uninvolved students and bullies (Chart 137). The sense of insecurity is most prevalent among bully-victims, followed by groups of bullies and victims, and least prevalent among uninvolved children (Chart 137). Satisfaction with various aspects of life is lowest among bully-victims, and highest among the uninvolved (Chart 138). Bully-victims are the least satisfied with their current life, scholastic performance, family relationships, and relationships in the classroom.

The highest level of integration into the school community is observed in uninvolved students, followed by groups of victims and bullies, while the least integrated are bully-victims (Chart 139). The most positive perception of teachers' attitudes towards students is held by those who are uninvolved, followed by the categories of bullies and victims, while bully-victims have the most negative perception (Chart 139).

Prosocial attitudes and communication competence are less pronounced in the groups of bullies and bully-victims compared to the groups of victims and uninvolved students (Charts 140 and 141).

The weaker integration into the school community of the group of bully-victims, compared to all other groups, is also indicated by their answers to the question of how much they could rely on their classmates' help if they were assaulted. As many as 91% of uninvolved students believe that their friends would always or very often help them; this is also believed by 90% of bullies, 79% of victims and 72% of bully-victims (Chart 150). When asked how many good friends they have at school, 76% of uninvolved students, 78% of bullies, 70% of victims, and 66% of bully-victims reported having more than three friends (Chart 142).

Chart 137: Emotional difficulties and students' sense of insecurity, and roles in a violent interaction (average ratings)

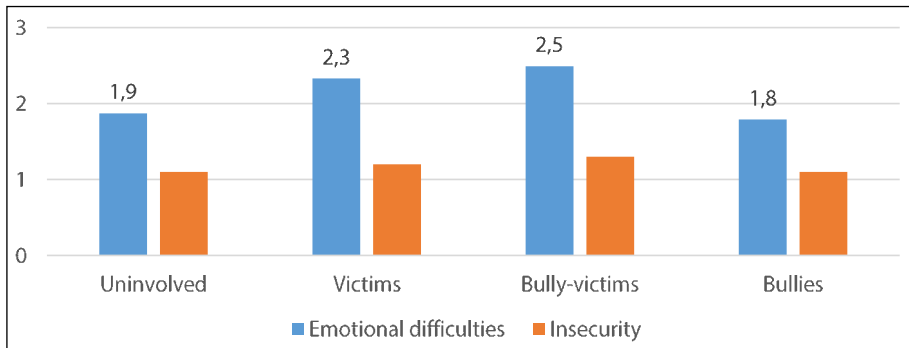


Chart 138: Satisfaction and roles in a violent interaction (average ratings)

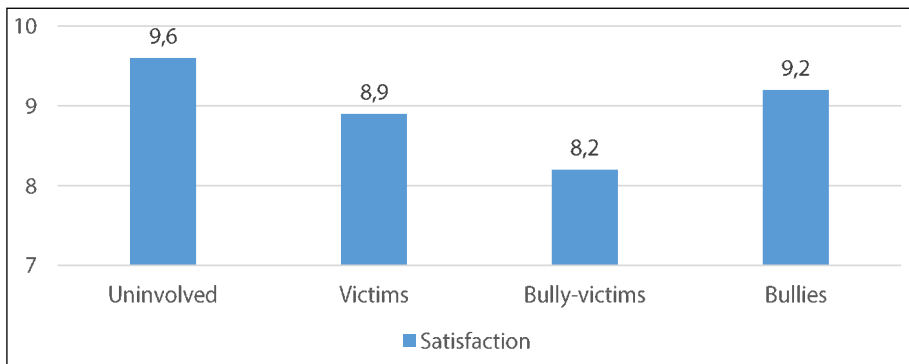


Chart 139: Integration into the school community and perception of teachers' attitude towards students, and roles in a violent interaction (average ratings)

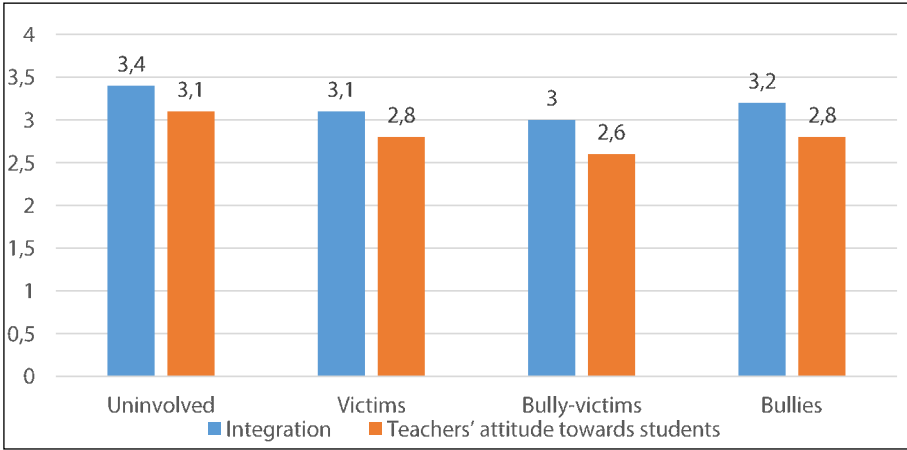


Chart 140: Prosocial attitudes and roles in a violent interaction (average ratings)

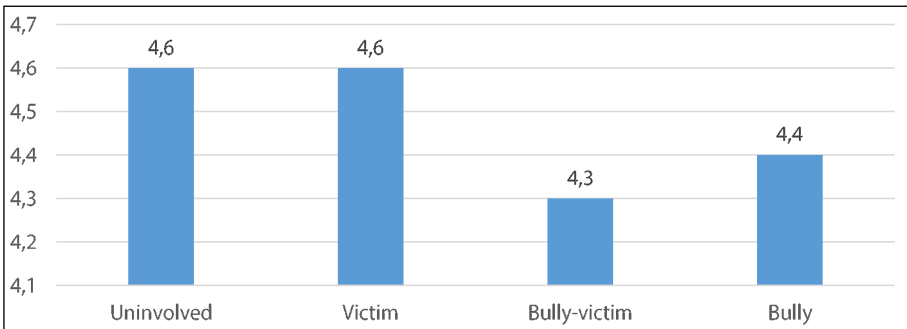


Chart 141: Communication competence and roles in a violent interaction (average ratings)

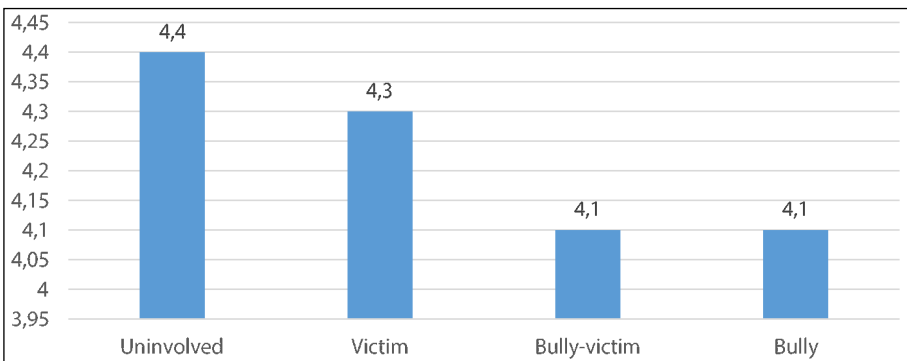


Chart 142: Roles in a violent interaction and trust in the support from friends in cases of exposure to peer violence (%)

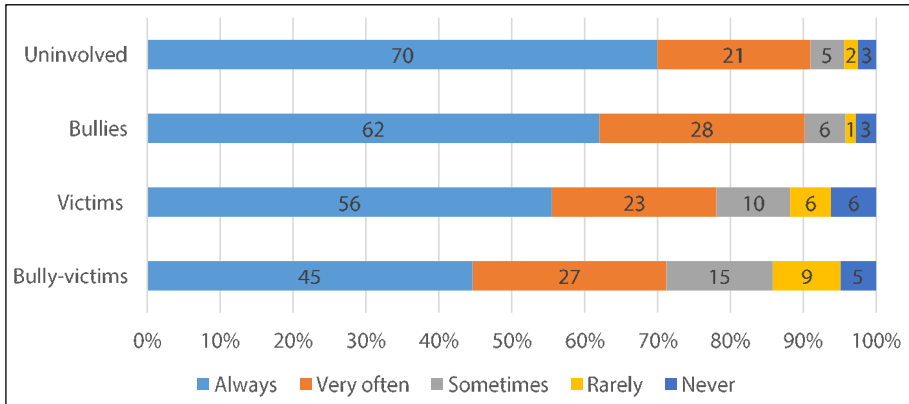
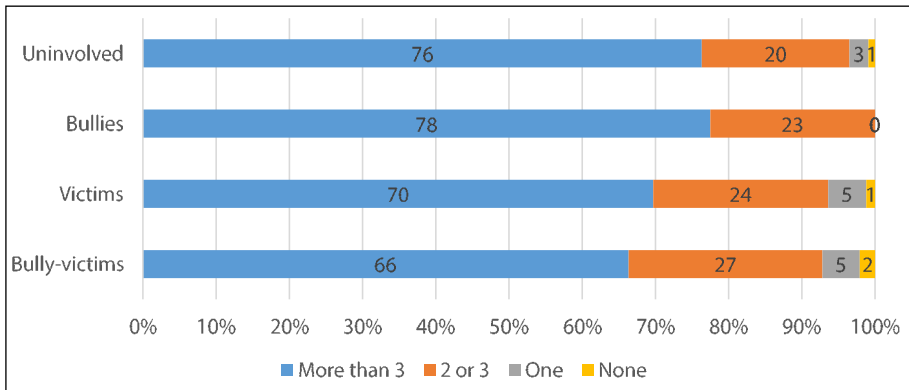


Chart 143: Roles in a violent interaction and the number of good friends



Why are their peers displaying violent behaviour towards them? We will only compare victims and bully-victims. Bully-victims are more likely than victims to believe that they are exposed to violence due to their physical appearance (43% compared to 29%), clothing, hairstyle, or behaviour (38% compared to 19%), attitudes and beliefs (43% compared to 26%), and because it is common behaviour towards people of the opposite sex (44% compared to 24%).

Children who both experienced and perpetrated violence differed in their responses to violence compared to children who only suffered violence. The first group is less likely to seek protection from parents/legal guardians (54% compared to 71%), somewhat less likely to avoid bullies whenever they can (78% compared to 84%), more likely to report suffering assaults and humiliation (35% compared to 24%), but also more likely to seek protection from peers (59% compared to 45%), more likely to retaliate in kind on their own (73% compared to 49%) or with the help of friends (51% compared to 26%). It can be said that they are more active in responding to violence, but in a way that increases the risk of further escalation.

Why are they perpetrating violence? The responses of bully-victims and bullies were compared, and there were no significant differences between them regarding their reasons: religion (3% compared to 7%), attitudes and beliefs (29% compared to 34%,  $V = .14$ ), physical appearance (21% compared to 13%), disability (3% compared to 5%), poverty (3% compared to 2%), liking people of the same sex (26% compared to 31%), clothing, hairstyle or behaviour (23% compared to 26%), or desire for retaliation (67% compared to 64%).

All of these findings suggest that children who have both experienced and perpetrated violence are the ones most at risk, who have most emotional difficulties and problems in communication with others, and therefore require special attention.

## 6.15. Violence in student–teacher interactions

Students were first asked about their teachers' violent behaviour towards them in the context of their schooling to date. Eighteen per cent of them experienced some form of violence by teachers during the course of schooling, which is a worryingly high number. Most often, it was verbal violence. Eighteen per cent of them reported that a teacher had insulted or made fun of them at least once (13% once or twice, and 5% multiple times or frequently). Three per cent of them suffered physical violence, of which 2% once or twice, and 1% multiple times or frequently. Online harassment (sending obscene messages, photos, or videos) by teachers was experienced by 25 of students (1.3%), 9 of whom experienced it once or twice, and 16 experienced it multiple times or frequently.

When asked about the past three months, face-to-face verbal violence (name-calling, mocking, or insults by a teacher) was experienced by 11% of students, 9% of which once or twice, and 3% multiple times or nearly daily. Physical violence (being hit, kicked, shoved, had their hair pulled, things thrown at them, etc.) was experienced by 2% of them. Twelve per cent experienced at least one or both of these types of violence, 9% of which only once.

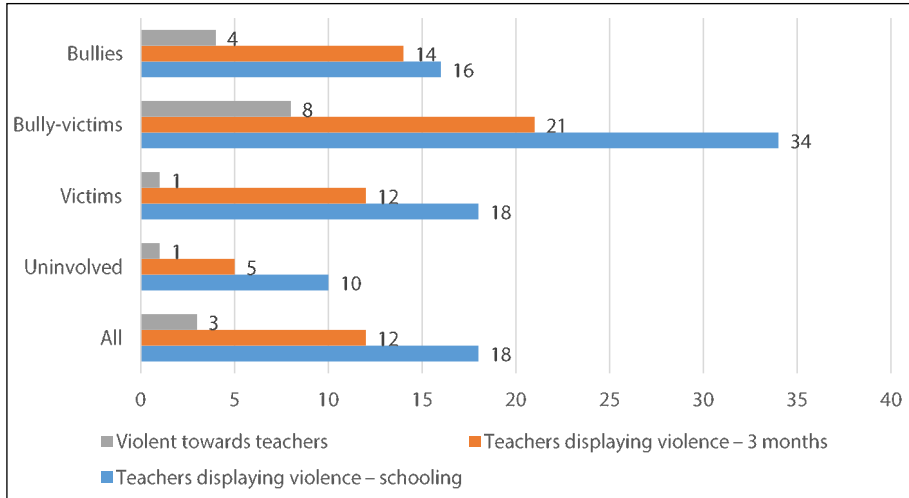
Children from big schools ( $\rho = .11$ ) and older students ( $\rho = .15$ ), were more likely to be exposed to face-to-face violence by teachers (in the past three months). Significantly more likely to complain of teacher violence were children who were less integrated into the school community ( $\rho = -.24$ ), had a greater sense of insecurity ( $\rho = .22$ ), more pronounced emotional difficulties ( $\rho = .14$ ), a lower sense of life satisfaction ( $\rho = .18$ ), a more negative perception of teachers' attitudes towards students ( $\rho = -.22$ ), as well as children who experienced more negative consequences of peer violence ( $\rho = .17$ ).

There was a significant, but low correlation with scholastic performance ( $\rho = -.08$ ), while there was no correlation with sex or communication competence and prosocial attitudes.

More likely to complain about teacher violence were children who displayed violent behaviour towards other children (20% compared to 9%,  $V = .18$ ), as well as those who reported experiencing violence by their peers (16% compared to 6%,  $V = .16$ ). Every second student (49%) who exhibited violent behaviour towards teachers reported having experienced teacher violence.

Children who fall into the bully-victim category were significantly more likely than others to complain about violence by teachers against them (both in the past three months and the entire schooling period) (Chart 144).

Chart 144: Roles in a violent interaction between peers and violent interaction with teachers (%)



Parents were less aware of their child’s victimisation by teachers. Ninety-seven per cent of parents whose children reported not having experienced verbal violence by teachers in the past three months, also stated the same. However, among the children who reported having experienced verbal violence by teachers once or more times, as many as 86% of their parents reported their children not having experienced it. Furthermore, according to the paired questionnaires, 12 children said that they had been hit by a teacher, yet only one parent was aware of it. Over half (55%) of parents of children who have experienced violence by teachers stated that no teachers were harsh and offensive to their child. We can infer from this that a significant percentage of children who experienced verbal or physical violence by teachers did not tell it to their parents. Possibly, they did not want to tell their parents the reasons why teachers were harsh to them. All this suggests that teachers often resort to verbal and physical violence as a method of disciplining students, not knowing how to correct their behaviour in other ways.

Children whose parents are more satisfied with their teachers’ attitude towards their child are less likely to be exposed to teacher violence ( $\rho = -.15$ ). Put differently, 56% of parents whose children have not suffered teacher violence rated their relationship with teachers as very good, as did 42% of parents whose children reported experiencing violence. Twenty-six per cent of the parents whose children did not suffer teacher violence said they are very satisfied with the teachers’ attitude towards their child, and 10% of parents whose children suffered violence also said the same. In the first group, 80% of parents say that no teachers are harsh or offensive to their child (20% believe this, but their children’s respons-

es contradict them), while in the second group, 55% of parents do not notice that their children complain about this. For children who did not display violent behaviour towards teachers, a total of 74% of their parents were satisfied – 59% were satisfied and 25% were very satisfied – with teachers’ attitude towards the child, and for the other children, the overall percentage of satisfied parents was similar (77%), but the percentage of those who were very satisfied was significantly lower (4.5%). The vast majority of parents of both groups of children believe that none of the teachers are harsh to their child.

Our previous study also showed that a high percentage of children complained about teacher violence. At the time, we assumed, and that explanation still seems plausible to us, that some teachers react violently when provoked by students’ behaviour towards them and others, but that in most cases, teachers resort to violence as a means of disciplining students. The prevalence of cases in which teachers exhibit violence towards students is also supported by the findings of the Special Report (2023), where 30% of students stated that a teacher often or occasionally abused a student in their class.

## **Student violence against teachers**

On this topic, 2.4% of students (44 of them) said that, since the beginning of the school year, they had insulted or threatened a school teacher, while 1.5% (28 students) reported having physically assaulted a teacher. Three per cent of them (52 students) exhibited at least one of these two types of violence towards teachers. They do not stand out in terms of socio-economic characteristics. Among them, there are 29 boys and 23 girls. Some of them are in the group of the youngest students (14) and among the oldest (9). The same distribution is observed across groups based on scholastic performance, with the exception of students who had repeated a grade; three out of five reported having been violent towards teachers (among those who were violent towards teachers, there were 9 students with good scholastic performance, 16 with very good performance, and 24 with excellent performance). These are more likely to be children who report having difficulties (the percentage is higher among children who report having a chronic illness or speech difficulties). These are also more likely to be children who reported displaying violence towards other students (8% violent compared to 1% non-violent students,  $V = .20$ ). While there are less than 1% of such children among the uninvolved children and victims, there are 4% among the bullies, and 8% among bully-victims (Chart 144). **Children in the bully-victim category are not only characterised by bilateral violent interactions with peers but also by bilateral violent interactions with employees.**

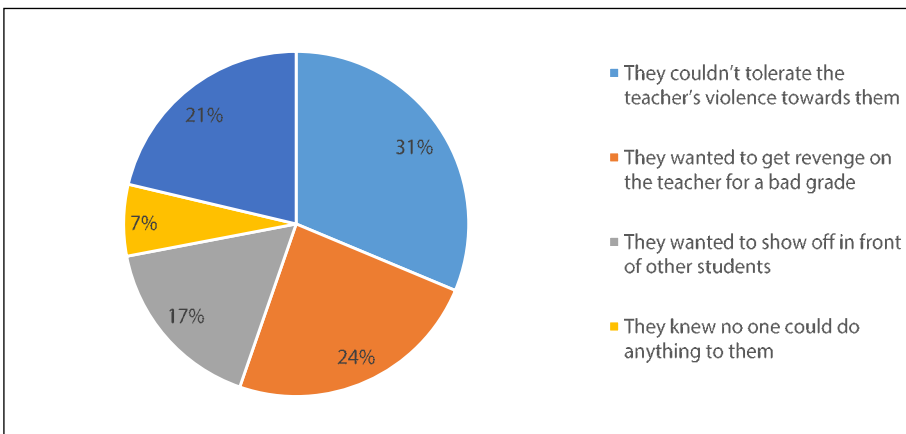
One in four students stated that, since the beginning of the school year, a student in their class had yelled at or insulted a teacher. A smaller number of children (5%) claimed that, since the beginning of the school year, a student in their class had physically assaulted a teacher. Since these are students’ statements about what happened in their class, it is also important to note the percentage of students in the class who reported such incidents. In 21% of classes, no student reported violent behaviour against teachers. In other classes, that percentage varies. If we take

as a criterion of visibility or reliability that two thirds of students in a class report it, we can see that in only 6% of classes do more than two thirds of students say that something of this kind has happened in their class. It is possible that students reported something that had occurred outside of classes, something that others disregarded, or something related to another class. However, the fact is that these events, if they actually happened, were not very visible to other students.

A high level of student violence towards teachers was also observed in an earlier study (Popadić, Plut & Pavlović, 2014). Then, half of the older primary school students said that they had witnessed verbal violence towards a teacher at least once during the school year, while one in ten had witnessed even a physical assault.

In students' opinion, why do students exhibit violent behaviour towards teachers? We presented to students a list of six possible reasons, asking them to mark the one that was, in their opinion, the most common. Two thirds of students reported they were not aware of such incidents (they are equally distributed across sexes, ages, and school types; among gymnasium students, this percentage was lower, 59%, compared to students in mixed schools, 72%). The responses of other students are presented in Chart 145.

Chart 145: Students' opinions on the reasons of student violence against teachers (%)



According to students' perception, most of these incidents occurred due to conflictual relationships between students and teachers, and they believe that in many cases, it was the teacher's fault. Similar to this is the opinion that these are students with problems who are unable to control themselves and therefore deserve a degree of understanding for their actions, at least to certain extent. A smaller proportion of cases refer to those where students wanted to assert their power, to show off in front of other students, and show that no one can do anything to them (24%). If we view this explanation separately, it is somewhat more common in urban schools (25% compared to 19%), and it is more frequently reported by children who have been violent towards other students (29% compared to 23%). However, these differences are very small, and no differences were

found between other categories, not even between students who had been violent towards teachers and those who had not.

Violent interactions between teachers and students require great attention. Based on students' statements, since the beginning of the school year, 13% of students (approximately one in seven students) have been involved in such interactions, mostly as victims of teacher violence. Teachers' involvement is similar. Based on the responses in the employee questionnaire, it can be seen that 12% of teachers stated that, during the current and the past school year, a student displayed violent behaviour towards them. Additionally, 35% reported that there were incidents of verbal aggression by teachers towards students in their schools, and 5% indicated that there were also cases of physical aggression. Furthermore, 63% said that students displayed verbal aggression towards teachers, while 22% reported there were also incidents of physical aggression by students towards teachers.

It was indicated above that 64% of students are involved in violent interactions with peers. When it comes to violent interactions in general, we can add to that percentage 2% of students who were not involved in violent interactions with peers, but were involved in violent incidents with teachers. **Therefore, the percentage of students involved in our survey who were involved in some form of violent interaction at school is 66%, or two thirds of students.**

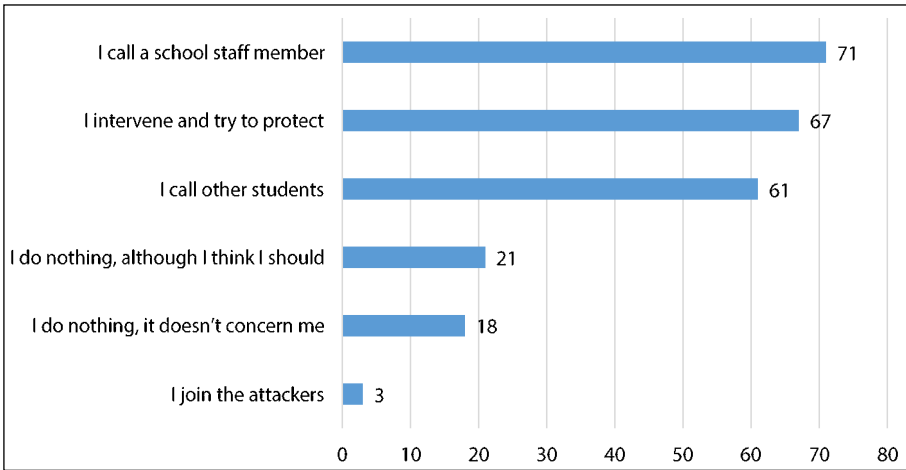
## 6.16. STUDENTS' BELIEFS AND ACTIONS RELATED TO VIOLENT INTERACTIONS

### What do students do when they witness peer violence?

Students were asked what they do when they see other students at school engaging in violent behaviour towards one of their peers. They were presented a list with six options, three of which describe active assistance, either through personal involvement or by turning to an employee or peer for help (Chart 146). Only 8% did not select any of these three answers, and 31% selected all three answers. **Virtually all students express a willingness to prevent peer violence when they witness it.** This percentage of students who show willingness to protect a student who is assaulted was also obtained in a previous survey of primary school students (Popadić, Plut & Pavlović, 2014). The results of the PISA survey also suggest that the vast majority of students are willing to condemn peer violence and help students at risk (Čaprić & Videnović, 2024). For instance, 86% of students agreed with the statement "I feel glad when someone stands up for students who are being bullied", and 83% agreed with the statement "I feel bad when I witness other students being bullied".

The most frequently chosen response was to turn to adults for support (71%), and only slightly less common response was to intervene on their own (67%) or invite other students (61%). Twenty-one per cent of them responded that, at least sometimes, they do nothing, even though they believe they should, or that they do nothing because they think it is none of their business (18%). Three per cent of them indicated that they join the aggressors because they consider it just fun.

Chart 146: Students' responses when they witness peer violence (%)



The difference between children from urban and rural schools was that children from rural schools were more likely to turn to adults (80% compared to 68%,  $V = .11$ ). The percentage of students who would turn to adults gradually decreased with age ( $V = .23$ ): 86% of 5th grade primary school students would turn to adults, as well as 72% of 7th grade students, 62% of 1st grade secondary school students, and 59% of 3rd grade secondary school students. No differences were observed between students from small and big schools.

Girls were more likely to turn to adults (76% compared to 64%,  $V = .12$ ). Higher-achieving students were also more likely to turn to adults (74% compared to 66%). Children who suffered peer violence throughout their schooling were less likely to turn to adults for help (62% compared to 75%). Bullies are less likely to turn to adults (54% compared to 77%), more likely to join the aggressors (6% compared to 2%,  $V = .12$ ), or to believe that it is none of their business (28% compared to 15%,  $V = .15$ ).

The analysis of paired questionnaires showed that none of these responses – neither actively providing help nor displaying indifference towards others – was associated with parents' statements about how much importance they assign to the parenting goal related to their child helping others.

Seven per cent of students selected only the responses indicating refraining from providing help. No differences were observed between them and other children in terms of sociodemographic characteristics. They were significantly less likely to be integrated into the school community ( $\rho = -.12$ ) and had significantly less pronounced prosocial attitudes and communication competence ( $\rho = -.17$ ).

It was observed that students believe that others would help them if someone attacked them – 72% of them believe that others would “always” or “very often” help them. The strength of the norm of helping is also shown by the fact that, among 17 students who believe that no one would be willing to help them in the event that someone bullies them, 11 of them say that they would intervene and try to protect someone who is suffering violence.

Although, as mentioned, virtually all students selected some of the responses indicating willingness to help, 70% of them selected *only* those responses. This means that, for a large portion of students, whether they will help depends on different circumstances. Many children are willing to help someone who is in their friend group, but not just anyone who is in trouble (Huitsing et al., 2012).

## Opinions regarding causes of violence

Students, with the exception of the youngest group (5th grade primary school students) were asked what their opinion was on the causes of violent student behaviour. Eight possible causes were listed, and for each of them, they were to indicate whether it was not at all, a little, moderately, or very important. A list of possible causes is presented in Chart 147.

The first chart shows the responses of students from the whole sample. Children put peer influence first, followed by family influence, the desire to be popular, and media influence. Forty-two per cent of them described peer influence as “very significant”, 38% said so for the desire to be popular, and 39% for family influence. For all other factors, more students believe that these factors have little or no influence than those who believe they have a moderate or very strong influence (when evaluating media influence, the ratio is equally divided). Three quarters of students do not believe inadequate curricula and teaching methods are a significant factor, and two thirds of them do not think the causes are in the social value system.

The second chart shows students’ responses from the paired questionnaires and their parents’ responses. When we compare student responses with their parents’ responses, it can be seen that parents attribute more importance to all factors compared to children (except peer influence, which children rated first). Parents believe that family influence is the most significant, followed by media influence, and the desire for popularity. Furthermore, in their opinion, overall situation is more important than peer influence.

Chart 147: Evaluation of the importance of the causes of violent student behaviour (average ratings)

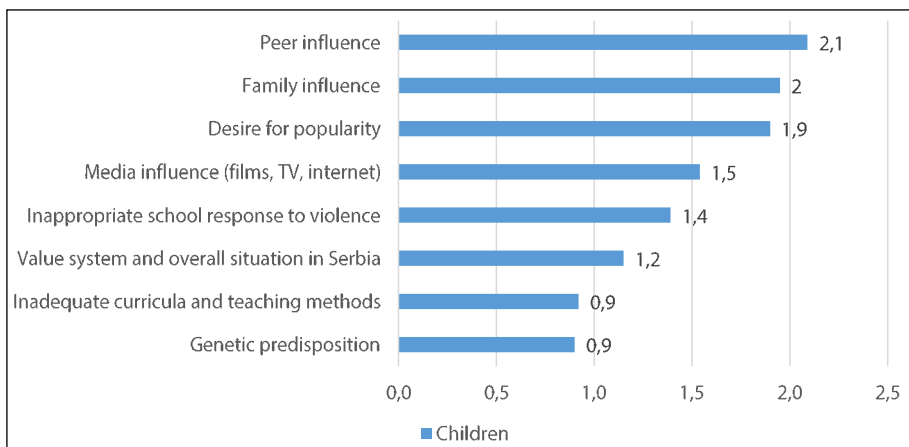
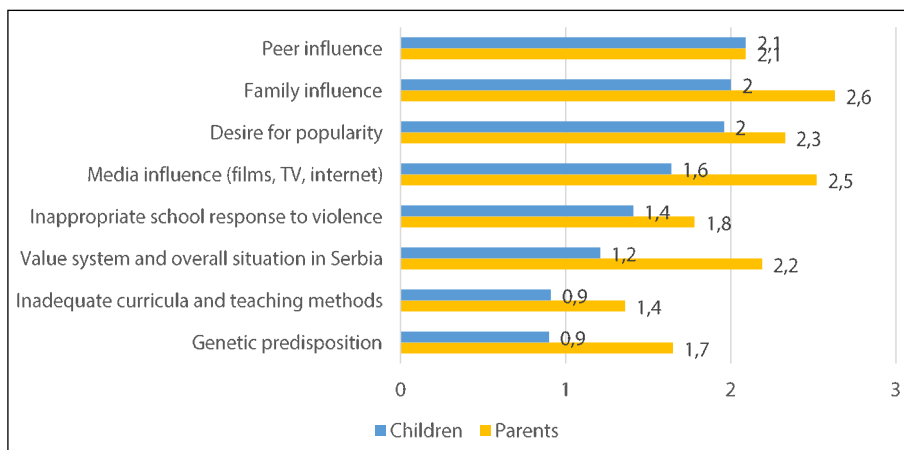


Chart 148: Importance of the causes of violent behaviour  
– comparison of evaluations of children and their parents  
(average ratings)



Students are less inclined to view school and the broader social system as key causes of violence; rather, they perceive violence primarily as stemming from peer dynamics and factors in the child's immediate surroundings. On the other hand, their parents have a somewhat broader approach to the causes of violence.

Low correlations are found between the importance that children assign to the listed causes and the importance their parents assign to them (Table 23).

Table 23: Correlations between students' and parents opinions on the causes of peer violence

Family	Genetic predisposition	Peers	Media	Inappropriate programmes	Overall situation	Lack of school response	Desire for popularity
<b>.11**</b>	<b>.13**</b>	.06	<b>.12**</b>	<b>.10*</b>	<b>.15**</b>	.09	<b>.15**</b>

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Regarding the evaluations of the importance of possible causes of violence, the greatest difference is observed between children of different ages. Older children tend to attribute greater importance to all of the above causes than younger children. Higher-achieving students are also more likely to emphasise these causes than lower-achieving students, with the exception of opinions about two causes that students consider the least important. Girls attribute greater importance to the influence of family, peers, and media compared to boys.

Table 24: Correlations between students' opinions on the causes of peer violence and sociodemographic variables

	School urbanity	School size	Grade	Sex	Scholastic performance
Family influence	<b>.18**</b>	.08**	<b>.21**</b>	<b>.16**</b>	<b>.26**</b>
Genetic predisposition	.02	-.01	<b>.11**</b>	-.01	.07**
Peer influence	<b>.20**</b>	.10**	<b>.27**</b>	<b>.15**</b>	<b>.23**</b>
Media influence	<b>.15**</b>	.09**	<b>.19**</b>	<b>.17**</b>	<b>.17**</b>
Inappropriate programmes	<b>.13**</b>	.05	<b>.19**</b>	.06	.08**
Overall situation	<b>.17**</b>	.04	<b>.31**</b>	.06	<b>.13**</b>
Lack of school response	<b>.19**</b>	.08**	<b>.26**</b>	<b>.10**</b>	<b>.18**</b>
Desire for popularity	<b>.10**</b>	.01	<b>.11**</b>	.08**	<b>.16**</b>

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

There are several significant correlations with violence and victimisation, but they do not exceed 0.10. Both those who suffered and perpetrated violence believe that family and the media are less influential. There are no differences in how the causes of violence are perceived depending on the role in a violent interaction.

## Opinions on ways to combat school violence

Students were asked to rate how successful they believe different measures for combating violent behaviour among students at school would be (this question was not given to the youngest, 5th grade students). They were offered a list of 10 measures (see Chart 149) and rated the success of the measures on a four-point scale: not at all, a little, moderately, and very much. Chart 150 compares children's and their parents' opinions from paired questionnaires.

Chart 149: Evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-violence measures (average values)

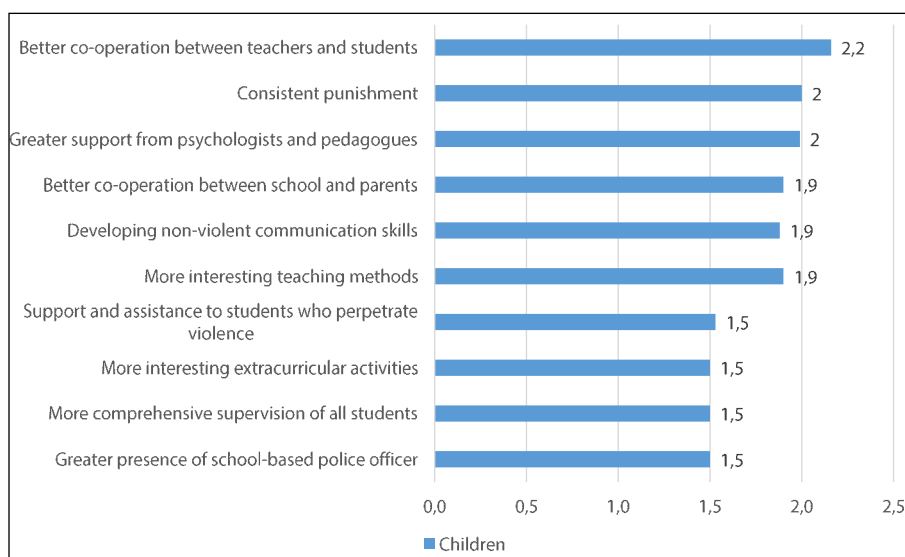
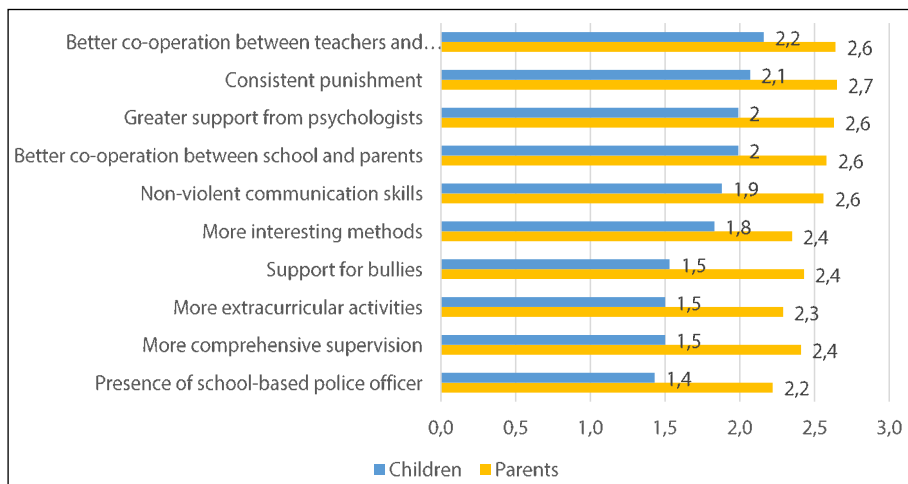


Chart 150: Evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-violence measures – comparison of evaluations of children and their parents (average ratings)



It can be said that, from the students' perspective, all the proposed measures are useful, and for no measure does the number of those who rate them as not at all or only little effective exceed the number of those who rate them as moderately or very effective (only more comprehensive supervision of students and increased presence of school-based police officer were rated as not at all or only little effective by a narrow majority – 52% and 53% of students – probably because these measures are perceived as a potential threat to students' freedom of behaviour at school). Students tend to favour measures that involve collaboration among various stakeholders within the school environment, as well as consistent punishment for violent behaviour.

With regard to measure effectiveness, parents believe that all measures would be effective and they attribute approximately equal importance to them. Both students and parents tend to prioritise improving interpersonal relationships and communication in the school community, while placing less emphasis on those based on control and supervision.

There is agreement in the evaluations of students and their parents regarding the role of the school-based police officer, extracurricular activities, and more interesting teaching methods (Table 25).

Table 25: Correlations between children's and parents' evaluations of the effectiveness of measures to combat peer violence at school

Co-operation between school and parents	Co-operation between teachers and students	Psychologists	Non-violent communication	Punishment	Support for bullies	More comprehensive supervision	School-based police officer	Extracurricular act.	More interesting methods
.05	-.01	.05	.01	.04	.05	.06	<b>.15**</b>	<b>.10*</b>	<b>.10*</b>

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Correlations between students' opinions and sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Table 26. Older students assigned greater importance to better co-operation between teachers and students, improving non-violent communication, and consistent punishment of bullies. Students with better scholastic performance were more likely to emphasise the importance of better co-operation between teachers and students, greater support from school psychologists and pedagogues, consistent punishment of bullies, and support and help for students who exhibit violent behaviour. No difference was observed between sexes.

Table 26: Correlations between students' evaluations of the effectiveness of measures to combat peer violence at school and sociodemographic variables

	School urbanity	School size	Grade	Sex	Scholastic performance
Better co-operation between school and parents	.07**	.05	.02	.03	.06 <sup>†</sup>
Better co-operation between teachers and students	<b>.13**</b>	.08**	<b>.14**</b>	.09**	<b>.10**</b>
Greater support from psychologists and pedagogues	<b>.11</b>	.71	.00	.00	<b>.10</b>
Developing non-violent communication skills	.09**	.03	<b>.12**</b>	.09**	.09**
Consistent punishment of bullies	.08**	-.03	<b>.19**</b>	.06 <sup>†</sup>	<b>.12**</b>
Support and help for bullies	<b>.12**</b>	.03	.09**	.06 <sup>†</sup>	<b>.11**</b>
More comprehensive supervision	.01	.02	.00	.03	.01
Greater presence of school-based police officer	.01	.05	.03	-.00	-.01
More interesting extracurricular activities	.05	.01	.04	.02	.01
More interesting teaching methods	.08**	<b>.10**</b>	.02	.02	.04

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

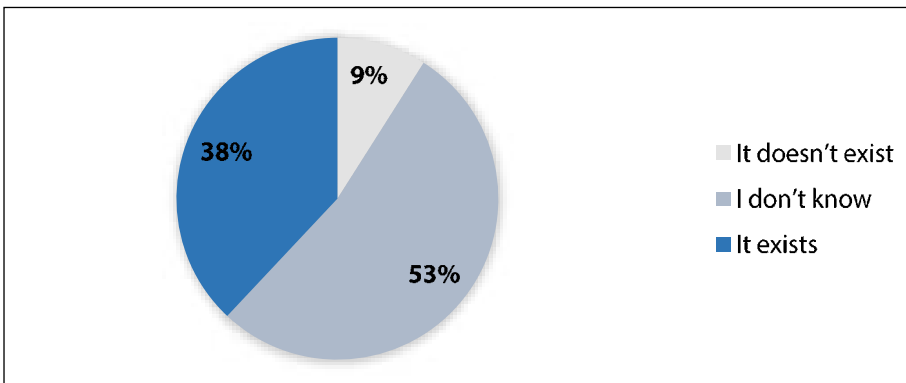
Violent students attribute less importance to the above measures, especially greater support from pedagogues and psychologists ( $rho = -.15$ ), better co-operation between teachers and students ( $rho = -.13$ ), better co-operation between schools and parents ( $rho = -.13$ ), and greater presence of a school-based police officer ( $rho = -.10$ ). Opinions of victimised students regarding this matter do not

differ from those of other students, except for the fact that they attribute less importance to the presence of a school-based police officer ( $\rho = -.09$ ), and better co-operation between teachers and students ( $\rho = -.09$ ).

## 6.17. AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION MEASURES

Although every school is legally obligated to form a Protection Team and showcase the list of team members in a prominent place, many students did not know that this team existed, or who its members were. Half of the students did not know whether or not the team existed, a minority of them were aware of its existence, while one in ten students claimed that no such team existed (Chart 151).<sup>17</sup>

Chart 151: Student awareness of the existence of the Violence Protection Team (%)



There was no school where all students were aware that the team existed. The highest percentage of those in a school who stated that a team existed was 75%, while more than half of students said so in only 18 schools (23%).

Children in rural schools, small schools, and those who have not displayed violent behaviour (41% compared to 30%) were more often aware that such a team existed.

When asked whether they were familiar with the school's obligations in the event of violence, two thirds (66%) of students stated they were. This number decreased with age (from 72% among the youngest students to 58% among the oldest students,  $V = .10$ ). Violent students were less aware of this than non-violent students (59% compared to 70%,  $V = .10$ ). Students who had suffered violence were less aware of this than others, but the difference was only 6% (64% compared to 70%). One of the measures for preventing peer violence is the formulation of class rules that students can refer to in conflict situations. When asked whether they had agreed on rules in their class, 38% of students confirmed this, more so in rural schools (55% compared to 32%), small schools (42% compared to 32%), and in

17 In the Special Report on School Violence prepared by the Ombudsman (2023), it is also stated that only one third of students were aware that a Protection Team existed in their school, while only one in ten students knew who the Team members were.

lower grades (from 54% to 21%,  $V = .27$ ). If such rules existed, it would be expected that this be confirmed by, if not everyone, then at least more than half of the students within the class. However, in only 29% of the 154 classes surveyed did more than half of students state that such an agreement on rules existed. More than half of students say this in 22 fifth grade classes (out of a total of 48 classes), 18 seventh grade classes (out of 48), 5 first grade secondary school classes (out of 29), and no third grade classes.

Of those who stated that such rules existed, 50% said they often used them in arguments, conflicts, or similar situations, 31% used them sometimes, while 19% did not use them at all. Therefore, out of the total sample, 29% of students stated that the rules they established were occasionally or often followed within the class.

Has any school employee (teacher, psychologist, pedagogue) instructed them what to do when they are angry or when they are arguing? One in four students (27%) stated that adults had never instructed them regarding this, 38% said that they were rarely instructed, and only one third of students (35%) reported that adults talked to them about it frequently. This is more likely to be reported by children in rural schools ( $V = .14$ ), older students ( $V = .16$ ), and those who are not victims of violence ( $V = .11$ ).

Do they participate in activities aimed at preventing violence? Twenty-four per cent of them said that their school had not organised such activities, 29% said that they do not participate in such activities, 31% participate occasionally, and 16% often. If we exclude those who stated that their schools had not done this, attendance at these programmes was not associated with the frequency of violence. In the study on which the Special Report on School Violence prepared by the Ombudsman (2023) is based, among children who said they had exhibited violence, an even higher percentage attended violence prevention programmes compared to children who had not exhibited violence (40% compared to 30%). Violence prevention programmes have not provided the expected results. Such activities are more likely to be attended by children in rural schools (71% compared to 59%,  $V = .20$ ), younger students (from 27% of 5th grade students who do not participate to 52% of 3rd grade secondary schools who do not participate,  $V = .17$ ).

# 7. Specific characteristics of digital communication and cyberbullying

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**T**his chapter presents research results on the use of digital technologies and cyberbullying among students, analysed from the perspectives of school employees, students, and their parents/legal guardians. Even though digital communication and cyberbullying were not the primary focus of this research – only a small number of questions in the questionnaire referred to them – these topics are unavoidable in the study of peer violence, considering the importance that digital technologies have in the daily lives of children and youth.

## 7.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS: SCHOOL EMPLOYEES, STUDENTS, AND PARENTS

- ▶ Employees in our sample, according to their own evaluations, possess very advanced digital skills (average score of 8.9 on a 10-point scale). Their self-assessed digital skills had a higher average score than the students' digital skills (7.9), which is inconsistent with the findings of previous studies.
- ▶ According to employees' opinion, secondary school students have more advanced digital skills than primary school students, which is consistent with parents' evaluations, but not with students' self-assessments.
- ▶ Digital skills scores decline with employee age and work experience. Greater self-confidence in digital skills is associated with a more positive self-assessment of skills for preventing and responding to violence and the evaluation of students' digital skills.
- ▶ Most employees (40%) believe that parent Viber groups are not useful in solving problems that students encounter at school, and that they can even be harmful. The evaluation of the effectiveness of parent groups is positively correlated with employees' satisfaction with their relationship with parents.
- ▶ Most employees have a very negative view of the impact of technology on students' physical and mental health, their behaviour, and daily ac-

tivities and obligations. The more negative the attitude towards the use of digital devices, the more frequently employees report the presence of cyberbullying and the more seriously they evaluate the problem of cyberbullying for the school.

- ▶ According to over two thirds of employees, the following forms of cyberbullying are most common among students: taking photos and videos without permission, excluding someone from online groups or activities, and sending offensive or threatening messages online, while a significantly smaller percentage of employees (around one fifth) report the misuse of generative artificial intelligence tools.
- ▶ A positive correlation was observed between the evaluation of the presence of digital and traditional violence. The cyberbullying score negatively correlates with employees' self-assessed digital skills and satisfaction with relationships at school.
- ▶ In the total sample, slightly less than a third (29%) of employees state that the use of mobile phones is prohibited during classes in their school, except when the teacher allows it (this is most often reported by principals), and the same percentage of employees say that the use of mobile phones is prohibited both during classes and breaks.
- ▶ The older students are, the more time they spend online. Most younger students spend up to three hours online during an average schoolday, most secondary school students spend over four hours, while one third of the oldest secondary school students spend over six hours a day online.
- ▶ Among the youngest students, boys spend somewhat more time online during the day, while the situation is reversed among the oldest students, where twice as many girls than boys use the internet for over six hours a day.
- ▶ The older students are, the more time they spend on social media. Nearly eight out of ten 7th grade students have daily contact with content they find on social media. Girls are somewhat more prevalent among those who use social media most intensively. The average number of profiles per student is 3.8, while the number of profiles increases with the student's age. Instagram is by far the most popular social media platform among secondary school students, followed by TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat, while the number of young people who use Facebook, which has long been the most popular social network, is negligible today. Girls are somewhat more likely than boys to use TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp, while boys are more likely to use Viber, YouTube, and X.
- ▶ Around two thirds of primary school students play online games almost every day or more frequently, while most secondary school students do not play online games daily, but rather several times a week or less often. Boys are more likely to play games across all age groups, while sex differences become more pronounced as students get older.
- ▶ Nine in ten secondary school students use the internet for schoolwork, while the same is done by eight in ten primary school students.

- ▶ Students most often use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to find information, with almost two thirds of them doing so at least occasionally, and nearly half of them relying on AI tools at least occasionally when doing homework.
- ▶ Most schools have imposed some form of ban on mobile phone use, with bans being more restrictive in primary schools than in secondary schools. Nearly half of primary school students stated they are not allowed to use mobile phones during the entire school day, in contrast to a small portion of secondary school students. On the other hand, in almost half of secondary schools, the use of mobiles is allowed in class, provided that they are used for educational purposes.
- ▶ Students of all ages rated the highest their own digital skills, compared to the skills of their schoolmates, teachers, and parents (overall average rating of 9). Boys rated their digital skills half a point higher compared to girls, as did students with excellent scholastic performance compared to those with lower performance.
- ▶ Nearly three quarters of students have never been exposed to cyberbullying. The most prevalent types of cyberbullying were taking photos without permission or excluding someone from an online group or activity. Those who engage in cyberbullying are often also exposed to cyberbullying themselves. This is most strongly manifested in the youngest students.
- ▶ The most common response to digital harassment among both boys and girls is some form of “defensive” tactics that would involve cutting off contact with violent students, as well as deleting their communication history. The second set of tactics could be called “proactive”, and they would involve some form of response aimed at reporting a violent person or situation or changing user privacy settings.
- ▶ Around one fifth of students have seen at least one video or photo showing violence, whether verbal or physical, or sexually explicit content involving students from their school. Girls and boys were exposed to this type of content to the same extent. Almost 60% of students took no action when they encountered violent or sexually explicit videos involving their school peers.
- ▶ Among those who reacted, the most common type of reaction was reporting such videos or photos, primarily to parents, followed by school employees, and finally, via the website. At the individual level, most of those who reacted, almost half of them, did so by informing the people in the video or photo about its existence. Primary school students are more willing to notify an at-risk person compared to secondary school students, as well as to report the existence of such content to someone. The older the students are, the more often they state that such photos or videos are none of their business – from half of 7th grade primary school students to almost three quarters of 3rd grade secondary school students.

- ▶ According to parents' responses, children are generally open to communication with their parents about activities and inconveniences they encounter online. Over three quarters of children initiated a conversation about their online activities; nearly half talked about something they saw online that upset or scared them, while just over one third of children sought support from their parents in solving problems encountered online. As parents age, communication about their children's online activities decreases. Children are somewhat more inclined to initiate conversations and confide in their mothers rather than their fathers on these topics.
- ▶ Most parents are not inclined to use time tracking apps for online activities, but eight out of ten parents defined internal rules on the amount of time their child can spend online, as well as on their online activities. Parents of younger children are more likely to define restrictions on internet use, either through establishing rules or with specialised parental control apps. This indicates that parents are aware of the need to control their children's use of the internet, but also that this control is more often established periodically through negotiation with children, and less often through automated, or software-based forms of control.
- ▶ When it comes to joint activities and encouragement related to exploratory use of the internet, most parents actively encourage their children to use the internet. Eight in ten parents encourage their children to use the internet for research purposes at least occasionally, and nearly three quarters of them participate in joint online activities with their children at least occasionally. Older parents, those with greater level of education, and with better financial status are more likely to encourage their children to do research and study online.
- ▶ Nearly half of parents believe that the internet greatly interferes with their children's daily activities, while one quarter of them state that its effect is moderate. Furthermore, more than half of parents believe that the internet has at least a moderate negative effect on their children's mental and physical health, while nearly half believe that it has the same effect on their behaviour. On the other hand, most parents believe that the internet greatly facilitates children's communication with peers, while two thirds of them believe that it moderately or fairly facilitates schoolwork.
- ▶ Six out of ten parents seek information and advice related to their children's online safety. The main sources of information are family members and friends, followed by various websites (including school or online safety centre websites), as well as traditional media. What is worrying, however, is that almost 40% of parents are not interested in information and advice related to their children's online safety.
- ▶ Despite frequent public condemnation of parent Viber groups, two thirds of parents consider these groups useful, while one third believe they are not useful, or harmful. The usefulness of Viber groups is more likely to be emphasised by parents from rural areas, as well as those with a lower level of education and weaker digital skills.

- ▶ Parents rate their children’s digital skills somewhat better than their own, which is especially pronounced among parents of secondary school students. Parents with a higher level of education and better financial status rate their digital skills more positively compared to parents with a lower level of education and worse financial status. What is interesting is that parents of primary school students rate their own digital skills half a point higher than parents of secondary school students, which can probably be attributed to the fact that parents of secondary school students underestimate their own digital skills, or overestimate their children’s skills.
- ▶ Somewhat over half of parents believe that children can acquire digital skills for safe internet use at school, but more than one quarter of parents state they are unable to evaluate whether schools provide this opportunity. On the other hand, slightly less than one fifth of parents believe that children cannot acquire such skills at school. Parents of primary school children have a far more positive attitude towards schools compared to parents of secondary school students, especially those whose children attend vocational schools. This attitude is likely influenced by the aforementioned tendency to overestimate the digital skills of secondary school-age children and underestimate the skills of teachers, which leads parents to conclude that the school is unable to adequately develop the digital skills of children who already possess strong digital skills.

## 7.2. INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

We will provide a brief overview of Serbian students’ use of digital technologies. According to the findings of the international study “EU Kids Online”, conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic on a representative sample of children and young people (aged 9 to 17), the majority use digital devices and the internet on a daily basis (Kuzmanović et al., 2019). According to self-assessed screen time, our students are at the top of the list of participating countries, as shown in two international studies (Smahel et al., 2020; Fraillon, 2024). As part of the latest PISA cycle, conducted in 2022, less than 2% of 15-year-old students had no access to any digital device during the pandemic, while around 5% of students shared a device with family members. According to school principals’ estimates, 99% of Serbian students are educated in schools equipped with internet-connected computers (Čaprić & Videnović, 2024).

Among digital devices, young people most often use mobile phones, particularly for entertainment and communication, and much less often for creating digital content and help with schoolwork. In Serbia, 28% of students use digital devices at school daily for school purposes, which is below the international average, and 47% use them at school for other purposes, which is above the average of countries included in the international computer and information literacy study (abbr. ICILS) (Fraillon, 2024). Compared to other European countries, Serbia ranks among those with the highest percentage of children who have profiles on social networking websites at an age younger than legally permitted (Smahel et al., 2020).

With the increasingly intensified use of digital technologies, the question of their impact on the health and well-being of children and young people, scholastic performance, and social functioning is increasingly examined. Concerns about the negative impact of excessive use of digital technologies on young people often take on the proportions of a *moral panic*, which cyclically appears with the emergence of each new medium (Orben, 2020), and which can prompt parents, teachers, and policymakers to make decisions unsupported by valid scientific and empirical evidence. One of the most common methodological limitations of most previous studies is their *correlational nature*, which means that based on the findings, it cannot be reliably asserted whether problematic internet use is a consequence or a cause of, for instance, dysfunctional relationships, insufficient social support, feeling of loneliness, and anxiety among young people. (Popadić et al., 2020). Some previous research on a national sample indicates an association of the screen time and the level of digital competence with the frequency of risky online behaviour and cyberbullying (Popadić and Kuzmanović, 2016). Despite numerous opportunities the internet provides, it also carries with it potential risks, such as exposure to harmful content, contact with strangers, excessive and problematic internet use, and the risk of cyberbullying, which is the focus of most studies.

### 7.3. DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND CYBERBULLYING: SCHOOL EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVE

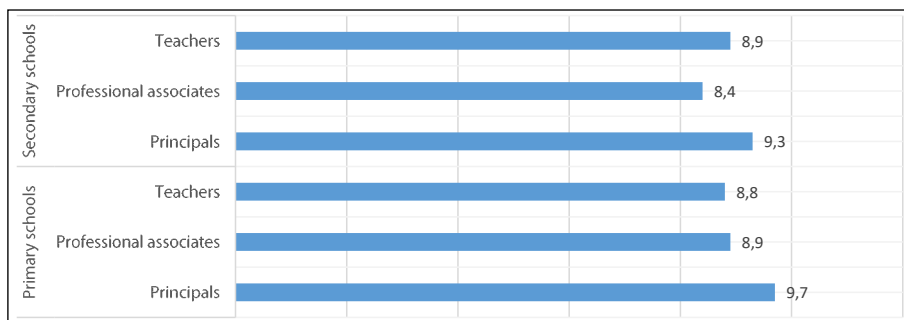
The questionnaire for employees includes eight questions related to the use of digital technologies: the level of digital skills, the frequency of different types of cyberbullying among students and the severity of cyberbullying compared to traditional violence, positive and negative aspects of using digital devices, and the rules for using mobile phones in the school context. Most of the questions are common to students and adults, enabling comparative analysis.

#### 7.2.1. Self-assessment of digital skills and assessment of students' digital skills

The manner of digital technology use largely depends on the user's digital skills. Acquiring appropriate digital competence is considered one of the most effective measures for preventing risky online behaviour and cyberbullying. As part of this research, we examined the digital skills of employees, parents, and students, but only based on one question related to global self-assessment, which does not provide a reliable picture of the actual level of digital skills. In addition to self-assessment, employees rated students' digital skills on a scale from 0 (very poor) to 10 (very good).

Employees in our sample self-assessed their internet use and computer programme skills as **very advanced** (average score of 8.9; standard deviation 1.9). The following chart shows the average ratings of **own digital skills** for three categories of employees in primary and secondary schools.

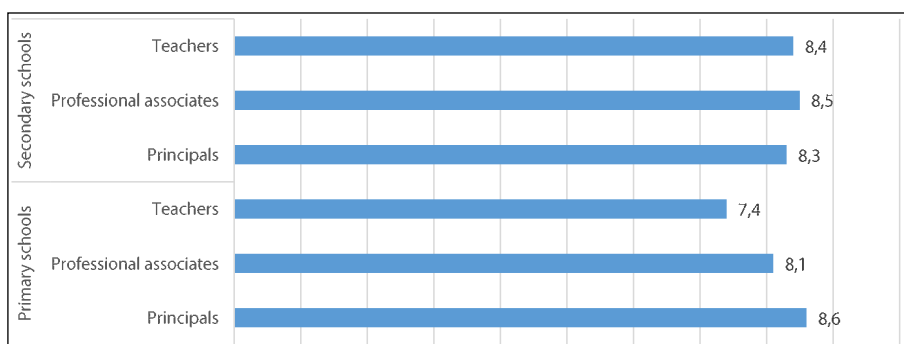
Chart 152: Self-assessment of employees' digital skills (average ratings)



Position at school has little impact on employees' self-assessment of digital skills. Employees rated students' digital skills with a lower average score than their own digital skills (average score of 7.9; standard deviation 2.22), but they were evaluated as advanced.

The following chart shows the differences in average ratings of **students' digital skills** between three categories of employees in primary and secondary schools (Chart 153).

Chart 153: Assessment of students' digital skills (average ratings)



As in the case of self-assessment, the difference between the three employee categories in evaluating students' digital skills is small and not practically significant. On the other hand, a significant difference was observed in the evaluation of students' digital skills between employees in primary and secondary schools, which has moderate practical significance ( $t(1786.318) = -9.344, p < .001, d = .42$ )<sup>18</sup>. Secondary school employees, especially teachers, rated students' digital skills higher compared to primary school employees. The employees' evaluations are consistent with the parents'; they also believe that older children have more advanced digital skills. When students evaluate their own digital skills, age also positively correlates with their ratings, which has been confirmed in most previous studies (for example, Popadić et al., 2016; Kuzmanović et al., 2019), but not in this research (now even younger children have equal digital self-confidence).

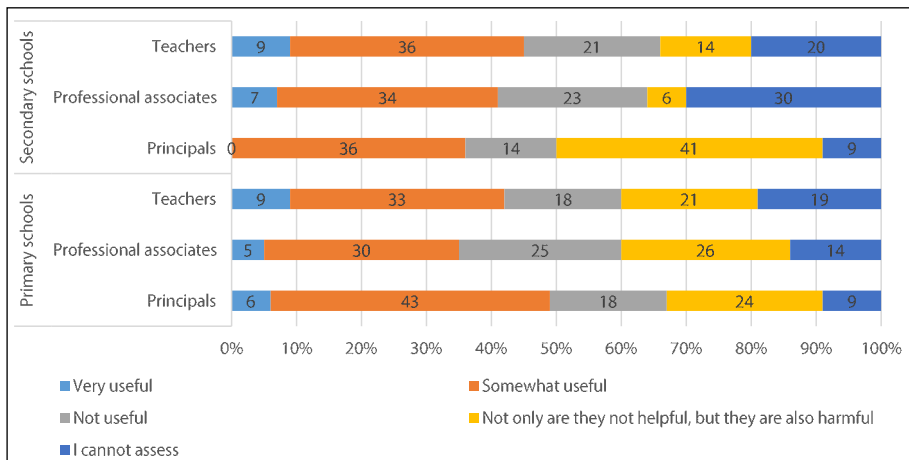
18 Cohen's effect size (or Cohen's *d*) is a measure of the strength of the difference between two groups. It indicates how big the difference between groups is, measured in standard deviations.

Self-assessment of digital skills negatively correlates with employees' age ( $\rho = -.29$ ), years of working in the area of expertise ( $\rho = -.30$ ), and years of service in the current position ( $\rho = -.28$ ). Employees who feel more competent in the area of preventing and responding to school violence give higher ratings to their own digital skills ( $\rho = .27$ ), as well as their students' digital skills ( $\rho = .29$ ). Among principals, greater self-confidence in organisational and managerial, as well as leadership skills (expressed through an average score) is associated with greater digital self-efficacy ( $\rho = .13$ ).

On the other hand, employees' evaluation of students' digital skills is not associated with employees' age and work experience, but it is associated with the evaluation of their own digital skills ( $\rho = .29$ ). It is possible that adults with higher digital self-efficacy also have higher expectations of students regarding the use of digital technologies, and thus possess more direct experience that provides them with better insight into students' digital competence.

Although often used in research, self-assessment is not always a reliable indicator of actual digital skills (Aesaert et al., 2014; ECDL, 2016). When it comes to students, a tendency has been observed to overestimate their own digital skills and underestimate the digital skills of adults (parents and teachers), particularly among older children (Popadić and Kuzmanović, 2016), which was also confirmed in the present study (as a reminder, they rated their own skills with an average score of 9, and teachers' skills with 7.6). Compared to their peers from other European countries, children and young people from Serbia show more self-confidence in their internet use and digital technology skills (Smahel et al., 2020). Most studies have shown low correlations between self-perceived and actual levels of digital competence, determined based on direct evaluation in a real-world context (Siddiq et al., 2016; Kuzmanović, 2017). Greater experience with technology, as well as a limited understanding of the concept of digital skills and their reduction to basic digital device-handling abilities, may contribute to increased self-efficacy. Based on a secondary analysis of data obtained within the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS), the most important predictor of digital self-ef-

Chart 154: Usefulness of Viber groups for solving students' problems at school (%)



ficacy in students is the use of digital devices and the internet for entertainment and leisure (Rohatgi et al., 2016).

### Usefulness of parent Viber groups

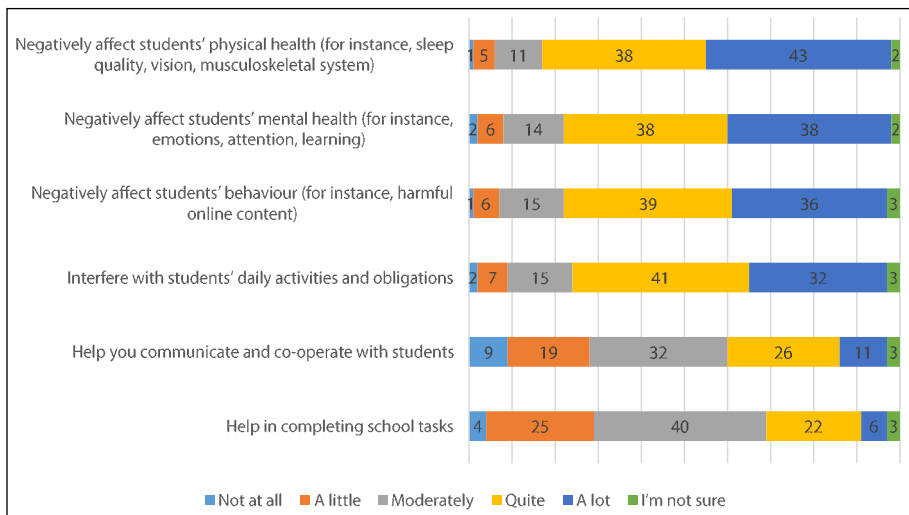
In recent years, and particularly during the pandemic and the transition to online learning, parent networking through online groups has become increasingly popular, and in our country, Viber is the most commonly used. Teachers, particularly form teachers, may also be included in online groups, so we were interested in their opinion was – whether parent Viber groups are useful for solving problems students encounter at school. Excluding those who were unable to evaluate this (19% of the total sample), one third of employees (34%) believe that parent Viber groups are useful to a certain extent, one fifth believe they are not useful, and the same percentage believe they are harmful (Chart 154). This finding suggests the need for additional qualitative research of positive and negative aspects of parents’ networking through online groups.

Primary school employees have a slightly more positive attitude towards parental Viber groups compared to secondary school employees ( $V = .10$ ). The perceived effectiveness of these groups is not associated with whether the teacher is a form teacher, or class or subject teacher, but it is significantly positively correlated with satisfaction with the relationship with parents ( $\rho = .18$ ).

## 7.2.2. Positive and negative aspects of using digital devices

School employees often have better insight than parents into students’ use of digital devices, particularly for educational purposes, as well as into their digital skills, behaviour during classes, social interactions, and exposure to risks in the digital environment. In this survey, employees were asked to what extent, in their opinion, the use of digital devices affects students’ health and daily functioning. Based on the data in the chart below, it is clear that most employees have a very negative view of the impact of technology on students’ physical and mental health, their behaviour, and daily activities and obligations (Chart 155).

Chart 155: Positive and negative aspects of using digital devices (%)



Surprisingly, it was observed that almost one third of employees hardly recognise the opportunities that technology provides for communication and co-operation with students, learning, and schoolwork. Employees with a more positive view of using technology to communicate with students are more likely to believe that it can help students with their schoolwork ( $\rho = .39$ ). The perception of positive effects of technology is not associated with the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics (sex, age, professional work experience).

The negative effects of technology use on students' health and functioning are significantly more likely to be reported by employees than parents.

Based on four statements related to negative aspects of technology use, which are highly intercorrelated (from .41 to .63), an average score was obtained – a measure of the negative impact of digital device use on students ( $\alpha = .83$ ). This score is negatively correlated with the cyberbullying assessment score, which means that employees with a more negative attitude towards the use of digital devices are more likely to report the presence of cyberbullying ( $\rho = .23$ ), and also more seriously evaluate the problem of cyberbullying in their school ( $\rho = .23$ ).

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, empirical findings on the impact of digital technologies on youth are inconsistent. According to recently published findings from more methodologically rigorous studies (longitudinal designs and experiments were used), the effects depend on individual characteristics (such as sex and age), frequency, and method of technology use. Therefore, it is not possible to speak of universal effects of digital media – social media can be both beneficial and harmful, depending on the context in which they are used and the individual characteristics of young people (Smahel et al., 2025).

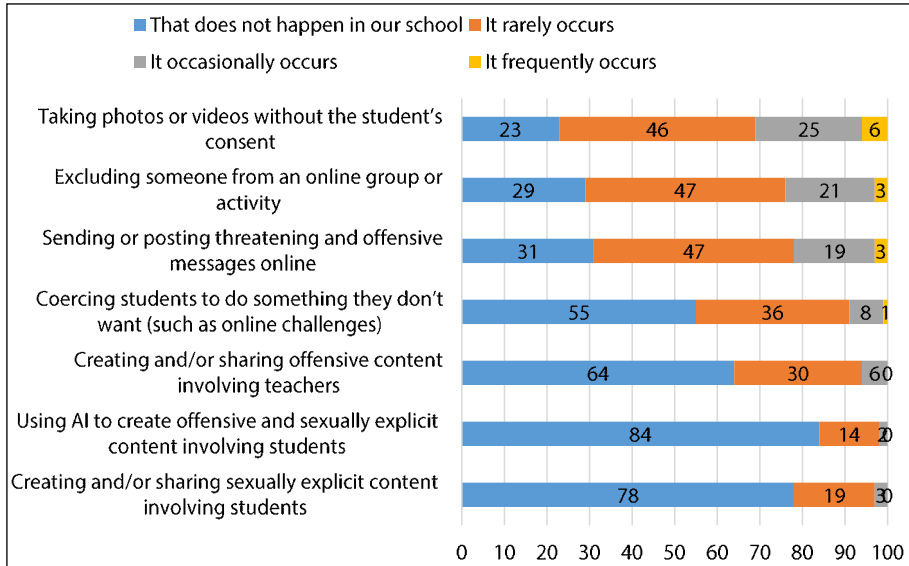
### **7.2.3. Evaluation of the prevalence and severity of cyberbullying in schools**

We were also interested to see how employees evaluate the frequency of digital or online peer violence. Cyberbullying refers to the use of digital technologies and the internet with the aim of upsetting, hurting, humiliating, and causing harm to another person (Popadić & Kuzmanović, 2016). Cyberbullying occurs in various forms, may be committed directly and indirectly, and has its own specific characteristics compared to face-to-face violence. Despite its specific characteristics, cyberbullying is fundamentally violence, and empirical findings show that it is associated with peer violence (Popadić and Kuzmanović, 2016; Kuzmanović et al., 2019; Smahel et al., 2020).

In recent years, with the increasing availability of tools based on generative artificial intelligence, new ways of misusing technology have emerged, such as creating false or compromising content, manipulating voice and image for the purpose of deception or blackmail, automated generation of harmful or disturbing messages, targeted harassment, or spreading disinformation.

Employees in our sample evaluated the frequency of seven forms of cyberbullying among students, including the abuse of AI tools (Chart 156).

Chart 156: Frequency of various forms of cyberbullying (%)



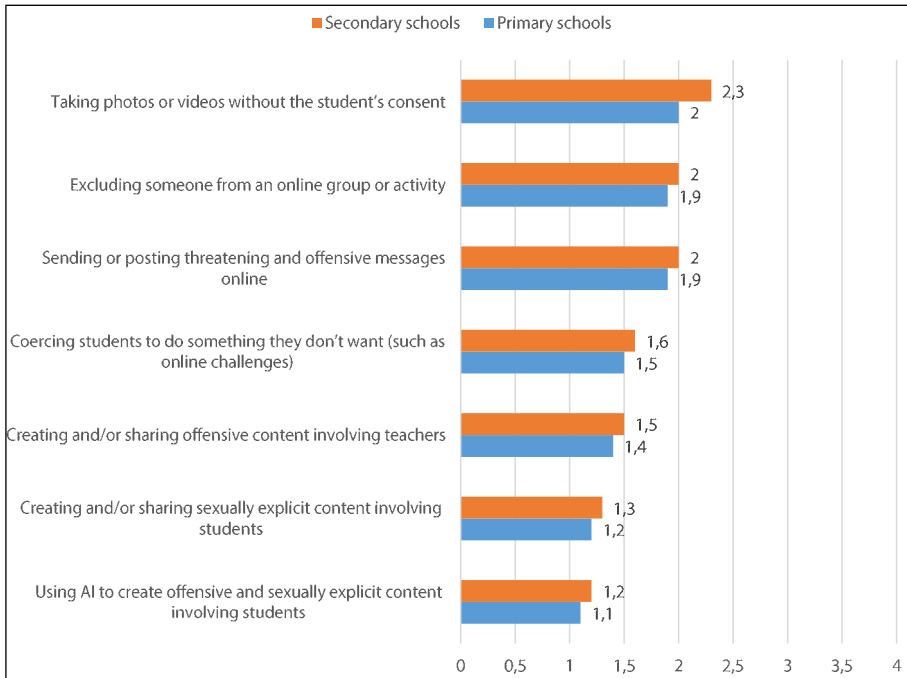
According to over two thirds of employees, the following forms of cyberbullying are most common among students: taking photos and videos without permission, excluding someone from online groups or activities, and sending offensive or threatening messages online. The smallest portion of employees (between 16% and 22%) report abuse of AI tools.

Considering the intercorrelation of the seven listed forms of cyberbullying (correlations range from .31 to .70) and the high reliability of the scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ), an average score was formed – a measure of perceived cyberbullying among students. The three employee categories do not differ significantly in terms of this score, nor do employees in primary and secondary schools.

The following chart shows the average ratings of individual forms of cyberbullying for employees in primary and secondary schools.

No differences were observed in the evaluations of the prevalence of various forms of cyberbullying between primary and secondary school employees, except for two: taking photos and videos without permission ( $t(1984) = -6.85, p < .001, d = 0.31$ ) and creating and/or sharing offensive content involving teachers ( $t(1955) = -6.71, p < .001, d = 0.17$ ). The practical significance of these differences is moderate, or small (when it comes to the second form of cyberbullying). Responses to some questions related to offline violence also showed that teachers in secondary schools were more likely to be involved in violent interactions compared to primary schools.

Chart 157: Prevalence of various forms of cyberbullying (average ratings)

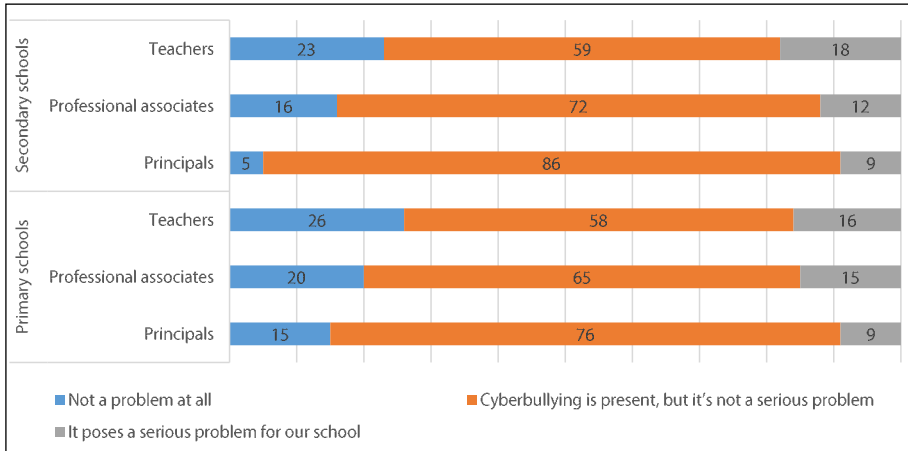


The score of perceived cyberbullying is highly positively correlated with the score of perceived offline violence among students ( $\rho = .67$ ) and the score of violence in student-adult and adult-adult interactions ( $\rho = .62$ ). Employees who believe that cyberbullying is more frequent among students also believe that offline violence is more frequent – both peer violence and violence in interactions with or between adults. Furthermore, significant negative correlations were also observed between the score of perceived cyberbullying and the evaluation of the negative impact digital device use ( $\rho = .23$ ) and years of service in the current position ( $\rho = .15$ ) and sex ( $\rho = .11$ ). Moreover, the score of perceived cyberbullying has a negative correlation with employees' self-assessed digital skills ( $\rho = .20$ ) and satisfaction with relationships at school ( $\rho = -.30$ ).

As previously stated, one in ten employees believes that schools are powerless to reduce cyberbullying, and two thirds believe that schools can contribute to its reduction to a lesser or greater degree. Most employees (60%) believe that cyberbullying, despite its prevalence, does not pose a serious problem for the school, but almost one fifth (16%) of them estimate that it is a serious problem for their school (this is more often reported by employees in primary schools (Chart 158)).

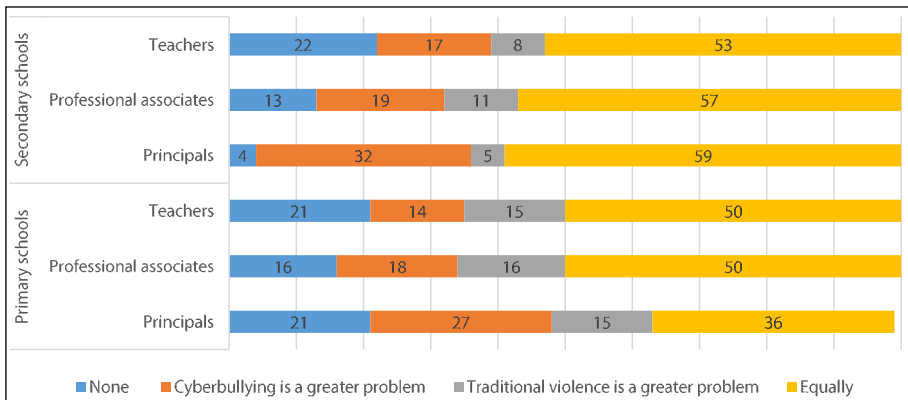
No statistically significant differences were observed in the evaluation of the problem of cyberbullying among employees in primary and secondary schools.

Chart 158: Severity of cyberbullying (%)



When asked to compare offline violence and cyberbullying, the largest portion of employees responded that both types of violence are equally problematic.

Chart 159: Severity of offline violence and cyberbullying (%)



Although more primary school employees believe that offline violence poses a bigger problem for schools, and more secondary school employees believe that cyberbullying is a bigger problem, a weak correlation was observed ( $V = .11$ ).

### 7.2.4. Rules regarding use of mobile phones at school

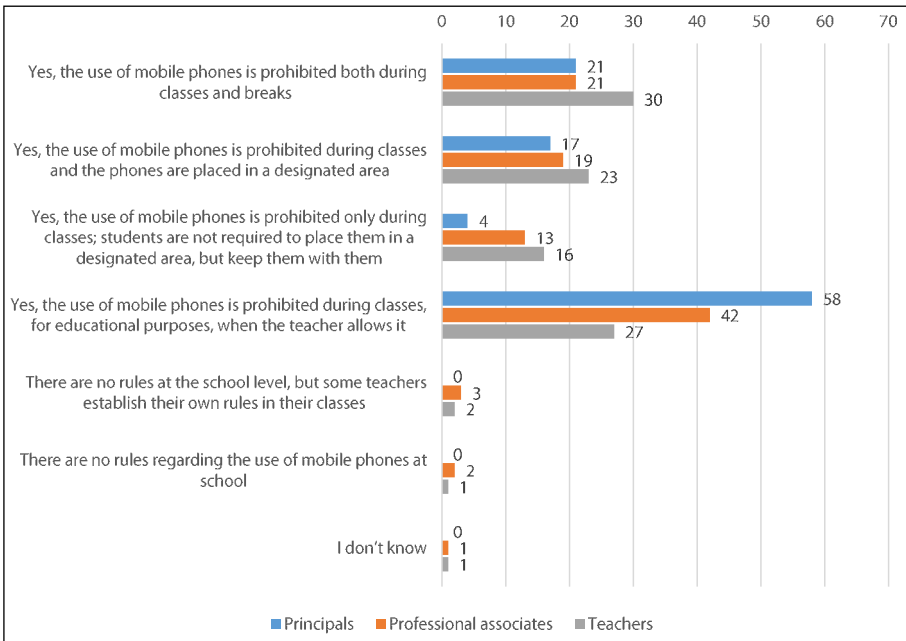
Finally, employees (just like parents and students) were asked whether their school had established any rules on the use of mobile phones. The responses are shown in the following chart (Chart 160).

In the total sample, slightly less than a third (29%) of employees state that the use of mobile phones is prohibited during classes in their school, except when the

teacher allows it (this is most often reported by principals), and the same percentage of employees say that the use of mobile phones is prohibited both during classes and breaks (this is most often reported by teachers). Here, it would not be meaningful to compare the responses of different employee categories at the level of the entire sample; rather, it would be more appropriate to compare the responses of employees within the same school and determine how consistent they are. In only one school, over 90% of employees stated the same (that use is prohibited in classes); in only eight schools, 80% or more of employees selected the same response; whereas in five schools, all six suggested responses were selected by at least one employee.

A negligible portion of employees reported that no rules on the use of mobile phones are in place at school or that they are not familiar with these rules. The presence of rules regarding the use of mobile phones at the school level is not associated with the evaluation of the prevalence of cyberbullying; on the other hand, it is associated with the prevalence of offline violence ( $V = .16$ ).

Chart 160: Existence of rules regarding use of mobile phones at school (%)



The debate on the use of personal mobile devices in schools is currently in the limelight at the global level, with a dominant media narrative of a “ban”. The arguments listed include the negative consequences of mobile phone use on students’ scholastic performance, disruption of mental health and well-being, social relationships, and personal safety.

Empirical findings on the effects of mobile phone use in school are mixed (evaluative studies of student scholastic performance, in which our country is involved as

well, such as PISA and ICILS, are a valuable source of information are international). Several studies show that restricting smartphone use in schools can improve students' scholastic performance, especially among children from less privileged backgrounds, while others show no significant benefits, or even indicate harmful effects. Since the number of studies is still small, there is not enough nuanced evidence to show which policies are most effective for all students or children of different ages.

The narrative of a “ban” should not “overshadow” a more serious societal debate on the best interests of children in the digital age, simultaneously absolving the technology sector of responsibility for designing services that are deliberately created to attract and retain users' attention (Rahali et al., 2023).

On a global scale, one in seven countries has recently introduced policies restricting or preventing students from accessing smartphones at school (particularly in Central and South Asia, North Africa, and West Asia); more and more countries are considering such measures (UNESCO, 2023). In recent years, domestic media has reported that certain (most often primary) schools have prohibited the use of mobile phones, and that disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against students who do not follow these rules.

It should be emphasised that a global initiative “Bring your own device” (BYOD) was launched over two decades ago, firstly in economically developed countries, with the aim of allowing students to use their own mobile devices (such as mobile phones, tablets, and laptops) during classes, as a support measure for the learning process (UNESCO, 2013).

As far as national regulations are concerned, in 2022, the Institute for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education and Upbringing (hereinafter: the Institute) published a document “[Bring your own device](#)”, containing recommendations for schools regarding the use of mobile digital devices by students during lessons for learning purposes (Institute for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education and Upbringing, 2022). This document indicates the benefits and potential challenges of using one's own digital devices during lessons, as well as specific guidelines and rules for use, which are binding on all participants in the educational process. All students and parents/legal guardians are expected to familiarise themselves with the document and sign a statement confirming they are aware of the school's policy regarding the “Bring your own device” programme, whereas all students and teachers are expected to follow the prescribed rules.

Based on the amendments to the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System<sup>19</sup>, in 2023, the Institute published the [Guidelines for the Use of Mobile Phones, Electronic, and Other Devices in Pre-University Education \(Institute for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education and Upbringing, 2023\)](#), intended to help schools in designing the Rules on the Use of Mobile Phones and Other Digital Devices, which should be aligned with the school rules on the educational and disciplinary responsibilities of students.

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19 “Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 88/2017, 27/2018 – other law, 10/2019, 27/2018 – other law, 6/2020, 129/2021 and 92/2023.

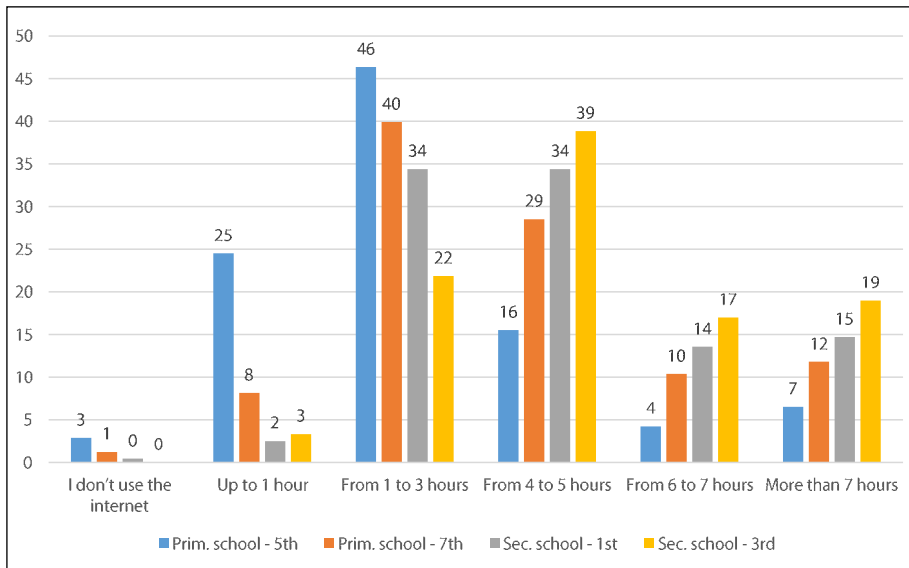
### 7.3. DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND CYBERBULLYING: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

A portion of the student questionnaire was dedicated to digital aspects of internet use and peer violence. In particular, we asked about the activities and time students spend online, the use of social networking platforms, and tools based on artificial intelligence. Of course, the focus was also on cyberbullying among students – its frequency, characteristics, and students' responses to situations of being directly exposed to cyberbullying or witnessing it. The youngest students responded to all questions related to this, except for those about the use of artificial intelligence tools and questions related to watching sexual and violent content involving their schoolmates.

#### 7.3.1. Time spent online and internet activities

In accordance with the findings of previous studies conducted on a national sample of primary and secondary school students in Serbia (Kuzmanović et al., 2019), it is clear that the time students spend online is directly correlated with their age ( $\rho = .37$ ). Put differently, the older students are, the more time they spend online (Chart 161).

Chart 161: Time students spend online during a school day – student age (%)



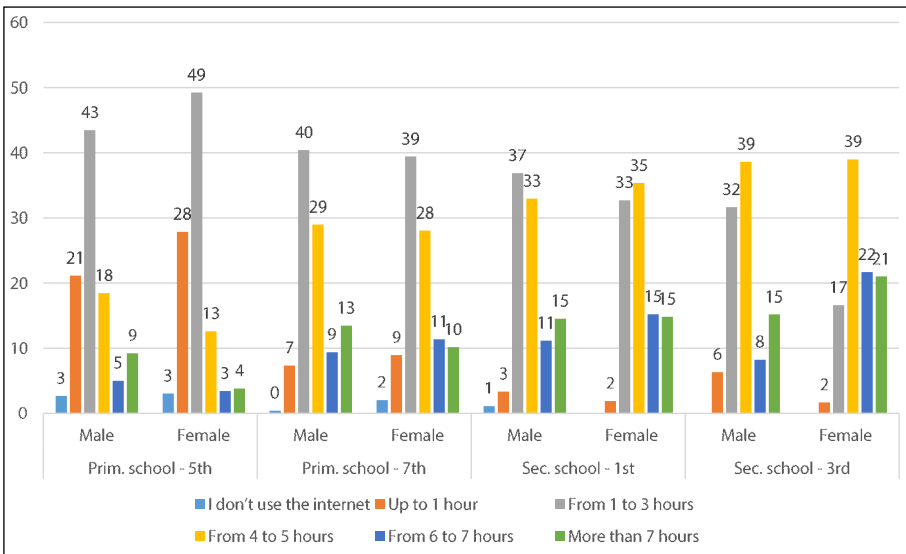
Almost three quarters of 5th grade students spend up to three hours online during a school day. Among primary school students who are just two years older,

the proportion of those who use the internet for up to three hours a day drops by half, while the other half uses it for more than three hours a day. Among secondary school students, daily internet use is even more frequent, with nearly half of 1st year secondary school students using the internet for more than four hours a day, whereas among those who are two years older, almost two thirds spend more than four hours a day online. As expected, the oldest students are predominant in the category of those who use the internet for more than six hours a day, with over one third falling into this category.

In addition to age, time spent online is also correlated with sex ( $\rho = -.15$  for the youngest and  $\rho = .22$  for the oldest). In other words, among the youngest students, boys are somewhat more likely to use the internet during the day, as more than 32% of boys use the internet for over four hours a day, compared to nearly 20% of girls. However, the situation is the opposite among the oldest students, where over 42% of girls use the internet for more than six hours a day compared to almost half as many boys (23%).

This finding is also not groundbreaking, since previous studies have shown that girls are more prevalent in the category of those who spend the most time online (Kuzmanović et al., 2019).

Chart 162: Time spent online – sex and age (%)



Furthermore, time spent online is not statistically significantly correlated with students' digital skills. However, it can be observed that among students who spend more than seven hours a day online, 44% rate their digital skills with the highest score of 10, while among those who spend between six and seven hours online, less than 30% rate themselves with the highest score. In all other categories, the number of students who rate their digital skills with the highest score decreases.

When it comes to online activities, as expected, students most frequently engage in activities related to the communicative use of the internet, while it is less frequently used for schoolwork. Older students are more likely to use the internet for communication, particularly social media activities, while younger students are more inclined to play online games.

Chart 163: Viewing social media content – grade (%)

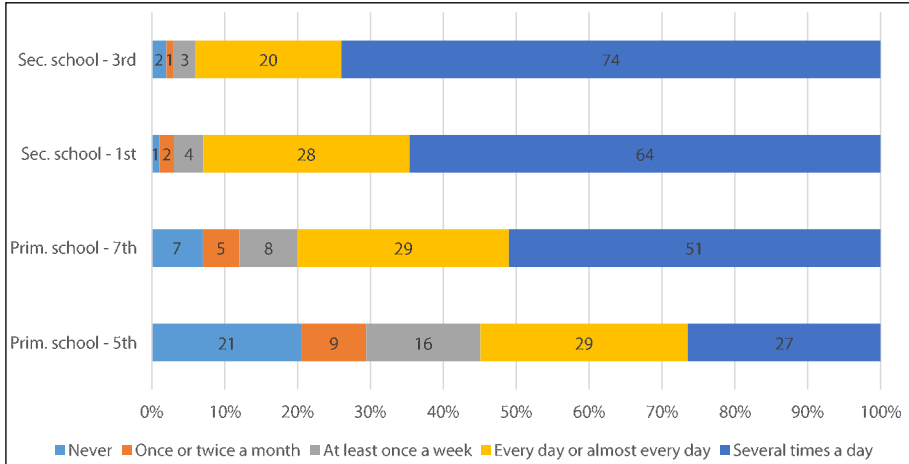


Chart 164: Posting on social media – grade (%)

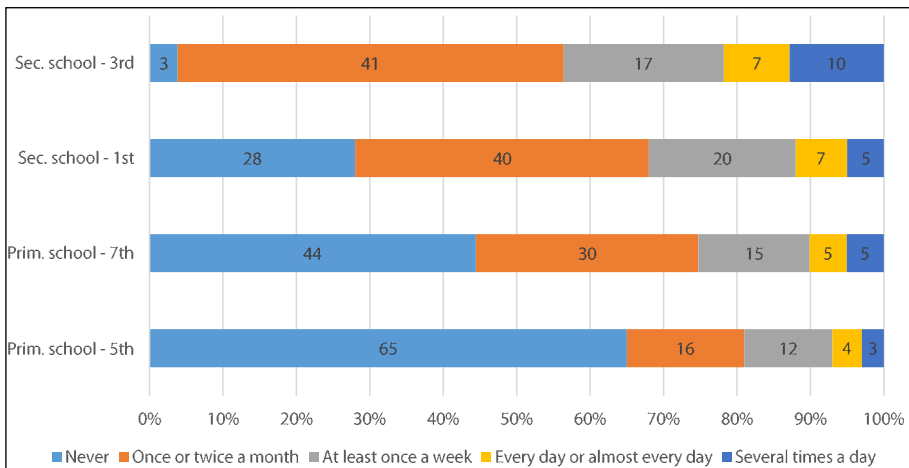


Chart 164 clearly shows a direct correlation between the students' age and their method of using social media ( $\rho = .41$ ). The older students are, the more time they spend on viewing content and posting on social media. Around one fifth of the youngest students never use social media, while just over half of them do so almost every day or more frequently. It should be noted that most social media networks allow only persons over the age of 13 to open a profile. This virtually means that most 5th grade students consciously ignore these restrictions, many of

whom probably do so with the consent of their parents, without whose help they most often could not open a profile, due to the rules of social media platforms.

Already among 7th grade students, a significant increase in the number of those who use social media almost every day or more frequently can be observed. More than half of students of this age view social media content several times a day, but if we add those who do so almost every day, it can be concluded that virtually eight out of ten students have daily contact with the content on social media. This confirms the findings of some previous studies that the use of social media increases when entering puberty, and particularly in the teenage years (Kuzmanović et al., 2019; Popadić et al., 2016). This finding may also be explained by the growing influence of peer groups as a factor in the socialisation of young people, whereby social media serve as an important channel for reproducing dominant societal values among young people. Therefore, a vast majority of secondary school students, that is, two thirds of 1st grade and three quarters of 3rd grade students, check social media several times a day to see what's going on, whereas the number of students who do not use social media or use it rarely declines to just a few per cent.

Statistically significant differences in the use of social media were also observed between urban and rural areas ( $\rho = .18$ ), with students from urban areas relying more on social media compared to those from rural areas. However, here as well, students' age plays a crucial role; thus, it cannot be claimed that urban environments significantly affect the use of social media by students. In particular, we have already seen that secondary school students are predominant in their use of social media compared to primary school students, and since secondary schools are mostly located in urban areas, it is actually students' age that affects the intensity of internet use, rather than the environment in which they live. This is also confirmed when analysing the data on subsamples of primary and secondary school students, where urban/rural environments no longer seems to be a statistically significant factor for social media use.

A correlation also exists between sex and the use of social media ( $\rho = .14$ ), which is particularly evident in the group of students who use social media the most. Namely, 59% of female students use social media several times a day compared to 46% of male students, while in the category of those who do not use social media, male students are predominant, with 12% compared to 5% of female students.

The students' age and sex are also correlated with their habits of publishing various content on social media. Two thirds of the youngest students never post content on social media (such as photos, videos, or music), while among 7th grade students, the percentage of inactive users declines to less than half. Upon starting secondary school, the habits of posting on social media gradually stabilise at around one third of students who post social media content at least once a week. The differences between male and female students are not as pronounced; however, it is worth mentioning that more than half of male students (52%) never post content on social media, while this is true for only one third of female students (33%).

Table 27: Correlations between sociodemographic characteristics and online activities

	Sex	Grade	Urban/rural	Scholastic performance
I used the internet for schoolwork	.17**	.19**	.14**	.11**
I used the internet to talk with classmates	.09**	.17**	.07**	.09**
I communicated with family and friends outside school	.08**	.18**	<b>.14**</b>	.05*
I used social media to see what others post	.14**	.40**	<b>.18**</b>	-0.02
I posted content on social media	.16**	.27**	.09**	<b>-.13**</b>
I commented on others' posts on social media	.11**	.10**	0.03	-.05*
I played games on the internet	<b>-.33**</b>	<b>-.20**</b>	<b>-.13**</b>	-0.04
I created some digital content	-.05*	-.07**	-0.03	-0.07

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \**p* <.05, \*\**p* <.01.

Regarding communication activities, they also intensify as students grow older, but the differences are not as pronounced as with social media use. The internet is used slightly more often for communication with family and friends outside school and somewhat more intensively among older students, but these differences, although statistically significant, are small (*rho* = .17). Charts 165 and 166 clearly show that, when starting secondary school, the use of the internet for communication purposes intensifies, and it continues to intensify in the senior grades of secondary school. It is also interesting that using internet for communication with family and friends decreases between the 5th and 7th grades of primary school, which could be related to the strengthening of peer relationships during the onset of the adolescent phase, or a decrease in the intensity of communication with the out-of-school environment, including family members.

Chart 165: Communication with family and friends outside school (%)

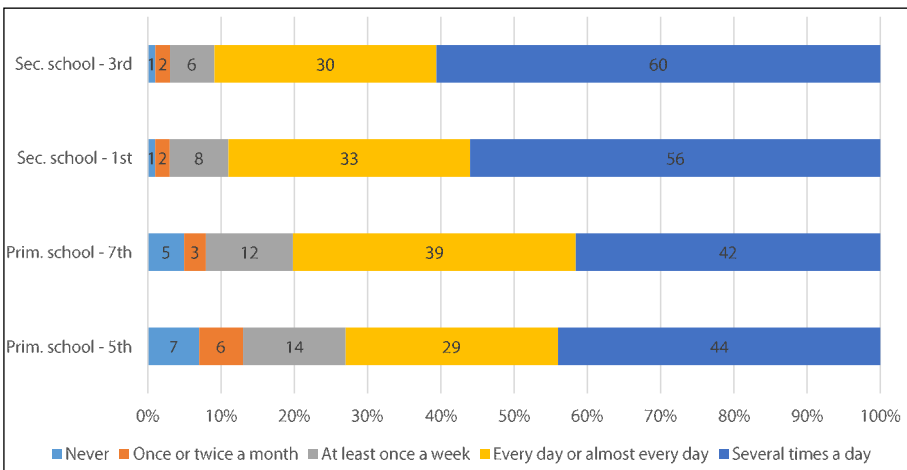
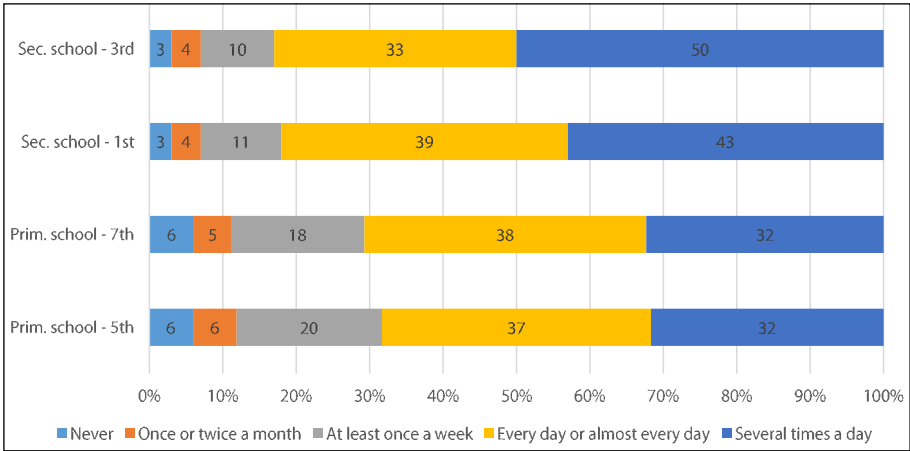
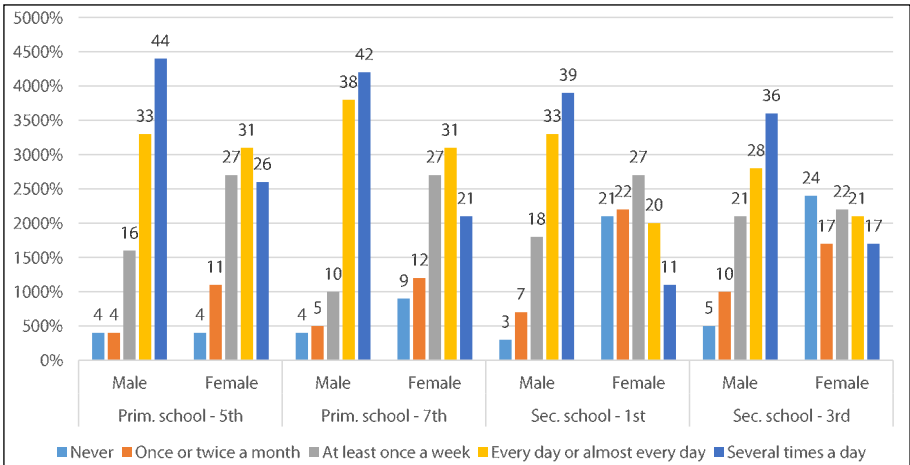


Chart 166: Communication with school friends (%)



The only online activity in which younger students engage more than older ones is playing online games, which is consistent with earlier social media studies (Kuzmanović et al., 2019; Popadić et al., 2016). This activity remains highly prevalent practically until the end of primary school, with two thirds of those playing online games doing so almost daily or more frequently, at which point there is a gradual transfer of time in favour of social media (Chart 167). Therefore, most secondary school students do not play online games daily, but rather weekly or less often.

Chart 167: Playing online games – sex and age (%)

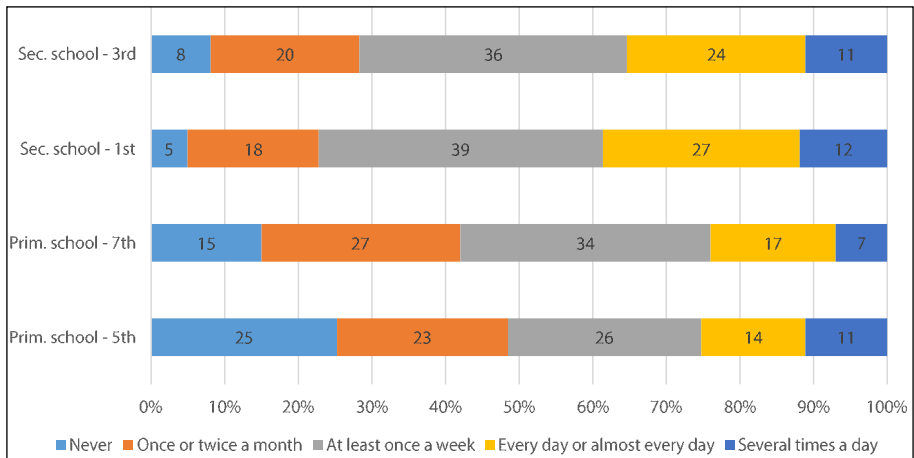


Another previously observed association with playing online games (Kuzmanović et al., 2019; Popadić et al., 2016) is related to student sex ( $\rho = -.33$ ). Boys are more likely to play these games across all age groups, and sex differences become more pronounced as students get older. For instance, among the youngest

students, in the category of those who never play online games, boys and girls are almost equally represented (below 5% for both categories), while boys are predominant in the category of those who play games every day (44% compared to 26%). On the other hand, among secondary school students, the number of girls who never play online games increases drastically (between one quarter and one fifth of girls), while boys overwhelmingly dominate among daily players (between 36% and 40% compared to 10% to 16%).

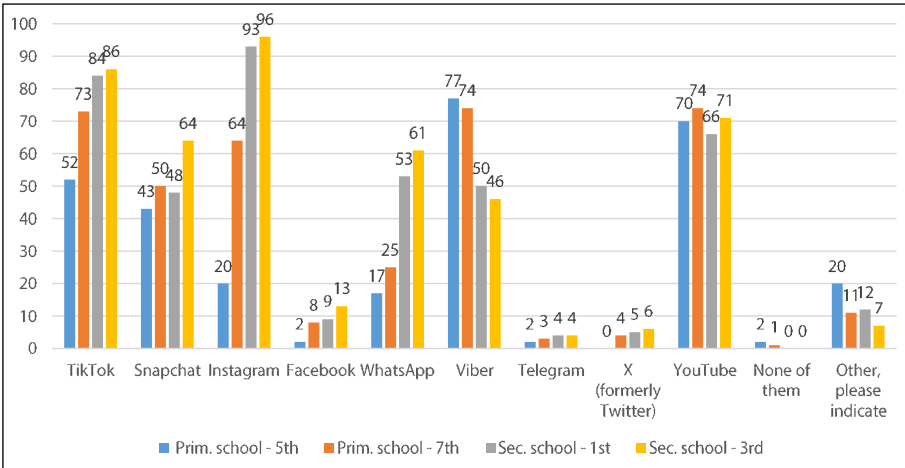
As mentioned at the beginning, the least frequent activity on the internet is related to schoolwork. However, almost two thirds of students use the internet for schoolwork at least weekly, and over 85% of them do so on a monthly basis. The older the students, the more likely they are to use the internet for schoolwork ( $\rho = .19$ ). A quarter of 5th grade students and a sixth of 7th grade students never use the internet for schoolwork, while this is true for only a small per cent of secondary school students (5% to 8%). This clearly shows that the internet has become an important tool in the process of educating students at all education levels, especially in secondary schools. According to the findings of a study conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic, a significantly smaller percentage of our students used the internet for schoolwork (Kuzmanović et al. 2019).

Chart 168: Using the internet for schoolwork (%)



Girls in all age groups are more likely to use the internet for schoolwork ( $\rho = .17$ ). The differences are particularly evident among those who never use the internet for schoolwork, where boys are, on average, twice as likely to use the internet. Therefore, among the youngest students, almost one third of boys never use the internet for schoolwork, compared to less than a fifth of girls, while among the oldest students, nearly 15% of boys do not use the internet for this purpose, compared to just under 5% of girls.

Chart 169: Most popular social media platforms (%)



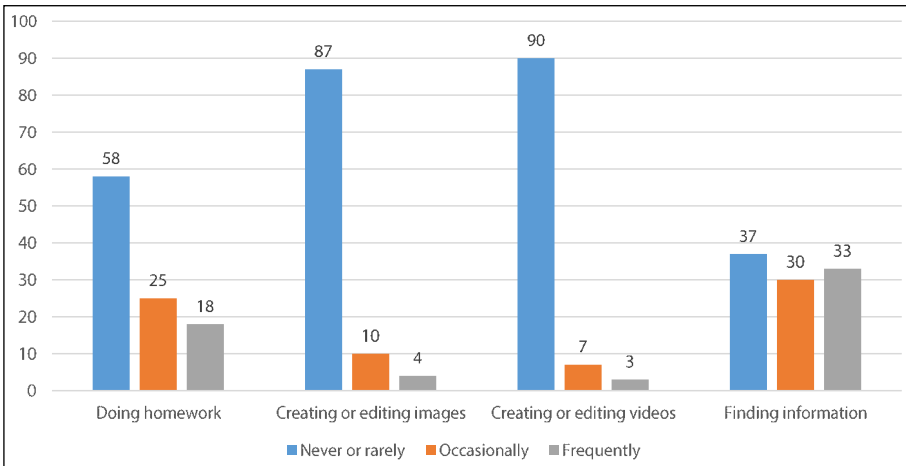
The average number of social media profiles per student is nearly four, with the number increasing as the student ages. Therefore, an average 5th grade student has three social media profiles, an average 7th grade student has nearly four, an average 1st grade secondary school student has more than four, while 3rd grade secondary school students have between four and five profiles. Instagram is by far the most popular social media platform among secondary school students with 93% (1st grade) and 96% (3rd grade) of users. TikTok is not far behind with 84%–86% of users, followed by YouTube with 66%–71% of active secondary school students, and Snapchat, which is especially popular among the oldest students (64%). The situation is somewhat different for primary school students, as Viber, a messaging app primarily used for sending messages and not a traditional social media platform, ranks first, with 77% of active 5th grade students and 74% of 7th grade students using it. Within this population, in second place is YouTube (70%–74%), which is also the most consistently popular social media platform, as it is followed by at least two thirds of students from each surveyed age group. Among 7th grade students, two “typical” social media platforms, TikTok and Instagram, also rank high. Over half of 5th grade students use TikTok and almost half of them use Instagram, which is concerning having in mind age restrictions for opening profiles that are apparently poorly respected, as well as the public controversy caused by the use of TikTok, especially among children under 13. The once very popular social media platform, Facebook – which was created before even the oldest students who participated in this survey were born – is used by few students.

Girls are somewhat more likely than boys to use TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp, while boys are more likely to use Viber, YouTube, and X, but the differences are small. Around three quarters of secondary school students follow their schoolmates on social media, compared to half of primary school students. This is likely attributed to the greater number of active social media users and the increased pressure to be present on these platforms among older students. There are no significant differences between students in terms of following their peers on social media.

### 7.3.2. Use of AI tools and regulating mobile phone use in schools

Regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, students most often use them to find information, with almost two thirds of them doing so at least occasionally, and one third does it frequently. Secondary school students are somewhat more likely to use these tools for informational purposes, but the observed differences in relation to 7th grade primary school students (5th grade students did not respond to these questions), although statistically significant, are not too big ( $\rho = .12$ ). Furthermore, higher-achieving students are also more likely to rely on the help of these tools to find information compared to lower-achieving students ( $\rho = .11$ ).

Chart 170: Using AI for different activities



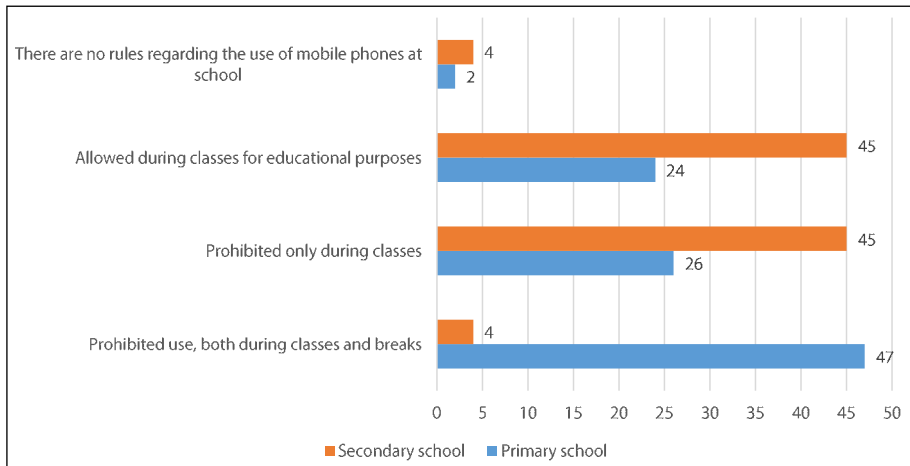
The next most common use is the use of AI for homework, with over 42% of students using it at least occasionally, including more than 17% of students who rely on such tools frequently. This is a significant finding, as it suggests that students have very quickly “kept up” with the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence in the area of education, but it is necessary to systematically support the pedagogically meaningful and effective use of such tools in the school context. Secondary school students use AI somewhat more often than primary school students, particularly for homework ( $\rho = .12$ ), which can likely be attributed to the better digital skills in older children.

Using AI tools for creating or editing images and videos is far less common among students of all grades. However, it is indicative that the perpetration of cyberbullying is associated with the use of AI tools for creating and editing images ( $\rho = .12$ ) and videos ( $\rho = .12$ ). Put differently, students who have exhibited violent behaviour in the digital environment are also those who are better at using AI techniques to create visual content.

The Council of Europe has been working for many years to foster a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and education. In 2019, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the [Recommendation on developing and promoting digital citizenship education](#), with a particular emphasis on the role and application of AI in education.

At the same time, there is a growing global debate regarding the relationship between artificial intelligence and human rights. In response to these challenges, the Council of Europe has developed the [\(Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law\)](#), which is the first international legally binding agreement in the area of artificial intelligence, which ensures that its implementation is in accordance with the fundamental values and principles of democracy.

Chart 171: Rules regarding use of mobile phones at school (%)



As evident in Chart 171, most schools have imposed some form of ban on mobile phone use. These bans are more restrictive for young than for older children, that is, in primary schools, the measures are more restrictive than compared to those in secondary schools. Only 4% of secondary school students stated they are not allowed to use mobile phones during school time, as opposed to nearly half of primary school students. On the other hand, secondary school students face restrictions regarding mobile phone use during class, with some schools requiring the phone to be placed in a designated area, while others do not. However, in almost half of secondary schools, the use of mobile phones is allowed, provided that they are used for educational purposes. The findings show that at the secondary school level, gymnasiums have somewhat stricter measures compared to other secondary schools, but the differences are not big. It should be noted that, similar to the employee questionnaire, only in nine secondary schools is there an agreement of 80% or more among students regarding the practices in their school, whereas in 17 schools, the students’ responses match five (or all six) of the six descriptions offered.

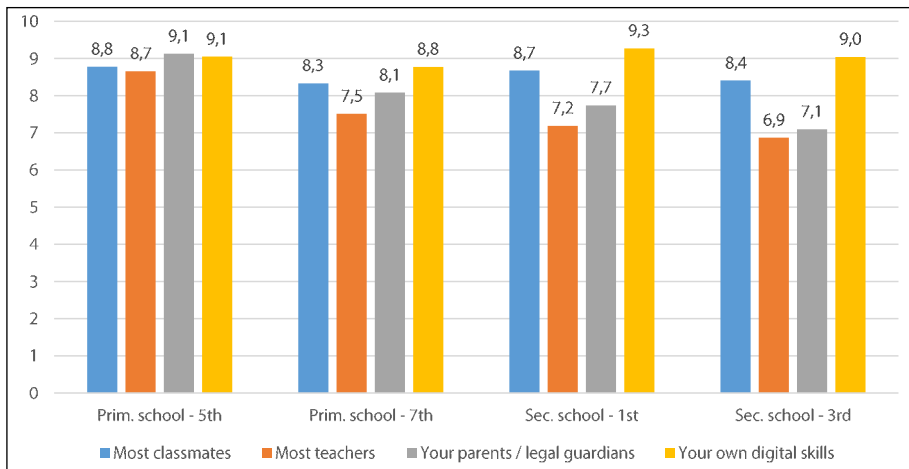
### 7.3.3. Digital skills

Students' digital skills were rated subjectively, that is, through self-assessment on a 0 to 10 scale. Besides their own, students also assessed the digital skills of their classmates, teachers, and parents. In this way, it was established how students assess their digital skills in a relative context, which is important for planning potential activities in the area of implementing digital tools in the educational process, as well as the prevention of cyberbullying.

As evident from the Chart 172, students of all ages rated the highest their own digital skills, with an overall average rating of 9. Interestingly, the youngest and oldest students rated their digital skills similarly highly, with an average rating of over 9.

Chart 172: Digital skills evaluation

They rated their peers' digital skills slightly lower (8.55) than their own, while the ratings of teachers' (7.59) and parents' (8.04) digital skills are lower as students grow older. This is likely related to an increasingly better insight into others' skills over the years of using digital technologies, but it is also likely a consequence



of a more critical attitude towards socialisation authorities, which is a common characteristic of adolescence. However, it is concerning that in each year group, students rate their teachers' digital skills the lowest, culminating among the oldest students, who rate their teachers' skills with 6.87, while they give themselves an average rating of 9.04. **This may be a clear indication that older students in particular do not perceive their teachers as competent experts they can turn to when they encounter problems in the digital environment.**

The self-assessment of digital skills is correlated with sex ( $\rho = .11$ ), scholastic performance ( $\rho = .10$ ), and financial status ( $\rho = .14$ ). Boys give themselves an average rating of 9.25, while girls rate themselves at 8.86. Students with excellent scholastic performance score an average of 9.26, whereas those with sufficient or good performance rate themselves at 8.3. Additionally, students who evaluate

their financial status as high give themselves an average score of 9.3, in contrast to those who assess their financial status as low, who rate their digital skills with an average score of 8.55 (financial status was assessed on a 1 to 10 self-assessment scale).

## Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying will be addressed in this section as a separate phenomenon, while a more detailed analysis, related to violence in physical spaces, is provided in the chapter focusing on the phenomenon of violence among students.

Indicators of exposure to cyberbullying are shown in Table 28. Since the youngest respondents did not answer all the same questions as older students, the results are presented separately, although there is no significant difference in cyberbullying suffered by age.

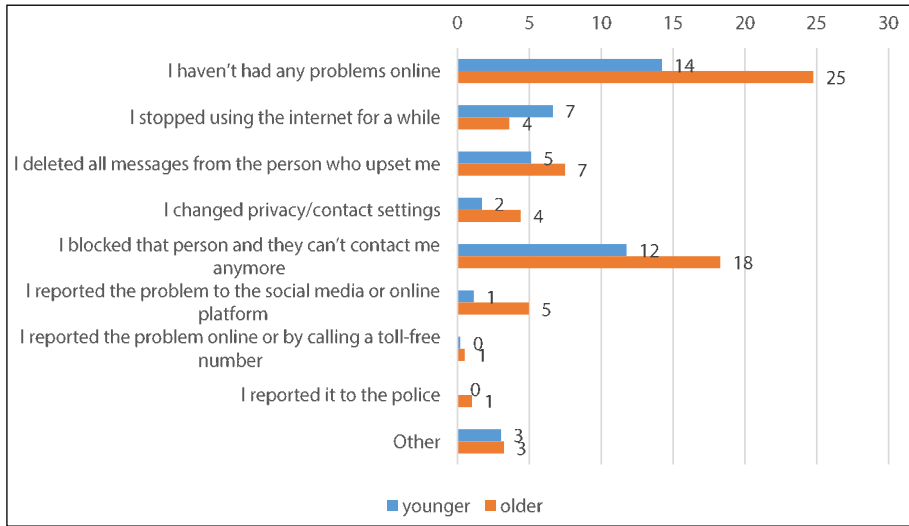
Table 28: Exposure to cyberbullying by age (%)

	Age	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times
Someone took pictures of me or filmed me against my wishes	younger	87	10	2
	older	84	12	3
I was left out or excluded from an online group or activity	younger	85	11	3
	older	88	7	3
I received threatening or offensive messages via phone, e-mail, social media	younger	93	4	2
	older	94	4	2
Mean messages about me were shared or posted where others could see them	younger	93	5	2
	older	93	4	2
I was forced to do something I didn't want	younger	92	4	3
	older	97	1	1
Someone edited my photos or videos using artificial intelligence to create offensive content and shared it in groups	younger	97	1	1
	older	97	1	1
Someone sent me sexually explicit content I didn't want, asking me to share it in groups or on social media	only older	96	2	1
Someone edited my photos or videos using artificial intelligence to create sexually explicit content and shared it	only older	98	1	0

Nearly three quarters of students have never encountered cyberbullying (72%), while among the 28% of those who have had such an experience, the most common types of cyberbullying were taking photos without permission, or being left out or excluded from an online group or activity. Sending threatening or offensive messages, or sharing or posting mean messages about others, was experienced by between 5% and 7% of students. The targets of digital victimisation among students of this age are those with fewer school friends ( $\rho = -.16$ ), those who have created digital content ( $\rho = .14$ ), used AI to create or edit images ( $\rho =$

.14), as well as those who have engaged in cyberbullying themselves ( $\rho = .29$ ). In other words, online victimisation is to a certain extent associated with greater difficulty in establishing peer relationships at school, but it may also be a response to certain digital content that may be provocative or offensive. This third finding thus shows that students who are also exposed to online harassment are often more likely to engage in violent behaviour themselves. This is even more evident among the youngest students, where the association between digital victimisation and cyberbullying is even stronger ( $\rho = .33$ ).

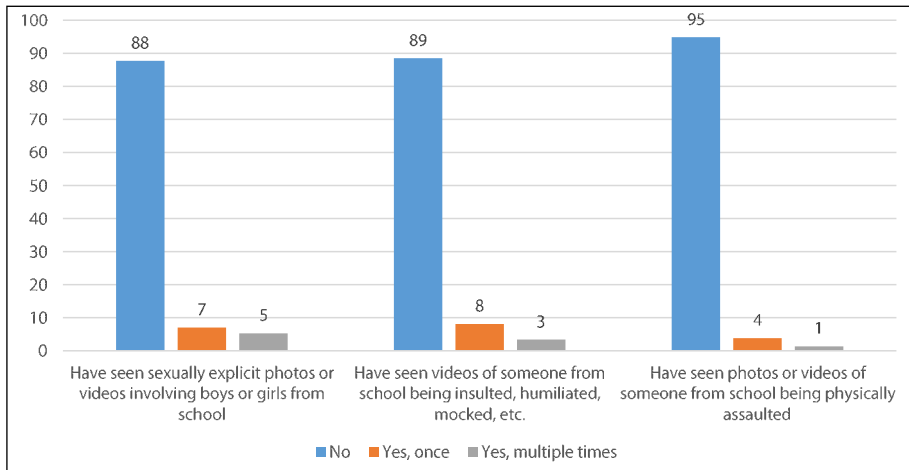
Chart 173: Responses to experienced cyberbullying (%)



The most common response to digital harassment among both boys and girls is some form of “defensive” tactics that would involve cutting off contact with violent students, as well as deleting their communication history (Chart 173). In general, around 30% of girls use these strategies, most often resorting to blocking the person harassing them (20%). On the other hand, slightly fewer boys – a quarter of them – use defensive strategies, also most often resorting to blocking a violent student (16%). The second set of tactics could be called “proactive”, and they would involve some form of response aimed at reporting a violent person or situation or changing user privacy settings. Girls are more likely to report disturbing situations than boys, but only 8% of girls resorted to this method of problem solving (of which 1.4% reported it to the police), and under 5% of boys. It is hard to infer from these responses why more students do not report incidents of cyberbullying. Low reporting rate might be a consequence of some form of self-censorship or distrust in those who should respond to violence. It is, however, also possible that students normalise cyberbullying and therefore believe that they do not need to report it. Of course, this may also be because students are not familiar with the procedure for reporting violence or to whom they should report it. It is likely a result of a combination of the aforementioned factors.

There are no significant differences between the reactions of the youngest and older students. Here too, defensive tactics are the most prevalent. Among older students, they are used in slightly less than 30% of cases, compared to 25% among younger students. The defensive tactics of these two groups of students differ in that older students are more likely to block violent students (18% to 12%), while twice as many of the youngest students temporarily withdraw from the internet, but these are generally rare forms of addressing the problem of cyberbullying (6% to 3%).

Chart 174: Exposure to videos and images of violent and sexually explicit content involving students

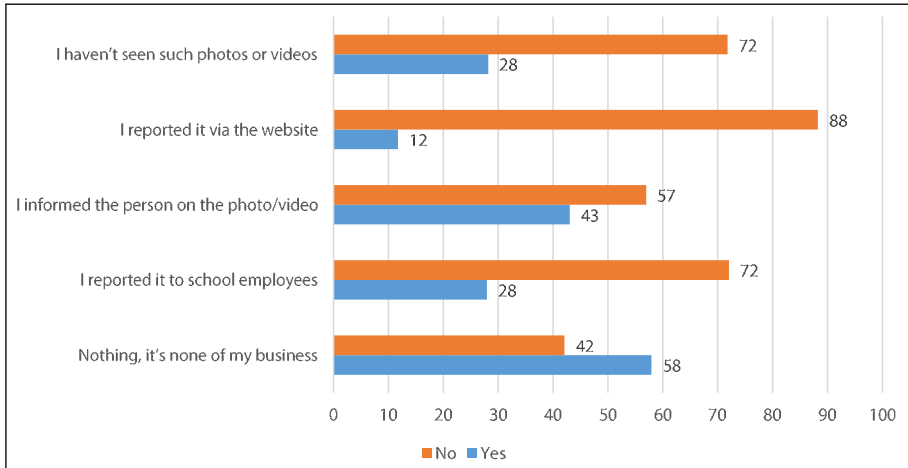


Around one fifth of students have seen a video or photo showing violence, whether verbal or physical, or sexually explicit content involving students from their school. Male and female students were equally exposed to such content. Third grade secondary school students are slightly more likely to be exposed to such content compared to 1st grade secondary school and 7th grade primary school students ( $V = .11$ ), especially those who attend vocational schools.

Furthermore, as expected, students who spend more time online have a somewhat higher chance of encountering such content ( $\rho = .10$ ). Those who post photos, videos, or music on social media are also more likely to encounter such content ( $\rho = .12$ ), which is likely due to the frequency of browsing different content when choosing what to post, which increases the possibility of coming across this type of content.

**Almost 60% of students (5th grade students did not respond to this question) took no action when they encountered violent or sexually explicit videos involving their school peers (Chart 175).** Among those who reacted, the most common type of response was reporting the existence of such videos or photos (33%), primarily to parents (31%), followed by school employees (28%) or through the website (12%). Still, at the individual level, most of those who reacted did so by informing the people in the video or photo about its existence (43%). It

Chart 175: Reactions to sexually explicit or violent content involving students (%)



should also be noted that primary school students are more willing to notify an at-risk person compared to secondary school students ( $\rho = .12$ ). Exactly half of 7th grade primary school students say they have notified the person in the photo or video, compared to 37% of secondary school students. Furthermore, primary school students are far more likely to report such content compared to secondary school students ( $\rho = .29$ ). Thus, over half of primary school students reported the existence of such content to someone (53%), while, on the other hand, this was done by slightly less than a quarter of secondary school students (24%). Considering that 1st and 3rd grade secondary school students are equally (un)likely to report such content, it can be concluded that the crucial change in this respect occurs during the transition to secondary school. This change in behaviour is likely to be more closely related to the growing influence of peer groups, where reporting is increasingly perceived as “telling on someone”, than to the specific nature of the digital content encountered. **Still, what is even more worrying is that the older the students are, the more often they state that such photos or videos are none of their business (“it’s none of my business”)** ( $\rho = -.13$ ). Unlike the tendency to avoid reporting such content, which develops during the transition from primary to secondary school, in this case, the shift in attitude occurs somewhat later. Therefore, approximately the same portion of 7th grade primary school students and 1st grade secondary school students – just over a half (56%–57%) of them – state it is none of their business. However, by the 3rd grade of secondary school, the percentage of those who believe it is not their business increases to nearly 70%. **In general, it appears that the older they get, the more students tend to adopt a form of defensive tactics based on ignoring such content.** It is also possible that, due to oversaturation with such content, they believe that responding to it serves no purpose. Whatever the reason may be, attention in the coming period should focus on raising the awareness of older students to foster greater responsibility regarding this type of content, which will be explored in more detail in the recommendations.

## 7.4. DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND CYBERBULLYING: PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE

Eleven questions in the parent questionnaire were dedicated to various aspects of the digital technology use in the context of school violence. We were most interested in seeing whether and to what extent children consult with their parents about the content they encounter on the internet; in what way and to what extent parents play a mediating role related to the use of digital technologies; whether parents believe they are competent enough to respond to cyberbullying; their opinions about the school as an educator and prevention mechanism in cases of cyberbullying among students; and the types of support they need when faced with cyberbullying among schoolmates, among other things.

### 7.4.1. Parental mediation of internet use and perception of the impact of digital devices on children

According to parents, in general, children are open to discussing their online activities with them. Over three quarters of children initiated a conversation about their online activities in the past year; nearly half talked about something they saw online that upset or scared them, while just over one third of children sought support from their parents due to an online situation they were unable to resolve on their own.

Table 29: Correlations between initiating conversations about online activities between children and parents and parents' sociodemographic characteristics

	Sex	Age	Parent's education level	Other parent's education level	Family financial situation
Your child initiated a conversation with you about their online activities	.10**	-.13**	.05	.06	.01
Your child told you about something they saw online that upset or scared them	.09**	-.12**	.04	-.01	.00
Your child asked you for support regarding an online situation they were unable to resolve on their own	.05	-.12**	.01	-.03	.04

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

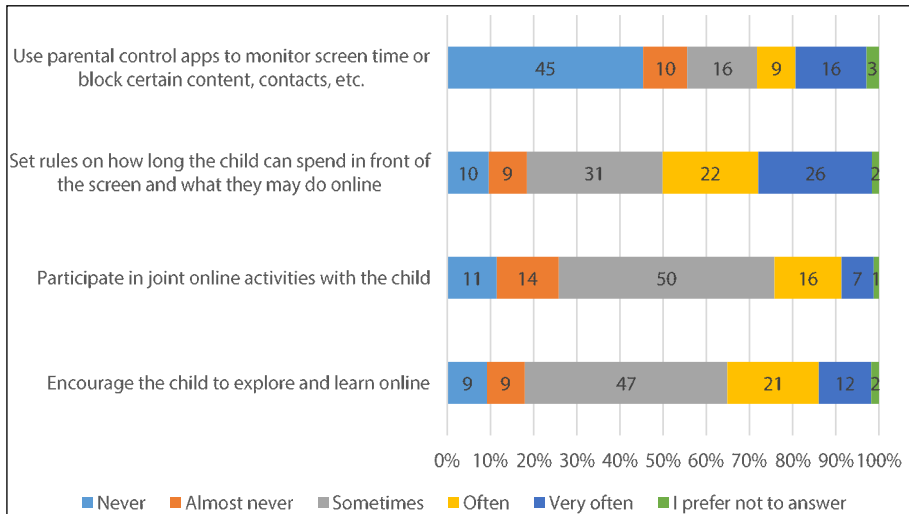
In addition, based on parents' responses, a conclusion can be drawn that children are somewhat more willing to talk to mothers and younger parents about their online activities. Sociological studies show that the patriarchal model of upbringing is still strongly present in our society, where the mother assumes most of the roles related to raising children. Therefore, it is not surprising that children are somewhat more likely to confide in their mothers rather than in their fathers (To-

manović and Stanojević, 2024). The fact that our sample included 84% mothers and only 16% fathers is highly indicative of mothers' greater interest in providing insights into this important topic concerning their children, but also of the fact that they are in fact better informed about their children's online activities.

When it comes to parents' age, children likely turn to younger parents more often because they themselves are younger and therefore more in need of support compared to older children. Although our research findings do not confirm the hypothesis that younger parents, in their self-assessments of digital skills, rated themselves as more competent than older parents to a statistically significant degree, it can nonetheless be assumed that younger parents, due to belonging to a more tech-literate generation, are generally more familiar with current trends on the internet, and therefore find it easier to engage in discussions about this topic with their children. Annual surveys of internet use in Serbia clearly indicate that with age, the number of internet users significantly decreases already among those over 45, and particularly among those over 55 (SORS, 2024).

In the questionnaire, two aspects of parental mediation of children's internet use were also examined: one referred to controlling internet use, and the other to joint activities and encouraging children to use the internet for exploratory purposes (Chart 176). When it comes to monitoring time spent online, most parents are not inclined to use time control apps (over half of them never or almost never use them, while approximately a quarter do so often or very often). This finding was also confirmed in our previous studies (Kuzmanović et al., 2019; Popadić et al., 2016).

Chart 176: Parental mediation of children's internet use (%)



Majority (over 80%) of parents establish internal rules on the amount of time spent online and types of online activities, with nearly half of them doing so often or very often. This indicates that parents are aware of the need to control their children's

use of the internet, but also that this control is more often established periodically through negotiation with children, and less often through tech-based measures.

An important finding is also that parents of younger children are far more likely to define rules regarding internet use compared to parents of older children, which has already been established in previous studies (Smahel, et al., 2020)

Therefore, 46% of parents of the youngest children included in our research (5th grade) often and very often use internet time control apps, compared to only 6% of parents of the oldest children ( $\rho = .35$ ). Imposing restrictions is even more common in the form of establishing internal rules; as many as 71% of parents of the youngest children do this often or very often, and only 5% do it never or almost never. As expected, parental control of internet use decreases with the children's age; thus, among the oldest children, only one fifth of parents (21%) impose this type of restriction ( $\rho = .42$ ). It is important to note that establishing control over internet use does not necessarily mean opposition to internet use. In fact, parents' responses show that establishing control is positively correlated with encouraging internet use. Thus, 54% of parents who frequently encourage children to explore the internet also often set rules regarding time spent online and online activities, with additional nearly 30% doing so occasionally ( $\rho = .10$ ). A similar pattern is seen among those who frequently participate in joint online activities with their children, with 64% of parents often imposing the aforementioned rules on their children, and an additional 25% doing so occasionally ( $\rho = .19$ ).

On the other hand, when it comes to joint activities and encouragement related to exploratory use of the internet, the majority of parents actively encourage their children to use the internet. Thus, over 80% of parents encourage their children to use the internet for research purposes at least occasionally, and nearly three quarters of them participate in joint online activities with their children at least occasionally.

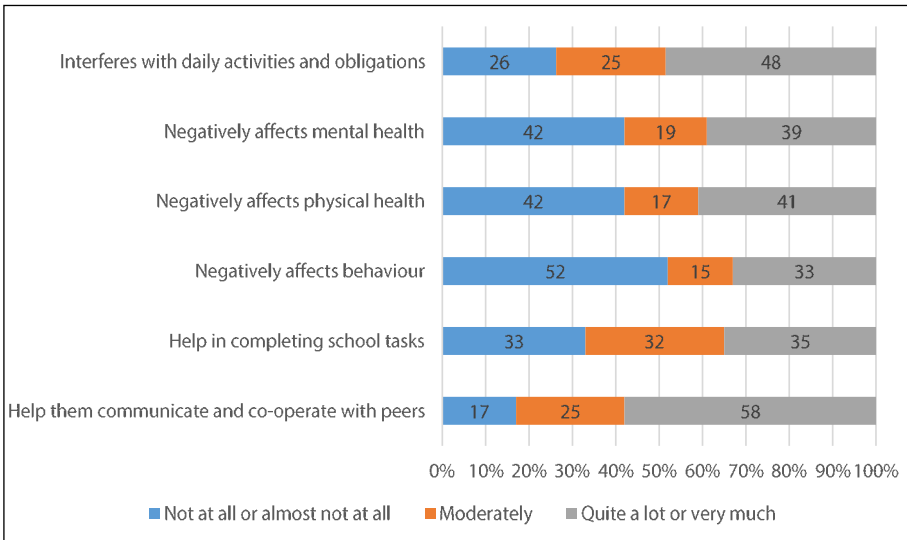
Table 30: Correlations between parental mediation of children's internet use and sociodemographic characteristics

	Sex	Age	Parent's education level	Other parent's education level	Family financial situation
You encourage the child to explore and learn online	-.07**	.16**	.21**	.18**	.11**
You participate in joint online activities with the child	-.02	-.06*	.07*	.05	.14**
You set rules on how long the child can spend in front of the screen and what they may do online	.01	-.23**	.03	.05	.05
You use parental control apps to monitor screen time or block certain content, contacts, etc.	-.05	-.24**	.04	.04	.06*

Note: Shown are Spearman's  $\rho$  correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

As shown in the table, older parents, those with greater level of education, and with better financial status are more likely to encourage their children to do research and study online. On the other hand, younger parents are more likely to use apps to monitor screen time and block unwanted content, and are more likely to set the rules on how long and in what way the child may use the internet. The main reason for the seemingly greater tendency of younger parents to adopt a more restrictive approach towards their children actually lies in the fact that they have younger children, who, as we have seen, are much more frequently exposed to restrictions compared to older children.

Chart 177: Parents' opinions on the impact of digital devices on children (%)

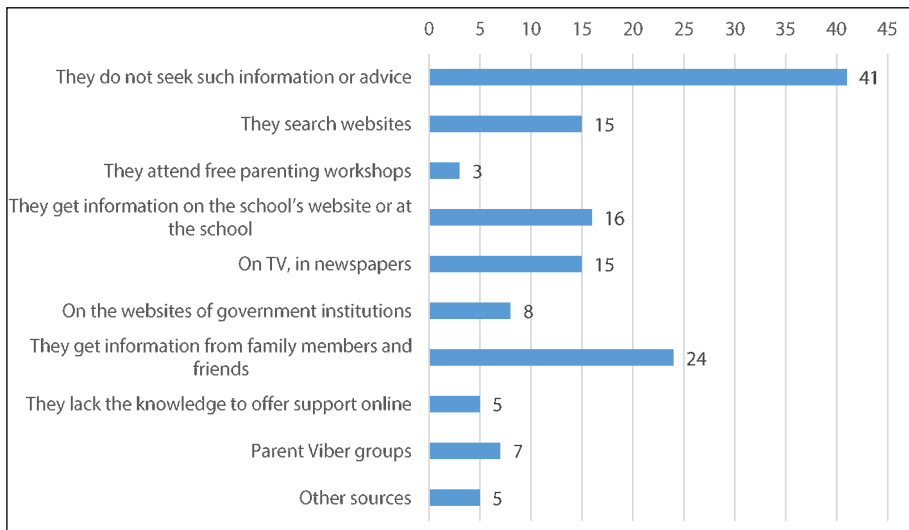


More than half of parents believe the internet has at least a moderately negative effect on their children's mental health (56%), physical health (56%), and behaviour (46%), as well as that it interferes with their daily activities (72%) (Chart 177). On the other hand, most parents believe that the internet greatly facilitates children's communication with peers (59%), while two thirds of them believe that it moderately or fairly facilitates schoolwork (67%). Parents' opinions about the effects of digital devices have no statistically significant correlations with their sociodemographic characteristics, but they are correlated with their evaluations of their children's digital skills. Specifically, parents who rate their children's digital skills higher are more likely to believe that the internet makes it easier for their child to communicate or do schoolwork ( $\rho = .16$ ). However, parents who rate their children's digital skills lower are somewhat more likely to emphasise the negative impacts of the internet on their children ( $\rho = .09$ ). Of course, this is also associated with their children's age; parents of younger children are somewhat more likely to emphasise negative aspects compared to parents of older children, which is most evident in the responses stating that the internet negatively affects children's behaviour ( $\rho = .11$ ) and mental health ( $\rho = .09$ ).

### 7.4.2. Parents' awareness of children's online safety and their attitude towards Viber groups

Just over 60% of parents seek information and advice related to supporting and ensuring their children's online safety (Chart 178). Over half of those who seek information use only one source (58%), about one quarter use two sources (26%), while less than 10% use three or more sources for information. The main sources of information are family members and friends (for nearly one quarter of parents), while about 15% of parents get information through various websites (alongside school or online safety centre websites) and traditional media. Slightly less than 10% of parents get information on the website of the Ministry of Interior and in parental Viber groups. However, it is worrying that around 40% of parents do not seek out this type of information at all. Awareness of the importance of information is more present among older parents, since nearly two thirds of them (65%) report that they get information from at least one source, while this is the case with slightly more than half of young parents (56%). Older parents are somewhat more likely to rely on traditional media ( $r = .10$ ). Nearly one fifth (18%) of them use this source of information, compared to just over one tenth of younger parents (11%).

Chart 178: Where parents find information and advice on how to support their child online and help keep them stay safe (%)

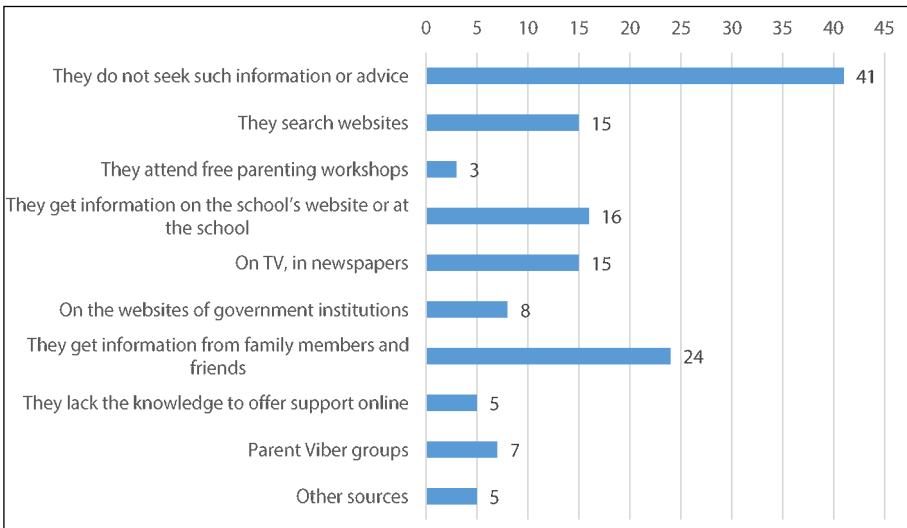


Moreover, the self-assessed digital skills of those who seek information are significantly higher compared to those who do not ( $8.25 - 7.65, t = -4.2$ ), which probably also affects the development of their awareness of the possible harmful consequences of internet use.

Despite frequent public condemnation of parent Viber groups, two thirds of parents consider these groups useful (to some extent or to a great extent), while

one third believe they are not useful, or harmful. Comparing these two groups of parents – those who consider Viber groups to be useful and those who do not – several interesting conclusions can be made. The first interesting finding is that Viber groups are more useful for parents from rural areas than urban areas ( $\rho = .17$ ). Over three quarters of parents who live in rural areas state such groups are helpful, compared to 60% of those living in urban areas. This may likely be explained by the greater geographical dispersion of parents living in rural areas – these groups may be an easier way to contact other parents and teachers than going to school. Another possible reason for this difference in attitude may stem from the assumption that all or most parents in rural Viber groups know each other personally. This familiarity could reduce the online disinhibition effect typically associated with online groups where most participants do not know one another, a characteristic that may, in part, apply to Viber groups of parents from urban areas. This is significant because, according to some authors (Suler, 2004), the disinhibition effect results in people starting conflicts more easily because they are not in physical contact with one another, and often do not know each other, which is a common characteristic of parental Viber groups.

Chart 179: Parents' evaluation of the usefulness of Viber groups (%)



Another interesting finding is that the higher the parents' level of education, the more negative their perception of Viber groups is ( $\rho = .22$  for the first parent and  $\rho = .17$  for the second). Therefore, as many as 87% of parents who have completed primary school believe that Viber groups are useful, compared to somewhat over half of highly educated parents (56%), whereas parents with secondary education are between these two groups, with 70% of them having a positive attitude. Since a large percentage of parents living in rural areas

also fall into the group of parents with lower education (only 14% of parents from rural areas have higher education compared to 86% of parents who live in urban areas), their attitude towards Viber groups is based on the reasons that have already been explained. An additional explanation, which should be explored in detail, may be that parents with higher education are likely more inclined to publicly express their opinions compared to those with lower level of education, which more often puts them in a situation in which they have to confront their opinions with other parents. Finally, since higher education is associated with better digital skills ( $\rho = .30$ ), it is not surprising that parents who consider Viber groups to be useless have a higher self-assessed average rating of digital skills score compared to those who consider these groups useful (8.4 compared to 7.9).

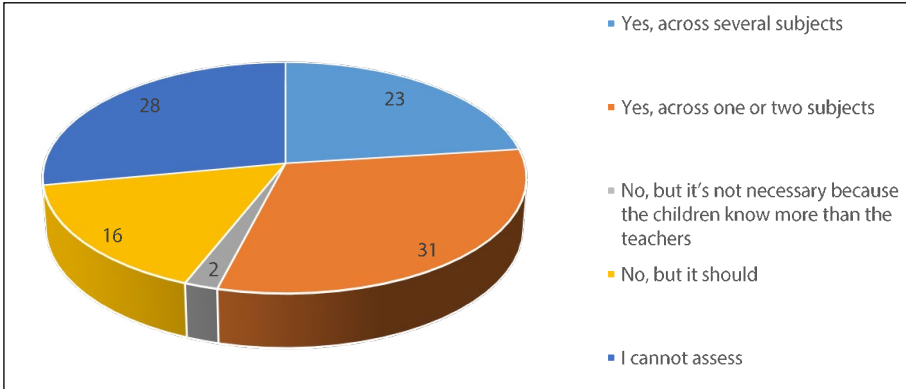
### **7.4.3. Understanding parents' and children's digital skills and attitudes towards school as a place for acquiring digital skills**

Parents rate their children's digital skills better than their own (8.7 – 8), but, in general, they give both themselves and their children high ratings. The aforementioned study "EU Kids Online" also shows that parents in Serbia rely to a great extent on children's help when using digital technologies, especially when browsing the internet, far more than the European average (Smahel et al., 2020). Still, it should be pointed out that this finding was obtained in the aforementioned study based on the responses of students, not parents.

Parents with higher education ( $\rho = .30$ ) and better financial status ( $\rho = .15$ ) rate their digital skills better compared to other categories of parents. Interestingly, parents of primary school students better rate their own digital skills than parents of secondary school students (8.3 compared to 7.8), whereas, when assessing their children's digital skills, they give much higher ratings to secondary school students than primary school students (9.3 – 8.3). Although parents of primary school students are on average younger than parents of secondary school students, it was observed that parents' age has no statistically significant correlation with their self-assessment of digital skills. Another explanation may be that parents simultaneously evaluated their own and their children's digital skills, which may have led them to evaluate their own skills in a relative context, that is, relative to their children's skills. If we accept this explanation, it is possible that the parents of primary school students were more likely to equate their digital skills with those of their children, while the parents of secondary school students may have overstated their digital inferiority compared to their children.

The tendency to overestimate the digital skills of secondary school students is also reflected in parents' views on whether schools can improve their children's digital skills (Chart 180).

Chart 180: Parents' opinions on the opportunity to acquire digital skills at school (%)



Somewhat over half of parents believe that children can acquire digital skills for safe internet use at school (54%), but more than one quarter of parents state they are unable to evaluate whether the school provides this opportunity to children. On the other hand, slightly less than one fifth of parents believe that children cannot acquire such skills in schools. Quite expectedly, parents of primary school children have a more positive attitude towards schools compared to parents of secondary school students, especially when it comes to parents of students in vocational and mixed secondary schools ( $V = .19$ ). Therefore, over 62% of parents of primary school students believe that school can contribute to improving digital skills for safe internet use, compared to 56% of parents of secondary school students and 35% of parents of children attending vocational secondary schools. This attitude is likely influenced by the tendency to overestimate the digital skills of secondary school-age children and underestimate the skills of teachers, which leads parents to conclude that the school is unable to provide adequate development of digital skills of children who already possess good digital skills. However, since parents of primary school students rate their children's digital skills as weaker, which is objectively the case with the youngest primary school students who were the subject of this research, they believe that school is an appropriate place for basic digital training for children.

It should also be added that parents from rural areas have a more positive view of the opportunity to acquire digital skills at school, compared to parents from urban areas ( $V = .14$ ). However, the key reason is that over 95% of parents from rural areas have children who are primary school students; therefore, the explanation given above can be applied here.

# 8. Gender-based violence among peers in Serbian schools

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## 8.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

- ▶ Gender-based violence was examined through multiple types of sexual harassment and intimate partner violence among students within the same school.
- ▶ One in ten students have experienced some form of gender-based violence, and the differences in the prevalence of such experiences among girls and boys are not statistically significant.
- ▶ A slightly higher percentage of boys than girls reported having experienced sexual harassment. The most frequently reported incident was touching, which was unpleasant for the respondent and was perceived as sexual harassment, while other forms, such as receiving unsolicited sexually explicit messages or the misuse of images or videos edited with artificial intelligence, were less commonly reported.
- ▶ One in ten students who experienced some form of sexual harassment believes that their same-sex sexual orientation was the reason. No statistically significant differences were observed between male and female students.
- ▶ Sexual harassment is more common in rural areas, while differences between regions are insignificant.
- ▶ During the survey, small percentage of students reported committing some form of sexual harassment, with more boys than girls among the perpetrators. One in five of students who reported having perpetrated sexual harassment cited the victim's same-sex sexual orientation as the reason for the harassment.
- ▶ Six per cent of students reported having experienced intimate partner violence, and in one third of those cases, this included physical violence.
- ▶ Although most students reject statements that express a patriarchal orientation or tolerance of violence, the relatively high level of agreement with certain attitudes is concerning, especially with the one that shifts the blame for violence onto the victim.

### 8.1.1. Introductory considerations

According to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Council of Europe, 2011), gender-based violence is defined as any form of harm or injury directed against an individual or group on the basis of their actual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. Gender-based violence is based on an imbalance of power and is perpetrated with the aim of humiliating a person or group of people, making them feel inferior and/or subordinate. This type of violence is deeply rooted in societal structures and cultural norms and values defining gender roles and relationships in a society.

Gender-based violence can take the form of physical, verbal, psychological (emotional), or sexual harassment, or stalking. It can be direct, or interpersonal, when occurring between individuals or groups, either in face-to-face or online interactions, or via various digital technologies (Babović, 2015). In this type of violence, a clear distinction can be made between the perpetrators, the victims, and the violent act. However, gender-based violence can also be indirect, such as structural or cultural/symbolic violence. Structural violence is rooted in social structures characterised by inequalities (in the case of gender-based violence, those are gender inequalities) and is manifested through the limitation of access to important social resources or positions for individuals of a particular sex, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Cultural or symbolic violence refers to the use of those aspects of a culture, or the symbolic sphere of a society, that can be used to justify or legitimise direct or structural violence (ibid.).

It is important to note that research on gender-based violence, due to its nature and complexity, requires more detailed investigation. Within this research, sexual harassment and peer partner violence were examined, if it involved students from the same school<sup>20</sup>. Sexual harassment was reported through several statements: "Someone touched me in a way that felt inappropriate or sexually harassed me"; "Someone sent me sexually explicit content I didn't want, asking me to share it in groups or on social media"; "Someone edited my photos or videos using artificial intelligence to create sexually explicit content and shared it in groups or on social media". Questions about sexual harassment were intended to document experiences of such violence perpetrated against the respondents by other students, as well as teachers. Moreover, students were asked about their experiences of both suffered and perpetrated violence.

Specific studies on peer gender-based violence, especially in the context of school violence, are very rarely conducted in Serbia. In fact, only one study has been performed, which was exclusively dedicated to the issue of gender-based violence in schools (Ćeriman et al., 2015); it has provided more detailed insights into this type of violence. The findings of the study carried out in 2024 should therefore be accepted with the important note that, due to methodological differences, they are not comparable to the findings of Ćeriman et al. from 2015.

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<sup>20</sup> 5th grade primary school students were not asked these questions.

## 8.2. EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE

In a sample of older students, 10% of them experienced at least one form of gender-based violence in the last three months. Interestingly, the differences based on the gender of the children are not statistically significant, but a slightly higher percentage of students who reported at least one of the examined forms of gender-based violence was registered among boys than among girls (12% compared to 9%).

With regard to the type of violence, sexual harassment was experienced by 8% of students. An unexpected finding is that there are statistically significant differences in this aspect, with a higher proportion of students exposed to such experiences among boys than girls (10% compared to 7%). The most frequently reported incident was touching, which was unpleasant for the respondents and was perceived as a kind of sexual harassment (5% of students reported such an experience, that is, 7% of boys and 3% of girls). Other forms were less prevalent. Four per cent of students reported having received unsolicited sexually explicit content via digital communication (5% of boys and 4% of girls), and 2% reported having suffered abuse of photos or videos that were edited using AI (1.9% of boys and 1.5% of girls). As already mentioned, these results should be viewed with caution since the research did not use specialised instruments to examine gender-based violence; rather, students responded to questions that were part of a comprehensive and complex instrument for measuring various types of violence, as well as views and other relevant experiences related to school and peer relationships. Furthermore, it is possible that girls were more reluctant to report such experiences due to fear of stigmatisation, retaliation by students who perpetrated some of the aforementioned forms of harassment, or due to still widespread belief that “victims are to blame” for provoking violence.<sup>21</sup>

Among students who have experienced sexual harassment in the observed period, 9% believes that their same-sex sexual orientation was the reason. In this respect, no statistically significant differences were observed between boys and girls. Nearly one third (32%) of students who reported having experienced sexual harassment, however, believe that the most likely reason is the common practice of boys behaving this way towards girls or vice versa. Here too, no statistically significant differences were found between boys and girls.

There are no statistically significant regional differences in the prevalence of experienced sexual harassment, but there are differences between urban and rural areas. In particular, more students from rural areas reported such experiences compared to students from urban areas (12% compared to 7%).

The survey also explored students’ experiences with forms of online sexual harassment perpetrated by teaching staff throughout their entire schooling.<sup>22</sup> One per cent of them reported having experienced it (25 students, of which 14 boys and 11 girls).

21 Such reasons for not reporting experiencing sexual harassment or other forms of violence have been emphasised in studies conducted on the general female population (see OSCE, 2019, Babović, Reljanović 2019); therefore, it is possible that these reasons are also present among the population of girls.

22 The question was: “Try to remember if, at any time during your schooling so far (in this or previous grades), any teacher has ever sent you inappropriate messages, photos, videos, etc., via the internet?”

Six per cent of them reported having experienced intimate partner violence during an emotional relationship with someone from school, with no statistically significant differences observed between boys and girls<sup>23</sup>. Intimate partner violence manifested as verbal violence in 68% of cases; psychological violence was reported by 68% of those who experienced intimate partner violence. Additionally, 34% reported elements of physical violence, while 51% experienced it online. The differences in the forms of intimate partner violence experienced by girls and boys are statistically insignificant. No statistically significant differences were found in this type of violence by region or type of area.

### 8.3. PERPETRATED VIOLENCE

The percentage of students who in the survey “admitted” having perpetrated any form of sexual harassment of other students in direct contact or via the internet is relatively small: 3%. More boys than girls reported perpetrating sexual harassment: 4% compared to 2% (which is a statistically significant difference).

For somewhat over one fifth of students who in the survey reported having been violent towards another student (22%), the reason for perpetrating violence was the sexual orientation of that student. Boys are more likely than girls to report exhibiting violent behaviour towards a student because they like people of the same sex – 29% of boys and 15% of girls reported having perpetrated violence against others. Among students who have experienced some form of gender-based violence, the portion of those who have perpetrated sexual harassment against someone is higher: 16%. That points to certain “vicious cycles of violence” in which the boundaries between the perpetrator and the victim are fluid for many students, indicating that it is easy to shift from the role of a victim to that of a perpetrator.

### 8.4. WITNESSING ONLINE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Since the start of the school year, 12% of older students have seen sexually explicit images or videos of boys and girls from their school on the internet. In almost half of such instances, they took no action because they believed it was “none of their business”. A quarter (24%) of them informed the student in the photo or video, 10% reported it to a school employee, while the same percentage of “witnesses” reported it to their parents, and 7% reported it via a website to online child safety services (such as the National Contact Centre for Child Safety on the Internet, “Net Patrol” or the website “I Protect You”).

### 8.5. ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER ROLES AND TOLERANCE OF VIOLENCE

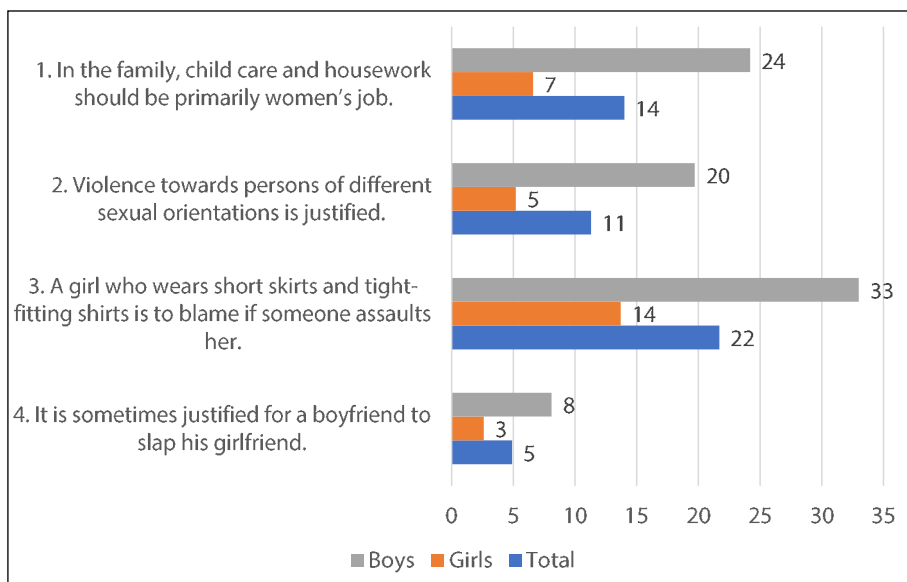
The survey also examined attitudes towards gender roles, as well as those expressing (in)tolerance of violence<sup>24</sup>. The majority of male and female students re-

23 The youngest students were not asked this question.

24 The youngest students were not asked these questions.

ject statements expressing a patriarchal orientation or tolerance of violence (the portion of those who reject them ranges from 62% for statement number 3 in Chart 189 to 91% for statement number 4). Still, the relatively high level of agreement with certain attitudes is concerning, especially with the one that shifts the blame for violence onto the victim (statement number 3 in the following chart). In this respect, statistically significant differences were observed between boys and girls, with boys being more likely to agree with patriarchal statements that emphasise the different roles of women and men in society, as well as with attitudes reflecting tolerance of violence (Chart 181). A higher degree of agreement with the listed attitudes is shown by boys ( $\rho = -.45$ ), especially those living in urban areas ( $\rho = .18$ ), of younger age ( $\rho = -.25$ ), and with lower scholastic performance ( $\rho = -.17$ ). Moreover, respondents who exhibit a higher degree of agreement with those attitudes were more likely to report that they had displayed violent behaviour towards others because of their sexual orientation ( $\rho = .10$ ).

Chart 181: Male and female students' agreement with views of gender roles – % of those who agree or strongly agree



These findings are consistent with other studies on gender-based violence and gender attitudes, which have consistently shown that men are more likely to agree with patriarchal attitudes and exhibit greater tolerance towards gender-based violence (OSCE, 2019; Babović et al., 2010).

# 9. School comparison (school as the unit of analysis)

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## 9.1. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

This chapter is aimed to provide a detailed analysis of differences between schools as whole units based on a range of relevant measures, primarily indicators of school climate and measures of experiencing and perpetrating violence. An aggregate analysis was conducted, with the school as the unit of analysis, based on averages of relevant measures across schools, calculated from the responses of students, parents, and employees in 77 schools included in the survey. The focus was placed on (1) analysing differences between schools in terms of contextual and organisational factors, indicators of school climate, and the prevalence of violence, (2) the agreement of evaluations of three respondent groups (students, parents, and employees), and (3) the relevance of school and contextual factors, as well as school climate, for the prevalence of violence. Here we will present the main conclusions for each of the analysed thematic units that are explained in more detail in the following pages.

### 9.1.1. Differences between schools in measures for physical environment safety and violence prevention

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- ▶ Certain measures for physical environmental safety, such as teacher supervision and lighting of schoolyards and surrounding areas, are present in all or almost all schools. A smaller number of schools – approximately one in seven – do not have video surveillance or a fenced yard; around one quarter of them do not have access control or a school-based police officer.
- ▶ Virtually all activities aimed at preventing school violence are implemented in all schools. The only activities that are missing in some schools are educational programmes such as social-emotional learning programmes, active work of peer teams, and co-operation with other schools on violence prevention.

### **9.1.2. Differences between schools based on indicators of school climate (responses of students, parents, and employees)**

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- ▶ Variations in school climate evaluations between different schools are not big, which may indicate that most schools have similar perceptions within their micro-community. Still, there are certain differences in values, particularly with regard to students' emotional well-being and perceptions of insecurity, which may indicate specific aspects that need to be addressed in some schools.
- ▶ There is a significant association between teachers' attitude towards students and students' emotional well-being. Schools where teachers have better relationships with students tend to have more positive assessments of student well-being. Moreover, more pronounced insecurity in schools is associated with higher levels of emotional distress and poorer relationships with teachers. This suggests that teachers' attitudes and their relationship with students play a key role in shaping a positive or negative school climate.
- ▶ There is a strong correlation between parent and student assessments of the school climate. In schools where parents rate positively their relationships with teachers, as well as their child's attitude towards the school and teachers' attitudes towards children, students also tend to provide more positive assessments of the school atmosphere, security, and teachers' attitudes towards them. This indicates that parents and students share a common perception of the school climate, which may serve as a foundation for improved co-operation within the school.
- ▶ In contrast to parental perspectives, school employees' assessments of the school climate show weaker correlation with those of students. This discrepancy may reflect differing perspectives on school atmosphere and relationships, and also highlights the need for improved communication and alignment of views between employees and students.

### **9.1.3. Differences between schools in forms of violent interaction (students' responses) and correlates**

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- ▶ There are distinct variations in the frequency of different forms of violence among schools. The most frequent form of school violence was verbal violence, such as insults and mockery, while sexual harassment was among the least frequent forms of violence. Significant differences were observed between schools in the prevalence of various forms of violence, as well as in the types of violence (for instance, insults and physical violence are among the most prevalent and show the greatest variation).
- ▶ The frequency of different forms of school violence (both face-to-face and online) is intercorrelated: the more frequent one form of violence is, the more frequent others are, except in the case of sexual harassment.

- ▶ The correlation between school characteristics and the prevalence of violence is generally weak. Some factors, such as the type of school, number of professional associates, and certain structural features, have a certain influence on the frequency of violence.
- ▶ The prevalence of school violence is associated with students' evaluations of the school climate. In schools where students are less integrated into the school community, there are more students who reported having experienced violence, whether physical or cyberbullying.
- ▶ In many schools, a considerable number of students did not exhibit any form of violent behaviour, especially in cases involving taking and damaging someone's belongings (in two thirds of schools, there was no such behaviour). In the worst-case scenario, up to 60% of students in one school perpetrated violence (mostly physical).
- ▶ Variations in the frequency of violent behaviour between schools are significant, but their range is smaller in the case of cyberbullying compared to violence in face-to-face interactions.
- ▶ There is a positive correlation between different forms of violent behaviour – the more students in a school display one form of violent behaviour, the more likely it is that other forms of violent behaviour will also happen.
- ▶ In general, violent behaviour is not consistently associated with the majority of analysed school measures and factors. Physical violence is more prevalent in primary schools, while verbal violence is more prevalent in schools in which disciplinary measures are imposed. School safety measures did not show a significant correlation with the prevalence of violence.
- ▶ Negative student evaluations of school climate (especially rating the school atmosphere as unsafe) are associated with higher levels of violent behaviour, such as insults and ridicule, as well as various forms of cyberbullying.

#### **9.1.4. School predictors of victimisation and violent behaviour**

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- ▶ There are significant variations in the frequency of experiencing violence across schools. In some schools, no one has experienced violence, while in others, all students reported experiencing violence (ranging from 0% to 100%). In over 80% of schools, more than half of the students had been exposed to some form of violence.
- ▶ Although it varies, the perpetration of violence is less prevalent than being subjected to violence. In most schools (over 90%), fewer than half of students report having behaved violently. The variations are also significant (from 0% to 75% of students who have engaged in violent behaviour in different schools).
- ▶ The prevalence of victimisation and violent behaviour is positively correlated, which means that schools with a higher number of students who

suffered violence also have a higher number of students who display violent behaviour.

- ▶ Lower levels of victimisation were recorded in secondary schools compared to primary schools. Schools with a higher teacher-to-student ratio have a lower percentage of students who have experienced violence.
- ▶ Fewer students display violent behaviour in schools with a higher number of teachers and professional associates per student. A higher number of teachers and professional associates is associated with a lower frequency of violent behaviour.
- ▶ Sense of insecurity has proven to be a significant risk factor for experiences of violent interaction. In schools students rated as unsafe, there is a higher percentage of students who have suffered violence. Moreover, in such schools, violent behaviour is more frequent.
- ▶ Low levels of emotional well-being in students are associated with a higher frequency of violent interactions.

### **9.1.5. Comparison of student, parent, and teacher assessments of school violence**

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- ▶ In general, students' and parents' evaluations are positively and significantly correlated. The more students in a school report experiencing some form of violence, the more parents confirm that their child has suffered the same form of violence. These evaluations are moderate to high and show that students and parents have similar experiences and views on the problem of violence.
- ▶ The correlation between students' and employees' evaluations is also present, although weaker and limited to certain forms of violence, such as verbal, physical, and social violence occurring in face-to-face interactions. For some other forms of violence, such as mockery, insults, sexual harassment, or cyberbullying, this correlation is not present.
- ▶ Evaluations of students, parents, and employees regarding the prevalence of violence and violent behaviour are intercorrelated, but not to the same extent. The weakest correlation is between the evaluations of parents and employees.
- ▶ In certain schools, also present are violence by teachers towards students and, to a lesser extent, violence by students towards employees. In only 20% of schools did no students report a teacher acting violently towards them. In 58% of schools, no students reported having been violent towards a teacher.
- ▶ Employees and parents also report violence by parents towards teachers. Only in a smaller number of schools (38%), employees and teachers do not encounter this problem at all. In schools in which parents' violence towards teachers is present, violence among students is also more common, as well as violence by teachers towards students.

- ▶ Forms of violence are intercorrelated and more prevalent in schools where there is a high level of peer violence. In schools where there is a poor relationship between any two groups within the school community, other intergroup relationships also tend to be poorer.

## 9.2. INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

School violence never occurs in a social “vacuum”, but always within a specific group or organisational context, which in one way or another, primarily through its norms, shapes behaviour. The schools included in this survey differ significantly in a number of relevant characteristics that are known, based on previous studies, to be important protective factors, as well as risk factors for experiencing and perpetrating violence. For instance, violence may be more prevalent in bigger schools due to the greater number of students and less attention paid to individual students, whereas smaller schools may be characterised by closer relationships or easier supervision of students, but may be limited in terms of prevention resources. In general, studies show that “less is more”, that is, that student violence is more prevalent in bigger schools (Agnich & Miyazaki, 2013; Baird et al., 2017; Bakioglu & Geyin, 2009).

In these considerations, the characteristics of the local environment or community in which the school is located are also an important factor. Bigger and more urban environments may provide more opportunities for conflicts, but there are also more available resources to support students. Research findings are “mixed”, with some suggesting higher rates of violent interactions in rural schools (Seo et al., 2022), while others draw completely opposite conclusions (Flynn et al., 2018).

The relationship between the ethnic composition of students and school violence is also complex. Ethnic diversity in schools may have both positive and negative impact on peer violence and victimisation, depending on factors such as geographic location and the definition of ethnicity (Basilici et al., 2022). Minority students often suffer higher levels of physical victimisation (Berkowitz, 2020; Soriano et al., 1994). Organisational structure also plays a key role in creating a positive or negative school climate. Clearly defined protocols for conflict and violence resolution, as well as active co-operation between teachers, parents, and students, may significantly reduce the number of incidents (Grunseit et al., 2008). A reasonable expectation that student violence will be less prevalent in schools that implement safety measures and procedures to a greater extent has at least partial empirical validation. Studies indicate that violence is less prevalent in places with more safety measures (Seo et al., 2022), although they may actually lead to a perception of a *less secure* school environment (Rauk et al., 2023).

Furthermore, attention will be paid to indicators of school climate, which include the views and perceptions of students, parents, and school employees. Examining these perceptions may provide deeper insight into how different school factors affect the development of a safe school environment. For example, students may have different experiences and opinions regarding school safety, which may not always correspond to the views of teachers or parents. Differences in perception may be a “consequence” of communication problems or distrust in reporting pro-

cedures. If students and parents do not feel that they can safely report incidents of violence or that such reports will be taken seriously, it is likely that the number of reported incidents will decrease, thereby masking the actual prevalence of school violence.

To all of the above, it should be added that previous studies in our environment (Popadić et al., 2014) indicate that the prevalence of experiencing and perpetrating violence varies significantly depending on certain school characteristics. For instance, schools in which violence was most prevalent, compared to those where it was least prevalent, tend to be smaller (in terms of student number) and characterised by a lower student-to-teacher ratio. Furthermore, in schools where organised groups (“gangs”) were more visible, or where there was a stronger perception of insecurity, violence was also more prevalent. Moreover, previous studies also point to the specifics of teachers’ evaluations of the prevalence of school violence – the correlation between teachers’ concerns about school violence and the vulnerability of students from the same school is significant, but low (Popadić et al., 2014). Teachers are most sensitive to verbal and physical violence, while they are less aware of problems caused by other forms of violence and, generally speaking, fail to accurately evaluate the level of risk.

In accordance with the above, the aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of how different school and/or contextual factors are correlated with the prevalence of experiencing and perpetrating violence. Firstly, a more detailed description of the schools included in this survey and their differences in a series of relevant factors will be presented. This information will then be used in the analysis of the association with measures of perception of school climate and the prevalence of violent interactions in the responses of parents, school employees, and students.

### **9.2.1. Data on which school comparisons are based**

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This chapter addresses the school as the unit of analysis, which will be based on data originating from several sources. They are as follows:

1. **School characteristics.** School principals delivered data about their schools based on official school records. Unlike other data used, these are not based on subjective evaluations but on existing records independent of our research. These data are:
  - ▶ school location: region, town/village name, municipality, rural/urban area;
  - ▶ school size: number of students and employees;
  - ▶ measures to ensure a safe environment;
  - ▶ composition of students: number of foreign students, those who have refugee status, come from minority ethnic groups, those with a disciplinary measure;
  - ▶ students’ scholastic performance;
  - ▶ measures to prevent violence.

2. **School employee responses** (presented separately in the chapter “School violence from employee perspective”).
3. **Responses of students’ parents who participated in the survey** (presented separately in the chapter “School violence from employee perspective”).
4. **Responses from students in the classes included in the survey** (presented separately in the chapter “School violence from students’ perspective”).

The following indicators were derived from the questionnaires<sup>25</sup>:

- ▶ school climate (quality of relationships between school community members, including employees, students, and parents; students’ sense of security, students’ integration into the school community, or a positive perception of the school atmosphere);
- ▶ students’ psychological characteristics: emotional well-being, prosocial attitudes, communication competence (the child “brings to school” these characteristics with them and they are only partly shaped in school, but since they affect relationships with other members of the school community, they will also be considered as factors of the school climate in this paper);
- ▶ implementing activities aimed at preventing violence.

Two indicators related to school violence will be specifically singled out from the school climate indicators: the prevalence of victimisation and the prevalence of school violence. These indicators will refer to student violence and violence between students and school employees, as well as violence by parents towards employees.

## 9.3. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL SAMPLE

The schools in the sample differ in terms of certain relevant characteristics and the structure of students and employees. In this section, we will take a closer look at the differences that may be relevant for subsequent analysis.

### 9.3.1. Differences between schools based on their characteristics

The specific characteristics of the surveyed schools regarding their size, rural/urban location, and type (primary school, vocational or mixed secondary school, gymnasium) are provided in the sample description; therefore, we will not list them here again.

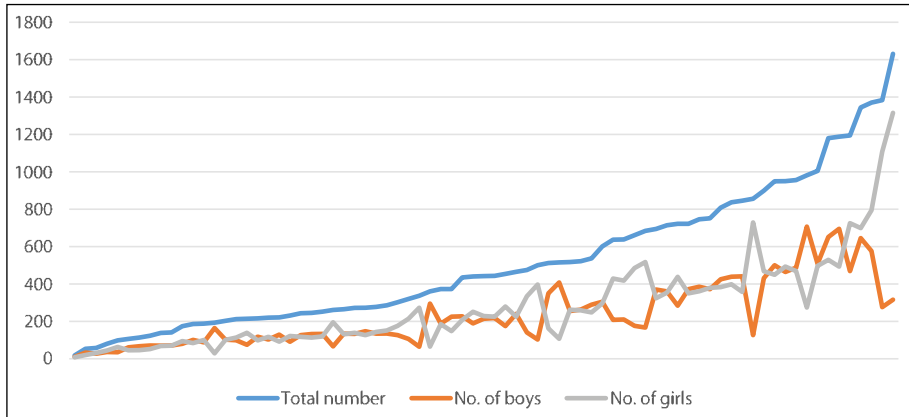
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25 The method of calculating these indicators is shown in the chapter “School violence from students’ perspective”.

### 9.3.2. Statistical data on students and employees

The number of male and female students per school ranged from 18 to 1,631 (517 on average). The number of male students varied from 10 to 707 per school (237 on average), whereas the number of female students per school varied from 8 to 1,315 (241 on average) (Chart 182). Boy-to-girl ratio within schools also varies, with boys having a slight “advantage”; the boy-to-girl ratio ranges from 1:6 to 6:1 (an average of 1.1: 1 in favour of boys).

Chart 182: Number of students by school



The number of teaching staff (Chart 183) ranges from 16 to 175; on average, schools had 56 employed teachers. On average, there were three professional associates per school (the number ranges from 0 to 9, Chart 184).

Chart 183: Number of teaching staff by school

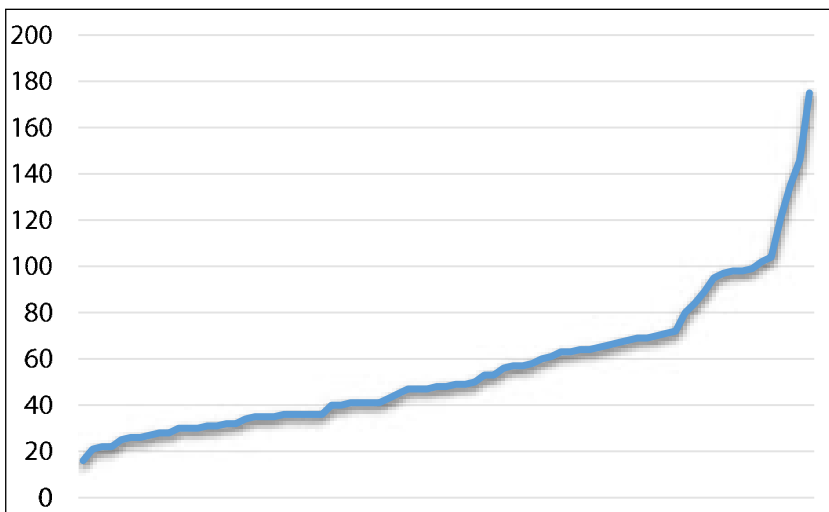
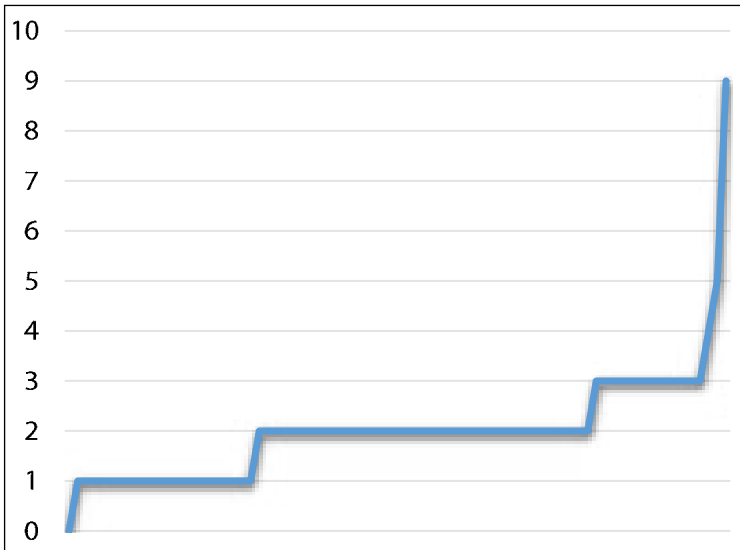
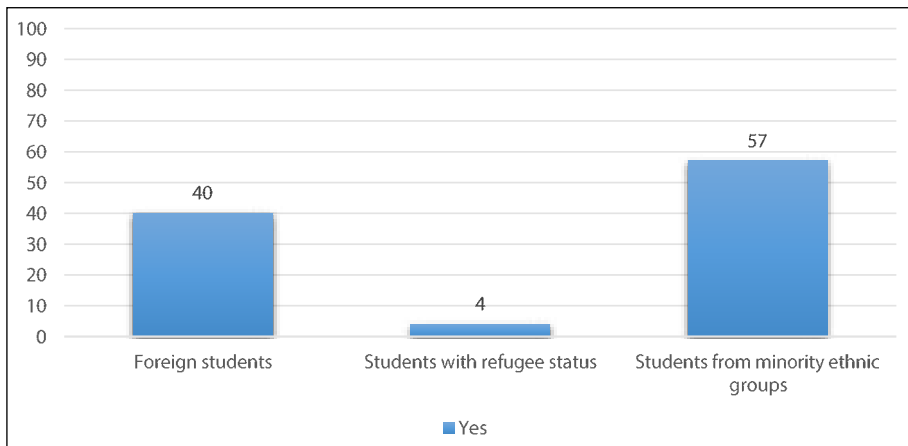


Chart 184: Number of professional associates



For the purposes of the present analysis, it is not only the total number of employees and professional associates that matters, but also their relative ratio, particularly in relation to the number of students. If we look at it from that perspective, it is clear that the ratio in the case of teaching staff varies from one teacher per 17 students to one teacher per two students (one of the schools even had more teachers than students). Professional associate-to-student ratio ranged from one per 500 students to one per 20 students.

Chart 185: Is the school attended by any...?



### 9.3.3. School characteristics

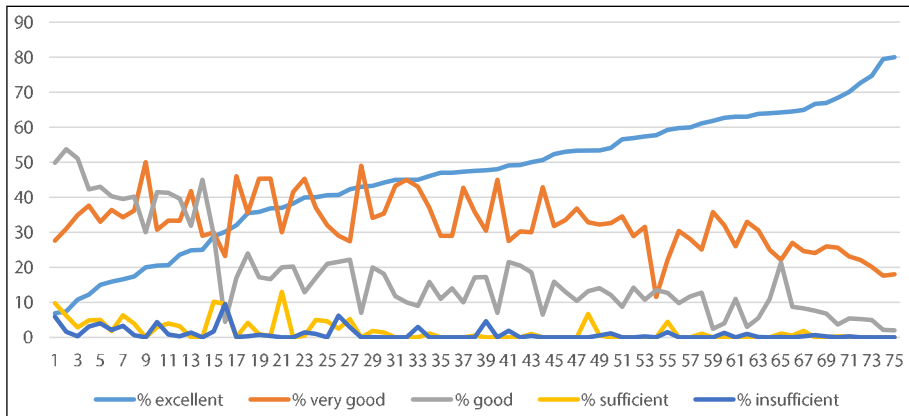
With regard to the student structure, around two thirds of participating schools had no foreign students (Chart 185). In schools which have foreign students, their

number ranges from 1 to 95. There were only three schools which had students with refugee status (each of them had two students), while most schools had students from minority ethnic groups. Their number ranges from 1 to 652 students. To reiterate, the sample included schools attended (mostly) by students belonging to national minorities.

### 9.3.4. Scholastic performance

Students' scholastic performance also varies (Chart 186)<sup>26</sup>. On average, each school has the greatest number of students with excellent scholastic performance (46%), although the proportion of students with excellent performance varies from 7% to 80%. They are followed by students with very good scholastic performance (on average, 32% of students per school, ranging from 12% to 54%), good performance (13% on average, ranging from 2% to 54%), and sufficient performance (2% on average, ranging from 0% to 13%). The lowest number of students had unsatisfactory scholastic performance (1%, ranging from 0% to 10%). The fact that the percentage of students with excellent performance varies the most between schools is significant for subsequent analysis.

Chart 186: Students' scholastic performance



With regard to the number of students with an imposed disciplinary measure, in 19 schools, there were no such students, whereas in other schools, their number ranged from 1 to 146 students.

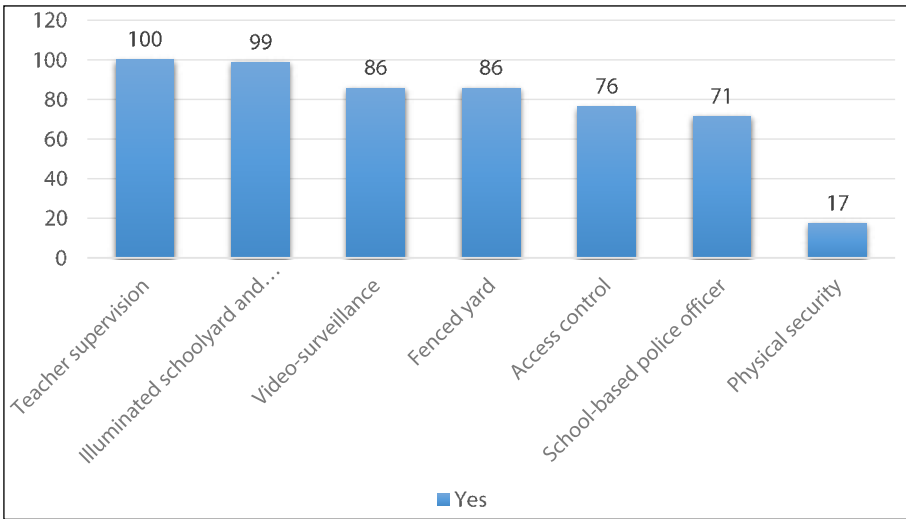
### 9.3.5. Indicators of physical environment safety

There are differences between schools regarding indicators of physical environment safety (Chart 187). In all or nearly all schools, teacher supervision

<sup>26</sup> Two schools did not provide information about this, and in a few cases, the data is incomplete or inaccurate (for instance, the sum of the percentages is significantly less than 100); still, such data have also been taken into consideration.

is provided, and schoolyards and surrounding areas are illuminated. Only a minority of schools – approximately one in seven – do not have video surveillance or a fenced yard; around one quarter of them do not have access control or a school-based police officer. The only exception to this trend is the presence of physical security, which is *not* available in the vast majority of schools. Fifty-eight per cent of rural schools (all of which are small) do not have a school-based police officer. Each school has a minimum of three of the listed indicators, while all indicators are present in 13% of schools (on average, five indicators per school).

Chart 187: Which of the following applies to your school...?

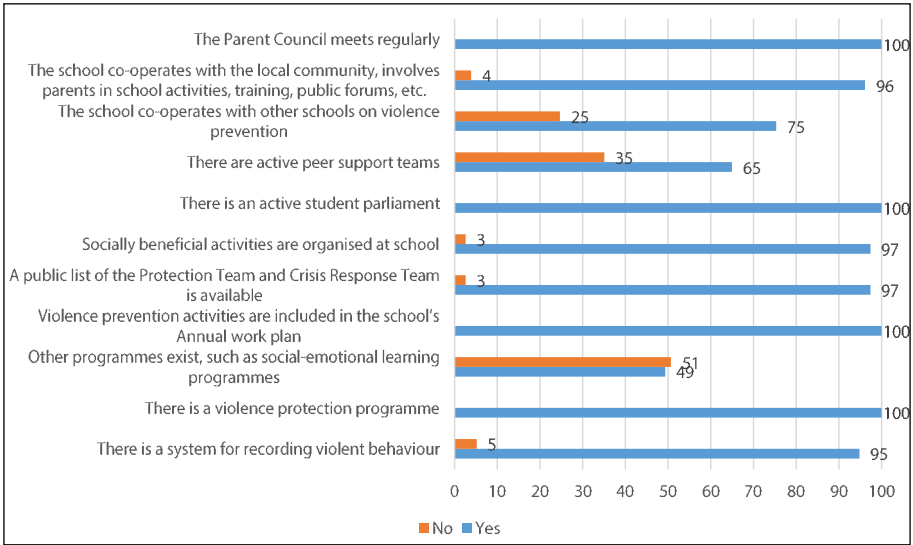


### 9.3.6. School safety-related activities

As can be observed in Chart 188, most school safety-related activities are implemented by the vast majority of schools. All schools have an active student parliament, include violence prevention activities in the Annual Work Plan, have a protection programme in place, and hold regular meetings of the Parents' Council. However, some schools lack co-operation with the local community or parent involvement in school activities, school-organised civic engagement activities, systems for the documentation of violent behaviour, or a publicly available list of the Violence Protection Team members. Between one quarter and one third of schools do not co-operate with other schools on violence prevention, or do not have an active peer support team. The only activity that is not implemented in the majority of schools is other programmes such as social-emotional learning programmes.

Most schools implement almost all activities (the average per school is 10 activities, ranging between 7 and 11). All activities are present in 30% of schools.

Chart 188: School safety-related activities



### 9.3.7. Additional information about surveyed classes

Schools also provided data on the specific classes surveyed related to the number of male and female students, as well as the number of unexcused absences and disciplinary measures imposed since the beginning of the 2024/25 school year. In this section, focus will only be placed on data on unexcused absences and measures imposed.

Of the 48 primary schools surveyed, only in two schools were there unexcused absences in the 5th grade since the beginning of the school year, and in one school, there were unexcused absences in the 7th grade. No disciplinary measures were imposed in any of the schools.

In secondary schools, there were unexcused absences in the 1st grade (from 1 to 7 absences) in nine schools, and in the 3rd grade, there were unexcused absences (from 2 to 18) in 11 schools. Here as well, no school was recorded with disciplinary measures imposed.

Having in mind that in each school two classes were surveyed – a total of 154 classes – unexcused absences were in fact present in very few classes.

## 9.4. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOLS BASED ON INDICATORS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE (RESPONSES OF STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND EMPLOYEES)

Measures related to the school as a unit of analysis are obtained as aggregated measures from the responses of school community members who participated in

the survey. The reliability of such measures depends on how many school community members actually responded to questions and what percentage this represents of all members of the school community.

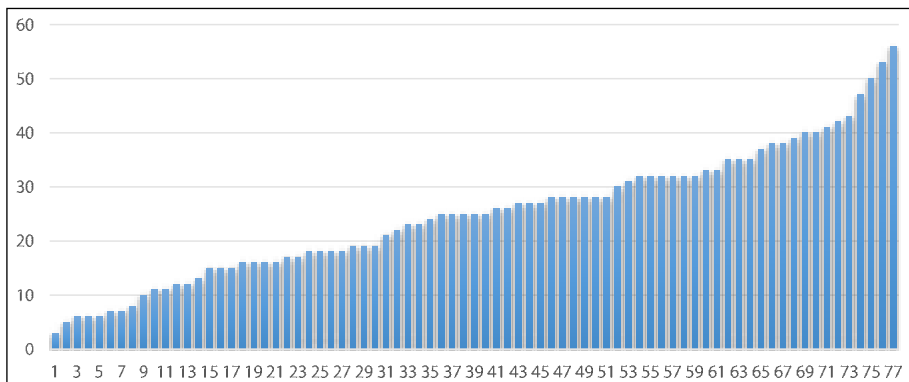
### 9.4.1. School community members who participated in the survey

Since only students from two classes in each school participated in the survey, it is evident that this sample of students was neither representative nor large enough for the measures obtained based on their responses to be treated as measures representing the responses of all students. But that was not our aim. Although the primary aim of the data was not to facilitate school comparisons, it can still serve this purpose. The responses from 7th grade students, while not indicative of all grade levels, can be effectively compared with those from 7th grade students in other schools.

The number of students in the two selected classes of each school ranged from 4 to 62 (41 students on average). There were a total of 3,168 students in all classes, which would have been the sample size if all students participated in the survey. However, 1,916 students participated in the survey, which represents 60% of students from the selected classes. The percentage of students who participated varied from school to school, ranging from 11% to 100%. If we observe the number of surveyed students per school, it ranges from 3 to 56 (the average is 25 students per school) (Chart 189). If we observe the number of surveyed students per class, it ranges from 1 to 30.

As evidenced, in certain schools, the number of surveyed students was very small (in 12% of schools, fewer than 10 students were surveyed), which makes the measures aggregated from their responses less dependable.

Chart 189: Number of surveyed students by school



When it comes to the parents participating in the survey, 1,207 of them responded, but for only 914 of them do we know the school their child attends; thus, only

their responses will be included in this analysis regarding school comparisons. The number of parents per school ranged from 1 to 35 (in one school, there were no parents), which provides for an average of 12 parents per school. In almost half of the schools (46%), less than 10 parents participated.

A total of 2,011 school employees completed the questionnaires, and their number per school ranged from 4 to 71 (on average, 26 per school) (Chart 190). The number of teachers ranged from 2 to 66 (on average, 24 teachers per school) (Chart 191).

Chart 190: Number of surveyed employees by school

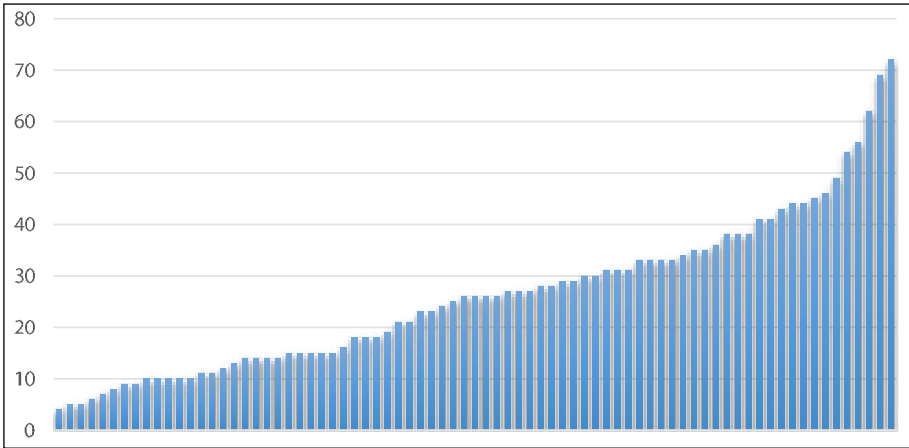
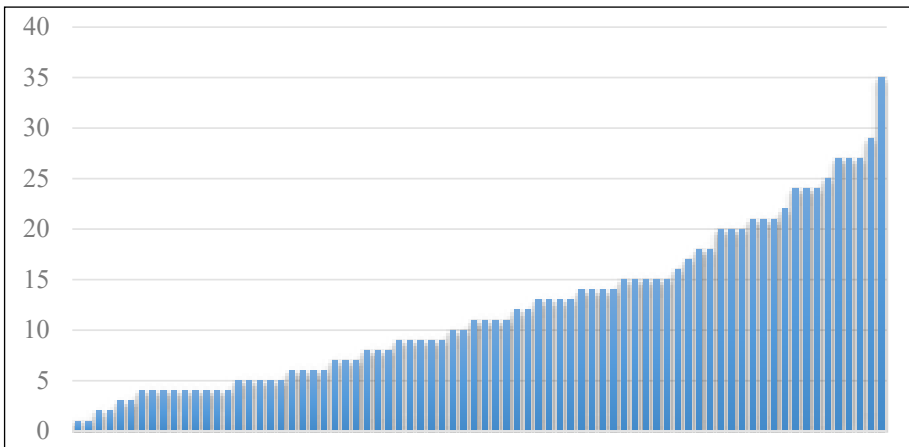


Chart 191: Number of surveyed parents by school



We will start the ensuing analysis with an overview of the school climate indicators, which have already been discussed in detail above; however, the approach in this section will be different. We will perform aggregate analysis, in which the school as a whole is the unit of analysis (or “respondent”), which means that the

data will be analysed at the level of the entire school, rather than at the level of individual students, parents, or employees. Put differently, when we refer to students, parents, or employees in this context, we mean the average responses given by students, parents, or employees **in the same school**. For instance, when stating there is a correlation between students', parents', or employees' perceptions, in this analysis, it means that schools in which more students perceive something in a certain way are at the same time the schools in which parents of such children attending them or employees working there perceive things in a similar way. Furthermore, this analysis is aimed to emphasise the potential significance of school characteristics as important factors in violent interactions. Just like students differ in a number of relevant characteristics (sex, age, etc.), schools, as a whole, differ in terms of a range of relevant characteristics (number of students, number of professional associates, etc.) which may be taken into consideration in this type of analysis, and constitute an important context in which violent interactions occur. Ultimately, this may provide important insights into whether there is a "type" of school where violent interactions are particularly frequent or rare, or whether certain school characteristics are particularly important in this respect.

Therefore, we will commence with an analysis of the perception of school climate of various actors, such as students, parents, and employees. Each of these groups has a specific perception of the school atmosphere, which may significantly affect their behaviour, engagement, and overall satisfaction with the school environment. Students may experience the school climate through personal experience and social interactions, parents through support and co-operation with the school, whereas employees shape the climate through educational methods and interpersonal relationships. Understanding these different perceptions enables the identification of potential challenges and the creation of strategies to support all participants in the educational process, thereby contributing to a more positive and productive environment for all.

The school climate analysis considered several groups of measures across three subsamples of respondents. When it comes to students, we will be focusing on the group of indicators previously described as measures of (1) integration into the school community (number of good friends, attachment to school, etc.), (2) perception of (in)security (visibility of weapons, presence of students who evoke fear, etc.), (3) perceived teachers' attitude towards children (freedom to express opinions, being respected, etc.), (4) emotional distress (presence of negative affects, etc.), (5) prosocial attitudes, and (6) communication competence. Charts 192–197 show the average ratings across schools for all six measures. In each chart, the values are independently sorted from most negative to most positive. Higher values for perceived school atmosphere and teachers' attitudes also indicate more "positive" perceptions, whereas the opposite is true for insecurity and emotional distress.

Chart 192: Perception of school atmosphere by school

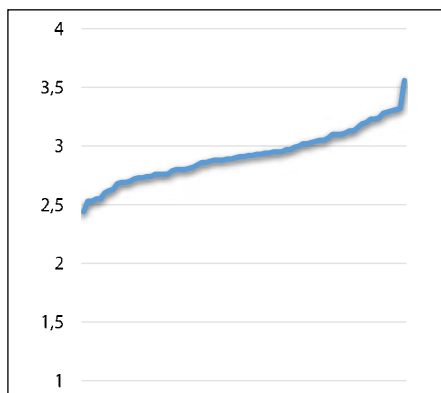


Chart 193: Perception of insecurity by school

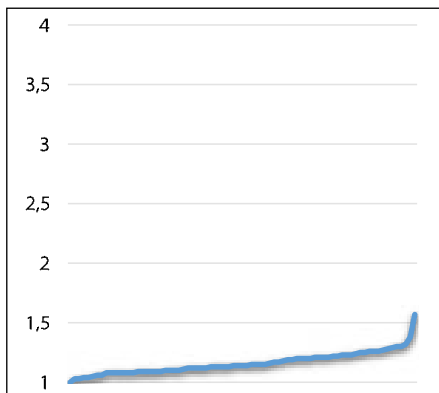


Chart 194: Teachers' attitude towards students by school

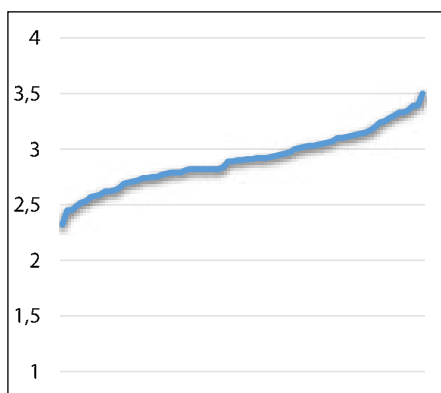


Chart 195: Emotional distress by school

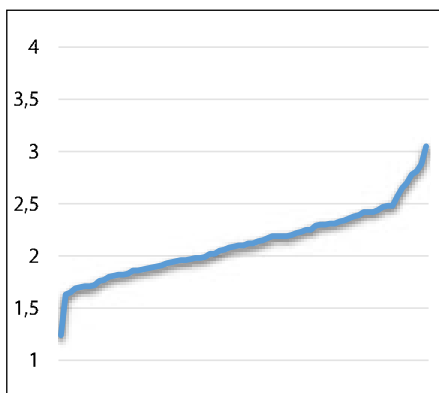


Chart 196: Prosocial attitudes by school

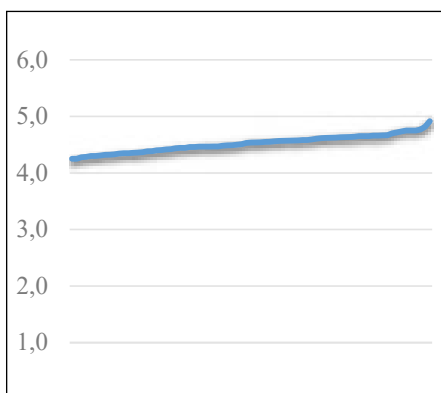
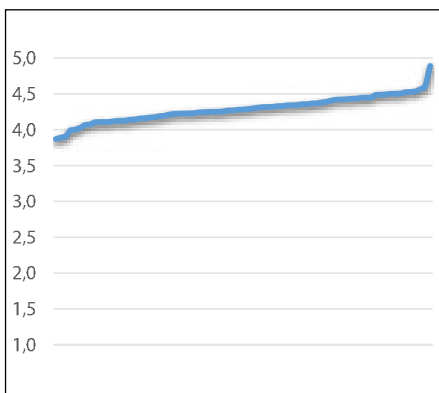


Chart 197: Communication competence by school



Based on the presented data, it is clear that for all six measures, there are no great variations between schools, although they certainly exist; scores most often range from the lowest to the highest within one unit on the scale (for example, from 2.5 to 3.5). A slightly bigger range of scores was recorded for emotional well-being, and by far the weakest variations between schools were observed in relation to the perception of insecurity.

The six analysed measures are significantly intercorrelated at the group level (Table 31), just like they were significantly correlated at the individual level (see the section “School violence from students’ perspective”). Therefore, **schools where students are more integrated into the school community are also schools in which students rate both their emotional well-being and teachers’ attitudes towards them more positively, are less inclined to describe the school environment as unsafe, and have more pronounced prosocial attitudes and communication competence, and vice versa.** Missing was the association between emotional well-being and prosocial attitudes and communication competence.

Table 31: Correlations between measures of perceived school climate

	Sense of security	Emotional well-being	Teachers’ attitude towards students	Prosocial attitudes	Communication competence
Integration into the school	.63**	.51**	.70**	.31**	.48**
Sense of security		.38**	.50**	.26*	.33**
Emotional well-being	.38**		-.43**	.05	.14
Teachers’ attitude towards students	.50**	.43**		.33**	.48**
Prosocial attitudes	.26*	.05	.33**		.54**
Communication competence	.33**	.14	.48**	.54**	

Note: Shown are Spearman’s rho correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

We will present in a similar manner the data on parents’ perceptions of the school climate and the relationships between the main actors in the school process. We focused on three groups of indicators: (1) parents’ satisfaction with the relationship with teachers and professional associates, (2) satisfaction with the child’s attitude towards school and school obligations, and (3) teachers’ attitude towards the child (Charts 198–200). The data are also presented as averages for each school and on each individual chart they are arranged separately from the lowest to the highest values (higher values indicate more positive evaluations, except for satisfaction with the teacher’s attitude towards the child, where the opposite applies). As a reminder, parents’ responses are missing for one school; therefore, the number of schools in the analysis of parents’ responses is 76.

As clearly observed in the charts, the differences between schools are not big, although they do exist. Of three groups of indicators, schools differ far more in

terms of parents' evaluated satisfaction with their relationship with teachers or their child's attitude towards school and school obligations, than with regard to satisfaction with teachers' attitude towards their child, where evaluations were far more uniform.

Chart 198: Satisfaction with relationships with teachers

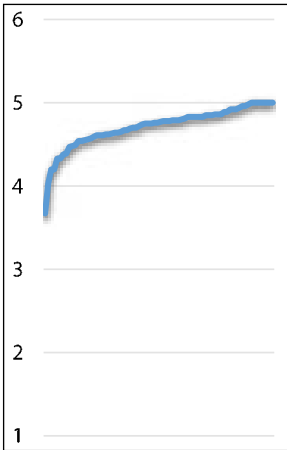


Chart 199: Satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school

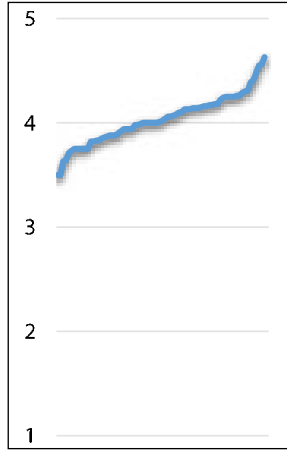
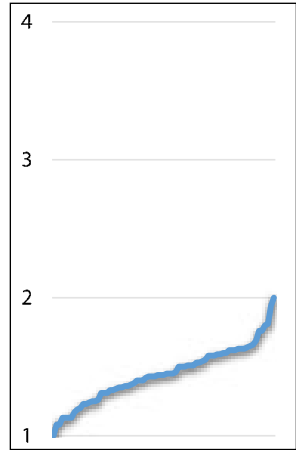


Chart 200: Satisfaction with teachers' attitude towards the child



Parents' evaluations are also significantly correlated. **Schools in which parents evaluate their relationship with teachers more positively are more often those in which parents also evaluate the child's attitude towards school more positively ( $\rho = .34$ ), as well as the teacher's attitude towards the child ( $\rho = -.56$ ).** Parents' evaluation of their child's attitude toward school is also positive in those schools where their evaluations of teachers' attitude towards the child are also more positive ( $\rho = -.34$ ).

Finally, when considering evaluations of the school climate in the employees' responses, it emerges that the same observations previously made for students and parents also apply to them. Three groups of school employees' responses were analysed: (1) satisfaction with relationships at school, (2) an evaluation of the degree of respect between students and teachers, and (3) an evaluation of the extent to which co-operation or competition is encouraged at school. The variations between schools are not particularly pronounced, and the greatest differences are related to the evaluation of the competitive or co-operative climate in the school (Charts 201–203). These evaluations are also significantly correlated. **The more inclined school employees are to give more positive evaluations of relationships in the school, the more likely they are to evaluate mutual respect between students and teachers more positively ( $\rho = -.45$ ) and the school climate as more co-operative ( $\rho = -.27$ ).** Evaluations of relationships between students and teachers and quality of the climate are not significantly correlated.

Chart 201: Employees' satisfaction with relationships at school

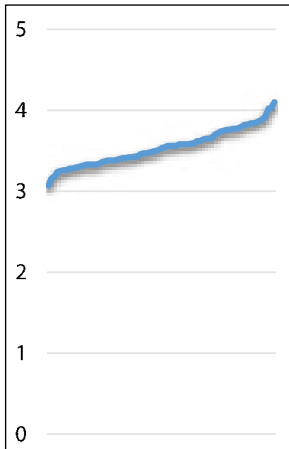


Chart 202: Employees' evaluations of mutual respect between students and teachers

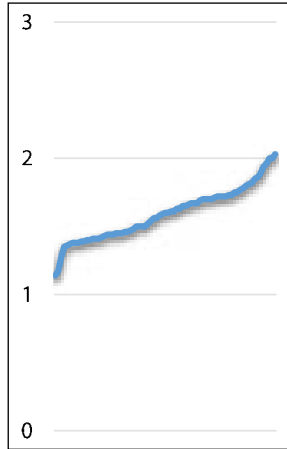
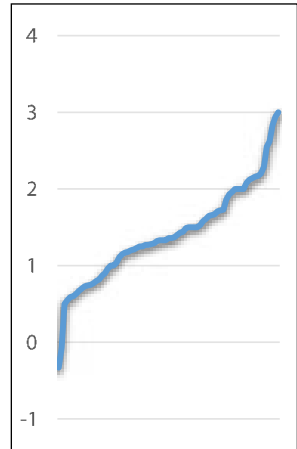


Chart 203: Evaluation of the cooperativeness of the school climate



It has been observed that the evaluations of students, parents, and employees in a school regarding various aspects of school climate are associated, and their mutual evaluations are also associated (Table 31). Firstly, attention should be drawn to the fact that the three different categories of respondents did not respond to identical questions, and therefore more direct comparisons are impossible; this is a comparison of the similarities between the responses given by the three categories of respondents about somewhat similar or comparable aspects of school life that have been treated herein as indicators of school climate. Our primary focus is the similarity of parents' and employees' evaluations to students' responses.

As evident from the table, almost all correlations are significant and in the expected direction. The more satisfied the parents of children in a given school are with their relationship with teachers, the child's attitude towards school, the teachers' attitude towards the child, the better integrated the children are into the school community, and more likely to give more positive evaluations of teachers' attitude towards them, their security, and well-being (there are no associations between perceived insecurity and teachers' attitude towards the child, or the emotional distress and the child's attitude towards school).

However, the agreement between the evaluations provided by employees and those provided by students is considerably weaker. The evaluations of employees' satisfaction with school relationships are not systematically associated with students' evaluations. The evaluation of mutual respect between students and teachers shows that the more employees in a given school report greater mutual respect, the more likely children are to give a positive evaluation of the school atmosphere, security, and teachers' attitude towards them. Here too, there is no association with emotional well-being. Surprisingly, employees' evaluations of climate cooperativeness were not significantly correlated with students' scholastic performance. The reasons why employees' evaluations of cooperativeness of school climate are not associated with students' evaluations of school atmosphere

may be different and may include multiple factors. Employees and students may have different perceptions of the same situation. For instance, teachers and other employees may have a more objective view of organisational aspects and systemic cooperativeness, while students may be more focused on personal experiences and relationships with peers. Employees often focus on internal aspects of the school's work, such as co-operation between colleagues and administration, while students may rate higher aspects such as student relationships, peer socialising, and a sense of security and acceptance at school. Employees may consider cooperativeness in the context of professional relationships, while students may consider it in the context of peer interactions. All of these are potential explanations for the lack of expected agreement in employees' and students' perceptions.

A data item that is not evident in the table, but which we would like to emphasise, is that parents' and employees' evaluations are relatively weakly correlated, and there is only one marked agreement: the more positively employees in a school evaluate the mutual respect between students and teachers, the more satisfied parents of children in that school are with their children's attitude towards school and school obligations ( $\rho = -.36$ ).

Table 32: Correlations between students', parents', and employees' evaluations of various aspects of school climate

Evaluations of parents and employees	Students' evaluations			
	Integration into the school	Insecurity	Emotional distress	Teachers' attitude towards students
Parents' satisfaction with relationships with teachers	.26*	-.23*	-.32**	.27*
Parents' satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school	.29*	-.27*	.12	.27*
Parents' satisfaction with teachers' attitude towards the child	-.42**	.19	.44**	-.44**
Employees' satisfaction with relationships at school	.08	-.20	-.08	.08
Employees' evaluations of mutual respect between students and teachers	-.25*	.38**	.01	-.21
Evaluation of the cooperativeness of the school climate	-.12	-.02	.09	.07

Note: Shown are Spearman's  $\rho$  correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that there is a significant correlation between the evaluations of school climate given by parents and students. The reason for this is, at least partly, that parents infer conclusions about many school situations and relationships based on what their children tell them, as well as their child's satisfaction with the conditions at school. However, the weaker agreement between employees' and students' evaluations indicates differences in perceptions of school climate, which may result from their different experiences and roles in school life. It also potentially indicates the need for improved communication and alignment of views between employees and students in order to improve the school atmosphere.

## 9.4.2. Correlations between school climate and school characteristics

We started from the assumption that the prevalence of violent interactions in a school can be viewed as one aspect of the school climate, and that it is associated with other components of the school climate. The question arises whether school characteristics – the context in which it operates and its organisation – are associated with various elements of the school climate, through which they could indirectly affect the level of violent interactions in the school. The association between school characteristics and indicators of the school climate is presented in Table 33.

Table 33: Correlations between school characteristics and various indicators of school climate

	Integration into the school	Sense of insecurity	Emotional distress	Perceived attitude of teachers towards students	Prosocial attitudes	Communication competence	Parents' satisfaction with relationships with teachers	Parents' satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school	Parents' satisfaction with teachers' attitude towards the child	Employees' satisfaction with relationships	Employees' evaluation of disrespect in student-teacher relationships	Cooperativeness in the school
Urban vs. rural	-.35**	.30**	.39**	-.38**	-.11	-.13	-.41**	-.08	.43	-.14	-.05	.04
School size	-.17	.20	.29**	-.29*	-.05	.03	-.27*	-.05	.30**	-.06	-.02	.01
School type	-.56**	-.09	.48**	-.53**	-.08	-.22	-.10	-.05	.33**	-.04	.02	.13
Total number of students in the school	-.26*	.28*	.35**	-.38**	-.10	-.03	-.41**	-.15	.45**	-.08	.03	.13
Total number of teaching staff	-.29*	.24*	.41**	-.40**	-.03	-.03	-.33**	-.16	.51**	-.07	.02	-.04
Number of employees in the psychological and pedagogical service	.00	.14	.14	-.08	.16	.11	-.14	-.03	-.19	-.17	.14	-.04
Boy-to-girl ratio	.30**	-.06	-.52	.24*	-.24*	-.09	-.19	.08	-.30	-.10	-.03	-.09
Teacher-student ratio	.18	-.29*	-.19	.24*	.17	.05	.41	.17	-.30**	.10	-.04	-.03
Psychological-pedagogical service to student ratio	.28*	-.19	.32**	.34**	-.17	.08	.40**	.13	-.39**	-.04	.06	-.06
Number of foreign students	-.08	.27*	.27*	-.05	-.13	-.15	-.26	-.06	.08	-.04	.01	.11
Number of students with refugee status	.02	.11	.08	-.05	-.06	.01	.20	.13	-.03	.05	-.03	.16
Number of students from minority ethnic groups	.02	.14	.10	-.12	.13	.13	-.23	-.04	.15	.07	.01	.15
Number of students with a disciplinary measure	-.35**	-.31**	.18	-.32	-.09	-.14	-.27	-.31**	.30**	.04	.22	.09
Percentage of students with excellent scholastic performance	.25*	-.03	.01	.25*	.20	.12	-.29*	-.13	.35**	.29	-.16	.02
School environment safety	-.04	.02	.22	-.03	.07	.14	-.29*	-.13	.35	-.02	.05	.03
School safety-related activities	.04	-.01	.05	.03	.21	.07	.01	-.11	-.02	-.14	-.05	-.03

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Rural schools, as well as small and primary schools, tend to have a more positive school climate, based on students' evaluations. In such schools, students feel more involved in the school community, more secure, have a more positive view of teachers' attitudes towards students, and show fewer emotional problems. These three school characteristics are not independent, and regression analysis was used to see what the relative importance of these characteristics is. It has been shown that a child's integration into the school community, emotional well-being, and positive perception of teachers' attitudes toward students depend on the school type (they are more pronounced in primary than secondary schools), rather than its urbanity and size. The feeling of insecurity was greater in rural schools, regardless of their type and size.

Measures undertaken by schools to increase the school environment safety were not associated with the indicators of school climate, most likely due to very small differences between schools in terms of the implementation of such measures. The number of school safety-related activities was also not associated with the indicators of school climate.

## 9.5. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOLS IN FORMS OF VIOLENT INTERACTION (STUDENTS' RESPONSES) AND CORRELATES

The differences between schools regarding various forms of violent student interactions will be presented, taking into account the basic distinction between suffering and perpetrating violence.

### 9.5.1. Experiencing violence

Charts 204–211 show the frequency of experiencing various forms of violence in face-to-face interactions, by school (the percentages refer to the number of students who have experienced the specified form of violence at least once since the beginning of the school year). Data for each form of violent interaction are presented in order of increasing frequency; the "higher" the curve on the chart, the more pronounced the form of violence, whereas a steeper slope of the curve indicates there are more pronounced differences between schools in terms of the percentage of students at risk.

Some important trends are evident in the charts. Firstly, no form of violence has been experienced by all students in a school. In the worst-case scenario, one form of violence has been experienced by 83% of students in a school; this applies to one form of verbal violence – insults and mocking. The next most frequently reported are gossiping and spreading lies (in some schools, reported by 71% of students) and physical violence (70%).

The second important finding that can be seen in the charts is that, **for each form of violence, there are schools in which none of the surveyed students reported having experienced it** since the beginning of the school year. For illustrative purposes, in 31 schools, no student reported having been forced to do something they did not want to, while no one in 39 schools (more than half of the schools surveyed) reported having experienced sexual harassment.

Chart 204: Name-calling, mockery, insults (% at least once)

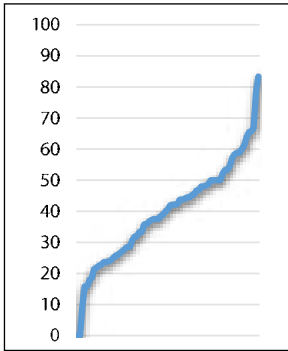


Chart 205: Hitting, kicking, shoving, throwing things, etc. (% at least once)

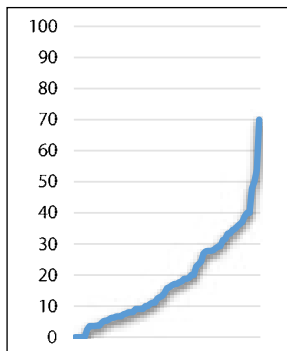


Chart 206: Gossiping, spreading lies, exclusion from the group (% at least once)

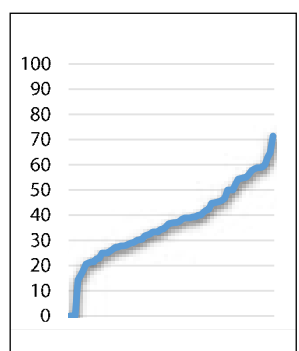


Chart 207: Stealing money, property damage (% at least once)

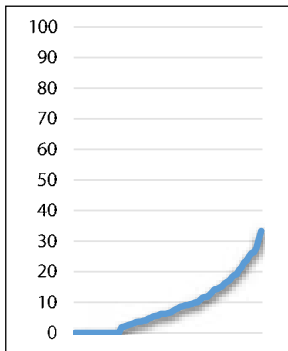


Chart 208: Threats and intimidation (% at least once)

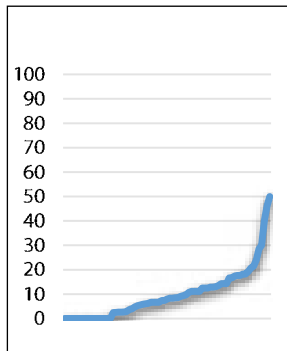


Chart 209: Coercion (% at least once)

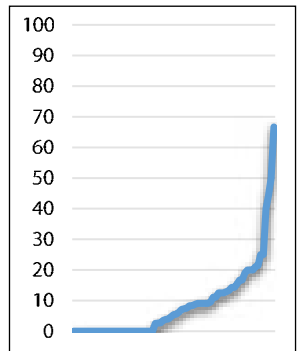


Chart 210: Sexual harassment (% at least once)

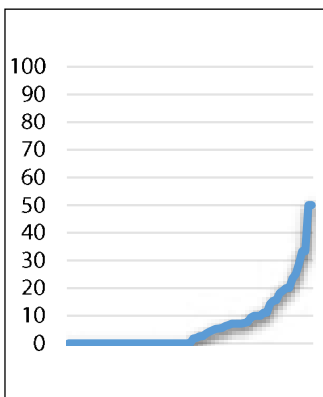
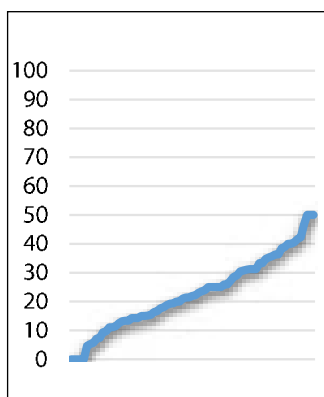


Chart 211: Mockery of appearance (% at least once)



The third important finding is that **all analysed forms of violence show smaller or larger variations between schools**. This is indicated, among other things, by the size of the gap in the frequency of individual forms of violence between the schools with the lowest and highest reported frequency. Insulting and mockery is the form of violence that varies the most between schools – ranging from 0% of surveyed students to the aforementioned 83%; on average, this is the most frequently reported form of violence. The smallest variations are expressed in terms of the prevalence of money theft or property damage (from 0% to 33%). As can be seen in the charts, schools in which more than half of students have experienced some form of violence are relatively rare. All of this suggests that it is reasonable to expect that differences in the prevalence of various forms of violence are potentially associated with differences between schools in certain relevant characteristics.

Finally, an important finding which is not visible in the presented charts is that the frequency of various forms of violence is *positively* correlated – **the more frequent one form of violence is among students in a school, the more common all other forms of violence are, with the exception of sexual harassment**, which is not correlated with the prevalence of other forms. Correlations are moderate to high, ranging from .24 to .76. The most pronounced correlations are between the prevalence of mockery and insults, or hitting, kicking, etc., and threats and intimidation.

Everything that was stated about the forms of violence in face-to-face interactions also applies to the analysed forms of online violence, with minor modifications (Charts 212–219). Compared to violence in face-to-face interactions, the prevalence of any form of cyberbullying is lower; in the worst-case scenario, half of the students experienced some form of violence (such as being photographed or filmed against their will or being sent sexually explicit messages). It is evident that **the prevalence of cyberbullying in schools is much lower than the prevalence of violence in face-to-face interactions**.

Furthermore, for each form of violence, there are schools in which none of the surveyed children reported having experienced it. This is in fact true for many schools regarding certain forms of violence; no student in three quarters of schools (59 out of 77 schools) reported photos or videos having been edited against their will.

There are also variations among schools in terms of the prevalence of the analysed forms of cyberbullying, but they are far less prevalent than violence in face-to-face interactions. The greatest variations were observed regarding taking unwanted photos and videos (from 0% to 50% of students have experienced it) and sending sexually explicit content (from 0% to 50%). The smallest variations were related to sending offensive messages (0% to 20%) and editing photos and videos to create offensive content (0% to 20%).

In the next step of the analysis, our aim was to determine whether different forms of violence are more prevalent in certain specific schools, that is, whether there is an association between school characteristics and the prevalence of individual forms of violence. Table 34 shows the correlations between the prevalence of violence in face-to-face interactions and various school characteristics.

Chart 212: Taking photos and videos against one's will (% at least once)

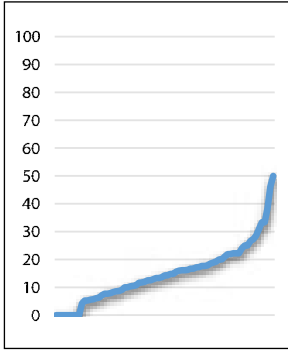


Chart 213: Threatening and offensive messages via phone, e-mail, etc. (% at least once)

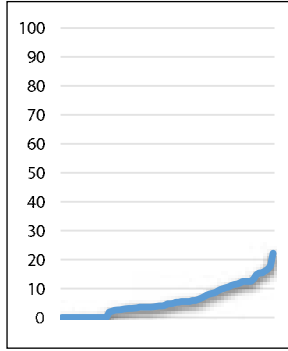


Chart 214: Exclusion from an activity or group (% at least once)

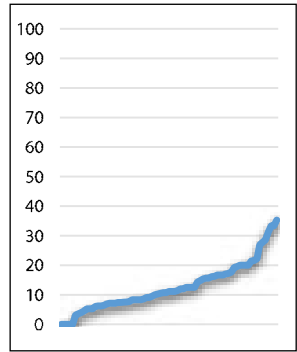


Chart 215: Sharing mean messages (% at least once)

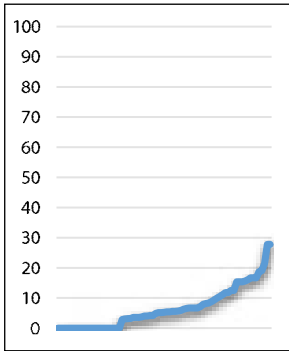


Chart 216: Coercion (% at least once)

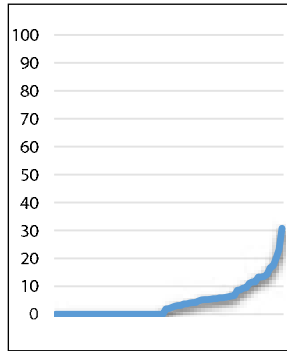


Chart 217: Sharing sexually explicit content (% at least once)

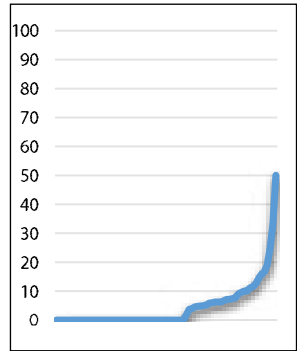


Chart 218: Creating and sharing sexually explicit content generated by AI from an image or video (% at least once)

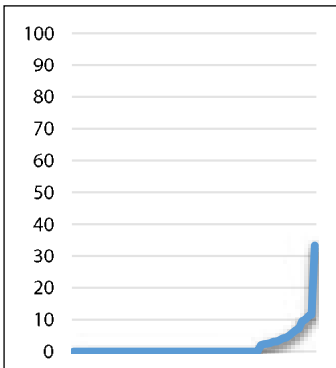


Chart 219: Creating and sharing offensive content generated by AI from an image or video (% at least once)

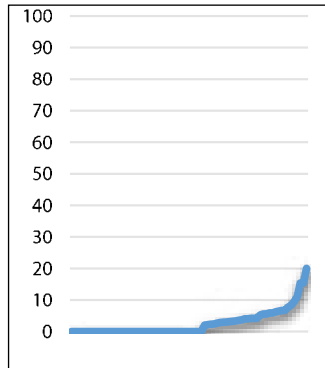


Table 34: Correlations between school characteristics and various measures of experiencing violence in face-to-face interactions

	Name-calling, mockery, insults (% at least once)	Hitting, shoving, hair-pulling, etc. (% at least once)	Gossiping, spreading lies, excluding someone (% at least once)	Taking or damaging someone's belongings (% at least once)	Threats and intimidation (% at least once)	Coercion (% at least once)	Sexual harassment (% at least once)	Mockery of appearance (% at least once)
Urban vs. rural	-.09	-.26*	.11	-.24*	-.27*	-.04	-.09	-.04
School type	-.40**	-.47**	-.09	-.38**	-.49**	-.18	-.08	-.33**
Total number of students in the school	.08	-.13	.28*	-.04	-.06	.15	.07	.02
Total number of teaching staff	-.07	-.22	.17	-.13	-.14	.04	-.01	-.12
Number of employees in the psychological and pedagogical service	.13	-.13	.18	-.01	.02	.02	-.07	.01
Boy-to-girl ratio	.11	.31**	-.09	.10	.18	.03	.11	.08
Teacher-student ratio	-.25*	-.07	-.35**	-.14	-.11	-.25*	-.12	-.22
Psychological-pedagogical service to student ratio	-.01	.07	-.23*	.05	.13	-.17	-.12	-.02
Number of foreign students	.28*	.16	.30**	.11	.05	.32**	.10	.17
Number of students with refugee status	.09	-.03	.06	.04	.09	-.06	.04	-.01
Number of students from minority ethnic groups	.27*	.048	.17	.14	.03	.02	.09	.04
Number of students with a disciplinary measure	.06	-.05	.13	-.05	-.05	.01	.10	-.06
Percentage of students with excellent scholastic performance	.21	.23	.16	-.02	.17	.21	-.12	.13
School environment safety	.01	-.14	.13	-.15	-.11	.04	.097	-.07
School safety-related activities	.03	.01	.12	.08	-.01	-.03	-.05	.05
School climate – students' evaluations								
Integration into the school	-.06	.01	-.30**	-.05	.01	-.08	.02	-.16
Insecurity	.42**	.26*	.37**	.22	.36**	.21	.20	.37**
Emotional distress	.03	-.13	.32**	-.17	-.02	.13	-.05	.09
Teachers' attitude towards students	-.04	.09	-.31**	-.04	.03	-.13	-.07	-.12
Prosocial attitudes	-.21	-.19	-.22	-.14	-.13	-.16	-.13	-.32
Communication competence	-.32**	-.22	-.32**	-.22	-.10	-.44	-.11	-.35
Parents' evaluations								
Satisfaction with relationships with teachers	-.08	-.046	-.08	.01	.01	-.06	-.13	-.18
Satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school	-.24*	-.15	-.20	-.21	-.19	-.10	-.11	-.21
Satisfaction with teachers' attitude towards the child	-.11	-.16	.13	-.19	-.02	.08	.18	-.01
Employees' evaluations								
Satisfaction with relationships	-.07	.08	.01	-.05	.03	-.14	-.01	-.13
Evaluation of disrespect in student-teacher relationships	.14	.04	.19	.12	.19	.10	.20	.15
Cooperativeness of the school climate	.08	.15	.02	-.12	-.01	-.08	-.03	.01

Note: Shown are Spearman's rho correlation coefficients; \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01.

As evident in the table, the correlations are rarely significant. **The most relevant factor is the school type** or level of education. Mockery and insults, physical violence, taking and damaging one's property, threats, and intimidation are more prevalent among primary than secondary school students. Physical violence, threats, and intimidation are more prevalent among students in rural compared to those in urban areas. Other factors have only limited significance. In schools that have more professional associates per student, gossiping and social exclusion are less prevalent. Similarly, in schools where the teacher-to-student ratio is more favourable, that is, there are fewer students per teacher, verbal and social violence among students is less prevalent. The same applies to the relative professional associate-to-students ratio – a more favourable ratio is associated with lower prevalence of social violence. The presence of foreign students in a school is associated with more prevalent coercion, and the presence of students with minority status with more prevalent insults and mockery. The structure of scholastic performance is not associated with the prevalence of any form of violence, nor are the indicators and activities related to school environment safety.

The prevalence of individual forms of experienced violence is only associated with certain indicators of school climate, primarily with students' evaluations. **Insults and ridicule, hitting and other forms of physical violence, threats, intimidation, and mockery are more prevalent in schools where students report greater insecurity in the school environment.** For some other forms of violence, such as gossiping and social exclusion, the quality of teacher's attitude towards students is also important; the better this attitude is, the fewer students report having experienced these forms of violence. This type of violence is also less prevalent in schools where students are more integrated into the school community. In schools in which a greater number of students have suffered this form of violence, evaluated levels of emotional well-being are lower. Students with less pronounced prosocial attitudes and lower communication competence are more exposed to verbal violence. Other evaluations by students, parents, and employees were not significantly correlated with the prevalence of victimisation.

Similar conclusions are inferred from an analysis of the correlations between the prevalence of various forms of cyberbullying and school factors (Table 35). Here as well, rarely any correlation is statistically significant. **Sharing offensive messages is a type of cyberbullying most commonly associated with some of the analysed factors;** it is more prevalent in bigger schools, those with fewer teaching staff and professional associates relative to the number of students, and those with a greater number of foreign students and students from ethnic minority groups.

Table 35: Correlations between school characteristics and various measures of experiencing cyberbullying

	Taking photos or videos against one's will (% at least once)	Sending threatening and offensive messages via phone, etc. (% at least once)	Leaving out or excluding someone from a group or activity (% at least once)	Sharing mean messages (% at least once)	Coercion (% at least once)	Sending sexually explicit content (% at least once)	Creating and sharing sexually explicit content generated by AI from an image or video (% at least once)	Creating and sharing offensive content generated by AI from an image or video (% at least once)
Urban vs. rural	.15	.05	.06	.05	-.09	.14	.09	-.03
School type	.17	.09	-.20	-.05	-.23*	.12	.23*	-.17
Total number of students in the school	.19	.22	.25*	.30**	.02	.22	.14	.11
Total number of teaching staff	.11	.11	.12	.11	-.06	.18	.13	.01
Number of employees in the psychological and pedagogical service	-.05	-.06	.13	-.07	-.12	-.14	-.11	-.14
Boy-to-girl ratio	.16	-.02	-.09	.01	-.01	.05	.05	.11
Teacher-student ratio	-.23*	-.28*	-.35**	-.45**	-.13	-.22	-.08	-.26*
Psychological-pedagogical service to student ratio	-.29*	-.24*	-.18	-.34**	-.05	-.33**	-.19	-.18
Number of foreign students	.28*	.14	.32**	.30**	.09	.20	-.05	.13
Number of students with refugee status	.06	.05	.19	.17	.01	.08	.02	.00
Number of students from minority ethnic groups	.01	.15	.22	.25*	-.03	-.14	.08	.10
Number of students with a disciplinary measure	.15	.19	-.06	.23*	-.26*	.11	.05	.15
Percentage of students with excellent scholastic performance	.08	-.15	.20	-.12	.02	-.21	-.24*	-.06
School environment safety	-.03	-.01	-.04	.03	-.15	.13	-.21	-.19
School safety-related activities	-.00	-.05	-.09	.10	-.07	-.06	.07	.09
School climate – students' evaluations								
Integration into the school	-.16	-.29*	-.14	-.11	.05	-.22	-.26*	-.06
Insecurity	.27*	.32**	.30**	.25*	.02	.17	.10	.28*
Emotional distress	.21	.04	.33**	-.01	-.03	.10	.09	-.04
Teachers' attitude towards students	-.26*	-.32**	-.27*	-.29*	-.02	-.27*	-.40**	-.25*

	Taking photos or videos against one's will (% at least once)	Sending threatening and offensive messages via phone, etc. (% at least once)	Leaving out or excluding someone from a group or activity (% at least once)	Sharing mean messages (% at least once)	Coercion (% at least once)	Sending sexually explicit content (% at least once)	Creating and sharing sexually explicit content generated by AI from an image or video (% at least once)	Creating and sharing offensive content generated by AI from an image or video (% at least once)
Prosocial attitudes	-.18	-.33**	-.09	-.37**	-.17	-.46**	-.16	-.25*
Communication competence	-.40**	-.18	-.26*	-.26*	-.08	-.34**	-.17	-.29**
Parents' evaluations								
Satisfaction with relationships with teachers	-.10	-.02	-.16	-.22	-.07	-.01	-.07	-.16
Satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school	-.03	-.21	-.12	-.34**	-.07	-.16	.03	-.19
Satisfaction with teachers' attitude towards the child	.21	.04	.14	.08	-.01	.23	.15	.12
Employees' evaluations								
Satisfaction with relationships	-.03	.13	-.06	-.10	-.19	-.02	.01	-.09
Evaluation of disrespect in student-teacher relationships	.08	.17	-.04	.16	.14	.07	-.02	.03
Cooperativeness of the school climate	.05	.01	-.01	-.01	-.07	-.04	.02	-.06

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Being coerced to do something online was more frequent among primary school students than secondary school students, while the opposite was true for editing content using AI. Sending sexually explicit content was more prevalent in schools with fewer students with excellent scholastic performance and a lower number of professional associates. Still, it seems that **various school factors are almost insignificant for different forms of both cyberbullying and face-to-face violence**. A more important role is played by "human capital" – situations in which there are fewer students per teacher or professional associate – which allows them more time and space to devote attention to all or most students. With the exception of coercion and harassment involving sexual content created using AI, all other forms of violence are less prevalent in schools where the described relationship between students and employees is more favourable.

With regard to the analysed forms of cyberbullying, evaluations of the school climate provided by parents or employees are insignificant; a negative correlation was only recorded between parents' satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school and the percentage of children who have experienced sharing of mean messages about them. Evaluations provided by students are far more relevant

and can be summarised with the conclusion that **various forms of cyberbullying are more prevalent in schools where students' evaluations of the school atmosphere or teachers' attitudes towards them are more negative, where school environment safety has a lower rating, and where children exhibit more developed prosocial attitudes and communication competence.** Each analysed form of cyberbullying is associated with at least one of the four students' evaluations in the described manner, with the exception of coercing someone to do something online.

## Perpetration of violence

The second main group of violent interactions are those related to the perpetration of violence. We presented this data in the same way as for the perpetration of violence – individually for each form of violence, by school, indicating the percentage of students who have displayed violent behaviour in the specified manner at least once. Firstly, we will focus on the perpetration of violence in face-to-face interactions (Charts 220–227).

From this data as well, we could infer similar main conclusions as for experiencing violence. There is no school in which all students displayed some type of violence; **in the worst-case scenario, 60% of surveyed students in one school displayed some form of violent behaviour, and this applies to physical violence.**

For each reported form of violent behaviour, there is a significant number of schools in which none of the surveyed students engaged in such behaviour. This especially applies to some types of violence, such as theft and property damage (in two thirds of schools, no one reported perpetrating this type of violence). There are also variations between schools ranging from 0% to 20% of students exhibiting a certain type of behaviour (sexual harassment or coercion), and from 0% to 60% (hitting, etc.). It appears that variations in forms of cyberbullying between schools are less pronounced than those in face-to-face violent interactions.

Chart 220: I called another student derogatory names, mocked, or insulted them (% at least once)

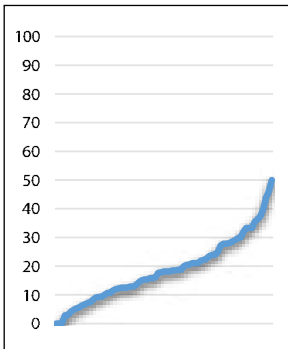


Chart 221: I hit, punched, kicked, pushed someone, pulled their hair, or threw things at them, etc. (% at least once)

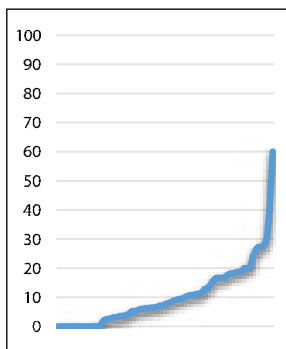


Chart 222: I spread lies about a student and discouraged others from socialising with them (% at least once)

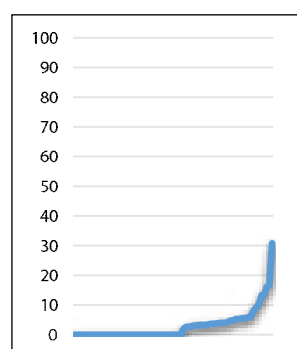


Chart 223: I took money or other things from a student, or damaged their property (% at least once)

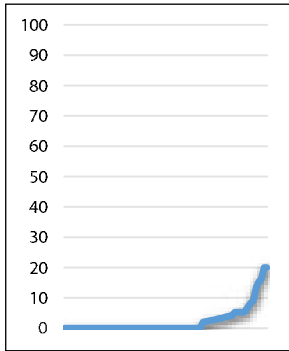


Chart 224: I threatened or intimidated a student (% at least once)

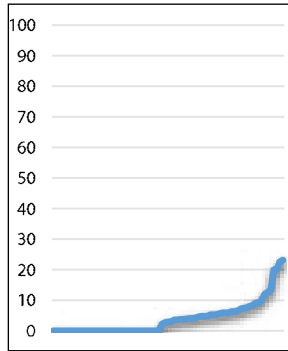


Chart 225: I forced a student to do something they didn't want (% at least once)

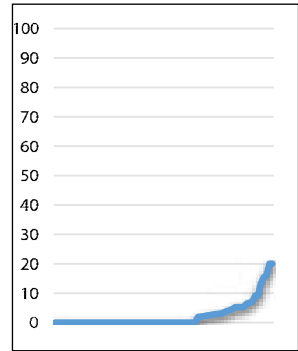


Chart 226: I touched a student in a way that made them feel unpleasant (% at least once)

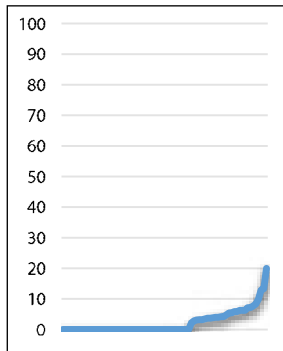
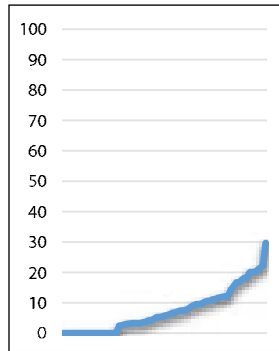


Chart 227: I mocked someone's appearance (% at least once)



Finally, with respect to violent behaviour, there are positive correlations between the prevalence of all analysed forms of violence; **the greater the number of students in a given school who engage in one form of violent behaviour, the greater the number of those who display virtually any other type of violence.** Correlations range from .227 to .723, and are the strongest between stealing money, destroying someone's property, and coercing others to do something they do not want to.

Data on the perpetration of cyberbullying also provide similar conclusions (Charts 228–233). Here as well, there is a large number of schools where none of the students displayed the specified behaviour; for example, in 80% of schools, no students reported having sent sexually explicit content.

While for the vast majority of schools there is no form of violence that all students reported perpetrating, in this case, all students from one school reported having sent sexually explicit content. In fact, the reason for this is that this school is represented by the response of just one student, who reported having sent sexually

explicit content. If we were to exclude this school's score from the chart, the next highest score would be 17%. The prevalence of different forms of violence varies between schools; the smallest range was recorded for sending threatening messages and posting mean comments (0% to 20%), while the greatest range is for sending sexually explicit content (0% to 100%); however, caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions.

Chart 228: Taking photos or videos against one's will (% at least once)

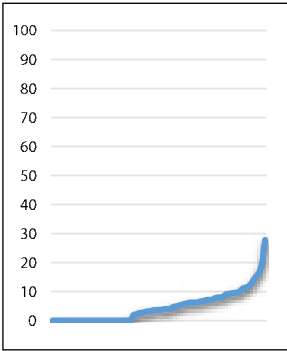


Chart 229: Sending threatening and offensive messages via phone, etc. (% at least once)

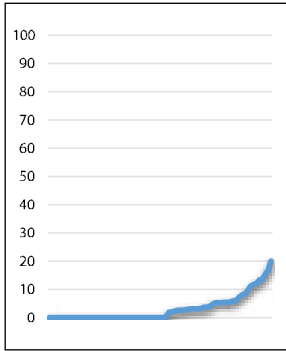


Chart 230: Leaving out or excluding someone from a group or activity (% at least once)

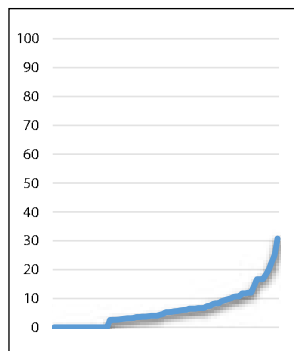


Chart 231: Sharing mean messages (% at least once)

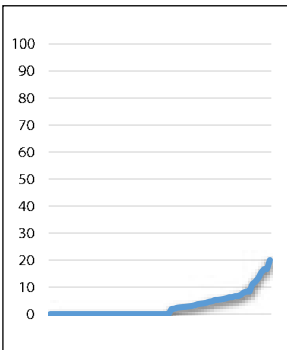


Chart 232: Sending sexually explicit content (% at least once)

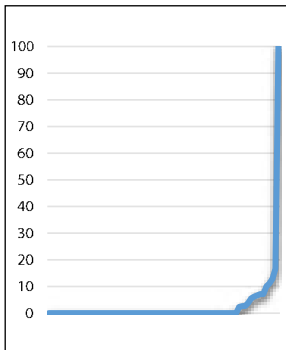
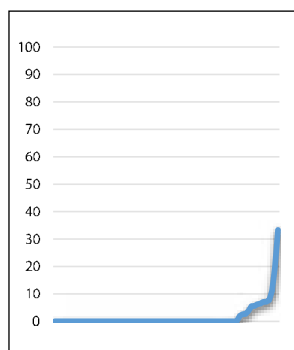


Chart 233: Creating and sharing sexually explicit content generated by AI from an image or video (% at least once)



**Correlations between the prevalence of violent behaviour and various school measures and factors are weak and sporadic** (Table 36). Only a few significant correlations were recorded. Physical violence is more prevalent in primary schools compared to secondary schools, and verbal violence is more prevalent in schools with a greater number of disciplinary measures imposed, as well as those where there are more male than female students. Verbal violence is less prevalent

in schools with a greater number of teachers and professional associates relative to the number of students. However, taken as a whole, it can be concluded that violent behaviour is not consistently associated with the analysed factors. Particularly significant is the finding that school safety measures did not show a significant correlation with the prevalence of student violence.

Table 36: Correlations between school characteristics and various measures of perpetrating violence in face-to-face interactions

	Name-calling, mockery, insults (% at least once)	Hitting, shoving, hair-pulling, etc. (% at least once)	Gossiping, spreading lies, excluding someone (% at least once)	Taking or damaging someone's belongings (% at least once)	Threats and intimidation (% at least once)	Coercion (% at least once)	Sexual harassment (% at least once)	Mockery of appearance (% at least once)
Urban vs. rural	.03	-.02	.01	-.22	.02	-.13	.13	.06
School type	-.09	-.31**	-.15	-.15	-.06	-.10	-.01	.17
Total number of students in the school	.18	.02	.10	-.07	-.02	-.03	.13	.09
Total number of teaching staff	.09	-.09	.00	-.06	.00	-.00	.13	.07
Number of employees in the psychological and pedagogical service	.00	-.06	-.08	-.10	-.05	-.19	-.08	-.10
Boy-to-girl ratio	.23*	.22	.10	.10	.20	.09	.13	-.22
Teacher-student ratio	-.28*	-.18	-.17	.05	.02	-.01	-.08	-.15
Psychological-pedagogical service to student ratio	-.27*	-.09	-.18	-.02	.02	-.11	-.16	-.13
Number of foreign students	.43**	.19	.11	.07	-.08	.16	.16	.19
Number of students with refugee status	.05	.05	.10	.11	.15	.10	.29*	.10
Number of students from minority ethnic groups	.17	.03	.11	-.11	-.11	.05	-.13	-.02
Number of students with a disciplinary measure	.27*	.13	-.02	.02	.07	-.02	-.01	.18
Percentage of students with excellent scholastic performance	.09	.12	.01	-.00	-.26*	.06	-.16	-.25*
School environment safety	-.00	.02	-.14	-.04	-.10	-.04	-.15	-.08
School safety-related activities	-.15	.05	.00	-.03	.14	.13	-.04	-.12
School climate – students' evaluations								
Student integration into the school	-.23*	-.14	-.07	.01	-.02	.03	-.07	-.45**
Insecurity	.36**	.41**	.18	.09	.23*	.13	.18	.19
Emotional distress	.07	-.13	.03	-.02	-.06	.06	.07	.31**

	Name-calling, mockery, insults (% at least once)	Hitting, shoving, hair-pulling, etc. (% at least once)	Gossiping, spreading lies, excluding someone (% at least once)	Taking or damaging someone's belongings (% at least once)	Threats and intimidation (% at least once)	Coercion (% at least once)	Sexual harassment (% at least once)	Mockery of appearance (% at least once)
Teachers' attitude towards students	-.25*	-.14	-.17	-.07	-.17	-.12	-.22	-.40**
Prosocial attitudes	-.34**	-.24*	-.12	-.26*	-.17	-.18	-.37**	-.40**
Communication competence	-.44*	-.39**	-.21	-.19	-.24*	-.20	-.18	-.29**
Parents' evaluations								
Satisfaction with relationships with teachers	-.03	-.21	-.11	.11	-.03	.05	-.03	-.17
Satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school	-.30**	-.29*	.02	-.12	-.05	.01	-.12	-.21
Satisfaction with teachers' attitude towards the child	-.01	.08	.08	-.04	.12	-.09	.12	.25*
Employees' evaluations								
Satisfaction with relationships	-.05	-.20	-.03	.09	-.26*	.01	.06	.02
Evaluation of disrespect in student-teacher relationships	.19	.23*	-.04	.04	.09	-.02	-.09	.15
Cooperativeness of the school climate	.20	-.06	.03	.01	-.17	-.02	.02	.03

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Somewhat more consistent correlations are observed between measures of school climate, primarily students' evaluations, and violent behaviour, but even those are only sporadic. **In schools where students evaluate the atmosphere more negatively and perceive the environment as less safe, and those where students have less developed prosocial attitudes and communication competence, there is also a greater number of students who reported having insulted and mocked other students.** The same is true for schools in which the relationship between teachers and students is perceived as more negative. Parents' evaluations are relevant for verbal and physical violence, which are more prevalent in schools where parents more negatively evaluate teachers' attitudes towards children or are less satisfied with their child's attitude towards school. Employees' evaluations are only associated with the frequency of threats and intimidation, or physical violence, which are more prevalent in schools where employees are less satisfied with school relationships, that is, rate teacher-student relationships, in terms of mutual respect, more negatively.

Online violent behaviour is more consistently and strongly associated with certain school characteristics, at least for some forms of cyberbullying (Table 37). **Taking unwanted photos and social exclusion are more common among students from urban areas, as well as among secondary school students compared to**

**primary school students.** Social exclusion is a type of violence that is particularly significant in the context of online interactions, and its prevalence in the school has been shown to be significantly correlated with a number of characteristics. As already mentioned, it is less prevalent among primary school students and in rural areas, as well as in smaller schools, those with a higher number of teachers and professional associates per student, and more ethnically homogeneous schools.

For some other forms of violence, students’ scholastic performance is also significant – there are fewer instances of sending offensive messages or sexually explicit content in schools with a higher percentage of students with excellent scholastic performance. Finally, in schools with the safer environment, there are fewer instances of taking unwanted photos or videos.

The perpetration of cyberbullying is associated with school climate indicators. The most general conclusion is consistent with what has been repeatedly observed – **cyberbullying is more prevalent in schools where students perceive the school climate more negatively and have less developed prosocial attitudes and communication competence.** This applies to all individual analysed forms, except for sending threatening and offensive messages and sexually explicit content, the frequency of which in the school is not associated with any indicators of the quality of the school climate.

Parents’ evaluations are associated with only one form of cyberbullying (social exclusion), while employees’ evaluations are not associated with any of them.

Table 37: Correlations between school characteristics and various measures of perpetrating cyberbullying

	Taking photos or videos against one's will (% at least once)	Sending threatening and offensive messages via phone, etc. (% at least once)	Leaving out or excluding someone from a group or activity (% at least once)	Sharing mean messages (% at least once)	Sending sexually explicit content (% at least once)	Creating and sharing sexually explicit content generated by AI from an image or video (% at least once)
Urban vs. rural	.28*	-.09	.43**	-.11	-.07	.08
School type	.42**	-.03	.26*	-.19	.02	.08
Total number of students in the school	.27*	-.06	.39**	-.01	.04	.21
Total number of teaching staff	.25*	-.09	.31**	-.02	.07	.18
Number of employees in the psychological and pedagogical service	.04	-.29*	.02	-.15	-.08	-.09
Boy-to-girl ratio	-.06	.13	-.01	.15	.08	-.08
Teacher–student ratio	-.21	-.01	-.38**	-.08	.02	-.15
Psychological-pedagogical service to student ratio	-.28*	-.07	-.38**	-.06	-.14	-.33**
Number of foreign students	.26*	-.04	.40**	.12	-.01	.17

Number of students with refugee status	.14	.17	.13	.12	.05	.05
Number of students from minority ethnic groups	.03	.05	.27*	.05	-.03	.20
Number of students with a disciplinary measure	.25*	-.07	.20	.08	-.08	.06
Percentage of students with excellent scholastic performance	-.07	-.24*	-.13	-.03	-.19	-.10
School environment safety	-.21	-.09	-.10	-.18	.01	.09
School safety-related activities	-.12	-.04	-.03	.05	-.12	.00
School climate – students' evaluations						
Integration into the school	-.35**	-.01	-.35**	.02	-.03	-.16
Insecurity	.29*	.21	.37**	.29*	.04	.23*
Emotional distress	.30**	.07	.26*	-.01	.15	.20
Teachers' attitude towards students	-.49**	-.17	-.45**	-.12	-.20	-.36**
Prosocial attitudes	-.30**	-.20	-.40**	-.26*	-.02	-.09
Communication competence	-.22*	-.31**	-.32**	-.20	-.18	-.15
Parents' evaluations						
Satisfaction with relationships with teachers	-.14	.03	-.26*	-.05	-.05	-.14
Satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school	-.01	-.07	-.06	-.13	.04	-.12
Satisfaction with teachers' attitude towards the child	.18	.03	.07	-.00	-.06	.11
Employees' evaluations						
Satisfaction with relationships	-.08	.05	-.13	-.14	-.04	.01
Evaluation of disrespect in student-teacher relationships	.18	-.01	.06	.15	.08	.05
Cooperativeness of the school climate	.08	.00	-.07	-.17	-.01	.00

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

## 9.6. SCHOOL PREDICTORS OF VICTIMISATION AND VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

Violent interactions may also be evaluated through two previously described summative indicators of experiencing and perpetrating violence, that is, victimisation and bullying. Charts 234 and 235 show the percentages of students who have experienced or displayed at least one form of violence.

As in the case of analysing individual forms of violence, victimisation expressed through this summative measure also varies – from schools in which no one reported experiencing any form of violence (two schools), to schools where all surveyed students reported experiencing violence; in other words, the percentage of vulnerable students ranges from 0% to 100%. Around one fifth of the surveyed schools have fewer than half of their students who have experienced violence; that is, **in four fifths of schools, more than half of the students were exposed to violence.**

Chart 234: Percentage of students by school who have experienced some form of violence

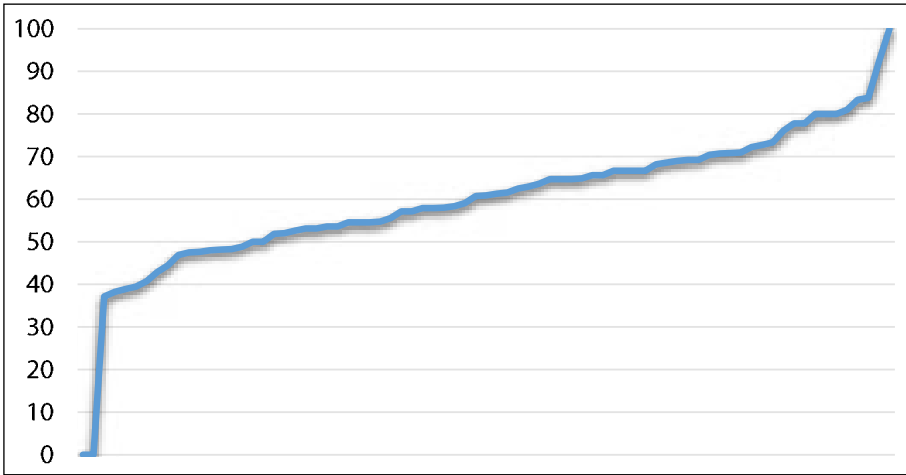
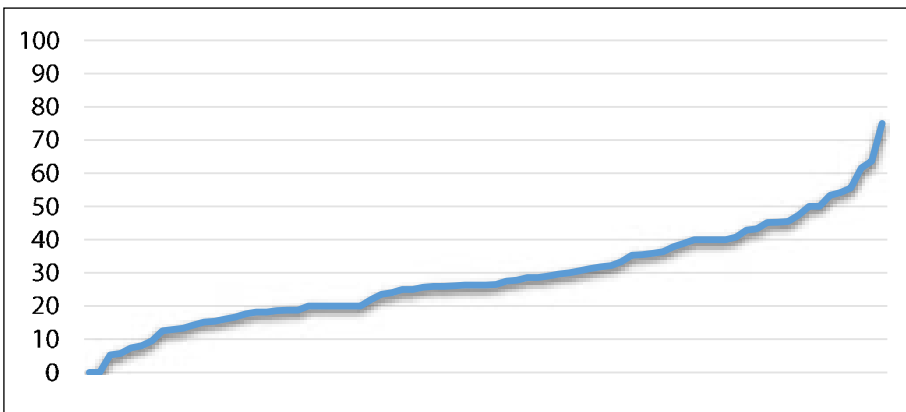


Chart 235: Percentage of students by school who have engaged in violent behaviour



The similar applies to the perpetration of violence. Its prevalence varies from 0% of students who have exhibited violent behaviour (two schools) to 75% of students who have done so (one school). Violent behaviour is less prevalent than victimisation; **in over 90% of the surveyed schools, less than half of the students reported having displayed violence.**

Finally, a particularly important fact should be mentioned – the prevalence of experiencing and perpetrating violence expressed in this way are positively and highly correlated ( $\rho = .5$ ) – **the greater the number of students who have experienced violence in a school, the greater the number of students who engage in violent behaviour, and vice versa.**

The main finding is, however, that both victimisation and bullying vary significantly between schools, which could mean they are also significantly correlated with certain school characteristics. Table 38 shows correlation between previous-

ly used school measures and indicators of victimisation and bullying (the table also shows the correlations with teacher violence towards students, and violence by parents towards employees, which is discussed in detail below; for the measure of violence by parents towards teachers, employees' evaluations of how often it occurs in their school were used).

It is evident from the table that there are only a few significant correlations, although they certainly are meaningful and relevant. Firstly, when it comes to victimisation, it is less prevalent in secondary schools compared to primary schools, as well as in smaller schools compared to bigger ones. Furthermore, the higher the number of teaching staff and professional associates per student, the fewer number of students who reported having experienced violence. On the other hand, a heterogeneous structure of students in terms of country of origin or membership in an ethnic minority group is associated with more pronounced victimisation. There are more students who have experienced at least some form of violence in schools with a higher number of foreign students. Other characteristics were not significantly associated with the prevalence of victimisation. A regression analysis was used to check which of the factors associated with victimisation was the most significant, and it turned out to be the type of school; in other words, with regard to the level of victimisation, the greatest differences between schools are related to whether they are primary or secondary schools. The only additional significant factor is the number of foreign students.

The number of students who displayed violent behaviour also varies significantly depending on certain school characteristics. There are fewer such students in schools that, relatively speaking, have more teachers and professional associates. Where their number per student is higher, fewer students display violent behaviour. Moreover, in schools with a higher number of students with refugee status, the number of students exhibiting violent behaviour is higher. The presence of violent interactions in school was not significantly associated with the safety measures undertaken by the school, nor with the activities related to school safety. Regression analysis did not indicate that any significant school factor stood out in terms of significance.

Table 38: Correlations between school characteristics and measures of victimisation and bullying

	Victimisation	Bullying	Teacher violence against students	Student violence against teachers	Parent violence against employees
Urban vs. rural	.16	.07	.27*	-.19	.29*
School type	-.30**	-.13	.45**	-.07	-.13
Total number of students in the school	.29*	.15	.42**	.01	.47**
Total number of teaching staff	.15	.09	.41**	-.01	.29*
Number of employees in the psychological and pedagogical service	.22	.01	.22	-.19	.34*
Boy-to-girl ratio	.01	.22	-.28	.02	-.02

	Victimisation	Bullying	Teacher violence against students	Student violence against teachers	Parent violence against employees
Teacher–student ratio	-.38**	-.23*	-.30**	-.10	-.51**
Psychological-pedagogical service to student ratio	-.23*	-.22	-.37**	-.13	-.38**
Number of foreign students	.47**	.37**	.17	.13	.47**
Number of students with refugee status	.02*	.02	.15	.01	-.19
Number of students from minority ethnic groups	.21	.12	.06	-.04	.13
Number of students with a disciplinary measure	.08	.27*	.20	.24*	.18
Percentage of students with excellent scholastic performance	.41**	.10	-.13	-.01	.22
School environment safety	.09	.04	.02	-.12	.19
School safety-related activities	.07	-.06	-.10	.02	.09

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

**One of the essential ways to prevent violence is through school activities aimed at violence prevention.**

Hence, the important question arises of how effective these programmes are, and whether peer violence is less prevalent in schools where such programmes are implemented. It has proven challenging to determine with certainty whether such programmes exist in schools, despite the fact that four different sources of information were available. Based on the first source – data from school profiles – all schools organise these activities. We also asked employees how involved they were in such activities. Only 5% of employees say that their schools do not implement violence prevention activities and programmes, 24% state these activities are implemented sporadically, whereas 71% say that they are organised in a planned and systematic manner. The information given by employees within the school does not match. Only in 28 schools (36%) is there unanimous agreement that such programmes are implemented, and even among them, only one school shows agreement on whether they are held sporadically or systematically. We also have information from parents, who were asked whether prevention programmes aimed at reducing school violence had been implemented at the school during this or the previous school year. As many as two thirds of parents (67%) stated they had not or that they were not familiar with it. There is no agreement within schools in that regard either. In only 13% of schools did parents give the same responses (in two, that such programmes are implemented, and in eight, that they are not). We also asked students whether their school had organised activities aimed at preventing violence and, if so, whether they participated in such activities. Taking a criterion of over 80% student agreement, then 39% of schools show agreement that such activities do take place. There was relatively poor agreement among these three pieces of information (measures) (correlations were .23, .28, and .31), so instead of using a single indicator for the visibility and presence of these activities, we correlated measures of victimisation and bullying in schools with all three measures. Whether we looked at the percentage of violent or victimised students, or at the inten-

sity of victimisation and bullying, there was no correlation with the measures related to the implementation and visibility of the programmes. The only significant association was a *positive* correlation between the degree of bullying in the school and employees' evaluations about how systematically such programmes are organised ( $\rho = .26$ ).

With regard to violent interactions between students and teachers and between teachers and parents, some school characteristics are also relevant. Teacher violence against students is more prevalent in urban and bigger schools, as well as in secondary schools compared to primary schools. However, it is less prevalent in schools with a higher number of teachers and professional associates per student. Other correlations were insignificant. The prevalence of student violence against teachers did not vary significantly based on any school characteristic except for the number of students who received a disciplinary measure. Where there is a greater number of such students, there are more instances of student violence against teachers. Finally, parents are more likely to display violent behaviour towards employees in bigger and more urban schools, while these incidents are less common in schools where there are fewer students per teacher and professional associate. A greater number of foreign students is also associated with the higher prevalence of parental violence. Other factors were insignificant. Here as well, we checked whether any of the analysed factors were of particular importance through several regression analyses – the details of which will not be presented – which showed that the type of school, the urbanity of the area, and the number of teachers and professional associates per student were the most important. The frequency of victimisation and violent behaviour was also significantly correlated with school climate indicators (Table 39).

**Insecurity represents a risk factor for experiences of violent interaction.**

The number of students who have experienced violence is higher in schools where students report greater sense of insecurity. The same is true for schools in which the students report lower levels of emotional well-being. Evaluations of the climate provided by employees or parents are not significant. Communication competence was associated with both lower levels of victimisation and bullying, while prosocial attitudes were associated only with lower levels of bullying. Teacher violence against students is also highly correlated with students' lower level of integration into the school community and their emotional distress. Teacher violence against students is more prevalent in schools where students report higher perceived insecurity, more negative teachers' attitudes towards students, and where parents are less satisfied with their relationships with teachers.

**The perpetration of violence is also associated with certain measures of school climate, primarily with perceived insecurity.** More students displayed violent behaviour in schools with greater perceived insecurity. Both parents' and employees' evaluations are relevant. Violent behaviour of students is more prevalent in schools where employees have a more negative view of mutual respect between students and teachers, as well as in schools where parents are more satisfied with their children's attitude towards the school.

Taking everything into account, the **perception of school environment safety** appears to be the most relevant factor for both experiencing and perpetrating violence.

Table 39: Correlations between school characteristics and measures of victimisation and bullying

	Victimisation	Bullying	Teacher violence against students
Students' evaluations			
Integration into the school community	-.08	-.16	-.41**
Insecurity	.37**	.41**	.26*
Emotional distress	.25*	.03	.47**
Teachers' attitude towards students	-.06	-.20	-.53**
Prosocial attitudes	-.07	-.34**	-.09
Communication competence	-.31**	-.49**	-.49**
Parents' evaluations			
Satisfaction with relationships with teachers	-.22	-.21	-.30**
Satisfaction with the child's attitude towards school	-.20	-.35**	-.18
Satisfaction with teachers' attitude towards the child	-.05	.13	.48
Employees' evaluations			
Satisfaction with relationships	-.11	-.05	-.16
Evaluation of disrespect in student-teacher relationships	.12	.24*	.18
Cooperativeness of the school climate	.04	.04	.00

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

## 9.7. COMPARISON OF STUDENT, PARENT, AND TEACHER ASSESSMENTS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Finally, we will also compare the evaluations of the prevalence of school violence provided by students, parents, and school employees. Consistency in their evaluations could indicate mutual understanding and a willingness to co-operate. When students', parents', and employees' evaluations of violence are consistent, it is easier to design effective strategies for solving the problem. However, differences in attitudes may suggest that certain groups are not sufficiently informed or have different expectations or criteria about what constitutes violence. Therefore, this type of analysis is important for planning interventions because understanding how all actors perceive the problem would allow for the creation of appropriate targeted measures.

Before presenting the data, let us recall that there were differences in *what* students, parents, and employees evaluated. Parents were only asked about certain forms of violence that students were also asked about, while employees were not asked separately about experiencing and perpetrating violence; rather, they rated how much a particular form of violence was a problem in the school (which

implies both experiencing *and* perpetrating it simultaneously). Thus, here we compared what could reasonably be compared: first, the evaluations of the prevalence of the same or “similar” forms of violence based on the responses of the three groups of respondents; and second, the evaluations based on summative measures of victimisation and violent behaviour, which included various forms of violence these three groups of respondents evaluated. For students, these measures refer to the number of those who have experienced or perpetrated some form of violence at least once. For parents, this indicator is similar and refers to the number of parents who report that their child has experienced or perpetrated some form of violence at least once. Meanwhile, for employees, this summative measure is related to the evaluation that the examined form of violence rarely occurs in their school. To reiterate, this is an analysis of correlation at the level of school as the unit of analysis, or the average responses of students, parents, and employees for individual schools.

Table 40 shows the correlations between three pairs of evaluations – students and parents, students and employees, and parents and employees – for those forms of violent behaviour where this was possible. Some important information can be seen in that table. Most evaluations provided by students and parents are significantly and positively correlated – **the more students in a given school reported having experienced some form of violence, the more parents reported that their child had experienced that form of violence**. This applies to all of the above forms, with the exception of gossiping, social exclusion, and sexual harassment. Furthermore, the correlations are moderate to high, which means that there is significant agreement between students’ and parents’ evaluations. It is based on the assumption that parents learn about their child’s victimisation primarily from the child themselves, and that children largely inform their parents about such experiences.

There is agreement among both students’ and employees’ evaluations, but it is of lower intensity and only refers to cases of violence in face-to-face interactions. **The more students in a given school reported having experienced verbal, physical, or social violence, the more employees in that school stated that the specific form of violence poses a problem in that school**. This association does not exist for evaluations of the prevalence of ridicule and insults, coercion, or sexual harassment, nor for any of the analysed forms of cyberbullying. It is possible that students do not report many instances of verbal violence to employees because, although frequent, they are a relatively normalised way of interacting with each other; also, employees cannot have full insight into what is happening in the online sphere.

As far as the evaluations of parents and employees are concerned, they are far less consistent and are available for only a few forms of violence. The more parents of children in a given school reported that their child had experienced physical violence, the more employees in that school identified physical violence as a problem. The same is true for one form of cyberbullying – exclusion from an online group or activity. There are no more significant correlations. This is understandable, since the evaluations of parents and children within the same school are based on completely different sources of information.

Table 40: Correlations between evaluations of the prevalence of different forms of violence in face-to-face interactions

	Student–parent correlation	Student–employee correlation	Parent–employee correlation
Violence in face-to-face interactions			
Name-calling, ridicule, or insulting	.40**	.01	.19
Hitting, kicking, shoving, hair-pulling, throwing things at, etc.	.54**	.28*	.49**
Gossiping, spreading lies, exclusion from the group	.19	.30**	.20
Stealing money, property damage	.44**	.287*	.34**
Threats or intimidation	.58**	.25*	.24
Coercion	-	.05	-
Sexual harassment	.17	.18	.00
Cyberbullying			
Taking photos and videos against one’s will	-	.01	-
Threatening and offensive messages	.40**	.07	-.05
Leaving someone out of activities and excluding them from groups	.35**	.13	.24*
Coercing someone to do something they don’t want	-	-.04	-
Sending sexually explicit content	-	.15	-
Editing photos or videos to create sexually explicit content	-	.12	-

Note: Shown are Spearman’s *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Another way in which the three groups of respondents will be compared is through summative measures of experiencing and perpetrating violence that include not only the same and comparable types of violence but also all types of violence that each of these three groups of respondents was asked about. The measure of employee evaluation was calculated as a cumulative evaluation of how frequently various forms (15) of offline and online peer violence occur in their school. The measure of parents’ evaluation of their child’s level of victimisation was calculated as a cumulative evaluation of the extent to which their child was exposed to certain forms of offline and online peer violence (seven forms in total). The measure of parents’ evaluation of their child’s level of violent behaviour was calculated as a cumulative evaluation of the extent to which their child exhibited different forms of offline and online peer violence (six forms in total). Measures of student victimisation and bullying were the percentages of students who experienced or displayed at least one form of peer violence.

The evaluations of different groups of respondents are significantly correlated (Table 41). The correlation between victimisation evaluations in students’ and parents’ responses is positive: **the more students in a given school have experienced some form of violence, the more parents and employees in that school have reported the same.** The same is true for violent behaviour – **the more students report having exhibited some form of violent behaviour, the more parents and employees report that the children have behaved violently.**

Table 41: Correlations between the cumulative measures of experiencing and perpetrating violence as evaluated by students, parents, and school employees

	Student–parent correlation	Student–employee correlation	Parent–employee correlation
Victimisation	.41**	.31**	.32**
Violent behaviour	.24*	.23*	.27*

Note: Shown are Spearman's *rho* correlation coefficients; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

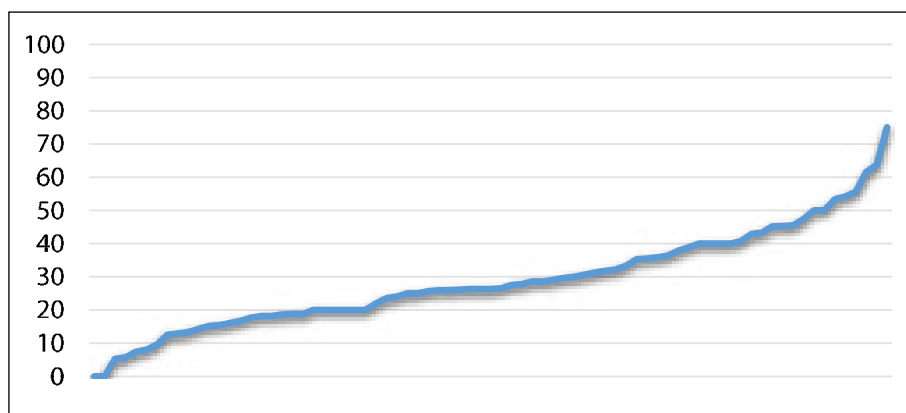
## 9.8. VIOLENT INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTS

Although the most attention was paid to peer violence, it is not the only form of violent interaction in schools. Violent interactions between teachers and students are also concerningly widespread (as suggested by the data presented in the sections on violent interactions from the perspective of students, parents, and employees).

The percentage of students per school who complained about violence teachers perpetrated towards them is shown in Chart 236. In 15 (19%) schools, no students complained about teacher violence, but in the same number of schools, 20% or more students reported teacher violence.

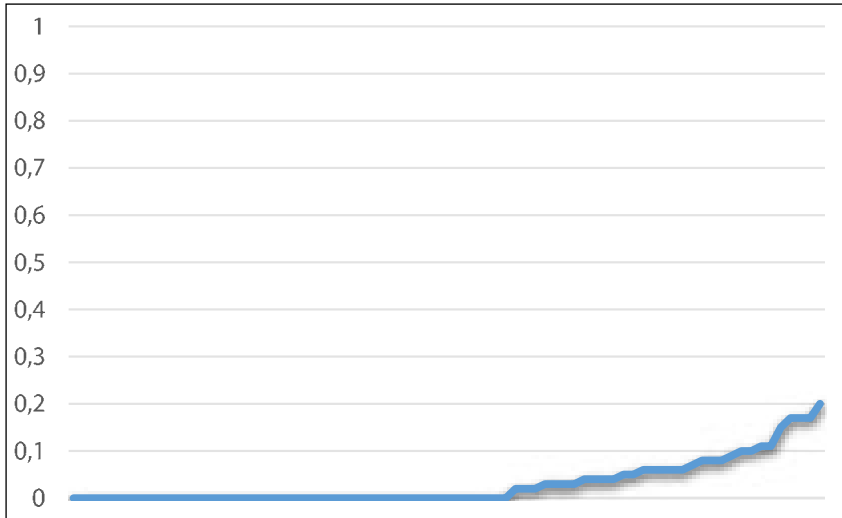
As evident from Table 38, more students who report teacher has perpetrated violence towards them are in urban, secondary, and bigger schools.

Chart 236: Percentage of students by school who reported teacher violence against them



The percentage of children per school who exhibited violence towards teachers is significantly lower, ranging from 0% (in 45 schools) to 20%; this is shown in Chart 237.

Chart 237: Percentage of children by school who exhibited violence towards teachers



Schools in which more students complain about teacher violence were perceived by both employees and parents as schools in which the problem of teacher violence against students is present (Table 42). On the other hand, student violence against teachers is not equally visible to these groups, and they disagree regarding its presence in the school. The lowest level of agreement regarding the degree of violent interactions between teachers and students is observed between parents and employees.

Table 42: Correlations between evaluations of students, parents, and employees of violent interactions between students and teachers

	Student–parent correlation	Student–employee correlation	Parent–employee correlation
Teacher violence against students	.27**	.42**	.02
Student violence against teachers	.10	.15	.07

Note: Since only two parents reported their child having displayed violent behaviour towards a teacher, the measure of parents’ evaluation of the level of student violence against teachers was derived from parents’ evaluation of how significant a problem student violence against teachers is in the school.

Shown are Spearman’s *rho* correlation coefficients ( $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ ).

In schools where teacher violence against students is more prevalent, student violence against teachers is also more prevalent ( $rho = .25$ ). In schools where peer violence is prevalent, violence in teacher–student interactions is also prevalent.

In some schools, **parent violence against employees** is also present. While in 29 schools, this is not a problem for most parents, in the same number of schools,

at least half of parents view it as a major problem. School employees also complain about this problem. Only in 36% of schools do most employees state that this problem does not occur in their school, and in 26% of schools, at least one in five employees report it happening occasionally or often. Furthermore, there were only nine schools in which no employee had experienced violence from a parent during the current or the previous school year, while in 25% of schools, many employees – one in five or more – reported having experienced such a thing. When they are not talking about their own experience, but rather about whether they are familiar with their colleague experiencing violent behaviour from a parent, there are no schools where at least one employee has not reported such cases. In one third of schools (35%), half or more of employees report being aware that their colleague experienced such a thing during the current and last school year. In schools where employees perceive it as a problem, parents also see it as a problem (the correlation between teachers' and parents' perceptions of this form of violence is  $\rho = .30$ ). The problem of parent violence against employees is greater in urban and big schools, as well as in schools with foreign students (Table 38). In schools in which a greater percentage of employees were victims or witnesses of violence by parents, the percentage of victimised students was also higher ( $\rho = .52$ ) and so was the percentage of violent students ( $\rho = .44$ ), and teacher violence against students was more frequent ( $\rho = .30$ ).

# 10. Conclusions and recommendations

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**T**he main research findings have already been presented for each analysed unit – at the beginning of each chapter within the research results. In this section, we will take a look at the main findings of this study from a more general perspective, while placing particular focus on the practical implications and recommendations that arise from them. We grouped them according to the main groups of respondents (school employees, parents, and students) and specific, previously identified thematic areas.

## 10.1. EMPLOYEES

As observed from the perspective of employees, various forms of violence are present in schools in Serbia. Even though verbal violence is most prevalent among students, according to employees' statements, students occasionally display physical violence towards their peers, and fights occur between groups of students in the school, as well as with students from other schools. Employees report the presence of verbal and physical violence by students towards school employees, by colleagues towards students, and by parents towards employees. Based on the obtained empirical findings, **it is important to undertake systemic measures to improve school environment safety. More specifically, it is necessary to ensure, at the school level, consistent implementation of prevention and intervention activities set out in the Protocol Rules, aimed at preventing violence, which would involve all actors in school life. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the effects of the undertaken measures.**

One of the significant findings of this study refers to the association between satisfaction with relationships between key actors and the evaluation of the prevalence of school violence from employees' perspective. Employees who report having better relationships with colleagues, students, and parents have more faith in the effectiveness of school mechanisms for combating violence. Those who more frequently report receiving support from parents in implementing prevention programmes, as well as from the Ministry of Education, are more likely to have greater confidence in the school's ability to reduce violence. To increase the safety of the school environment and reduce violence, it is essential, **by means of various school (curricular and extracurricular) activities, to improve re-**

**relationships between all actors involved in the educational process, and encourage co-operation and a sense of belonging to the school.**

An atmosphere of mutual disrespect is predominant in the relationships between students and school employees in our sample. Many studies indicate an association between various aspects of school climate and the presence of school violence. The primary imperative of every school should be to **create a positive school climate, in which employees play a key role, considering that, like parents, they serve as role models for students.** Based on the research findings, **it is necessary to support the development of social and communication skills among all participants in the educational process. As far as employees are concerned, these skills may be acquired through professional development programmes, but it would also be useful to integrate them into the initial education of future teachers.**

Almost half of the employees in our sample believe that the school is powerless to reduce violence using its own mechanisms in the school context. The perception of a school's ability to reduce violence is associated with understanding the causes of violence and the evaluation of the effectiveness of various measures to combat it. Similar to previous studies, there is a tendency to attribute responsibility for school violence to factors beyond the school's control, such as the negative influence of family, the media, and societal values, while the least importance is placed on factors related to school climate, inappropriate curricula, and teaching methods. It is undeniable that school violence is related to contextual factors, but despite this, it is **important to raise awareness among employees, especially teachers (through initial and ongoing professional development) about the multiple causes of violent behaviour and the ways in which the school can act as a generator of violence. This particularly applies to factors such as more interesting teaching methods and meaningful extracurricular activities for students, which have been confirmed to have a protective role in the case of peer violence.**

According to most teachers, the most effective anti-violence measures are more principled punishment of violent student behaviour and improved co-operation between parents and schools. Employees who do not believe in the school's ability to prevent violence are more likely to advocate for student punishments and less likely to advocate for pedagogical measures for violence prevention. Considering the empirical findings suggesting that punitive measures and restrictive discipline do not solve the problem of school violence in the long term, but often lead to its increase (not only in schools but also in an out-of-school context), **it is necessary to empower teachers to apply more constructive methods of (positive) student discipline, such as encouraging desired student behaviour, fostering responsibility and co-operation, developing social-emotional skills, teaching students how to control their own behaviour, allowing them to see the consequences of their actions and helping them to repair the damage, etc.**

The co-operation between parents and school has proved to be very important in this research as well. It could be concluded that there is a kind of ongoing "tension" in this relationship, manifested through the shifting of responsibility for vio-

lent student behaviour from one side to the other, which sometimes leads to physical confrontations. Employees believe that parents are not sufficiently involved in the school prevention activities aimed at violence reduction, even in cases where their child is exhibiting violent behaviour. On the other hand, parents believe that the school does not sufficiently involve them in such activities. **To reduce tension and improve co-operation between parents and schools in preventing violence, the following practical measures can be implemented: organising joint workshops and training courses on preventing and responding to violence, fostering greater involvement of parents in school teams and activities, such as parent classroom visits, organising joint events (such as sports days, volunteer actions) with the aim of building shared responsibility for children's safety, and improving communication between teachers and parents (timely and efficient information exchange), etc.**

Although most employees believe they are not responsible for school violence, they rate their personal competence for preventing and responding to violence very highly. Those who have experienced violence by students evaluated slightly lower their own ability to solve problems of student violence. On the other hand, although a high portion of employees expressed a need for additional training and a willingness to attend it, slightly more than half of them actually attended training courses. Employees who have not attended training express a greater need for training. This is also one of the more important findings of the research, which needs to be explored additionally: **what the specific needs of teachers regarding the problem of school violence are, what types of training they consider the most useful, how the knowledge obtained from training may be implemented in practice, why those who express the need for additional training do not attend training courses, etc.**

Most employees report the systematic implementation of preventive activities and programmes aimed at prevention of school violence, performed through various forms of work. However, a smaller portion of employees state that such activities are not organised in their school. A significant number of employees are not involved in school violence prevention activities, and around one tenth of employees do not know who the members of the Protection Team are. Many studies indicate the importance of involving all employees in school prevention activities. **It is important to raise the sensitivity of employees to the problem of school violence, especially those who are not sufficiently interested, and encourage them to become more involved in school activities aimed at prevention and intervention. This is particularly important having in mind the fact that employees who already have experience in violence prevention and who are sensitised to this issue are more willing to engage in further professional development.**

## 10.2. PARENTS

The research has shown that an authoritative parenting style is the most prevalent among parents and that the majority of children have good communication with their parents, which is highly valued, especially among younger, more educated,

and better-off parents. In previous studies, the positive “effects” of this parenting style have been well established; thus, despite its widespread presence, it is important to ensure that **parents have resources that can help them improve their parenting skills**. This could be especially useful for parents who may not be aware of the importance of their parenting style for their child’s development. There are several ways to implement this: by organising workshops and seminars focused on specific aspects of parenting practices such as communication with children, discipline, emotional support, etc.; providing resources in a digital format that are easily accessible and contain videos, interactive courses, and expert advice; by organising information sessions in schools where parents would be informed about the importance of their role in the child’s development; by creating public campaigns that will raise awareness about the importance of parenting styles and emphasise how they affect the child’s development, etc.

In general, parents are satisfied with their children’s scholastic performance, as well as their relationships with peers and teachers, while over half of children enjoy school. However, there are concerns regarding the perception of teachers’ expectations, a factor that is closely associated with parents’ perceptions of children’s satisfaction with school life as a whole. These concerns suggest the **need for greater transparency and co-operation between parents and teachers**. It is recommended to organise regular and specialised parent–teacher conferences, where teachers could more clearly convey their expectations related to teaching methods, evaluations, and expectations, but also openly discuss possible problems. Such discussions could include topics such as implementing different teaching strategies, adapting tasks for children of different abilities and developmental stages, and how parents may help their children with schoolwork. It could create a basis for defining realistic expectations that are in line with children’s abilities, and forming realistic expectations of parents regarding teachers’ work and the school as a whole.

In general, parents believe that teachers respond consistently to violence, and parents’ perception of violence is often associated with the evaluation of schools’ willingness to appropriately respond to the problem. However, when violence occurs, parents do not always receive timely information about the undertaken measures, and only half of parents are informed about school activities. Furthermore, parents whose children display violent behaviour are often not involved in designing a plan for enhanced educational work. The first practical implication of these findings is that there is a clear need to **improve communication between the school and parents in cases of violent interactions**. Parents’ awareness and confidence that the school consistently responds to every case of violence may improve the (perception of) school’s capacity to address situations of violence, as well as improve parents’ openness to collaboration, when they have no doubts about the school’s willingness to respond whenever necessary. Schools can establish a formal mandatory system for informing parents which would include regular reports on the activities undertaken by the school in cases of violence, as well as key information on progress and support measures. For these purposes, existing or newly created digital platforms (school website, apps, e-mail, etc.) that would enable receiving information in real time may be used. Since developed procedures for responding in such situations already exist, there is an evident

need to update, modify, or improve them. **Increasing the availability of information on protection and support measures for parents** is one of the possibilities. The research showed that many parents were not familiar with the existence of the Violence Protection Team, peer team activities, and support programmes for students who are victims of violence or who display violent behaviour. This points to the need for the school to actively work to increase the visibility and accessibility of this information. At regular or special parent–teacher conferences, all current protection measures could be presented, along with the work of the Violence Protection Teams and peer support teams. At these parent–teacher conferences, parents would receive detailed information about how the school responds to violence and what support they can expect. Another option is to **find alternative channels of communication with parents** to ensure that all parents receive necessary information, including those who may have fewer resources or have difficulty accessing information. One of the ways to achieve this could be to use different communication channels (website, e-mails, social media, paper documents), which will ensure that information is available to all parents. Schools can also organise informational meetings or consultations for parents who, due to various reasons, cannot always attend regular parent–teacher conferences. In addition, **more active involvement of parents in procedures for responding in cases of violent interactions** need to be implemented more effectively. On the one hand, this involves raising parents’ awareness of the existing mechanisms for violence protection, as well as the roles of the Protection Teams and peer support teams through, for instance, the aforementioned regular information meetings. Parents can also become more familiar with “I Protect You” platform and other resources that are helpful in timely responding and preventing violence. More active parents’ involvement, on the other hand, also implies their empowerment in terms of counselling and other types of support so that they can more effectively deal with situations of violence at school and at home, and also perceive themselves as active participants in the process of designing strategies for working with children. The school may organise **counselling sessions** or **training programmes** for parents, which will provide them with tools and strategies to effectively address situations of violence, both at school and at home. These training courses should include practical advice on how to identify signs of violent behaviour, how to communicate with children in such situations, and how to co-operate with the school to create a comprehensive strategy for preventing and addressing violence. It is also important that parents be involved in the process of creating and implementing strategies for working with children. This involves the school inviting parents to participate in the drafting and revision of **school policies for violence prevention**, as well as enabling parents to provide feedback on current measures and opportunities for their improvement. Such an approach will allow parents to feel like active participants in the decision-making process, which will improve their willingness to co-operate with the school in combating violence.

As we have seen, when their child reports having suffered school violence, parents generally respond in an “adequate” manner, advising their children to turn to school employees for help. Strengthening parents’ trust in co-operation with schools in addressing violence and their more active involvement thus gains additional importance as a way of raising awareness of the obligations and responsibilities of all parties involved. Further improving co-operation is essential

to ensure that parents are confident the school has established adequate measures and mechanisms to respond to violence, as well as to **remove any potential systemic and institutional barriers to more active parental involvement**, not only in cases where violent interactions occur but primarily in preventive activities. In this way, schools can pave the way for processes of long-term collaboration with parents. As we have seen, as a measure to combat violence, parents highly rated improved co-operation between teachers and students, as well as the support of psychologists and pedagogues. This further points to the need for **stronger co-operation between parents, teachers, and professional associates in preventing and addressing violence**. In accordance with the suggestions presented above, they could be implemented in the form of existing teams and structures within the school, or new permanent working groups which would involve children, parents, teachers, psychologists, and pedagogues, and which would work on developing and implementing measures to improve the school climate and reduce violence.

As we have seen, parents have greater confidence in their abilities to respond to face-to-face violence, but they are less confident when it comes to online violence. This points to the need for **additional education and support for parents regarding cyberbullying**. Workshops, webinars, or educational programmes for parents can be organised to provide them with information and tools to identify and respond to cyberbullying, or to utilise existing resources more effectively (such as the aforementioned “I Protect You” platform). The research also showed that parents have more confidence in schools’ ability to reduce face-to-face violence but are more sceptical when it comes to reducing cyberbullying. Having in mind the increased prevalence of cyberbullying, it is important that schools start initiatives that include educating both parents and children about this issue. **Developing training courses and resources for parents related to the legislative and procedural aspects of responding to violence** appears, in this sense, to be an important implication of the findings about parents’ needs. As we have seen, every second parent knows nothing more than that the fact there are legal procedures for school’s responses to cases of violence. In addition to creating new programmes and strategies, the primary focus here can also be placed on greater utilisation of existing resources, such as the “I Protect You” platform.

Finally, since parents emphasise the importance of “external” factors such as family, media, and the overall societal situation in shaping violent behaviour in children, the development of programmes that include education on emotional support for children, media and digital literacy, as well as ways for parents to serve as role models, and how to promote positive media and social values in co-operation with the family, school, and other social actors, should play a far more significant role. It is clear that, from parents’ perspective, **the phenomenon of violence must be approached systemically and systematically, at the level of all relevant institutions of society**, from the family to public policy makers and creators of legislative procedures. Both parents and schools must be actively and systematically supported by competent institutions, but also the society as a whole. The school’s capacity to combat violence is inevitably restricted by the level of willingness to combat it that exists in other segments of society.

### 10.3. STUDENTS

We will highlight certain findings that we consider the most significant, which help us understand the dynamics of violent interactions in schools, and whose observation may assist in designing appropriate programmes for violence prevention.

The results indicate a relatively high prevalence of peer violence in schools. Since the beginning of the school year, two thirds of students have been involved in a violent interaction, either as victims or perpetrators. If we take into consideration that students also witness violent interactions between other students, we can conclude that **peer communication that involves the risk of mutual harm constitutes a part of their everyday life.**

It seems that children do not use the terms “violence”, “to suffer violence”, “to be violent”, etc., in the same way we do, but only for more intense and unpleasant forms of violence, and that **a good portion of the interactions we refer to as violent is considered a normal part of their everyday interactions.** This primarily means that students need to be helped to understand that these other forms of behaviour also deserve to be considered violence – **that it is appropriate to call all actions that hurt other children and violate the norms of friendly, polite interaction as violence.** Programmes aimed at improving communication do not necessarily need to be called programmes against “violence” but rather, for instance, against insults, threats, hate speech, etc.

Although a large portion of the instances that we would refer to as violent do not seem to upset children (at least according to their statements) and they would not label them as violent, we must not ignore that even such cases of inconsiderate or rude behaviour in mutual interactions create the basis for more serious violent reactions, lead to an escalation of violence, and may deeply affect some children. Another reason why programmes for working with children should not be labelled only as actions *against* (violence, intolerance, etc.) but as actions *for* a more enjoyable stay at school, joint learning and helping, etc.

There is a high correlation between offline and online victimisation and between offline and online violence. This emphasises the importance of an integrated approach to preventing violence in both spheres of life. **Workshops for students should focus on both aspects,** and students, as well as their parents and teachers, should be aware that someone who suffers one of these forms of violence is likely to be a victim of the other, and that this should be addressed as soon as possible.

There is a high correlation between perpetrating and experiencing violence. This indicates shared risk factors, such as emotional regulation issues, underdeveloped social skills, negative behaviour models, or family environment, which contribute to children becoming caught in cycles of violent interactions that increase the likelihood of being both victims and perpetrators. There is likely a reciprocal influence: a child has displayed violence, and thus provoked violent reactions from other children, or a child suffers violence, and then (especially if they do not receive appropriate help) responds with violence. Or children who experience violence develop negative perceptions about interpersonal relationships, which then

makes them more likely to engage in violence when communicating with others. In any case, **necessary are preventive programmes that develop social skills that would help children react assertively in conflict situations and violent interactions, with better self-regulation of emotions and behaviour. The development of these social skills can be supported not only by professional associates but also by teachers in their classes.**

**The relatively large category of children who both suffer violence and perpetrate it themselves are at the greatest risk** – they have the worst quality of interpersonal relationships, both with peers and teachers, and are prone to developing both internalised (impaired self-esteem, emotional distress) and externalised (aggressiveness, impaired self-control) ways of reacting. **Such children should receive special attention, educational work with them should be intensified, and co-operation with their parents strengthened.**

The correlation between victimisation and violence with a range of sociodemographic variables is not high or systematic, but **there is a very strong correlation between victimisation and violence with all measured psychological variables.** Along with the high correlation between offline and online violence, and the high correlation between victimisation and perpetration of violence, psychological variables show high intercorrelations and high correlations with victimisation and violence. **The correlations mentioned here are virtually the highest recorded in this part of the research; all others are low and unsystematic. Children involved in violent interactions, whether they have suffered violence or perpetrated it, are less integrated into their peer group, experience significantly more emotional problems, have reduced communication competence, possess a lower sense of security, display greater distrust of adults, and exhibit less pronounced prosocial attitudes and values.** It is impossible to determine cause-and-effect relationship based on correlational questionnaire studies, but these associations have the potential to form a closed cycle of violence. **During their initial education, school psychologists and pedagogues are sufficiently trained to conduct studies themselves, including longitudinal studies, which allow them to monitor children from risk groups and the effects of various events in the school environment on them, and, in general, to monitor the attitudes and needs of students.**

The correlation between victimisation and bullying with student's psychological characteristics is among the strongest correlations not only at the individual level (comparison of students) but also at the organisational level (comparison of schools). **At the school level, it is necessary to regularly organise joint activities that improve the integration of children into school, especially those who are withdrawn and poorly integrated. These activities should aim to develop a common identity and make children's time at school not only secure but also as pleasant as possible. A greater focus on an individual approach and consideration of specific needs during the teaching process would also contribute to this.**

Many children show good integration into school and willingness to help their peers in case of exposure to violence. Students could potentially be an effective

“peer shield” for vulnerable students, especially the students who show a high level of integration and have high social status. Their assistance would not only consist of direct involvement in violent interventions, but also in helping vulnerable students better integrate into their peer group. Children who want to participate in this type of assistance should be provided with appropriate education.

Virtually all schools report implementing violence prevention programmes, but they have been shown to have little effect on students who display violent behaviour, and on the presence of school violence. Especially in light of data indicating that many of these programmes are implemented inadequately, **it is essential to evaluate the quality of educational programmes intended for students and school employees, as well as to monitor their implementation and effects.**

There is significant room for improvement in the relationships between students and teachers. Firstly, there is mutual violent interaction between students and teachers, that both sides complain about. It is essential that both students and teachers understand that such interaction will be, without exception, considered unacceptable and violent, and **consistent sanctioning of such behaviour from both sides, rather than mere severity in response, would send a strong and necessary message.** It has been shown that the perception of good relationships between students and teachers is significantly correlated with a child’s emotional well-being and their integration into school. That is why it is essential to work on developing better communication between them.

Based on students’ responses, teachers’ assistance to vulnerable students is often inadequate or lacking. Distrust in effective help from teachers results in children not relying on the employee assistance in peer conflicts, rather, they react inappropriately. Along with additional employee training, it is also necessary to raise awareness among children that school employees have a duty to consistently and adequately support them in situations when they need help. This information should be available to children not only during lessons or homeroom classes, but rather permanently, for instance, through brochures they could take home or notifications in the school building.

The role of student parliaments in schools needs to be strengthened, since they can play an important role in developing partnerships with school employees and empowering students to exercise their rights, including in personal development.

A surprisingly high number of children report having numerous emotional difficulties arising from different causes. It is possible that even the teachers themselves do not have a clear understanding of how often the children they work with are unhappy, insecure, and anxious. Emotional difficulties are a significant risk factor for a child to react inadequately in relationships with peers and adults, to be violent, or to respond inappropriately when exposed to violence. The findings that the *majority* of children have a positive attitude towards school and peers, that they seek help from adults when they are in danger, that they are satisfied with their lives and family relationships, etc., must not overshadow the findings that some children, albeit few, have **serious problems in relationships at school and within the family. School psychologists and pedagogues should give additional support to such children.**

Although schools are legally obligated to form a Protection Team and showcase the list of team members in a prominent place, every second student did not know whether this team existed, while one in ten claimed that there is no such team. Considering the key role the team plays in prevention and intervention activities, **it is necessary to increase the visibility of the Protection Team to students.**

Parents, even those who believe that their children openly discuss their problems with them, do not have sufficient insight into the extent to which children are involved in violent interactions with other children and teachers. This could be improved with more frequent and transparent communication between teachers and form teachers with parents. Parents should be made aware of the negative consequences that engaging in violent interactions can have on a child, and encouraged to talk more openly about this with their children, possibly helping them to identify subtle signs of violent interactions in their children.

As already mentioned, the partnership between the school and parents needs to be strengthened, with students included in this partnership building. **It would be desirable to organise joint meetings of school employees, parents, and students, as well as collaborative school activities (such as school maintenance, fundraising, cultural events, and exhibitions) involving all these groups.**

Parenting style has been shown to have an impact on children's involvement in violent interactions. The least involved in violent interactions are children whose parents foster an authoritative parenting style – where the parent provides the child with support and love, but also sets clear rules. Parents should be informed in some way, in educational seminars or parent–teacher conferences, that this parenting practice is better for the child than practices characterised by permissiveness or restrictiveness towards the child. By analogy with parenting practices, school employees should also be instructed to use an authoritative approach in their communication with students, rather than a restrictive, overly permissive, or neglectful.

Schools are fairly uniform in terms of implementing measures for school environment safety, many of which are also legally obliged to do so. Despite this, there are significant variations between schools in the frequency of violent interactions between students. While measures of school environment safety and evaluations of school climate were not significant predictors of violent interactions at school, students' feelings of insecurity were, formed based on their perceptions that drugs were offered in the school environment, that violent groups existed, and that some students brought dangerous objects to school. It would seem that these indicators are passing “under the radar” of school employees and parents. **These and similar indicators, based on students' reports about the school environment, should be incorporated into the safety indicators that are regularly monitored.**

Although school safety measures and school-based interventions were not significantly associated with the prevalence of violent behaviour, it does not mean that they are ineffective – they are necessary, but not sufficient. We believe that these safety measures are effective, but along with them, it is necessary to strengthen another component – supportive interpersonal relationships and everything that is considered a positive school climate or school ethos.

## 10.4. DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND VIOLENCE

According to the previous research findings, primary and secondary school students in Serbia use the internet on a daily basis. The older the students, the more time they spend online, with almost one fifth of secondary school students being online for more than seven hours a day, which means that, with an average of eight hours of sleep, a secondary school student has nine hours left during the day for all other activities. When it comes to older primary and secondary school children, experts agree that it is **not possible to set an optimal amount of screen time; however, the basic recommendation is that screen use should not replace other activities essential for healthy psychophysical development (for instance, sleep, physical activity, time spent with family and peers, leisure activities, hobbies, and schoolwork).**

Employees from our sample have a very negative attitude towards the use of digital devices by young people, with most of them believing that their use has negative effects on the physical and psychological well-being, social relationships, and daily functioning of young people. Parents' attitudes are somewhat more positive, but almost half of them believe that internet use greatly interferes with their children's daily activities. It is important to note that one cannot speak of universal effects of digital media, since they can be both beneficial and harmful, depending on the context in which they are used and the individual characteristics of a person. Considering the multiple functions that mobile phones have in the lives of children and young people, excessive screen use does not necessarily have to be problematic. **Adults should focus not on the quantity, but on the quality of screen time and the context of its use. Moreover, both employees and parents should keep in mind that problems in psychosocial functioning often result in problematic internet use.**

Nearly half of parents of 11-year-olds reported using time tracking apps for online activities often or very often, while a very small number of parents of the oldest children does the same. The use of technical protection measures (such as parental controls) to limit screen time is not an effective strategy in most cases, especially considering that students self-assessed their digital skills higher than those of their parents, while some parents underestimate their own digital skills compared to their child's. Moreover, strictly limiting usage (which is linked to so-called digital parenting anxiety) has the opposite effect and deprives the child of the opportunity to become digitally resilient. **Instead of restrictions and bans, it is necessary to involve young people in creating family rules regarding healthy internet use and to support them in developing an individual plan for using digital devices, as well as in building skills for self-regulation and managing their own screen time.**

In accordance with the findings of previous research, the most common online activities of students are communication, using social networking websites, and playing video games. Only one fifth of 5th grade students state they do not use social media, while 80% of 11-year-olds violate the rules for using social media, and most often with the knowledge of their parents. In spite of highly rating their own digital skills, children, as well as their parents, are often unaware of poten-

tial risks, as evidenced by the percentages shown. **It should be noted that most social media platforms have imposed a rule prescribing a minimum age of 13 to open a profile, which means that younger children are not supposed to have a profile on social media. It is very important, both for children and parents, to raise awareness of how algorithms shape user behaviour in the digital environment, what mechanisms platform owners use to keep users in front of the screen for as long as possible, and why you need to be cautious when sharing personal data online.**

Two thirds of students play video games almost every day, boys more often than girls, in all surveyed age groups. Video games and social networking websites have educational potential, which is generally underused. **When choosing a video game, you should consider their age appropriateness. Parents, especially parents of younger children, are expected to inform themselves about the age appropriateness of video games and other digital content (for instance, PEGI classification).**

Eight in ten primary school students and nine in ten secondary school students surveyed reported using the internet for schoolwork. In previous studies, conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic, a significantly smaller percentage of students used the internet for schoolwork. **It is crucial to support the meaningful and constructive use of digital tools, not only in the school context but also in the out-of-school context. Teachers and parents can, in different ways, support the use of digital tools for creating digital content, which is a more cognitively challenging activity compared to merely consuming content.**

Although tools based on generative artificial intelligence are relatively new, especially in Serbia, many students use them to find information, as well as doing homework. **For the safe and ethical use of these tools, it is necessary to systematically support the development of literacy in the area of artificial intelligence within mandatory education, not only among students (through compulsory curriculum programmes) but also among teachers.** (AI literacy is incorporated into the current Digital Competence Framework for teachers, but it is necessary to further support its practical application.)

As reported by all three groups of our respondents, most schools have imposed some form of ban on mobile phone use, with bans being more restrictive in primary schools than in secondary schools. In almost half of secondary schools, the use of mobiles is allowed in class, provided that they are used for educational purposes. **Within our education system, the meaningful use of personal mobile devices during the educational process is supported when the teacher deems it necessary. However, this also implies that both students and teachers must comply with the guidelines for the use of personal devices defined in the official document “Bring your own device”.**

In this survey as well, students rated their parents’ and teachers’ digital competence lower than their own digital skills; the evaluation negatively correlates with age. However, for the first time, we have observed that teachers rate their students’ digital skills with a lower average score than their own. Parents have less confidence in their digital skills, especially compared to older children. **This find-**

**ing has significant practical implications: if students do not perceive their teachers and parents as digitally competent, they will not turn to them for support when they face online challenges.** On the other hand, when comparing students' self-assessments with direct assessments, it is evident that students are unreasonably confident. **Among all participants in the educational process, it is necessary to systematically raise awareness about what is meant by digital skills and, more importantly, to support self-criticism and more objective (self-)assessment.**

The most common response of students to digital harassment is some form of "defensive" tactic that would involve cutting off contact with the violent person, as well as deleting their communication history. In these situations, **it is recommended to take "proactive" measures, such as reporting the violent person (via help centres on social media or specialised websites), or by changing user privacy settings. Within the framework of compulsory school subjects, especially the thematic area of digital literacy, it is crucial to systematically empower students to use the internet safely.**

When they encounter inappropriate or harmful content online (such as verbal or physical violence, and sexually explicit content), almost two thirds of students do nothing, even when they recognise their school peers. It is possible that, due to the oversaturation with such content on the internet, students have become indifferent to it and have come to believe there is no point in reacting; it is also possible that they do not trust the persons to whom they are supposed to report such content. **It is crucial to raise students' awareness of responsible behaviour in public spaces such as the internet, through the development of media literacy skills, but above all, it is necessary to work in an integrated manner on institutional mechanisms that will ensure the internet becomes a healthier and safer space for young people.**

## 10.5. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Research shows that gender-based violence is a prominent form of school violence. One in ten students experienced some form of gender-based violence in the observed period. Although the survey methodology was not designed to address the specifics of gender-based violence, the high portion of students reporting it even within survey focused on other forms of violence suggests the severity of this problem. **However, separate research should be conducted which would specifically focus on gender-based violence and allow for the comprehensive and more detailed examination of prevalence and characteristics in the school context.**

The most common form of sexual harassment is unwanted touching, while intimate partner violence is most frequently manifested through verbal abuse. Sexual harassment is slightly more likely to be reported by boys than girls, while there are no significant differences between sexes in terms of intimate partner violence. This may suggest that girls are less likely to be encouraged to report some form of gender-based violence out of fear of stigmatisation or retaliation from the

students who perpetrated the harassment. Therefore, special attention should be paid to empowering them to report gender-based violence. **It is necessary to encourage students to report such cases, and to prompt teachers and other employees involved in violence response mechanisms to effectively implement the existing protocols for acting in case of violence.**

As with other forms of violence, a vicious cycle of gender-based violence has been observed – students who have experienced harassment more frequently are more likely to perpetrate some form of violence.

Stereotypical attitudes towards gender roles and high tolerance of violence are worryingly widespread among students. These attitudes are more common among boys and students who have reported having perpetrated some form of violence and are intercorrelated. Students who express patriarchal attitudes also show greater tolerance of gender-based violence. Since stereotypes and tolerance of violence are one of the key factors of violent behaviour, it is recommended that schools pay special attention to the activities that will address these issues. **Teachers and students need to be educated about gender equality in broader terms, because gender-based violence is rooted in structural and cultural factors, and can only be understood in the broader context of gender relations among children and young people. It is also necessary to implement educational programmes on gender-based violence, especially regarding the forms of harassment that are more common among students. This will enable the identification of different forms of violence, promote zero tolerance for gender-based violence, particularly various forms of sexual harassment, and thus encourage changes in student behaviour.**

Educational activities may be carried out in co-operation with civil society organisations involved in responding to violence and supporting victims of violence, in order to make use of their vast knowledge and experience in raising awareness among students and teachers regarding this issue.

# 11. References

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# Appendix 1.

## Questionnaire for students

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### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

\* School name and location:

You have before you a questionnaire that explores various aspects of school life that will be completed by a great number of your peers in Serbia.

This is not a test and there are no correct and incorrect responses. We care only about your opinion. The questions are related to you personally, so it is very important that you answer as honestly as possible. No one will be able to see your responses except for the researchers involved in this study. Your teachers, parents, or other students will not see them.

Please read all questions carefully and do not rush to answer. You answer the questions by selecting one or more of the provided options, so carefully read the instructions for each question. First read all the provided responses to the question, and then choose the one that suits you best. Completing the questionnaire takes approximately one school period.

If you see a question that you are unable to answer or are not comfortable answering, move on to the next one. At the end of the questionnaire, you will receive more information about whom you can contact if you would like to further discuss the matters we asked you about.

Participation in the research is not mandatory. If you don't want to participate, no one will be mad at you and you won't bear any negative consequences.

If you want to find out more about this research, you may turn to your form teacher or contact Prof. Dragan Popadić, PhD, the principal investigator of the project ([dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs](mailto:dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs)).

Please confirm below if you would like to participate in this research.

\* I understand that participation is voluntary and I would like to complete the questionnaire.

Yes

No

CODE (We would like to remind you that you and your parent/legal guardian should enter the same code)

1. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

2. What is the year of your birth?

- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014

3. Who are the members of your family? (You can select more than one response.)

- Father/guardian
- Mother/guardian
- Younger siblings
- Older siblings
- Siblings your age
- Someone else

3.4. You stated that your family members include younger siblings (enter a number, such as 2):

3.5. You stated that your family members include older siblings (enter a number, such as 2):

3.6. You stated that your family members include siblings your age (enter a number, such as 2):

4. What was your academic performance at the end of the previous grade?

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Sufficient
- Insufficient (I am repeating the grade)

5. Do you have any of the following difficulties? (You can select more than one response.)

- Chronic illness (such as asthma, diabetes)
- Disability (physical impairment)
- Sensory impairment (vision, hearing)
- Movement difficulties
- Speech difficulties
- Learning difficulties (such as attention, writing, or reading problems)
- I don't have any of the above difficulties

6. Some families have less money, and some have more. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate you and your family?

- 1 – Families with the least money
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 – Families with the most money

7. How many good friends do you have at school?

- I don't have any
- I have one
- I have 2–3
- I have more than 3

8. How many times have you transferred schools during your schooling so far due to discipline-related problems?

- Never
- Once
- Twice
- Three or more times

9. Below are some statements about your school, school teachers, and students who attend your school. Indicate how true you think these statements are.

	Not true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Completely true
I feel I belong to my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other students are kind and willing to help me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We are a united and cohesive class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers respect me as a person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teachers are friendly towards me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel lonely at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like going to school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Are there groups of students at your school who are violent and bully other students?

- I didn't notice
- There is one group
- There are several groups

11. Are there any students in your class that you are afraid of?

- No
- There is one or several male students
- There is one or several female students
- There are both male and female students

12. Has anyone from your school brought a knife, weapons, chains, or similar objects to school that could be used in a fight?

- I haven't heard of it or seen it
- I've heard of it, but I haven't seen it
- I've seen it once or twice
- I have seen it multiple times

13. Have you brought a knife, weapons, chains, or similar objects to school that could be used in a fight?

- No, never
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times
- It happens frequently

14. Does anyone in your school or in its vicinity offer drugs to students?

- No, I haven't heard of it or seen it

Yes, I've heard of it, but I haven't seen it

Yes, I've seen it

15. On a scale from 0 to 10, please indicate how satisfied you are with your:

	Not at all 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very much 10
Current life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholastic performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships within your family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships in your class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	I completely disagree	I mostly disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I mostly agree	I completely agree
I worry too much	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get nervous in certain new situations and lose confidence easily	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often have headaches, stomach aches, or nausea	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am often unhappy, sad, or feel like crying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have many fears and easily get scared	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's hard for me to relax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My palms are often sweaty and my heart races	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Below are different statements. Please indicate to what extent you agree with each of them.

	I completely disagree	I mostly disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I mostly agree	I completely agree
All children have rights that must be respected.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We should always try to understand people who are different from us.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Laws should apply to everyone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I hurt someone's feelings, I always apologise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I plan something, I usually manage to achieve it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	I completely disagree	I mostly disagree	I neither agree not disagree	I mostly agree	I completely agree
I easily recognise when my friend needs help.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to be considerate of other people's feelings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to help someone who is hurt, upset, or feeling sick.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I do something with others, I always do my share of the work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Every argument is best resolved through conversation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Parents can raise their children in different ways. Which of the following statements best describes your mother's/legal guardian's attitude towards you in most situations?

- She gives me love, support, and understanding, but also sets clear rules for behaviour; I am free to express my opinion, but I am expected to adhere to the set rules; there is open communication between me and her.
- She sets strict rules and expects me to follow them; she punishes me when I'm disobedient; she doesn't show much support or understanding for my needs and feelings.
- She gives me support and understanding, and doesn't set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour; I am largely free to act as I wish and make decisions without much control by her or punishments for not following the rules.
- She doesn't have time for me and is uninterested in my needs and feelings; she doesn't set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour.
- I'm unable to answer this question

19. Which of the following statements best describes your father's/legal guardian's attitude towards you in most situations?

- He gives me love, support, and understanding, but also sets clear rules for behaviour; I am free to express my opinion, but I am expected to adhere to the set rules; there is open communication between me and him.
- He sets strict rules and expects me to follow them; he punishes me when I'm disobedient; he doesn't show much support or understanding for my needs and feelings.
- He gives me support and understanding, and doesn't set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour; I am largely free to act as I wish and

make decisions without much control by him or punishments for not following the rules.

- He doesn't have time for me and is uninterested in my needs and feelings; he doesn't set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour.
- I'm unable to answer this question

20. During the past MONTH, approximately how much time did you spend on the internet on schooldays?

When we refer to "the internet", we mean any devices (such as mobile phones, tablets, computers, or game consoles) you use for communication, searching for information, social media, chatting with friends and family, uploading or downloading photos and videos, and everything else you generally do online.

- I don't use the internet
- Up to 1 hour
- From 1 to 3 hours
- From 4 to 5 hours
- From 6 to 7 hours
- More than 7 hours

21. During the past MONTH, how often have you done the following things online? Select one response in each row.

	Never	Once or twice a month	At least once a week	Every day or almost every day	Several times a day
I used the internet for schoolwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I used the internet to talk to schoolmates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I communicated with family and friends outside school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I used social media to see what others post (on Snapchat, Tik Tok, Facebook etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I posted content (photos, videos, music) on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I commented on others' posts (photos, clips, music) on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I played games on the internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I created some digital content (such as music, video, app)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. What social media or online platforms do you use daily? (You can select multiple responses.)

- TikTok
- Snapchat
- Instagram
- Facebook
- WhatsApp
- Viber
- Telegram
- X (formerly Twitter)
- YouTube
- Other, please indicate:

- None of them

23. Do you follow your classmates/schoolmates on social media?

- Yes, many
- Yes, but not many
- No
- I don't use social media

24. Does your school have rules regarding mobile phone use?

- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited both during classes and breaks
- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited during classes and the phones are placed in a designated area
- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited only during classes; students are not required to place them in a designated area, but keep them with them
- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited during classes, for educational purposes, when the teacher allows it
- There are no rules at the school level, but some teachers establish their own rules in their classes
- There are no rules regarding the use of mobile phones at school
- I don't know

25. On a scale from 0 to 10, how would you rate the digital skills (internet use and computer program skills) of:

	Very poor 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10
Most classmates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of your teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your parents/legal guardians (If the skills of your parents/legal guardians differ, provide a rating for the one who has better skills.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your own digital skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We will list different ways in which a student may be exposed to unpleasant experiences, bullying, or violence by OTHER STUDENTS at school. When we say 'violence', we refer to all instances in which an individual deliberately subjects another to various unpleasant experiences or intends to harm or humiliate them through their actions or words. Friendly teasing and arguments, or accidental, unintentional harm and injury, are not considered violence.

26. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR, how many times has any of the listed things happened to you at school?

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
Someone called me names, mocked me, or insulted me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone hit me, kicked, pushed, shoved me, pulled my hair, threw things at me, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone gossiped, spread lies about me, excluded me from a group, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone took my money or other things, or destroyed my belongings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone threatened or intimidated me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone made fun of my appearance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR, how many times has any of the listed things happened to you online?

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
Someone took pictures of me or filmed me against my wishes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I received threatening or offensive messages via phone, e-mail, social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was left out or excluded from an online group or activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mean messages about me were shared or posted where others could see them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
I was forced to do something I didn't want to do (such as online challenges)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone edited my photos or videos using artificial intelligence to create offensive content and shared it in groups or on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28. Have any male or female students at your school displayed violent behaviour towards you?

- Female students
- Male students
- Both male and female students
- No one has been violent towards me

29. Which class are the students who displayed violence towards you from?

- From my class
- From other class(es)
- From both my class and other classes
- No one has been violent towards me

30. How old are the students who displayed violence towards you?

- Younger than me
- My age
- Older than me
- Of various ages
- No one has been violent towards me

31. How many students have behaved violently towards you?

- Mostly one student
- 2–3 students
- Many students
- No one has been violent towards me

32. Where in or around the school have you been exposed to violence?

- In the school yard
- In the hallways or staircases
- In the classroom (with the teacher present)
- In the classroom (with the teacher absent)
- In the restroom

- In the gym or locker room
- On the way to or from school

33. If other students have ever treated you badly, why do you think they did it?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Maybe, I don't know	No one has been violent towards me
Because of my name and surname or religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of my physical appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of my disability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because I don't have enough money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of my clothing, hairstyle and/or behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of my excellent or poor academic performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

34. Try to remember if, THROUGHOUT YOUR SCHOOLING (in this or previous grades), the following has ever happened to you:

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Frequently
Being exposed to verbal or physical violence at school by a student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being exposed to online violence by a student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being bullied by the same student or group of students for a long time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being insulted or made fun of by a teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being hit by a teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being sent inappropriate messages, photos, videos, etc., via the internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

35. What do you do when another student is violent towards you (in the school or online)?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	No one has been violent towards me
I seek protection from parents/legal guardians	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I seek protection from school employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I seek protection from peers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I endure the assault and humiliation, and I don't seek help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I retaliate in kind without help from others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	No one has been violent towards me
I retaliate in kind, with the help of friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to deter the student who is behaving violently from assaulting me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to appease the student who is behaving violently with gifts and favours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I avoid these students whenever I can	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

36. If you have had problems with something or someone online, have you done any of the following? (You can select more than one response.)

- I stopped using the internet for a while
- I deleted all messages from the person who upset me
- I changed privacy/contact settings
- I blocked that person, and they can't contact me anymore
- I reported the problem to the social media or online platform where I was harassed (for instance, I clicked the "report" button, or contacted the Help Centre)
- I reported the problem online or by calling a toll-free number (such as the National Contact Centre)
- I reported it to the police
- Other
- haven't had any problems online

37. For some children, violent behaviour they have experienced by other students may be upsetting even when they return home. Has something like this happened to you? (You can select more than one response.)

- I don't get very upset about it
- I feel angry and furious
- I can't fall asleep at night
- I constantly worry
- I feel sick
- I become fearful
- I have difficulty learning
- I don't enjoy activities I usually like
- I think that life isn't worth living
- I don't want to go to school
- No one has been violent towards me

38. Whom have you told about experiencing violence? (You can select more than one response.)

- No one
- Teacher or form teacher
- Another adult at school (psychologist, pedagogue, school-based police officer)
- Parent or legal guardian
- Siblings
- Friend(s)
- Someone else
- No one has been violent towards me

39. Have teachers or other adults at school helped you when you experienced violence?

- No, they didn't even try to help me
- They tried to help me, but weren't very successful
- They helped me to certain extent
- They helped me a lot
- No one has been violent towards me

40. Has any adult you live with reported to the school that you had experienced school violence?

- No, no one has reported it to the school
- Yes, they have reported it to the school
- No one has been violent towards me

41. If you were bullied at school, how willing do you believe your friends would be to help you?

- Always
- Very often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

42. What do you do when you see other students at school engaging in violent behaviour towards one of your peers?

	Yes	No
I intervene and try to protect the person experiencing violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I call an adult, school employee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I call other students to help me prevent violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes	No
I join the perpetrators, because it's all just fun	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do nothing, it doesn't concern me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do nothing, although I think someone who is exposed to violence should be helped	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

43. Since the beginning of the school year, have you seen any of the following online (on social media, groups, forums, etc.)?

	No	Yes, once	Yes, multiple times
Videos of someone from your school being insulted, humiliated, mocked, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Photos or videos of someone from your school being physically assaulted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

44. What did you do about it?

	Yes	No
Nothing, it's none of my business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I reported it to school employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I reported it to my parents/legal guardians	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I informed the person on the photo/video	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I reported it via the website (for instance, the National Contact Centre for Child Safety, Net Patrol, I Protect You platform)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I haven't seen such photos or videos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

45. Now please think back and answer how many times, SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, you have behaved towards other students in any of the following ways at school:

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
I called another student derogatory names, mocked, or insulted them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I hit, punched, kicked, pushed someone, pulled their hair, or threw things at them, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I spread lies about a student and discouraged others from socialising with them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I took money or other things from a student, or damaged their property.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I threatened or intimidated a student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I forced a student to do something they didn't want.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I touched a student in a way that made them feel unpleasant.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I mocked someone's appearance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

46. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, how many times have you behaved in any of the following ways towards other students ONLINE?

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
I photographed or filmed someone when they didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sent threatening or insulting messages via a messaging app or social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I excluded or left out someone from an online group or activity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I posted mean comments, photos, or videos of someone where others could see them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

47. If you have ever behaved badly towards another student, why did you do it?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	I have never behaved violently
Because of their name and surname or religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of their physical appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of a disability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because they don't have enough money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of their clothing, hairstyle and/or behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of their behaviour towards me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

48. Has any school employee talked to you about your behaviour?

- No, never
- Yes, once or twice
- Yes, multiple times
- Yes, daily
- I have never behaved violently

49. Has any of your family members talked to you about your behaviour?

- No, never
- Yes, once or twice
- Yes, multiple times
- Yes, daily
- I have never behaved violently

We will now list different ways in which a student may be exposed to unpleasant experiences by a TEACHER at school.

50. Please indicate how many times the following things have happened to you SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR:

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
A teacher called me names, mocked me, or insulted me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A teacher hit me, kicked, shoved me, pulled my hair, threw things at me, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

51. Since the beginning of the school year, has any of your classmates yelled at, insulted, or threatened a teacher at school?

- It has never happened
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times
- It happens frequently

52. Since the beginning of the school year, has any of your classmates physically assaulted a teacher at school (for example, hit them or tried to hit them, pushed them, or prevented them from leaving the classroom)?

- It has never happened
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times
- It happens frequently

53. Since the beginning of the school year, have you insulted or threatened a teacher at school?

- Never
- Once
- Multiple times

54. Since the beginning of the school year, have you physically assaulted a teacher at school (for example, pushed them, blocked their way, or raised your hand against them)?

- Never
- Once
- Multiple times

55. If you are aware of any situations in which students were violent towards a teacher at school, what do you think were the most common reasons for this?

- They couldn't tolerate the teacher's violence towards them
- They wanted to get revenge on the teacher for a bad grade
- They wanted to show off in front of other students

- They knew no one could do anything to them
- Those are students who have problems, they can't control themselves
- I'm not aware of any such cases

56. Does your school have a Violence Protection Team (members of which are adults at school you can turn to for help when someone is behaving violently towards you)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

57. Do you know what the school's obligations are in case of peer violence at school?

- I know
- I don't know

58. Now please think about the way teachers at your school generally treat students. How many teachers behave in the following ways:

	None of the teachers	A minority	Majority	All of them or almost all of them
They communicate openly with students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They allow students to freely express their opinions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They show interest in students' problems and needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They have a fair and just attitude towards students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They try to make students feel comfortable during class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They always and promptly take necessary measures when violence occurs at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

59. Have you, as a class, agreed on rules for reducing violent behaviour?

- Yes
- No

60. During arguments, conflicts, or similar situations, do you and your classmates follow class rules?

- We don't use class rules to resolve conflicts
- We sometimes use them
- We frequently use them

61. Has any school employee (teacher, psychologist, or pedagogue) taught you what to do when you are angry, when your friends are arguing in front of you, when others are displaying violent behaviour towards you, or in similar situations of violence?

- They never speak to us about it
- They rarely speak to us about it
- They often speak to us about it

62. During this or the previous school year, have you been involved in any of the following activities, in or outside of school? You can select more than one response.

- Sports activities
- Artistic activities (drama, music, literature, fine arts, ballet)
- Environmental activities (environmental protection)
- Humanitarian activities (collecting aid for poor or children without parental care, helping the elderly, etc.)
- Additional foreign language learning
- Additional learning of programming and robotics
- Another activity

63. Have you participated in any school-organised activities, such as workshops, visits to the museum, theatre, or library?

- No, the school has not organised such activities
- No, even though the school has organised such activities
- Yes

64. Do you participate in activities aimed at preventing violence?

- No such activities are organised in my school
- I don't participate in such activities
- I participate sometimes
- I participate frequently

Thank you for your participation in this research. You contributed greatly to its successful implementation.

In the questionnaire, you were asked different questions, including those regarding negative experiences in face-to-face and/or online communication. You may have experienced some of them yourself or you know certain peers who have experienced something similar.

If you have ever experienced peer violence, whether in person or online, or if you have seen something that upset you, it is very important to share it and seek help from peers or adults you trust. If you haven't already, it would be best to turn to your parents/legal guardians or school employees for help (psychologist, pedagogue, or teachers). They can help you resolve problematic situations appropriately and successfully overcome negative experiences.

It is possible that you have not encountered any negative experiences with students or employees from your school, but that some questions may have raised concerns about things that could occur in the future. Such feelings are understandable, but it is important to share your concerns and learn more about how to safely use the internet – how violence can be prevented, how and when to respond, whom to report it to, etc.

If you need advice or help, or if you would like to talk about anything you've experienced or are concerned about anonymously (so that no one knows who you are), you can contact:

1. "Smart and Safe" centre by calling 19833 or via the website [www.pamet-noibezbedno.gov.rs](http://www.pamet-noibezbedno.gov.rs)
2. NADEL (the National Children's Line) by calling 116111.

If you have any additional questions regarding this research, feel free to contact the principal investigator of the Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools project, Professor Dragan Popadić, at: [dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs](mailto:dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs).

Once again, thank you for your co-operation.

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR OLDER STUDENTS

\* School name and location:

You have before you a questionnaire that explores various aspects of school life that will be completed by a great number of your peers in Serbia.

This is not a test and there are no correct and incorrect responses. We care only about your opinion. The questions are related to you personally, so it is very important that you answer as honestly as possible. No one will be able to see your responses except for the researchers involved in this study. Your teachers, parents, or other students will not see them.

Please read all questions carefully and do not rush to answer. You answer the questions by selecting one or more of the provided options, so carefully read the instructions for each question. First read all the provided responses to the question, and then choose the one that suits you best. Completing the questionnaire takes approximately one school period.

If you see a question that you are unable to answer or are not comfortable answering, move on to the next one. At the end of the questionnaire, you will receive more information about whom you can contact if you would like to further discuss the matters we asked you about.

Participation in the research is not mandatory. If you don't want to participate, no one will be mad at you and you won't bear any negative consequences.

If you want to find out more about this research, you may turn to your form teacher or contact Prof. Dragan Popadić, PhD, the principal investigator of the project ([dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs](mailto:dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs)).

Please confirm below if you would like to participate in this research.

\* I understand that participation is voluntary and I would like to complete the questionnaire.

Yes

No

CODE (We would like to remind you that you and your parent/legal guardian should enter the same code)

1. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

2. What is the year of your birth?

- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014

3. Who are the members of your family? (You can select more than one response.)

- Father/guardian
- Mother/guardian
- Younger siblings
- Older siblings
- Siblings your age
- Someone else

3.4. You stated that your family members include younger siblings (enter a number, such as 2):

3.5. You stated that your family members include older siblings (enter a number, such as 2):

3.6. You stated that your family members include siblings your age (enter a number, such as 2):

4. What was your academic performance at the end of the previous grade?

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Sufficient
- Insufficient (I am repeating the grade)

5. Do you have any of the following difficulties? (You can select more than one response.)

- Chronic illness (such as asthma, diabetes)
- Disability (physical impairment)
- Sensory impairment (vision, hearing)
- Movement difficulties
- Speech difficulties
- Learning difficulties (such as attention, writing, or reading problems)
- I don't have any of the above difficulties

6. Some families have less money, and some have more. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate you and your family?

- 1 – Families with the least money
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 – Families with the most money

7. How many good friends do you have at school?

- I don't have any
- I have one
- I have 2–3
- I have more than 3

8. How many times have you transferred schools during your schooling so far due to discipline-related problems?

- Never
- Once
- Twice
- Three or more times

9. Below are some statements about your school, school teachers, and students who attend your school. Indicate how true you think these statements are.

	Not true	Somewhat true	Mostly true	Completely true
I feel I belong to my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other students are kind and willing to help me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We are a united and cohesive class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers respect me as a person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The teachers are friendly towards me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel lonely at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like going to school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Are there groups of students at your school who are violent and bully other students?

- I didn't notice
- There is one group
- There are several groups

11. Are there any students in your class that you are afraid of?

- No
- There is one or several male students
- There is one or several female students
- There are both male and female students

12. Has anyone from your school brought a knife, weapons, chains, or similar objects to school that could be used in a fight?

- I haven't heard of it or seen it
- I've heard of it, but I haven't seen it
- I've seen it once or twice
- I have seen it multiple times

13. Have you brought a knife, weapons, chains, or similar objects to school that could be used in a fight?

- No, never
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times
- It happens frequently

14. Does anyone in your school or in its vicinity offer drugs to students?

- No, I haven't heard of it or seen it
- Yes, I've heard of it, but I haven't seen it
- Yes, I've seen it

15. On a scale from 0 to 10, please indicate how satisfied you are with your:

	Not at all 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very much 10
Current life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scholastic performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships within your family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships in your class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	I completely disagree	I mostly disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I mostly agree	I completely agree
I worry too much	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get nervous in certain new situations and lose confidence easily	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often have headaches, stomach aches, or nausea	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am often unhappy, sad, or feel like crying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have many fears and easily get scared	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's hard for me to relax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My palms are often sweaty and my heart races	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Below are different statements. Please indicate to what extent you agree with each of them.

	I completely disagree	I mostly disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I mostly agree	I completely agree
All children have rights that must be respected.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We should always try to understand people who are different from us.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Laws should apply to everyone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I hurt someone's feelings, I always apologise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I plan something, I usually manage to achieve it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I easily recognise when my friend needs help.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to be considerate of other people's feelings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	I completely disagree	I mostly disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I mostly agree	I completely agree
I try to help someone who is hurt, upset, or feeling sick.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I do something with others, I always do my share of the work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Every argument is best resolved through conversation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is sometimes justified for a boyfriend to slap his girlfriend.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A girl who wears short skirts and tight-fitting shirts is to blame if someone assaults her.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Violence towards persons of different sexual orientations is justified.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the family, child care and housework should be primarily women's job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Parents can raise their children in different ways. Which of the following statements best describes your mother's/legal guardian's attitude towards you in most situations?

- She gives me love, support, and understanding, but also sets clear rules for behaviour; I am free to express my opinion, but I am expected to adhere to the set rules; there is open communication between me and her.
- She sets strict rules and expects me to follow them; she punishes me when I'm disobedient; she doesn't show much support or understanding for my needs and feelings.
- She gives me support and understanding, and doesn't set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour; I am largely free to act as I wish and make decisions without much control by her or punishments for not following the rules.
- She doesn't have time for me and is uninterested in my needs and feelings; she doesn't set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour.
- I'm unable to answer this question

19. Which of the following statements best describes your father's/legal guardian's attitude towards you in most situations?

- He gives me love, support, and understanding, but also sets clear rules for behaviour; I am free to express my opinion, but I am expected to adhere to the set rules; there is open communication between me and him.
- He sets strict rules and expects me to follow them; he punishes me when I'm disobedient; he doesn't show much support or understanding for my needs and feelings.

- He gives me support and understanding, and doesn't set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour; I am largely free to act as I wish and make decisions without much control by him or punishments for not following the rules.
- He doesn't have time for me and is uninterested in my needs and feelings; he doesn't set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour.
- I'm unable to answer this question

20. During the past MONTH, how much time did you approximately spend on the internet on schooldays?

When we refer to "the internet", we mean any devices (such as mobile phones, tablets, computers, or game consoles) you use for communication, searching for information, social media, chatting with friends and family, uploading or downloading photos and videos, and everything else you generally do online.

- I don't use the internet
- Up to 1 hour
- From 1 to 3 hours
- From 4 to 5 hours
- From 6 to 7 hours
- More than 7 hours

21. During the past MONTH, how often have you done the following things online? Select one response in each row.

	Never	Once or twice a month	At least once a week	Every day or almost every day	Several times a day
I used the internet for schoolwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I used the internet to talk to schoolmates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I communicated with family and friends outside school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I used social media to see what others post (on Snapchat, Tik Tok, Facebook etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I posted content (photos, videos, music) on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I commented on others' posts (photos, clips, music) on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I played games on the internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I created some digital content (such as music, video, app)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. What social media or online platforms do you use daily? (You can select multiple responses.)

- TikTok
- Snapchat
- Instagram
- Facebook
- WhatsApp
- Viber
- Telegram
- X (former Twitter)
- YouTube
- Other, please indicate:

- None of them

23. Do you follow your classmates/schoolmates on social media?

- Yes, many
- Yes, but not many
- No
- I don't use social media

24. How often do you use AI-based tools (such as ChatGPT, Bard, Grammarly, Dall-E, Midjourney) for the following activities:

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Doing homework (for instance, solving math problems, writing papers, translating)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating or editing images	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating or editing videos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding information (for instance, related to school, mental health)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. Does your school have rules regarding mobile phone use?

- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited both during classes and breaks
- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited during classes and the phones are placed in a designated area
- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited only during classes; students are not required to place them in a designated area, but keep them with them

- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited during classes, for educational purposes, when the teacher allows it
- There are no rules at the school level, but some teachers establish their own rules in their classes
- There are no rules regarding the use of mobile phones at school
- I don't know

26. On a scale from 0 to 10, how would you rate the digital skills (internet use and computer programme skills) of:

	Very poor 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10
Most classmates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of your teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your parents/legal guardians (If the skills of your parents/legal guardians differ, provide a rating for the one who has better skills.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your own digital skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We will list different ways in which a student may be exposed to unpleasant experiences, bullying, or violence by OTHER STUDENTS at school. When we say 'violence', we refer to all instances in which an individual deliberately subjects another to various unpleasant experiences or intends to harm or humiliate them through their actions or words. Friendly teasing and arguments, or accidental, unintentional harm and injury, are not considered violence.

27. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR, how many times has any of the listed things happened to you at school?

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
Someone called me names, mocked me, or insulted me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone hit me, kicked, pushed, shoved me, pulled my hair, threw things at me, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone gossiped, spread lies about me, excluded me from a group, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone took my money or other things, or destroyed my belongings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone threatened or intimidated me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone forced me to do something I didn't want to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone touched me in a way that felt inappropriate or sexually harassed me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone made fun of my appearance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR, how many times has any of the listed things happened to you online?

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
Someone took pictures of me or filmed me against my wishes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I received threatening or offensive messages via phone, e-mail, social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was excluded or left out from online groups or activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mean messages about me were shared or posted where others could see them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was forced to do something I didn't want to do (such as online challenges)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone sent me sexually explicit content I didn't want, asking me to share it in groups or on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone edited my photos or videos using artificial intelligence to create sexually explicit content and shared it in groups or on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone edited my photos or videos using artificial intelligence to create offensive content and shared it in groups or on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. Have any male or female students at your school displayed violent behaviour towards you?

- Female students
- Male students
- Both male and female students
- No one has been violent towards me

30. Which class are the students who displayed violence towards you from?

- From my class
- From other class(es)
- From both my class and other classes
- No one has been violent towards me

31. How old are the students who displayed violence towards you?

- Younger than me
- My age
- Older than me
- Of various ages
- No one has been violent towards me

32. How many students have behaved violently towards you?

- Mostly one student
- 2–3 students
- Many students
- No one has been violent towards me

33. Where in or around the school have you been exposed to violence?

- In the school yard
- In the hallways or staircases
- In the classroom (with the teacher present)
- In the classroom (with the teacher absent)
- In the restroom
- In the gym or locker room
- On the way to or from school

34. If other students have ever treated you badly, why do you think they did it?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Maybe, I don't know	No one has been violent towards me
Because of my name and surname or religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of my physical appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of my disability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because I don't have enough money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because I like people of the same sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of my clothing, hairstyle and/or behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of my attitudes and beliefs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because it is common for boys to behave that way towards girls, or girls towards boys	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of my excellent or poor academic performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

35. Have you experienced any form of violence by a student at school while you were in a relationship with them or after the relationship ended?

- Yes
- No

36. What kind of violence did you experience then?

	Yes	No
Face-to-face verbal violence (insults, threats, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cyberbullying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

37. Try to remember if, THROUGHOUT YOUR SCHOOLING (in this or previous grades), the following has ever happened to you:

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Frequently
Being exposed to verbal or physical violence at school by a student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being exposed to online violence by a student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being bullied by the same student or group of students for a long time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being insulted or made fun of by a teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being hit by a teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being sent inappropriate messages, photos, videos, etc., by a teacher via the internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

38. What do you do when another student is violent towards you (in the school or online)?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	No one has been violent towards me
I seek protection from parents/legal guardians	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I seek protection from school employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I seek protection from peers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I endure the assault and humiliation, and I don't seek help	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I retaliate in kind without help from others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I retaliate in kind, with the help of friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to deter the student who is behaving violently from assaulting me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to appease the student who is behaving violently with gifts and favours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I avoid these students whenever I can	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

39. If you have had problems with something or someone online, have you done any of the following? (You can select more than one response.)

- I stopped using the internet for a while
- I deleted all messages from the person who upset me
- I changed privacy/contact settings
- I blocked that person, and they can't contact me anymore
- I reported the problem to the social media or online platform where I was harassed (for instance, I clicked the "report" button, or contacted the Help Centre)
- I reported the problem online or by calling a toll-free number (such as the National Contact Centre)
- I reported it to the police
- Other
- I haven't had any problems online

40. For some children, violent behaviour they have experienced by other students may be upsetting even when they return home. Has something like this happened to you? (You can select more than one response.)

- I don't get very upset about it
- I feel angry and furious
- I can't fall asleep at night
- I constantly worry
- I feel sick
- I become fearful
- I have difficulty learning
- I don't enjoy activities I usually like
- I think that life isn't worth living
- I don't want to go to school
- No one has been violent towards me

41. Whom have you told about experiencing violence? (You can select more than one response.)

- No one
- Teacher or form teacher
- Another adult at school (psychologist, pedagogue, school-based police officer)
- Parent or legal guardian
- Siblings
- Friend(s)
- Someone else
- No one has been violent towards me

42. Have teachers or other adults at school helped you when you experienced violence?

- No, they didn't even try to help me
- They tried to help me, but weren't very successful
- They helped me to certain extent
- They helped me a lot
- No one has been violent towards me

43. Has any adult you live with reported to the school that you had experienced school violence?

- No, no one has reported it to the school
- Yes, they have reported it to the school
- No one has been violent towards me

44. If you were bullied at school, how willing do you believe your friends would be to help you?

- Always
- Very often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

45. What do you do when you see other students at school engaging in violent behaviour towards one of your peers?

	Yes	No
I intervene and try to protect the person experiencing violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I call an adult, school employee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I call other students to help me prevent violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I join the perpetrators, because it's all just fun	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do nothing, it doesn't concern me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do nothing, although I think someone who is exposed to violence should be helped	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

46. Since the beginning of the school year, have you seen any of the following online (on social media, groups, forums, etc.)?

	No	Yes, once	Yes, multiple times
Sexually explicit photos or videos involving boys or girls from your school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Videos of someone from your school being insulted, humiliated, mocked, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Photos or videos of someone from your school being physically assaulted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

47. What did you do about it?

	Yes	No
Nothing, it's none of my business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I reported it to school employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I reported it to my parents/legal guardians	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I informed the person on the photo/video	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I reported it via the website (for instance, the National Contact Centre for Child Safety, Net Patrol, I Protect You platform)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I haven't seen such photos or videos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

48. Now please think back and answer how many times, SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, you have behaved towards other students in any of the following ways at school:

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
I called another student derogatory names, mocked, or insulted them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I hit, punched, kicked, pushed someone, pulled their hair, or threw things at them, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I spread lies about a student and discouraged others from socialising with them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I took money or other things from a student, or damaged their property.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I threatened or intimidated a student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I forced a student to do something they didn't want.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I touched a student in a way that made them feel unpleasant.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I mocked someone's appearance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

49. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, how many times have you behaved in any of the following ways towards other students ONLINE?

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
I photographed or filmed someone when they didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sent threatening or insulting messages via a messaging app or social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I excluded or left out someone from an online group or activity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I posted mean comments, photos, or videos of someone where others could see them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sent sexually explicit content to someone who didn't want it, asking them to share it in groups or on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I edited someone's photos or videos using artificial intelligence to create sexually explicit content and shared it in groups or on social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

50. If you have ever behaved badly towards another student, why did you do it?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	I have never behaved violently
Because of their name and surname or religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of their physical appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of a disability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because they don't have enough money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because they like people of the same sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of their clothing, hairstyle and/or behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of their attitudes and beliefs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because of their behaviour towards me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because it is common for boys to behave that way towards girls, or girls towards boys	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

51. Has any school employee talked to you about your behaviour?

- No, never
- Yes, once or twice
- Yes, multiple times
- Yes, daily
- I have never behaved violently

52. Has any of your family members talked to you about your behaviour?

- No, never
- Yes, once or twice
- Yes, multiple times
- Yes, daily
- I have never behaved violently

We will now list different ways in which a student may be exposed to unpleasant experiences by a TEACHER at school.

53. Please indicate how many times the following things have happened to you SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR:

	Never	Once or twice	Multiple times	Almost daily
A teacher called me names, mocked me, or insulted me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A teacher hit me, kicked, shoved me, pulled my hair, threw things at me, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

54. Since the beginning of the school year, has any of your classmates yelled at, insulted, or threatened a teacher at school?

- It has never happened
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times
- It happens frequently

55. Since the beginning of the school year, has any of your classmates physically assaulted a teacher at school (for example, hit them or tried to hit them, pushed them, or prevented them from leaving the classroom)?

- It has never happened
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times
- It happens frequently

56. Since the beginning of the school year, have you insulted or threatened a teacher at school?

- Never
- Once
- Multiple times

57. Since the beginning of the school year, have you physically assaulted a teacher at school (for example, pushed them, blocked their way, or raised your hand against them)?

- Never
- Once
- Multiple times

58. If you are aware of any situations in which students were violent towards a teacher at school, what do you think were the most common reasons for this?

- They couldn't tolerate the teacher's violence towards them
- They wanted to get revenge on the teacher for a bad grade
- They wanted to show off in front of other students
- They knew no one could do anything to them
- Those are students who have problems, they can't control themselves
- I'm not aware of any such cases

59. What do you think are the reasons why some students display violent behaviour? We will list some of the possible causes of violent behaviour, and for each one, please indicate how important you believe it is.

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very much
Family influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Genetic predisposition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Peer influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Media influence (films, TV, internet)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inadequate curricula and teaching methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Value system and overall situation in Serbia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inadequate school response to violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desire for popularity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

60. How effective do you think the following measures would be in addressing violent student behaviour at school?

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very much
Better co-operation between school and parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better co-operation between teachers and students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Greater support from psychologists and pedagogues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing non-violent communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support and assistance to students who perpetrate violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More comprehensive supervision of all students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Greater presence of school-based police officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More interesting extracurricular activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More interesting teaching methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

61. Does your school have a Violence Protection Team (members of which are adults at school you can turn to for help when someone is behaving violently towards you)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

62. Do you know what the school's obligations are in case of peer violence at school?

- I know
- I don't know

63. Now please think about the way teachers at your school generally treat students. How many teachers behave in the following ways:

	None of the teachers	A minority	Majority	All of them or almost all of them
They communicate openly with students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They allow students to freely express their opinions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They show interest in students' problems and needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They have a fair and just attitude towards students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They try to make students feel comfortable during class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They always and promptly take necessary measures when violence occurs at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

64. Have you, as a class, agreed on rules for reducing violent behaviour?

- Yes
- No

65. During arguments, conflicts, or similar situations, do you and your classmates follow class rules?

- We don't use class rules to resolve conflicts
- We sometimes use them
- We frequently use them

66. Has any school employee (teacher, psychologist, or pedagogue) taught you what to do when you are angry, when your friends are arguing in front of you, when others are displaying violent behaviour towards you, or in similar situations of violence?

- They never speak to us about it
- They rarely speak to us about it
- They often speak to us about it

67. During this or the previous school year, have you been involved in any of the following activities, in or outside of school? You can select more than one response.

- Sports activities
- Artistic activities (drama, music, literature, fine arts, ballet)
- Environmental activities (environmental protection)
- Humanitarian activities (collecting aid for poor or children without parental care, helping the elderly, etc.)
- Additional foreign language learning
- Additional learning of programming and robotics
- Another activity

68. Have you participated in any school-organised activities, such as workshops, visits to the museum, theatre, or library?

- No, the school has not organised such activities
- No, even though the school has organised such activities
- Yes

69. Do you participate in activities aimed at preventing violence?

- No such activities are organised in my school
- I don't participate in such activities
- I participate sometimes I participate frequently

Thank you for your participation in this research. You contributed greatly to its successful implementation.

In the questionnaire, you were asked different questions, including those regarding negative experiences in face-to-face and/or online communication. You may have experienced some of them yourself or you know certain peers who have experienced something similar.

If you have ever experienced peer violence, whether in person or online, or if you have seen something that upset you, it is very important to share it and seek help from peers or adults you trust. If you haven't already, it would be best to turn to your parents/legal guardians or school employees for help (psychologist, pedagogue, or teachers). They can help you resolve problematic situations appropriately and successfully overcome negative experiences.

It is possible that you have not encountered any negative experiences with students or employees from your school, but some questions may have raised concerns about things that could occur in the future. Such feelings are understandable, but it is important to share your concerns and learn more about how to safely use the internet – how violence can be prevented, how and when to respond, whom to report it to, etc.

If you need advice or help, or if you would like to talk about anything you've experienced or are concerned about anonymously (so that no one knows who you are), you can contact:

1. "Smart and Safe" centre by calling 19833 or via the [website: www.pamet-noibezbedno.gov.rs](http://www.pamet-noibezbedno.gov.rs).
2. NADEL (the National Children's Line) by calling 116111.

If you have any additional questions regarding this research, feel free to contact the principal investigator of the Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools project, Professor Dragan Popadić, at: [dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs](mailto:dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs).

Once again, thank you for your co-operation.

## Appendix 2.

# Questionnaire for parents/legal guardians

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You have before you a questionnaire that explores the opinions and attitudes of parents/legal guardians of children aged 11 to 17 regarding various aspects of their children's school life and peer relationships. The research is conducted as part of the project "Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools", organised by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia. In addition to children and employees from 78 schools, this research involves children's parents/legal guardians.

This questionnaire has several sections and includes questions related to your evaluation of the relationships you have with your child and their school, your child's involvement in problematic interactions with other children, and your skills in responding to such situations, etc.

You answer the questions by selecting one or more of the provided options or by writing your response where no options are suggested. Completing the questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes.

The risks associated with participating in this research are minimal and virtually non-existent. You do not have to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer.

The questionnaire is anonymous. Your name and/or any other personal information will not be registered or recorded anywhere. The data collected in the research will be processed collectively, and it will not be possible to identify the parents/legal guardians who took part in it based on the analysis presented in the research report. The implementation of this research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to stop completing the questionnaire at any point. If you have any questions regarding this research, you may contact Prof. Dragan Popadić, PhD, the principal investigator of the project ([dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs](mailto:dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs)).

If, after reading this study description, you agree to participate in it, please confirm by selecting the statement provided below. Then move on to the next page and start answering the questions.

School name and location:

\* I agree to participate in the research.

Yes

No

\* CODE (Please remember that both you and your child should enter the same code.)

1. What is your sex?

Male

Female

2. How old are you (enter the number of years)?

3. What is your highest level of education?

I didn't go to school

Incomplete primary education

Primary education

Secondary education

HND-level education

Higher education

4. What is the highest level of education of the child's other parent?

They didn't go to school

Incomplete primary education

Primary education

Secondary education

HND-level education

Higher education

I don't know

5. Which of the following statements best describes your household's financial situation?

We barely have enough money for bills and food.

We have enough money for bills and food, but we struggle to buy clothes and shoes.

- We have enough for food, clothes, and shoes; we can save a little, but not enough for more expensive items (such as a fridge, TV).
- We can afford some pricier items, but not very expensive ones (such as a new car).
- We can buy almost anything we want.

6. Who are the members of your household, apart from you?

- Spouse or partner
- Child's grandmother, grandfather, or other relatives
- Children

7. Does your child have any of the following difficulties:

	No	Yes	I don't know
Physical disability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chronic physical illness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sensory impairments (vision, hearing)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental health problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behavioural problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning difficulties (such as attention problems, dyslexia, dysgraphia)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other difficulties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. How many times has your child transferred schools throughout their schooling to date (excluding the transition from primary to secondary school)?

- Never
- Once
- Two times
- Three or more times

9. Why did your child transfer schools? (you can select more than one response)

- Relocation
- Peer problems
- Disciplinary measure

Other:

10. How regularly do you or the child's other parent attend parent-teacher conferences?

- Regularly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- We don't attend them at all

11. How would you rate your relationship with:

	1. Very poor	2	3	4	5. Very good	I cannot assess
Form teacher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School professional associates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. In case of violent behaviour, the school is obliged to act in a prescribed manner. Are you familiar with the legal procedures for responding to school violence? (Select one response)

- I'm not familiar
- I know there are procedures in place, but nothing more
- I am well acquainted with the procedures, their implementation, and the consequences for students

13. Has anyone from the school informed you about the procedures for acting in response to school violence?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

14. Are you informed about the activities of the Team for Protection against discrimination, violence, abuse, and neglect (hereinafter "the Protection Team")?

- No, I didn't know a Protection Team exists at the school
- I know that a Protection Team exists, but I'm not informed about its activities
- I am informed about some of the activities of the Protection Team

15. During this or the previous school year, has any violence prevention programme been implemented at the school?

- Yes, I participated in some of them
- Yes, but I didn't participate
- No
- I don't know

16. To what extent are you, as the child's parent/legal guardian, informed about student team activities aimed at preventing violence?

- I am not informed at all
- I am somewhat informed
- I am well informed

17. Does the school organise special support and educational activities for students who exhibit, experience, or witness violent behaviour?

- No
- Yes
- I don't know

18. Have you, as the child's parent/other guardian, initiated any activities related to the prevention of school violence, community service or humanitarian activities?

- No
- Yes (briefly describe such activities):

19. In your opinion, how many teachers always promptly respond to violent school incidents?

- Hardly any teachers
- A minority of teachers
- The majority of teachers
- Almost all teachers

20. Is the problem of school violence today smaller or bigger than it was a few years ago?

- It is less severe today than it was a few years ago
- It is more severe today than it was a few years ago
- It is approximately the same
- I cannot assess

21. In your opinion, how serious a problem do the following forms of violence pose in your child's school?

	Not a problem at all	A small problem	A moderate problem	A big problem	I don't know
Violence among students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student violence against teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Violence among school employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher violence against students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parent violence against school employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. When raising children, parents use different parenting styles. Which of the following statements best describes your relationship with your child?

- I give my child love, support, and understanding, but I also set clear rules for behaviour; the child is free to express their opinion, but is expected to adhere to the set rules; there is open communication with the child.
- I set strict rules and expect my child to follow them; I control my child's behaviour and punish them when they are disobedient; I care more about the child behaving appropriately than their needs and feelings.
- I give my child support and understanding, and I don't set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour; the child is largely free to act as they wish and make decisions without much parental control or punishments for not following the rules.
- I don't have time for my child and don't give much importance to their needs and feelings; I do not set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour for the child.

23. Which of the following statements best describes the relationship of the other parent/legal guardian with the child?

- The parent gives the child love, support, and understanding, but also sets clear rules for behaviour; the child is free to express their opinion, but is expected to adhere to the set rules; there is open communication between the parent and the child.
- The parent sets strict rules and expects the child to follow them; they control the child's behaviour and punish them when they are disobedient; they care more about the child behaving appropriately than their needs and feelings.
- The parent gives the child support and understanding, and doesn't set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour; the child is largely free to act as they wish and make decisions without much parental control or punishments for not following the rules.
- The parent doesn't have time for the child and is uninterested in the child's needs; they do not set any specific restrictions or rules for behaviour for the child.
- I'm unable to answer this question.

24. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

	I completely disagree	I disagree	I'm not sure	I agree	I completely agree
Girls are naturally more gentle and emotional than boys, and boys are more independent and aggressive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When raising children, we should protect girls more and be stricter with boys.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Boys and girls should be encouraged to study and pursue careers in different areas (for instance, girls in social sciences and humanities, and boys in engineering sciences).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
With regard to life interests and future education and career, girls should be guided towards occupations that allow them to devote more time to motherhood and their families.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. Below are some characteristics that children may acquire within the family. How important do you consider each of them?

	Not important at all	Not important	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Very important
Independent, self-sufficient	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obedient and respectful of their parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helpful to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selfless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Striving for success in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They talk openly with you about everything	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. How satisfied are you with:

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Moderately satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Your child's grades	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your child's relationships with other children at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School teachers' attitude towards your child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your child's attitude towards school obligations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. How much does your child enjoy going to school?

- Very much
- Mostly enjoys it
- Mostly doesn't enjoy it Not at all
- I cannot assess

28. Does your child have any of the following problems with teachers:

	None of the teachers	A small number	Majority	All of them or almost all of them	I cannot assess
Teachers can be harsh and offensive towards the child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They lack understanding of the child's problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They give them biased grades	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They have excessively high expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. How often does your child share their feelings or problems with you?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- I don't know; I cannot assess

30. Since the beginning of the school year, how many times has your child complained to you about any of the following:

	Never	Once	Multiple times
1) That another child hit them or took their belongings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2) That another child insulted them, mocked them, or threatened them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3) That another child gossiped or spread lies about them to turn other children against them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4) That a teacher at school hit them, pulled their ear, hair, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5) That a teacher at school insulted them, mocked them, or threatened them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6) That a teacher sexually harassed them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7) That another child sexually harassed them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

31. If your child suffered violence at school, did the school inform you promptly about the actions it had taken or planned to take?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know; I cannot recall

32. If your child suffered violence at school or witnessed it, were the parents involved in the preparation of a protection plan?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know; I cannot recall

33. Since the beginning of the school year, how many times has your child done any of the following:

	Never	Once	Multiple times	I don't know
1) Hit another student or took their belongings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2) Insulted another student, mocked them, or threatened them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3) Gossiped or spread lies about another student to turn other children against them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4) Hit a school employee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5) Insulted or mocked a school employee	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6) Sexually harassed another child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

34. If your child engaged in violent behaviour at school, were you involved in the development and implementation of an enhanced educational support plan or in disciplinary proceedings?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know; I cannot recall

35. If your child was involved in school violence that required notifying other competent institutions, how satisfied were you with their actions and support:

	Not at all	A little	Quite	Very	There was no need to intervene
School Administration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Centre for Social Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ministry of Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ministry of Interior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Prosecutor's Office	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

36. In your opinion, to what extent does the national digital platform "I Protect You" improve:

	Not at all	A little	Quite	Very	I don't know
Reporting school violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recording and monitoring of undertaken activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Not at all	A little	Quite	Very	I don't know
School's communication with other competent institutions within the external protection network	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to violence-related materials and educational activities for students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to violence-related materials and educational activities for parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Implementation of prevention measures against school violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timely response to school violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

37. If your child told you that a student at school was bullying them, what would you advise them to do first?

- To retaliate in kind
- To avoid that student
- To seek protection from their friends
- To turn to school employees for help
- To let you take care of it

38. What do you think are the reasons why some students display violent behaviour? We will list some of the possible causes of violent behaviour, and for each one, please indicate how important you believe it is.

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very
Family influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Genetic predisposition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Peer influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Media influence (films, TV, internet)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inadequate curricula and teaching methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Value system and overall situation in Serbia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inadequate school response to violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desire for popularity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

39. How effective do you think the following measures would be in addressing violent student behaviour?

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very
Better co-operation between school and parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better co-operation between teachers and students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Greater support from psychologists and pedagogues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing non-violent communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very
Consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support and assistance to students who perpetrate violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More comprehensive supervision of all students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Greater presence of school-based police officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More interesting extracurricular activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More interesting teaching methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

40. How do you evaluate the school's ability to reduce violence?

- The school is powerless to reduce violence
- Little can be done at school to reduce violence
- Much can be done within the school to reduce violence
- I cannot assess

41. How do you evaluate the school's ability to reduce cyberbullying among students?

- The school is powerless to reduce cyberbullying
- Little can be done at school to reduce cyberbullying
- Much can be done within the school to reduce cyberbullying
- I cannot assess

42. During the past year, has your child:

	No	Yes
Initiated a conversation with you about their online activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Told you about something they saw online that upset or scared them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asked you for support regarding an online situation they were unable to resolve on their own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

43. How often do you do any of the following with your child?

	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Very often	I prefer not to answer
You encourage the child to explore and learn online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You participate in joint online activities with the child	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You set rules on how long the child can spend in front of the screen and what they may do online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You use parental control apps to monitor screen time or block certain content, contacts, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

44. In your opinion, to what extent does the use of digital devices:

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite	Very much	I'm not sure
Interfere with your child's daily activities and obligations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help the child communicate and co-operate with peers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negatively affect the child's mental health (for instance, emotions, attention, learning)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negatively affect the child's physical health (for instance, sleep quality, vision, musculoskeletal system)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negatively affects the child's behaviour (for instance, negative role models, harmful online content)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helps the child in completing school tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

45. To your knowledge, has your child experienced any of the following online since the beginning of the school year:

	No	Yes	I don't know
One of their schoolmates displayed violent behaviour towards them (insults, teasing, threats, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
One of your child's schoolmates blocked your child online, removed them from their friends list, deliberately ignored them, or excluded them from a group, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your child displayed violent behaviour online towards a schoolmate, deliberately trying to hurt them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your child teased a schoolmate in a way they did not like, threatened, deliberately excluded, or ignored them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

46. Where do you find information and advice on how to support your child online and help keep them stay safe? (You can select more than one response.)

- I do not seek such information or advice
- I search websites (such as online safety centre, Net Patrol, I Protect You platform)
- I attend free training courses for parents (for instance, via the I Protect You platform)

- I get information on the school website, parent-teacher conferences, and school-organised lectures and workshops
- On TV, in newspapers
- On websites of government institutions (such as the Ministry of Interior, the Department for High-Tech Crime)
- I get information from family members and friends
- The child knows more than I do; I can't support them when it comes to the internet In parent Viber groups
- Other sources:

47. In your opinion, to what extent are parent Viber groups useful for solving problems students encounter at school?

- Very useful
- Somewhat useful
- Not useful
- Not only are they not helpful, but they are also harmful
- I cannot assess

48. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate:

	Very poor 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very good 10
Your own digital skills (how proficient you are in using the internet and computer programmes)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your child's digital skills (how proficient your child is in using the internet and computer programmes)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

49. In your opinion, does the school provide your child with the opportunity to acquire digital skills for safe internet use and responding to cyberbullying?

- Yes, across several subjects
- Yes, across one or two subjects
- No, but it's not necessary, because children know more than teachers
- No, but it should
- I cannot assess

50. In general, how would you rate your own capacities and skills to respond in situations when your child is involved in a violent peer interaction (whether as a victim, perpetrator, or witness)?

	1 Very poor	2	3	4	5 Very good	I cannot assess
In face-to-face interactions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

51. On a scale from 1 to 5, please indicate the extent to which you feel you need the types of support listed below:

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite	Very much	I cannot assess
Knowledge about the developmental needs of different-aged children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication and constructive problem-solving skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parenting skills (such as setting boundaries, parenting styles)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expert advice on the quantity and quality of screen time (such as opportunities and risks, problematic usage)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information on available types of support for children and families (such as youth counselling centres, free online help centres)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legal and other procedures for responding to school violence (to whom and how to report violence, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical knowledge of digital devices and the internet (such as using parental control tools)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for your participation in this very important research.

The aim of this research is to explore the opinions of parents/legal guardians of children aged 11 to 17 regarding various aspects of violent interactions among children and the factors that influence it. We are interested in understanding how parents evaluate the prevalence of peer violence, how they evaluate their own capacities and skills in addressing such situations, and to what extent they are familiar with existing response procedures, as well as in examining whether these evaluations are related to the type of relationship parents/legal guardians have with the school or their child. Our aim is also to identify whether specific categories of parents/legal guardians have a greater need for additional support from the school or other institutions and protection systems. All of this is intended to help develop interventions and programmes aimed at creating a safer and more secure school environment for all children.

It is possible that neither you nor your child have encountered any negative experiences related to the topics we inquired about, but some questions may have raised concerns or discomfort about things that could potentially occur in the future.

Such feelings are completely understandable, and it is important to share your concerns and learn more about how violence can be prevented, how and when to respond, to whom to report it, and how to use the internet safely. If you need advice or help, please visit the "I Protect You" (<https://cuvamte.gov.rs/>) where you can find more information on how to act in situations involving violence, how to report such instances, as well as various other tips for parents and free online training.

We would like to remind you once again that your participation in this research is anonymous. Your name and/or any other personal information have not been registered or recorded anywhere. The data collected in the research will be processed collectively, and it will not be possible to identify the parents/legal guardians who took part in it based on the analysis presented in the research report.

If you have any comments or additional questions regarding this research, feel free to contact the principal investigator of the Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools project, Professor Dragan Popadić, at: [dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs](mailto:dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs).

Once again, thank you for your co-operation.

# Appendix 3.

## Questionnaire for employees

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You have before you a questionnaire that explores the opinions and attitudes of school employees in Serbia (principals, professional associates, and teachers) regarding various aspects of children's school life and peer relationships. The research is conducted as part of the project "Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools", organised by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia.

This questionnaire has several sections and includes questions related to your evaluation of the school environment's safety and the quality of the school climate, your own skills related to the activities of prevention and responding to violence among children, your personal experiences with violence, as well as your understanding of the nature of peer violence and preventive measures. We will also ask you to provide some information about your sociodemographic characteristics, which are required for the statistical data analysis.

You answer the questions by selecting one or more of the provided options or by writing your response where no options are suggested. Completing the questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes. The risks associated with participating in this research are minimal and virtually non-existent. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable or that you do not want to answer.

The questionnaire is anonymous. Your name and any other personal information will not be registered or recorded anywhere. The data collected in the research will be processed collectively, and it will not be possible to identify the employees or schools that took part in it based on the analysis presented in the research report. The implementation of this research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to stop completing the questionnaire at any point. If you have any questions regarding this research, you may contact Prof. Dragan Popadić, PhD, the principal investigator of the project ([dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs](mailto:dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs)).

If you agree to participate in the research, please confirm below.

\* I agree to participate in the research.

- Yes
- No

\* School name:

\* Location:

1. What is your position at the school?

- Principal
- Professional associate
- Class or subject teacher

2. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

3. How old are you?

4. What subject do you teach?

- I'm a class teacher
- Natural sciences and mathematics subjects (such as mathematics, physics)
- Social sciences and humanities subjects (such as geography, history, psychology)
- Technical and technological subjects (such as computing, engineering, and technology)
- Languages (such as Serbian, English)
- Vocational subjects
- Art subjects (such as art, music)
- Other subjects (please indicate):

5. What grades do you teach?

- Primary school: 1st to 4th grade
- Primary school: 5th
- Primary school: 6th
- Primary school: 7th

- Primary school: 8th
- Secondary school:
- Secondary school: 2nd
- Secondary school: 3rd
- Secondary school: 4th

6. During this or the previous school year, have you been a form teacher?

- Yes
- No
- I'm a class teacher

7. How many years of professional experience do you have in your field?

8. How many years have you been working in your current position?

9. Are you a member of the Team for Protection against discrimination, violence, abuse, and neglect and/or the Crisis Response Team?

- Yes, I'm a member of both teams
- I'm a member of the Team for Protection against discrimination, violence, abuse, and neglect
- I'm a member of the Crisis Response Team
- I am not a member of any team

10. During the previous school year, how much of your working time did you spend on various professional duties? Please distribute 100% of your working time across the following duties:

- Planning and organisation of educational work, monitoring and evaluation of school's work
- Collaboration with teachers, form teachers, and the principal
- Collaboration with parents
- Working with students
- Educational practice research (analytical research)
- Participation in the work of professional bodies
- Co-operation with other institutions (schools, social welfare and health authorities)
- Professional development
- Preparation for work and keeping work documents

11. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your...

	Very low 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very high 10
...leadership skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...organisational skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...management skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... communication skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. To your knowledge, how often have the following forms of violent behaviour occurred in your school during the current and previous school year?

	Such incidents do not occur in our school	They rarely occur	They occas. occur	They frequently occur
Ridicule, insulting, name-calling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hitting, kicking, throwing things at, locking up others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spreading lies about a student, discouraging others from socialising with them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stealing a student's money and belongings, damaging their property	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threatening and intimidating a student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forcing a student to do something they don't want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexual harassment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Destroying school property	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fights between groups of students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fights with students from other schools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Verbal aggression of students towards teachers (swearing, insulting, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical aggression of students towards teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threats to teachers by students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Verbal aggression of teachers towards students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical aggression of teachers towards students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Violent behaviour of parents towards staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Violent behaviour among staff members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. In your opinion, to what extent are the following forms of cyberbullying prevalent among students:

	Such incidents do not occur in our school	They rarely occur	They occas. occur	They frequently occur
Taking photos or videos without the student's consent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sending or posting threatening and offensive messages online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Excluding someone from an online group or activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coercing students to do something they don't want (such as online challenges)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating and/or sharing sexually explicit content involving students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using AI to create offensive and sexually explicit content involving students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating and/or sharing offensive content involving teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. In your opinion, to what extent does cyberbullying among students pose a problem for your school?

- Not a problem at all
- Cyberbullying is present, but it's not a serious problem
- It poses a serious problem for our school

15. If you were to compare traditional violence and cyberbullying, which one do you believe poses a greater problem for the school?

- None of these pose a problem for our school
- Cyberbullying is a greater problem
- Traditional violence is a greater problem
- Both are equally problematic

16. In your opinion, to what extent are parent Viber groups useful for solving problems students encounter at school?

- Very useful
- Somewhat useful
- Not useful
- Not only are they not helpful, but they are also harmful
- I cannot assess

17. In your opinion, to what extent does the use of digital devices by students:

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite	Very much	I'm not sure
Interfere with students' daily activities and obligations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help you communicate and co-operate with students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negatively affect students' mental health (for instance, emotions, attention, learning)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negatively affect students' physical health (for instance, sleep quality, vision, musculoskeletal system)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Negatively affect students' behaviour (for instance, harmful online content)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Help in completing school tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Does your school have rules regarding mobile phone use? Please select one response.

- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited both during classes and breaks
- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited during classes and the phones
- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited only during classes; students are not required to place them in a designated area, but keep them with them
- Yes, the use of mobile phones is prohibited during classes, for educational purposes, when the teacher allows it
- There are no rules at the school level, but some teachers establish their own rules in their classes
- There are no rules regarding the use of mobile phones at school
- I don't know

19. How often do you encourage students to use mobile phones during classes for schoolwork?

- Never
- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Frequently

20. Is the problem of violent behaviour in your school today smaller or bigger than it was a few years ago?

- It is less severe today than it was a few years ago
- It is more severe today than it was a few years ago
- It is approximately the same
- I cannot assess

21. How would you assess your own competence in solving problems related to violent student behaviour? Please indicate the appropriate number on a scale from 0 to 10.

	Not at all 0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Completely 10
I can recognise violent behaviour in my students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to respond constructively in situations when a student behaves violently towards another student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to respond constructively in situations when a student behaves violently towards me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to help a student who is experiencing violence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am familiar with the procedure for acting in certain situations related to school violence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22a. On a scale from 0 to 10, how would you rate your own digital skills (internet use and computer programme skills)?

- 0 – Very poor
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

- 8
- 9
- 10 – Very good

22b. On the same scale, how would you rate the average digital skills of your students?

- 0 – Very poor
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 – Very good

23. Does the school update violence prevention programmes every year in accordance with the situation assessment?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

24. During this or the previous school year, has the school organised violence prevention activities and programmes?

- Such activities are not organised in the school
- Activities and programmes for violence prevention for students, teachers, and parents are implemented sporadically in the school
- The school organises violence prevention activities and programmes in a planned and systematic manner, through various forms of work (form class, extracurricular activities, parent–teacher conferences, expert bodies, actions, etc.)

25. During this or the previous school year, have you been involved in school violence prevention activities?

- Yes
- No

26. During this or the previous school year, have you participated in a professional development programme related to violence prevention?

- I have not participated in such a form of professional development
- I have participated in one training/programme of that type
- I have participated in two or more such trainings/programmes

27. Do you know who the members of the school's Team for Protection against discrimination, violence, abuse, and neglect are?

- Yes, I'm a member
- I'm not a team member, but I know who the members are
- I don't know who the team members are

28. If a case of violent behaviour occurred in your class, were you involved in the work of the Team for Protection against discrimination, violence, abuse, and neglect?

- Yes
- No

29. During this or the previous school year, has your school organised activities that encourage mutual co-operation between students, teachers, and parents/legal guardians?

- The school does not organise such activities
- The school rarely organises such activities
- The school occasionally organises such activities
- The school frequently organises such activities

30. During this or the previous school year, has the school organised activities to support students suffering or witnessing violence (for instance, protection plans designed for them)?

- The school does not organise additional activities to support students who suffer or witness violence
- Support activities are occasionally carried out for students who experience or witness violence
- Support activities are frequently carried out for students who experience or witness violence
- Support activities are always carried out for students who experience or witness violence

31. During this or the previous school year, has the school organised activities of enhanced educational support for students perpetrating violence (for instance, different behaviour change activities are organised, enhanced educational support plans are designed)?

- The school does not organise additional activities to support students who perpetrate violence
- Support activities are occasionally carried out for students who perpetrate violence
- Support activities are frequently carried out for students who perpetrate violence
- Support activities are always carried out for students who perpetrate violence

32. In your opinion, to what extent does the national digital platform “I Protect You” improve:

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite	Very much	I cannot assess
Reporting school violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recording and monitoring of undertaken activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School's communication with other competent institutions within the external protection network	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to violence-related materials and educational activities for employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to violence-related materials and educational activities for students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Access to violence-related materials and educational activities for parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Implementation of prevention measures against school violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timely response to school violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

33. During this or the previous school year, have you taught students what to do when they are angry, when they witness violence, or when others are being violent towards them, etc.?

- I have not taught students about this
- I talk to students about this topic occasionally, in situations of violence
- I am working on it in a systematic and planned manner

34. Do you need training related to violence prevention?

- Yes, I need such training and I would attend it
- I need such training, but I don't have time for it
- No, I don't need such training

35. Do you need training related to violence intervention?

- Yes, I need such training and I would attend it
- I need such training, but I don't have time for it
- No, I don't need such training

36. During this or the previous school year, has any student turned to you for help when they were exposed to violence or witnessed it?

- It has never happened

- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times

37. How do you (generally) respond when students turn to you for help? (Select up to five responses)

- I don't attribute much importance to it, as these are typical conflicts among children
- I tell the students to resolve it on their own, because it's best not to get involved in such situations
- I call the students, explain why such behaviour is inappropriate, and ask them to make peace
- I call the students and try to determine who is to blame, then punish the one at fault
- I talk to students in a form class about such behaviour and ask them to co-operate
- I call the students' parents together and ask them to resolve the issue with their children
- I speak with each student and parent individually
- I consult with colleagues
- I consult with professional associates
- It has not happened to me

38. How do you respond when you see violence among students?

- I don't get involved, I leave it to the students to resolve the issue themselves
- I believe it's the responsibility of those whose job it is to identify and address such issues
- I respond whenever I can (it all depends on how busy I am in the given situation)
- I always try to respond

39. How do you respond when you see violence between students and employees?

- I don't get involved, I leave it to them to resolve the issue themselves
- I believe it's the responsibility of those whose job it is to identify and address such issues
- I respond whenever I can (it all depends on how busy I am in the given situation)
- I always try to respond

40. During this or the previous school year, has any parent turned to you for help when their child was exposed to violence or witnessed it?

- It has never happened
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times

41. During this or the previous school year, has any teacher turned to you for help regarding a situation of school violence?

- No one has turned to me for help
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times

42. Are you aware of any cases of students reporting experiencing violence by other students?

- I'm not aware of any such cases
- I'm aware of such cases

43. Did the school respond appropriately?

- The school always responded
- The school sometimes failed to respond
- I don't know; I cannot recall

44. Are you aware of any cases of students reporting experiencing violence by employees?

- I'm not aware of any such cases
- I'm aware of such cases

45. Did the school respond appropriately?

- The school always responded
- The school sometimes failed to respond
- I don't know; I cannot recall

46. When a situation of school violence occurs, what are the most common obstacles you face in implementing the protocol for acting in response to such situations?

	Rarely or never	Occasionally	Frequently	I don't know; I cannot assess
Parents do not co-operate with the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protection Team is operating poorly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are difficulties in co-operation with the social welfare system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are difficulties in co-operation with the healthcare system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are difficulties in co-operation with the Ministry of Interior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employees are unwilling to implement the protocol	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

47. During this or the previous school year, has any student behaved violently towards you (insulted you, threatened you, hit you, etc.)?

- It has never happened
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times

48. During this or the previous school year, has any parent behaved violently towards you (insulted you, threatened you, hit you, etc.)?

- It has never happened
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times

49. During this or the previous school year, to your knowledge, has any parent behaved violently towards any of your colleagues (insulted them, threatened them, hit them, etc.)?

- It has never happened
- It has happened once or twice
- It has happened multiple times

50. In your opinion, how many of your colleagues always promptly respond to violent student behaviour?

- No colleagues
- A minority of colleagues
- Half of colleagues
- More than half of colleagues

51a. In your opinion, which students most frequently experience peer violence at school?

- Quiet and withdrawn children
- Children who provoke other children
- Equally

51b. In your opinion, which students most frequently experience peer violence at school?

- Children of higher social status
- Children of lower social status
- Equally

51c. In your opinion, which students most frequently experience peer violence at school?

- Children with lower scholastic performance
- Higher-achieving students
- Equally

51d. In your opinion, which students most frequently experience peer violence at school?

- Girls
- Boys
- Equally

52a. In your opinion, which students display violent behaviour towards peers at school more frequently?

- Children of higher social status
- Children of lower social status
- Equally

52b. In your opinion, which students display violent behaviour towards peers at school more frequently?

- Children with lower scholastic performance
- Higher-achieving students
- Equally

52c. In your opinion, which students display violent behaviour towards peers at school more frequently?

- Girls
- Boys
- Equally

52d. In your opinion, which students display violent behaviour towards peers at school more frequently?

- Unpopular children
- Popular children
- Equally

53. In your opinion, to what extent do the following factors affect violent student behaviour at your school?

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very much
Poor family influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Genetic predisposition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor peer influence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor media influence (films, TV, internet)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inadequate curricula and teaching methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Value system and overall situation in Serbia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inadequate school response to violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor interpersonal relationships in the school community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Desire for popularity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

54. How effective do you think the following measures would be in addressing violent student behaviour at school?

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very much
Better co-operation between school and parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better co-operation between teachers and students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Greater support from psychologists and pedagogues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developing non-violent communication skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consistent punishment of students who perpetrate violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More comprehensive supervision of all students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Greater presence of school-based police officer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More interesting extracurricular activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More interesting teaching methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

55. How do you evaluate the school's ability to reduce violence?

- The school is powerless to reduce violence
- Little can be done at school to reduce violence
- Much can be done within the school to reduce violence

56. How do you evaluate the school's ability to reduce cyberbullying among students?

- The school is powerless to reduce cyberbullying
- Little can be done at school to reduce cyberbullying
- Much can be done within the school to reduce cyberbullying
- I cannot assess

57. To what extent are you satisfied with:

	Very dissatisfied	Mostly dissatisfied	Moderately satisfied	Quite satisfied	Very satisfied
Relationships among school staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships between students and staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships between parents and school staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationship between school administration and staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude of the Ministry towards the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

58. To what extent do the following statements apply to your school?

	Rarely or never	Occasionally	Frequently	I cannot assess
Students do not show enough respect towards employees.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employees do not show enough respect towards students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

59. In your opinion, to what extent is co-operation among students encouraged in your school?

- 0 – Not at all
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 – Very much

60. In your opinion, to what extent is competition among students encouraged in your school?

- 0 – Not at all
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 – Very much

61. In your opinion, how many parents are willing to co-operate in implementing violence prevention programmes?

- There are almost no such parents
- There are few such parents
- There are a lot of such parents

62. In your opinion, how many parents are willing to co-operate in case of violent behaviour of their child?

- There are almost no such parents
- There are few such parents
- There are a lot of such parents

63. In your opinion, how many parents treat school employees disrespectfully or aggressively?

- There are almost no such parents
- There are few such parents
- There are a lot of such parents

64. In your opinion, to what extent could the following factors contribute to increasing teacher authority?

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very much
Law amendments for the purpose of improved safety of teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Salary increase	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Greater teacher autonomy (for instance, in designing curriculum, selecting teaching content)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating mechanisms to reduce pressure on teachers from parents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better protection by competent institutions (Ministry of Education, police, prosecutor's office)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reducing political influence on school functioning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creating a more positive image of teachers in the media and society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improving teachers' capacities (such as for problem-solving, communication)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for your participation in this important research.

The aim of this research is to explore the opinions of school employees – principals, professional associates, and teachers – regarding various aspects of violent interactions occurring in school, evaluations of school environment safety and school climate as a whole, as well as individual capacities and skills to prevent and respond to violence, opinions about the causes of violent behaviour, and the efficiency of procedures for its prevention. Since this research also involves the children from your school and their parents/legal guardians, we are interested to see the similarities and differences in opinions of different “actors” in school life. All of this is intended to help develop interventions and programmes aimed at creating a safer and more secure school environment for all children.

It is possible that you have not encountered any negative experiences related to the topics we inquired about, but some questions may have raised concerns or discomfort about things that could occur in the future. Such feelings are understandable, but it is important to share your concerns and learn more about how violence can be prevented, how and when to respond, and to whom to report it. If you need advice or help, we encourage you to contact one of the members of the Violence Protection Team at your school. On the platform “I Protect You” (<https://cuvamte.gov.rs/>) you can find more information on how to act in situations involving violence and how to report such instances.

We would like to remind you once again that your participation in this research is anonymous. Your name and/or any other personal information have not been registered or recorded anywhere. The data collected in the research will be processed collectively, and it will not be possible to identify the employees or schools that took part in it based on the analysis presented in the research report.

If you have any comments or additional questions regarding this research, feel free to contact the principal investigator of the Prevent Bullying and Peer Violence in Schools project, Professor Dragan Popadić, at: [dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs](mailto:dpopadic@f.bg.ac.rs).

Once again, thank you for your co-operation.







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