

Dr Tanja Nedimović
Preschool Teacher Training College Vrsac

=====

FREQUENCY AND FORMS OF PEER VIOLENCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Abstract: The research problem refers to the following question: what are the forms and frequency of peer violence manifestation in primary school. and what the rate of their frequency is. The research sample consists of 504 subjects, primary school students (attending 3rd to 8th grade).

The instruments used in the research are *The questionnaire measuring manifestation forms and frequency of peer violence* and *The questionnaire for teachers – class teachers*. Both questionnaires had been construed by the author of the paper for the needs of the research. The variables included in the research are the following: sex, age, school success and place where a child attends primary school (village – town).

Out of the sample as a whole, 22,8% the subjects state that they have been exposed to violence in the previous three months at least once, while 4,8% of the subjects have experienced repeated peer violence (bullying) in the previous three months. 55,8% of students have been exposed to peer violence at least once during the whole schooling period, while 13,3% of the subjects have experienced repeated peer violence. The existence of statistically significant differences between reporting on being exposed to peer violence either in the previous tree months or throughout schooling and the independent variables observed in the research has not been confirmed.

The most frequent forms of peer violence the students have been exposed to are the following: insult (51,5%) and gossiping (46,9%), threats (19,3%) and physical peer violence (19,2%).

Key words: peer violence, manifestation forms, frequency, bullying.

Introduction

“Violence over children is a general problem permeating all societies, all cultures and all regions of the world. Millions of children put up with violence

every day. Violence over a child is a serious violation of children rights. Violence causes suffering of a child, seriously jeopardizes development, welfare as well as the life of a child itself, with the serious and long-lasting consequences” (National strategy for prevention and protection of children from violence, 2008).

The first systematic research on the phenomenon of peer violence started in 1970ies (Olweus, 1973, 1978) in Scandinavian countries. The fact that bullying among school children was rising in the end of 1980ies and the beginning of 1990ies started a series of studies in other countries including Japan, England, Canada USA and Australia. Nowadays, around forty years after the first research on peer violence were carried out, numerous experts are pointing out that the appearance of violence in school is still showing a tendency of rising both in the world and in Serbia. Namely, peer violence, as a form of manifesting aggressive behaviour is increasingly more present in contemporary society. A great number of students, as well as their teachers and parents, are facing violence in school.

In the case of children peer violence brings about negative consequences, both physical and psychological, that can be numerous and can last for a very long time.

In order to stop the violence increase tendency and to suppress the phenomenon, it is necessary to engage society as a whole, including students, teachers, parents and the media. Consequently, the research on the phenomenon are of great importance, not only for the understanding of the problem issue, but also for the design of prevention and intervention programs to significantly contribute to the decrease and suppression of the peer violence phenomenon in schools.

In more developed part of the world dealing with the problems of peer violence has undergone several phases: from the establishment of the problem incidence, work on broader public become more sensible for the problem, raising awareness of the need for interdisciplinary approach to the problem, increased engagement of responsible institutions, fundraising and support of governing institutions, to the design of prevention and intervention programs and their evaluation.

The society we live in is permeated with violence. The increase of violence is perceptible in schools as well. Peer violence in schools is increasing in both developed and undeveloped countries, in both rural and urban

settings. Violence among young people in school is an issue of public health dealt with by the World Health Organization (Gasic-Paviscic, 2004b).

In the attempts made at determining the term of peer violence for the needs of the paper and the research represented in it, we relied on two relevant definitions of the term violence. According to the World Health Organization, violence is determined as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” (WHO 2002). According to the definition of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia in the *Special protocol for protection of children and students from violence, abuse and negligence in educational-upbringing institutions*, violence is determined as “any form of verbal or non-verbal behaviour that occurs once or repeatedly resulting in real or potential threat of life, development or dignity of children/students.” (Special Protocol, 2008).

The forms of peer violence

Various taxonomies of peer violence can be found in the relevant literature, made according to different criteria. Sinobad (2005) offers a comprehensive classification into physical, psychological and sexual violence.

Physical violence is, according to research results (Olweus, 1994) the most common form of peer violence in schools. It appears in various forms – ranging from pure physical violence to the occurrence of physical violence in a combination with psychological violence. We are talking about physical violence when a direct physical assault on the victim is present, when somebody is hurting or tries to hurt another person. Physical violence can appear occasionally, it can be more frequent or continuous and as such it can bring about more enduring and serious consequences.

Psychological violence appears through verbal and non-verbal assault, as well as through intentional exclusion or negligence of a child by his peer group. Verbal attacks can be the following: threats, mocking, teasing, insults. Non-verbal assaults are considered to be the following: making grimaces, rude movements, intentional shutting somebody down from the group or rejection to please the wishes of another person.

According to majority of definitions, the behaviour considered to be sexual harassment fulfils three conditions: it is a behaviour of sexual nature manifested through verbal or non-verbal communication, as well as through physical contact; it is undesirable behaviour, disapproved by the person involved; it is a behaviour in which the criteria of “harassment” are determined by the person who is the victim according to subjective experience of unfriendly, humiliating or insulting atmosphere (Jerkovic & Pivk, 2008).

In the *Special protocol for protection of children and students from violence, abuse and negligence in educational-upbringing institutions* (The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia 2007) it is stated that violence can have various forms.

Physical violence refers to the behaviour bringing to real or potential injury of a child or a student. The examples of physical violence are: hitting, kicking, pushing, slapping, pulling one’s hair, choking, throwing, aiming at, weapon attack, poisoning, burning, throwing hot water, food and sleep deprivation, etc.

Emotional/psychological violence refers to the behaviour bringing to immediate or permanent threat for psychological and emotional health and dignity of a child/student. It also refers to the situations in which the opportunity is missed to provide appropriate and supporting environment for healthy emotional and social development according to the potentials of a child/a pupil. Emotional violence and abuse involves acts of humiliation, labelling, ignoring, insulting, blackmailing, calling names, gossiping, mocking, making fun of somebody, rejection, distortion, manipulation, threat, intimidating, limiting of child’s or student’s movements, as well as other forms of unfriendly and enemy behaviour. To exclude a child from a group and to discriminate him/her means to exercise social violence. It refers to the following forms of behaviour: separating a child/a student from others according to him/her being different, bringing a child into a position of inequality and subordination, isolation, not socializing with a child, ignoring him/her, not accepting a child on any terms.

Sexual violence and abuse of children/students implies their involvement into a social activity they do not fully understand, they are not mature enough for (they do not accept it, they are not in a condition to agree with it) and whose aim is to provide enjoyment and satisfy the needs of another person. The following acts are considered to be sexual violence:

harassment – making lascivious comments, labelling, dissemination of untrue stories, touching, sending messages, making photographs, phone calls etc; leading or forcing a child/a student into taking part in sexual activities, either through contact (sexual intercourse, sexual touching, etc) or non-contact activities (exposition to views, exhibitionism etc); using children/students for prostitution, pornography and other forms of sexual exploitation.

Frequency of peer violence

The data gathered through one of the first Olweus' studies (Oweus, 1994) point to the fact that around 15-20% of students are involved into peer violence, either as victims or as bullies. Approximately 9% of the students were victims, 7% abused other students, while 1,6% of students were at the same time both victims and bullies. The obtained results imply that in 60-65% of cases a victim is abused by a group consisting of two or three students and that 35-40% of the abused students were subjected to peer violence by an individual. The study also showed that the occurrence of violence in schools is not influenced by the size of the school or a class, or whether the school is in the urban or rural setting. According to a review of a number of surveys (Veenstra et al, 2005) dealing with suffering from peer violence undertaken in the school is Australia, Austria, England, Finland, Germany, Norway and USA, the results range from 15% to 25%.

The World Health Organization (WHO) carries out a survey administered each four years dealing, among others, with the issues referring to violence in schools. Before they provide answers to the given questions, it is explained to pupils what is and is not considered violence. The explanation is in accordance with Olweus's determination of violence and refers to the cases of disproportional power (but not to repeated violence). The results obtained in the research undertaken in 2001/2002 in 35 countries in the region on a sample of 120.000 students aging 11, 13 and 15 (Craig & Harel, 2004 according to Popadic & Plut, 2007) are as follows: approximately 34% of the polled students has at least once been exposed to violence; 11% of students has been exposed to violence at least two to three times a month; being exposed to violence decreases with age; the differences in experiencing violence in school between sexes are relatively small; around 35% of the total sample have admitted that they have harassed other students; the bullies are significantly more often boys than girls, 39% of children has at least once participated in a fight in the previous year, while 10% of them were in a fight for three times or even more often; Estonia, Greenland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Ukraine were at the top

of the scale; the countries that have the lowest level of school violence are the following ones: Check republic, Slovenia, Sweden and Croatia.

In the research dealing with the forms of peer violence (Popadic & Plut, 2007) the obtained results show that the most frequent forms of the peer violence in which students are victims are the following: insulting (45,6%), gossiping (32,6%), hitting (19,2%) and threats (16,9%). Touching (sexual harassment), snatching and destruction of property, as well as forcing somebody to something are the forms of violent behaviour present in less than 10%.

Within the same research, having analyzed the data on the forms of peer violence from the position of students as bullies, the following results were found: the violence form students most often admit is verbal violence (32,4%), followed by hitting (15,6%), threatening (9,1%), touching (7,2%) and gossiping (6,3%).

Compared with the result of the studies carried out in other countries, the results of the studies undertaken in the schools in Serbia have shown lower level of peer violence in our schools. In the research dealing with peer violence in schools in Serbia (Gasic-Pavasic, 2004b), when students were asked the following question: "Have you experienced violence in your school during this school year?", 24% of them answered positively, while 76% of students gave a negative answer.

The consequences of peer violence

Peer violence can have numerous negative consequences. For the victims of peer violence, this means going to school every day afraid of bullying and humiliation. A great number of data obtained in numerous and a variety of studies has shown that various forms of violence can have serious long-term consequences for mental and physical health. Some of the consequences for mental health are the loss of self-esteem, depression, stress, problems in sexual relations, and in the segment of physical health – psychosomatic problems, diseases occurring due to weakened immunological system of the organism, physical injuries as consequences of physical violence (Brain, 1997 according to Smith & Brain, 2000).

According to Kerlikowske (2003), 26% of the young girls who were victims of peer violence, have reported that they are depressive, unlike 8% of young girls, who are depressive, but were not victims of peer violence.

Furthermore, higher percentage of suicidal behaviour has been noticed in the case of the victims in comparison to the children who have not been peer violence victims: 8% of girls and 4% of boys compared to 1% total for the children who have not been victims of peer violence. At the same time, children who have been victims of peer violence often have problems with concentration, leading to their poor school achievement (Ballard et al, 1999). The percentage of being absent from school and leaving school is also higher in the case of children who have been victims of peer violence in comparison to those children who have not experienced peer violence. 16% of boys and 31% of girls have reported on the consequences of peer violence being their abandoning school in the attempt to avoid violence (Rigby, 1997). Nansel et al (2001) report on the results of a research showing that students who were the victims manifest higher level of insecurity, anxiety, depression, being lonely, dissatisfaction and lower level of self-respect than non-victims. At the same time, research results (Drake, 2003) show that victims of violence in school are less popular than other students who are not involved in peer violence. Repeated peer violence can have long-term negative consequences for the victims long after they leave school (Olweus, 1994). The feeling of isolation and the loss of self-respect in the case of the victims can last until they reach maturity (Clarke, Kiselica, 1997). This is also supported by another research findings pointing out that when persons who used to be the victims of peer violence in school grow up they often have problems to fit in a society (Gladstone et al, 2006 according to Jankauskiene et al, 2008).

Peer violence does not have negative effects only for the victims, but also for the students who manifest violent behaviour. Namely, research results imply that bullies can rarely make friendships and often have the characteristics of antisocial behaviour in adulthood, reflected in various criminal actions (Aluede, 2006; Wet, 2005). In the case of these children more frequent are the problems in the form of law violation, taking part in fights and thefts. When bullies are in question, peer violence is related to lower academic achievement of these children and weaker motivation for achievement, marking classes, unjustified absence from school, not obeying school rules (Dake et al, 2003; Glew et al, 2005 according to Jankauskiene et al, 2008). At the same time, results show that the children who behave violently, compared to the children not involved in violence, are much more inclined to have problems like depressive symptoms, suicidal ideas, as well as others diagnosed psychiatric disorders (Dake, 2003 according to Jankauskiene et al, 2008). Children who have chronically been violent towards their peers during schooling, continue their violent behaviour during adulthood, which has influence on their ability to make

adequate social contacts and interpersonal relations (Oliver, Hoover & Hazier, 1994). At the same time, these disorders in behaviour show relatively significant resistance to clinical treatment, so that around 60% of these children face bad prognosis. A trend has been noticed that with maturation and growing older these problems transform into delinquency or antisocial personality disorders.

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

Systematic non-experimental observation was used for the needs of the research.

The research subject and problem

Due to the fact that the problem of peer violence has increased both in Serbia and worldwide, we are facing the need for studies dealing with the current problem issue, aiming at gaining relevant data and information to help prevention of such a behaviour.

The research subject is peer violence in primary schools and the studied problem is the following: what are manifestation forms of peer violence present in primary schools and what is the frequency of their appearance.

Research aim

The main research aim is to determine the manifestation forms and the frequency of peer violence in primary school in South Banat.

Two more specific aims arise out of the general aim:

- to establish the frequency of peer violence in primary schools;
- to establish the manifestation forms of peer violence appearing most frequently in primary schools (physical violence, gossiping, threats, forcing somebody to do something, snatching and property destruction, sexual harassment).

Research Tasks

The stated aims can be further determined according to research tasks carried out within the research:

1. to establish the frequency rate of peer violence in primary schools in the last three months;

2. to find out whether there is a link between the frequency of peer violence in the last three months and gender, age, school success and the place where a child goes to school (village-town);
3. to find out whether there is a correlation between the frequency of peer violence throughout schooling and gender, age, school success and the place where a child goes to school (village-town);
4. to establish the forms of peer violence (physical, emotional-psychological, social, sexual) the pupils have most frequently been exposed to in the last three months;
5. to establish to forms of peer violence (physical, emotional-psychological, social, sexual) the pupils have most frequently manifested in the last three months.

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses have been established within the research:

1. There are no statistically significant differences between the frequency of peer violence in the last three months and gender, age, school success and the place where a child goes to school (village-town);
2. There are no statistically significant differences between the frequency of peer violence throughout schooling and gender, age, school success and the place where a child goes to school (village-town);
3. The students have most frequently been exposed to emotional-psychological and social forms of peer violence in the last three months.
4. The students have most frequently manifested emotional-psychological forms of peer violence in the last three months.

Sample

The sample consisted of 504 subjects, primary school students, attending 3rd to 8th primary school grade – 246 boys and 258 girls, out of which 287 attend school in a town and 217 in a village.

Instruments

The following instruments were used in the research:

- the questionnaire measuring manifest forms and frequency of peer violence was composed according to the existing instruments observing peer violence in primary school (the questionnaire was created by the author of the paper for the purpose of the research). The questionnaire was used to gather the data on the frequency of peer violence and the manifest forms of peer violence some students are exposed to: insulting, gossiping, threatening, forcing, snatching and destruction of property, sexual harassment and physical peer violence;
- questionnaire for teachers – class teachers (the questionnaire was designed by the author of the paper for the purpose of the research); the questionnaire was administered in order to gather the data on socio-demographic variables and school success of the subjects.

The procedure

The research was undertaken in the period between April and June 2009, in the primary schools “Jovan Jovanovic – Zmaj” in Hajducica, “Jovan Sterija – Popovic” in Velika Greda and “Olga Petrov – Radisic in Vrsac.

At the beginning of the *Questionnaire for measuring manifest forms and frequency of peer violence*, a definition of peer violence is given. The questionnaire includes global and specific self-evaluations from the position of a bully and a victim in previous three months and throughout schooling. The obtained results on being exposed to peer violence were considered in relation to two criteria: the criterion of violence experienced at least once and the criterion of repeated exposure to violent behaviour (bullying).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The frequency of peer violence was measured in the research according to global self-evaluations of the subjects, who, having become aware what is defined as violent behaviour, gave their responses to directly asked question referring to how often they were the victims of violence in the previous three months, as well as throughout their schooling. The findings are shown in the Table 1.

Table 1: Self-evaluation of exposure to peer violence in the previous three months

	N	%
Not once	389	77,2%
Once or twice	91	18,0%
Several times	20	4,0%
Frequently	4	0,8%
Total	504	100%

The results showing the exposure to peer violence can be considered according to the criterion of at least once experienced violence and according to the criterion of being repeatedly exposed to violent behaviour (bullying). When we consider the obtained results referring to being exposed to violence in recent three months viewed from the angle of the first criterion – at least once experienced peer violence (once or twice, several times, often; Table 1), we can see that 22,8% out of the total number of subjects responded that they had been exposed to peer violence at least once. The results found in the research are in accordance to the results of the study already carried out in Serbia (Popadic & Plut, 2007), according to which 21,1% of the subjects had been exposed to peer violence in previous three months. Considering the obtained results in relation to the second criterion implying the responses “several times” and “frequently” actually referring to bullying, the results found in the research are also in harmony with the results of the study already undertaken in Serbia. Namely, in our research, 4,8% of the subjects reports that they have been exposed to repeated violence (several times, often; Table 1) by their peers in the previous three months, which is result similar to the one gained in the research “School without violence” (Popadic, 2009) – 5,1% of the subjects.

Furthermore, the results of our research referring to the complete period of schooling are shown in the Table 2.

Table 2: Self-evaluation of exposure to peer violence throughout schooling

	N	%
Not once	233	46,2%
Once or twice	204	40,5%
Several times	50	9,9%
Every day	17	3,4%
Total	504	100%

Responding to the direct question, 53,8% of the subjects has stated that they had been exposed to peer violence at least once (once or twice, several times, on daily basis; Table 2), while 13,3% out of the total number of subjects included in the sample have testified on repeated peer violence (several times, every day; Table 2). These results are also in accordance with the results obtained within the program “School without violence”, where 44,8% of students reported that they had been exposed to peer violence at least once during schooling, and 14,2% had experienced peer violence repeatedly during schooling. The differences can be explained according to the size of the sample (within the program “School without violence” the sample consisted of 26.628 subjects, while our research involved 504 subjects). At the same time, the found differences can be influenced by the fact that all the subjects provided answer to this question in our research, and in the mentioned research (Popadic & Plut , 2007) only the senior students (from 5th to 8th grade).

Nevertheless, if we compare the results of the analysis of general self-evaluations gathered in our research with the data acquired in the research of World Health Organization (Currie et al, 2008, according to Popadic, 2009), we can see that peer violence in Serbia shows under the average presence. The world average of the students who have been exposed to peer violence in school is 33% as compared to 22,8% in our research; furthermore, there are 4,8% of the students who have been exposed to repeated violence (bullying) in previous three months in our research, as compared to the world average of 11% of students. These results might be rather encouraging if we have in mind that data on the frequency of peer violence acquired in our research. However, they could also indicate inadequate recognition of various forms of peer interaction that actually, according to definition, imply violence but are not acknowledged as violent by a certain number of students attending schools in Serbia. At the same time, it could also be assumed that numerous students restrain themselves from being completely honest, as well as that there might be a situation of “getting used to” peer violence, especially if it is not noticed and if it is not adequately punished, i.e. sanctioned, either by the peer group or by the adults (teachers, class teachers, parents). In other words, the results obtained according to the general self-evaluations in our sample can point to an increased tolerance threshold in the case of students in Serbia, which is not typical only for students, but for the broader social context of the country we live in.

In this part of the research, we were also interested in the data showing whether there are differences between reporting on being exposed to

peer violence during the previous three months and throughout schooling and sex, the grade the students attend, school success and the place they go to school (whether it is rural or urban setting). Considering the frequency of peer violence both in the previous three months and throughout schooling, the obtained results show that there are not statistically relevant differences in regard to the observed independent variables. The non-existence of statistically significant differences in regard to the place the students attend school (the previous three months $X^2=4,56$; $df = 3$; $p =0,20$; throughout schooling period $X^2=1,49$; $df = 3$; $p =0,68$) and school success (the previous three months $X^2=20,2$; $df=12$; $p=0,06$; for the whole duration of schooling period $X^2=14,0$; $df = 12$; $p =0,30$), are expected results. Namely, for the society we live in it is characteristic that smaller and larger places are well connected, with a large number of people from smaller places frequently going to towns for schooling and work, so that it had been assumed that there are not significant differences in the broader social context. Accordingly, statistically significant differences related to the place of attending school (village-town) were not expected when exposure to peer violence is in question. At the same time, even though there are stereotypes and biases that the students who have poor school success are more frequently the actors of violent peer interaction, the results acquired through our research are in agreement with the results gained within the research already undertaken research in Serbia, showing that there is not statistically relevant difference between peer violence and school success (Popadic, 2009).

In our research statistically significant differences in the frequency of peer violence in regard to sex have not been found either – the previous three months ($X^2 =0,39$; $df=3$; $p=0,94$), overall schooling ($X^2=2,49$; $df = 3$; $p =0,48$), even though certain former research showed that boys are statistically significantly more exposed to peer violence than girls (Popadic & Plut, 2007). However, in spite of the fact that statistically significant differences have not been found, this research has also reported on boys being more frequently exposed to peer violence than girls (in previous three months 23,98% of boys in comparison to 21,71% of girls). Considering repeated peer violence in previous three months (bullying) boys are also more exposed than girls (4,88% of boys compared to 4,66% of boys), although these differences are not statistically relevant, as well. Observing the results referring to overall schooling up to now, girls report more frequent exposure to peer violence when the first criterion is in question (at least once – 56,59% of girls in comparison to 50,81% of boys). In regard to the criterion of repeated peer violence throughout schooling, boys

report on being more frequently exposed than girls (13,82% of boys compared to 12,79% of girls). In other words, in spite of the fact that there is no statistical relevance, the result obtained in the previous research, as well as the results acquired within our research show greater extent of boys being exposed to peer violence than girls. Sex differences regarding exposure to peer violence are actually rather small and this is confirmed by the results of our research. High level of statistical significance found in some former studies can be explicated according to a large sample rather than great differences in the ratio of boys and girls exposed to peer violence (WHO research, Craig & Harel, 2004, according to Popadic & Plut, 2007).

The present research has not found statistically significant differences in the reporting on being exposed to peer violence in the previous three months and throughout previous schooling in comparison to the grade the students attend: in the last three months ($X^2=0,03$; $df = 3$; $p = 0,99$), throughout schooling ($X^2=0,09$; $df = 3$; $p = 0,99$).

The most frequent forms of peer violence have in the current research been considered from the position of a bully and a victim, and the data were gathered according to the specific self-evaluation lists filled by students. In other words, we were interested in the forms of violent behaviour the students were most frequently exposed to in the previous three months, as well as the forms of peer violence they most frequently manifested in the last three months.

The specific self-evaluation lists included, among others, the question of how often were the subjects been exposed to individual forms of peer violence. Their responses are shown in the next table (Table 3).

Table 3: The forms of peer violence the students were exposed to in the previous three months

VICTIMISATION FORMS	Not once	Once or twice	Several times	Every day
Insulting	48,5%	35,1%	14%	2,4%
Gossiping	53,1%	32,5%	12%	2,4%
Physical violence	80,8%	15,0%	3,8%	0,5%
Threatening	80,7%	14,9%	4%	0,4%

Sexual harassment*	89,6%	6,5%	2,7%	1,2%
Snatching and destruction of property	84,1%	12,6%	2,9%	0,4%
Forcing	83,0%	13,5%	3,2%	0,3%
Another form*	91,2%	8,0%	0,4%	0,4%

* Only the students attending 6th to 8th grade responded

The results show that the students most often report on being subjected to direct verbal violence (being insulted and made fun of) – 51,5% and verbal – relational violence (gossiping) – 46,9%, followed by threats (19,3%) and physical peer violence (19,2%). According to frequency of appearance, these forms of peer violence are followed by forcing, snatching and destruction of one’s property and sexual harassment. These results are in a sense expected, due to the fact that verbal violence has, according to the results of all former studies, been shown as the most frequent form of school violence (Wolkie et al, 2001 according to Popadic, 2009).

The results regarding repeated peer violence (bullying) are rather similar to the previous ones considering the most frequent forms of peer violence the students were exposed to at least once. Namely, the results show that in the previous three months the students were mostly exposed to repeated insults (16,4%) and gossip (14,4%). Considering other forms of repeated peer violence, their presence is less than 10% (threats, physical peer violence, sexual harassment, forcing, snatching and destruction of one’s property). The obtained results on the most frequent forms of victimisation according to both observed criteria (experienced at least once and repeatedly) are in accordance with the results of former research realized in Serbia (Popadic, 2009).

Considering the results showing the most frequent forms of peer violence in the previous three months from the position of a bully (Table 4), the students show the highest level of readiness to admit their own verbal violence over their peers (39,2%), physical peer violence (21,2%), gossiping (13,4%) and threats (10,5%). Less than 10% of subjects “confessed” sexual harassment, gossip, forcing and snatching and destruction of peer’s property.

Table 4: The forms of peer violence manifested by students in the last three months

FORMS OF VIOLENCE	Not once	Once or twice	Several times	Every day
Insulting	60,8%	34,4%	4,3%	0,5%
Physical violence	78,8%	18,2%	2,6%	0,4%
Threatening	89,5%	8,9%	1,4%	0,2%

Sexual harassment*	95,8%	3,4%	0,8%	--
Gossiping	86,5%	12%	1,5%	--
Forcing	96,2%	3%	0,7%	0,1%
Snatching and destruction of property	96,7%	3%	0,3%	--

* Only the students attending 6th to 8th grade responded

These results could be interpreted according to students reporting that verbal violence and gossiping are not classified within peer violence (Smederevac et al, 2010), as well as to the results showing that students most inadequately recognize insult and gossip as peer violence; consequently they are more ready to admit that they have been involved in such a form of peer interaction. Relatively high percentage of students “admitting” physical violence can be explained according to the fact that physical peer violence is a direct and manifest form of peer violence which is well recognized and least dependant on social interaction interpretation. The results on the frequency of repeated peer violence (bullying) in the previous three months from the position of a bully show that, according to the frequency of “confessing” again the most frequent forms are insult and physical peer violence, followed by other forms of repeated peer violence. The finding that all the forms of repeated peer violence “have been confessed” by less than 10% of students is also indicative. These results showing the most frequent forms of peer violence manifested by students are also compatible with the results gathered in some studies formerly carried out in Serbia (Popadic, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

The group of results regarding the frequency of peer violence has been examined according to two criteria: time (in previous three months and through schooling) and frequency (peer violence experienced at least once and repeated exposure to peer violence – bullying). The findings regarding the previous three months show that 22,8% of students have at least once been exposed to peer violence, while 4,8% of students report on being repeatedly exposed to peer violence. 53,8% of students report on being at least once exposed to peer violence during their period of schooling and 13,3% of students confess being subjected to repeated peer violence throughout schooling. There are no statistically significant differences between reporting on being exposed to peer violence in the previous three months and throughout schooling and sex, grade the subjects attend, their school success and place they attend school (village – town).

The next group of results refers to the most frequent forms of peer violence from the position of a victim and a position of a bully in the last three months. The students have mostly been the victims of insults and gossips, followed by threats and physical peer violence. Furthermore, the findings in regard to being exposed to bullying in the previous three months show that the students have most often been exposed to repeated insult and gossip. Having in mind the results regarding the most frequent forms of peer violence from the position of a bully, the students have most often “confessed” verbal violence in their interaction with peers, as well as physical violence, gossiping and threats.

The findings indicating the frequency of peer violence in the schools in Serbia seem to be alarming. In other words, more than one fifth (22,8%) of students report that they have at least once been victims of peer violence in the previous three months, while every second student (53,8%) reports on being at least once exposed to peer violence until now during schooling period as a whole. These findings impose the need for continuous and systematic dealing with the problem issue, both at the level of educational and upbringing institution and in a broader social context. Considering the results referring to bullying (repeated peer violence) the finding that 13,3% of students have been exposed to repeated acts of peer violence (several times or every day) throughout their schooling, additionally explicates the presence of the problem in our educational institutions, advocating in favour of the need for elaboration and application of various, before all prevention, as well as intervention programs.

REFERENCES

1. Aluede, O. (2006). Bullying in Schools: A form of Child abuse in schools. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 30, 31-39.
2. Ballard, M., Tucky, A., & Remley, T. P. Jr. (1999). Bullying and violence: A proposed prevention program, *NASSP Bulletin*, 23, 38-47.
3. Clarke, E. A., Kiselica, M. S. (1997). A systemic counselling approach to the problem of bullying. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling*, 31, 310-324.
4. Drake, J. (2003). Teacher preparation and practices regarding school bullying. *Journal of School Health*, 12, 347-356.
5. Gašić-Pavišić, S. (2004b). Mere i programi za prevenciju nasilja u školi, *Zbornik instituta za pedagoška istraživanja*, 36, 168-188.

6. Jankauskiene, R., Kardelis, K., Sukys, S., Kardeliene, L. (2008). Associations between school bullying and psychosocial factors. *Social and Personality*, 36, 145-162.
7. Jerković, I., Pivk, L. (2008). Eksploatacija seksualnosti: od incidenta do novog morala. *Pedagoška stvarnost*, 5-6, 543-559.
8. Kerlikowske, G. (2003). One in six students fall prey to bullies. Inside School Safety, 6-9. Preuzeto 14. maja 2009. sa <http://www.tcnj.edu/millerS/Bullying.htm>.
9. *Nacionalna strategija za prevenciju i zaštitu dece od nasilja*, Savet za prava deteta Vlade Srbije, 2008.
10. Nansel, T. R., Ovebeck, M., Pilla, R. S., Ruan, W. J., Simons-Morton, Scheidt, P. (2001). Bullying behaviours among U.S. youth: Prevalence and association with psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285, 2094-2100.
11. Oliver, R., Hoover, J. H., & Hazer, R. (1994). The perceived roles of bullying in small-town Midwestern Schools. *Journal of Counselling and Development*, 72, 416-419.
12. Olweus, D. (1973). Personality and aggression. In J.K. Cole, Jensen (Eds.) Nebraska Symposium on Motivation 1972. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
13. Olweus, D. (1978). *Aggression in the schools: bullies and whipping boys*. Washington, D.C.: Hemisphere.
14. Olweus, D. (1994). Annotation: Bullying at school: Basic facts and effects of a school based intervention program. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 3, 1171-1190.
15. Popadić, D. (2009). *Nasilje u školama*. Beograd: Institut za psihologiju, UNICEF.
16. Popadić, D., Plut, D. (2007). Nasilje u osnovnim školama u Srbiji: oblici i učestalost. *Psihologija*, 40, 309-328.
17. *Posebni protokol za zaštitu dece i učenika od nasilja, zlostavljanja i zanemarivanja u obrazovno vaspitnim ustanovama* (2008). Beograd. Ministarstvo prosvete Republike Srbije.
18. Rigby, K. (1996). *Bullying in Schools: What to do about it*. Victoria, Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd
19. Sinobad, S. (2005). Obeležja vršnjačkog nasilja u školama. Preuzeto 15. septembra 2008, sa <http://www.uds.org.yu/file050.pdf>
20. Smederevac, S., Kodžopeljić, J., Čolović, P., Marković, J. (2010). *Škola bez nasilja – ka sigurnom i podsticajnom okruženju za decu; rezultati istraživanja*. Interni materijal Pokrajinskog sekretarijata za obrazovanje.
21. Smith, P. K., Brain, P. (2000). Bullying in schools: Lessons from two decades of research. *Aggressive Behavior*, 26, 1-9.
22. Wet, C. (2005). *The nature and extent of bullying in Free State secondary schools*. Preuzeto 18. Septembra 2008 sa <http://www.ericdigests>

org/2003-1/bullying.htm.

23. WHO (2002). *World report on violence and health*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization.

Biographical note

Tanja Nedimovic has a Ph degree in the field of psychological sciences. She works at the Preschool Teacher Training College “Mihailo Palov” in Vrsac as a senior lecturer of psychological group of courses (*General Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Pedagogic Psychology, Mental Health, and Psychology of Creativity*), She has graduated from the Philosophical Faculty in Novi Sad, Psychology department, where she obtained her Master and PhD degree. Her scientific-research fields of interest are: aggressiveness, peer violence, psychology of creativity.