

## TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTER-COEVAL VIOLENCE (BULLYING) IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

### STAVOVI NASTAVNIKA O MEĐUVRŠNJAČKOM NASILJU U OSNOVNOJ ŠKOLI

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#### ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to examine the attitudes of teachers and associates towards inter-coeval violence (bullying) in correlation with the actual presence of violence in schools. The study proceeds from the hypothesis that, according to the attitudes of teachers, violence is present as a problem at school, but that teachers' attitudes and teachers' perceptions of inter-coeval violence (bullying) do not correlate with the actual presence of violence in schools. The study included a sample of 83 teachers, of which 62 were female teachers and 21 were male teachers. For the purpose of this study, a measuring instrument was constructed in the form of a questionnaire. Results show that 51.8% of teachers think that inter-coeval violence (bullying) is unnoticeably present in schools. Results show that 41.2% of teachers consider that inter-coeval violence (bullying) as a problem is present at school, while 40% do not consider that inter-coeval violence (bullying) as a problem is present at school.

**Key words:** teachers, inter-coeval violence (bullying), school environment.

#### SAŽETAK

Cilj rada je ispitati stavove nastavnika o međuvršnjačkom nasilju u korelaciji sa stvarnim prisustvom nasilja u školama. U radu se pošlo od hipoteze da je prema stavovima nastavnika nasilje prisutno kao problem u školi, ali da stavovi nastavnika i percepcija nastavnika o međuvršnjačkom nasilju nije u korelaciji sa stvarnim prisustvom nasilja u školama. Istraživanjem obuhvaćen uzorak od 83 nastavnika, od čega je 62 nastavnice i 21 nastavnik. U svrhu istraživanja konstruisan je mjerni instrument u formi upitnika. Upitnik je bio koncipiran sa pitanjima otvorenog i poluotvorenog tipa. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da 51,8% nastavnika smatra da je međuvršnjačko nasilje prisutno u školama.

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Dobijeni rezultati pokazuju da 41,2% nastavnika smatra da je međuvršnjačko nasilje kao problem prisutno u školi, dok 40% nastavnika ne smatra. Istraživanjem su se dobili podaci da stavovi nastavnika nisu u stvarnoj korelaciji sa problemom međuvršnjačkog nasilja u školi.

**Ključne riječi:** nastavnici, međuvršnjačko nasilje, školsko okruženje.

## INTRODUCTION

Inter-coeval violence or bullying is a phenomenon and social deviation that is pervasive in the daily lives of a large number of students, both in the Tuzla Canton and throughout the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The term inter-coeval violence (bullying) is a neologism composed of two words: inter-coeval and violence. The word inter-coeval is a compound word formed between two words: inter-(between) and coeval (peer), and represents a relationship, an action, an act that takes place between a pair of peers or a group of peers. In our domestic literature, the terms aggression, harassment, and abuse are most commonly used in the sense of the term violence, as well as English words mobbing and bullying. Olweus translated this term as violence too, Colloros as violence, bullying or abuse (Maleš, Stričević, 2005). Inter-coeval violence (bullying) is one form of social deviance as well as one form of behavioural disorder. A professional and broader social strategy aimed at preventing and treating behavioural disorders in children and young people presupposes, among other things, a clear definition, unambiguous classification, continuous recording and monitoring, and permanent documentation of the key features of this phenomenon (Uzelac, 2004; according to Bouillet and Uzelac, 2007 ). N. Myschker (1996, according to Koller-Trbović, 2003) under the term behavioural disorder, using the term disturbed behaviour, understands behaviours that, with respect to specific time, culture, and expected norms, are deviant and maladaptive or maladapted, conditioned organically and / or by reaction to the background and which, due to their multidimensionality, frequency and severity, weaken the potential for development, learning and work, which cannot be overcome or cannot be sufficiently overcome without special pedagogical-therapeutic assistance. Definitions of violence range from narrow definition, in terms of equating it with some of its forms, for example physical violence, to a broader definition that inclines from verbal violence to uncivilized behaviour, which most authors agree with (Martić, 2012).

Dictionaries have different definitions of violence:

- 1) the use of physical force to injure or hurt someone, or to damage something
- 2) the unlawful use of unlawful force or the effect obtained through the threat of such force,
- 3) violence or violent behaviour, or aggressive behaviour, is when an actor or perpetrator uses his or her body or object (including weapons) to inflict injury or pain on another person (Martić, 2012).

Inter-coeval violence (bullying) has been recognized as an important and serious social problem that we face daily in working with children. Undoubtedly, the school is the place with the highest prevalence of inter-coeval violence (bullying), regardless of the size of the school or the environment in which it is located.

Since the school is second in importance to the life of every child, right behind the family, it is necessary to make it a safe environment for every child in which he or she will strive to achieve the highest level of overall child development (Brajša-Žganec, Kotrla-Topi and Raboteg-Shari, 2009; according to Kruli and Velki, 2014). Research has shown that, if they feel safe and accepted in the school environment and accepted by their peers, students are more oriented towards socially acceptable behaviours, are more attuned to school and have more positive feelings. On the other hand, if the problem is not noticed on time, the consequences for the child can be very serious (Wentzel, 2003; according to Kruli and Velki, 2014). The incidence or frequency of inter-coeval violence varies significantly in research results from country to country, ranging from 9% to 54% (Nansel et al., 2004; Dake, Price and Telljohann, 2003; Mazur and Malkowska, 2003; Due et al.; 2005; according to Sesar, 2011). Inter-coeval violence (bullying) usually occurs in grades 4 through 8 of primary school (Bilić and Karlović, 2004). Girls are more likely to be abused by both boys and girls, while boys are predominantly abused by their own gender. Boys between the ages of 8 and 11 are more likely to act violently on their own than as members of a group, while boys over the age of 11 are more likely to commit group violence (Rigby, 2002). In contrast to the direct forms of violent behaviour whose incidence decreases with age, the incidence of relational forms of inter-coeval violence (bullying) increases with age (Rivers and Smith, 1994, according to Rajhvan-Bulat, Ajduković, 2012). The teacher is a person recognized by society and the education authorities as being qualified for the education and upbringing of children, youth and adults, and as such is responsible for the entire educational process. The teacher works not only to achieve certain results in work and learning, but also to encourage and develop a number of positive traits of his/her students. The teacher accomplishes social goals and educational tasks, providing students with theoretical and practical knowledge, forming their positive outlook on the world, developing their character and personality traits, as well as social activity (Gordon, 2001).

The aim of the study is to examine the attitudes of teachers and associates towards inter-coeval violence (bullying) in correlation with the actual presence of violence in schools. The study proceeds from the hypothesis that, according to the attitudes of teachers, violence is present as a problem at school, but that teachers' attitudes and teachers' perceptions of inter-coeval violence (bullying) do not correlate with the actual presence of violence in schools.

## **RESEARCH MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### **Sample of respondents**

The study included a sample of 83 teachers, of which 62 were female teachers and 21 were male teachers. The highest percentage of teachers is between 31-40 years old (45.8%). The research sample consisted of teachers from six primary schools in the four municipalities of the Tuzla Canton: Dobož Istok, Gračanica, Tuzla and Živinice. The primary schools surveyed are: Primary School Klokotnica, Primary School Brijesnica Velika, First Primary School Gračanica, Primary School Malešići, Primary School Kiseljak and First Primary School Živinice. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by gender and age.

Table 1: Gender and age of respondents

Gender		Age of respondent				Total
		20-30	31-40	41-50	51 or more	
Male	N	0	8	4	9	21
	%	0.0%	38.1%	19.0%	42.9%	100.0%
Female	N	4	30	18	10	62
	%	6.5%	48.4%	29.0%	16.1%	100.0%
Total	N	4	38	22	19	83
	%	4.8%	45.8%	26.5%	22.9%	100.0%

### Method of conducting research

The research was conducted by the method of random selection of teachers in primary schools. A form on the voluntary consent of the teacher to participate in the research was signed for the research. In the empirical part of the research, the test method was used. The research technique used is a survey. The survey collected data on the current state and occurrence of inter-coeval violence (bullying) in primary schools in the Tuzla Canton area. Teachers completed the questionnaire individually, for which 10 minutes were provided. The completing of the questionnaire was anonymous, and it should have contributed to the objectivity of the answers.

### Measuring instrument

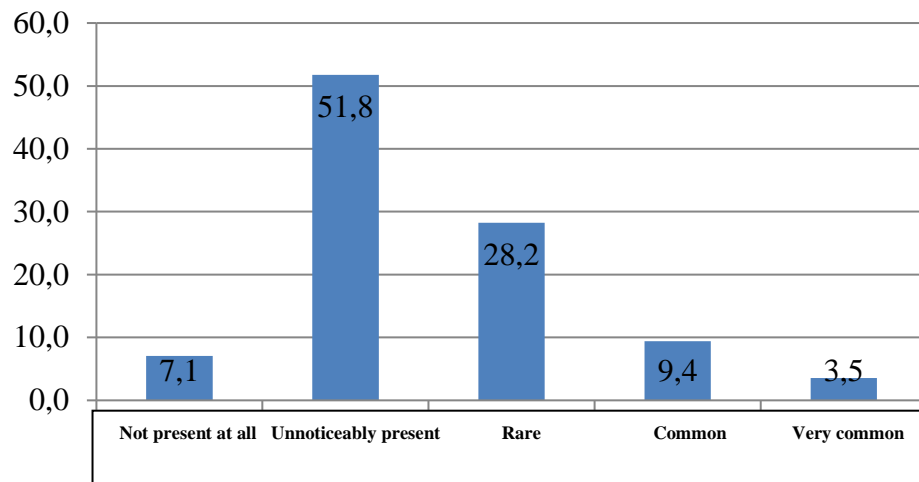
For the purpose of this study, a measuring instrument was constructed in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed with open and semi-open-ended questions. The survey questionnaire for teachers is composed of 6 questions. The variables in the questionnaire were related to: the presence of inter-coeval violence (bullying) in the school where the teacher works, cooperation with the Centre for Social Work, and the recognition of inter-coeval violence (bullying) as a problem.

### Method of data processing

Statistical data processing was performed with the following statistical values: percentages (%), frequency (f), arithmetic mean (M), standard deviation (SD), hi-square test, Spearman's correlation coefficient. The results of the analysis are presented numerically and graphically using numerical series, rank lists, tables and graphs. The "SPSS software package - version 16" was used to calculate the statistics.

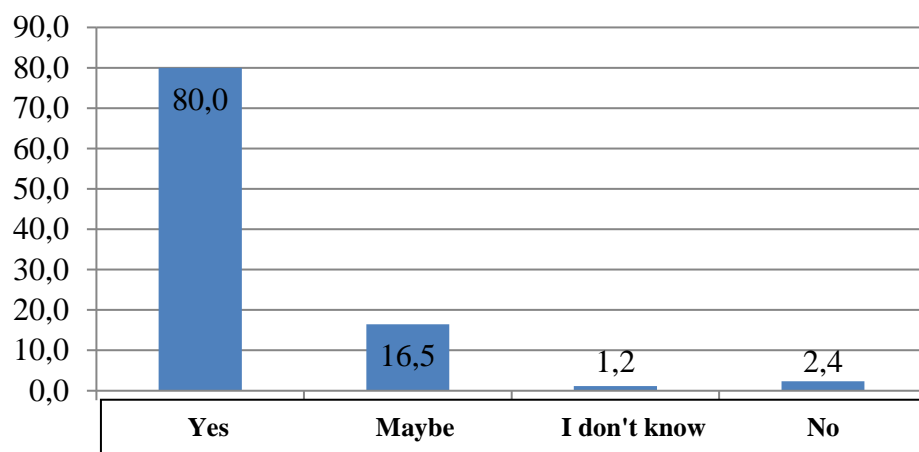
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the survey will first be presented graphically, according to the questions in the survey questionnaire that had the most frequent answers. The questions presented on the graph provided answers on a Likert-type scale.



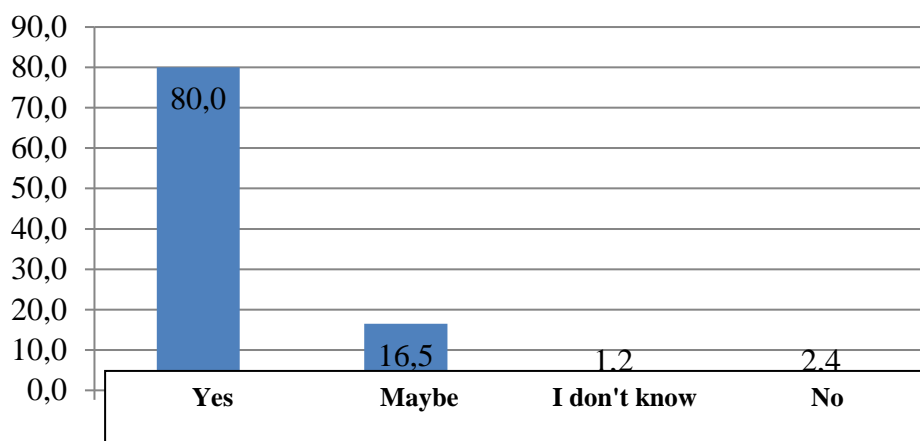
Graph 1: How much is inter-coeval violence (bullying) present at your school?

Graph 1 shows that 51.8% of teachers think that inter-coeval violence (bullying) is unnoticeably present in schools, 28.2% of teachers think that it is rare, 9.4% of teachers think that it is common, 7.1% of teachers think that it is not present at all and 3.5% of teachers think that inter-coeval violence (bullying) is very common in schools.



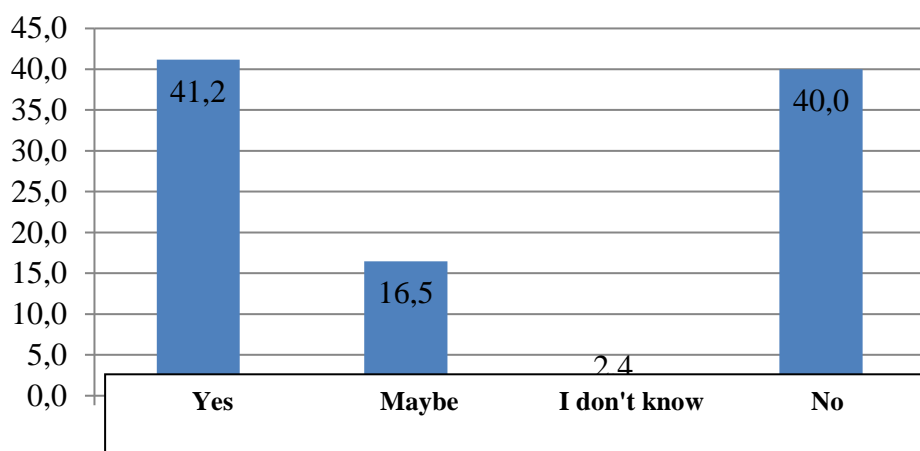
Graph 2: Is there cooperation with the Centre for Social Work regarding the prevention of inter-coeval violence (bullying) at your school?

Graph 2 shows that when it comes to the need for more active cooperation with Centres for Social Work in terms of prevention of inter-coeval violence (bullying), 80% of teachers' answers were affirmative.



Graph 3: Do you think there is a need for more active cooperation with the Centre for Social Work when it comes to preventing inter-coeval violence (bullying)?

The results obtained in Graph 4 show that 41.2% of teachers consider that inter-coeval violence (bullying) as a problem is present at school, while 40% do not consider that inter-coeval violence (bullying) as a problem is present at school. The set variable provided fairly uniform answers when it comes to teachers' attitudes towards the presence of violence as a problem at the school where they work.



Graph 4: Do you think that inter-coeval violence (bullying) as a problem is present at your school?

In order to test the research hypothesis regarding the relation between teachers' attitudes and the actual presence of school violence, Spearman's correlation coefficient will be applied. The results obtained are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation of teachers' perceptions of inter-coeval violence (bullying) and its actual presence

Variables		A	B
How much is inter-coeval violence (bullying) present at your school (students)	r	1	-.13
	p	.	.23
How much is inter-coeval violence (bullying) present at your school (teachers)	r	-.13	1
	p	.23	.

Legend: A - How much is inter-coeval violence (bullying) present at your school (students); B - How much is inter-coeval violence (bullying) present at your school (teachers)

Table 2 shows the results of the correlation analysis. The table data shows that there is no correlation between teachers' perceptions of inter-coeval violence (bullying) at school and the presence of inter-coeval violence (bullying). Based on the results of the correlation analysis, a working hypothesis of the research is accepted, which reads "It is assumed that teachers' attitudes and teachers' perceptions of inter-coeval violence (bullying) are not correlated with the actual presence of violence at schools." Thus, teachers' perceptions are not consistent with the actual presence of inter-coeval violence (bullying), that is, inter-coeval violence (bullying) often goes unnoticed by teachers, and this is certainly one of the major problems in the application of an adequate societal response to this socio-pathological phenomenon in society. Observing the safety of children in particular places at school; children are least likely to feel safe in the classroom while the teacher is absent, in front of other children who do not usually jump in to help the victim, and then on their way to and from school, and in the toilet. A large British-German study has pointed out that the schoolyard is the place where violence (bullying) is most common (Wolke et al. 2001, Dejanović et al. 2003). Earlier research has shown that the reason for the frequent violence in some places in the school is the reduced supervision of adults in these places. Olweus (1998) emphasizes the importance of a support system for children and an on-call teacher during school recess and emphasizes the extraordinary role of teachers in dealing with violence (bullying) at schools (Olweus, 1994, according to Flader, 2007). Some schools also monitor violence (bullying) at school by the presence of on-call teachers in the school corridors, and some by video surveillance cameras that allow a retrospective view of events (Stevens et al., 2001, according to Žunić-Cicvarić and Cicvarić, 2009). Bearing in mind several types of violence (bullying), the community must make special efforts to monitor both children who are victims of violence (bullying) and bullies, and also to implement prevention programs (Kim et al., 2005, according to Trabonja, 2010). Prevention programs targeting school violence (bullying) can reduce violent behaviour and their consequences.

## CONCLUSION

According to the results, it can be concluded that intensive work is needed with teachers and professional staff in schools, because despite the perception of students and the actual presence of inter-coeval violence (bullying) in schools, teachers feel that the problem is not so pronounced.

The research confirmed the hypothesis that teachers' attitudes and teachers' perceptions of inter-coeval violence (bullying) do not correlate with the actual presence of violence (bullying) at schools. In order to inform and educate teachers about this complex socio-pathological phenomenon, seminars, workshops and panel discussions on this topic need to be organized. Thus, all teachers in schools would be required to attend these sessions in order to receive education and to get acquainted with the phenomenology of inter-coeval violence (bullying) and the real percentages. Verbal violence and psychological violence are a notable mention, because they seem "invisible", last longer before being discovered, but because of these facts they leave profound consequences that students later bear throughout their lives and that interfere with their daily functioning.

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