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PEER VIOLENCE IN SERBIA FROM THE STANDPOINT OF RESEARCHERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Abstract: The research of the problem of peer violence, i.e. bullying, has great theoretical and practical significance, because if it is frequently spoken about violence, the phenomenon can be prevented, thus avoiding serious consequences, threatening for child development. In the society where we live, violence is widespread. The increase of violence is manifested in schools, as well. This was the very reason made us focus on the study of this problem. Although it seems that bullying is a researched topic of a large body of domestic and foreign research, the issue is becoming more pressing.

The aim of the present paper is to review research papers on peer violence, i.e. bullying, and to systematize knowledge in this field which would result in the creation of guidelines for practical work. In this review we used the services of Serbian Library Consortium for Coordinated Acquisition - KOBSON in order to browse and investigate research papers. The search included articles published in the period between 2000 and 2014. Investigation included a great number of papers but 60 of them were used for the present paper. A qualitative research was conducted in which content analysis was used as a procedure of investigation. Concerns about bullying have intensified demands to explain the problem and to take measures to resolve it. It is necessary that all schools implement various programs and projects whose objectives are teaching non-violent communication, reducing violence in schools as well as the activation of children and youth. As a consequence, peer violence can be decreased and prevented by suppressing what drives it and by changing the motives causing it.

Keywords: research, prevention, problems, school, pupils, peer violence, bullying.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

Every day, media provide reports illustrating increasingly more brutal forms of bullying, brutal beatings and gang wars. Violence is widespread in schools and most students have experience with peer violence. The question often arises how is it possible that there is violence in schools and what is it that leads to children get among themselves beaten, insulted, humiliated, etc. Different answers are offered to these questions, among them that violence is present everywhere around us, especially in the media, in different contents that are offered to children, that children have developed a kind of insensitivity to violence, implying that violence is an integral part their lives. Kids see violence at home, at school, on television, they see that sometimes through violent reactions a goal can quickly be reached, i.e. they can get out of a conflict situation as winners and thus get what they want. Are children becoming more violent, or is it that we deal with the problem of peer violence more openly and talk

louder about this social phenomenon? Experts are faced with this and a series of questions have been raised that need to be resolved.

The complexity of the issue of bullying is the subject many researchers have been dealing with for over three decades, intensively studying prevalence, forms, ways of manifestations, causes and consequences of bullying. Although there is general agreement that school violence is a serious problem, there are is single theoretical or operational definition. Peer violence is usually defined as persistent, repeated and unwanted behaviour that involves the use of negative actions (Glumbić Žunic and Pavlović, 2008). It is any psychological or physical violent behaviour that is directed to children by their peers, which is done for the purpose of injury.

In studying school violence, it is necessary to take into account the social context. The problem of bullying in schools should be dealt with by the entire society, having in mind that its institutions, families and other social groups can make a significant contribution to the fight against violence. Violence among students in the school must be given adequate attention and treatment. Community response to violence among students in schools must be effective and adequate. It is necessary to act in a comprehensive awareness-raising manner emphasising that any form of violence is prohibited, along with any other form of degrading treatment of children. Educational institutions should have as their priority the prevention of bullying, they should educate staff, pupils and parents, strive to build a safer environment, to greater implementation of resolution of existing program in practice and to re-socialization of children perpetrators of violence in the community.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present paper analyzes the research papers in which theoretical and practical aspects of problem of bullying are treated. In this review we used the services of Serbian Library Consortium for Coordinated Acquisition - KOBSON in order to browse and investigate research papers. Review and analysis included available electronic literature in the period from April to June 2015. In order to ensure a wider coverage of literature, the search included the following keywords: violence, bullying, violent behaviour, bullying in the school environment, victims of bullying, bullying risk factors, prevention of bullying. We searched the literature in the Serbian language. The criteria for selecting research papers were as follows: that at least one variable relates to bullying and includes a population of children and / or youth; at the same time for the purposes of this study the sample of papers was limited to those published after 2000. The analysis included a large number of works, but for the purposes of this study 60 review and research papers (most influential) were singled out that dealt with the theoretical and practical aspects of peer violence.
We analyzed each work as a whole and from the point of the subject it treated. Articles are classified in following categories: (1) Definition of bullying; (2) Risk and protective factors of bullying; (3) Bullying in school and the school environment, (4) Victims of bullying and (5) Prevention of bullying.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. Conceptual definition of bullying - This group consists of 11 papers dealing with different approaches to the conceptual definition, characteristics, forms and ways of manifestation of bullying. The starting point for consideration of the phenomenon of bullying or victimization

of students in school is evaluating ways in which the phenomenon is manifested and how it spreads. Already at this stage, both researchers and practitioners are faced with difficulties that reflect the complexity and multidimensionality of the phenomenon itself. They meet with various forms of violence, whose picture changes with regard to gender and age, as well as with different roles in bullying. All the authors of analyzed papers agree in regard to the fact that in modern literature there are many definitions of bullying and that it is therefore not possible to speak of a universal and generally accepted definition of this term. There are also numerous terminological and conceptual overlaps in the conceptual definition of aggression, violence and bullying. Popović – Ćitić (2007) analyzes the definition of the concept of bullying from the standpoint of a number of different aspects. Legal science defines the problem of violent behaviour in children and adolescents in terms of criminal and misdemeanour behaviour. Criminological sciences define violent behaviour in children and adolescents in terms of a particular type of crime that is referred to as juvenile delinquency. In the field of medical disciplines, violent behaviour in children and youth is seen within the diagnostic categories of behavioural disorders, while psychological disciplines use the terms violent and aggressive behaviour synonymously and discuss them within the syndrome of externalized and internalized behaviour. Violent behaviour can be defined as intentional and repetitive expression of physical or verbal forms of aggression for the purpose of causing physical injury, causing psychological pain and suffering or exercise control and power over another person (Davidović, 2012; Popović Ćitić, 2006; Savić and Knežić, 2007). In their work Glumbić and Žunić Pavlović (2008), emphasize within their definition three important elements: duration, negative practices and unequal power relations. Thus, bullying is to be distinguished from the instrumental aggression which is carried out in a short period of time or reactive aggression, which is a direct response to negative action. Only in situations where reactive aggression takes the form of repeated reaction to victimization, one can speak of a reactive type of peer violence (Bazić, 2013).

When we talk about bullying and violence in schools, a term that is frequently encountered in domestic and foreign professional literature is the term bullying. In the papers written by the following authors: Glumbić and Žunić Pavlović (2008), Đorić (2009) and Sinobad (2005), the term bullying is used in such a way to imply more emphasized aggression towards weaker, where the attacker and the attacked party can be an individual and a group. There is no word in Serbian language which would completely match the sense of the word bullying, and it is most often translated as harassment, bullying or violence. Based on these determinations Đorić (2009) concludes that bullying and violence forms of aggression which partly overlap. Physical attacks that are not repeated and / or where there is no imbalance of power would not be classified within violence or bullying, but only as aggressive behaviour. Repeated forms of psychological and social abuse belong to bullying, and not to violence. Thus, in such determination of school violence, it is not limited to the phenomenon of bullying and the use of the term violence is used in a broader sense. In their works Bazić (2013), Glumbić and Žunić Pavlović (2008) and Popović Ćitić (2006 b) declared that the most common forms of peer violence are the following: verbal, physical and relational type. The most common forms of verbal violence are as follows: threats, name calling, insults, ridicule, teasing, unpleasant comments, etc. Physical violence includes: hitting, kicking, hair pulling, pushing, slapping, spitting, biting, etc. Relational violence is directed to the exclusion of a certain individual from peer groups, usually the using threats or spreading rumours (Bazić, 2013; Glumbić and Žunić Pavlović, 2008; Mentus, 2008; Đorić, 2009).

In his work Đorić (2009) highlights the survey results indicating that there are differences among children who experience violence, the perpetrators of violence and children who experience violence, but those children experiencing violence manifest it themselves, having in mind their gender. Boys are involved in bullying more than girls, regardless of their role in the bullying (Glumbić and Žunić Pavlović, 2008). However, it turned out that, when it comes to exposure to violence, the differences between boys and girls decrease. Boys are more often the perpetrators of direct forms of violent behaviour, while girls more often use relational aggression and indirect abuse (Đorić, 2009; Florić Knežević, 2008). Hitting and threats are forms of violence which are more common in boys, while gossiping and taking personal belongings are forms of violent behaviour which is more characteristic for girls (Glumbić and Žunic Pavlović, 2008).

3.2. Risk and protective factors of bullying – five papers are classified within this category. Risk factors are factors that predict increased risk and increase the probability of occurrence and development of peer violence; protective factors, on the other hand, refer to factors that provide resistance to risk factors and act in the direction of reduction of probability that peer violence will occur.

Nedimović and Biro (2011) listed several groups of factors in their work that are considered as risks for violent behaviour: family and genetic factors, impaired social cognition, socio-economic status of the family, interpersonal influences, belonging to a group of peers with problem behaviour, the impact of mass media and wider cultural factors. In their approach, Polovina and Đerić (2009) and Maksimovic et al (2008) search for the essence of the phenomenon of bullying, considering physical characteristics, personality traits and characteristics of social behaviour of students in relation to their peers. Violent students are physically stronger, have a low level of anxiety, but also a high level of aggression and social intelligence. Numerous studies were dealing with the relation between gender and bullying. Some researchers report the results indicating that boys even at preschool years tend to be more inclined to the manifestation of violence than girls, leading to manifestation of serious behavioural problems in children. When we talk about risk factors specific to the occurrence of violence in children, numerous studies have dealt with the influence of education and the conditions of growing up. Popović Ćitić (2007) and Nedimović and Biro (2011) have identified several groups of family risk factors that are considered basic or essential by majority of authors. These are as follows: ineffective parenting, family functioning, family structure, parental psychopathology and neglect and child abuse. Research also suggests that certain ineffective parenting skills are in direct correlation with appearance and maintenance of aggression and violent behaviour in children and adolescents. These are the following: harsh and inconsistent discipline measures, low parental control and supervision, as well as the low level of positive engagement of parents. The children whose parents do not establish clear boundaries in relation to violent behaviour towards peers and adults, and children whose parents are themselves prone to expressing aggression, tend to increase aggression of a child, and thus increasing the risk of later subsequent behaviour. Family functioning is a domain including separation or divorce of parents, family conflicts and domestic violence. Compared to peers who grow up in intact functional families, children from families in which the parents are divorced, tend to leave school two to three times more frequently, they are inclined to delinquency and make friends with delinquent peers. An important factor is the one that refers to the parental emotional warmth. Children whose parents are at a low level on the dimension of parental attitude warmth, whose parents are emotionally insensitive to the child's needs and who offer little emotional support, attention and interest in the child, are

more frequently disobedient, aggressive and show behavioural problems. Certain features of family structure are associated with an increased risk of manifestation of violent behaviour and delinquency. These are as follows: family size, birth order and parental status. Large families, i.e. families with a large number of members are associated with a predisposition to violent behaviour in children and youth. Growing up with a single parent, i.e. only with one's mother is associated with a lack of acceptance of authority and violent behaviour in children. The correlation may also be associated with and conditioned by male sex, low socio-economic status of the family and living in urban areas. Along with these additional factors, reconstructed family structures do not have the strength to protect children from possible behavioural problems. Children of parents who have psychopathological problems exhibit a higher rate of emotional and behavioural difficulties than children of parents who do not have such problems. The forms of psychopathology of parents associated with increased risk of the emergence of violent behaviour in children include the following: drug-addiction of parents, depression in the mother and antisocial personality disorder parents. In any case, the effects of parental psychopathology may also be conditioned by genetic, psychological and environmental factors. Also, parental psychopathology may predispose a child to impulsivity, aggression and violent behaviour not only due to the effects of social factors or experiences, but also due to genetic factors.

Popović-Ćitić (2012) emphasizes the importance of attachment to school as a protective factor. School environment is an important area of socialization, in which students can establish strong prosocial connections, which is important for prevention of behavioural problems and bullying. The author states that the results of a series of empirical studies confirm that a weak attachment to school, expressed through poor connection of students with the school, teachers and academic goals that are promoted in the school environment, correlate with expression of violence at school. Children and adolescents, who are poorly connected to schools exhibit to a greater degree delinquent behaviour, more frequently participate in peer violence, tend to use psychoactive substance and drop out of school. According to the stated paper, attachment to school is a strong protective factor decreasing negative effects of risk factors and reducing likelihood of the emergence and development of various forms of bullying.

Identification and description of risk and protective factors, and an understanding of their dynamic interrelationships and interactions is very important because it provides a basis for designing preventive interventions and contributes to scientific foundation of prevention.

3.3. Peer violence in the school and school environment - We have included 13 papers in this category, dealing with bullying of students, i.e. peer violence in school environment. Given that in Serbia school is an environment in which different forms of bullying are most frequently manifested, there are many studies dealing with the forms and ways of peer violence manifestation.

Popadić and Plut (2007) conducted a study in 50 primary schools across Serbia, and judging by the statements of students, many of them had experienced some form of bullying (the percentage varies depending on a school ranging from 48% to 80%). Adult violence is reported by 35.7% of students and 42% of students have witnessed verbal aggression of pupils towards teachers. The most common forms of bullying were insults (45.6%) and intrigue (32.6%). Boys are slightly more likely than girls identified as bullies and more frequently were exposed to

violence of peers and adults. Older students are more likely to be violent and they more often reported adult violence, while age differences in exposure to violence were minimal.

Plut and Popadić (2007) in their study wanted to describe the reaction of students and adults working in school to violence. The results show that students react to violence inconsistently, and that their reaction repertoire involves constructive and non-constructive ways to respond to violence. Half of the students are in case of threat ready to seeks for help of others, but there are also those whose reactions would actually drive further violence. Every tenth student who is a victim of violence does nothing else but actually only suffers and conceals violence. Although adults themselves highly evaluate their readiness and ability to react to violence, the measures they take are not assessed as good by students.

Stanković Đorđević (2007) reported that teachers in schools recognized negative phenomena related to the behaviour of children. An increase is obvious in violent behaviour and aggressiveness of children in schools. The results indicate the necessity of introducing programs of prevention of violence, which should enable the establishment of quality relations between children and adults and peers. Trifunović (2007) presents the results of research dealing with characteristic forms and manifestation of peer violence and trend of unadjusted behaviour of primary school pupils. Development of intolerable behaviour is a consequence of not only developmental changes and difficulties of an individual, but also of social relationships, influence and actions of school.

Gašić Pavišić (2009) point to the need for academic training and professional development of students preparing for teacher professions in Serbia to include contents and activities related to introduction to the theoretical insights and concrete data on violence in schools, and introducing prevention programs and intervention strategies. Such an approach to the preparation of teachers for implementation of violence prevention program is more effective than their additional training, i.e. professional development conducted when they already start working in schools.

The research results stated by Popović Ćitić (2009) show that the manifestation of violent behaviour is not highly represented in the population of polled students included in the sample of their research. Milder forms of such behaviour have been identified, rather than those more serious forms of peer violence. Boys manifest more violent behaviour than girls, but girls are often the victims of such behaviour. The manifestation of mild forms of violent behaviour increases with the age of respondents, while the degree of manifestation of severe forms is not correlated with age. The number of respondents who were victims of violent behaviour decreases with age.

Polovina and Đerić (2009) conducted a study examining the relationship regarding exposure of students to different forms of bullying in elementary school. These are, before all, theft of belongings, physical injuries, coercion, ridicule, avoidance, and the like. The authors found correlation between these forms of school violence and the level of education of students' parents.

Tomonjić et al (2009) point out that in order to conceive a high quality and functional program for protection of children from violence, abuse and neglect, it is necessary to screen the conditions and state of affairs in a particular school. According to the obtained data planning of prevention programs and monitoring of their efficacy should be conducted. The research

results show that 32.35% of students exposed to violence and 15.3% of the students express violent behaviour. Many students have already developed adjustment to violence, there is insufficient knowledge in regard to appearance violence. What has also been noticed is the restraint to honestly answer questions related to this phenomenon, due to fear of consequences. Students were also asked to give suggestions on how school violence can be prevented and stopped.

The research results of Kodžopeljić et al (2010) show that around 43.5% of the students were subjected to bullying during training in primary and secondary schools in Serbia. Furthermore, about 11% of the students were victims of repeated or frequent bullying. Among high school students there is significantly higher percentage of those who have never experienced violence. The most common form of bullying both in primary and in secondary schools is verbal violence. The high school students are more likely to react to violence: the percentage of those who would react in any way is higher among high school students.

Gojković and Vukićević (2011) confirmed in their research that there is a high degree of physical and verbal violence among secondary school students and that physical violence is mainly manifested by boys and verbal and social by girls. It was found that bullying significantly correlated with previous victimization.

Nedimović (2013) conducted a research whose aim was to investigate how successfully students recognize different forms of bullying as violent peer interaction (physical, insults, rumours, threats, extortion and destruction of property, sexual harassment). The author also wanted to examine whether there is a connection between the rate of success in recognition of certain forms of bullying, on the one hand, and gender, school grade, school success and setting. The results show that students differently successfully recognize particular forms of bullying as a violent peer interaction. They most successfully recognize sexual (95.0%) and physical bullying (91.9%) and are least successful in recognizing machinations (61.4%) and insults (51.4%) as a form of bullying. Girls are significantly more effective in recognizing sexual harassment as a form of bullying than boys, and students in lower grades are significantly more effective in recognizing machinations as a form of bullying compared to students in higher grades.

Mikanović and Popović (2013) investigated the presence of informal violence in schools in Serbia. The authors have identified a representation: a rumour, provocation, segregation, marginalization, abuse of media and media insults. These are the most common forms of non-formal school violence. The research established the connection of the attitudes of students in the final grades of primary school towards certain forms of informal violence and academic achievement and involvement in school extracurricular activities.

Popadić et al (2013) searched for an answer to the following question: to what an extent are teachers sensitive to the problems of their students. A significant but low correlation between teachers concerns about violence in schools and threats to students from the same school was found. Teachers are most sensitive to verbal and physical violence, but they to a lesser extent notice the problems that are caused by other forms of violence. A large number of teachers (40%) do not accept that the school has problems with violence. Greater sensitivity is shown by teachers who are more committed to their profession and whose role is such that demands greater involvement.

Čolović et al (2014) point out that the tendency towards violent behaviour is manifested both through direct physical aggression and the inciting of violence against peers. In order to intimidate, ridicule and humiliate the victim, these students may resort to the various forms of psychological or emotional violence, such as threats, gossiping, teasing and calling names. As for the students who are victims of bullying, most of them are passive victims of violence, with no possibility or desire to defend themselves. Victims exhibit maladaptive response mechanisms to violence.

3.4. Victims of bullying – six papers belong to this category. Why children and adolescents become victims of bullying is an issue that is discussed in the framework of different theoretical models and research projects, including various aspects and factors of exposure to bullying of children and adolescents. None of the theoretical models gives a complete picture of exposure to violent behaviour. Victims of violence are students who are repeatedly and continuously exposed to negative actions taken by one or more students and can be grouped into a few typical categories that are most commonly used. Mršević (2013) points out that typology can be best formed when the reasons due to which some children become victims of bullying are known. Insights into these reasons are best obtained if they are offered by bullies themselves; in other words, it is best to look into what let them decide who to attack and how. Basically weakness and being different are identified are reasons for bullying, and they are two basic categories of characteristics of peer violence victims. Nedimović and Biro (2013) point out that most attention and interest was paid to determining and defining the typical characteristics and traits of the abuser, and the characteristics of the victims are much less explored. In their paper, the authors point out in particular the results of previous studies which suggest that there are a number of characteristic features, or factors affecting that particular child becomes a victim of violence. Thus, students who are victims of bullying can be divided into two groups: passive (subject to violence) victims and the provocative victims. Passive victims are numerous and their characteristics are that they are cautious, sensitive, quiet people in situations when a bully attacks react salaries and dragging. These are students who are often physically weaker than other children who have low self-esteem and high levels of depression, which combined with being afraid of other children gives a picture of the person who is insecure and who will not fight back if someone attacks him/her. In the school context, the victims are often isolated in their relations with their peers, i.e. they do not belong to any social network. Glumbić et al (2009) in their study made a great contribution to scientific research dealing with the so called aggressive victims, who do not fit into the traditional roles of perpetrator and victim of bullying. Their work showed an atypical profile of a ten year old boy who participates in bullying as aggressive victim.

Papers written by Glumbić et al (2007) and Žunić Pavlović and Glumbić (2010) deal with handicapped children as victims of bullying. The authors point out that there is not much information on peer violence against children with disabilities, but that apparently disabled children are at greater risk of being bullied than children in the general population. They also emphasize the importance of prevention and reduction of bullying within the programs that are in a specific way conceived for the children with disabilities. Dimoski (2012) also dealt with the problem of suffering from peer violence by children with disabilities in school. Family has an important role to play in the process of overcoming the consequences of peer violence on the victim. One of the ways of cooperation between school and family is advising the family and warning it of a child who suffers violence at school. The author provides practical guidelines for advisory work with the family.

3.5. Prevention of bullying - this category includes 27 papers. School has the opportunity to ensure early prevention and reduce violence among students, but it is equally important that it has possibilities for the students to develop positive social behaviour, both in children who suffer violence, and for children who commit violence. The following papers describe different prevention programs, interventions and activities, examples of good practice, but also a number of proposals and suggestions for successful implementation of prevention programs in school conditions: Beljanski (2009), Gašić Pavišić (2004, 2006, 2009), Dedaj (2013a), Jerković (2010), Zdravković (2007), Zdravković et al. (2010, 2011), Kojić and Marković (2011), Maksimović and Jovanović (2013), Ninković (2010, 2011), Pavlović and Žunić Pavlović (2008), Petakov Vucelja (2010), Plut et al. (2012), Popović (2012, 2014) Sretenović (2013), Stanisavljević Petrović and Cvetković (2012). The experience gained according to applied programs shows that the most successful approach to preventing school violence is the one that includes all the people in the school, students and staff, which starts early, at preschool age, which permeates the entire educational program and is not limited to individual students or individual subject matters or classes, which focuses on building a positive climate in the school, which does not tolerate violence, while positive behaviour is encouraged and rewarded. Prevention programs are more successful when they have the support of teachers, parents and social environment in which the school is located. Each school has to choose between violence prevention program that suits its needs and circumstances in which it operates. In order to successfully introduce and implement such a program all the participants in educational work should be given their own responsible roles; this task should not be delegated only to individual teachers or other professionals in school. The role of teachers is particularly emphasized in the implementation of prevention programs which can be realized by designing activities of educational work in class community whose aim is to continuously enhance pro social behaviour to be achieved by the development of empathy and altruism, a sense of confidence and self-esteem, and acquisition of skills of non-violent communication. In the works of Popovic (2010, 2011a, 2011b) the necessity to prevent violence is pointed out, and special attention is paid to the importance of the close relationship between family and school. Presenting data on the separate roles of the family and the school, the author considers the necessity of uniting their interests and implementing joint activities, in order to ensure prevention when the emergence of violence among students is in question.

Petakov Vucelja (2012) and Dedaj (2013 b) point out that the importance of the participation of experts has often been unjustifiably forgotten, i.e. those who are often the initiators of numerous activities aimed at developing necessary skills among students and teachers in order to develop and support peaceful ambient we seek for. These activities are as follows: teamwork, creative problem solving, communicating freely with respect and understanding, self-confident expression of opinion and conflict resolution in active and non-violent way, etc. The works of Petakov Vucelja (2013) and Jovanović Kranjec (2011) focus on the prevention of bullying that is considered according to realization of the role, objectives and tasks of expert teams to protect students from violence.

Preventive role of the school refers to specific corrective actions for prevention and elimination of negative phenomenon of bullying at school. For a school to successfully accomplish its preventive role, it is essential to fulfil its comprehensive and educational function. It is necessary to pay more attention to monitoring and observing the behaviour and activities of students, making clear rules and regulations of conduct, as well as their implementation, advisory work with students, organizing leisure activities, cooperation between family and school. It is very important that the institutions act preventively and

promptly, because any delay in resolving problem can lead to its growth, and to increased development of bullying.

Conclusion

Experts from different fields who work with children should be aware of the signs of possible victimization or violent behaviour in children and adolescents, especially children belonging to the group of high-risk children, such as children with disabilities or children who have the characteristics of a child who frequently experiences violence and who is sometimes violent towards other children. The number of students involved in bullying, however, is not negligible. On the contrary, it has been spoken in favour of the need to take actions to deal with the issue and prevent violence. The schools themselves do not always have enough strength and available options to manage this issue. Parents, too, are not always sufficiently sensitive to this issue, and often are not even able to resist the destructive, even aggressive influences of society on their families and their children. Therefore, we believe that any investigation of this problem is a good starting point and the basis for all other activities to follow in order to combat this phenomenon.

Based on the data obtained according to the current survey on peer violence, i.e. bullying, it can be concluded that it is necessary to work against all forms of violence among children in school and in the first place, we need to take educational and pedagogical actions to prevent verbal violence, which is represented in the schools to highest degree. It is necessary to conduct training and permanent education of teachers and other agents on the characteristics of bullying, short- and long-term consequences, forms of intervention that are effective in reducing bullying, and that would simultaneously include teachers, students and parents. In addition, society on the whole should work to increase public awareness about bullying and consequences of bullying through various forms of public campaigns.

The present analysis shows that the largest number of works deals with theoretical aspects of bullying and bullying prevention programs. We note that there are no works that deal with the specific application and analysis of the performance of these programs in our schools. Also, there was a lack of papers dealing with opinions and competences of teachers to tackle the issue. Furthermore, it seems necessary to carry out quality research on the topic of bullying. Although there has been an expansion of research on the topic in recent years, there is still much to be learned about this problem.

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