

Regional Research

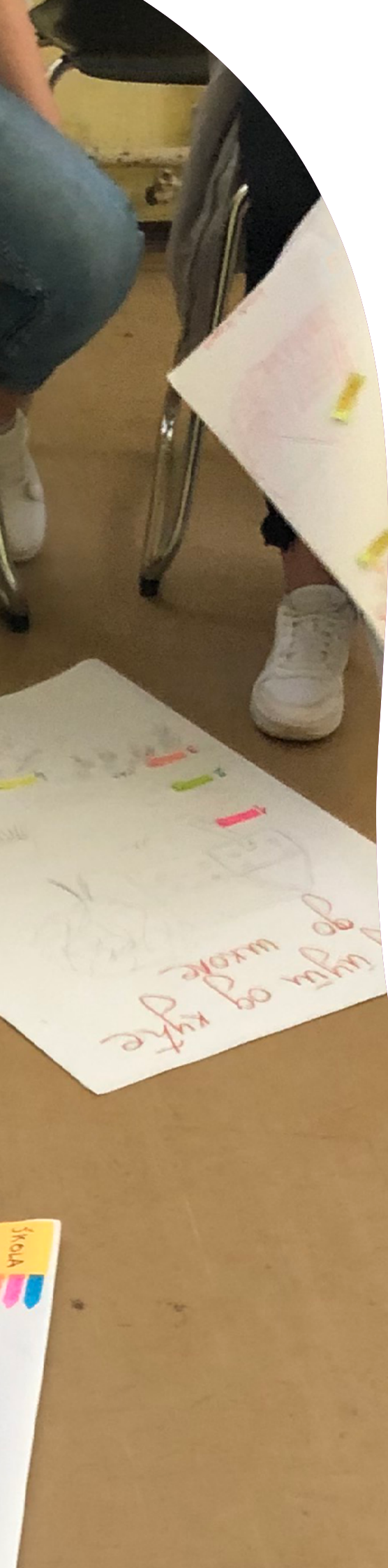
ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Country Report: Bosnia and Herzegovina

In partnership with: International Institute for Child Rights
and Development & Child Hub

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The research was conducted in two municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Banja Luka and Mostar. The research sample consisted of members of two day centres, Nova Generacija and Altruist, children from marginalized groups, professionals from these centres and the children's parents. In the sample of children from Banja Luka, there were 4 girls and 5 boys, and from Mostar, 5 girls and 6 boys. There were 6 female participants in the sample of adults from Mostar, out of which 4 were professionals and 2 were parents, while the sample of adults from Banja Luka consisted of 6 participants professionals: 3 men and 3 women. The research was mostly conducted in-person, following all measures prescribed by the Public Health Institute, with the exception of the adult group from Banja Luka, with whom we conducted online research due to the worsening COVID-19 situation.

Findings

- Most of these children feel labelled in their schools, based on a variety of grounds – the socio-economic status of their parents, how others perceive their behaviour – and as such they are both victims and perpetrators of peer violence. These children indicated a great distrust of the teachers who work with them, both as adults whom they would see as protectors, or someone who understands them. They feel safe in their homes and with their friends, as well as in the day centres they visit.
- Children know the types of violent behaviour quite well, but they do not report the violence that happens to them because they do not trust the system; they believe they would be labelled even more in such a situation.
- Adults feel that the system does not work properly. They pointed out that Bosnia and Herzegovina has well-developed legal acts covering all areas of child protection. Yet, they noted that the system does not work due to: lack of professional staff, and insufficient awareness of the importance of reporting and prosecuting all violence, not criminally, but in order to have the opportunity to work with professionals on the consequences of violence.
- The adults pointed out that children's distrust of teachers is based on the fact that if the child engaged in violence once, teachers label them and consider them the perpetrators of most of the violence in their schools. Most teachers don't consider that behaviour can change and that a child can learn to behave appropriately.

Conclusions & recommendations

1. Implementation of the Program of Secondary Prevention of Inadequate Behaviours in Children and Young People. This program aims to prevent socially unacceptable forms of behaviour through timely recognition of the behaviour and reactions in children which may, ultimately, lead to children in conflict with the law. This includes registering these forms of students' behaviours and reactions, as well as the development of various programs which would, with the help of school professionals and parents, modify their behaviour. This program was introduced in the Sarajevo Canton, and professional associates and teachers in primary schools in the Una-Sana Canton and Canton 10 are currently being trained in it.
2. Application of the Referral Mechanism of Support to Children in the schools in the Republic of Srpska. This is a mechanism by which teachers are required to continuously monitor all students and record certain behaviours and reactions which may indicate the development of various problems, both in behaviour and in mental health. Like the Program of Secondary Prevention, the Referral Mechanism is also a secondary prevention program, and it will be used to work with children at risk.
3. Application of the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Violence Against and Among Children, which exists in all entities, cantons of state and the Brčko District. This is a document that regulates the steps in registering violence against a child at school.
4. Application of the Protocol on the Procedure of Cases of Peer Violence among children in the educational system of the Republic of Srpska in schools to prevent violence among children.
5. Training of teachers focused especially on the development of their socio-emotional competencies; it is not enough for a teacher to recognize violent behaviour, they must be able to empathize in order to better react to cases of violence.

These recommendations point to the application of various programs and protocols that exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The complex organization of the state makes it nearly impossible to apply unique recommendations unilaterally in BiH. Hence, all programs and important documents that contribute to the prevention of violence against and among children have been highlighted. In BiH, various programs and teacher trainings have been implemented for 25 years, but in essence, it is not clear whether the situation, when it comes to peer violence, has improved. Therefore, this research report exclusively refers to the application of programs and protocols, which more than adequately cover the prevention of violence.

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1

Introduction

It is no longer possible to ignore the significant and widespread impact violence has on children. It influences children in the short and long term, and even across generations. Despite the three decades that have passed since the international community came together to launch the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Hollis, Marcy, Amboy and Kress (2016) found that over 1 billion, half of all children between the ages of 2 and 17, had experienced violence, abuse or neglect within the previous year. Violence against children happens in schools, homes, communities and across systems. In South East Europe, violence against children is pervasive.

Understanding that direct and indirect experiences of violence in childhood undermines our investments in children in health, education, and development, this research focuses on further understanding the social and gender norms impacting school-related (gender-based) violence (SRGBV), and the role of children in challenging these social norms.

For this research, Child Hub Europe partnered with Terre des hommes and the Institute for International Child Rights and Development to address this critical issue.



Methodological Overview: Overview of multi-country study

This study was conducted in South Eastern Europe, specifically in **Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania and Serbia.**

The purpose of the research was: to measure the social and gender norms impacting school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), and the potential role of children in challenging these social norms (RFP Child Hub).



2.1

Guiding Questions and Contextual Lens of Analysis

The following questions guided all aspects of the study, and were integrated into the study framework and relevant data collection instruments:

1. What do we know about the incidence and type of violence that children are facing in and around school in Southern and Eastern Europe, as well as the children that are most impacted by it?
2. What are the social and gender norms of school children, community members and school professionals related to violence against children?
3. What are the social and gender norms of school children, community members and school professionals related to gender-based violence against children?
4. What are the informal and formal mechanisms, child-led actions, community resources, values and services that protect children from violence and promote a child's well-being?
5. To what degree do children feel able to prevent or respond to violence (and GBV specifically) against themselves and their peers, and what ideas do they have for preventing and responding to violence?
6. How has children's experience of violence in and around school changed since COVID-19?

Note: due to measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection was temporarily suspended until it could be resumed in accordance with national and local requirements to ensure the safety of participants and researchers. To maintain the consistency and legitimacy of the data collection, the research questions remained the same, but additional contextual information provides clarity on data that refers to retrospective perspectives of what was occurring prior to pandemic policies and school closures, and any changes that have occurred as a result of lockdown measures. Some additional questions were added to explore the perception of the change in experiences of violence in schools and other educational experiences (including online, learning from home) that occurred as a result of COVID-19 measures.

In order to gather information on the current status and practice of violence against children, as well as on social norms, attitudes, practices and knowledge around violence against children, this study explored educational settings in addition to the full context of children's lives within which violence takes place.

This study focused on:

1. Girls' and boys' experiences and life stories (in general),
2. Educational settings (including formal and informal educational settings [in person, at a distance, online], for teachers, principals and fellow students),
3. The route to educational settings (including outdoor spaces, recreational areas, business areas, roads, etc.),
4. Formal and informal support services (including social services, state care and the judicial system),
5. Cultural values, beliefs and norms that shape children and adults' social and gender norms with respect to violence against children.
6. Children in exceptionally difficult circumstances, such as children with disabilities, children living on the street, migrant children, ethnic or religious groups, etc.

Research Methods and Approach

2.2

This is a mixed methodology study with a “qualitatively driven approach” (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015). It is both inductive and deductive, as well as exploratory, drawing on participatory methods. Using a variety of research instruments with groups of children and adults (see the table below), the researchers' understanding of children's lived realities gradually deepened. Further exploration of children's lives will yield stronger indications of social norms and practices, and will enable clearer direction for future programming and policy, rather than a process that reaches larger numbers of participants with less depth.

Within the participatory methodology, the focus of the instruments was to provide children and adults with a framework in which they could explore the violence that is taking place in children's lives. Rather than asking closed questions, researchers created the space for children to name what they perceive as violence, explain its prevalence and its impact on their daily lives, discuss their attitudes towards violence as well as the attitudes of their peers, parents and the broader community, and the impact of these attitudes. In addition, attention was given to creating space for children to identify strategies for prevention and support services, as well as for social change.

Researchers in each project country identified the most appropriate sites based on the sampling frame.

The research in Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted in two municipalities: Banja Luka and Mostar. The research sample consisted of children from marginalized groups – members of two Day centres, Nova Generacija and Altruist – professionals from these two centres and the children's parents. In the sample of children from Banja Luka, there were 4 girls and 5 boys, and from Mostar, 5 girls and 6 boys. There were 6 female participants in the sample of adults from Mostar, of which 4 were professionals and 2 parents, while the sample of adults from Banja Luka consisted of 6 participants: 3 men and 3 women.

The sampling frame aimed to include the following:

- **Children** aged 13–18 (approximately 30 children/site [2 groups of 10–15 children, one boy group and one girl group], in approximately 2–4 sites)
- **Adults**, including: parents, teachers, principals, other school professionals, community and religious leaders, social service providers and community members (approximately 15 people/site)

However, given the added complications associated with COVID-19 distancing protocols, the research was conducted in accordance with the decisions of the Public Health Institute of the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the beginning of September, when conducting research in Banja Luka, there could not be more than 5 participants in the group, with later measures allowing up to 10 participants. The children and facilitators had to wear facial masks and maintain a distance of 2 meters from one another, so that each person in the group had their own 4m² of space. The research was conducted in disinfected and ventilated rooms. As the epidemiological situation in BiH worsened in October, a focus group was conducted in Banja Luka online, using the Zoom application.

Methods conducted with Children and Adults

Children	Adults
Tool 1: Social Mapping- Part 1	Tool 7: Vignettes
Tool 2: Vignettes	Tool 8: Focus Group
Tool 3: Participative Ranking Methodology	
Tool 4: Social Mapping-Part 2 (Optional)	
Tool 5: Social Network Mapping	
Tool 6: Focus Group	

Note: due to COVID-related measures introduced during data collection, tools were adapted to fit one or both of the following formats:

Method 1: In person, respecting physical distancing

Method 2: Via smartphone or computer with internet connection, or remote participation

If it is not possible to safely bring together a small group of children while physically distancing, consider the following adaptations:

Online Video-Conferencing: in groups with Microsoft Teams, Zoom, WebEx, GoToMeeting, etc.

WhatsApp/Phone Calls: If children are unable to connect to a video-call app, consider using WhatsApp or audio-based group calls and/or individual calls to chat about maps.

Online via Zoom, Jam Board, Miro or other visual collaboration software

No internet and unable to meet in person: Co-create activity packages with children and adults that can be mailed to or safely dropped off at children's homes (with postage for them to return it, or a convenient drop-off location).

All efforts were made to conduct research in person to avoid the ethical complications of conducting distance-based research with children on violence.

Ethical Considerations

2.3

Research on sensitive subjects, such as violence against children, can cause unintended harm to participants, for example, if confidentiality is breached, informed consent is not obtained, or a group of people is stigmatized. Researchers need to be careful not to raise expectations, which can lead to mistrust of outsiders and disillusionment. Researchers also need to be cautious not to increase power imbalances that may cause a particular group to become vulnerable.

The research on violence may ask children and adults, even without direct questions concerning personal experience, to re-live painful and difficult trauma. For researchers working with children who may have suffered from violence, abuse, neglect and/or exploitation, there is a critical responsibility to "do no harm" in their interactions with children and youth.

The researchers in this study were trained to watch for signs of distress (both verbal and non-verbal) among children. They ensured that the environment within the activities remained respectful and supportive, and took time to speak with children who may have needed extra support outside of the activity. The name and contact details of a support worker, as well as emergency numbers and local reporting protocol, were listed on a flipchart at all times, enabling children to reach out for additional support on their own. Where a flipchart was not practical, handouts were given to young participants before each session. When, for example, a researcher saw that a young person required support, they were able to discuss this with the child and call a support person to request a personal visit be made to the community. The researcher was then able to follow-up with both the child and the support worker using appropriate child safeguarding protocol, as per the TdH Child Safeguarding Policy and national legislation.

Please see Appendix B for more on Ethical Research Protocols, including further ethical guidelines, recommendations and practices for working with children, informed consent and limited confidentiality procedures and considerations.

3

Country-Level Methodology

3.1 Research Team

The research team consisted of two members: Ivana Zečević, the lead researcher, and Nela Marinković, note taker.

3.2 Site Selection

The research was conducted at two locations: the Nova Generacija Day Centre in Banja Luka, and the Altruist Day Centre in Mostar. Both locations are privately owned homes where children stay and use the centres' services daily. These locations and centres were chosen to study how children from marginalized groups see peer violence, how and to what extent they experience it, how they behave in these situations, and what social norms are reflected when experiencing peer violence. Furthermore, we wanted to examine how these children perceive safety in the environment in which they are growing up and going to school, and whether they feel supported by their peers, teachers and other adults.

3.3 Participants

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the research conditions in that the required sample, i.e. number of children per group, was not possible to achieve due to government measures that reduced group size to 5 initially, with a gradual increase to 10. It is also important to note that due to fear of infection, some parents stopped sending their children to the day care centres, which also affected the sample.

Group size was determined by engaging the largest number of participants without compromising the depth of the research, for a team of researchers (1 to 2 people). In each research site, the researchers worked with 2 separate gender-specific groups of children and 1 separate group of adults.

The following individuals were included as participants:

- **Children** aged 13–18. In Banja Luka, 9 children participated, of which 4 were girls and 5 were boys. Boys and girls were 14–16 years old. There were 3 boys aged 14, 1 who was 15, and 1 who was 16. Four were in grade 9 of elementary school and 1 in grade 1 of high school. Amongst the girls, 1 was aged 14, 2 were 15, and 1 was 16. One was in grade 9, 2 were in grade 1 of high school, and 1 was in grade 2 of high school. All children are Serbs and citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were 11 participants in Mostar, of which 5 were girls and 6 were boys.

The girls were 14–16 years old, and the boys 12–14 years old. In the group of boys, 2 were 12, 2 were 13, and 2 were 14 years old. Two boys were in grade 7, 2 in grade 8, and 2 in grade 9. In the group of girls, 3 girls were aged 12, 1 was 13, and 1 was 14. Three were in seventh grade, 1 in eighth, and 1 in ninth grade. All children are Bosniaks and citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- **Adults**, including: parents, teachers, principals, other school professionals, community and religious leaders, social service providers, community members. There were 6 female participants in the adult group in Mostar: 4 professionals and 2 parents. Three professionals were employees of the Day Centre: 1 psychologist and 2 teachers by profession (1 of whom was a primary school teacher), and 2 mothers. In Banja Luka, we had 6 participants, 3 of whom were professionals (2 psychologists and 1 social worker), and 3 student volunteers.

Given the nature of the research, children aged 13–18 were selected as they have reached a developmental stage wherein they can understand the complexities of violence and the systems that influence it. Given the gendered nature of experiences of violence, we attempted to include an equal number of participants of both genders. Children on the gender-spectrum had the opportunity to choose to participate in the group they most closely identified with. Whenever possible, sensitivity to the gender of the group was matched with the gender of the researchers.

Sampling

3.4

The target population was children aged 13–18 years old in school in South and Eastern Europe. Choosing the appropriate school was limited by numerous pragmatic and sampling constraints. The research is exploratory in nature and the sampling strategy draws on convenience sampling, allowing researchers to choose schools that are accessible to them and the opportunity for schools to identify children who meet the criteria for inclusion in the study. Therefore, the schools were identified via convenience and purposive sampling, in order to select specific populations representing a diverse range of children in a diverse range of settings. This was set collaboratively by national researchers, but included schools representing urban or rural contexts, or schools with a high percentage of Indigenous, Migrant, or various ethnic groups and low income families. Schools could also be chosen on the basis of perceived high rates of violence, concerning gender-based issues.

It was of primary importance to work closely with schools, community organisations, and local government to ensure that research could be conducted with the same children and adults over the course of the research, to ensure that the same group of children moved through all the research tools identified, and thus researchers and participants could deepen their understanding as each tool progressed.

Sampling Children

The first step of sampling was determining that children from marginalized groups would be the focus of the study. Hence, we contacted our partner organization, Save the Children North West Balkans, which provided contacts for cooperating day centres bringing together children of upper and primary schools. These specific centres were located in Banja Luka and Mostar.

Sampling Adults

The adults who were part of the sample were professionals working with children in the day care centres, as well as teachers and parents. The COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible for us to adequately sample adults, due to a limited number of people allowed to be present and fear of infection. Furthermore, research with adults in Banja Luka was conducted online, which some adults did not feel comfortable with and hence, they did not participate.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted by making transcripts for each group of respondents, and a qualitative analysis of the obtained data was carried out.

3.5 Ethical Issues

Please also see Appendix B for more details on the Ethical Protocol.

Special note during COVID-19: As each local context during COVID-19 has rapidly changed for both children and project staff (for example, government restrictions on physical distancing were suddenly relaxed), it was clear that ethical protocols needed to be examined regularly (at each point of change).

Participation in the survey for each child was co-signed by the parent, and the children also gave their oral consent. The research circumstances were inhibited by the pandemic; some parents were afraid of potential infection and did not allow their children to participate in this research.

Research Tools: Adaptations and Reflections on their Implementation

3.6

The research was carried out with a sample of children from marginalized groups. Accordingly, we applied all the instruments required by the research, but we must note that our participants had a problem with certain questions during the discussions. These were all questions that required higher levels of reasoning and ideas about potential activities to reduce peer violence. Consequently, within each instrument, there were certain questions to which our participants could not give answers because they lacked the capacity to do so.

Limitations

3.7

The research limitations were exclusively related to sampling due to the declaration of COVID-19 measures. Therefore, the limitations are reflected in the number of participants, as initially, in Banja Luka, we could not have more than 5 participants per group, and also because some parents did not give consent due to fear of infection.

4

Violence Against Children in Schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country with a very complex structure of government. It consists of two entities: the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (10 cantons) and the Brčko District. BiH has 12 education systems. Precisely because of the complexity of the organization of BiH, the rate of peer violence is not unilaterally monitored, although there are documents used to monitor this type of violence.

These documents are:

1. Procedure Guidelines on Cases of Violence Against Children¹ (used in the Federation of BiH and the Brčko District, and each canton has its own protocol)
2. Procedure Guidelines on Cases of Violence, Abuse or Neglect of Children² (used in the Republic of Srpska)
3. Protocol on the Procedure of Cases of Peer Violence among Children and Young People in the Educational System of the Republic of Srpska³

These Protocols and Guidelines have an important role in the prevention of violence against children as they regulate the procedure of cases of violence against children, including peer violence, when it happens in or out of school. The protocols also regulate the recording of all forms of violence against children. In this way, preventive work in the field of peer violence is formally regulated. These records are very important for the prevention of peer violence, but we did not find much information about it, except for one report by the RS Ombudsman for Children.⁴

¹ Smjernice o postupanju u slučajevima nasilja nad djecom: http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/ljudska_prava/djeca_bih/Smjernice%20za%20postupanje%20u%20slucaju%20nasilja%20nad%20djecom%20-%20HRV.pdf

² Protokol o postupanju u slučajevima nasilja, zlostavljanja ili zanemarivanja djece: <http://www.djeca.rs.ba/uploaded/Novi%20Protokol.pdf>

³ Protokol o postupanju slučajevima vršnjačkog nasilja među djecom u vaspitno obrazovnom sistemu Republike Srpske: https://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/Ministarstva/mpk/Documents/Documents/%D0%A2%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%81%D1%82%20%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0_067666228.pdf

⁴ Ombudsman za djecu Republike Srpske (2010). *Vršnjačko nasilje u obrazovnom sistemu, Primjena Protokola o postupanju u slučajevima vršnjačkog nasilja među djecom i mladima u obrazovnom sistemu Republike Srpske*. Banjaluka: Ombudsman za djecu RS

The current report says that schools dealt with peer violence in 91% of cases, and in only 9% of cases did schools involve other institutions, mainly the police, the centre for social work, and health facilities. Schools also reported that 95% of reported incidents were successfully resolved.

Reported cases of peer violence are mostly reported in the first, second and third grade of high school, while they decrease by the fourth. Boys are three times more likely to be reported as perpetrators than girls, while 62% of victims of peer violence are boys and 35% of victims are girls (some schools did not answer this question). Forms of peer violence reported in schools included: physical violence 83%, emotional violence 74%, and one reported a case of sexual violence. Of the victims of peer violence, 29% have been victims more than once, while 69% of students have only one experience with peer violence.

For the last 30 years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has implemented various projects investigating peer violence, and subsequently developed and implemented prevention programs. Different methodologies characterize the research on peer violence, i.e. some researchers deal with quantitative and some with qualitative methodology. For quantitative methodologies, self-assessment questionnaires in which the respondents estimate the percentage of being a victim of peer violence and the extent to which they have committed violence are widely used, resulting in varying statistics. This research also surveyed types of violence, the frequency and the places where they most often occur, with a sample consisting of children, young people and adults.



The results of this research indicate that violence happens every day, and when it comes to schools, it happens both inside and outside the school.⁵ Over 60% of students in primary schools and 50% in secondary schools believe that violence is present in their school. When it comes to reporting violence, they have the most confidence in the homeroom teacher, then the pedagogue, then the school principal. It is also interesting that about 5% of primary school students, as well as 10% of respondents in secondary schools, believe that cases of peer violence are not dealt with in their schools, but rather covered up.

Physical and psychological violence are the most common forms of violence, according to the children themselves.⁶ When it comes to cyber violence, the results of the research "Behaviour and Habits of Children on the Internet: attitudes of children, parents and computer science teachers", conducted by Save the Children among students of 9 primary and 9 secondary schools in BiH, are interesting. They state that almost all children included in the survey are users of social networks, and that they share a large amount of personal data on the Internet (78.7% have their photo on the Internet; 25.5% have a residential address listed on the Internet). At the same time, parents showed a high degree of tolerance and trust in children when it comes to using the Internet, but also poor knowledge of digital technologies. As many as 14.2% of the children included in the survey falsely presented themselves as someone else, 10.3% posted photos of other people without their approval, and 12.5% commented on other people in an offensive way. Removal from a list of friends, as well as expulsion from a group on a social network, was experienced by a high percentage of children, sometimes more than once. One in five children was ridiculed: 17.3% experienced ridicule, 13.6% of children suffered online threats and 28% of these children faced threats three or more times. Furthermore, 12% of children experienced a situation where a recording made against their will was distributed to others. Half of these children experienced this two or more times. In these situations, children would have the most confidence in parents, to whom they would first report the violence, then peers (45%), and a much smaller percentage of children would turn to school staff.

⁵ TPO Fondacija (2017). Vršnjačko i rodno zasnovano nasilje u osnovnim školama u BiH: <http://www.tpo.ba/b/dokument/2017-10-13-Vrsnjacko-i-rodno-zasnovano-nasilje-u-OS-u-BiH-web.pdf>

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Sarajevski otvoreni centar (2018). Međuvršnjačko nasilje na osnovu različitosti: <https://soc.ba/site/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Me%C4%91uvr%C5%A1nja%C4%8Dko-nasilje-na-osnovu-razli%C4%8Ditosti-%E2%80%93-iskustava-i-preporuke.pdf>

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⁶ Grahovac, N (2012). Poseban izvještaj Ombudsmana za djecu i Mreže mladih savjetnika o vršnjačkom nasilju, Banja Luka: Ombudsman za djecu RS.

Findings

5

Incidence, Type and Perpetrators of Violence Against Children in Kosovo

5.1

The respondents mentioned different forms of violent behaviour during the research, as well as types of violence, which they described through the discussion. Among the forms and types of violence were: verbal, physical, sexual, online, domestic and social violence, harassment, stalking and exploitation. In further elaboration of violent behaviours, when we put them in different contexts and asked them to rank them from 1st to 5th place, according to the frequency of occurrence or the strength of influence on them, the respondents selected a total of 7 types of violence, which are presented in **Table 1**. The table presents the rank averages for each form or type of violence, based on the gender of the respondents from Banja Luka and Mostar.

Table 1. Average ranks of types and forms of violent behaviour among boys and girls

Gender	Types of Violence	Most Common Types of Violence	Most Common Types of Violence Related to Gender	Most Common Types of Violence in School	Most Common Types of Violence on the way to School	Most Impactful Type of Violence
BOYS	Physical	1.5	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
	Verbal	1.5	2	2	1.5	1.5
	Cyberbullying	3	4.5	4.5	5	4
	Social	5	3	4	4	5
	Exploitation	4.5	3.5	2.5	3	3
	Domestic violence	4	5	5		5
GIRLS	Physical	2.5	4	3.5	3.5	2.5
	Verbal	1.5	1.5	1.5	1	3.5
	Cyberbullying	4	3	2.5	5	3.5
	Sexual	3	1.5	4.5	2	1
	Harassment	4	5	3.5	3.5	4.5

Looking at **Table 1** we can see that the **boys** from Banja Luka and Mostar agreed on about 4 types of violence: **physical, verbal, online violence, and exploitation**. They differed when it comes to social violence, which was talked about by the boys from Mostar, and domestic violence, which was talked about by the boys from Banja Luka. According to the data in Table 1, we can see that physical and verbal violence are the two most dominant types of violent behaviour.

By physical violence, the boys exclusively meant fights. When it comes to verbal violence, they emphasized the following types of behaviours: **insulting, using derogatory names and belittling**. They pointed out the problem with verbal violence in the sense that it is done both in person and through online technologies, so that some children are subjected to this type of violence almost throughout the day.

"They called me all sorts of names. They used very bad names because of my appearance. I kept thinking I didn't care, but I did care. I cried." (Boy, 13)

"We are constantly hitting each other. Some of my friends don't even think that fighting is violence. I only realized it was when I started going to the Day Centre." (Boy, 15)

Next most highly ranked was **exploitation**. They often complained that older students exploited them on different grounds: they took their money, asked them to be violent towards other children or asked them to do other activities for them.

"When that guy sees me, he immediately comes to me and tells me that I have to go to the store for him. I am immediately frightened because I know that I am not allowed to leave the schoolyard, but he says that he will beat me if I don't go, so I go secretly." (Boy, 14)

"I feel the worst when I see him [a boy who is violent]. I know right away that he will ask me for something. My stomach hurts and I start sweating. I think only about him all day at school." (Boy, 14)

The boys from Mostar also experience **social violence**. In order to understand this type of violence and what they encounter, it is crucial to note that these children belong to socially disadvantaged families and that they are obviously different from other children. They made quite clear in the discussions how much they notice these differences.

"It is very important how we are dressed here. They often laughed at my brother for coming in shorts, but we didn't have money to buy him trousers." (Boy, 15)

Table 1 also mentions **domestic violence**, which is not a form of peer violence, but was left in at the insistence of the boys from Banja Luka. They not only said that this type of violence is present in their environment, but also very present in their school, and that the children they hang out with experience violence from their parents. They often mentioned the beatings which they and their friends experienced.

"Beatings are as common as hellos. When I do something I shouldn't do, my father beats me until I am unable to sit. I know it's violence and I tell him, but he tells me that no one can do anything to him." (Boy, 13)

Boys or their peers, or older boys, are most often mentioned as perpetrators of **child-on-child violence**. In addition, respondents also pointed out that high school students give them trouble on the way to school.

Girls considered the most common forms of violent behaviour to be: **physical, psychological, sexual, and online violence and harassment**. The girls from Banja Luka and Mostar jointly recognized verbal violence as the most frequently occurring form. The girls from Mostar thought physical violence and harassment were the other two most frequent forms of violence, while girls from Banja Luka highlighted sexual and online violence.

Girls from Mostar explained physical violence as **physical confrontations, fights and pushing**, all of which they say is common during school, after school and also at home. It is more present amongst boys, but they are also often beaten by their parents or suffer various punches. The girls stated that the way home from school is the most dangerous because they have to go through a park where older, violent children gather.

"My mom tells me not to go that way, that's why I have to go around it to get to school, even though it's a longer way!" (Girl, 13)

The girls state that they are often **blackmailed** to buy, do something or bring something to other children, which happens more often with children who are withdrawn and who cannot fight for themselves.

"If someone is different, withdrawn or of a different faith or skin colour, if they don't know how to defend himself from aggressive children, they are tortured." (Girl, 13)

As regards girls from Banja Luka, verbal violence is described through **insults, teasing and humiliation**.

"It has become almost normal for us to insult each other every day and call ourselves derogatory names." (Girl, 15)

"Girls are worse off on this issue (verbal violence)... the things we say to each other..." (Girl, 14)

Girls describe **sexual violence** as calling girls shameful (derogatory) names, giving epithets that have sexual connotations, touching, sending photos, and even sexual harassment and abuse.

"It's normal when someone walks by and slaps our ass." (Girl, 16)

"That is happening a lot in our school, I don't know if there is a girl that didn't experience having boys say something bad to her." (Girl, 15)

They state that **online violence** is constantly present and "cannot be escaped", unlike other forms of violence, since most children have mobile phones and internet access.

During the focus group discussions, adult respondents listed the five most common forms of violence: **physical, verbal, social, online and sexual**. They believe that physical, verbal, online and social violence is characteristic of both boys and girls, while boys more often perpetrate sexual violence against girls. The groups from Banja Luka and Mostar believe that online technology is a big problem and that it allows children who behave violently in school to behave like that even after returning home.

"Online technologies are an extended arm to bullies. Today, a child can be a victim of violence all day. That's really awful." (Woman, professional)

Adults believe that the most damaging consequences of any form of violence are carried out through online technologies because the victim is constantly under the influence of the perpetrator. Professionals in the focus group pointed out that Viber groups and social networks are a space for children prone to violent behaviour to behave violently throughout the day. Even more importantly, victims of **online violence** that are labelled and who have information about them spread throughout social networks are under the impression that the violence against them has been seen by many more peers than when violence occurs in person.

"They [children] do not grasp that the information they share about each other stays on the Internet forever, so they happen to share situations in which someone is violent towards someone." (Woman, professional)



Social and Gender Norms Around Violence Against Children, including Gender-Based Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina

5.2

Social norms occasionally pervaded the discussions with children and adults. They were resisted by adult professionals in that, when answering a question in a professional capacity, social norms were not mentioned. However, when commenting on how someone else might interpret or react in a situation, they then pointed out that they were aware of certain deviations from their stated reactions, and began talking about social norms at that point. Hence, professionals show the impact of the training they have undergone to work with children at risk. In both parents and children's responses, however, social norms were much more visible.

The social norms visible in children's responses:

- There are visible differences in the perception of boys and girls, when it comes to violent behaviour, as well as the suffering of violence in question. In working with child respondents, we obtained the following data:
 - Boys are often seen as more violent than girls, and therefore are more often punished. In terms of punishment, respondents had the impression that penalties for boys were more severe than penalties for girls.
„If there was Valentin instead of Valentina, the teacher would scream, write him down in a class register book and throw him out of the classroom.”
(Boy, 13)
„It would have been worse if he had been a boy, the teacher would have been even worse.” (Girl, 15)
 - Sexual violence in which the boy is the victim is not doubted, while in situations where the girl is the victim, evidence is sometimes found to suggest she provoked her abuser in some way.
„If a girl had sent a boy nude photos, she would have been a whore and she would have been guilty.” (Boy, 16)
„If a girl had done that it would have been worse, everyone would have condemned her, she would have been guilty in the end.” (Girl, 16)
- Teachers are not adequately involved in the prevention of violence; they often do not react because they believe it is the child's parents' task. For this reason, children from marginalized groups, and children from dysfunctional families where domestic violence occurs, do not report the violence they experience to their teachers.
- The child respondents feel that they are labelled in their schools because they use day centre services, and that they are automatically under scrutiny as potential bullies as a result.

Most of the answers from adult respondents did not include the ingrained social norms which prevail in our society, likely because most of them were trained to think objectively in working with children. However, when asked to think about how others see certain situations, then the following answers occurred:

- The responsibility for the child's violent behaviour is transferred exclusively to the parents, i.e. family. Violent behaviour should be controlled at home, not at school.
- Teachers believe they are predominantly in charge only of the teaching process, not the upbringing of their students. Thus, they often transfer the responsibility for working with children who participate in violence to professional services, psychologists and pedagogues, explaining that it is not their job, but the job of professional services.
- A school that has a higher number of reported peer violence incidents is a „bad” school. Which is why the number of peer violence incidents is covered up by schools.
- Bad or inadequate behaviour of students in class (as demonstrated in the vignette with a student named Valentina) is addressed with a punishment, because the teacher is an authority that is unquestioningly listened to. Authoritative decisions are not questioned and are not discussed as potentially bad or inadequate.
- The teachers' reactions to student misconduct generally varies. Penalties are

5.3 Protection from Violence and Promotion of Well-being

By analysing the data obtained in the research with children, we concluded that they feel safe in situations when they are at home and when they are with their friends. Adults, parents and workers in day care centres also make them feel safe. Their trust in parents was evident from the first activity when they mapped the path from home to school, and everyone circled their home as a place where they feel safe.

Of particular importance to note is the fact that the children from Banja Luka did not mention the teaching staff as a protective factor. When asked if they would report violence at school, they said they would, but only to the principal because they distrust the teachers. Those that did mention teachers referred to a „favourite teacher”, i.e. a teacher they trust. Moreover, they did not express trust in professional associates, pedagogues and psychologists.

„They [teachers] immediately call their parents and gossip. They like to talk in the teacher's lounge and lie and fabricate.” (Boy, 13)

„I reported it several times and then I was found guilty. They twist everything. They turn a victim into a bully.” (Boy, 16)

"When we tell teachers, they don't understand us; they don't do anything or make it even worse." (Girl, 13)

The respondents pointed out that the day care centres are places where they learn a lot about violence and violent forms of behaviour, and that it is very important to them. They feel that with the help of the staff, they have learned a lot about themselves. This was evident during the interviews and working with them. They were very willing to answer questions, but they also showed excellent knowledge of violent behaviours and their classification.

The respondents believe that it is very important that other children learn about violent forms of behaviour in order to recognize violence and react to it. They believe that children can and should be supported and report violence, but when it comes to reporting violence, some of the respondents exclusively mentioned parents as persons to whom they would report violence, and others added teachers to this group.

A lack of abstract thinking was visible during the work with these respondents; they were unable, for example, to discuss ideas on what they would do regarding peer violence in their communities. Their answers only focused on coming to the day centre and educational activities.

Furthermore, it is a very disappointing and worrying that some of these children do not feel safe in their schools, that is, that their teachers do not give them a sense of security. The feeling of distrust towards teachers, caused by situations in which they ignored reports of violence or reported the victim as a bully (because the child used the day centre due to a past aggressive behaviour), frequently arose in the discussions.

Children's Agency and their Responses to Violence

5.4

In talking to adult respondents about how to respond to violence, two avenues were discussed: legal acts, various strategies and action plans; and institutions, both local and state, and non-governmental organizations. Adults mostly believe that the prevention of violence against and among children is adequately covered by legal acts, and that it is elaborated in various strategies in the field of social protection and education. Furthermore, the respondents believe that local communities are adequately covered by state and local institutions, such as schools and centres for social work, and non-governmental organizations, whose mission and vision is to protect the rights of the child, and whose preventive activities are related to violence against and among children. However, some respondents pointed to the insufficient capacity of state and local institutions, meaning a lack of professional staff to effectively carry out preventive activities in a timely manner.

The female respondents in Mostar pointed out the lack of school psychologists who could deal with violence prevention. They believe that one pedagogue per school is not enough to monitor the teaching process and work with children and parents in regards to both learning and the prevention of violence against and among children. In Banja Luka, they believe that schools have enough professional associates, but that the problem is the capacity of the Centre for Social Work, because Banja Luka is a large town and the centre does not have enough professionals, psychologists or social workers relative to the population. In addition to the insufficient number of professionals, the respondents believe that there is an insufficient connection between these institutions, i.e. that schools do not report violence against and among children, and as a result, adequate interventions have not been made.

When it comes to the non-governmental sector, the respondents believe that there are many organizations that deal with the prevention of violence in the form of implementing various educational projects in schools. In their opinion, these are useful projects, but they have been implemented for about 30 years without results. Hence, the question of where the root of the problem lies. They believe increased awareness of professionals in schools would be very important to react to violence and work with all participants. On the other hand, there are very few non-governmental organizations that, like these two day care centres, directly deal with interventions and work with children from marginalized groups who are at risk or already involved in violence.

The respondents mentioned the documents in each canton and entity, i.e. protocols defining different types of violence, and procedures to follow when a child in school is a victim or perpetrator of violence. These protocols were signed by the ministers of education, interior, social and health care, with the aim of linking all actors in the prevention of violence against and among children. Yet, the basic problem lies in schools not reporting violence, which allows the perpetrators of violence to remain hidden and untreated.



Discussion

The research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted on a sample of children from marginalized groups who uses day care centres services in Banja Luka and Mostar. These are children who belong to socially vulnerable categories, families in which dysfunction occurs, as well as children who behave violently in their environments. After conducting research with the participation of the children, the adults who work with them and their parents, we came to the following findings:

- Most of these children feel labelled in their schools based on the socio-economic status of their parents, their behaviour (if known to be inadequate), and as such, are both victims and perpetrators of peer violence. No matter what position they were in, these children indicated a great distrust of the teachers who worked with them, both as adults in whom they could see protection, and as someone who might understand them. They feel safe in their homes and with their friends, as well as in the day centres they visit.
- Children know the types of violent behaviours quite well, but they do not report the violence that happens to them; they do not trust the system and believe that reporting violence would lead to further negative labelling.
- Adults feel that the system does not work properly. They pointed out that although Bosnia and Herzegovina has well-developed legal acts covering all areas of child protection, the system does not work for two reasons: the lack of professional staff, and insufficient awareness of the importance of reporting all violence so the participants can work with professionals to address the consequences of violence.
- The adults pointed out that children's mistrust in teachers has its roots in the fact that teachers label those children who were once violent and consider them as perpetrators of most of the violence at school. Most teachers seem to have no idea that behaviour can change and that a child can learn to behave appropriately.

Key Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the data obtained in this research:

1. Implementation of the Program of Secondary Prevention of Inadequate Behaviours in Children and Young People. This program aims to prevent socially unacceptable forms of behaviour through timely recognition of the behaviour and reactions in children which may, ultimately, lead to children in conflict with the law. This includes registering these forms of students' behaviours and reactions, as well as the development of various programs which would, with the help of school professionals and parents, modify their behaviour. This program was introduced in the Sarajevo Canton, and professional associates and teachers in primary schools in the Una-Sana Canton and Canton 10 are currently being trained in it.
2. Application of the Referral Mechanism of Support to Children in Schools in the Republic of Srpska. This is a mechanism by which teachers are required to continuously monitor all students and record certain behaviours and responses which may indicate the development of various problems, both in behaviour and mental health. Like the Secondary Prevention Program, the Referral Mechanism is a secondary prevention program to be used with children at risk.
3. Application of the Protocol on the Procedure of Cases of Peer Violence among Children in the Educational System of the Republic of Srpska to prevent violence among children.
4. Application of the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Violence against and among children, which exists in all entities, cantons and the Brčko District. This is a document that regulates the steps to take when registering violence against a child at school.
5. Training of teachers, which should especially be focused on the development of their socio-emotional competencies as it is not enough for a teacher to be aware of someone's violent behaviour, they must be able to empathize in order to better react to cases of violence.

These recommendations point to the application of various programs and protocols that exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The complex organization of the country hinders recommendations at the level of the entire state. Hence, we have highlighted all programs and important documents that contribute to the prevention of violence against and among children. Despite a number of programs, and training of teachers that have been implemented over the past 25 years, it remains unclear whether the situation, when it comes to peer violence, has improved. Therefore, we exclusively refer to the application of programs and protocols, which best cover the prevention of violence.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Key Definitions

Violence Against Children: *“All forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.”* (UNCRC, Art 19)

Sexual violence: An umbrella term used to refer to all forms of sexual victimization of adult women, men and children, including different forms of child sexual abuse and exploitation. *“Any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person, regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.”* (Kewkes, Sen, Garcia-Moreno, 2002, p.149)

Child sexual abuse: *“Engaging in sexual activities with a child who, according to the relevant provisions of national law, has not reached the legal age for sexual activities (this does not apply to consensual sexual activities between minors), and engaging in sexual activities with a child where use is made of coercion, force or threats; or abuse is made of a recognised position of trust, authority or influence over the child.”* (UNICEF, 2017, p.6)

Types of Violence Against Children (Adapted from Dawes, Bray, & Van Der Merwe, 2007)

Particular types of violence against children are elaborated below:

Physical Violence: Intentionally inflicting injury or death on a child.

Emotional Violence: Exposing a child to or inflicting psychological or emotional harm on a child.

Sexual Violence: Sexual activities, with or without the child’s consent, where the perpetrator is older or in a position of authority. (This may also involve force or trickery.)

Neglect: Lack of care provided by caregivers, usually over a longer period of time that results in physical or psychological harm to a child.

Exploitation: Broader term usually referring to the use of a child for another person’s gains, that has a negative impact on the child, such as harmful child labour, early marriage, child trafficking, child prostitution or pornography, etc.

Categories of Violence Against Children CRIN (n.d.)

Neglect:

- Abandonment
- Dangerous, Harmful Work
- Hazardous Work
- Deprivation
- State Neglect

Exploitation:

- Pornography
- Sex Tourism
- Sexual Exploitation
- Slavery
- Trafficking
- Violence at Work

Physical/Psychological Violence:

- Abduction
- Bullying
- Death Penalty
- Domestic Violence
- Extra-judicial Execution
- Gang Violence
- Harmful Traditional Practices
- Honour Killings
- Infanticide
- Judicial use of Physical Punishment
- Kidnapping
- Physical Abuse
- Physical Punishment
- Psychological Abuse
- Psychological Punishment
- State Violence
- Torture and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment



Child: The Convention defines a “child” as a person below the age of 18, unless relevant laws recognize an earlier age of majority.

Child Protection: UNICEF’s definition of child protection is the *“strengthening of country environments, capacities and responses to prevent and protect children from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and the effects of conflict.”*(UNICEF, 2008)

Child Participation: *“Participation is the term used to encapsulate activities that ensure a child’s right to participate in matters that affect them are adhered to. This draws on the concept that ‘children are not merely passive recipients, entitled to adult protective care’. Rather, they are subjects of rights who are entitled to be involved, in accordance with their evolving capacities, in decisions that affect them, and are entitled to exercise growing responsibility for decisions they are competent to make for themselves.”*(Lansdowne & O’Kane, 2014, p. 3)

Child Well-being: *“Child well-being is a dynamic, subjective and objective state of physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and social health in which children:*

- *are safe from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.*
- *meet their basic needs, including survival and development.*
- *are connected to and cared for by primary caregivers.*
- *have the opportunity for supportive relationships with relatives, peers, teachers, community members and society at large; and*
- *have the opportunity and elements required to exercise their agency based on their emerging capacities.”*(ACPHA, 2019, p.10)

Child Safeguarding: *“The responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children’s safety within the communities in which they work, are reported.”*(Keeping Children Safe, 2014, p.3)

Social Norms: *“The full range of these definitions includes a constellation of social rules ranging from mere etiquette to the most fundamental moral duties [13, 14, 37, 38]. In their simplest definition, social norms are the informal, mostly unwritten, rules that define acceptable, appropriate, and obligatory actions in a given group or society.”*(Cislaghi & Heise, 2018)

Gender Norms: *A simple definition suggests, “gender norms are the social rules and expectations that keep the gender system intact.”*(Cislaghi & Heise, 2019, p.4) However, a more nuanced and complex definition suggests that *“gender norms are social norms defining acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men in a given group or society. They are embedded in formal and informal institutions, nested in the mind, and produced and reproduced through social interaction. They play a role in shaping women and men’s (often unequal) access to resources and freedoms, thus affecting their voice, power and sense of self.”*(Cislaghi & Heise, 2019, pp.9–10)

Appendix B: Ethical Protocols

In addition to the information contained in [section 2.3](#), the following ethical protocols were considered:

Research on sensitive subjects, such as violence against children, can cause unintended harm to participants. For example, if confidentiality is breached, informed consent is not obtained, or a group of people is stigmatized. Researchers need to be careful not to raise expectations, which can lead to mistrust of outsiders and disillusionment. Researchers also need to be cautious not to increase power imbalances that may cause a particular group to be vulnerable.

Given the timing of the research with the COVID-19 pandemic, protocols will be more stringent for online interactions. It is strongly recommended that remote violence against children (VAC) data collection does not take place with children while lockdown measures are in place (Bhatia, Peterman & Guedes 2020). Where it is deemed appropriate for research to continue, adaptations will take into consideration the kinds of questions being asked and the level of privacy afforded participants in the setting where they are joining. Given the potential for heightened levels of violence experienced by children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in keeping with recommendations by UNICEF–IRC 2020, no direct questions will be asked about participants' experiences of violence, but rather their understanding of violence occurring in their communities.

Research on violence may ask children and adults, even without direct questions concerning personal experience, to re-live painful and difficult experiences. As researchers working with children who may have suffered from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, there is a critical responsibility to “do no harm” in our interactions with children and youth.

Researchers will be trained to watch for signs of children expressing distress (both verbal and non-verbal). Researchers will ensure that the environment within the activities remains respectful and supportive, and will take time to speak with children who may need extra support outside of the activity, from a safe distance. The name and contact details of a support worker, as well as emergency numbers and local reporting protocol, will be listed on a flipchart at all times, enabling children to reach out on their own for additional support (for example, the psychosocial service of the school and Child Protection Unity in Albania). Where a flipchart is not practical, handouts will be made to give to young people before each session. Should a researcher see that a young person requires support, the researcher will discuss this with the young person and call the support person to request a personal visit to the community. The researcher will follow-up with both the child and the support worker using appropriate child safeguarding protocol, as per the TdH Child Safeguarding Policy and national legislation.

When working with participants, researchers will pay close attention to the following ethical guidelines, recommendations and practices:

Confidentiality:

- Inform children that you will be collecting quotes and stories, but no names will be attached, only gender, age and community.
- Ensure that you obtain children's written permission as well as the written permission of their parents or caregivers. In some cases, permission might need to be gained from the Ministry of Education in each country. Please see Appendix A for a sample Consent Form.
- Ensure that you obtain the written permission of adults as well. Please see Appendix B.
- Remember, informed consent is an ongoing process. Participants should be regularly reminded of their options. No child should be made to feel that they must participate.
- If you plan to use a recording device, be sure to inform children of this and obtain their consent. Explain how the recordings will be used and what will happen to the recordings at the end of the project.
- If attending virtually, request that participants have a place that offers some privacy, and where this is not possible, that they share who else is in the room and when with the group (as noted below).

Voluntary informed Assent/Consent Conversations

Special note during COVID-19: As the local context may change rapidly during COVID-19 for both children and project staff (for example, if governmental restrictions on physical distancing are suddenly relaxed), it is recommended to regularly address voluntary informed consent (at each point of change). It is useful to think of consent as an ongoing conversation that you have with children (and their parents/carers). You can document consent by asking children/parents to sign consent forms, and you can digitally record their verbal consent if physical distancing is required, or if children and/or their parents/carers have low levels of literacy. Signed consent forms or recordings of consent should be kept securely. It may be useful to use a "script" or checklist when having a consent conversation to ensure that you do not forget anything.

Make sure participants are comfortable and fully informed:

- Select a suitable location where children feel comfortable and at ease.
- Be open and honest with children.
- Explain the entire process, including how the tools could affect young participants.

- Don't raise expectations. Be clear about what can and cannot be achieved through the research.
- Privacy and confidentiality are extremely important, but cannot be guaranteed due to the involvement of the group of participants in the research. Make sure that limited confidentiality is clearly communicated before the start.
- Let children know that they can always ask questions: No question is a bad question.

Know yourself:

- Learn about and be reflective of your lived experiences, biases, assumptions, and trigger points.
- Be comfortable with the uncomfortable. Change can often include feelings of discomfort and confusion. Recognize and pause during these moments.
- Be emotionally present and available to engage with children and listen effectively.
- Communicate genuinely and honestly.

Develop an understanding of the local culture, context and understanding of children and youth:

- Understand the local culture and context you are working in.
- Remember child protection factors differ across gender, age, race, culture, socio-economic status, ability, and other factors.
- Learn about local power dynamics as they may undermine genuine participation.
- Be open to learning. Inquire and ask questions to seek understanding.

Build relationships:

- Build relationships with organizations, communities, families, children and youth.
- Learn from and with children, youth, families and communities.
- Work in partnership, not opposition. Exercise humility.

Be prepared:

- Remember that children may be resilient in one area of their lives but not in others due to their social-ecological framework.
- Remember that talking about one's experiences can be harmful in some contexts.
- Make sure to identify someone to provide follow-up support for those who may need help or want to have a more in-depth conversation.

Be inclusive:

- Be inclusive and involve the most vulnerable populations.
- Remember that most victimized children and youth do not receive services.

Support the group:

- Be flexible and adaptable. Situations and circumstances change, and sometimes things do not work out as planned.
- Hold people accountable. Do not be afraid to hold people accountable for their actions. Be firm but respectful and create an opportunity outside the group to talk through any issues.

Build from strengths and bolster resilience:

- Build from the strengths in people (e.g., positive behaviours, coping techniques), cultures and systems.
- Build capacity. Nurture innate self-healing and protection capacities.
- Recognize people's agency and capacity. See people as experts and survivors and not as victims.

Follow-up:

- **Follow-up with participants afterwards to make sure they are doing okay. For example, you might want to check in with them at the end of the session.**
- **Leave participants the phone number of someone they can talk to, and with information on how to access helpful resources.**
- **Remember, if you hear about violence or abuse, you have a responsibility to connect that young person with a support person, and to report it the appropriate organization following local protocol.**

Informed Consent (Adapted from Columbia Group for Children in Adversity [2011])

Participation in research must be voluntary, and people must be free to decline or end participation without any negative consequences. The decision to participate should be informed by an understanding of the purpose of the research, how and what information will be collected, how the information will be used, and potential risks and benefits to participants. When participants are children, informed consent must be obtained from the children themselves and from their parents or guardians.

Obtaining informed consent is inherently difficult for many reasons, such as the power imbalance between researchers and participants, the pervasive expectations that participation will bring material improvements now or at a later point in time, and the prevailing norms of hospitality, among others. Obtaining written consent may not be feasible because of low literacy levels and/or prospective participants' fears that written documents will be used against them. Because of this, it is important to treat informed consent as an ongoing process rather than a one-off action.

Specific steps to ensure informed consent:

- Use a child-friendly approach in explaining to children the purpose of the research, what and how information will be used, and their right to say “No” without negative consequences.
- If the participant is a child under the age of 18, obtain the informed consent of both the child and his or her parent or caretaker.
- Tailor the approach to obtaining informed consent to local circumstances. Where appropriate, use the forms provided in the Appendices and request signatures to indicate voluntary and informed consent.
- The process of obtaining informed consent must be implemented for each individual participant.
- Avoid the subtle coercion that can occur. For example, if a parent tells a child “you should participate” or if a village leader says, “we should welcome the researchers and answer their questions”, explain informed consent to the person in power and ask them to explain to others that they are free not to participate, and that there will be no disadvantages or penalties for people who decide not to participate.
- Manage expectations by explaining in simple, clear language that no material benefits will come from participating in the research. Add, however, that the information collected will be fed back to communities and countries, which may find the information useful in taking stock of and improving community-based mechanisms of child protection.
- Explain that, should someone begin to participate and decide that they are not comfortable, they can always leave the research without any penalty.

Limited Confidentiality (Adapted from Columbia Group for Children in Adversity [2011])

Research participants will be informed that the information they provide is confidential, unless they share anything that puts themselves or others at risk. If there is an incident, suspicion, or disclosure of current violence or abuse, the researcher will work with the child or adult to follow up and explore appropriate services of support using the TdH Child Safeguarding Policy, Research Ethics Protocol of the local University research partner, and the legal protocol in the country. The researchers will not publicly share any personal information such as names that could be used to identify specific individuals or sources of information. Where identity information is collected, it will be maintained in a separate, locked file, and will be made available only to people who have a legitimate need to know. Pseudonyms will be used when data is being quoted.

Specific steps to ensure confidentiality include:

- Conduct discussions in a private setting. When conducting interviews with young people, ensure that there is always a minimum of three people present (either two children or two adults) and if not, there is a third person within vision for child safeguarding purposes. If there are departures from privacy, make sure all participants know who else is present and listening or observing, and get their informed consent to continue.
- Keep any records of names and other identifying information in a safe, locked place that is not open for public access.
- Do not leave confidential files open on a desk or computer. Always close them and put them out of public access, even if you leave your desk only for a minute or two.
- Use general descriptors (e.g., 13-year-old girl) rather than a specific name or other identifying information in writing up your data and reports.
- Share information from your field notes, including identifiers, with members of the research team, but not with people outside the research team.
- Hold information about specific cases of abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect in strict confidence, sharing information only with the Lead National Researcher or the UNICEF Focal Point.

Please note: It is important to be clear with participants, that they should only share information in the activities that they want the group to know; you cannot guarantee that other participants will keep the information they hear confidential, though you will strongly encourage it. Participants are welcome to speak with you after the activity in private, should they want to share additional information.

Remote adaptations: Restrictions in meeting children face-to-face due to the COVID-19 pandemic means that online interactions and participatory activities via devices, such as smartphones and computers, are likely to increase. This increases risks to children that are specific to the online environment, such as increasing the likelihood that family members will be present, through to more significant risks like the dissemination of false information, exposure to violent extremist messaging, or surveillance and censorship. For the former, transparency and good communication allows participants to be clear on the level of privacy they are able to maintain within their physical environment (as noted above). For the latter, digital applications, platforms and services need to be safe, secure and should not result in inappropriate or unethical capture and/or use of data on children. Safeguarding considerations for online communication and interaction fall into three key areas:

Safe behaviour online

- Guidelines are developed for users of digital platforms and products. These explain expectations regarding posting, speaking, commenting on the site or platform, and establish consequences for misuse.

- Build relational safety by having regular “safety” check-ins with children at the beginning or end of virtual sessions, where a key worker listens carefully and responds sensitively to the child.
- All websites, phone lines and platforms where children are commenting or sharing information, photos and stories are moderated by staff to maximise safety and privacy and minimise risks. Where concerns of harm or abuse are identified, reporting procedures are followed.
- Procedures for reporting and responding to harm or abuse exist for each digital platform or product. These take into account local laws, cultural norms and the availability of protection services.

The Canadian Women’s Foundation developed the following hand signals for people who want to safely disclose violence in the home while on a video-call:



Ethical access to and use of children’s data

- Children using digital platforms must be given the opportunity to agree to a specified use of their personal data. This consent should not be assumed based on their consent for other activities (e.g., for their photo to be used in media activities).
- Active consent must be captured in a way so that consent is not the default option.
- A written agreement is in place to control and authorise the release of information on children (data, images) to partner organisations, the Internet, the public domain or any third party. Consent conversations with children (see above) should include an assessment of the need/benefit of sharing information that is balanced against potential risks, before consent is given by children for use of their data.
-

Responding online to disclosures and allegations of child abuse during COVID-19

If a case of abuse is reported or disclosed when physical distancing restrictions are in place the following issues will need to be addressed for responding online:

- **Seek the views of the child victim/survivor** (where it is possible to establish safe, direct contact) on their situation that will inform a risk assessment for responding to the report of abuse. It may be useful to connect to child helplines to identify services that might support the child victim/survivor.
- **Conducting remote interviews, focus groups and other participative activities** (e.g., via Zoom or WhatsApp): Outline the process in advance to participants. Make sure they can safely participate online and are able to use the software. If it is not safe to do so (e.g., a child is in the same room as a violent parent/carer) do NOT conduct the process. Establish the identity of the participant and ensure you are communicating with the person you are intending to speak to. Provide information on local support services at the end of every interview.
- **Ensure privacy and manage confidentiality:** participants should use a computer that is private or isolated, make use of headphones and limit the use of identifying information (i.e., agree to refer to Mr. Smith as Mr. X). Check there is no one else in the room or nearby and record interviews if possible.

Appendix C: Country Level Consent Forms

Formular saglasnosti djeteta/mlade osobe i roditelja

Ja razumijem o čemu je ova aktivnost.

- ☐ Znam koja će biti moja uloga u aktivnosti i koliko dugo će trajati.
- ☐ Imao/la sam priliku da postavim pitanja u vezi sa ovom aktivnošću.
- ☐ Znam da mogu u bilo kom trenutku da kažem da ne želim da učestvujem i da prekinem moje učešće u aktivnosti.

- ☐ Slažem se da kažem i uradim tokom ove aktivnosti fotografije i snimi, pri čemu moje lice neće biti fotografisano.

- ☐ Slažem se da učestvujem u ovom projektu.

Ako želiš da budeš deo ovog projekta, molimo te da potpišeš ispod, kao i da zamoliš tvoje roditelje/staratelje da se potpišu. I ako ne želiš da se fotografišeš ili snimaš i dalje možeš učestvovati u istraživanju.

Tvoje ime: _____

Tvoj potpis: _____ Datum: _____

Ime tvog roditelja/staratelja: _____

Potpis tvog roditelja/staratelja: _____ Datum: _____

Broj telefona tvog roditelja/staratelja: _____

E-mail tvog roditelja/staratelja: _____

Formular o saglasnosti za odrasle

Svrha projekta: Cilj ovog projekta jeste da se istraži vršnjačko nasilje, koje se dešava u našim školama, iz ugla djece i mladih, ali i odraslih.

Šta su dobre strane Vašeg učešća u ovom projektu: Ono što naučimo od vas tokom istraživanja biće upotrebjeno za uticaj na kreiranje usluga i politika za djecu i mlade u oblasti zaštite od nasilja.

Procedura: Vaše uloga podrazumeva učešće u dve aktivnosti (jedna radionica i jedna fokus grupa) u toku jednog istog dana, u trajanju do tri sata.

Svi predvidljivi rizici i neugodnosti: Studija će postavljati pitanja koja uključuju nasilje o djeci i mladima u vašoj zajednici i oko nje. Neka pitanja mogu izazvati nelagodu ili neka neprijatna sjećanja. Ako se u bilo kojem trenutku osjećate nelagodno, možda ćete odlučiti da ne odgovorite na istraživačko pitanje i/ili prekinete svoje učešće privremeno ili trajno. Takođe možete odlučiti da zatražite da se svi vaši prethodni odgovori ne koriste u projektu. Ako nakon ove aktivnosti zaželite naknadnu podršku, obezbjeđićemo vam podatke o kontaktima za usluge podrške i pomoći vam da pronađete podršku.

Povjerljivost: Mi ćemo čuvati vašu povjerljivost, a vaše ime neće biti navedeno u ovom istraživačkom projektu. Ako imate bilo kakvih nedoumica nakon svog učešća, možete tražiti da pregledate bilješke iz naših diskusija. Vaše učešće je dobrovoljno. Imate pravo da se povučete u bilo kom trenutku bez ikakvih posljedica. Ako podijelite bilo šta što na neki način može ugroziti vas ili druge, moraćemo da sarađujemo kako bismo pronašli podršku i prijavili situaciju.

Količina vremena koje je potrebno da odvojite: Bićete zamoljeni da odvojite oko pola dana za učešće u ovom projektu.

Snimanje i transkripcija: Ova diskusija će biti snimana, vodićemo bilješke i biće napravljen transkript.

Sporazum: Molimo vas da potpišete ovaj formular o saglasnosti

Ime učesnika (štampanim slovima): _____

Potpis: _____ Datum: _____

Appendix D: Royal Roads University Consent Forms

Child Informed Consent

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONSENT LETTER

WELCOME TO THE DISCUSSION ON VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

We would like to lead play and art-based activities about children and young people's safety and well-being in schools.

WHO AM I?

My name is [INSERT YOUTH FRIENDLY SENTENCE ABOUT RESEARCHER LEADING]

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS PROJECT?

We want to find out what makes children and young people feel safe in schools, and what type of violence is occurring that makes them feel sad and/or bad. We also want to hear your ideas on how violence and abuse can be prevented and responded to.

WHAT DOES BEING IN THIS RESEARCH INVOLVE?

If you decide to take part in this study, there are some different things we will ask you to join in. You will have the opportunity to decide if you do or do not want to participate. I will ask you and your peers to join in on participatory research activities that will take you 1.25 days. We will have refreshments and meals during the day.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL THE ACTIVITY TAKE?

Our engaging activities will take 1.25 days. We will work with adults in your life to make sure they take place after school hours or on the weekend so as to not disrupt your studies. We will ask you what hours work best for you.

ARE THERE GOOD THINGS AND BAD THINGS ABOUT BEING PART OF THE PROJECT?

What we learn in this project from you and your peers will be used to support future programs and policies for children and young people. In any experience there may be parts you do not enjoy. If there are, you do not have to join in.

IF I SAY YES TO BEING IN THE PROJECT DO I HAVE TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS?

If I ask you questions that you do not want to answer, then please tell us you do not want to answer those questions or simply abstain. If we ask you to do things you do not want to do, then tell us that you do not want to do them. You can say no and choose not to participate at any time.

WHO WILL KNOW I WAS PART OF THIS ACTIVITY?

The things you say and any information we write about you will not have your name with it, so no one will know they are your answers or the things that you did. The researchers will not let anyone other than themselves see your answers or any other information about you. Your teachers, parents, community members will never see the answers you gave or the information we wrote about you. Your peers who are in the same activity will hear what you say but they will be asked to keep it confidential. For your safety, we will not include your name in any research reports.

DO I HAVE TO SAY YES?

NO! You do not have to be in this activity. No one will get angry or upset with you if you don't want to do this. And remember, if you decide to be in the project and later change your mind, you can tell us you do not want to be in the study anymore.

QUESTIONS?

You can ask questions at any time. You can ask now, or you can ask later. You can talk to me or you can talk to someone else at any time during the study. You can reach me at [insert local phone numbers where applicable] or by email at [INSERT RESEARCHERS EMAIL]. If you want to speak to someone else involved in the project, you can also contact [INSERT TERRES DES HOMMES DETAILS]

Look forward to learning from you!

Best,

INSERT RESEARCHERS NAME

CHILD AND YOUTH CONSENT FORM

- ☐ I understand what the activity is about
- ☐ I know what my part will be in the activity and I know how long it will take
- ☐ I have had the chance to ask questions about the activity
- ☐ I know that I can say I do not want to participate at any time and stop taking part
- ☐ I agree to having photos taken of the things I make in the research, and my voice recorded (no photos of my face will be taken)
- ☐ I agree to be part of this project

If you want to be a part of this project, please print and sign your name below and ask your parent or guardian to print and sign their name below too. You can still be

a part of this study if you do not want your photo taken, voice recorded, or video taken.

Your name, printed: _____

Date: _____

Your signature: _____

Date: _____

Your parent or guardian's name: _____

Your parent or guardian's signature: _____

Your parent or guardian's phone number: _____

Your parent or guardian's email: _____

Informed Consent Form – Adults

Purpose of the project: This project aims to *[INSERT]*

Researcher: My name is *[INSERT NAME]*, and I am *[INSERT TWO SENTENCES FOR EACH RESEARCHER]*

For any questions or concerns, you can contact me and/or a member of my team at: *[INSERT EMAILS]*

Benefits of being a part of this project: What we learn in this project from you and your peers will be used to. We will provide refreshments.

Procedure: Participation will include engaging in *[INSERT]* activities over one day.

All foreseeable risks and discomforts: The study will ask questions involving violence in and around schools for children and young people in your community. Some questions may cause some discomfort if you by chance reflect upon an unpleasant memory. If you feel uncomfortable at any point in time you may choose not to answer a research question, and/or discontinue your participation temporarily or permanently. You can also choose to request that all your previous answers are not used in the project. If you are triggered and/or want follow up support we will provide contact information for support services and follow up with you to find support.

Confidentiality: Your confidentiality will be maintained, and your name will not be referred to in this research project if you do not want it to be. If you have any concerns after your participation, you can request to review the notes from our discussions. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. If you share anything that puts yourself or others at harm, we will need to work together to follow up to find supports and report the situation.

Length of time involved: You are asked to contribute 0.5 day for the activities.

Recording and Transcription: Our discussion will be recorded and written out.

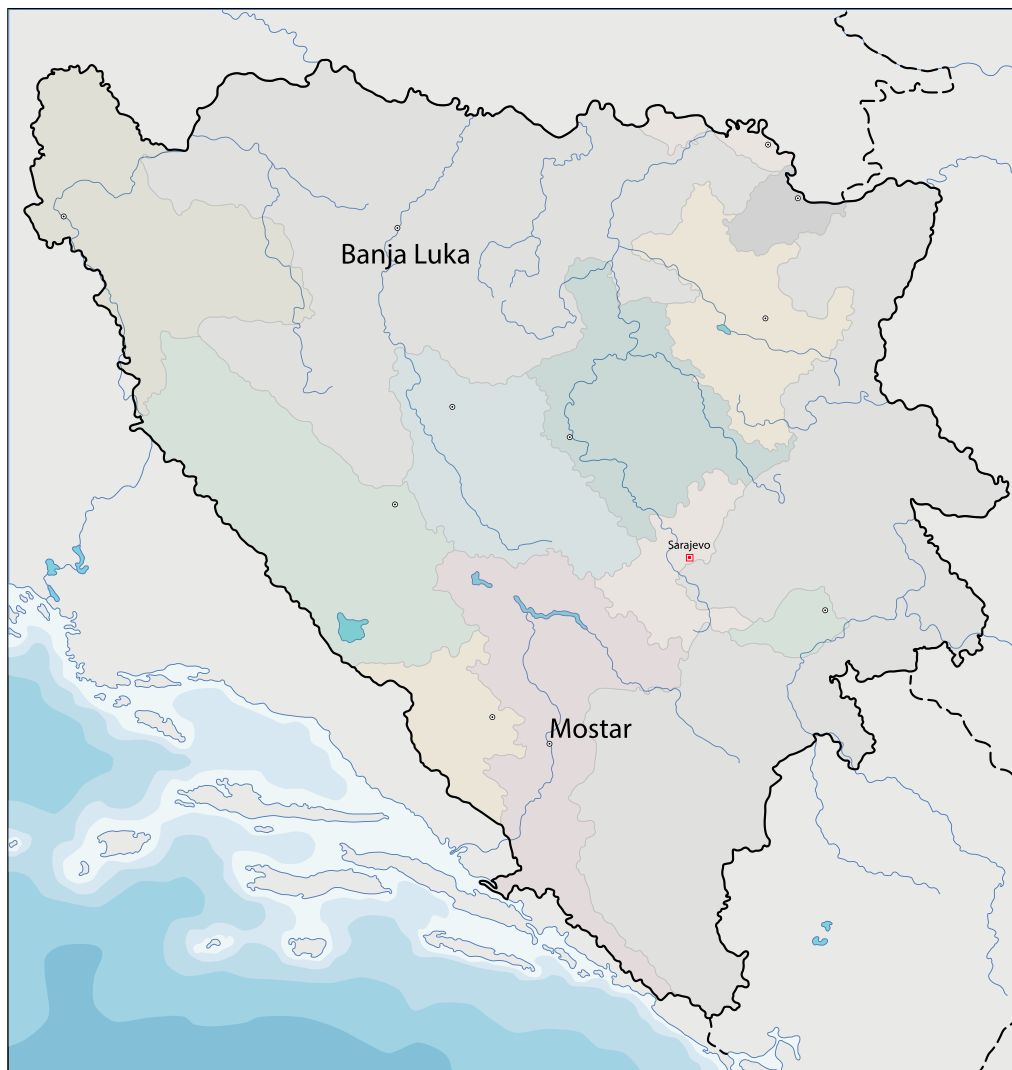
Agreement: Please sign this form for your consent.

Name of Participant, printed

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix E: Map of Research Sites





Regional Research
**ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS IN
SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

Country Report: Bosnia and Herzegovina

In partnership with: International Institute for Child Rights
and Development & Child Hub

Researcher: Ivana Zecevic and Nela Marinkovic
Date: 20 November 2020