CHILD PROTECTION HUB
FOR SOTH EAST EUROPE

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CHILD PROTECTION HUB

Regional Research

ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

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Final Report Authors and Researchers:

Kathleen Manion, Laura Lee, Vanessa Currie, Laura Wright, Wahida Raman, Ben Cislaghi

Country Report Authors and Researchers:

Bujar Gallopeni, Izela Tahsini, Slavica Milojevic, Daniela Terzi-Barbarosie, Antoaneta Mateeva, Irina Costache, Tatjana Lazor, Sanja Gajic, Ivana Zecevic, with Judit Nemeth-Almasi, Sendrine Constant

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Researcher Bios -

Executive Summary

Introduction

It is no longer possible to ignore the significant and widespread impact violence has on children. It influences children and young people in the short and long term, but also sometimes across generations. Violence against children and young people happens in schools, in homes, in their communities, and across various systems that touch the lives of children. In South East Europe, violence against children and young people is pervasive.

This research project investigates the experiences of violence that children experience at school and enroute to and from school. This study particularly focuses on understanding the social and gender norms impacting school-related, gender-based violence (SRGBV), and the role of children and young people in challenging these social norms.

With Child Protection Hub South East Europe, Terre des hommes, and the Institute for International Child Rights and Development (IICRD), this study was conducted in eight countries in South East Europe, specifically in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, and Serbia. The purpose of the research was: **to explore the social and gender norms impacting school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), and the potential role of children and young people in challenging these social norms.** This qualitative research project collected data through participatory research activities and focus groups with young people and key supportive adults across two sites within each country. The research was guided by the following research questions:

What do we know about the incidence and type of violence that children and young people are facing in and around school in South East Europe, as well as the children and young people that are most impacted by it? Sub-questions included:

1. What are the social and gender norms of school children and young people, community members and school professionals related to violence against children and young people?

2. What are the social and gender norms of school children and young people, community members and school professionals related to gender-based violence against children and young people?

3. What are the informal and formal mechanisms, child-led actions, community resources, values and services that protect children and young people from violence and promote children and young people's well-being?

4. To what degree do children and young people 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?

5. How have children and young people's experience of violence in and around school changed since COVID-19?

Within this research social norms refer to one person's beliefs about what others typically do in a situation X (descriptive norms), and what actions other people approve and disapprove in a situation X (injunctive norms) (Cialdini et al., 1991).The research looked at the constellation of social and gender norms that affect violence against children both in direct and indirect ways; how social norms intersect with other non-normative factors; and how both social and gender norms play a role in sustaining violence against children in South East Europe.

Findings

The findings provided interesting information about the prevalence of violence experienced by children and young people across the eight countries, as well as the social and gender norms that influenced behaviour related to children and young people's experience of violence. Key findings have been summarised below.

Experiences of Violence - Incidence, Types, Locations, Perpetrators

- Participants overwhelmingly reported violence in all its forms. However, the most frequently reported forms of violence were psychological violence and bullying, as well as sexual violence and harassment of girls. In contextualising violence, one young person said: "This phenomenon has been, is and will always remain, that the strong is above the weak" (young person, Kosovo).

- Young participants showed an awareness of the consequences of violence, including the long-term impacts. The intensity and duration of violence varied greatly across countries, with serious physical and psychological impacts as a result at one end of the continuum, and minor infractions at the other end. "Violence can destroy a person's future" (young person, Kosovo). "I think psychological violence is worse. You get beaten up and it passes, but with psychological...you have longer consequences" (young person, Serbia).

- Many participants noted the serious impacts of sexual violence, but also identified the long-term impacts of psychological, verbal, emotional violence and bullying, particularly in serious cases. "Bullying is happening constantly. I think it is dangerous" (young person, Albania).

- COVID-19 appears to have increased the incidence of domestic violence and online harassment and cyberbullying. "Those who were violated at home, used to have an escape. ... Especially during the quarantine, isolation became extreme" (young person, Albania).

- Looking holistically at violence — including at physical, emotional, and psychological forms of violence experienced by students — participants reported a lack of safety in homes and a lack of safety enroute to and from school. In some locations, the research identified specific areas of concern, such as bus shelters, the school yard, school bus and local shops, which can be addressed at the local level.

- Violence that was identified and discussed focused on individual experiences of violence. There was a dearth of focus on systemic violence, for example systemic violence as a result of the climate crisis or institutional and systemic violence experienced by marginalised populations. As an exception, there was some recognition of systemic violence that disproportionately impacted minority groups.

- Likewise, violence was also depersonalised, i.e., it happens to others, but not me.

- Incidents of violence appeared to reinforce existing power dynamics. Young people noted that violence perpetuated labelling the "strong" over the "weak", whether dynamics are based on ethnicity, status, gender or other factors. The impact can be profound. "They called me all sorts of names. They used very bad names because of my appearances. I kept thinking I didn't care, but I did care. I cried" (young person, Bosnia-Herzegovina).

- Other various perpetrators were named, particularly fathers, teachers, other adults, but the most common was peers.

Gender, Diversity, Marginalisation

- There were clear distinctions in the experiences of victims and perpetrators that were aligned with gender. Participants said girls were much more likely to experience sexual violence and boys were much more likely to experience and engage in physical violence. Girls were more likely to report violence than boys, and more likely to experience victim blaming.

- There was some evidence of trends where girls were imitating the physically violent acts of boys, purportedly as an act of protection (e.g., Albania).

- Victim blaming seemed to be strong for sexual violence perpetrated against girls. Shame was identified as a prevalent consequence of experiencing sexual violence and harassment.

- While research teams focused on marginalised populations, specific to their contexts, this did not feature heavily in all reports. It was a large factor in Romania, with discrimination against Roma children and young people being highlighted. There was recognition that children and young people from marginalised groups were more likely to experience violence across a range of types and settings. Participants highlighted that both Roma people and refugees experienced higher levels of violence, and participants noted they were also more likely to be blamed for higher levels of violence. Higher levels of violence also existed for students with disabilities, students from low socioeconomic status families, and children and young people who were seen as weaker or quieter.

- Poverty also factored into some groups, where people living in poverty were at greater risk of experiencing violence.

Insights on Social and Gender Norms

Social Norms

Across all countries, we found a system of social norms that (1) limited reporting of violence, (2) increased the use of violence, (3) increased the acceptance of violence and (4) limited the intervention of third parties. In general, social norms promulgated violence, minimised its impact and curbed reporting, particularly in cases of violence seen as mild or moderate. These social and gender norms intersected with a range of non-normative factors. Traditional gender roles also

featured heavily in the social and gender norms that participants highlighted. Participants noted a degree of passivity where they assumed that children and young people did not engage in violence because "they know better" or because violence is seen as unchangeable. This dismissive norm helped keep violence unrecognised. As one participant stated: "Violence among children will exist as long as children are human, and there is very little that we can say and do about it" (adult participant, Romania).

Overall, there were strong descriptive (beliefs of what others do) and injunctive (beliefs of what others approve) norms that prevented the naming of violence as such, reporting violence, and that perpetuated attitudes of blame and shame for the violence that took place.

Norms that limited reporting included descriptive norms: *all children experience violence, but they don't report it; injunctive norms: strong children do not suffer from episodes of violence … it is not appropriate for children to report violence to the police and teachers … if a child experiences violence it's their fault and they will be blamed.*

- Shame for being a victim was a strong feature identified by young people, which also impacted the rates of reporting.

- The Bystander Effect was noted, particularly in Albania, where people feared repercussions if they acted in a particular way. This both promoted and mitigated violence to varying degrees.

- Some people avoided getting involved for fear of repercussions. "It is that double-edged sword whether or not to report violence." (adult participant, Serbia)

- Non-normative factors or actions that positively or negatively affected reporting included: trust, feeling it is too big, weighing the severity, undermining the importance of reporting, assuming it is someone else's responsibility, deferring to others to report for you, feeling alone, not wanting to bother people, disclosing non-verbally/peripherally, implementing policies and procedures, and avoidance.

Social norms that increased the use of violence included descriptive norms: *everyone uses violence; injunctive norms: certain forms of violence are acceptable, others are not.* In terms of the latter, there was a strong push to exact revenge or right a wrong, particularly among boys. This was linked to a concept of male honour or protecting the family/group.

- For both boys and girls, victim blaming was also a feature in several countries' reports. The concept of deserved violence emerged in several areas, across genders.

Normative justification for the acceptance of violence was provided, including injunctive norms: *when a child experiences violence, they did something to deserve it; real men use violence with their lovers; people who use violence are strong and deserve respect; people who use violence are honourable; it's appropriate to punish boys more harshly.* Additionally, there were a range of social norms that emerged in coping with being victimised, including retaliating, keeping it secret, or running away from it.

Young people see violence as normal, the most normal thing for them is that groups beat each other, that we beat each other, that people in relationships beat each other

— mentally, physically, in all directions — because it is presented to us, all the time as something normal, and it should not be (young person, Croatia).

- Within the constellation of non-normative factors influencing the use of violence, participants noticed these actions that mitigate or support violence: displacing responsibility, gathering and protecting together, offering alternatives, following rules to keep safe, telling others.

Social norms that emerged that limited third parties' interventions included descriptive norms: *people do as their parents did; injunctive norms: those who intervene will be ridiculed; teachers and police are untrustworthy; why bother, they don't listen to children and young people anyway.* These normative attitudes reduced the ability of third parties to intervene.

Gender Norms

There were a range of ways that gender factored into how violence was perceived, experienced, and redressed. The social norms that dictated behaviour and the roles that different genders are expected to take also differed. In many instances, there were both surface and deep illustrations of this with ideas that "boys will be boys" and that "respectable girls are not violent", yet the research also suggested that girls were seen to be becoming more violent over time.

- Patriarchal norms were prominent, differentiated by gender. This was also entrenched in patriarchal parenting practices. Protection of female purity seemed to feature across countries.

- There were some other features that were distinct for boys and girls, where boys were found to more likely use physical violence, girls were more likely to use psychological violence.

  – One young participant summed it up in this way: *"girls are more prone to start a fight, usually without a real reason such as someone who talked about someone else and so on...[...] Verbal fights can become physical fights and girls are fighting much more. Girls fight over boys, but it doesn't happen the other way around"* (young person, Romania).

- While tradition was seen as an important way to promulgate social and gender norms, some young people, particularly in Serbia, noted the role of the media in promoting social norms.

Circles of Protection - Informal and Formal

- The circle of support varied across countries, but often included family (parents/carers), school professionals, peers, with other external institutions, including police, being least impactful. In general, it seems that the circle of protection was quite small and included those closest to the young people.

- There was a notable lack of trust in police and other statutory services across several countries by the young people. Lack of knowledge, coupled with perceptions of corruption, lack of privacy of information and lack of trust of efficacy emerged in the data. This was further highlighted by a lack of access to professional supports outside school.

- Overall, there seemed to be a sense that there were insufficient formal protective educational supports in place. Although prevention workshops and education had been provided, it did not appear to be sufficiently effective. The young people limited their trust to a relatively small number of favourite teachers or occasionally a school psychologist and sometimes felt there were few avenues to take to redress violence. *"Can children complain? Well, they can, but hardly anyone will pay much attention to them, because they are small and no one believes them"* (young person, Bulgaria).

Self Efficacy

- Notably, the young participants did not see themselves as agents of change and they did not report feeling a strong sense of self efficacy or ability to inspire safety. They also did not feel like they had a voice. *"I don't know who to look for, I'll take care of myself. My father says that if I want to succeed in life, I have to take care of myself"* (young person, Bulgaria).

- Across some countries, participants communicated a sense of helplessness and a lack of agency to make a difference on issues of violence or to be heard by adults. This was supported by some participants who reported that some teachers and parents trivialize violence and lack empathy. *"My parents would say that is my fault"* (young person, Moldova).

- There were some indications that children and young people, particularly girls, walk to and from school together to create safety. In some countries young people noted that peers were more likely to report violence that happened to others than they were to report violence that happened to them. In Albania, researchers also highlighted that violence appeared to be focused on individual incidents rather than collective or systemic experiences, thereby mitigating collective action.

  - *I think it should all start from the parents. They should know what society we are living in. Every decade things change. When the parent knows how to educate their child, tomorrow this child won't be a danger to society. It all starts with parental education, when they teach children from a young age not to offend, not to insult* (young person, Albania).

- Those that felt that they had a voice and could make change tended to have resources on hand, including a supportive family, and social standing. Some young people also felt more forthright (e.g., Croatia), but others felt they lacked agency: *"Maybe someday we'll be able to change something later, not now. Who will take us seriously? Especially some small-town, eighth-grade girl..."* (young person, Serbia).

Recommendations

Key recommendations were gathered from the seven countries and are presented below thematically.

Preventing and Addressing Violence Against Children and Young People in Schools, including Gender-based Violence

1. **Identify various forms of violence that occur in schools, who they are**

likely to happen to and map where they are likely to occur.

2. **Co-create a school-wide plan to end violence against children and young people, with children and young people's input.**

3. **Pay particular attention to gender-based violence** and incorporate these into school-wide end-violence plans.

4. **Introduce a zero-tolerance policy for teachers and other professionals on corporal punishment** and provide training on more effective behaviour-management strategies.

5. **Build in safe, secure and simple reporting mechanisms** for children and young people to report violence when they experience it or witness it. Fully explore reasons why reporting is not happening and address these challenges.

Child Protection/Safeguarding Policies

6. **Develop, fund, implement and enforce child protection policies related to the prevention of violence against children and young people,** as well as policies related to protecting children and young people from violence (Albania, Moldova, Serbia, Kosovo).

7. **Where they exist, implement existing policies within the child protection system as well as other services related to preventing, protecting, and responding to violence against children and young people in schools.** Ensure adequate budget support for implementation, such as increasing the number of psychologists and social workers in schools to support mental health. Build in accountability processes to ensure perpetrators are discouraged from repeat offenses, including, where appropriate, enforcing convictions against perpetrators (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Kosovo).

8. Implement existing child protection **policies to ensure the media manages child abuse and sexual abuse cases in an ethical manner,** and reduce the negative role of media through disciplinary measures (Albania).

9. Build in **child safeguarding practices in online social media platforms** so that children and young people can report online violence and bullying.

Awareness, outreach, and social norm change

10. **Discuss and make explicit social and gender norms** that promote violence against children and young people so that they can be challenged. Open dialogue with communities and schools on ways to disrupt negative social norms, particularly around tolerance of violence against children and young people.

11. Develop c**ommunity-based programs to raise awareness about violence against children and young people and its prevention,** including a focus on the roles that both children, young people, and adults play as perpetrators and victims of violence and the impact of violence on children and young people (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia, Romania, Kosovo).

12. Develop **systemic campaigns directed at changing social norms that tolerate or support violence** in general, and violence against children and

young people in particular. Campaigns designed and promoted across sectors are required involving authorities, schools, community-based organizations, children and young people and other key stakeholders (Kosovo).

13. **Involve children, young people, families, and communities in social norm change focused on attitudes and practices related to violence and gender-based violence against children and young people** in schools. For example, develop training resources and curricula that promote norms and values, such as gender equality, non-violence and empathy (Romania). Support processes that challenge the harmful elements of patriarchal gender norms.

Engaging children, young people, and community

14. **Children and young people's voices and experiences must be a starting point for any anti-violence awareness campaign or intervention and children and young people need to be involved as co-creators of content.** Interventions need to take into account children and young people's experiences, their voices as well as their practical strategies for navigating violent circumstances in order to efficiently prevent and address violence against children and young people in school (Romania).

15. **Normalize conversations around violence and reporting to address feelings of shame,** ensuring children and young people know who to go to report an incident and to receive support. Work with schools and school authorities to develop trust with children and young people, so that when they witness or experience violence, they feel comfortable reporting this and/or seeking support (Romania, Kosovo).

16. **Address challenging social norms around violence, gender and exclusion in schools, with a focus on well-being.**

17. **Address social norms that discourage help-seeking behaviour.** Encourage children and young people to seek safe supportive relationships.

18. **Support processes that promote children and young people's social agency, self-efficacy and change-making capacity.** This begins with promoting spaces where they can share their ideas, thoughts and perspectives.

School-based training and programming

19. Develop **school-based programs for children, young people, and families at risk of violence against children and young people**, with a specific focus on gender and gendered experiences of violence. Starting from a young age, provide information and raise awareness about VAC, strategies for preventing violence, reinforce anti-bullying and peer-to peer support strategies. Motivate parental involvement in schools and encourage open communication between parents/carers and teachers around violence against children and young people (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Romania, Serbia).

20. **Develop programs and curricula focused on how children and young people can protect themselves from violence while** ensuring that children and young people are never blamed for their experiences. Include a focus on enhancing agency, well-being and resilience, promoting good decision

making, building values, and life skills such as taking responsibility for actions and avoiding dangerous situations. Empower children and young people from a young age to understand their rights, the power of their voice, and involve children and young people in program development, including the planning of violence prevention and protection programs (Moldova, Serbia).

21. Ensure **training for educators and community support workers includes a focus on minority and marginalized groups, addressing social norms related to violence against children and young people,** especially in communities with high numbers of refugees. In addition, ensure that children and young people from minority or marginalized communities have access to social and psychological services to deal with the higher prevalence of violence they experience (Serbia, Romania).

22. **Provide science-based and age-appropriate sex education in schools** that includes topics such as sexual violence and sexual harassment on an offline (Romania).

23. Create a **gender-awareness curricula for teachers**, including a focus on gender equality, gender norms, gender-based violence, gender stereotypes and gender roles, with practical examples of how to prevent SRGBV, particularly in vulnerable communities where little specialized support for children and young people exists (Romania).

24. Develop **mechanisms within the school system to address child protection and safeguarding concerns,** including identifying focal points, regulations and protocols to be carried out across the education system (Kosovo).

Community-based interventions

25. Develop **community-based services and interventions to challenge and transform harmful social and gender norms that perpetuate violence,** and ensure these stress respect for human rights. This could include public campaigns to eradicate any form of violence against children and young people and campaigns to promote children's rights and dignity (Albania, Moldova, Serbia).

26. Develop **community-based parenting programs to support positive parenting practices** such as communication with children and young people, supporting children and young people's agency in self-protection and peer-protection, while addressing social norms that maintain violence, gender-based differences and social exclusion. Promote healthy relationships between adults and children and young people that support well-being (Albania, Moldova, Serbia, Romania).

27. **Build professionals' socio-emotional competencies,** through training, to relate empathetically to victims and perpetrators of violence (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia, Romania).

28. **Increase professional awareness about the importance of child participation,** and work with school professionals to promote children and young people's meaningful engagement in school and the community, including providing training and resources (Serbia, Romania).

Cross-sectoral collaboration

29. **Invest in social protection structures, welfare mechanisms and supports,** such as centres for social work, community police and child protection centres, that facilitate reporting of violence in general and violence against children and young people in particular to relevant authorities and the support required by both victims and perpetrators (Kosovo).

30. **Strengthen collaboration between systems and structures,** including within the education system and the community to adequately address and respond to violence against children and young people (Kosovo).

Further Research

31. **Conduct further targeted research** on the experiences of violence of children and young people identifying as LGBTQ+, children and young people with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and children and young people from marginalised groups.

Table of Contents

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, but also sometimes 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 one billion, half of all children between the ages of 2-17 had experienced violence, abuse or neglect within the previous year. Violence against children happens in schools, in homes, in their 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.

Note, this paper refers to both children and young people as those 18 years old and younger, it generally refers to the young research participants as young people.

1.2 Social Norms and their influence on children's lives

The great variety of approaches and theoretical standpoints can generate confusion to those who want to apply social norms theory to real-life problems. At their most basic, social norms are rules of appropriate and normal action, shared by people in a given society or group. More specifically, social norms are a type of beliefs.
As they experience the world, human beings form beliefs about how the world functions. Three main types of beliefs exist: (1) beliefs about the self (e.g., *I exist, I am worthy, I am a child, I am a woman)*, (2) beliefs about the material world (e.g., *the sun rises in the morning, fire burns, things fall*), and (3) beliefs about others (e.g., *some people like to go to the beach, most people in my town go to school when they're young*).

Social norms are beliefs about others. Among the many schools of social norms theory, the most commonly used in child protection and children's rights (and

more generally in global health and international development) draws on the work by Cialdini and colleagues (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Cialdini et al., 1991; Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Schultz et al., 2007). Their theory describes social norms as one person's beliefs about 1) what others typically do in a situation X; and 2) what actions other people **approve and disapprove** in a situation X. These scholars called beliefs of the first type **descriptive** norms, and beliefs of the second type **injunctive** norms (Cialdini et al., 1991).

Both descriptive and injunctive norms can affect what people do. If one person believes that most people will get on the train at 9:30am, for instance, they might decide to get on the 10am train. Similarly, if one person believes that most people disapprove of tattoos at work, they might cover their tattoos with long shirts.

There are several reasons why people comply with social norms. These include:
- Socialisation, Internalisation, and Automaticity. As children are socialised into life in their contexts, norms become unconscious behavioural patterns. Compliance with norms becomes automatic, rather than the result of internal rational deliberation.

- Social Identity. Adherence to norms becomes a symbol of being part of a group.

- Enforcement. Norms compliance can be enforced by people in positions of power who have an interest in keeping the status quo.

- Positive and negative sanctions. Norm compliance can happen when people anticipate negative sanctions (punishment) for non-compliers and positive sanctions (rewards) for compliers. Positive sanctions might include being praised, rewarded, and allowed in the group of adults. Negative sanctions might include being gossiped about, threatened, or physically injured.

In the last 15 years, there has been a surge of interest in using social norms theory to solve daunting social dilemmas that affect children's lives, such as female genital cutting (Shell-Duncan et al., 2018), child marriage (Cislaghi et al., 2019), sexual exploitation (McCleary-Sills et al., 2013), corporal punishment (Lokot et al, 2020), and access to girls' education (Chamarbagwala et al., 2006), to cite a few examples. The influence of norms has been studied extensively as contributing to parents' decisions to cut their daughters (worrying their daughters might be ostracized otherwise), to marry them off (worrying they might have premarital sex that would throw the family into shame), hit their children (worrying other parents might think they're not good ones), or send their daughters to school (worrying that they might attract inappropriate boys' attention).

The universe of social norms affecting children's lives are complex and multi-faceted. While at times the norm is a mirror of the practice, other times the constellation of norms surrounding the harmful practice are not directly related to it. As an example of the former, consider parents who decide to get their daughter's genitals cut because there are norms that respectable girls should be cut. Other instances, instead, do not have such a direct relation norm-practice (as we mentioned). As an example of this latter case, consider child marriage: parents might decide to marry their daughters off, not because there is a norm that girls

should be married early, but because there is a strong norm that respectable girls should not be pregnant out of marriage. Afraid their daughters might meet negative sanctions for not complying with this norm, these parents might arrange a marriage soon after puberty.

A group of scholars and activists gathered in Baltimore in 2018 to make sense of how norms specifically affect violence. They suggested that there are four domains of norms increasing likelihood of experiencing violence: 1) Norms limiting reporting of violence; 2) Norms increasing use of violence; 3) Norms increasing acceptance of violence when experiencing it; and 4) Norms limiting third party's interventions (Cislaghi et al., 2019).

'Cornerstone Norms' affecting Violence Against Woman and Violence Against Children

Figure 1 'Cornerstone Norms' affecting Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children

While interest in social norms theory has generated new pathways for research and action, scholars in child protection have been advocating for integrating a social norms perspective as part of multi-layered intervention designs. Rather than considering approaches that target exclusively the set of norms, child protection activists have reported greater success in understanding how norms intersect with other factors affecting parents' decisions and actions. Cislaghi and Heise (2019) have suggested a framework to look at how normative and non-normative factors intersect. In their work, they have urged researchers and activists to consider the ways in which these factors affect each other, to make better sense of the nuances in which normative influences spill over into other domains of people's life, including material, individual and institutional domains. Through this lens, it is possible to identify ways that may shift social norms.

Global
- e.g. Rising consumerism
- Globalisation
- Technological innovation Ideologies (human rights, fundamentalism)

Institutional
- e.g. Laws-family inheritance, property institutions
- Governance structures (political representation)
- Economic policy (tax structure, social protection, job market)
- Criminal justice system

Material
- e.g. Availability of services
- Transport
- Infrastructure
- Available assets (property, land, jobs, livestock)

POWER GENDER

Individual
- e.g. Factual beliefs
- Aspirations
- Skills
- Attitudes
- Self-efficacy

Social
- e.g. Social networks and support
- Avilability of models
- Postive deviants

Figure 2 - Power, Gender and Social Norms

Finally, gender norms are worthy of particular mention. Cislaghi and Heise (2020) conducted an introductory historical exploration of the two terms. They suggest that gender norms could be defined as a subset of social norms. More specifically:

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. (p.415)

Their definition operationalised the attempt to work across two fields of research and action (work done in child protection using a social norms lens, and work done to transform gender and power relations, conducted using a gender-norms lens).

In this report, we used these insights to produce a study where we looked at (1) the constellation of norms that affect violence against children both in a direct and indirect way; (2) how social norms intersect with other non-normative factors; and (3) how both social and gender norms play a role in sustaining violence against children in Eastern Europe.
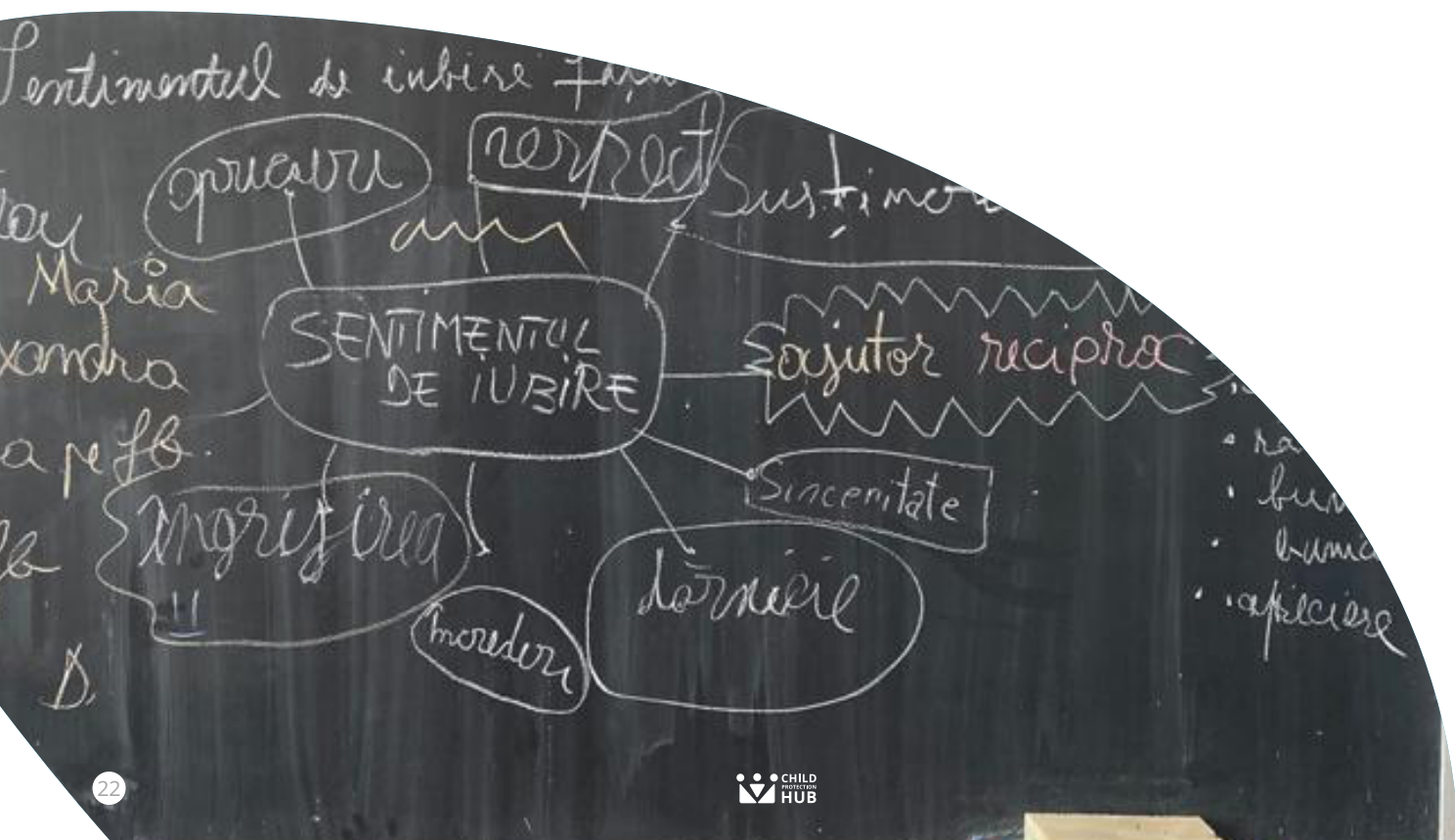
Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review sought to explore what has been written in grey and academic literature on the level and kinds of violence that children and young people experience within South East Europe, especially in schools. This included an exploration of the experience of gender-based violence in schools, the social norms promoting violence against children and young people in schools, and any student responses to violence in schools. The review also endeavoured to identify gaps in the research. The latter is salient, as limited academic and grey literature is available attesting to the level of violence against children and young people in schools in South East Europe. Despite this, the literature review explores the literature that has been produced on the intersection of violence against children and young people in schools in South East Europe and the social and gender norms impacting school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV).

Methodology

In this literature review, academic and grey literature was used based on its quality, relevance, findings, and applicability. The review drew on multiple search engines inclusive of: Google Scholar, JSTOR, Google, Google Books, and Mendeley.) Relevant country specific publications between 2009 and 2019 were given preference to understand the particular situation, current development and changes in the area of violence against children and young people in schools and more specifically the social and gender norms impacting on school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in South East Europe. Seminal work prior to 2009, if pertinent, was also included. Most of the literature (specifically the survey reports) were based on sample surveys in South East European Countries.

The structure of the literature review is as follows:
• Violence against children and young people in schools – Nature and Type

• Gender-based violence in schools

• Social Norms Promoting violence against children and young people in Schools

• Students response towards school violence

• Research Gaps.

Before moving on to the analysis of the literature, it is important to understand the landscape of violence against children and young people in South East Europe in order to grasp a complete picture about the subject.

2.3 The Landscape of Violence against Children and Young People in South East Europe

Violence against children and young people is a common phenomenon reported across the globe. In South East Europe, violence against children and young people (VAC) is known to be prevalent in all the countries. It also does not appear to be on the decline, as seen in Moldova (Arends et al., 2016). UNICEF Moldova (Arends et al., 2016) reports that 76% of Moldovan children (2–14 years) experience corporal punishment as a discipline method in schools, homes and within communities. Child sexual abuse is one of the increasing crimes against children and young people that continues to be largely unreported in Moldova (Arends et al., 2016). Also, in Moldova, Arends et al. (2016) suggest that poverty was correlated with higher rates of experiencing violence among children and young people. In Serbia, VAC is happening in different forms. Use of violent disciplining methods such as corporal punishment, psychological aggression, severe physical punishment are treated as legitimate and advisable practice in child rearing (UNICEF Serbia, 2017). Small children (age 1–4 years) are particularly at risk of exposure to physical violence, more so than older children and young people (age 5–14) (UNICEF Serbia, 2017). Girls are more frequently exposed to physical violence than boys (UNICEF Serbia, 2017). In Albania, there is a high prevalence of abuse and neglect against children and young people in both homes and schools. The most frequently reported forms of abuse and neglect in Albania were psychological (50%), physical (40%), and sexual (6%) (WHO, 2016).

Organised violence against children and young people is also a concern in some parts of South East Europe. For instance, Romania is one of the major countries in Europe that stands as a country of origin, transit, and destination for child trafficking (ECPAT, 2006). According to ECPAT (2006), most of the time parents of trafficked children and young people have sent children and young people outside the country knowing that their child will be exploited sexually or otherwise. Girls are frequently recruited through false promises, made by friends or relatives. ECPAT (2006) reports that Romania also has the highest number of street children involved in prostitution or have been forced to engage in the production of pornographic material and exploited at a tender age (ECPAT, 2006). Girls and young boys are the main victims of rape among Romanian street children (ECPAT, 2006).

In Bulgaria, UNICEF (2016) reports that each year about 3,500 reports of violence against children and young people are received. Further, 68% of parents/carers accept the use of "reasonable violence" as a means to discipline their children and young people (UNICEF Bulgaria, 2016). Over 4200 incidents of violence are reported

against children and young people every year in schools (UNICEF Bulgaria, 2016). Violence has a huge impact on children and young people's future. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, 57% of children aged 2-14 years are exposed to violence both physical and psychological violence as a method of discipline in homes by their parents or household members (UNICEF, 2010). And yet according to UNICEF KOSOVO (2017) much of the practice of violence against children and young people is invisible to the general public in Kosovo society due to social beliefs and norms. Children and young people in the general population tend to experience physical violence from the ages of 1 -13 years however in minority groups such as Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, children and young people are exposed to physical violence until marriage (UNICEF Kosovo, 2017). 43% of children and young people within these communities are married by the age of 18. In Croatia, it was reported that 10.8% of children and young people between 11 and 16 years experienced some form of sexual abuse during childhood with girls experiencing more non-contact sexual abuse than boys (Ajduković et al., 2010).

While this study did not focus on the macro issues affiliated with violence against children and young people in South East Europe, Arends et al. (2016) noted the correlation between decentralisation of social protection and lower levels of funding associated with redressing violence against children and young people in Moldova.

Lessons Learned from the Literature Review 2.4

Violence against children and young people in schools in South East Europe: Nature and Type:
Physical Violence:

Physical Violence

Second Highest Across South Easter Europe

Corporal Punishment

Methods of Discipline

School Bullying

Exclusion and Superiority

Peer Violence

Methods of Solving Problem Between Students

Forms of physical Violence

Pushing, Pinching, Strangling and Hitting and Grabbing

Major Violence Prone School Areas

Classrooms, Corridors, School yards, Locker rooms Toilets and Café outside Schools

Main Preparators

Peers, Teachers, School staff and Student from Another school

Results

School Dropout and Frequently absent in school, Develop Anxiety, Negative Attitude Towards School
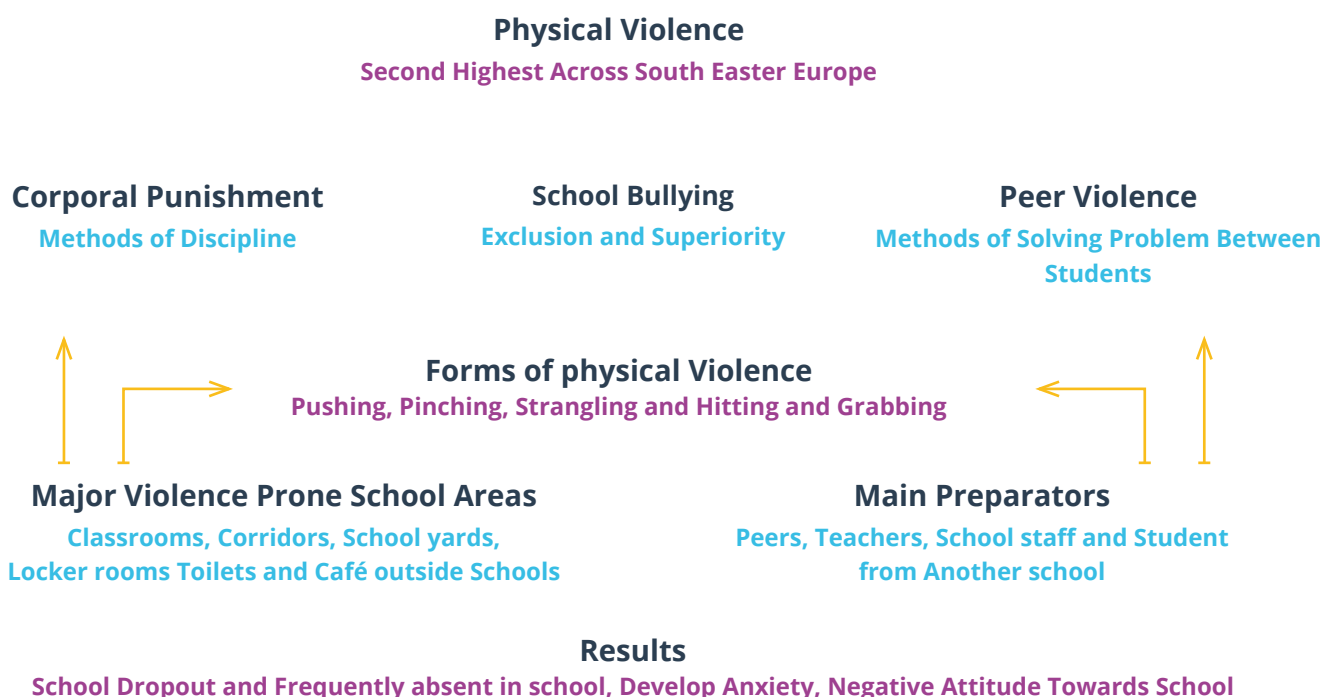
Figure 3. Physical violence affecting children and young people in schools in South East Europe

The physical violence against children and young people is common and very similar in nature across South East Europe. It is largely accepted in the school environment as a form of discipline. All actors are equally involved and responsible for such unethical behaviours in education systems.

In Moldova physical abuse is commonly reported starting from children and young people as young as three years of age and continued until 18 years of age (WHO, 2018). According to BECAN (2012), violence against children and young people varies in relation to age, gender, or geographical areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina. children and young people in the distinct age categories of 11,13 and 16 years of age faced the highest level of physical violence as a method of discipline in school and homes, with 68% of children and young people in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BECAN Bosnia, 2012) and 66.7% in Croatia reported to be affected (BECAN Bosnia, 2012). In schools, it is suggested that all forms of violence are still perceived and used as a means of education or discipline from pre-school to upper secondary education in Albania (UNICEF Albania, 2018). 48.4% of Albanian children and young people experienced at least one form of physical violence during their school life (prevalence), and 59.45% of the children and young people reported to have experienced physical violence during the past year (incidence) (Hazizaj et al., 2013). Physical violence against children and young people in schools also appears to be prevalent in Kosovo, whether as a form of discipline or as a form of solving the problems between the children and young people themselves. School and educational institutions are the premises where children and young people often experience violence (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). Nine out of ten students have experienced physical violence in schools at least once (Mustafa, 2018). Violence is implemented by both peers and teachers. In Kosovo, 34% of students are exposed to violence caused by their teachers (Thaci, 2018).

In most schools in Serbia, according to UNICEF Serbia (2017), violence against children and young people including physical violence is committed by school staff. In Bulgaria, 26.4% students, have conflict with their teachers due to corporal punishment or disciplinary policies and it increases the risk for students dropping out of school (Valkov, & Lavrentsova, 2019). In Prishtina, Kosovo, the situation at municipal public schools is a particular concern for safety. 21% of students do not feel safe in schools due to violence, whereas 47% of parents/carers feel their children and young people are unsafe in school. The school yards and toilets are considered to be the most unsafe place in schools and violence occurs during class breaks or during their return to home (UNDP, 2018). Physical violence encountered in schools reportedly includes pushing, pinching, strangling, hitting, etc. Physical violence is justified by children and young people themselves, who consider it as a legitimate form of disciplining (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017).

Peer to peer violence in the form of school bullying is a major form of violence that exists in schools. In Romania, 22% of children and young people have threatened beating another child, 16% had already beaten another child, and 30% had lightly hit another child (Save the Children Romania, 2016). In Serbia, 44% of students are exposed to peer-to-peer violence in school, of which 33% is physical violence. It is suggested that peer-to-peer violence is more common in urban environments than

rural areas (UNICEF Serbia, 2017). In Romania, the physical abuse against children and young people mostly took place in classrooms, corridors, school yards or in the locker rooms. In urban areas, 28% of students are feeling anxious about going to school due to violence that could involve them directly being victims or indirectly being a witness (Cristian, 2014).

Bullying is also the major type of violence present in special schools, such as schools for children and young people with disabilities. Children and young people with disabilities have been known to experience some form of violence in a preschool institution, at school, and at day care centres (UNICEF Serbia, 2017).

2.4.1 Psychological Violence

Figure 4. Psychological violence affecting children and young people in schools in South East Europe

Psychological violence is not considered as abuse in the Albanian context given their high prevalence and cultural acceptance of it, however, it is the most commonly reported form of violence by children (61.69%) (Hazizaj et al., 2013). Cristan (2014) asserts that the negative impact of psychological or verbal abuse is significantly higher among Romanian students compared to physical abuse. Psychological abuse also had a significantly higher prevalence among male students in Serbia. A study about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in the young population revealed that 36.7% of Serbian students had suffered from psychological abuse in their childhood and school life (WHO, 2015). In Kosovo, 59% of school children and young people suffered from psychological violence. The main forms of psychological violence exercised by students on each other is damage and destruction of their personal property (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). Children and young people from North Albania experience the highest rates of psychological violence compared to South Albania and Central Albania (Hazizaj et al., 2013).

The range of unethical behaviours displayed by teachers is wide in Albania, varying from minor behaviours to major acts. The most concerning unethical behaviours of teachers in schools includes excluding students from classrooms, threatening them with low marks, or failing them in an examination; using inappropriate communication such as insulting, sarcastic language, or derogatory nicknames; showing favouritism to particular students based on personal relations or preferences (ACER, 2017). The school norms that support favouritism impact students negatively. According to UNICEF Albania (2018), this prompts them to respond by being physically and verbally violent towards their peers and rude and disrespectful toward teachers and school staff). The primary school students from 5th–8th grade were more often victims of bullying by a teacher in Serbian schools (UNICEF Serbia, 2017). Teachers perceive bullying actions as a normal behaviour related to child growth and development (Kashahu, 2014).

School bullying and rejection by peers is the major form of psychological violence faced by students across South East Europe. Peer rejection is also suggested to increase loneliness, anxiety, and distress among students in Bulgaria (Valkov & Lavrentsova, 2019). It has been associated with indifference and loss in academic motivation and school performance (Valkov & Lavrentsova, 2019). In Bosnia-Herzegovina, 72.3% children and young people experienced psychological violence in schools in 2012, inclusive of verbal insults, such as, being called stupid and lazy, or through non-verbal alienation by being ignored by other children and young people (BECAN, Bosnia, 2012). Verbal bullying has a much higher incidence than physical bullying in schools. In Romania, younger children are more likely to be victims of bullying compared to older students in school (Cosma, 2014). The most widespread form of bullying is psychological. A higher number of students in Albania have been subject to bullying or involved in bullying at least two to three times a month. Physical appearance e.g., being overweight, having language difficulties and being perceived as having physical weakness are cited as the major reasons why some children and young people are singled out and experience higher rates of school bullying (Dragoti & Ismaili, 2017). Belonging to certain groups

also increases the vulnerability to certain forms of violence. For instance, Arends et al. (2016) suggest that children and young people left behind because of migration in Moldova experience higher rates of violence.

2.4.1.1 Impacts of Psychological Violence

In Croatia, 73.04% of children and young people experienced some form of psychological violence during their lifetime or school life (BECAN Croatia, 2012). Benčić (2014) asserts that children and young people who suffer from violent acts in schools more often suffer from depression and are prone to having suicidal thoughts or psychiatric disorders. In Moldova, the discriminatory behaviour of teachers, peers' negligence and bad treatment from school authorities are considered the most common forms of psychological violence among students leading to school dropout and students frequently changing schools (Terre des hommes, 2018).

2.4.2 Sexual Violence

Sexual Violence:

| Sexual Violence | Less experienced by children in school | perpetrators - Adult male or school staff | inappropriate body touching, abusive messages, force to touch their intimate body parts etc. |
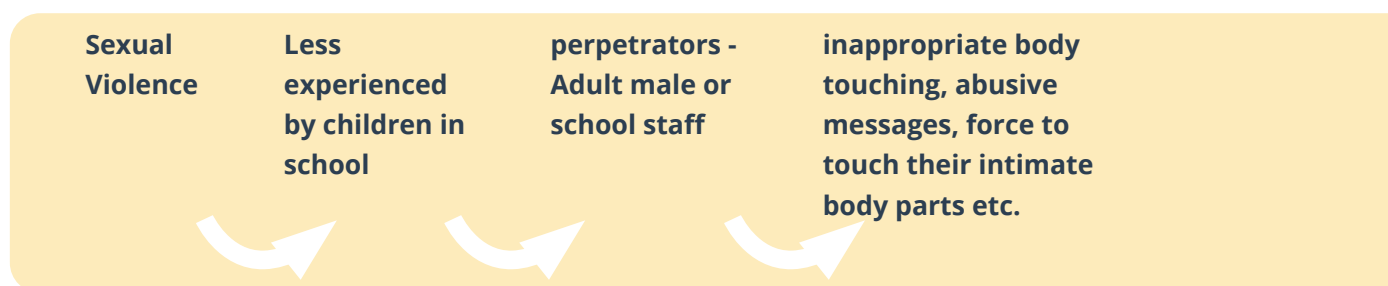
Figure 5. Sexual violence affecting children and young people in schools in South East Europe

Sexual violence is a less reported form of violence experienced by children and young people across South East Europe. According to Petroulaki et al. (2013), the rates of 'sexual adverse experiences' range from one in six to one in twenty across nine Balkan countries. They also note that there are higher rates of self reports of contact sexual violence for boys than for girls across seven of the nine countries. The CRCA (Hazizaj et al., 2013) proposes that boys experience higher rates of sexual violence and contact this sexual violence in schools. However, the literature reports a hesitancy of girls to disclose forms of sexual and gender-based violence, thus it can be assumed that the figures are likely much higher than reported (Hazizaj et al., 2013). For example, in Albania, the Hazizaj et al. (2013) posited a link between strong social norms such as the patriarchal mentality of the culture and girls hesitancy to disclose sexual abuse or exposure to sexual violence). In Moldova, sexual abuse appeared to be on the rise, constituting one quarter of all cases of violence against children and young people (Arends et al., 2016).

There is also some evidence of denial of sexual abuse. According to a survey entitled "Opinions and Perceptions Regarding Domestic Violence and Child Abuse",

completed by the Oak Foundation (n.d.), 17.5% of the population in Moldova assumes that child sexual abuse does not happen in their country. And yet, children and young people experienced sexual harassment in different forms including telling them things of sexual connotation or touching their intimate body parts against their will or forcing them to touch theirs (Oak Foundation, n.d.). In Bosnia-Herzegovina, 18.63 % of students in different age groupings (11-year-old, 13 years old and 16 years old) experienced sexual violence at some point in their life (BECAN, Bosnia, 2012). According to the Balkan Epidemiological Study on Child Abuse and Neglect in Croatia, the prevalence across the population of sexual violence is 10.18%, while contact sexual violence (as defined as rape, forced penetration, or unwanted sexual contact) was experienced by 4.5% of children and young people during their lifetime including school life in Croatia.

Despite the low rates of reporting by young women about sexual violence, it is known that the most common perpetrators of sexual violence are child/adolescent males or adult males (BECAN Croatia, 2012). Further, sexual violence against students is occurring in school settings in East Europe, for instance in Kosovo, UNICEF reported that school and institutions of education are the premises where students experience various body touching as a form of sexual violence (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). In most schools in Serbia, the sexual violence against children and young people is committed by school staff (UNICEF Serbia, 2017). The existence of sexual violence is equal in both rural and urban schools of Kosovo (Mustafa, 2018)

2.4.3 Gendered Differences in Violence in Schools

BOYS
Main Victim of physical and sexual violence in school
Highest exposer to corporal punishment
Main preparator of school bullying

GIRLS
Main Victim of psychological violence and negligence
Main victim of school bullying
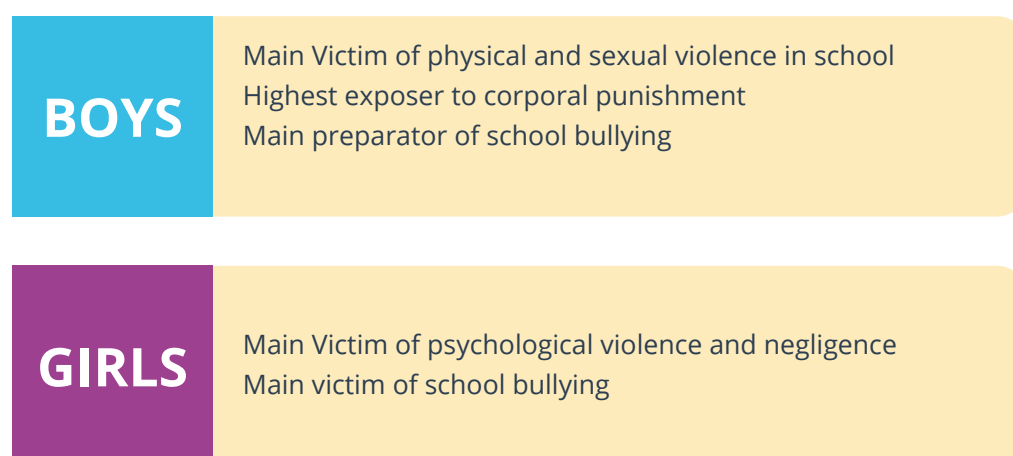
Figure 6. Gendered differences in violence against children and young people in schools in South East Europe

Gender plays a more influential role in the prevalence of certain types of violence in school. In Albania, it is reported that boys are the main perpetrators of bullying in schools and are less likely to be victims, whereas girls are more likely to be victims of bullying in school (Dragoti & Ismaili, 2017). In Romania, girls are less involved in bullying compared to boys (Cosma, 2014). On the other hand, in Albania boys experience higher rates of both sexual violence and contact sexual violence in schools, whereas girls experience higher levels of feelings of neglect (Hazizaj et al., 2013).

Girls are the most common victims of sex trafficking or forced labour, or are victims of early marriage in Albania (Byrne, 2014). In high schools in Albania, 68% of boys are exposed to violence as victims, whereas 32% of girls identified themselves as victims of violence in schools (Brahja, 2017). In Bosnia, 48% of children and young people were married before the age of 18. The highest percentage of child victims of early and forced marriages belonged to the poorest wealth quintile in Bosnia-Herzegovina (ECPAT, 2018).

According to a "Becan Epidemiological Survey on Child Abuse and Neglect", a higher number of girls in Bosnia reported feelings of neglect, both in schools and society (BECAN Bosnia, 2012). In the case of Kosovo, the girls were mainly victims of psychological violence because they were considered physically weak and therefore more vulnerable to bullying and for various psychological pressures (Mustafa, 2018).

Girls generally experience more neglect and psychological violence, while boys experience more physical violence and sexual violence (Mustafa, 2016). The boys in Moldova are more exposed to corporal punishment or physical violence in schools, but girls are the main victims of emotional abuse and forced sexual contact (WHO, 2018). In Serbia, boys reportedly faced higher rates of physical abuse and higher prevalence for situations in which they were pushed, grabbed, or hit by something that had been thrown at them (WHO, 2015). On the other hand, the incidence of violence of female students was smaller (Marković et al., 2016). Athletic ability also made a difference, 11.4% of sports women experienced violence, whereas 12.5% of non-sportswomen did (Marković et al., 2016).

2.4.4 Social and Cultural Norms Promoting Violence Against Children and Young People in Schools

The violence against children and young people is not considered abuse in the Albanian context due to cultural acceptance. Corporal punishment is largely accepted as a form of discipline in school and society (Hazizaj et al., 2013). Parents/carers approved of school authorities using psychological and physical violence against their children and young people to teach discipline. Parents/carers themselves can encourage the use of violent behaviours against their children and young people on school premises and in front of peers and teachers (ACER, 2017). 8.2% of females and 12.6% of males in Moldova believe that it is necessary for parents/carers to use corporal punishment to raise children and young people (IOM, 2019) and 76% of students had experienced violence as a method of discipline (UNICEF Moldova, 2012). In Kosovo, it also appears violence against children and young people in schools and at home is considered as a social norm and it is accepted by society (UNICEF Kosovo, 2017). Physical Violence or punishment is considered as a valid method of providing education or child discipline. It is applied by teachers in schools (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). In Moldova, people accept verbal violence against children and young people as acceptable and they have high rates of tolerance of it in schools and in society as a whole (Arends et al., 2016). Child sexual abuse is a sensitive issue in Moldovan society. The OAK Foundation found the general population underestimates the existence of child sexual abuse in their society or in schools (OAK foundation, n.d.).

Child sexual abuse is kept under strict secrecy in Albanian society due to the existing socio-cultural norms that seek to preserve "honour" and refraining from sexual activity until marriage. This precludes some from discussing it or reporting it. Early marriage (often involving 14 and 15-year-old girls) is a prevalent practice in rural communities and Roma communities to ensure virginity until marriage (Cenko & Thartori, 2016). According to Cenko & Thartori (2016), people believe that if they educate children and young people about sex or sexual abuse then they encourage children and young people to have sex. Cenko and Thartori (2016) suggest that due to patriarchal mentality, girls are not allowed to disclose sexual abuse or exposure to sexual violence because of the high risk of destroying the reputation (and the good name) of the family. "Albania has deep seated roots in the patriarchal traditions characterized by parental authority, adherence to an honour-and-shame system, and customs of hierarchical ordering with the family and the intergenerational family" (Cenko & Thartori, 2016, p. 310).

Large-scale child sexual abuse happens within schools and communities, and children and young people are left unprotected due to the norm of shame and affiliated secrecy especially in rural areas (Cenko & Thartori, 2016). Children and young people are not considered rights holders in Albanian families, schools, or society (Byrne, 2014). Roma and Egyptian families are the most excluded and vulnerable groups in the country and their girls are also victims of sexual trafficking, forced labour and child marriage (Byrne, 2014). Due to social exclusion and discrimination against Roma communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina there is an increased rate of violence against Roma children and young people in schools and society. They are also the victim of early and forced marriages, exploitation in prostitution and other forms of sexual abuse (ECPAT, 2018). Due to cultural prerequisites of early marriage the school dropout rate is comparatively high among Roma children and young people in Bulgaria (Valkov, & Lavrentsova, 2019).

2.4.5 Students Response Towards Violence against Children and Young People in Schools

The academic and grey literature suggests that a large number of students across South East Europe displayed violent behaviour on school premises. The Child Rights Information Centre (2016) stated that few schools taught children and young people how to deal with bullying and peer pressure, and how to solve conflict without using violence. In a study by Brahja among students in grades 10. 11 and 12 in two Albania cities, it was revealed that children and young people believe the major reason for their violent behaviours was that their parents/carers, teachers or society never acknowledged their rights or allowed them to make decisions (Brahja, 2017). In South East Europe, the vast majority of students remain silent regarding violence in schools and only a small number of students report school violence to their teachers, school authorities or parents/carers, (Marković et al., 2016).

Children and young people have a lack of trust about the efficiency, justice, and complaint mechanisms of the school systems to address violence (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). The UNDP (2018) suggests that girls prefer to report violence to their class teacher, while boys prefer to address the issues with friends in order to seek help. The majority of students preferred to report violence to the school psychologist

compared to the teacher or the school principal in Albania (Brahja, 2017). At the same time, children and young people are uncomfortable to discuss violence with their parents/carers therefore most of the time parents/carers were completely unaware about physical and psychological violence against their children and young people in schools (Benčić, 2014).

Children and young people are exposed to different types of violence in schools, but school bullying is one of the major types of violence experienced among children and young people. Children and young people mainly feel helpless and angered by bullying (Benčić, 2014). School bullying also results in long-term trauma and anxiety among the child victims (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). In Moldova, Arends et al. (2016) report that every other person in the country is aware of a peer who is impacted by bullying. The majority of teachers are aware about anti-bullying policies in schools, but they are not trained and confident enough to address bullying issues in school (Dragoti & Ismaili, 2017). A negative climate in the schools, including racial or ethnic discrimination among students and teachers, corporal punishment as disciplinary policies and less interaction between students and teachers, creates conflict among teachers and students. To address this problem, students prefer to drop out of school (Valkov, & Lavrentsova, 2019). Girls are mainly against using corporal punishment in the schools; therefore, they prefer either to dropout or change schools (UNDP, 2018).

The lack of capacities among teachers and school staff to identify and address cases of violence, and a lack of standardized procedures and mechanisms to prevent violence are the major internal factors influencing the high prevalence of violence in schools across South East Europe (UNICEF Serbia, 2017).

Gaps in Literature 2.5

Violence against children and young people is prevalent across the globe and also visible in Europe and specifically in South East Europe. Many children and young people are reportedly exposed to violence more regularly in schools and homes. There are several factors contributing to violence against children and young people in school, including gender-based violence. The socio-cultural norms, social exclusion, poverty, system gaps, lack of effective policies, capacities of teachers and student's faith in the system are the major factors promoting and encouraging violence against children and young people in schools. In the context of South East Europe, there is limited literature available to understand and address these issues. The literature on school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), the social and gender norms influencing violence against children and young people in schools, the attitudes, behaviours and perceptions of children and young people, community members and school professionals about violence against children and young people in schools, and school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), and informal and formal mechanisms, such as child-led actions, community resources, values, and services that protect children and young people from violence are largely missing from the literature. While there is an apparent

dearth in the available literature in any language, it is particularly apparent in a bridge language like English. This limits the available resources for stakeholders to compare and contrast the incidence of violence against children and young people in schools and in homes, but also in the availability of sources to share practices across countries in South East Europe.

2.6   Concluding Thoughts

Having explored a range of grey and academic literature, it is clear that violence against children and young people is common in South East Europe, including in schools, at home and in communities. Corporal punishment, sexual violence, verbal aggression, and bullying are commonly discussed in the literature. The incidence of violence varies across genders, but in ways that might not be expected and that are not consistent across rural and urban areas or across countries. While there was not a lot of literature exploring social norms, there was enough to suggest that social norms support accepting levels of corporal punishment and impede reporting of violence against children and young people in several countries. Overall, the literature review illustrated a dearth of recent literature articulating the severity, prevalence and types of violence experienced by children and young people, as well as the heightened risk for children and young people from different genders, abilities, ethnicities, or other groupings. Fewer studies still were uncovered that explored the response children and young people have to violence in schools.
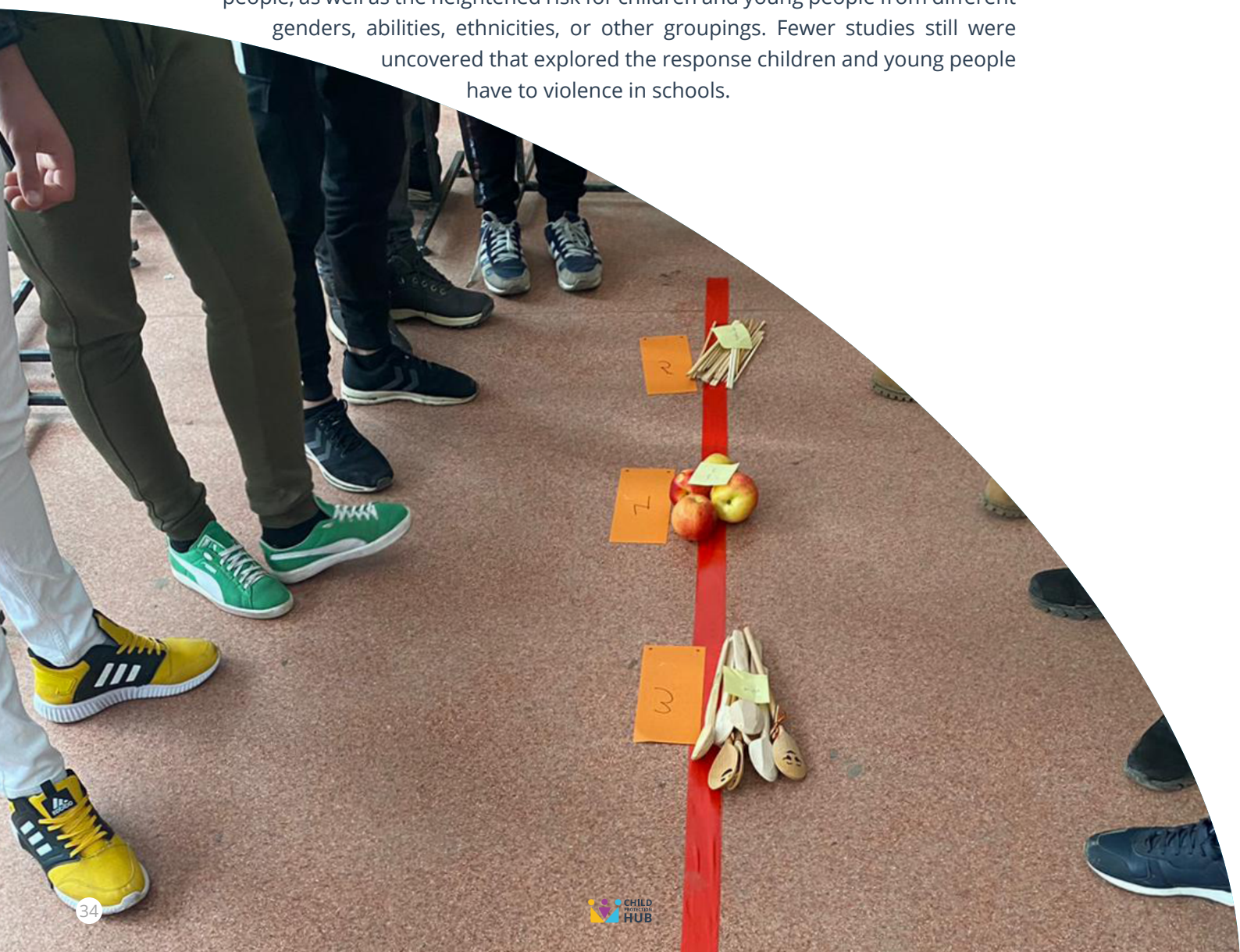
Methodological Overview: Overview of Multi-Country Study

This study was conducted in eight countries in South East 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 and young people in challenging these social norms** (RFP Child Hub).

Within this report, the young research participants are referred to as young people. All of whom were 18 years old or younger.

Guiding Questions and Contextual Lens of Analysis

3.1

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

1. What do we know about the incidence and type of violence that children and young people are facing in and around school in South East Europe, as well as the children and young people that are most impacted by it?

2. What are the social and gender norms of school children and young people, community members and school professionals related to violence against children and young people?

3. What are the social and gender norms of school children and young people, community members and school professionals related to gender-based violence against children and young people?

4. What are the informal and formal mechanisms, child-led actions, community resources, values, and services that protect children and young people from violence and promote children and young people's well-being?

5. To what degree do children and young people 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 and young people's experience of violence in and around school changed since COVID-19?

The COVID-19 pandemic hit in the middle of data collection, the data collection was initially paused and then changes were required to align with national and local physical distancing requirements and to ensure the safety of the participants and the researchers. To maintain the consistency and legitimacy of the data collection, the research questions remained the same, but additional contextual information provided clarity on data that referred to retrospective perspectives of what was occurring prior to the pandemic policies and school closures and any changes that occurred as a result of lockdown and social distancing 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 and young people as well as on social norms, attitudes, practices, and knowledge around violence against children and young people, this study explored educational settings as well as the full context of children and young people's lives within which the violence takes place. This study focused on:

1. Girls' and boys' experiences and life stories (in general),

2. Educational settings (including formal and informal education settings [in person, at a distance, online], teachers, principals and fellow students),

3. On route to educational settings (including outdoor spaces, recreational areas, business areas, roads etc.),

4. Formal and informal support services (including social services, state care, judicial system), and

5. Cultural values, beliefs and norms that shape children, young people, and adults' social and gender norms with respect to violence against children and young people.

6. Children and young people in exceptionally difficult circumstances, such as children and young people with disabilities, children and young people living on the street, migrant children and young people, ethnic or religious groups etc.

3.2   Research Methods and Approach

This was a mixed methodology study, with a "qualitatively driven approach" (Hesse-Bibber & Johnson, 2015). It was both inductive and deductive and exploratory, drawing on participatory methods. Using a variety of research instruments with groups of young people and adults (see Chart 1 below), researchers' understanding of children and young people's lived realities was gradually deepened. A deeper exploration of children and young people's lives was intended to yield stronger indications of social norms and practices and would enable clearer direction for future programming and policy, than a process that reached larger numbers of participants with less depth.

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

Researchers met in person for a three day workshop to ensure the research project met the aims of the individual countries, but also included consistency across countries. The research team also maintained ongoing communication and regular meetings throughout the research project. Researchers in each project country identified the most appropriate sites based on the sampling frame. The sampling frame aimed to include young people age 13-18 (up to 30 young people/ site in two sites) and adults, including: parents/carers, teachers, principals, other school professionals, community and religious leaders, social service providers, community members (up to 15 people/site).

Chart 1 - Research Tools used with Young People and Adults

Young People	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	

3.2.1 COVID-19 Adaptations

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit during data collection, the tools were adapted to be in one or both of the following formats:

Method 1: In person respecting physical distancing policies set out by local and national policies, COVID-19 Adaptations with adequate ventilation, hand sanitizing and other relevant safety precautions.

Method 2: With access to smartphone, computer with internet, or remote participation

While all attempts were made to conduct this research in person, in some situations this was not possible. All efforts were made to conduct the research in person, as there are added ethical issues to consider, mitigate, and respond to when conducting research with children on violence at a distance. Where it was not possible, with careful risk analysis, thoughtful adaptations, and additional ethical safeguards, national researchers made use of password protected online video-Conferencing (via group video-conferencing), WhatsApp/Phone Calls for setup and follow up and online visual collaboration tools.

Chart 2 - COVID-19 Adaptations

Country	In person	Online	Adaptations
Albania	Yes	No	In order to adhere to local restrictions the size of groups was reduced to 10 and time was limited to two days per site, so the second Social Network Mapping tool (an optional tool) was not included.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Yes	No	The research occurred in person, but the sample size was limited due to COVID-19 physical distance requirements.
Bulgaria	No	Yes	Due to COVID-19, the tools were adapted and used online, with the support of school psychologists and ethical support from the Ministry of Education.
Croatia	Yes	Yes	Due to COVID-19 measures, the focus group in Rijeka was implemented in person, respecting physical distancing and masks. The number of participants was reduced to respect local COVID-19 guidelines. Online research was conducted in Zagreb/Čakovec. Focus groups were implemented via Zoom. After the online research, participants from site Zagreb/Čakovec were contacted by phone to see if additional support was needed. In Rijeka, the research team contacted school supervisors to check in.
Kosovo	Yes	No	The data collection with participants in Pristina took place in the first half of March 2020, just before the pandemic hit and physical distancing protocols were implemented. Due to COVID-19, data collection in Ferizaj was postponed until the end of September 2020, when schools reopened and research could be completed in person.
Moldova	No	Yes	All tools were used and adapted for online use. Schools closed 11 March 2020, and the lack of internet access in some communities, such as in Roma communities, provided additional barriers, and therefore dictated site selection.
Romania	Yes	Yes	Face-to-face research was conducted at the first research site (Amărăștii de Jos), while online research was conducted at the second research site (Filiași).
Serbia	Yes	No	None needed. Data collection was completed prior to COVID-19 restrictions. All tools were used.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

All research was conducted in accordance with children and young people's rights (as outlined in the United Convention on the Rights of the Child) and best practices in researching with children (e.g., Ethical Research Involving Children [ERIC]) and adults. The research was approved and cleared by the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board, the national research boards in each respective country, and adhered to Terres des homme's Child Safeguarding Policy. The ethics addressed critical elements of voluntary and informed ongoing consent and assent, limited confidentiality, anonymity, do no harm protocol, power imbalances between researchers and participants, and use of data. The limits of confidentiality were also clear so that participants knew that any information that indicated a young person was at risk to themselves or to another would have to be reported to

the appropriate authorities. The ethics in this research thus adhered to procedural ethics (as outlined above) and integrated an ethics of care that respects and recognises humans as relational, and emphasized the value of participants being respected and listened to in the research (Bussu et al., 2020).

3.3.1 Ethics in Practice

The research team followed the consent process proposed by the methodology. In each location, the research team asked young people and their parents/carers to sign the project consent form. In addition, Tdh Romania worked with each school administration in each research site after concluding a formal partnership agreement for the research to be conducted within each school. The research team asked participants (including young people and their guardians) to sign GDPR compliance consent forms. These consent forms are required for any personal data collection and processing according to EU and national regulations.

The research team also made sure to discuss and obtain verbal consent from young people at each stage of the data collection process, at the beginning of each research activity. This consent is audio or video-taped. Young people were also reassured that researchers would not present data, photo or any other information that would divulge their identity.

The national and international researchers were cognisant that 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 took extra care to be careful not to raise expectations, which could lead to mistrust of outsiders and disillusionment. Researchers also needed to be cautious not to increase power imbalances that may have caused a particular group to be vulnerable and to work to deconstruct these power imbalances wherever possible in the research process.

Research on violence may unintentionally result in young people and adults reflecting on difficult experiences, even though questions were developed in an intentional manner to avoid direct questions on personal experience. As researchers working with children and young people 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 young people. Further, the best interests of the child must always be at the heart of decisions made when working with children and young people.

Country-level researchers were trained on how to watch for signs of young people expressing distress (both verbally and non-verbally). Researchers ensured that the environment within the activities remained respectful and supportive and took time to speak with young people who may have needed extra support outside of the activity. The name and contact details of a support worker(s), as well as emergency numbers and local reporting protocol, were listed on a flip chart paper at all times, enabling young people to reach out on their own for additional support (for example the psychosocial service of the school and the Child Protection Unity in Albania). Where a flipchart was not practical, handouts were made to give to the

young people prior to the session beginning. When a researcher saw that a young person required support, the researcher was able to discuss this with the young person and call the support person to request them to make a personal visit to the community. The researcher was available to then 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.

Further, additional care and responsibility was needed in order to conduct some of the research online. This included checking in with participants prior to the sessions to ensure they were clear on what would be discussed, to ensure they had a safe and secure location to participate in the research (and private where possible), that they had a safe phrase or signal and that they were followed up with after the sessions. In some countries, partner organizations ensured the safe follow up of children and the young people participated in the online research from the "centre", not their homes.

Appendix B for Ethical Research Protocols provides further information about the ethical protocols in place, including further ethical guidelines, recommendations, and practices for working with children and young people, informed consent and limited confidentiality procedures and considerations.

Research

3.4.1. Teams

The following is a brief table outlining the research teams — including country, number of research sites, number of lead researchers, other data collection support provided and any specific notes.

Chart 3 - Research Teams

Country	# of Sites	# of Lead Researchers	Other Data Collection Support	Notes
Albania	2	4 (2 researchers and 2 note takers)	n/a	Two teams of two persons, gender matched. Each team was composed of a researcher (the national researcher and the co-researcher, selected to facilitate the boys' groups)/group facilitator and a note taker, two women for the girls' groups and two men for the boys' groups.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2	2 (1 researcher, 1 note taker)		
Bulgaria	2	3 (1 lead researcher and 2 field researchers)	2 school psychologists	One female and one male field researcher led the research (one psychologist/educator and one social worker). They were supported by a school psychologist at each site who coordinated the online work with children in a safe space at the schools.
Croatia	2	3		
Kosovo	2	5 (lead researcher, research facilitator for data collection, and 3 research assistants as note takers during the data collection process.)		
Moldova	2	3	n/a	
Romania	2	2 (lead researcher & research assistant)	1 lead contact, support and field site selection	
Serbia	2	2 (data collection, processing and reporting)	Field data collection support (2) and transcription (2)	Field data support provided by staff from Centre for Youth Integration Belgrade

3.5 Site Selection

In each country, researchers worked with young people and adults at two or more sites or locations. These sites were selected based on areas that were specifically compelling in each country based on social norms, gender-based issues and violence. Appendix 7 includes maps of the research sites.

The following chart outlines more information about where the research took place, including any process that was used to select the sites.

Chart 4 - Research Sites

Country	Site 1	Site 2	Notes on Site Selection Process
Albania	Lezhë (urban)	Levan (rural)	Sites selected as areas where social norms, gender-based issues and violence in relation to children and young people deserve attention.
Bosnia- Herzegovina	Banja Luka (urban)	Mostar	Sites were selected in order to learn more about the experiences of children and young people in marginalized communities.
Bulgaria	Pordim (small town)	Vulchitran (village)	Sites were selected based on cultural differences in the gender and violence related norms and attitudes, presence of Roma people and presence of follow-up support for participants. An additional urban site was selected, but it was not possible to proceed due to a COVID-19 outbreak in the area.
Croatia	Rijeka (urban)	Zagreb & Čakovec (urban)	These 2 urban and multicultural sites enabled participation of young people with different backgrounds and from different minority groups. Working through good practice Child and Youth Protection Centres ensured adequate psychosocial follow-up for young people, if required. These areas also have compelling social norms, gender-based issues and violence issues.
Kosovo	Prishtina (capital city)	Ferizaj (in the southeast)	These two sites were selected because Terre des hommes in Kosovo collaborates with educational authorities there. Both sites included children, young people and families from vulnerable groups, such as children and young people with low socioeconomic status, and children coming from Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities.
Moldova	A village in central Moldova (rural)	City in northern Moldova (urban)	Both sites have Roma populations, and were selected based on availability of internet due to the online nature of the research.
Romania	Amarastii de Jos, (rural)	Filiasi (urban)	Both sites were located in very low socioeconomic counties in Romania with substantial Roma populations. Notably, Filiasi had a previous experience with the AH1N1 flu in 2009, where the local gymnasium was a hotspot for AH1N1 flu after 15 people had been diagnosed with the disease. More than a decade earlier, the schools in the community had been under similar COVID-19 closure orders.
Serbia	Kraljevo (urban)	Šid (rural)	Focus was on sites outside of the capital city & on locations with issues related to social norms, gender-based issues and violence.

Participants

For the research project as a whole, the following guidelines were provided to country-level researchers selecting participants:

- Young people aged 13–18 (approximately 30 young people/site [groups of 10-15 young people, with two groups, one boys' group and one girls' group] at approximately two sites). However, physical distancing protocols in place during part of the research meant that some groups needed to be smaller.

- Adults, including: parents/carers, teachers, principals, other school professionals, community and religious leaders, social service providers, community members (approximately 15 people/site). As noted above, sessions that took place during physical distancing protocols meant some sessions needed to include fewer participants.

In each site, the research teams strived to work with the three groups, i.e., two groups of 8–15 young people and one group of 8–15 adults, for each activity over the course of three days.

Given the nature of the research, young people aged 13–18 were selected due to their duration of lived experience as children and young people who have knowledge on violence and abuse and understand its complexities and the systems of influence from younger years and at a transitional phase of life. While a specific age category was targeted the researchers operated from a childhood studies approach respecting young people as social actors in their own lives with diverse expertise and experiences. Given the gendered nature of experiences of violence, the participants also needed to include close to equal numbers of genders. Young people on the gender-spectrum had the opportunity to choose to participate in the group they most closely identify with. Whenever possible, sensitivity to the gender of the group was matched with the gender of the researchers.

Group size was determined by engaging the largest number of participants without compromising the depth of the research, for a team of researchers (one to two people). In each research site, the researchers worked with two separate gender-specific groups of young people and one separate groups of adults, unless otherwise stated, for a maximum total of approximately 30 young people from each site (ideally equal numbers of girls and boys) and a maximum number of 15 adults from each site (ideally equal numbers of men and women). This research study aimed to engage a maximum of 30–60 young people and 15–30 adults per country. And for the total project the maximum sample size was 240–480 young people and 120–240 adults. **In practice, 263 young people and 168 adults were engaged across the 7 countries. The numbers are on the lower end of what was projected due to the impact of COVID-19 on limited numbers for safe gatherings.**

The following chart outlines the broad demographic information of participants (e.g., age, ethnicity), and their role (e.g., teacher, other professional, parent).

Chart 5 - Participant Demographics

Participants Demographics							
Country	**Type of Participants**	**Number of Participants**	**Age**	**Gender**	**Ethnicity**	**Role**	**Comments**
Albania	Young People	32	13–18 years old	17 girls & 15 boys	Not recorded	Student	4 groups
	Adults	18	n/a	Not rot ot	Not recorded	Parents/carers, Teachers, School Psychologists, Nurses, Community Leaders and Social Services Providers	
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Young People	20	12–16 years old	9 girls, 11 boys	Bosniaks	Student	
	Adults	12	n/a	Not recorded	Not recorded	Parents/carers, Teachers, Principals, School Professionals, Community & Religious Leaders, Social Service Providers, Community Members	
Bulgaria	Young People	40	10–14 years old	Equal male and female	Not recorded	Student	2 gender specific groups in each site
	Adults	19	n/a	12 women, 7 men	Not recorded	Parents, Teachers, non-pedagogical staff members	
Croatia	Young People	19	13–18 years old	12 girls, 7 boys	multicultural, with presence of various nationalities, ethnics and minority groups	Student	
	Adults	17	n/a	not recorded	multicultural, with presence of various nationalities, ethnics and minority groups	Teacher, Parent/carers Principal, School Professionals, Community Members, Police, Social Service, NGO Reps, Ombudsman	
Kosovo	Young People	42	13–18 years old	22 girls, 22 boys		Student	2 schools in each site, one primary and one lower secondary
	Adults	20	n/a	16 female, 4 male		Parents/carers, Teachers, Principals, social Service Providers, Community Members & Leaders, Religious Leaders	

Participants Demographics							
Country	Type of Participants	Number of Participants	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Role	Comments
Moldova	Young People	44	13–18 years old	14 girls, 8 boys	2–3 Roma or Ukrainian members in each group	Student	Groups were mixed gender based on young people's preferences
	Adults	34	n/a	Mixed gender	Not recorded	Parents/carers, teachers, other school professionals, community and religious leaders, social service providers, local police representatives, community members	
Romania	Young People	31	14–17 years old	16 girls, 14 boys	Multi-ethnic, including Roma	Student	
	Adults	25	n/a	6 men and 19 women	Multi-ethnic including Roma	Parents/carers, Teachers, Principals, Other School Professionals	
Serbia	Young People	35	10–14 years old	Equal male and female	Not recorded	Student	
	Adults	23	n/a	Not recorded	Not recorded	Parents/carers, Teachers, School Pedagogues, Community Members	

Sampling 3.7

In general, the target population was young people aged 13–18 years old in school in South East Europe. The research was exploratory in nature and the sampling strategy drew on convenience sampling, allowing researchers to choose schools that were accessible to them and the opportunity for schools to identify young people who met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Schools were identified via convenience and purposive sampling, in order to select specific populations representing a diverse range of children and young people 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 migrant, Roma or various minority ethnic groups, and low income families. Schools were also chosen on the basis of perceived high rates of violence, and/or concerning gender-based issues.

What is important to note, is that all researchers worked closely with schools, community organisations, and local government to ensure that we could conduct the research with *the same young people and adults over the course of the research. So, the same group of young people moved through all the research tools identified, so that researchers and participants could deepen their understanding as each tool progressed.*

3.7.1 Sampling Young People

Working with local partners, secondary schools and community organizations were contacted in advance to inform them of the research. Based on the sampling frame provided above, national researchers identified schools and invited them to participate. Each country included one or two schools or community organisations.

3.7.2 Sampling Adults

For adults, groups included: mothers, fathers, caregivers, educators (teachers, principals, other school staff), community leaders (community and religious leaders, social service providers), NGO and social service providers, and others. The goal was to engage one mixed gender group of 8–15 people at each research site. In order to obtain a group of 15 adults, it was sometimes necessary to invite larger numbers of adults, based on convenience.

The following chart provides additional or specific information from each country on sampling, when available or relevant.

Chart 7- Country-Level Sampling Details

Country	Overview of Sampling	Sampling Young People	Sampling Adults
Albania	No other additions	Young people were purposely selected by the Terre des hommes community centre contact points, in cooperation with the national researcher, and were invited to participate in the research.	Sites selected as areas where social norms, gender-based issues and violence in relation to children and young people deserve attention.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Sampling strategy includes convenience and purposive sampling, allowing researchers to choose schools that are accessible to them and the opportunity for schools to identify young people who meet the criteria for inclusion in the study.	Sampling was done by first determining that we wanted to test the young people from marginalized groups, then working with Save the Children North West Balkans to connect with day centres to host the research. The day care centres that brought together the young people of the upper grades of primary school were selected.	The adults who were part of the sample were professionals working within the day care centres, as well as teachers and parents. COVID-19 virus made it difficult to adequately sample adults.
Bulgaria	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.	Working with local partners and schools, researchers identified schools and invited them to participate. They worked closely with schools and the Ministry of Education to ensure that they could conduct the research with the same children over the course of the research.	The pandemic made the selection of adults more difficult. An additional effort was made by the school administrations to explain the aims of the study and to approach larger numbers of mixed gender adults to engage them in the research.

Country	Overview of Sampling	Sampling Young People	Sampling Adults
Croatia	Local partners (CYPC Zagreb and Protection Home for Children "Tić" Rijeka, PHCT) supported the process of identifying schools and sampling young people as well as adults. Prior to sampling we gave a presentation to the Ethics Board of CYPC and PHCT. This helped to build a mutual understanding of research goals but also to consider mitigation strategies due to challenges related to COVID-19.	Due to COVID-19 measures, following sampling was used:	Sites selected as areas where social norms, gender-based issues and violence in relation to children and young people deserve attention.
Kosovo	No other additions	In Prishtina, young people were selected from two schools: one primary and lower secondary school (aged 13–15), and one upper secondary school (aged 16–18), which included young people from both rural and urban areas. In Ferizaj, similar to Prishtina, two schools with the same characteristics were included.	Adult participants were selected from the same school neighbourhoods.
Moldova	No other additions	Participants were purposively selected by the school administration and invited to participate in the research.	No other additions
Romania	No other additions	Participants were purposively selected by the school administration and invited to participate in the research.	These 2 urban and multicultural sites enabled participation of young people with different backgrounds and from different minority groups. Working through good practice Child and Youth Protection Centres ensured adequate psychosocial follow-up for young people, if required. These areas also have compelling social norms, gender-based issues and violence issues.
Serbia	The rural site, on the border with Croatia and BIH, has a significant number of migrants in that area, which impacted the perspectives of young people and adults who participated in the research.	Working with local partners, secondary schools and community organizations were contacted in advance, to inform them of the research. Based on the sampling frame, national researchers identified schools and invited them to participate. Young people from the secondary school in Kraljevo included young people without parental care living in SOS Children's Village.	These two sites were selected because Terre des hommes in Kosovo collaborates with educational authorities there. Both sites included children, young people and families from vulnerable groups, such as children and young people with low socioeconomic status, and children coming from Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities.

3.8 Data Analysis

The research was conducted in two different sites in each country, with various configurations of research teams in each site/country. The data analysis included gathering all relevant materials, prepared during the research, including recorded and written transcripts of each research session. To ensure consistency across sites, two analysis workshops were held via Zoom and data collection forms were provided in the methodology in order to streamline data collection processes. These two data collection forms were completed by researchers just after the data was collected. The transcripts were then also thematically analysed in order to prepare a country level report. An excel spreadsheet, entitled Violence Against Children in Schools in SE Europe Data Analysis Tool, was provided with both pre-populated thematic codes (based on research questions and research tools) and areas for emergent themes. Thematic analysis involved a search for themes that are important to the description of the phenomenon (Daly et al., 1997) and pattern recognition to identify categories of analysis. National researchers completed the spreadsheets to assist them in their thematic analysis. National researchers then completed their country reports.

The international researchers reviewed all of the country reports. Two researchers conducted inter-coder reliability, developed a set of thematic codes and coded the research reports. The code thematic codes were analysed and synthesized before being written into the final report.

Chart 8- Country-Level Data Analysis Details

Country	Additional Data Analysis Details
Albania	Each tool was recorded (with the permission of each participant), to ensure full collection of data. Confidentiality of data was fully preserved. Transcripts of each recording were produced. The qualitative data were coded organised around the main themes of the primary data collection. Sub-codes were further developed, merged and rearranged based on the variations and new insights emerging during narrations, and organised in Excel sheets.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Data analysis was conducted by making transcripts for each group of respondents, and then a qualitative analysis of the obtained data was made.
Bulgaria	Due to the pandemic, the data collection process was prolonged and it shortened the time available for data analysis. The research team organized several online meetings to discuss and deepen the understanding of the data collected. In order to clarify some data or to collect additional information, several telephone and online individual interviews were conducted.
Croatia	Data Analysis included a review of transcripts as well as observation notes, and art-based products such as social maps. In order to code and categorize the data, the Violence Against Children in Schools in SE Europe Data Analysis Tool was used. In alignment with the research questions, themes were identified, then categorized following coding. This allowed synthesis and a process to make sense of the data.
Kosovo	No other additions.
Moldova	The data analysis process was completed based on recordings of the Zoom meeting, data collection forms for specific tools and notes taken by the researchers during the online meetings. Perceptions and opinions can be ambiguous, and they are subject to modification and instrumental manipulation, therefore the researcher transcribed in Romanian all data to depict the truthful attitudes and behaviours existing in society with regard to VAC.
Romania	Data analysis forms provided in the methodology were used as well as an excel table to compile the information gathered through the research activities with participants. The researcher and the note taker worked together to accurately fill in the data sheets as well as the participant quotes tables based on their field notes and on the recordings of the research sessions.
Serbia	Data analysis started after the collection of all the information and transcripts made for both groups, following the research questions as well as the answers gathered in the methodological tools. The main concern was to see what all the groups coming from different locations, with different socio-economic backgrounds, have in common, what are their differences in understanding various types of violence and in acting in cases of violence in their communities.

Limitations

The research study contained a number of limitations that deserve mention. The main three included the lack of ability to generalise the findings, the challenges associated with a large international study, and the issues that emerged as a result of COVID-19 physical distancing protocols and school closures.

As a qualitative study, the primary limitation of the research project was the size and scope of the research sample. Although the sample was large, it was dispersed across two sites in eight different countries. This meant there were a small number of participants in each site representing a limited geographic region within each country. This means that the research findings are not generalizable across South East Europe. However, the research provides a rich depth of insight into some young people's experience and perspective on violence within and around schools. This augments and furthers existing quantitative data that exists in most of the participating countries. Due to the participatory nature of the research, purposive and convenience sampling were used, rather than random sampling.

Given the complexity of arranging a large multi-country research project, with project team members spanning across continents and due to budget constraint, the lead researchers were not present for the country level data collection. To mitigate this, a strong research team was compiled in each country and thorough training and joint revision of methods was done in the initial stages of the project and ongoing communication was adhered throughout the project.

COVID-19 presented a host of challenges for researchers that impacted site selection, sampling, and the implementation of the research. Across the eight countries who participated in this research, only one country completed the full suite of research tools before the onset of the pandemic (i.e., Serbia). Four countries noted the need to decrease the size of their research sample to ensure the safety of participants and align with local COVID-19 guidelines (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo). A revised research methodology needed to be created in order to address new concerns arising from COVID-19 and to ensure the safe and ethical engagement of young people both on and offline. Four countries needed to adapt some or all of the tools for online use (using the revised methodology for COVID-19), which limited the participants who could be engaged because of internet access (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Moldova).

4 Violence Against Children and Young People in Schools across the Region

The following section provides high-level findings from the country-based contextualised literature reviews. The literature reviews use academic and grey literature. While some recent literature exists, the country-level reviews exposed a gap with limited literature on violence in schools, with even less on children and young people's perspectives. This research seeks to address this gap by contributing to a larger evidence base on violence in schools from children and young people's perspectives and that of their community. For more detail on country-level literature reviews please see Appendix F.

4.1 Albania

Psychological (50%), physical (40%), and sexual (6%) violence are the most frequently reported forms of abuse in Albania (WHO, 2016). 48.4% of Albanian children and young people experienced at least one form of physical violence during their school life (prevalence), and 59.45% of children and young people reported experiencing physical violence during the past year (incidence) (Hazizaj et al., 2013). Unfortunately, several teachers, students, parents/carers and school staff are involved in unethical behaviours in schools (ACER, 2017). Hazizaj and colleagues (2013) report that corporal punishment is largely accepted as a form of discipline in school and society.

Psychological violence is downplayed in the Albanian context (Hazizaj et al., 2013). Teachers perceive bullying as a normal behaviour related to child growth and development (Kashahu, 2014). Differences in physical appearance are perceived as a weakness and is cited as a reason why some children and young people are singled out and bullied (Dragoti & Ismaili, 2017), with boys more likely to bully, and girls more likely to be victims. Some children and young people believe that their own violent behaviours is caused by parents/carers, teachers or society that never acknowledged their rights or allowed them to make decisions (Brahja, 2017).

Girls experience higher rates of sexual violence, but this is likely underreported due to patriarchal social norms (Hazizaj et al, 2013; Burazeri et al., 2015), leaving children and young people unprotected as a result of the norm of shame and affiliated secrecy, especially in rural areas (Cenko & Thartori, 2016). Early marriage (often involving 14- and 15-year-old girls) is prevalent (Cenko & Thartori, 2016). Roma and Egyptian families are reported as the most excluded and vulnerable groups in Albania (Byrne, 2014).

Bosnia and Herzegovina

According to a recent Ombudsman's report (Ombudsman za djecu Republike Srpske, 2010), violence against children and young people happens every day, and when it comes to schools, it happens both inside and outside of school (TPO Fondacija, 2017). Over 60% of students in primary school, and 50% in secondary schools, believe that violence is present in their school (TPO Fondacija, 2017). When it comes to reporting violence, students in the TPO Fondacija (2017) study expressed the most confidence in their homeroom teacher, then the pedagogue, followed by the school principal. It is also interesting that about 5% of primary school students, as well as about 10% of respondents from secondary schools, believe that cases of peer violence are not dealt with, but are covered up in their schools. Physical and psychological violence are the most common forms of violence, according to the children themselves (TPO Fondacija, 2017).

Schools dealt with peer violence in 91% of cases and only in 9% of cases did the schools involve external institutions; most of the cases were resolved (95% of reported incidents) (Ombudsman za djecu Republike Srpske, 2010). Boys are three times more likely to be reported as perpetrators; 62% of victims of peer violence are boys and 35% of victims are girls. In schools, the most common forms of violence are: physical violence 83%, emotional violence 74% and one reported case of sexual violence (Ombudsman za djecu Republike Srpske, 2010).

Croatia

Corporal punishment has been prohibited in Croatia, yet violent educational practices persist (Ajduković et al., 2012), and are accepted in some areas (Rajter et al., 2016). There is a link between peer violence and the experience of domestic violence (Baldry, 2003). In terms of peer violence, 37.8% of students experience at least 1 form every week, most commonly psychological violence, especially gossip (Rajhvajn et al., 2011): 64.5% of girls and 56.5% of boys were harassed by peers at least once; 24.70% of girls and 54.20% of boys were hit by peers at least once; 31% of girls and 4% of boys were sexually harassed. Yet, 37% of children and young people experience corporal punishment by a parent (Rajhvajn et al., 2011).

Looking at a gendered experience of violence, 63% of girls and 37% of boys in 12 high schools believe a young man has the right to hit his girlfriend if she wants to break up with him or if she pays more attention to friends than to him; 49% of

children and young people think that a girl has the right to hit her boyfriend if he does not listen to her, and approximately one-third of children and young people state that they know couples among their peers whose relationships involve verbal, physical and sexual violence (Bjelić, 2016). In relation to sexual abuse, 13.7% of children and young people experienced abuse according to stricter criterion, and 18.1% based on milder criterion (Ajduković et al., 2012).

4.4 Kosovo

Children and young people often experience violence in school and educational institutions in Kosovo (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017); 9 out of 10 students have experienced physical violence in schools at least once (Mustafa, 2018), and 34% of students are exposed to violence caused by their teachers (Thaci, 2018). A UNDP (2018) report suggests that school yards and toilets are the most unsafe places in schools. In terms of psychological violence, 59% of school children and young people have been made victims (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017).

Violence against children and young people in schools and at home is considered a social norm, and it is commonly accepted in society (UNICEF Kosovo, 2017); physical violence or punishment is considered valid and applied by some teachers in schools (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). Girls generally experience more neglect and psychological violence, while boys experience more physical and sexual violence (Mustafa, 2016). Physical violence is often justified by the children and young people themselves (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017).

Many Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, children and young people are exposed to physical violence until marriage, with 43% of children and young people within these communities married by the age of 18 (UNICEF Kosovo, 2017).

4.5 Moldova

Approximately 75% of children and young people experienced various forms of physical or psychological violence in Moldova, and one-third of children and young people have been involved in a fight with their peers (Landers, 2013; UNICEF, 2014). One-third of children and young people declare that teachers verbally attack them. Thirteen percent of children and young people say that teachers either always or sometimes physically abuse them (UNICEF, 2007). Twenty-four percent of children and young people report that they feel that their teachers discriminate against them (UNICEF, 2007). In school, girls tend to suffer more from violence, especially physical violence, than boys (UNICEF, 2007).

Almost 60% of adolescents participated at least once in a fight in the last year, and/ or say they have been harassed at least once in the last few months; one-third of Moldovan students aged 13–15 say that they have participated in at least one fight in the last year, or have been harassed at least once in the last few months (UNICEF,

2021a). Four out of ten parents/carers know teachers who verbally attack children and young people. One-tenth of parents/carers know teachers that have harassed or sexually abused children and young people (UNICEF, 2021b).

Romania

According to a Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC) study, Romania fares very poorly when it comes to school bullying. Of the 42 countries studied in the report, Romanian students are in the top 5 countries when it comes to the prevalence of bullying. Over 20% of boys and 11% of girls report that they engaged in bullying or harassment of other colleagues in the past 2 months, with a total of 15% of Romanian boys and 9% of Romanian girls reporting being victims of bullying and harassment by colleagues in school (HBSC, 2014). Girls of a higher socio-economic background are more frequently victims of bullying (HBSC, 2014). Students who report being victims of bullying are twice as likely to report feeling alone, to report poor health, to use medication and to have a medically diagnosed illness (HBSC, 2014). Students whose parents/carers (mother or father) work abroad, or who are in the care of grandparents, are twice as likely to act as bullies (HBSC, 2014).
According to a Save the Children Romania report (2016), 22% of children and young people said that they threatened another child with a "beating", 19% said that they have humiliated another child, while 25% said that they have spread rumours about a child they didn't like. Of the children and young people interviewed, 18–28% initiated the exclusion of a child from a group. Of the children and young people who participated in the study, 13% said that they had destroyed another child's belongings, while 16% said that they had beaten another child, and 30% said that they have hit another child lightly. Alarmingly, 84% of children and young people said that they have witnessed situations when a child threatened another child, 80% witnessed a child being humiliated, and 78% of children and young people witnessed mild physical aggressions (pushing, mild hitting). Almost 69% of children and young people have witnessed two children or young people fighting.

Serbia

There is a high tolerance for violence resulting from wars, crisis and social unrest in Serbia, and this now manifests itself in discriminatory attitudes towards minorities, and norms and values related to gender roles and relations. Institutional determinants impact violence, including ineffective instruments of coordination, identification and treatment of cases of violence.
"In 2013, 44% of students reported that they were exposed to peer-to-peer violence in the three-month period preceding the survey. Among them, 45.8% experienced verbal abuse, 33% physical violence, another 33% social violence (plotting, manipulative relations, etc.), while 21% of children and young people perpetrated violence. … 15% of them said that they had been hit by a teacher, while 5% were threatened by a teacher" (Popadić et al., 2014).

Girls are impacted to a greater extent by child marriages, sexual exploitation and violence and trafficking. Violence affecting boys includes: child labour in rural areas and peer physical violence in urban areas. Young people reporting exposure to at least one form of gender-based violence include 69% of primary school students and 74% of secondary school students (Ćeriman et al., 2015). Children and young people living and working on the street, and children and young people living in residential institutions for protection are at a higher risk of experiencing violence.

The digital space is an increasingly significant space for violence against children and young people. Almost two-thirds (62%) of primary school and 84% of secondary school students were exposed at least once to an Internet risk in the year preceding the survey (Popadić & Kuzmanović, 2013). Digitalization, development of information and communication technologies, Internet and social media are linked with new forms of violence against children and young people, as perpetrators use new technologies as a means of violence.

Findings

Young People's Experiences of Violence - Incidence, Location, Type, Perpetrators and Survivors

Violence against children and young people in and enroute to school was high amongst the sample population in this study. While there was some variation in incidence, location, type and primary perpetrators, more often than not, there were overarching similarities. In contextualizing violence, one young person said, "This phenomenon has been, is and will always remain, that the strong is above the weak" (young person, Kosovo).

Throughout all of the participating countries, there was widespread incidence of a variety of types of violence. "In my school and on the way to school, I have seen peers and adults that hurt others" (young person, Albania). This was a widely-shared view. Yet, in contrast, in Bulgaria, participants suggested, "The small town and the village are seen as relatively secure places where all people know each other, there are no outsiders who could pose a threat to them" (young person, Bulgaria).

This research focused on experiences of violence in schools, but inevitably, participants expanded their experiences beyond this, to their level of comfort in schools and their experiences outside school and at home. Participants in Bulgaria also highlighted that school was one of their favourite places to be: "It is interesting and fun" (young person, Bulgaria); and "The school is good. The teachers are good" (young person, Bulgaria). This illustrated their sense of safety within the confines of the school.

The most common forms of violence varied across countries, age ranges, urban/rural groups, and genders. The common theme across countries, however, was the ubiquitous nature of violence experienced by children and young people. The range of severity of violence highlighted by young people ranged from mild to severe, including physical violence involving weapons. Yet, violence was most commonly expressed on the mild to medium range. As an example of the more serious incidents, a participant shared, "there was a physical violence [incident] between the two classes and they had cold weapons[1]" (young person, Kosovo). Another participant suggested, "I have seen at my school that they also fight with knives… One day our school became the place of battle and the students were covered in blood. Those boys were in the fourth grade, two classes fought together"

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[1] A cold weapon is one that does not include an explosive, e.g., metal pipe, knife, bludgeon.

(young person, Albania). However, these more serious physical altercations are a rarity, and the duration and frequency of a broader range of types of violence ranged from occasional to daily. Some participants also noted that struggles often start from minor or superficial infractions, and escalate to something larger, as one participant stated, "when we fight over something stupid, then we don't talk for months" (young person, Bulgaria).

In Albania, girls most commonly face psychological violence in schools, whilst boys deal with physical violence, but both experience bullying and sexual violence. In Bulgaria, the participants were younger (10–14 years old), which may explain why sexual violence did not come up in their discussions. Instead, they discussed a limited range of violence witnessed or experienced: swearing, insulting words, conflicts in which "blows are exchanged".

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, young people highlighted a range of types of violence, including cyberbullying, domestic violence, sexual violence and harassment, but also social violence, which was identified as violence that focuses on a minority group.

In Croatia, verbal abuse was identified as the most common form of violence amongst girls, while aggression and bullying were commonly experienced by boys. Witnessing various forms of violence was also commonly mentioned by the young people — verbal abuse, threats, extortion, physical violence and aggression, and sexual harassment and intimate partner violence in playgrounds, public buses, sports field, parking lots, transport terminals, near liquor shops and near night clubs.

In Kosovo, participants noted that psychological violence was the most common form of violence against children and young people overall, but some gender differences also existed where girls experienced psychological or verbal violence, sexual violence and cyberbullying in schools, enroute to school and at home (in order of frequency), whereas boys experienced psychological violence, verbal violence and bullying, followed by physical violence.

In Moldova, younger children and young people aged 13–15 were more likely to be involved in physical violence, whereas children 15–18 years old were more likely to be involved in verbal violence (bullying, name calling and online harassment). They suggested that witnessing physical violence among boys and verbal abuse among girls was common at school.

In Romania, participants suggested girls most commonly experience verbal violence, bullying, and sexual violence, whereas boys most commonly experience verbal violence and bullying.

In Serbia, boys identified the existence of more physical forms of violence, which included rubber band shooting, fighting, but also emotional abuse, including insults, ridicule, online violence and blackmail. According to boys, similar kinds of violence arise enroute to and from school, including insults, ridicule, name calling, rumbles, fighting and blackmail.

The following chart outlines the most common types of violence named by participants across each country.

Chart 9 - Most Commonly Reporting Type of Violence by Young People

Country	Most Common Violence Overall	Experience for Girls	Experience for Boys	Notes
Albania	Bullying and sexual violence	In school and enroute to school: psychological violence (ages 0–12 bullying; 13–18 sexual harassment)	In school and enroute to school: physical violence (ages 0–12 "offences" and physical violence; 13–18 physical and psychological)	There were an increasing numbers of girls using physical violence and imitating boys. There was also a perceived increase in cyberbullying.
Bulgaria	Swearing, insults, conflicts that led to an exchange of "blows"	Physical, verbal	Physical violence (hitting, pushing, pinching, hanging) and verbal violence	Sexual violence did not feature in their narratives, other than in stories from the adult world.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	In school: cyberbullying and sexual violence	In School: sexual violence; enroute to school and home: cyberbullying and harassment (participants said the latter had the bigger impact)	In school: social violence (seen as most impactful); at home: domestic violence	Social violence described as violence that is felt more acutely by socially disadvantaged groups, including social exclusion.
Croatia	Verbal abuse	Verbal abuse, sexual harassment and abuse	Physical violence	
Kosovo	Psychological	In school and enroute to school: psychological/ verbal, sexual and cyberbullying	In school and enroute to school: psychological, verbal/ bullying, and physical	Psychological violence, including verbal abuse, is the most offensive and has an emotional impact, are the most commonly ranked types of violence in school, on route to school, and in general.
Moldova	In schools: physical and verbal abuse, with verbal violence being most common between peers	Verbal violence	Physical confrontations	13–15 year olds are more likely to use physical violence, and 15–18 year olds are more likely to be involved in verbal violence. Older children and young people are also more likely to bully younger ones.
Romania	Verbal violence and bullying	In school and enroute to school: verbal violence, bullying, sexual violence	In school and enroute to school: verbal violence, bullying	
Serbia	Psychological violence, which was seen as having the most long-lasting impact	In school and enroute to school: psychological violence (13–14- year-olds) and emotional violence (15–18)	Physical violence (13–18-year-olds)	

Participants differentiated types of violence in different locations. While violence enroute to school was noted as prevalent, in Albania the severity and incidence of violence increased further from the school. The most common forms of violence encountered at school, enroute to school and at home were unique, although sometimes overlapping. Bullying was common at school, but so were various psychological, verbal, social, sexual and physical forms of violence. As one participant commented, *"Bullying is happening constantly. I think it is dangerous"* (young person, Albania).

Enroute to school, verbal, sexual and physical violence were common, and at home, cyberbullying was the most common form of violence, but domestic violence was also noted, including both verbal and physical abuse: *"…the use of physical means, may also be the use of inappropriate words against a person"* (young person, Kosovo). In Serbia, young people suggested that the most dangerous places were on the way to school. Public buses were considered sites of bullying as well as sexual harassment. A Croatian young person shared: *"On the bus there was a girl, she was in the 8th grade, and he was touching her all the time and she was trying to get away from him"* (young person, Croatia). Perpetrators were usually adults considered *"local troublemakers"*. Unsurprisingly, several participants also mentioned that there was an increased risk of violence at night (outside of school, for instance in night clubs). While some participants had direct experience with this, others had a vague perception of the risks, as illustrated by one 10 year old participant: "If they catch me in the dark, they can kill me or sell me" (young person, Bulgaria).

The most pervasive and prevalent abuse overall came under the broad umbrella of psychological violence. There was some overlap in definitions given by young people for psychological, verbal and emotional abuse: false gossip, mockery, swearing, insults, sharing photos without the subject's permission, being negatively labelled (sometimes by teachers), humiliation, provocation, scaring or threatening, belittling, criticizing someone's appearance, body shaming, shaming, manipulating, blackmail, exclusion/marginalization, *"hysterical fights"*, screaming and shouting. This morphed into more physical violence for the older girls, which tended to occur enroute to school, where some participants suggested girls start unnecessary group fights, quarrels, conflicts, and engage in peer exclusion, insulting, and even physical violence.

In general, there seemed to be a gendered difference in the kind of physical violence mentioned. For instance, in Bulgaria, boys mentioned hitting and pushing, whereas girls noted pushing and pulling. In Kosovo, it was reported that physical violence in schools happened as a result of play or perceived rivalry. In Bulgaria, participants also highlighted that physical violence sometimes led to property damage when someone gets angry or aggressive and breaks something or hurts someone. Furthermore, the researchers picked up on a trend of girls imitating the physical violence traditionally demonstrated by boys. Physical violence in Serbia included beatings, abuse and touching someone without their consent. They also remarked on the seeming lack of concern for the violence experienced by boys. A young person in Romania shared: "Physical violence is very obvious; you can easily

see it. When you do something to someone that person threatens to beat you up." A participant in Bulgaria stated: *"When we won, one of the boys got very angry and hit me hard. Then he cursed me"* (young person, Bulgaria). Another participant suggested gang violence can be severe: *"There are fights between clans in our community (gang violence)... sometimes it gets really bad. If one is hit, they all jump for him. All for one and one for all. This is how it is"* (young person, Romania).

These incidences were tied to ubiquitous issues of bullying, with overlapping definitions. For participants, bullying included spitting, stupid jokes, humiliation, belittling, public humiliation and group exclusion. Bullying, with the exception of cyberbullying, was more common in schools, although it also occurred outside of school. For instance, in Kosovo, violence was seen as more common in the surrounding areas, such as shops, lanes, bakeries and on the street. In these places it was often accompanied by sexual harassment. Young participants in Kosovo defined bullying as a form of "systematic insult". In Romania, it was seen as a daily issue. Interestingly, adult participants in Romania felt that child bullying and ganging up on other children and young people was rare. Whereas in Kosovo, the adult participants felt that bullying was a major preoccupation of children and young people, with a myriad of definitions, including physical and emotional violence (pushing, hitting, pinching, plucking, hanging, using obscene words and expressions). Participants in Bulgaria noted that verbal bullying was quite common on the school bus.

Overall, the act of violence included tools of exclusion: *"Sometimes they don't call me to play and it offends me"* (young person, Bulgaria). Researchers in Bosnia-Herzegovina expressed that children and young people feel that they are labelled by peers, further adding to the potential for social exclusion.

Participants expressed a growing concern over the online violence they experienced. This is often referred to as cyberbullying and can include exposure to violent material. Participants in Kosovo suggested this was perpetrated via social media. Incidents of cyberbullying seem to be increasing as children and young people have moved online due to COVID-19 restrictions. Sharing pornographic material, such as intimate and nude photos, was also common: *"Yes, everybody does it...it is more likely that guys will share, but yes, everybody sends their pictures"* (young woman, Croatia). In Croatia, this behaviour changed with age; while pre-teens tend to share nude pictures on social media, older children and young people are much more aware that distribution is criminal according to Croatian law, and they tend to physically present pictures or videos to their closest, most trusted friends.

While this research focused on children and young people's experience in schools, inevitably participants discussed issues pertaining to general and domestic violence. Some participants also noted the perceived increase of risk of domestic violence while at home during COVID-19 restrictions.

Those who were violated at home used to have an escape. For example, they could go and hang out with their friend, at least spend some time outside. Especially during the quarantine, isolation became extreme. Now it's a bit different, but then it was the worst, and they were the most at risk (young person, Albania).

Participants in all countries mentioned evident sexual violence. This was almost exclusively communicated as experienced by girls, and most commonly, experienced enroute to school via sexual harassment, catcalling, unwanted physical touching, lewd comments, but more broadly, also included sharing nude images, humiliation by partners, manipulation, as well as rape. Body shaming was also mentioned more commonly for girls, as in being shamed for being *"too fat", "too skinny"* or for other physical characteristics. Early marriage was also noted. While not violence, some participants mentioned teen pregnancy in association with this topic.

To complicate matters, there was a perception that some types of sexual violence were not always seen as unwanted. It was common to blame girls for receiving sexual attention and violence, or that sexual harassment was encouraged by girls. Illustrating the complexity, one participant said: *"Some boys are making girls fall in love with them and are asking them different sexual favours; they later make this public or tell/ show their friends"* (young person, Romania).

In Romania, the issue of extortion was raised, as one young person shared this example: *"There was a boy that was staying in front of the school's toilet asking other children to pay 1 RON in order to use the toilet"* (young person, Romania).

Neglect was less understood and less obvious among young participants; they noted it happens, but it is not well understood within schools. Adults also provided an insight into the perceived incidence of violence. In Serbia, they suggested that online violence and shame were common for girls and physical violence was common for boys. In both cases, shame-inducing behaviour may hinder some from seeking help and reporting.

In Albania, participants also highlighted intergenerational aspects of violence, especially the impact of violent fathers. In Kosovo, participants mentioned family expectations, as well as exploitation, where some families required children and young people to engage in street or family work to support the family income.

In terms of understanding and contextualising violence, several participants across several countries said that their information comes from television, movies, social media and books. Some younger participants in Bulgaria expressed that this was their only experience of seeing violence, although they may have been discussing purely physical violence, for example murder. In Bulgaria, participants abstractly discussed violence against the elderly as something they had heard about in the media. Participants in Romania also mentioned violence against animals, but their knowledge of this came mainly from the media. One incidence of witnessing violence against a dog was noted by a Bulgarian participant.

5.1.1 Perpetrators of Violence

The most commonly cited group of people that young people said engaged in violence were their peers. They also mentioned teachers, parents/carers, other children and young people, adults, police and the media. For verbal and emotional violence, this group included peers, teachers and parents/carers. A common theme emerging from the interviews was "the strong" perpetrating violence on those seen

as smaller or weaker (adults against children and young people, older children and young people against younger children, males against females, the socially strong against the socially weak, etc.). Preying on those seen as weaker also occurred with peers outside the school, often older boys who engaged in other activities, including substance use, selling drugs or gang affiliation. This was more of an issue in specific locations, such as bus shelters and shops.

As has been discussed, experiences with, impact on, and perpetrators of violence differed for boys and girls. Psychological, verbal, emotional violence and bullying were commonly done by peers, except for online bullying which sometimes included a broader group. Some participants perceived that children and young people who experienced violence at home were more likely to bully (e.g., Moldova). Many participants across countries discussed verbal violence and yelling as perpetrated by teachers, who also give children and young people names and labels, sometimes in response to what was seen as *"poor behaviour"* or a challenge to their behaviour.

Girls were more likely to perpetuate verbal violence (e.g., Serbia), although there was some indication that things may be changing. As one participant said: *"In the last years, the number of girls behaving like the boys... is increasing"* (young person, Albania).

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, researchers noted that boys were also more likely to be verbally abusive or aggressive to teachers and peers, or to pull hair or ears. This seemed to be aligned with stereotypical normative expectations for girls to be "good" or obedient, and to do their homework. In contrast, boys were provided more freedom and more latitude to be lazy and unorganised, just as there was an assumption that they are better able to care for themselves; *"It is different for a boy; the boy can defend himself, while the girls cannot. Also, because in the future, this boy will lead a family, his family"* (young person, Albania).

Participants also pointed out that older children and young people were more likely to victimise younger children and young people. In contrast, they were also more likely to protect them. Two participants in Bulgaria shared the following: *"They are constantly teasing us and it's a downright horror"* (young person, Bulgaria). *"Big boys are dangerous, they hit me for nothing"* (young person, Bulgaria).

Sexual violence, in terms of teasing, verbal slurs and groping, was carried out by peers and people encountered enroute to school. In one case, in Kosovo, participants shared a story of a teacher sexually assaulting a student.[2]

In terms of physical violence, perpetrators of corporal punishment tended to include parents/carers and teachers (particularly for children 14 and younger according to Romanian participants), and parents/carers in regard to domestic violence.

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[2] In cases where children shared cases of abuse or other concerning experiences, the psychologists and social workers working with the children followed up with each case and made appropriate referrals where needed.

"Violence occurs between the same sexes, but there are also cases of different genders" (young person, Kosovo). "My father beats me so much that 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" (young person, Bosnia-Herzegovina).[3] Based on the comments of participants, girls tended to experience more emotional and psychological violence, especially bullying, but were more likely to experience sexual violence and harassment as well, particularly enroute to school.

I have experienced sexual harassment by boys on the street and physical violence, because I did not respond to them. They stopped me, grabbed me forcefully by the arm and it remained bruised for weeks. I remember the high school period as traumatic (young person, Albania).

In contrast, boys were more likely to experience and perpetuate physical violence, but one participant also suggested that physical violence was more likely to be tolerated by boys than girls (Serbia).

Similarly, in Moldova, boys purportedly intervene in conflicts and react aggressively when someone denigrates or beats them. Norms about behaviour were also more permissive for boys, for instance in telling *"dirty jokes"* (Bosnia-Herzegovina). As an example, one participant stated, *"When it comes to gender-based violence, we often mean abusing the dominance of boys over girls, and we are always sensitive to that"* (adult participant, Serbia).

Everyone is capable of perpetrating violence, as was captured by one participant in Bulgaria: *"Children often quarrel at school, they swear sometimes, they call each other names. It's not good, however, when someone gets nervous and it happens"* (young person, Bulgaria). Researchers in Moldova concluded that violence among peers is a source of obtaining popularity and social acceptance, a way of increasing one's status and social capital. In addition, violence is used as a way to fit in, to be part of a group, to gain a sense of belonging and to strive to secure one's position in a hierarchy.

Familial violence emerged in several discussions, with parents and siblings implicated in perpetrating violence. Violence within the family included violence between siblings.

When it comes to violence perpetrated by one child against another in the family, it means that if a brother or sister suffers violence, I think that the reaction of the parents depends on how some rules of conduct in relations between family members are set; we can say, it depends on some internal family rule (Serbia).

Within the family, it is also interesting to note that parents were more likely to recognise their children or young people as victims rather than perpetrators of violence, hence illustrating a sense of shame in the perpetrators.

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[3] ibid

There were some suggestions that particular groups were more likely to be perpetrators, for instance, in Serbia, participants suggested Roma, migrants, and refugees were more likely to perpetuate violence, although some researchers were careful to highlight that statistics do not bear this out.

While participants did not specifically identify systemic or institutional violence, they did suggest some institutions that promoted social norms that influenced perceptions of violence or hindered reporting mechanisms. These mainly included the police and the media. The media was also noted as inappropriately releasing private information to the public, including identifiable information, and causing additional damage to victims and their families. Police were implicated in both eroding trust in institutions to address violence against children and young people, having too high a threshold for reporting, and in some cases, perpetuating violence themselves. The lack of trust in the police to protect privacy was related to cases where information about the victims of sexual violence was linked to the media. In Albania, young people included police because they felt they used physical violence to keep control, but also because there were concerns of corruption and lack of privacy of case information.

Participants in several countries noted that identifying and punishing perpetrators, and communicating the punishment, assumedly as a form of prevention, would support reducing incidents of violence.

5.1.2 Survivors of Violence

Across a range of countries, older children and young people were more likely to abuse younger children. In some cases, this manifested as extortion. And "stronger" children and young people were more likely to abuse "weaker" children and young people. Children and young people were identified as "weaker" if they had a disability, had lower academic achievements, were from a minority group, were withdrawn or had few friends. Moldovan research identified additional categories, including children and young people with limited cognitive skills, unique family situations (e.g., orphans, those not living with their parents/carers, migrant families, parents/carers temporarily unemployed, families in financial difficulty etc.). In Serbia, participants thought that those with less talent and those who needed more support were more likely to be victimised. In Romania, participants said that shy or quiet children and young people were also more likely to be victimised. Their definition of "weaker" was diverse.

There is one girl in my class, she constantly suffers violence from our classmates, more mentally than physically. It is usually the insult, pushing, what no child is comfortable with, not even her. She is very withdrawn. She has difficulties establishing contacts with people, and she hangs out with my sister. I see that she does not like it. She is very sad. She reported it, but then the whole class attacked her for lying. Mostly my sister and I take her side. The school is generally never interested in solving that. We have these workshops on violence, but mostly it never helps (young person, Serbia).

In Serbia, young people noted that children and young people living and working on the streets, and children and young people living in residential institutions were particularly vulnerable to experiencing violence. The concern for the former centred on exploitation, trafficking and sexual violence.

Girls and boys were victimised in different ways, and some groups were more marginalised than others, as discussed in the following sections.

5.1.3 Gender-Based Differences in Experiences and Perceptions of Violence

Across all of the countries, participants provided examples of differing experiences and perspectives of violence. Girls experience more sexual violence, while boys are more prone to engage in physical violence. *"Women are generally associated with beauty, sensitivity and weakness. Boys are not seen like that and their gestures are not judged that much"* (young person, Romania). It was also suggested that who reaches out for support differs between genders. In Moldova, it emerged that more girls than boys ask teachers and family for help to discuss their problems. While experienced equally, there were also nuanced differences in their experiences of verbal and physical violence.

Gender differences were seen in Croatia as both boys and girls shared intimate photos, but girls, not boys, were shamed for these activities: "The girl is more often condemned, they say that she is a whore, while for a guy, he is a legend, he's big, and the girl, she is a slut…" (young person, Croatia).

Several participants in various countries also highlighted that girls were more likely to experience and engage in cyberbullying than boys: "They write nonsense and then fight over some boys. I know this from my sister" (young person, Bulgaria). Participants across a range of countries discussed the influence of the media on instilling gender-based norms. This is typified by the following quote:

We are constantly saying something that we need to accept, for example, we have performances that point to violence against women, and every year we have more and more women killed during domestic violence. It's like we're inciting those killers. Nothing concrete was done. Just some stories, some seminars, focus groups … Without any concrete action. In my opinion, alternatives for children should really be made at the local community level, dance groups, choir, etc. should be opened more. To invest more in it and for young people to join it (young person, Serbia).

In Bulgaria, gender relations were discussed as a cause of conflict, particularly verbal violence (e.g., taunting, insults). *"The boys are irresponsible. They smoke cigarettes and think they are something big"* (young person, Bulgaria); *"The boys are dumb"* (young person, Bulgaria). Several participants also suggested that females were more likely to be victimised as they were perceived as physically weaker.

5.1.4 Marginalisation and Violence

As has been discussed, across the countries there were a range of factors that highlighted the groups of people that were more likely to be victimised by violence, identified by being different or by being perceived as weaker. *"There are a lot of children at school, everyone is different and so some you like, others you don't. Whoever they don't like they start harassing"* (young person, Bulgaria). According to

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[4] In cases where children shared cases of abuse or other concerning experiences, the psychologists and social workers working with the children followed up with each case and made appropriate referrals.

participants, marginalisation happened because of age, gender, or socio-economic differences, but also due to cultural or ethnic differences. In general, Croatian students recognized that the higher you are on the social scale, the less likely you are to be bullied and experience other types of violence. In general, participants in Romania stated that girls were the most judged group.

Factors pertaining to age and gender differences have been discussed. Another area that was raised was socio-economic differences. For instance, in Bulgaria, participants noted that people seen as poorer or with fewer economic status symbols (e.g. mobile phones, the right clothing, living conditions) were more likely to be picked on. *"If you don't have nice clothes and a phone, they make fun of you"* (young person, Bulgaria). Their home environment, food and origin were also a source of ridicule.

Social status, for instance, the number of friends you had, could act as a source of outcasting or social protection for children and young people. Participants in Bulgaria suggested that education acted as a protector, with less educated people being at risk (and illiterate students being at an even greater risk). In contrast, participants also noted that academically-oriented students were more at risk. In a similar vein, in Romania, participants highlighted the rift between students in the vocational and academic tracks, which often led to violence.

Participants commented on the negative attitudes towards the increasing number of refugees (for instance, in Serbia). This made refugees more vulnerable to experiencing violence, but also of being accused of increasing the rates of violence. In Serbia, young people suggested that others, especially girls, express high concern regarding the presence of refugees, particularly near the borders, despite the fact that violence has not emerged with refugee children and young people in their schools. Regardless, participants suggested that more police and military protection was needed.

Race and culture were a significant factor in marginalisation across the countries. Groups particularly at risk included: Roma, Black people, Ashkali, or Egyptians. The prejudice and discrimination illustrated to Roma children and young people was particularly acute in the Romania study, where participants suggested that they engaged and experienced higher rates of verbal and physical violence. Demonstrating the prejudice, participants articulated discrimination in their response. There was a common myth perpetuated that Roma children and young people were "dirty" and had lower academic achievement, which sometimes meant Roma students were older than their cohort, and sometimes married or were parents/carers themselves. One Romanian participant explained that he was regularly called "thief" and "stupid" by peers and teachers because he is Roma. The perception that there were higher rates of early marriage and teen pregnancy is not corroborated by the statistics, according to the researcher.

Physical or mental disabilities did not emerge as a factor in many instances, but there were a few cases, as one participant stated: *"There's a boy who stutters and everyone laughs at him"* (young person, Bulgaria). In Kosovo, participants noted that children and young people with special needs were more likely to experience neglect and psychological violence at school.

5.1.5 Impact of Violence on Victims and Survivors

In terms of the recognition of the impact of violence, participants generally noted that violence could have "heavy consequences" (e.g., Albania). The young participants were "very uncomfortable" with the impact of violence on children and young people. This was a concern for both children and young people, but also the affiliated adults. These two quotes highlight the effect violence had on two young people. *"Personally, I feel safe only at school and at home. In the street, I don't have any guaranteed security"* (young person, Albania). *"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"* (young person, Bosnia-Herzegovina).

A teacher in Romania suggested that the impact of violence on students was obvious: *"You can see with a naked eye that children are traumatized"* (adult participant, Romania).[4]

Much of the focus of this discussion was on the most serious forms of violence. For instance, in Albania, young people highlighted the clear physical and serious impacts of sexual exploitation, rape and suffocation. Girls in Romania and Kosovo felt sexual violence was the most harmful form of violence for girls, whereas boys said psychological violence, such as humiliation, had lingering ramifications. In Serbia, participants noted that sexual violence was not common, but sexual and gender-based violence (rape, posting intimate things on social networks, and groping), were some of the most damaging forms of violence. While there was recognition of the impact of serious cases of violence, participants stated that ongoing, persistent low levels of violence were sometimes just as damaging. Participants felt that emotional abuse, including exclusion from society, insulting, and belittling, had far-reaching consequences.

The psychological and emotional toil of bullying and cyberbullying across most countries was seen as damaging self–confidence and impacting how children and young people felt about attending school. This was seen as equally damaging for boys and girls; "I think the worst is psychological. Exclusion from society, group. Then everyone retreats into themselves. Both boys and girls" (young person, Serbia).

Likewise, participants in Kosovo and Croatia stated that verbal violence took an emotional toll. As one young person shared: *"Wherever we turn, there is not much help until we manage to extinguish that emotion of anger, sadness and oppression"* (young person, Croatia). Furthermore, the specific consequences of psychological violence were highlighted by young Romanian participants: *"I lose self-confidence"*; *"fear"*; *"low academic success"*; *"I feel bad"*; *"I am more shy"*.

There was a correlation between bullying and verbal and psychological violence. Participants noticed that bullying was more likely to occur for children and young people who stood out for some reason, and as a result, were more likely to suffer the consequences of victimisation. Such children and young people were also more likely to engage in self-harm. As one young person stated:

I have been a victim of bullying, only because of my economic situation…because I couldn't afford clothes or things like the others did. I have experienced bullying so badly that I thought I would even commit suicide. I even tried several times, but I was scared. I thought about my mom, about my life…I had also taken a knife, I thought several times I will do it, or I will explode, because I'm going crazy in this world (young person, Albania).

While the level of severity of violence and its impact was commonly thought to be mild to moderate, but in Kosovo participants noted that if severe it could result in "self-damage" and suicide. There were also self-harm cases amongst children and young people who had had nude pictures of themselves distributed or shared on social media. Feeling shame and humiliation, "their pictures went online and then they started cutting themselves" (young person, Croatia).

Adult and young participants also noted that psychological and emotional violence had the most profound impact on children and young people: "I think we are a lost generation and that we have somehow lost these children who are coming because of the general crisis" (adult participant, Serbia); *"The most dangerous violence is psychological"* (young person, Kosovo); *"Psychological violence is more severe (bad) I think"* (young person, Kosovo). Another stated, *"I hate to be teased. It's low and I don't like it. I complain to the teacher, but some children don't stop, and this happens almost every day"* (young person, Bulgaria).

In Albania, shame, both victim blaming and public shaming, was a theme that emerged. Young people identified shame as a consequence of being victimised, particularly if the violence was sexual in nature. The resulting stigma and negative reactions were difficult for the victims/survivors, some of whom moved or changed schools. In Bulgaria, girls tended to be younger participants (10–14), and did not want to discuss sexual violence. Adult participants suggested that it was rare and came in the form of teasing that girls often ignored. Interestingly, in Albania, male perpetrators were said not to experience the same level of blame and shame as female victims.

The impact of violence was also seen as more severe for girls. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, for instance, there were graver concerns for girls as a result of child marriage, sexual exploitation and violence, and trafficking, whereas concerns for boys were related to child labour in rural areas and peer physical violence in urban areas.

In Serbia, participants stated that the violence crisis has had a deep impact on the way they raise their children and young people. In Romania, participants included an exploration of the broader context where violence occurred, and noted an increase in stress where there was a lack of family bonds and emotional support from families whose parents/carers were working abroad.

Importantly, while participants recognized the continuum of severity and impacts of violence, they also noted the damaging impact of tolerating violence. In contrast, young participants suggested that the cycle of tolerating violence needed to stop. One participant summed this up: *"Violence, in every aspect, is unforgivable"* (young person, Kosovo).

5.2 Mechanisms of Support

5.2.1 Support from Family and Community

Unsurprisingly, families were said to offer support and protection from violence to children and young people. One participant called this the most important source of protection. Mothers were often seen as particularly protective: *"If I have any problems, I tell my mother and she deals with the teachers. My father doesn't go to school"* (young person, Bulgaria). Another stated: *"I would look for help from my mother, she is very open…"* (young person, Croatia).

A young Albanian shared:
I think it should all start from the parents. They should know what society we are living in. Every decade things are changing. When the parent knows how to educate their child, tomorrow this child won't be a danger to the society. It all starts with parental education, if they teach their children from a young age not to offend, not to insult (young person, Albania).

Family support often came from the immediate family, like a sibling, but also the broader family, uncles and aunts and their close families, play an important role: *"For example, I have a very good relationship with my parents and sisters, so I know that I can tell them absolutely everything and these best friends are always there"* (young person, Croatia). However, this was not universally the case. Some participants said that they would not share their experiences with parents/carers, and that they would underplay the impact and avoid conflicts between children and young people. Some participants were in care and not living with their families. In Bulgaria, where the participants were younger (10-14 years old), they noted that their parents/carers were their main source of protection, but older siblings also played a significant role. Some participants suggested that overall, children and young people were left on their own to deal with their experiences of violence (e.g. Moldova).

Friends, particularly close friends, were also listed, but not universally. Young people were ambivalent to the role of peers in protection in Serbia. Friends could be confidents or the ones to report, rather than the victim. In some cases, friends were the first people that children and young people would turn to in case of sexual violence.

In Albania, researchers noted that the norm of the community protecting each other was an important aspect of protection, but this did not extend to sexual violence.

In Croatia, young people perceived that they had less help than adult participants. As a young person shared: *"It's all very unfair to me, rarely does an institution help like that, it doesn't make sense to me, I feel like no one is helping anyone, but I see that it all goes through some connections"* (young person, Croatia). Adults, however, especially practitioners, recognized a strong reporting system, both informal and formal, to protect children and young people from violence, and to promote well-being. Also, adults in Croatia highlighted that there are many programs and activities to prevent violence and empower children, young people, and parents/carers toward more peaceful behaviour.

One of the impediments to making change was seen as a lack of skills to do so. As an example, participants noted that parents/carers lacked the necessary parental skills to maintain healthy and emotionally warm relationships with their children and young people during adolescence. It was also said that teachers lacked the skills to care for children and young people's emotional needs, such as empathy.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina the research was conducted within a non-governmental organisation. As such, recognition of the important contribution that non-governmental organisations make was evident, for instance, the two day care centres who directly deal with interventions and work with children and young people from marginalized groups who are at risk or are already involved in violence.

In Bulgaria, the participants suggested that the community could provide more safety if they were to provide more dedicated child-friendly spaces and activities within their town. Likewise, this would reduce the level of violence. Similarly, in Romania, participants said that their communities lacked spaces for children and young people to create bonds among themselves based on shared interests and shared activities.

5.2.2 Understanding Safety

Participants articulated their right to safety: "children have rights, no one should hit them" (young person, Bulgaria). Participants in Albania recognised the strength in supporting one another within the community. In this sense, safety was tied to relationships.

In understanding this better, participants were asked to share the general location of their safe spaces and who helped them feel safe. In general homes and areas close to home were highlighted as the main source of protection: *"I am safe at home. My parents would always protect me. I'm not afraid of anything. They love me and support me"* (young person, Bulgaria); *"It is the parents and neighbourhood who support"* (young person, Albania). In Kosovo, boys suggested that they mostly relied on family, but would be more likely to turn to friends if there was physical violence, exploitation, or trafficking, whereas girls said they would turn to friends in the case of psychological or sexual violence and bullying.

Schools were also cited as relatively safe places, particularly where teachers were around. Some participants, for instance in Moldova, noted that while these spaces (i.e., home and school) were generally safe, there were rare, extreme cases where this was not the case.

While it did not come up often, some participants mentioned the corrolation between violent behaviours and other risk-taking behaviour (for instance alcohol and drug consumption, hanging out with people who engage in risk-taking behaviours, gang violence and other behaviours). Some children and young people were also seen as naturally more violent and unruly, or acting out: "In each class there is someone who always fights, and teachers can do nothing" (young person, Bulgaria); "Some of them do not know what they are doing" (young person, Bulgaria). There was also some discussion on how violence was seen as a form of testing boundaries: *"Everyone knows X … And they deliberately tease him to watch to see what will happen and to make fun of this"* (young person, Bulgaria).

There appeared to be a conflation of safety and protection, where those who offered protection were considered safe. The main source of protection was seen as family. Safe people included parents/carers (particularly mothers), trusted friends, and favourite teachers. In contrast, participants in Albania noted that fathers can *"also be feared"*. In Bulgaria, participants noted that friends were an important source of safety, but they preferred to be with those of the same gender. In Albania, participants added the caveat that only children and young people with a strong support system feel protected. In some instances, it emerged that a safe space was made when they were in the presence of safe people. Participants in Bosnia-Herzegovina noted that they felt safe when in the presence of close friends and family.

Safe spaces were also limited to daytime spaces. For instance, in Bulgaria, participants suggested that schools, parks and city centres were safe, but only in the daytime. Similarly, participants in Moldova said that they avoid locations which lack public lighting (like parks, the cemetery or dark streets).
In Moldova, participants contextualised safety with self-efficacy, suggesting that strong children and young people solve their problems on their own, without asking teachers and parents/carers for help. *"I don't know who to look for, I'll take care of myself. My father says that if I want to succeed in life, I have to take care of myself"* (young person, Bulgaria).

Within the school, Bulgarian participants noted that the classroom was the safest place as it was under the management of the teacher. In contrast, less safe areas were corridors and gyms, washrooms, school buses and school yards. But in Albania, some male participants said that the gym felt like a safe space. In several sessions with adults across countries, teachers said that they intervene in violence and work to create safety.

The route to and from school was identified across several countries as a less-safe space. While the route to school was not seen as safe, it was seen as safer (and more fun, according to one Bulgarian participant) when travelled with friends.

Participants in Bulgaria suggested that their community was safer because it was smaller and allowed better monitoring of behaviour. It also allowed more trust in allowing children and young people to go to school alone. The level of violence differed across sites, both rural and urban, but it was equally pervasive. While the severity of violence may have been slightly higher in urban areas, the level of discrimination appeared higher in rural areas. However, this needs to be interpreted within the small sample provided.

In a more general sense, in order to feel safe, participants suggested adequate punishment for the perpetrators was necessary. They also recommended that additional, child-friendly spaces be provided within their communities. Participants noted that they had received training about violence against children and young people, and this built safety, but several commented that such programs were insufficient, for example, those that exist in schools are not seen by children and young people as efficient and effective in Serbia.

Those workshops that we have are part of the civic education in school. We are constantly learning the same things in these workshops. No one has yet dealt with the fact that it is not effective. Nobody tried changing something in those workshops, or changing the way they work (young person, Serbia).

To build more safety, participants suggested several actions: supporting parents/carers to improve their communication; working with the community and the media to change attitudes (especially toward gender-based violence); talking regularly about violence and prevention with parents/carers, in families, school, and the community; make services more accessible; and ensure that perpetrators receive adequate punishment. Participants in Romania, said that parents/carers should enact harsher punishments to address violence perpetrated by their children and young people and to ensure specific incidents were dealt with within parent-teacher meetings: *"We need to talk more about it"* (young person, Albania). In school in Romania, boys recommended that there be more dialogue between teachers, school principals and children and young people about violence. In this way, they stated, children and young people could come up with strategies to prevent and act in cases of violence.

Some participants also provided more specific recommendations: *"for a start, I would change the public lighting on the way to school"* (young person, Serbia). One Romanian participant suggested that communities engage self-defence instructors to train girls. Another Romanian participant stated that it would be useful to work with specialists to teach children and young people how to increase their empathy levels, school counsellors to talk to children and young people about positive behaviours, and to design activities that help develop balance, calmness, non-violent response and conflict management skills. Participants also said that boys could be provided more training on gender equality.

5.2.3 Protective Approaches - Self Efficacy

While there was a lot to celebrate in terms of children and young people's collective approaches to keeping themselves and each other safe, there was also a degree of stoicism and isolation in their efforts. There was also an assumption that strength is shown by doing things for oneself and that this may be the best approach: "If it's very hard for me and I suffer a long time already, I could tell my mom, but still, I would prefer to solve it by myself" (young person, Moldova). In addition, some felt they lacked a voice, or that they did not have confidence in their ability to be agents of change, particularly in Albania, and Bulgaria.

In terms of individual self-protection, participants in Bulgaria noted that their parents/carers taught them to protect themselves and enacted rules that kept them safe, for instance not going out at night and hanging around older children and young people, instead, coming home directly from school. However, researchers also noted that the young participants did not have a clear sense of what dangers or specific violence they were being protected from. *"My mother tells me not to communicate with strangers on the street when I'm alone, because they can be dangerous. You don't know who can do what to you"* (young person, Bulgaria). In

Serbia, participants stated that they feel confident talking to their teachers and school personnel, but they believe more prevention and protection work could be done: "We should never be ashamed to say something" (young person, Serbia).

If the situation is not serious, adult participants in Bulgaria felt that children and young people could manage by themselves. In Moldova, participants added a few more strategies than were evident in other research sites. They noted that children and young people tend to solve online disputes on their own, without engaging adults: *"I deleted all my messages. My parents/carers would be very upset if they knew what they called me"* (young person, Moldova). There are a few strategies children and young people use in order to react when someone is bullied online, ranging from mild rejection (not giving a "like", posting an ugly comment or "compromised" photo), to extreme dismissal of the abuser (unfollow, reject, block or even report). A girl said that she was bullied online, and even if she described herself as being "strong" and "resilient to stressful situations", she decided to change schools in order to avoid daily confrontation with her bully.

When asked about the ways children and young people could support safety for other children and young people in their communities, their responses were concrete (for instance walking together to school, reporting incidents to teachers, attending day centres and classes), and they lacked abstract conceptualisation. In general, they felt that communities were protected by institutions — schools, community centres, social workers and other non-profit organisations.

In terms of collective action by children and young people, participants included walking together to school, particularly when the walk was long or if it traversed a dangerous area. Furthermore, children and young people take responsibility for protection when they report violence they witness or hear about to parents/carers, teachers or other supportive people. In Albania, participants noted that they are more likely to report violence when it occurs to their friends, but not to themselves. In Moldova, one participant suggested that children and young people could join sports like boxing as a way to learn protection; *"it is very good for boys to be able to protect themselves"* (young person, Moldova). Another participant in Moldova offered accepting the violence and not reacting, or alternatively, dropping out of or changing schools. In Serbia, some participants thought that older young people did not do enough to redress violence against children and young people, and that younger children were too young to mobilise to change. As a form of action, they gave the example of supporting children and young people who were bullied. In Moldova, participants stated that good friends banded together to confront abusers or report to older peers. However, participants in one setting in Romania believed that boys demonstrated their courage and toughness, built social capital, and joined gangs to protect themselves and their families. In Kosovo, participants highlighted the importance of solidarity, *"I think that the whole class should be together supporting the victim"* (young person, Kosovo).

While there was some evidence of child-led action, it was possible that those with stronger protective systems in place (e.g., supportive family, trusted friends and teachers) felt more prepared to stand up for themselves. As an example, a participant in Romania stated that shy children and young people are less likely to

reach out to school psychologists. In Albania, a small group of children and young people did not feel able to stand up for themselves due to peer pressure, fear of bullying, fear of repercussions by authority figures, parents/carers (especially in cases of domestic violence) and teachers. This is related to damaging social and gender norms, and was more pronounced in cases of sexual violence.

The respondents believe that it is very important that other children and young people learn about violent forms of behaviour in order to recognize violence and react to it. Awareness was "to create a greater and more effective understanding and cooperation between peers as well as between students and teachers" (young person, Kosovo).

We held a silent protest for women's rights, and we even had big banners, flowers, and surprisingly, more boys than girls participated. Before going out, we gathered at school to talk about it first. Everyone had written letters to the parents, to thank them for their support. To tell you the truth, girls were serious and hugged them, while boys burst into tears, when they read those thank-you letters (young person, Albania).

They believe that children and young people can and should be supported when it comes to reporting violence. Participants felt that they did not have a voice and that they wanted to be listened to more: "Please pay more attention to the opinions and attitudes of the children" (young person, Serbia); "Maybe we don't have much influence because we are children. We have no influence, actually, in terms of talking about safety or if we don't like something…" (young person, Serbia).

5.2.4 Circles of Support: School-based and Other Professional Support

In general, across all countries, participants noted that the school, community and day centres, and to some extent police and other non-profit and social services, were helpful in protecting children and young people from violence, as were associations supporting victims and survivors of violence. However, they also noted that the services, the protection, and the training they offered were insufficient or they did not fulfil the needs adequately. Only one group highlighted a national campaign against violence (Albania).

As previously mentioned, schools were seen as safe places. Teachers, principals/directors and school psychologists, social workers and school security officers (where they existed) were seen as helpful resources and some of the first points of contact for specific incidents for certain participants. However, many participants noted that, with the exception of favourite teachers, they were often not likely to report incidents of violence to teachers. Of course, there were exceptions to this. In Albania, participants described trusted, favourite teachers they could confide in, who exhibited good communication skills, who showed an openness toward children and young people, were uncritical and non-aggressive, and taught without an authoritarian style; *"My class teacher is very understanding, and I can always go to her for help. She has helped me before. Once other boys were going to deal with me, she went and talked to them"* (young person, Bulgaria).

Some participants in Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, indicated distrust in their teachers' (as well as pedagogues' and psychologists') ability to support them based on the perception that teachers label children and young people who were once violent, and do not consider that their behaviours can change. In Kosovo, participants felt that when they did report to teachers, they were not taken seriously. In Serbia, some participants doubted the consistency of the school's response to violence, and felt teachers lacked support or motivation. They also noted that they believed they off-loaded responsibility to "professional" support people. In addition, it was clear to them that one psychologist in a school was not enough to deal with awareness-raising, education, as well as support. Other participants felt that they could be more involved in awareness-raising, prevention and protection. Topically, several participants noted that both parents/carers and teachers lacked enough information on protecting children and young people against violence online. In Albania, one participant said that psychological services within schools were helpful, but was sometimes "corrupt". In Kosovo, participants claimed they would be ridiculed if they went to the psychologist in school. "Our psychological counsellor is very good, and I go to her when the big ones tease me. She scolds them" (young person, Bulgaria).

Participants in Albania highlighted their discussions with teachers on relevant topics, but said the talks on bullying were helpful. Teachers and other school professionals were involved in mediating conflicts among children and young people, but when a conflict escalates, the principal can call the local police. In Romania and Bulgaria, teachers intervene, but participants did not see them as proactive, and they did not have an institutional strategy to deal with violence against children and young people. *"We are well connected. As soon as we notice something, we react. We have teachers on duty in the corridors, in the children's buses. We do not allow beatings or quarrels between students"* (adult participant, Bulgaria). Teachers also noted that their efforts to intervene were not always effective, and that they felt they had too few tools to do so, **"we talk to them, but no effect"** (adult participant, Bulgaria). In a different vein, teachers in Bulgaria stated that they felt blamed for children and young people's behaviour: *"We are always blamed for everything. If something happens, we will still be accused of not doing our job - both parents/carers and bosses"* (adult participant, Bulgaria); *"We don't have much support from the children and young people's parents/carers. They have completely abdicated. They have transferred all the responsibility to the school"* (adult participant, Bulgaria).

In Kosovo, participants generally suggested that the school was the third place they would reach out for help, but they believed that they should be involved when the violence occurs on school property.

Generally, young participants knew about other state and local institutional supports, such as social workers, social services, or child protection units and police, but only in the abstract. Across several countries, overall participants stated that they are educated about the appropriate institutions, and in Kosovo, for instance, participants felt that they were aware of and responded to violence. However, there was some concern regarding the level and efficacy of institutional

support due to lack of professional staff and inadequate and timely preventative approaches to violence. *"Support from child's rights organizations would help prevent or respond to violence"* (young person, Kosovo). The participants in Romania said that local institutions were not involved in violence prevention, and boys tended not to trust them. In Serbia, participants recognized the dearth of civil society organisations, particularly ones focused on child rights, child participation and youth empowerment. This was seen as the reason why few formal or informal groups could help organise and lift children and young people's voices. This was more acute in small communities where there were fewer specialist services. Several participants noted the support and protection from community centres or day centres. In Bosnia, participants pointed out that day care centres were informative about violence and violent forms of behaviour, and participants who attended them illustrated their increased level of knowledge.

Police services were recognized in the research in most countries. There was both trust in their supportive capacity, and distrust in their protection. This was in part due to the differentiation of types of violence. Participants across several countries expressed concern with police corruption. In Albania, there was specific concern over the police respecting people's privacy, particularly in cases of sexual violence. In Kosovo, they were ranked quite highly in dealing with situations of trafficking and exploitation. In Bulgaria, participants worried that by bringing reports forward, they would be accused of being guilty.

On a related note, participants in Serbia deemed the judicial system "effective". In Kosovo, a participant stated, *"violence must be prohibited by law"* (young person, Kosovo).

In exploring what impedes effective intervention, Romanian participants suggested a belief that violence is unavoidable by human nature. This prevents adults from purposefully and creatively designing school and community-based programs to eliminate violence against children and young people. Participants in Kosovo stated that coordination across services was also missing. In Bulgaria, participants suggested that this adversely effected timely and adequate measures. Where there were coordinated groups focused on the eradication of violence, children and young people fared better. Participants felt that these coordinated interagency groups would be stronger if they were located where children and young people were more likely to be, i.e. in schools.

Further illustrating the mitigating factors, participants in Serbia noted that the response time of institutions depends on the type of violence; they suggested they are less responsive to cases of psychological violence. As noted in the previous section, participants felt that children and young people with stronger social protection networks were more likely to experience safety and to report violence. In Serbia, participants added to this, saying that children and young people from better social and economic backgrounds experienced more responsiveness from school personnel, which further entrenched the impacts of discrimination. In Romania, participants stated that teenagers did not have access to specialised support for experiences of violence.

From a systems perspective, some participants called for campaigns against violence, particularly violence against children and young people, designed and promoted by authorities, schools, and community-based organizations, as well as effectively-implemented child protection policies.

5.3 Social Norms Pertaining to Violence Against Children and Young People in Schools

5.3.1 Social Norms Limiting the Reporting of Violence

Across countries, participants highlighted a range of social norms that influence how much, and to whom, participants report acts of violence against children and young people. Participants noted that there are serious consequences for not reporting prolonged bullying. Schools also have not sufficiently reported violence, and have thus hindered efforts to curb violence in their schools. This section identifies a range of themes that emerged regarding reporting, including levels of trust, avoiding taboo subjects, not wanting to appear weak, the scale of violence is "too big", weighing the severity (whether the level of violence warranted reporting), assuming violence is normal, undermining the importance of reporting, being afraid, seeing it as someone else's responsibility, deferring to others to report for you, feeling alone, shame, non-verbally disclosing and assuming no one listens. There is also some discussion on the roles of policies and procedures. Generally speaking, participants described experiencing a high level of shame for experiencing violence. Shame and fear of being seen as weak, frail, and in need of protection and support were common reactions to experiencing violence among children and young people. Shame was particularly acute for girls in cases of sexual violence.

Descriptive norm: All children experience violence, but they don't report it.

Some participants noted that reporting did not happen because there was an assumption that violence is normal, even an everyday occurrence. Children felt that nobody reports because it's useless. For instance, in Bulgaria, some participants did not see the point: *"Can children complain? Well, they can, but hardly anyone will pay much attention to them, because they are small and no one believes them"* (young person, Bulgaria). In Croatia, children and young people thought teachers who treat violence as trivial lack empathy: *"Everything that happened outside of school, they don't care..."* (young person, Croatia).

Some groups seemed to be particularly essentialised into violent groups. As an unhealthy approach to redressing violence, participants noted that some people reinforce and further perpetuate this stigma as a way of reporting or responding to dealing with violence. They appear to assume that certain populations are both more likely to instigate violence and are more accustomed to being the recipient of violence. Participants suggested this strengthened assumptions pertaining to

these populations, including their level of intelligence, poverty, strength and ability to cope. Participants specifically named the Roma population, Egyptians, and refugees as being more targeted.

Injunctive Norm: Strong children do not suffer from episodes of violence

Several participants refused to report the violence they experienced for fear of being seen as weak. There were several examples of those who reported incidents being mocked and ridiculed by their peers. As an example, one participant stated: *"in our class, the girls are slimy and complain for no reason"* (young person, Bulgaria). As will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, participants reported that shame was common for victims of violence and that this keeps many from reporting. *"Any child who experiences any form of violence would not go to talk to a psychologist because their friends will make fun of him, call him stupid"* (young person, Albania).

Injunctive Norm: It is not appropriate for children to report violence to the police and to teachers.

As noted earlier, some participants expressed their distrust of both teachers and police. Some did not believe that police could intervene in cases of violence against children and young people, which would mitigate access to social services support. More generally, participants in Bosnia-Herzegovina said they did not report the violence that happens to them because they do not trust the system. In one area in particular, teaching staff were not seen as protective or safe persons to report to. The exception was students' favourite or trusted teachers. Distrust was born out of previous experiences where teachers failed to take incidents seriously or where students were subsequently labelled. Students in Albania shared a similar opinion: "They (teachers) immediately call their parents/carers and gossip. They like to talk in the teacher's lounge and lie and fabricate" (young person, Albania); *"I reported it several times and then I was found guilty. They twist everything. They turn a victim into a bully"* (young person, Albania); *"When we tell teachers, they don't understand us, they don't do anything, or make it even worse"* (young person, Albania).

There appeared to be particular taboos against reporting sexual violence, especially in Albania. This appeared to relate to a perception that police, media, and other institutions would not keep the victim's information private. In Albania, participants recommended that victims should not "make a big issue of it". This highlighted the importance of keeping sexual violence secret as victims and survivors were stigmatised if they reported experiencing it. Where they did report, some participants suggested young people tended to report to people they had a greater level of engagement with, who may be less senior, for instance the teacher, but not the principal or the police.

Injunctive norm: If a child experiences violence, it's their fault and they will be blamed

Victims of violence were stigmatised and ridiculed by both peers and the victim's own community. Victim blaming also pertained to girls, where a double standard was apparent, particularly in regards to sexual behaviour. For example: "If a girl

had sent a boy her nude photos, she would have been a whore and she would have been guilty" (young person, Bosnia-Herzegovina); *"If a girl had done that it would have been worse, everyone would have condemned her, she would have been guilty in the end"* (young person, Bosnia-Herzegovina). Anticipation of being blamed for experiencing violence also obviously limited children's readiness to report it.

There were a range of social norms that emerged in coping with being victimised, including retaliation, keeping it secret or running away from it. In Albania, participants noted the expectations of parents/carers and peers to stand up for oneself and solve problems on their own. Similarly, in Moldova participants shared the deeply-embedded stereotype that a strong child would not experience violence, hence reporting would be akin to admitting that they are weak. Taking this further, some participants highlighted that children and young people who have repeatedly experienced abuse and neglect avoid disclosing additional victimisation to parents/carers. In exploring these topics, participants suggested strategies for standing up for themselves, including joining self-defence classes, and accepting and not reacting to experiences of violence, particularly mild forms.

5.3.1.1 Negative Sanctions for reporting violence

Some felt that they could not or would not report violence due to a fear of repercussions: "It is that double-edged sword whether to report violence or not" (adult participant, Serbia). In Albania, reporting is accepted only in "serious" cases because of the underlying, harmful social norms and fear of consequences. Furthermore, participants suggested that only schools push for reporting, but even there, there was fear of repercussions: "Here in Albania they have the mentality that whoever goes to the psychologist is afraid, he is a coward" (young person, Albania). In Croatia, they noted that "...the reason that they don't turn to teachers for help is that they are afraid of punishment and it is this vicious circle." Young people also feared repercussions from parents/carers, even when they were victims (not perpetrators) of violence: *"We would call the police, but then you know that they will call your parents, so we stayed locked in a shed and begged him [the perpetrator] to let us go, rather than call my parents."*

5.3.1.2 Non-normative factors affecting the strength of social norms limiting reporting of violence

Trust. Trust emerged as a major factor influencing whether children and young people reported violence or not. While time did not permit a deep exploration of what trust entailed, this did provide some insight into what children and young people were thinking. Some children and young people, particularly in Romania, had good levels of trust in school personnel and would report readily, but in other areas there was distrust in teachers and other school personnel. There was also some discussion on a lack of trust in peers, police and media. Participants noted that where there is trust, reporting comes easily, for instance with some friends: *"My friends are important to me. I share everything with them"* (young person, Bulgaria); *"I don't say anything to my mother, I only share with my friends"* (young person, Bulgaria); *"I have a girlfriend who is older than me and she advises me on various things"* (young person, Bulgaria). In Bulgaria, participants recognized clear procedures in cases of

violence at school that entailed how to report. In Croatia, students mentioned that reporting depends on the level of connectedness with parents/carers, teachers and school management, with boys being less likely to seek help then girls.

Feel it is "too big". Some participants, for instance in Bulgaria, suggested that if the scale of the violence was "too big" or threatening, they would be reluctant to tell a teacher or parent about what is happening to them and to ask for their support. Although this was not explicitly stated in the findings, it might relate to a fear of repercussions, or a sense of apathy and inability to effect change, as well as an assumption that an adult or professional would step in and rectify the situation.

Weigh the severity. In contrast, if the case was seen as too mild to report, they may also hesitate to report it and instead try to solve the issue themselves, turn to a small group of friends for help or ignore it. This can discourage reporting, or postpone asking for help.

Undermine the importance of reporting. The tolerance for violence is high across most countries. Adults in Bosnia-Herzegovina noted that they have well-developed legal acts, which cover all areas of child protection. However, they stated that the system fails because of a lack of professional staff and insufficient awareness of how important it is to recognise, report and redress violence. In other countries, there were similar concerns about the lack of professionals to redress violence against children and young people, or insufficient knowledge to do it effectively.

Assume it is someone else's responsibility. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, participants suggested that some people do not report incidents of violence because they assume it is someone else's responsibility, such as parents/carers or teachers. They believed that this negatively impacted marginalised children and young people, or children and young people from dysfunctional families more commonly. To the same effect, teachers in Bosnia-Herzegovina suggested that too much was expected of them, and that their role was to teach and not to raise children and young people, which also hinders reporting.

Defer to others to report for you. In several countries, young people suggested that they might not report violence against themselves, but that their friends might do it for them: "Yes, there are some people who, for example, do not talk about their problems at all, but it is their friends who go and tell the teacher (young person, Albania). In this way, older children and young people might protect younger students.

Feeling alone. In Moldova, participants suggested that some children and young people are left alone to face their perpetrator and therefore must accept violence and not defend themselves. In Romania, adult participants said that they tend to solve their problems on their own.

Do not want to bother people. Some participants suggested that children and young people may be concerned about sharing their experiences of violence, particularly to parents/carers, as this would be another burden for them that might be too overwhelming.

Disclose non-verbally/peripherally. Participants highlighted that some girls may show there is an issue without explicitly sharing the details, and that some parents/carers, peers, and teachers may be able to pick up on these clues.

Implement policies and procedures. It is worth noting that there are various policies and procedures in each country that supports and protects children and young people from violence. This did not feature in many discussions within this research, but some brought it up. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, participants shared that each canto has its own protocols and procedures pertaining to violence and that this includes coordination between professionals to ensure good coverage of treatment, but they also noted that this is not effective if schools do not report violence.

Avoid it. Avoidance, as an approach, came in several forms. Some boys in Romania suggested they avoided conflict and physical violence as they felt unprepared to defend themselves. Others claimed dropping out of school or changing schools is a known avoidance tactic. Still, others said that in order to avoid being targeted as an outcast, students should work to fit in, for instance, by choosing the "right" clothes.

5.3.2 Social Norms Increasing Use of Violence

The social norms that emerged across all eight countries encompassing attitudes towards violence, why people use violence, on redressing violence, on reactions to victimisation, why people do not intervene, and at a broader level, why change does not happen, were quite similar. In exploring the general attitudes towards violence, the following social norms emerged: permissive attitudes towards violence (including normalising and tolerating violence), undermining or ignoring the impact of violence, perpetuating apathy, and displacing responsibility (e.g., victim blaming or demanding obedience). In looking at why people use violence, several additional beliefs and social norms emerged, including perceived differences in social standing, gaining social capital or acceptance from peers and family and maintaining honour. In unpacking ways people redress violence, some social norms were healthy, and some were not. In looking at unhealthy social norms, it appears there is more and harsher punishment for boys, processes that reinforce discrimination, and approaches to hide problems and displace responsibility (e.g., ascribe blame). Some of the healthy social norms included: gathering together to protect, establishing and following rules or policies, and telling others about incidents of violence. Some of the emergent social norms affiliated with being victimised included: standing up for oneself, keeping it secret, feeling shame, fear of being seen as weak and trying to *"fit in"*. The social norms that mitigate people from intervening included: fear (including a fear of loss of privacy), lack of empathy, and a lack of trust in people and institutions. Social norms that undermine change included: failure to listen to children and young people, perpetuating myths about the dominance of the strong over the weak, traditional gender norms, assuming *"boys-will-be-boys"*, risk-taking behaviours and a lack of skills. *"The whole society teaches us that we must not be weak and seek help, and we must somehow fight for everything ourselves"* (young person, Croatia).

Descriptive Norm: Everyone uses violence.

There appeared to be a widespread culture of accepting and tolerating violence against children and young people in all but the most serious cases across the countries. The ubiquitous nature of mild-to-medium violence, sometimes witnessed daily, led to normalization and desensitization. Participants noted that this tolerance existed in schools, but was likely an extension of the attitudes towards violence they are exposed to at home, where various forms of violence may be permitted, experienced, ignored and/or perpetuated. As an example, where corporal punishment was practiced at home or school, there appeared to be a more permissive attitude towards teachers and parents/carers using verbal and physical violence, even among some adult participants. Participants in Romania suggested there were links between discipline experienced at home and in school-based tasks. In Kosovo, participants shared incidents where parents/carers asked the school to use more physical violence on their children and young people to enforce better obedience, which was tolerated by adults. The widespread nature of violence has led children, young people and adults to become desensitized, and demonstrates a high level of tolerance to various types of violence. As a young student in Croatia described:

Young people see violence as normal, the most normal thing for them is that groups beat each other, that we beat each other, that people in relationships beat each other, mentally, physically, in all directions, because it is presented to us all the time as something normal, and it should not be (young person, Croatia).

Experiences of domestic violence further normalised violence for children and young people. Furthermore, there were indications that some forms of sexual violence, such as "ass slapping", verbal sexual harassment and other sexual objectification were seen as a nuisance, but there was a perception that some may consider this as desired attention, which reinforces the behaviour. "Because some girls consider receiving a slap on the ass as a form of appreciation, some of the boys perceived this as a universal gesture that pleases all girls. They started doing it to us as well, although we don't like it, we don't appreciate it and we don't want to be touched without our consent" (young person, Romania).

In addition to limiting what is considered violence, participants highlighted that social norms help to undermine or encourage ignorance of the impact of various forms and severity of violence. In Serbia, some teachers think that gossip is normal behaviour and that experiencing it may help children and young people learn how to protect themselves. Given the lack of attention paid to it, in Moldova, participants suggested that bullying is not taken seriously by adults and children and young people are therefore left to deal with the situation on their own. Some children and young people also held this position: "children get upset when they are called by their nicknames, but it doesn't seem so horrible to me" (young person, Moldova).

Participants across several countries identified concern for the safety of children and young people who are increasingly online (due to online education, as well as a preference for virtual communication). As an emerging social issue, there did not yet seem to be enough information about how to protect students, and little evidence demonstrating affiliated social norms. However, this is an area that requires further investigation.

Certain types of violence, such as psychological violence, were normalized by participants to a greater degree. As expressed by a participant in Croatia: "... psychological violence is present in greater numbers because we perceive it more as normal, because when someone fights you will know it is violence, and when someone insults someone it is already our routine" (young person, Croatia).

In looking more deeply at permissive attitudes towards violence, some participants stated that violence is a natural, immutable, and unavoidable human phenomenon: *"Violence among children will exist as long as children are human and there is very little that we can say and do"* (adult participant, Romania); *"Albanians don't change"* (adult participant, Albania). Participants noted this perspective has been inherited from previous generations and is often rooted in family structures. This perpetuates apathy towards violence. With an assumption that violence is a natural, perpetual, unchangeable phenomenon, some adult participants went further to suggest that there is little that the school can do to prevent violent behaviour among children and young people, leaving them the option of intervening only in the most serious cases. In contrast, several participants expressed the imperative to change behaviours and attitudes towards violence against children and young people, and to not repeat the mistakes of past generations. As one young person declared: *"the old generation cannot change. Our generation needs to"* (young person, Albania).

And yet, adult participants in Croatia recognized a shift in the norms and attitudes of society toward violence due to prevention and education programs:

.... However, the progress back some 20 years is obvious for all forms of violence against children, including sexual and peer...it was not talked about at all, neither in schools nor in families. It was an attitude, if we do not talk about it, there is no problem.... Today the picture is different. The environment is different, and in fact it is a consequence that the public is constantly talking about violence and sending messages about how important it is to protect children from violence... (adult participant, Croatia).

Descriptive norm: Strong people triumph over the weak. Participants articulated the use of violence to demonstrate social standing and to ensure the strong were seen as victorious over the weak. Some participants think older students are more self-sufficient, while younger children and young people were more at risk: "What can a little one do, cry the most; help the younger children because they think, 'they are defenceless'" (young person, Bulgaria). A young participant in Albania shared,

In our school there was this talk about strong and weak groups. In the ninth grade, there was a group that was considered the toughest and bullied others. Those who joined it were the toughest in the school. They would make noise, disturb the teachers, leave the classroom. In one case, they physically attacked the teacher and were sent to the police. Still, they didn't consider this a bad thing. They considered this a show of strength, showing the teacher their place. Even if you would say that this is not strength, everyone would turn against you (young person, Albania).

Injunctive norm: certain forms of violence are acceptable, others are not.

Participants across countries recognised that there is a high threshold for what is considered violence, a general lack of awareness of the various types of violence, and the rates of incidence. They are often dismissed as not being violence. For instance, some participants noted that mild bullying, swearing, insulting, hitting, teasing, pushing and pinching are not seen as a form of violence ("It is normal for a child to behave like that at school" [young person, Bulgaria]) and may even be seen as fun. Further illustrating the undermining of violence, some participants felt that the definition of sexual violence was limited to rape, discounting violations like sexual harassment and early marriage.

5.3.3 Social Norms that Increase the Acceptance of Violence

Injunctive norm: When a child experiences violence, they did something to deserve it.
As previously mentioned, there was some indication that compliance with rules (either family-based or school-based) and obedience to authority was expected. As one researcher noted, this has the effect of undermining children and young people's agency or position of power, which can make them more vulnerable to violence. As seen below, in some cases an expectation of compliance led to fear of consequences, which in turn led to lower levels of reporting; children and young people hide incidents of violence for that *"complaining"* to adults will result in their disapproval. Furthermore, in cases where misbehaviour is punished with violence, children and young people fear identifying this as violence as it contradicts the authority figure whose actions cannot be questioned (both in school and at home).

"If children listen to their teachers and parents, there will be no problems" (young person, Bulgaria). Children and young people believe that violence could be prevented if children and young people would be *"obedient"* and disciplined. Likewise, participants raised a social norm that they deserve punishment when their behaviour is incongruent with adult expectations: *"My dad gets mad when I make a lot of noise"* (young person, Kosovo). *"When my dad has a bad day at work, he sometimes hits me"* (young person, Kosovo). Again, children and young people are not in a position to question the actions of the authority figure and are left to see this as a deserved consequence of failing to comply. Adding to this, participants noted that fear of being labelled by peers, teachers, and parents/carers as a result of receiving corporal punishment may make them seem deserving of this treatment, further entrenching a sense of deserved punishment. This fear of being labelled discourages them from sharing their situation with friends, teachers, family or other authorities, and they do not receive help. In general, this has also increased the lack of trust in the system. For instance, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, participants suggested that teachers easily label children and young people and assume they cannot change.

5.3.3.1 Normative justifications for the use of violence

Injunctive norm: real men use violence with their lovers.
Across countries, a range of rationales were provided for why participants thought people engaged in violent acts. Gender-based differences were woven throughout, but there was an overarching theme that revolved around the perceptions of differing social standings, or perhaps the attention of a romantic partner. Victims were seen as weaker, smaller, lesser or poorer, and perpetrators as stronger, larger, better or richer. Violence was a way of perpetuating these social standings.

In Bulgaria, participants suggested that gaining the attention of a potential boyfriend or girlfriend was one of the most common causes of peer conflict. *"They quarrel over a boy and insult each other very vulgarly"* (adult participant, Bulgaria). This could erupt in envy and jealousy, which could in turn result in acts of violence. On a related note, boys in Romania used aggressive sexualized behaviour to draw girls' attention, such as unwanted touching or lifting girls' skirts. This type of behaviour was common in schools.

Injunctive norm: people who use violence are strong and deserve respect.

Gaining social capital, or proving oneself to their peers, families and others emerged as another social norm that used violence as a mechanism of self-protection. In this way, violence and aggression were seen as means to show strength and to counteract, or inoculate people from an image of being seen as weak and vulnerable. For example, participants in Moldova said that boys have to impose their masculinity through violence, whereas some girls demonstrate their womanhood in more sexualized ways. However, in some countries, participants noted that girls were imitating boys in their levels of physical violence as it was believed to increase their social status. In several countries, participants also suggested that adults, including parents/carers encourage this behaviour: *"Some parents encourage their children to beat other children"* (young person, Moldova).

Participants also said that children and young people, particularly boys, share violent media content. In Romania, participants felt that some boys were simply aggressive and enjoyed the benefits it bestowed. Others stated that they illustrate aggression or consume violent media that they emulate to impress peers, show courage and toughness. In some cases, for instance in Romania, some boys felt compelled to participate in gang violence if directed to do so by gangs. This was one way to increase social capital. Perpetuating the perception that violence gains social capital and promotes self-protection, in Albania, participants accepted revenge as a justification for retaliating if someone harms or hits you.

While uncommon, there was also some discussion on children and young people being part of gangs, particularly boys. This behaviour increased their protection or social standing. Overall, it appeared that there were some social norms around staking a claim to more power, privilege, or social standing through violent acts. These tended to manifest more in physical forms for boys (but also more verbal conflicts with teachers), and psychological forms for girls (e.g., gossiping, online bullying or harassment).

Injunctive norm: people who use violence are honourable.

Traditional gender norms featured in the social norms that propel the use of violence. This included finding ways to protect and maintain a boy's honour. For instance, in Albania, boys' parents/carers, peers and community expected them to use violence to protect their honour, which was also part of their perceived responsibility to protect their families.

Participants in several countries noted the differentiation in how boys and girls were punished, with punishments for boys being perceived as more numerous and severe. According to some participants, boys were generally seen as *"more problematic"*. To reprimand a boy, *"the teacher would scream, write him down in a class register book and throw him out of the classroom"* (young person, Bosnia-Herzegovina). In a similar and related form of discrimination, children and young people who used day centres in Bosnia-Herzegovina felt that they were treated differently and kept under more scrutiny as potential bullies.

5.3.3.2 Non-normative factors contributing to increasing use of violence

Displace responsibility. Having a difficult time coping with the reality of the impact of violence, some people displace responsibility. Within the study, across countries, this emerged through victim blaming, parent blaming and teacher blaming. Victim blaming was clear in cases where the victim was assumed to deserve the violence, for instance, in Croatia participants believed that traditional gender roles dictated how females behave, and hence, any reactions garnered from acting provocatively would be deserved. Blaming both parents/carers and teachers was also noted as social norms that commonly occur to displace responsibility.

Gather, protect together and offer alternatives. In a healthier vein, participants also noted that children and young people have grouped together to protect one another. In Moldova, for instance, participants stated that friends gather to confront or punish the abuser. In Romania, girls' groups were active and identified the presence of violence. Other individuals or groups banded together to protect each other: *"I have a brother in first grade and every day I go to ask him if anyone is teasing him"* (young person, Bulgaria). Other participants had alternative approaches that they would implement, as one suggested, *"children should respect each other and the opinions they have"* (young person, Bulgaria). Another pushed, *"let's be friends and not fight"* (young person, Bulgaria). Finally, another offered a relevant alternative to a conflict, *"solve the problems using dialogue"* (young person, Bulgaria).

Follow rules to keep safe. Several participants noted that specific rules (from parents/carers or schools), broader policies and laws offer guidance for protecting children and young people when implemented. However, participants highlighted that these are not always implemented or enforced. As an example, one young person offered this anecdote: "There are teachers with us on the school bus and they do not allow beatings or anything else between the children, because that is the rule" (young person, Bulgaria)

Tell others. Social norms associated with reporting have already been discussed, but it is repeated here as it is an important element of redressing violence. As an example, one Bulgarian young person stated:

5.3.4. Norms that Limit Third Parties' Interventions

Descriptive norm: People do as their parents did.

Participants referred directly to the transmission of violence from older to younger generations. In Croatia, a participant referenced a *"vicious cycle", "because after an adult is raised in a way that he thinks is okay, he will pass it on to his children. There is really no end"* (adult participant, Croatia).The participants noted a strong focus on communities maintaining traditional gender roles, which have a significant influence. These include assumptions that males must retain honour and protect their family, and as a result they are excused for some behaviour because *"boys will be boys"*. Boys are more often seen as violent, and are punished more for this, but bad behaviour is also more likely to be dismissed. For girls, there are expectations that limit the roles they can take. They are expected to hide their sexuality. Failing to do so results in being blamed for their experiences of sexual violence. Furthermore, they are encouraged to keep these experiences a secret, which hinders action to redress violence against children and young people. In Romania, for instance, a bill proposed to implement sexual education in schools was crushed due to strong religious opposition.

Injunctive norm: Those who intervene are ridiculed.

Researchers in Romania perceived a lack of empathy for children and young people experiencing some forms of violence. This was demonstrated, for instance, by participants sharing provocative images or criticisms. They suggested that some would rather present themselves as tough, cool and insensitive, and might even criticize a victim for fear of being seen as intervening. While this may appear as a lack of empathy, it may also be connected with social norms and desires to appear *"tough and cool"*. In Croatia, teachers were described as lacking empathy, and even ridiculing and minimizing reports of violence by children and young people.
Injunctive norm: Teachers and Police are untrustworthy.

As previously stated, participants do not always trust teachers and police officers, and hence, do not report violence to them, meaning they were unable to intervene when violence arose. The lack of trust in the safety of schools is concerning.

Injunctive norm: Why bother, they don't listen to children and young people anyway.

People don't listen to children and young people. Participants noted that children and young people did not see themselves as agents of change, did not have good levels of participation and did not feel they were listened to. They felt that they have not been asked their opinions or respected enough, and this has undermined actions to redress violence against children and young people. According to one Croatian participant, *"The whole society teaches us that we must not be weak and seek help and we must somehow fight for everything ourselves"* (young person, Croatia). While they have some suggestions for better preventing and protecting children and young people from violence, they don't have many ideas about how they could be involved or if they could even lead these activities.

5.3.4.1. Negative Sanctions for intervening in violence

Participants discussed several assumed social norms that influence why people do not intervene. Fear of the abusers was a major factor: *"Physical violence is very obvious; you can easily see it. When you do something to someone that person threatens to beat you up"* (young person, Romania); *"If he tells someone, they will beat him again"* (young person, Bulgaria); *"Children and young people have to defend each other and then they will be able to overcome it, but everyone is afraid of being beaten tomorrow"* (young person, Bulgaria). In a broader sense, participants in Albania and Serbia fear the loss of privacy, particularly in cases of sexual violence.

Gender norms

5.4

As has been discussed throughout this paper, there were a range of ways that gender factored into how violence was perceived, experienced and redressed. The social norms that dictate behaviour and the roles that boys and girls are expected to take also differed. In many instances, there were both surface and deep illustrations of this. In some countries, like Serbia, participants did not recognise this until they began discussing it. In general, this revolved around traditional gender norms and patriarchy where males are expected to be externally facing, provide for and protect the family, while women are meant to be family-focused and demure. In Kosovo, participants stated that girls are expected to provide more "spiritual" support and care, while boys are expected to provide financial support to the family. It should be noted that some research sites were chosen because they were known to have more acutely differentiated gender-based norms. In Romania, the researchers concluded that girls tend to fear criticism if they report or if they talk to adults about incidents of violence (verbal sexual harassment, physical or cyberbullying), while boys feel stigmatized if they report being victims of any type of violence. However, in Moldova, participants suggested that the gender stereotypes are rapidly changing.

Gender norms: Boys will be boys.

In Albania, experiences of violence were manifested in a focus on expectations to abide by male honour and show strength. Boys were also granted more latitude because *"boys will be boys"*. In illustrating the social expectation, participants in Bulgaria suggested it is unacceptable for boys to cry: *"I have seen children take offense at each other. A boy burst into tears. Everyone laughed at him"* (young person, Bulgaria).

As stated earlier, teachers react differently to violence perpetrated by boys and girls. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, participants noted that boys were seen as more problematic and the penalties they received were more significant. They were also seen as more straightforward: *"I think it's more honourable in boys. Me to you - you to me. Girls knit a net, so there are a lot of them involved and they manipulate more than boys"* (adult participant, Serbia). In Moldova, participants

perceived that boys have to impose and demonstrate their masculinity through violence. In Romania, participants suggested that boys entered conflicts less often, but when they did, they tended to be more serious.

Gender norm: respectable girls aren't violent.

For girls, experiences of violence were tempered by their restricted activities, movements and roles. They were perceived to be more protected from violence, but their actions were seen to be more judged. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the case of sexual violence, when boys were abused it was seen as abuse, but when girls were abused, they were shamed and assumed to have provoked it. In Romania, participants also stated that sexually-active girls were stigmatized by their communities, and their reputation was important. Girls felt pressured or tricked into having sex before they were ready.

Participants stated that girls can be more psychologically violent when motivated to commit violence: *"Girls insult worse"* (young person, Bulgaria); "Girls, I think, are crueller than boys" (adult participant, Serbia); *"Girls always find something to pick on"* (young person, Bulgaria). In Romania, participants said girls were generally more likely to enter conflict. In Kosovo, participants thought that physical violence was expected from boys, but in contrast, "it makes no sense for girls to engage in physical violence" (young person, Kosovo).

Gendered norms emerged around perceptions of children and young people impacted by online exploitation. In Croatia, participants described attitudes around sending your intimate pictures to people online: *"The girl is more often condemned, they say that she is a whore, while for a guy, he is a legend, he's big, and the girl, she is a slut, but the picture is good…"* (young person, Croatia).
In Serbia and Romania, participants also noted that girls are increasingly using physical violence.

We all should admit that girls are becoming more and more violent. Sometimes they are even more often involved in some physical violence occurring on the way to school than boys. It's not good if we all will continue to ignore these obvious situations that are happening more and more frequently (adult participant, Serbia).

Girls are more prone to start a fight, usually without a real reason such as someone who talked about someone else and so on… […] Verbal fights can become physical fights and girls are fighting much more. Girls fight over boys, but it doesn't happen the other way around (young person, Romania).

Girls felt more judged, while also experiencing more pressure to conform to community expectations. In Romania, participants shared that these expectations included: not fighting or swearing, studying hard, getting good grades, having a body that fits certain standards of beauty, having clean hair, using deodorant, wearing make-up and certain clothes, having certain mobile phones and bags. When these norms are breached, other girls tend to penalize the trespasser. Girls report being criticized, being marginalized, and excluded by peers. In Moldova, participants suggested that girls needed to prove their womanhood by

emphasizing their sexuality though specific makeup and clothing. This also leads to girls comparing and competing over their physical appearance. And yet, a girl who had sexually explicit pictures of herself shared would, *"be judged for her actions, but it is acceptable for boys"* (young person, Kosovo).

Relationships between genders. Romantic and sexual relationships across genders appeared to have complex social norms. Gaining the romantic attention of particular people was the cause of many conflicts, according to some participants. Social norms that dictated sex and sexuality were clearly gendered. Some participants noted that some boys and girls exploit this difference. In Romania, human sexuality is a taboo topic in schools: *"Some boys are making girls fall in love with them and are asking them different sexual favours; they later make public or tell/ show their friends"* (young person, Romania). Following this, social norms pertaining to sexual violence were also gendered, where boys were allowed to act in a sexually aggressive manner, but girls were encouraged to keep sexual violence hidden. It is worth noting that the findings focused on heterosexual relationships and assumptions of being cis-gender. Further study may helpfully explore the experiences of children and young people identifying as LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer and other groupings).

People Whose Opinion Impacts Behaviour

5.4

Reference groups refer to the people whose opinions matter and who influence our behaviour. These groups propel social norms into action. Participants did not explicitly discuss these, but there was some implicit discussion about the role peers, parents/carers, teachers, media and communities play in influencing social norms.

5.5.1 Social Norms - Peers
Positive peer influence. Several participants across countries noted common communal values. For instance, in Albania, participants noted the value of supporting each other in the community. This value was perpetuated by the expectations of their own parents/carers, peers and community. This was not necessarily felt equally across countries or participants, as one participant in Serbia said: "Popular children will also gain more support from their peers" (young person, Serbia).

In expressing communal values, participants in Romania were confident that friends and colleagues could help a child in need and take their side, with the expectation that they would do the same. Similarly, girls mentioned feeling safer when they are joined by their classmates on the way to school, in school and when using the schools' bathrooms. This mutually beneficial behaviour reinforces it. Some participants said that some girls would offer moral support by listening to the victim, talking to the teachers and trying to protect her friend. This works only when there is an expectation that help will be provided without judgement.

Prove oneself to peers. Several participants used the behaviour that emerges when children and young people do certain things so that their peers see them as more attractive, popular or powerful. This could include choosing specific clothes or using sexualised behaviour to gain the attention of girls, as participants highlighted in Romania.

Fear of peer judgment. Peers also acted as a reference group when people moulded their behaviour so that they would not experience negative peer judgment or other repercussions, such as being ignored, losing friendships or being bullied.

Engaging in street culture. Within a broader spectrum of peers, several participants in different countries discussed that older boys and peers were perpetrators. Some of the problematic behaviour occurred on the way to or from school. In Albania, the street, was perceived as a symbolic place of socialization where children and young people share and negotiate their values and influence each other: *"Nowadays, the street influences our children and young people, not family, like in old times"* (adult participant, Albania).

5.5.2 Social Norms - Parents/Carers

Attend to parents/carers' judgment. The influence of parents/carers on the behaviour of children and young people varied and was seen as less important than peers and media. Many participants named parents/carers or other family members as people they would talk to about violence, but this was not universally the case. There were also several participants that worried about what their parents/carers would think if they knew they were victims of bullying or violence, whereas others were seen as understanding. In some cases, participants felt that parents/carers would either not believe children and young people or would blame them: *"My parents would say that it is my fault"* (young person, Moldova).

In Kosovo, families were thought to be an important reference group. This was illustrated in cases where there was an expectation that children and young people would work to support the family rather than attend school. This was sanctioned by parents/carers and family. In contrast, in Albania, adult participants indicated that teachers, parents/carers and family have limited influence upon children and young people, and do not shape their values, beliefs, and decision making. In Romania, however, teachers said that the disciplinary measures that they take against children and young people who are violent should work as examples for sanctioning such behaviour. Participants in Croatia noted how parents/carers' views and attitudes towards violence do influence that of their children: *"… That's one vicious circle, because after an adult is raised in a way that he thinks is okay, he will pass it on to his children, there is really no end…"*

5.5.3 Social Norms - Media

Consume media. Media was seen as an important influencer, and while it cannot make judgements, it does provide an ideal that children and young people work towards. This was seen as an important influence in several countries on children and young people's attitudes towards violence against children and young people. Fail to stop perpetrators of cyberbullying. In thinking about the reality that children and young people face as they navigate social media, some participants commented

that the anonymity of the platform exacerbates and promulgates violence online. For instance, in Kosovo, the anonymity and distance lack of school policies meant that cyberbullies went without sanction.

Violence as Experienced during the COVID-19 Pandemic

This research began prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was impacted by it. Some research had been collected prior to the introduction of school closures and physical distancing protocols, but the research needed to be adapted after new protocols were released. This is discussed in more detail in the Methodology chapter. All participants from the research that occurred after physical distancing protocols were initiated were asked additional questions about the impacts of COVID-19 on violence against children and young people. The impacts were obvious: *"Kids don't go out. Now you do not see any children and young people in the village. We stay at home on the Internet, doing our lessons, class time, or chatting among us"* (young person, Moldova). In this period, participants noted that children and young people preferred screen-to-screen relationships rather than face-to-face relationships, with much more time online. Adult participants in Moldova said there was a blurring of the line between *"real" and "fake"* lives. This online reality disrupted family life. In Kosovo, participants told us there had been limited in-person physical contact with severe restrictions on socialisation and movement. This made them feel isolated from their schools and peers. While online socialisation helped to some degree, not all children and young people have access to computers, mobile phones and the internet.

The research found that the changes in relation to violence against children and young people during the pandemic appeared to relate to an increase in cyberbullying and domestic violence while children and young people spent more time at home and online. They also experienced a decrease in physical contact and enforced time at home. For young people in Albania, girls stated that there was more bullying and cyberbullying, whereas boys said there was more isolation, sexual violence[5], and cyberbullying. Typifying their experience, one participant said: "Nowadays a conflict could rise from posting something online and could be solved by discussing in person, or vice versa" (young person, Moldova). In Kosovo, adult participants stated that the increase in cyberbullying was particularly worrisome as parents/carers and teachers did not have the skills or knowledge to protect children and young people online.

Participants also stated that they missed being in school: "I no longer want to stay at home, I prefer to go to school, although we are all the time in masks" (young person, Bulgaria). Once they returned to school, there was a period of reorganisation. *"After they returned to school, after a six-month absence because of the COVID-19, it took a long time to bring order. They had forgotten everything"* (adult participant, Bulgaria).

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[5] As noted previously, where specific cases of abuse were disclosed that needed follow up, social workers and school psychologists followed up and made the appropriate referrals

6 Discussion

Across the eight countries, the level of violence was alarming, not only in the prevalence and severity, but also in the endemic nature of low-level violence that had a significant impact on children and young people. A challenging picture was painted for children and young people in and around schools in South East Europe. This included the cumulative effect of both the acute and severe forms of violence at one end of the spectrum, coupled with the low-level pervasive violence that occurs daily. This was further exacerbated by the clear, entrenched tolerance of many forms of violence. Though ingrained, many children and young people were still able to name these incidences as violence and acknowledge their pervasiveness. These findings align with those outlined in the global and country-based literature reviews, adding greater depth to the current evidence in South East Europe.

The young people who participated in this research, along with the adult participants, painted a picture of the myriad of social and gender norms that permeated these contexts and militate actions to redress violence in schools, and enroute to and from schools.

6.1 Experiences of Violence

As noted, violence in all forms was expressed as existing on a continuum from mild to severe, and from occasional to daily. Psychological violence and bullying were the most common forms of violence shared by most participants. However, it is notable that participants also highlighted the high rates of sexual violence experienced by girls. Participants also commented on the prevalence of corporal punishment at home and in schools, and a high degree of acceptance of this practice.

The participants highlighted spaces where violence was more common, including school buses, gyms and hallways, but the most dangerous areas were the routes to schools, in particular shops, bus stops and other known areas. Homes and online spaces were also identified as posing risks for some children and young people. Participants emphasised that COVID-19 and affiliated physical distancing protocols have increased the level of cyberbullying and domestic violence.

In general, participants expressed an inconsistent view of safety as it exists in schools, homes and communities. Some participants stressed that school and home were places of safety, but for others, these spaces were the most unsafe places. This identifies the importance of paying attention to the diversity of experiences of violence and where they occur. It also reminds us to challenge assumptions about where safety lies. This insight provides an opportunity to better target initiatives to increase safety in homes, schools and other public spaces (busses, playgrounds, shops and parking lots).

Overall, the participants reported that peer-to-peer violence was common. In looking at who is perpetrating and experiencing violence, participants noted that there is some overlap, with some children and young people being both victims and perpetrators. Although the existence of peer-to-peer violence is well known in the literature, too little research has focused on what this looks like, how common it is and how it may be disrupted. Participants also stated that parents, other family members, teachers and other adults perpetrate violence, particularly verbal and physical violence.

In exploring who most experiences violence and who is most impacted by violence, a complex picture emerged. Participants identified a range of individuals and groups who were targeted by peers and adults. The unifying quality among these individuals and groups was that they were seen as different or as "weak". Participants identified specific groups that were more likely to be excluded, including those seen as different in some way, for example, refugees, children and young people from minority ethnic groups, people with learning difficulties or disabilities, those seen as quiet or shy, and more generally, girls. Participants also noted that a range of physical or socio-economic characteristics (as seen through mobile phones and clothes) could mark a child as different.

Another facet of the incidents of violence is the framing of violence that was more commonly individually-focused rather than collectively understood. By framing violence as an individual, rather than a collective issue, children and young people were more likely to blame themselves for being victims, and are less likely to identify the ways they can collectively work together to impact change.

There was a dearth of information in the research on the experiences of children and young people identifying as LGBTQ+. Given the taboo nature of sexuality that participants highlighted, this is an area that requires more research. In a similar vein, the experiences of children and young people with disabilities, from specific ethnic minorities and from refugee and migrant communities could be studied in greater depth.

6.2 Social and Gender Norms

The research identified a range of social and gender norms. Some of these norms supported community safety while others perpetuated violence against children and young people in, and enroute to or from, schools. The most directly-damaging norm we uncovered was the high level of tolerance and acceptance of violence, and the apathy that occurred as a result of assuming violence is natural and inevitable. For some children and young people, violence was seen as an instrument to gain more social capital and to exert power over those seen as weaker. The use of violence to protect their space in an imagined hierarchy was an interesting finding.

Other harmful social norms that emerged in the research were the racist and discriminatory social norms that target specific groups of children and young people and label them as deserving victims and/or natural perpetrators.

Problematically, the constellation of norms that surrounded the taboos around violence reduced children and young people's readiness to seek help. Young people noted that there was a strong norm to ensure you were seen as looking after yourself and your own problems, including violence. The taboo about discussing violence, and particularly about being a victim of violence, further entrenched a resistance to seek support. This was more acute for sexual violence. Together, these promoted a sense of secrecy regarding violence and also impeded help-seeking behaviour.

We found that participants themselves assigned value to recognising and naming violence when it happened as a means to reduce the prevalence of violence against children and young people. Greater visibility to children's experience of violence and responses to it might open opportunities to disrupt these norms and explore alternatives that better support children and young people.

The gender norms were deeply entrenched in traditional and patriarchal norms. For boys, this most commonly manifested in norms that were permissive for boys to behave disrespectfully (i.e., boys will be boys) and encouraged boys to physically demonstrate their power and "take care of their families". For girls, gender norms compelled them to be quiet, compliant and to not be sexually evocative. This manifested in a significant amount of self-blame when girls experienced sexual violence and harassment. With a high prevalence of gender-based violence against women and girls, some girls would go quiet and compliant, but another norm that emerged described the opposite. Some girls would challenge the traditional gender roles in some countries by beginning to enact behaviours perceived to be "masculine" to gain status and to protect themselves. Participants noted that there had been an increase in female violence, including physical violence, where girls were seen to be imitating boys.

6.3 6.3 Redressing Violence in and Enroute to Schools – Systems of Safety

The research recognised the structures and initiatives that have been put in place in the various countries, regions and specific schools to tackle experiences of violence in and around educational settings. The research participants noted that this was not enough.

A range of risk and protective factors emerged in the research that deserve attention. The circles of protection the young people highlighted were relatively tight. While there was some variability across participants, the circles generally included a small group of people including their family (especially mothers or favourite uncles or siblings) at the centre, then school professionals and peers, and then other institutions. The lack of trust in institutions was quite high, namely police, schools, other social services organisations and media outlets. Of particular concern was the lack of trust in the protective capacity of educational supports. Some participants turned to a relatively limited number of school-based supports, usually favourite teachers or school psychologists.

The research highlighted not only the forms of violence in schools, but also the systems that surround schools. This reiterates the notion that violence in school does not occur in isolation. The young people identified a range of spaces where violence occurs that impacts the school environment and children and young people's lives. While children and young people are more likely to be at home due to COVID-19 restrictions and some schools being closed, the incidents of violence have not been reduced, they have simply shifted locales.

6.4 Concluding Thoughts

This research profoundly illustrated the importance of working with children and young people to better understand the realities of their lived experiences of violence in, and enroute to and from, schools. The research brought attention to the importance of discussing violence more often and more fully. By making explicit the norms we take for granted we might be better able to redress violence against children and young people. Further, by recognising and amplifying children and young people's voices we can better foster their ability to be agents of change and better address the realities they face.

As one young person in Albania suggested, *"Children's main hope is that all children are protected from violence"*, and as another implored us, *"Please pay more attention to the opinions and attitudes of the children"* (young person, Serbia).

7 Key Recommendations

Key recommendations were gathered from the seven countries and are presented below thematically.

Preventing and Addressing Violence Against Children and Young People in Schools, including Gender-based Violence

1. **Identify various forms of violence that occur in schools, who they are likely to happen to and map where they are likely to occur.**

2. **Co-create a school-wide plan to end violence against children and young people, with children and young people's input.**

3. **Pay particular attention to gender-based violence** and incorporate these into school-wide end-violence plans.

4. **Introduce a zero-tolerance policy for teachers and other professionals on corporal punishment** and provide training on more effective behaviour management strategies.

5. **Build in safe, secure and simple reporting mechanisms** for children and young people to report violence when they experience or witness it. Fully explore reasons why reporting is not happening and address these challenges.

Child Protection/Safeguarding Policies

6. **Develop, fund, implement, and enforce child protection policies related to the prevention of violence against children and young people**, as well as policies related to protecting children and young people from violence (Albania, Moldova, Serbia, Kosovo).

7. Where they exist, **implement existing policies within the child protection system as well as other services related to preventing, protecting, and responding to violence against children and young people in schools.** Ensure adequate budget support for implementation, such as increasing the number of psychologists and social workers in schools to support mental health. Build in accountability processes to ensure perpetrators are discouraged from re-offending, including, where appropriate, enforcing convictions against perpetrators (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Kosovo).

8. Implement existing child protection **policies to ensure media manages child abuse and sexual abuse cases in an ethical manner,** and reduce the negative role of media through disciplinary measures (Albania).

9. Build in **child safeguarding practices in online social media platforms** so that children and young people can report online violence and bullying.

Awareness, outreach and social norm change

10. **Discuss and make explicit social and gender norms** that promote violence against children and young people so that they can be challenged. Open dialogue with communities and schools on ways to disrupt negative social norms, particularly around tolerance of violence against children and young people.

11. Develop **community-based programs to raise awareness about violence against children and young people and its prevention,** including a focus on the roles that both children, young people, and adults play as perpetrators and victims of violence, and the impact of violence on children and young people (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia, Romania, Kosovo).

12. Develop **systemic campaigns directed at changing social norms that tolerate or support violence** in general, and violence against children and young people in particular. Campaigns designed and promoted across sectors are required involving authorities, schools, community-based organizations, children and young people and other key stakeholders (Kosovo).

13. **Involve children, young people, families, and communities in social norm change focused on attitudes and practices related to violence and gender-based violence against children and young people** in schools. For example, develop training resources and curricula that promote norms and values, such as gender equality, non-violence and empathy (Romania). Support processes that challenge the harmful elements of patriarchal gender norms.

Engaging children, young people and community

14. **Children and young people's voices and experiences must be a starting point for any anti-violence awareness campaign or intervention, and children and young people need to be involved as co-creators of content.** Interventions need to take into account children and young people's experiences, their voices, as well as their practical strategies for navigating violent circumstances, in order to efficiently prevent and address violence against children and young people in school (Romania).

15. **Normalize conversations around violence and reporting to address feelings of shame,** ensuring children and young people know who to go to report an incident and to receive support. Work with schools and school authorities to develop trust with children and young people so that when they witness or experience violence they feel comfortable reporting this and/or seeking support (Romania, Kosovo).

16. **Address challenging social norms around violence, gender and exclusion in schools, with a focus on well-being.**

17. **Address social norms that discourage help-seeking behaviour.** Encourage children and young people to seek safe, supportive relationships.

18. **Support processes that promote children and young people's social agency, self-efficacy, and change-making capacity**. This begins with promoting spaces where they can share their ideas, thoughts and perspectives.

School-based training and programming

19. Develop **school-based programs for children, young people, and families at risk of violence against children and young people,** with a specific focus on gender and gendered experiences of violence. Starting from a young age, provide information and raise awareness about VAC, strategies for preventing violence, reinforce anti-bullying and peer-to peer support strategies. Motivate parental involvement in schools, and encourage open communication between parents/carers and teachers around violence against children and young people (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Romania, Serbia).

20. **Develop programs and curricula focused on how children and young people can protect themselves from violence** while ensuring that they are never blamed for their experiences. Include a focus on enhancing agency, well-being and resilience, promoting good decision making, building values and life skills, such as taking responsibility for actions and avoiding dangerous situations. Empower children and young people from a young age to understand their rights, the power of their voice, and involve children and young people in program development, including planning violence prevention and protection programs (Moldova, Serbia).

21. Ensure **training for educators and community support workers includes a focus on minority and marginalized groups, addressing social norms related to violence against children and young people,** especially in communities with high numbers of refugees. In addition, ensure that children and young people from minority or marginalized communities have access to social and psychological services to deal with the higher prevalence of violence they experience (Serbia, Romania).

22. **Provide science-based and age-appropriate sex education in schools** that includes topics such as sexual violence and sexual harassment on an offline (Romania).

23. Create a **gender-awareness curricula for teachers,** including a focus on gender equality, gender norms, gender-based violence, gender stereotypes and gender roles, with practical examples of how to prevent SRGBV, particularly in vulnerable communities where little specialized support for children and young people exists (Romania).

24. Develop **mechanisms within the school system to address child protection and safeguarding concerns,** including identifying focal points, regulations and protocols to be carried out across the education system (Kosovo).

Community-based interventions

25. Develop **community-based services and interventions to challenge and transform harmful social and gender norms that perpetuate violence.** Ensure these programs have a stress respect for human rights. These could include public campaigns to eradicate any form of violence against children and young people, and campaigns to promote children's rights and dignity (Albania, Moldova, Serbia).

26. **Develop community-based parenting programs to support positive parenting practices,** such as communication with children and young people,

supporting children and young people's agency in self-protection and peer-protection, and addressing social norms that maintain violence, gender-based differences and social exclusion. Promote healthy relationships between adults and children and young people that support well-being (Albania, Moldova, Serbia, Romania).

27. **Build professionals' socio-emotional competencies** through training and enable them to relate empathetically to victims and perpetrators of violence (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Serbia, Romania).

28. **Increase professional awareness about the importance of child participation,** and work with school professionals to promote children and young people's meaningful engagement in school and the community, including providing training and resources (Serbia, Romania).

Cross-sectoral collaboration

29. **Invest in social protection structures, welfare mechanisms and supports,** such as centres for social work, community police and child protection centres, that facilitate reporting of violence in general and violence against children and young people in particular to relevant authorities, and the support required by both victims and perpetrators (Kosovo).

30. **Strengthen collaboration between systems and structures,** including within the education system and the community to adequately address and respond to violence against children and young people (Kosovo).

Further Research

31. **Conduct further targeted research** on the experiences of violence of children and young people identifying as LGBTQ+, children and young people with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and children and young people from marginalised groups.

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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, 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.)

Physical and 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

Neglect:

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

Exploitation:

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

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). Please see Appendix F: Tdh Conceptual Framework on Well-being Pillars.

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 that without direct questions on 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 young people.

Researchers will be trained on how 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 flip chart paper at all times, enabling children to reach out on their own for additional support (For example the psychosocial service of the school and the Child Protection Unity in Albania). Where a flipchart is not practical, handouts will be made to give to the young people prior to the session beginning. 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 them to make a personal visit to the community. The researcher will then 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 also need to be taken from the Ministry of Education in each country. Please see Appendix A for a sample Consent Form.

- Ensure that you obtain adult's written permission, as well. Please see Appendix B.

- Remember informed consent is an ongoing process. Participants should be regularly reminded about 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, to request 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 each local context during COVID-19 may change rapidly both for children and project staff, for example, governmental restrictions on physical distancing are suddenly relaxed, it is recommended that voluntary informed consent is addressed regularly (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 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 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 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 young people:
- 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 young people.
- Learn from and with children, young people, 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 young people 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 number of someone they can talk to and locations of resources they can access.

- Remember, if you hear about violence or abuse, you have a responsibility to connect that young person with a support person and report accordingly to organization and 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. Decisions 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, 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 through participation 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.

- If children do not feel comfortable answering a question during an activity.

3 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 to explore appropriate services of support using the Tdh Child Safeguarding Policy, Research Ethics Protocol of the local University research partner, and that adheres to legal protocol in the country. The researchers will not share publicly 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 insure confidentiality are to:

- Conduct discussions in a private setting. When conducting interviews with young people ensure that there is always at a minimum of three people present (either two children or two adults) and that if not, there is a third person within vision for child safeguarding purposes. If there are departures from privacy, make sure all the participants know who else is present and listening or observing and give 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 in strict confidence information about specific cases of abuse, exploitation, violence, and neglect, 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 hold 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, mean 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 of presence of family members through to more significant risk 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.

THE

VIOLENCE AT HOME SIGNAL FOR HELP

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

Albania

Formulari i Miratimit të Prindit

Organizata Terre des hommes po realizon një studim në të gjithë rajonin tonë, përfshirë edhe Shqipërinë, mbi tematikën e dhunës në shkollë në përpjekje për të kuptuar a) si është situata në shkollat që janë përzgjedhur për studimin, b) cilat janë llojet e dhunës më të hasura në to, c) si janë qëndrimet e nxënësve, mësuesve dhe prindërve ndaj kësaj dhune, etj me synimin për të ngritur programe ndërhyrjeje për të reduktuar fenomenin në të ardhmen.

Në studim do të marrin pjesë fëmijë të moshës 13-18 vjeç, të cilët do të organizohen në grupe prej nga 7-8 pjesëmarrësish dhe do të angazhohen në aktivitete loje që gjenerojnë të menduarin dhe të shprehurin lidhur me subjektin kryesor të studimit. Aktiviteti do të zhvillohet në dy ditë të njëpasnjëshme në ambientet e qendrës _____, nën supervizimin dhe mbështetjen e punonjësve të Terre des hommes.

Informacioni i dhënë nga fëmijët do të mbahet tërësisht konfidencial dhe do të ruhet anonimati i fëmijës. Fëmija ka mundësinë të heqë dorë nga studimi në çdo moment, nëse kështu deshiron.

Parimi ynë kryesor është se në të gjitha situatat interesi më i lartë i fëmijës është parësor. Kjo do të thotë që në të gjitha veprimet dhe vendimet duhet të kemi parasysh nevojat dhe të drejtat e fëmijëve si një çështje thelbësore.

Pëlqimi për veprimtarinë (Ju lutemi shënjoni elementët për të cilët jepni pëlqimin):
*   Unë/Ne jap/japim pëlqimin tim/tonë për fëmijën tim/tonë_____ (emri i fëmijës) për të udhëtuar dhe marrë pjesë në veprimtaritë e _____ (emri i Qendrës).

*   Unë/Ne autorizoj/autorizojmë _____ (emri i Qendrës) që të jetë përgjegjëse për fëmijën tim/tonë gjatë veprimtarive dhe të marrë vendime lidhur me ndonjë trajtim urgjent mjekësor për fëmijën tim/tonë, që mund të nevojitet gjatë këtij udhëtimi.

*   Unë/Ne konfirmoj/konfirmojmë se unë/ne e kam autoritetin e plotë të japim pëlqimin e kërkuar në këtë dokument.

Unë/Ne konfirmoj/konfirmojmë se unë/ne e kam/kemi lexuar dhe kuptuar Formularin e Pëlqimit të Prindit, dhe jam dakord të veproj në përputhje me përmbajtjen e tij.
Emri i fëmijës_____
Data_____në_____
Emri dhe nënshkrimi (emrat e prindit(ërve)/kujdestarit(ëve)
_____

Historiku mjekësor

Të dhënat në këtë formular do të mbahen konfidenciale. Vetëm profesionistët mjekësorë dhe organizatorët e veprimtarive do të lejohen të kenë akses në to.

Emri i fëmijës (duke përfshirë nofkat):

Data e lindjes:

Numri i letërnjoftimit:

Ndonjë alergji e njohur (p.sh. ushqimi, kushtet, kafshimi i insekteve, barna):
Përdorues aktual i barnave :
Jo Po

Nëse po, përshkruani çfarëlloji/doze:

Ju lutemi sillni kopjet e recetave (të barnave apo okulistit) dhe mjekim të mjaftueshëm për kohëzgjatjen e veprimtarisë, duke përfshirë kohën e udhëtimit

Ndonjë gjendje ekzistuese (p.sh. astma, epilepsia, aftësia e kufizuar, tensioni i ulët i gjakut, diabeti, prirje për migrenë/zalisje/marramendje, depresion/ankth):

Ndonjë operacion kirurgjikal dhe regjim spitalor:

Ju lutemi ofroni hollësi për ndonjë sigurim mjekësor:

Emri i kompanisë së sigurimit:

Numri i politikës së sigurimit:

Ju lutemi na vini në dijeni nëse ka diçka tjetër që duhet ta dimë me qëllimin që të sigurojmë që fëmija juaj të jetë i sigurt, i mbrojtur, i përkujdesur mirë për të qenë në gjendje të marrë pjesë plotësisht:

Formulari i Miratimit të Pjesëmarrjes në Studim

Organizata Terre des hommes po realizon një studim në rajonin tonë, përfshirë Shqipërinë, mbi tematikën e dhunës në shkolla në përpjekje për të kuptuar a) si është situata në shkollat që janë përzgjedhur për studimin, b) cilat janë llojet e dhunës më të hasura në to, c) si janë qëndrimet e nxënësve, mësuesve dhe prindërve ndaj kësaj dhune, etj, me synimin për të informuar programe ndërhyrjeje në të ardhmen.

Në studim do të marrin pjesë:
- fëmijë të moshës 13-18 vjeç të cilët do të organizohen në grupe prej nga 7-8 pjesëmarrësish dhe do të angazhohen në aktivitete loje që ndihmojnë të menduarin dhe të shprehurin lidhur me subjektin kryesor të studimit.

- Anëtarë të komunitetit si psh prindër, mësues, punonjës administrate, punonjës të shërbimit shëndetësor etj, të cilët do të organizohen në një grup prej rreth 10 pjesëmarrësish e ku do të përfshihen në diskutime dhe ndarje informacioni lidhur me subjektin e studimit.

Aktiviteti me anëtarët e komunitetit do të zhvillohet me një kohëzgjatje prej rreth 3 orësh në ambientet e qendrës _____, nën supervizimin dhe mbështetjen e punonjësve të Terre des hommes.

Informacioni i dhënë nga pjesëmarrësit në aktivitet do të mbahet tërësisht konfidencial dhe do të përdoret vetëm për qëllimin e studimit duke ruajtur njëkohësisht anonimatin. Anëtari i grupit ka mundësinë të heqë dorë nga pjesëmarrja në studim në çdo moment, nëse kështu dëshiron.

Pëlqimi për veprimtarinë:

Unë konfirmoj se kam lexuar dhe kuptuar Formularin dhe jam dakord të veproj në përputhje me përmbajtjen e tij.

Emri/Mbiemri/Firma…………………………………………………………………………
Data…………………………………………………………në…………………………………………

Bosnia and Herzegovina
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 fotografiše 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 upotrebljeno 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, obezbjedićemo 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: _____

PRISTANAK ZA SUDJELOVANJE U ISTRAŽIVANJU O NASILJU U ŠKOLAMA

Poštovani,

željeli bismo provesti istraživanje vezano bolje razumijevanje sigurnosti i dobrobiti djece i mladih kroz zajednički rad i druženje.

TKO SMO MI?

Moje ime je Marina Trbus, psihologinja sam, a uz mene, istraživanje će provoditi moj kolega, Miroslav Rajter. Zajedno radimo za organizaciju Hrabri telefon koja je dio velike mreže organizacija iz cijele Europe – ChildHub. Organizacije iz te mreže ulažu puno truda kako bi pomogli djeci, mladima ali i stručnjacima da djeca budu sigurnija od nasilja. Uz Hrvatsku, istraživanje se još provodi u Moldaviji, Albaniji, Kosovu, Srbiji, Rumunjskoj, Bugarskoj, Bosni i Hercegovini i Hrvatskoj. Ukupno će sudjelovati oko 400 mladih i oko 200 odraslih (roditelja i stručnjaka).

ZAŠTO PROVODIMO OVO ISTRAŽIVANJE?

Želimo saznati zbog čega se djeca i mladi osjećaju sigurno u školama, ali i koje nasilje se događa u i oko škole i zbog čega se mladi osjećaju tužno, loše, usamljeno ili izolirano. Također želimo čuti vaše ideje kako se nasilje i zlostavljanje može spriječiti i smanjiti.

ŠTO ĆE SE RADITI U OVOM ISTRAŽIVANJU?

Ako se odlučite sudjelovati u ovom istraživanju, uključiti ćemo vas u 2 radionice u prostorijama Dječjeg dom Tić, Rijeka. Radionice će se održati u petak, 25. rujna, 2020 godine s početkom u 10 sati i trajat će s pauzama do 15 sati. Druga radionica će se održati putem video linka, a za sve ćemo se dogovoriti na našoj prvoj radionici.

Napominjemo, tijekom svake od tih radionica, dakle, u svakom trenutku, moći ćete reći da ne želite više sudjelovati i napustiti radionicu. Tijekom radionica osigurat ćemo osvježenja i obroke tijekom pauza. S vašim školama dogovorili smo da vas za taj dan oslobode nastave.

ŠTO ĆEMO RADITI S VAŠIM ODGOVORIMA?

Ono što u ovom istraživanju naučimo i saznamo od vas i vaših vršnjaka koristit ćemo za buduću podršku i brigu za drugu djecu i mlade.

AKO KAŽEM DA ŽELIM BITI U ISTRAŽIVANJU, MORAM LI ODGOVORITI NA SVA PITANJA?

Ako vam postavimo pitanja na koja ne želite odgovoriti, možete nam reći da ne želite odgovoriti i jednostavno ne morate ništa odgovoriti. Ako vas zamolimo da radite stvari koje ne želite raditi, onda nam recite da ne želite sudjelovati u aktivnosti. Možete reći ne i ne sudjelovati u bilo kojem dijelu ili cijeloj radionici ili cijelom istraživanju.

TKO ĆE ZNATI DA SAM DIO OVE AKTIVNOSTI?

Ono što kažete kao i bilo koje informacije koje zabilježimo neće imati vaše ime, tako da nitko neće znati da su to vaši odgovori. Istraživači neće dopustiti da itko osim vas samih vidi vaše odgovore ili bilo koje druge podatke o vama. Vaši učitelji, roditelji,

članovi zajednice nikada neće vidjeti odgovore koje ste dali ili podatke koje smo napisali o vama. Vaši vršnjaci koji se nalaze u istoj radionici će čuti što kažete, ali od njih će se tražiti da ni u kom trenutku nikome ne govore što su čuli na radionici. Radi vaše sigurnosti, nećemo spominjati vaše ime ni u jednom istraživačkom izvješću.

MORAM LI SUDJELOVATI?

NE! Ne morate sudjelovati. Nitko se neće naljutiti ili uznemiriti ako to ne želite učiniti. I zapamtite, ako se i odlučite uključiti u projekt i onda se kasnije predomislite, možete nam reći da ne želite više biti na radionici. Imate potpuno pravo na to i nitko vam to neće zamjeriti ili se naljutiti, niti ćete imati nekih posljedica zbog toga.

PITANJA?

Pitanja možete postaviti u bilo kojem trenutku. Možete pitati sada ili možete pitati kasnije. Možete razgovarati sa mnom ili možete razgovarati s nekim drugim u bilo kojem trenutku tijekom radionice. Možete me kontaktirati na 095/4855 117 ili e-poštom na mtrbus@gmail.com. Ako želite razgovarati s nekim drugim uključenim u projekt, možete se obratiti i Hrabrom telefonu na https://tinejdzeri.hrabritelefon.hr/ ili 116 111.

Veselimo se učenju od vas!

S poštovanjem,
Marina Trbus

OBRAZAC PRISTANAK

- ☐ Razumijem o čemu se radi,

- ☐ Znam koji će dio biti u aktivnosti i znam koliko će trajati,

- ☐ Imam priliku i znam gdje postavljati pitanja o radionici i aktivnostima,

- ☐ Znam da mogu reći da ne želim sudjelovati i prestati sudjelovati,

- ☐ Dopuštam da se tijekom radionica fotografiraju moji radovi (fotografije mojeg lica neće biti snimljene),

- ☐ Dopuštam da se za potrebe lakšeg zapisa istraživanja audio snimaju moji odgovori koje će isključivo čuti istraživači i nakon toga će se snimke uništiti,

- ☐ Slažem se da sam dio ovog istraživanja.

Ako želite sudjelovati u ovom istraživanju i radionicama od kojih se istraživanje sastoji, napišite svoje ime u nastavku, a roditelja ili skrbnika zatražite da ispod ispiše i potpiše svoje ime. I dalje možete biti dio ove studije ako ne dopuštate snimanje svojih fotografija ili audio snimke.

Vaše ime	Ime vašeg roditelja ili skrbnika
Datum	Datum
Vaš potpis	Potpis vašeg roditelja ili skrbnika
	Telefonski broj vašeg roditelja ili skrbnika
	E-adresa vašeg roditelja ili skrbnika

Fletëpëlqim

Të dashur nxënës, të nderuar prindër,

Ju falënderojmë shumë që keni pranuar të jeni pjesë e hulumtimit ndaj dhunës së fëmijëve në shkolla. Ky hulumtim ka për qëllim të nxjerrë informata rreth përceptimeve, vlerave e normave sociale që ndikojnë në shfaqjen e dhunës ndaj nxënësve. Hulumtimi realizohet me pajtim të Drejtorisë Komunale.

Ju lutem lexojeni tekstin në vijim me kujdes dhe shenjoni secilën kuti nëse pajtoheni me deklaratat e më poshtme. Kjo formë duhet të nënshkruhet nga ju dhe prindi apo kujdestari ligjor i juaj. Ju akoma mund të merrni pjesë në aktivitet nëse vendosni që mos të fotografojmë aktivitetin tuaj, apo mos të regjistrojmë zërin tuaj.

☐ E kuptoj qëllimin e këtij aktiviteti

☐ E kuptoj rolin tim në këtë aktivitet dhe kohëzgjatjen e aktivitetit

☐ Kam pasur mundësi të parashtrojë pyetje lidhur me aktivitetin

☐ Jam i informuar se mund të tërhiqem nga aktiviteti në cfarëdo kohe

☐ Pajtohem që të realizohen fotografi të aktivitetit tim në këtë hulumtim dhe se mund të regjistrohet zëri im (fotot të fytyrës nuk do të bëhen)

☐ Pajtohem që të marrë pjesë në këtë aktivitet

Shrkuani emrin tuaj: _____

Data: _____

Nënshkrimi: _____

Data: _____

Emri i prindit apo kujdestarit ligjor: _____

Nënshkrimi i prindit apo kujdestarit ligjor: _____

Numri i telefonit të prindit apo kujdestarit ligjor: _____

Email adresa e prindit apo kujdestarit ligjor: _____

FORMULAR DE CONSIMȚĂMÂNT – ADULȚI

Introducere

Am dori să facem împreună cu voi o serie de activități și să purtăm discuții având ca temă siguranța și bunăstarea copiilor și tinerilor în școli. Terre des hommes și Daniela Terzi-Barbaroșie, psihologă, cercetătoare angajată de Terre des hommes Moldova.

Această cercetare este regională și se desfășoară în Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croația, Kosovo, Moldova, România, și Serbia. Scopul acestei cercetări este de a analiza normele sociale și de gen care influențează violența de gen față de copii în școli și rolul potențial pe care îl pot avea elevii în schimbarea acestor norme. Studiul este realizat de către Institutul Internațional pentru Dezvoltare și Drepturile Copiilor (în engl. International Institute for Child Rights and Development) cu sediul în Canada and Organizația Child Hub din Budapesta (Ungaria).

Scopul întâlnirii noastre online

Vrem să aflăm care este opinia adulților despre violența în școală, care credeți că sunt factorii care îi determină pe copii și pe tineri să se simtă în siguranță la școală, precum și tipurile de violență din școală care credeți că există în școlile din Moldova.

De asemenea, dorim să aflăm părerea dumneavoastră despre modalitățile prin care violența asupra copiilor ar putea fi prevenită, precum și despre felul în care putem gestiona situațiile de violență în școli.

Ce presupune implicarea dvs. în acest proiect de cercetare?

Dacă sunteți de acord să vă implicați la acest proiect, prin semnătura dvs. de mai jos veți confirma disponibilitatea dvs. de a participa la ședințele online și de a răspunde la chestionarul online. Sunt însă câteva lucruri pe care este bine să le cunoașteți, iar dumneavoastră veți avea ocazia să decideți dacă doriți sau nu să participați. Durata activităților va fi de aproximativ 2 ore. Pe parcursul discuției, vom face pauze, dacă veți simți nevoia. De asemenea, puteți oricând să vă retrageți din discuție sau să nu răspundeți la întrebările adresate de către cercetătoare. Participarea dvs. în acest proiect este anonimă și nimeni niciodată nu va afla detalii cu privire la implicarea dvs.

Confidențialitate

Lucrurile pe care le discutăm aici, precum și informațiile pe care le notăm nu vor fi asociate cu numele dumneavoastră. Cercetătorii nu vor lăsa pe nimeni altcineva să vadă răspunsurile oferite sau orice alte informații despre dumneavoastră. Discuția noastră va fi înregistrată audio, iar datele vor fi folosite de către cercetătoare pentru a completa un raport național care va fi expediat echipei de cercetare de la Institutul din Canada.

Vă rugăm să semnați acest formular dacă sunteți de acord

Nume și prenume

Semnatură

Pentru orice întrebări sau nelămuriri, puteți să mă contactați la tel: 06914691 sau email: dterzibarbarosie@gmail.com

Bine ați venit la cercetarea privind violența în școli derulata de organizatia Terre des hommes Moldova.

Introducere

Terre des hommes Moldova este o organizatie neguvernamentala care aduce o contribuţie importantă la îmbunătăţirea sistemului de protecţie a copilului, la reforma asistenţei sociale şi la desfăşurarea de activităţi psiho-sociale cu copiii, promovând incluziunea socială, participarea copiilor şi dezvoltarea comunitară.

Anul acesta Terre des hommes Moldova derulează o cercetare privind violenta pe care o întâmpină copiii in scoli si in comunitate. Pentru a obţine informaţii cat mai relevante dorim să facem împreună cu copiii, o serie de activități bazate pe joc și artă, având ca temă siguranța și bunăstarea copiilor și tinerilor în școli.

CINE SUNTEM?

Terre des hommes Moldova și Daniela Terzi-Barbaroșie, psihologă și cercetătoare angajată de TdH Moldova pentru acest proiect de cercetare.

DE CE FACEM ACEST PROIECT?

Vrem să aflăm ce îi face pe copii să se simtă în siguranţă la şcoală, dar vrem să aflam șde la ei ce tip de violenţă întâmpină la şcoală și îi sperie sau îi nelinişteşte atunci când sunt in drum spre şcoală sau după ce au trecut de porţile liceului. De asemenea, dorim să aflăm părerea lor despre cum violenţa poate fi prevenită, precum și despre cum pot reacţiona copiii si adulţii la violenţă.

CE PRESUPUNE IMPLICAREA ÎN ACEST PROIECT DE CERCETARE?

Să participe la activitățile de cercetare participativă care vor dura 2 ore. Pe parcursul acestora vom desena, vom discuta, dar vom face și pauze dacă va fi necesar.

CARE SUNT AVANTAJELE ȘI DEZAVANTAJELE PARTICIPĂRII LA ACEST PROIECT?

Ceea ce vom afla în acest proiect de la copii va fi folosit pentru a sprijini viitoarele programe și politici pentru copii și tineri. În orice moment, pot exista aspecte care nu îi fac pe copii să se simtă confortabil, iar în acest caz, ei pot sa nu participe la respectivele activităţi.

DACĂ ACCEPT SĂ FAC PARTE DIN PROIECT, TREBUIE SĂ RĂSPUND LA TOATE ÎNTREBĂRILE?

Dacă vom adresa întrebări la care nu se dorește să se răspundă, vor putea să ne anunțe, sau nu vor răspunde deloc. Dacă vă rugăm să facă lucruri pe care nu îşi doresc să le facă, atunci îi rugăm să ne anunțe. Pot alege să participe decât la acele activităţi ce le fac plăcere.

CINE VA ȘTI CĂ AM PARTICIPAT LA ACEASTĂ ACTIVITATE?

Lucrurile pe care le discutăm în cadrul cercetării, precum și informaţiile pe care le notăm nu vor fi asociate cu numele copiilor, așa că nimeni nu va şti că acestea sunt răspunsurile lor sau lucrurile pe care le-au făcut. Cercetătorii nu vor lăsa pe nimeni altcineva (profesori, părinţi, membrii ai comunităţii etc.) să vadă răspunsurile lor sau orice alta informaţii despre ei. Ceilalţi colegi care participă la activitate vor auzi

ce spun, dar li se va cere să nu discute aceste lucruri mai departe. Pentru siguranța copiilor nu vom include numele lor în niciun raport de cercetare.

TREBUIE SĂ SPUN DA?

NU! Nu trebuie să luați parte la activitate și nimeni nu se va supăra dacă decideți astfel. De asemenea, dacă inițial se decide să participe în proiect și mai târziu vă razgandiți, atunci ne puteți spune acest lucru.

ÎNTREBĂRI?

Puteți pune întrebări în orice moment. Puteți întreba acum sau puteți întreba mai târziu. Puteți vorbi cu noi sau cu altcineva, oricând pe parcursul activității.

Dacă doriți să vorbiți cu Terre des hommes, organizația care coordonează proiectul, o puteți contacta pe Veronica PELIVAN, Manager de proiect la telefon _____ și pe email veronica.pelivan@tdh.ch.

Dacă doriți să luați legătura cu persoana care a realizat activitățile, o puteți contacta la telefon pe Daniela Terzi-Barbaroșie, la numărul 069146891 sau pe email: dterzibarbarosie@gmail.com.

Va mulțumim!

FORMULAR DE CONSIMȚĂMÂNT PENTRU COPII ȘI TINERET

Înțeleg despre ce este vorba în cadrul acestor activități. Știu care va fi implicarea mea în activități și știu cât vor dura. Am avut ocazia de a pune întrebări suplimentare despre activitate. Știu că pot spune că nu vreau/ nu mai vreau să particip în orice moment. Sunt de acord să fac fotografii cu lucrurile pe care le fac pe parcursul activităților și sunt de acord ca activitățile să fie înregistrate audio. Sunt de acord să particip la acest proiect.

Dacă doriți să faceți parte din acest proiect, vă rugăm să scrieți numele vostru și să semnați mai jos. De asemenea, rugați-vă unul dintre părinți sau reprezentantul legal să semneze acest formular.

Numele și prenumele _____

Data: _____

Semnătura: _____

Numele părintelui/tutorelui:_____

Semnătura părintelui/tutorelui tău: _____

Numărul de telefon al părintelui/tutorelui: _____

Adresa de e-mail a părintelui/tutorelui tău (daca este cazul): _____

Appendix D: Royal Roads University Consent Form

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 for how violence and abuse could be prevented and responded too.

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 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 pieces 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 confidence. 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 the 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 if you change your mind, then 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 YOUNG PEOPLE 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 taken and my voice recorded (no photos of my face will be taken)
- [ ] I agree to being a 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

Researcher: My name is BLANK 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 BLANK 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 (please print)

_____   _____

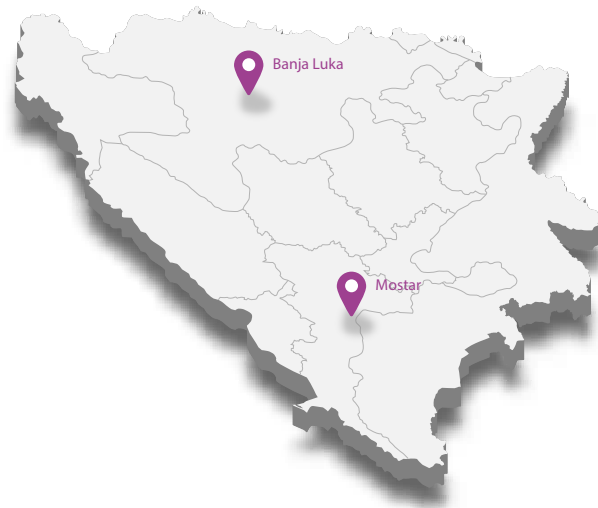Signature of Participant   Date

Appendix E: Map of Research Sites

Albania

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Croatia

Kosovo

Romania

Serbia

Appendix F: Violence Against Children in Schools in Seven Countries

Albania

In Albania, there is a high prevalence of abuse and neglect against children in both homes and schools. The most frequently reported forms of abuse and neglect were psychological (50%), physical (40%), and sexual (6%) (WHO, 2016). A variety of persons in the school setting, inclusive of teachers, students, parents, and school staff are involved in unethical behaviours in the education systems (ACER, 2017). In schools, it is suggested that all forms of violence are still perceived and used as a means of education or discipline from pre-school to upper secondary education (UNICEF Albania, 2018). 48.4% of Albanian children experienced at least one form of physical violence during their school life (prevalence), and 59.45% of the children reported to have experienced physical violence during the past year (incidence) (Hazizaj et al., 2013).

Peer to peer violence in the form of school bullying is a major form of violence that exists in schools. Psychological violence is not considered as abuse in the Albanian context, given the high prevalence and cultural acceptance of it, however, it is the most commonly reported form of violence by children (61.69%) (Hazizaj et al., 2013). The most widespread form of bullying is psychological. A higher number of students have been subject to bullying or involved in bullying at least two to three times a month. Physical appearance e.g. being overweight, having language difficulties and being perceived as having physical weakness are cited as the major reasons why some children are singled out and experience higher rates of school bullying (Dragoti & Ismaili, 2017).

With regard to teachers, the range of unethical behaviours displayed by them is wide, varying from minor behaviours to major acts. The most concerning unethical behaviours of teachers in schools includes excluding students from classrooms, threatening them with low marks, or failing them in an examination; using inappropriate communication such as insulting, sarcastic language, or derogatory nicknames; showing favouritism to particular students based on personal relations or preferences (ACER, 2017). The school norms that support favouritism impact students negatively. According to UNICEF Albania (2018), this prompts them to respond by being physically and verbally violent towards their peers and rude and disrespectful toward teachers and school staff. Teachers perceive bullying actions as a normal behaviour related to child growth and development (Kashahu, 2014).

Sexual violence is another concerning type of violence, also because it is more hidden. The CRCA (Hazizaj et al., 2013) proposes that boys experience higher rates of sexual violence and contact this sexual violence in schools. However, the literature reports a hesitancy of girls to disclose forms of sexual and gender-based violence, thus it can be assumed that the figures are likely much higher than reported (Hazizaj et al., 2013). The authors posited a link between strong social norms such as the patriarchal mentality of the culture and girl's hesitancy to disclose sexual abuse or exposure to sexual violence Hazizaj et al. (2013).

Gender plays a more influential role in the prevalence of certain types of violence in school. On one hand, it is reported that boys are the main perpetrators of bullying in schools and are less likely to be victims, whereas girls are more likely to be victims of bullying in school (Dragoti & Ismaili, 2017). On the other hand, in Albania, boys experience higher rates of both sexual violence and contact sexual violence in schools, but girls experience higher levels of feelings of neglect (Hazizaj et al., 2013). Girls are the most common victims of sex trafficking, forced labour, and early marriage (Byrne, 2014). In high schools, 68% of boys are exposed to violence as victims, whereas 32% of girls identified themselves as victims of violence in schools (Brahja, 2017).

Violence against children is often not considered abuse in the Albanian context, due to social and cultural acceptance in certain contexts. Corporal punishment is largely accepted as a form of discipline in school and society (Hazizaj et al., 2013). Parents approved of school authorities using psychological and physical violence against their children to teach discipline. In Albania, parents themselves may encourage the use of violent behaviours against their children in school premises and in front of peers and teachers (ACER, 2017).

Child sexual abuse is kept under strict secrecy in Albanian society due to the existing socio-cultural norms that seek to preserve "honour" and refrain from sexual activity until marriage (Burazeri et al., 2015). This precludes some from discussing it or reporting it. Early marriage (often involving 14 and 15 year old girls) is a prevalent practice in rural communities and Roma communities to ensure virginity until marriage (Cenko & Thartori, 2016). According to Cenko and Thartori (2016), people believe that if they educate children about sex or sexual abuse then they encourage children to have sex. Cenko and Thartori (2016) and Burazeri et al. (2015)

suggest that due to a patriarchal mentality, girls are not allowed to disclose sexual abuse or exposure to sexual violence because of the high risk of destroying the reputation (and the good name) of the family. Albania has deep seated roots in the patriarchal traditions characterized by parental authority, adherence to an honour-and-shame system, and customs of hierarchical ordering with the family and the intergenerational family (Cenko & Thartori, 2016, p. 310). Large scale child sexual abuse happens within schools and communities and children are left unprotected due to the norm of shame and affiliated secrecy, especially in rural areas (Cenko & Thartori, 2016). Bryne (2014) suggests that children are not considered rights holders in Albanian families, schools, or society. Roma and Egyptian families are the most excluded and vulnerable groups in the Albania and the girls are also victims of sexual trafficking, forced labour, and child marriage (Byrne, 2014).

The academic and grey literature suggests that a large number of students display violent behaviour on school premises. In a study by Brahja (2017) among students in grades 10, 11, and 12 in two Albania cities, it was revealed that children believe the major reason for their violent behaviours was that their parents, teachers, or society never acknowledged their rights or allowed them to make decisions. The majority of students preferred to report violence to the school psychologist compared to the teacher or the school principal (Brahja, 2017). The majority of teachers are aware about anti-bullying policies in schools, but they are not trained and confident enough to address bullying issues in school (Dragoti & Ismaili, 2017).

Based on grey and academic literature, it is clear that violence against children is common in schools, at home and in communities, in Albania. While there was not a lot of literature exploring social norms, there was enough to suggest that they support accepting levels of corporal punishment, sexual violence and impede reporting of violence against children. Overall, the literature review illustrated a dearth of recent literature articulating the severity, prevalence and types of violence experienced by children, as well as the heightened risk for children from different genders, abilities, ethnicities, or other groupings. Fewer studies still were uncovered that explored the response children have to violence in schools.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) is a country with a very complex structure of government. It consists of two entities, the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (10 cantons) and the Brcko District. BiH has 12 education systems. Precisely because of the complexity of the organization of BiH, there is no single monitoring of the rate of peer violence, although there are documents that are used to monitor this type of violence. These documents are:

- Procedure Guidelines on cases of violence against children (used in the Federation of BiH and the Brcko District, and each canton has its own protocol too).

- Procedure Guidelines on cases of violence, abuse, or neglect of children (used in the Republic of Srpska).

- Protocol on the Procedure of cases of peer violence among children and young people in the educational system of the Republic of Srpska.

These Protocols and Guidelines have an important role in the prevention of violence against children because 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. The current report says that schools dealt with peer violence in 91% of cases and only in 9% of cases the schools involved 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 are decreasing in the fourth grade of school. 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: physical violence 83%, emotional violence 74% and one reported case of sexual violence. Victims of peer violence are different students in 69% of cases, while 29% of them have been victims more than once.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is a country where various projects have been implemented for almost 30 years, which investigate peer violence, and after that prevention programs are developed and implemented. Different methodologies characterize the research on peer violence, i.e., some researchers deal with quantitative and some with qualitative methodology. When quantitative methodologies are used, then self-assessment questionnaires are mostly used, in which the respondents estimate the percentage of being a victim of peer violence and the extent to which they have committed violence, and the statistics vary regarding that. The research surveyed the types of violence, the frequency, and the places where they most often occur. The sample consists of children, young people, and adults.

The results of the research indicate that violence happens every day and when it comes to schools, it happens both inside and outside the school. 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 home room teacher, then the pedagogue, then the school principal. It is also interesting that about 5% of primary school students, as well as about 10% of respondents in secondary schools, believe that in their school the cases of peer violence are not dealt with, but covered up. Physical and psychological violence are the most common forms of violence, according to the children themselves.

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 nine primary and nine secondary schools in BiH, are interesting. It is stated 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 photos on the Internet; 25.5% have a residential address). At the same time, the parents showed a high degree of

tolerance and trust in children when it comes to using the Internet, but also a poor knowledge of digital technologies. As many as 14.2% of the children included in the survey presented themselves, falsely, as someone else, 10.3% posted photos of other people without consent, and 12.5% commented on other people's posts in an offensive way. Removal from the list of friends, as well as expulsion from a group on the social network, was experienced by a high percentage of children, even several times. One in five children was ridiculed, 17.3% experienced ridicule, 13.6% of children suffered online threats, and 28% of that number experienced it three or more times; and 12% of children experienced a situation where the recording that was made against their will was distributed to others. Half of them experienced it two or more times. In these situations, children would have the most confidence in parents to whom they would report violence first, then peers (45%), and a much smaller percentage of children would turn to school staff.

Croatia

Croatia has one of the lowest rates of economic activity in the European Union, with only 52.5% of the working age population in 2015 active in the labour market. Employees, as a share of the total population, make up only 37.68%, representing a serious obstacle to the sustainability of the social system and economic growth. Findings of research conducted in Croatia showed that lower education and parents' unemployment, higher levels of stress and family conflict and lower levels of family intimacy predicts higher risk for child abuse (Rezo et al., 2019). It is important to stress out this content, along with the lack of systematic implementation of evidence-based programs (Rajter et al., 2016; Rajter 2019; Rezo, Rajter, Ajduković, 2019) to better understand prevalence of violence against children in schools in Croatia. Corporal punishment of children as a pedagogical measure has been prohibited in Croatia since 1999. However, the results of epidemiological research of violence against children show that violent educational practices are still often used in Croatia (Ajduković et al., 2012). The results of the analyses implemented by Rajter et al., (2016) indicate that the attitude towards corporal punishment shows a positively skewed distribution, i.e., that fewer parents have positive attitudes towards corporal punishment, although a substantial number of them support corporal punishment to a certain extent. In other words, a relatively positive attitude toward the use of violence in rearing children persists. Along with lack of economic safety, for children who witness family stress, this can affect children's cognitions, emotions, and behaviours.

Numerous studies have proven that there is a link between peer violence and the experience of domestic violence (Baldry, 2003, according to Bulat & Ajduković, 2012). Regarding peer violence Rajhvajn et al. (2011) on a sample of 558 male and female students of 2 years of age find that 37.8% of students experience at least 1 form of peer violence every week, and the most common is psychological violence, especially gossip. Following this data, (Trbus et al., 2015) showed on a sample of almost 2,300 young people in Croatia, that 64.50%, girls and 56.50% of boys stated that they were harassed by one of their peers at least once in their life; 24.70% of girls and 54.20% of boys stated that they were hit by one of their peers at least once in their life and 31% of girls and 4% of boys stated that they were sexually

harassed by someone. It was also found that 37% of young people express the likelihood that as parents they will use corporal punishment as an educational measure which shows a positive attitude towards violence and points towards the transgenerational transmission of violence. Regarding intimate partner violence among adolescents on a sample of 330 young people (63% of girls and 37 % of boys) in 12 high schools Bjelić (2016) found that:

- 47% of young people believe that a young man has the right to hit his girlfriend if she wants to break up with him or if he pays more attention to friends than to him;

- 49% of young people think that a girl has the right to hit her boyfriend if he does not listen to her and approximately 1/3 of young people state that they know couples among their peers whose relationships involve verbal, physical and sexual violence.

Epidemiological research on the extent of family violence on children in the Republic of Croatia (Ajduković et al, 2012) showed that 13.7% of young people experienced sexual abuse (stricter criterion) and 18.1% according to the milder criterion.

The above mentioned context of positive attitudes, lack of programs and strategic action in the prevention of violence and sensibilization of public as well as continued socioeconomic challenges can somewhat explain why data in Croatia shows that there is no change in prevalence of violence against children. In 2011 and 2017, two-time points research with the probabilistic stratified cluster sample of pupils in the 2nd high school grade about self-reported one-year prevalence of parental violence experienced was implemented. Results showed there was an increase in the prevalence of physical violence, while the prevalence of psychological violence remained unchanged. In the context of gender differences, in 2017 girls were at the higher risk for psychological aggression, equally as in 2011, while the risk for psychological abuse became equal for boys and girls (Rajter, 2019).

Kosovo

Violence against children in Kosovo includes psychological, physical, sexual, and so on, and takes place in various places, such as school, home, street, and so on. Physical violence against children in schools appears to be quite prevalent, whether as a form of discipline or as a form of solving the problems between the children themselves. School and educational institutions are the premises where children often experience violence (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). It is indicated that nine out of ten students have experienced physical violence in schools at least once (Mustafa, 2018). Violence is implemented by both peers and teachers. In Kosovo, 34% of students are exposed to violence caused by their teachers (Thaci, 2018).

The school yards and toilets are considered to be the most unsafe place in schools and violence occurs during class breaks or during their return to home (UNDP, 2018). Physical violence encountered in schools reportedly includes pushing, pinching, strangling, hitting, etc. Physical violence is justified by children themselves, who consider it as a legitimate form of discipline (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). The same source reports that school bullying can also result in long-term trauma and anxiety among the child victims.

Children in the general population tend to experience physical violence from the ages of 1 -13 years however in minority groups such as Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, children are exposed to physical violence until marriage (UNICEF Kosovo, 2017), with 43% of children within these communities married by the age of 18.

In Kosovo, 59% of school children suffered from psychological violence. The main forms of psychological violence exercised by students on each other is damage and destruction of their personal property (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). Further, sexual violence against students is occurring in school settings. For instance, UNICEF reported that schools and institutions of education are the premises where students experience various body touching as a form of sexual violence (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). The girls were mainly victims of psychological violence because they were considered physically weak and therefore more vulnerable to bullying and various psychological pressures (Mustafa, 2018). Girls generally experience more neglect and psychological violence, while boys experience more physical violence and sexual violence (Mustafa, 2016).

Evidence shows that it also appears violence against children in schools and at home is considered as a social norm and it is accepted by society (UNICEF Kosovo, 2017). Physical violence or punishment is considered as a valid method of providing education or child discipline. It is also applied by teachers in schools (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017).

Children have a lack of trust about the efficiency, justice, and complaint mechanisms of the school systems to address violence (KOMF & UNICEF, 2017). The UNDP (2018) suggests that girls prefer to report violence to their class teacher, while boys prefer to address the issues with friends in order to seek help. Consequently, girls are mainly against using corporal punishment in the schools, therefore they prefer to either to dropout or change schools (UNDP, 2018). And yet according to UNICEF Kosovo (2017) much of the practice of violence against children is invisible to the general public in Kosovo due to social beliefs and norms that tolerate or encourage it.

Moldova

The Republic of Moldova ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Lanzarote Convention) in 2011. The Committee of the Parties to the Convention, also known as the Lanzarote Committee, is charged with monitoring the implementation of the Convention. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto provide a robust legal framework to ensure children's protection from bullying and to address the challenges associated with online abuse. Guided by Article 19 of the Convention, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its General Comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, addressed bullying and hazing by adults or other children, including through the use of ICTs. Despite the adoption of many international instruments on child protection against violence, statistical data elucidate different problems in the field.

Multiple studies show that violence affecting children is prevalent in all societies. In Moldova, there were some important research efforts, including some supported by UNICEF, providing a general background for violence against children. According to UNICEF, approximately 75% of children experienced various forms of physical or psychological violence and one in three children have been involved in a fight with their peers. In addition, both boys and girls experience violence in childhood, although it differs in the nature of the violence performed by the perpetrator and experienced by the victim (Landers, 2013; UNICEF, 2014).

"Violence against children in the Republic of Moldova study" developed by UNICEF in 2007 shows that as for violence against children by teachers:

- One-third of children declare that teachers verbally attack them. An increased incidence of this phenomenon is associated with low-income situations and lack of parental figures.

- Four out of ten parents know teachers who verbally attack children.

- 13% of children say that teachers either always or sometimes physically abuse them.

- Two out of ten parents know teachers who threaten children with beatings or slap them.

- 24% of children report that they feel that their teachers discriminate against them. The rate is higher for children who identify as being from a family of low socioeconomic standing.

- One out of ten parents know teachers that have harassed or sexually abused children.

- Girls tend to suffer more from violence, especially physical violence, in school.

- In addition, almost half of children think that some students are victims of physical violence by teachers during class. Approximately the same proportion of children say that they know of particular cases of such abuse.

As for different types of violence:

- 56% of children think that teachers discriminated against at least some students in school.

- 54% of children know at least one child in a similar situation.

- 24% of children say that, at least sometimes, they find themselves in a situation where their teacher discriminates against them for no reason or accuses them of something that is not true.

- 66% of children think that there are at least a few students who suffer verbal violence.

- 64% of children know at least one student in a similar situation.

- 34% of students say that they at least sometimes find themselves in a situation where teachers are yelling at them.

- 42% of children think that there are at least some students who suffer from physical violence by a teacher.

- 44% of children know at least one student in a similar situation.

- 14% of students identify themselves, at least partially, with the situation in which a teacher slaps a student.

At the same time, interviewed parents supported the perception that teachers use violent educational practices.

This study also shows that children who suffer from all three types of violence at school, unsurprisingly, report a low level of adaptation at school. Since all the data in this study was collected at the same time, no conclusion can be drawn about causality, i.e., whether poor adaptation determines the experience of violence or vice versa. Correlation analysis shows that children often suffer from more than one type of violence at school. The closest relationships between types of violence are the relationships between verbal and physical violence and between discrimination and verbal violence. If a child experiences one type of violence, it is likely that the child will also experience the other. The data also shows that girls tend to suffer more from violence at school, especially physical violence.

UNICEF in Moldova reported that there are concerns about bullying, with almost 60% of adolescents participating at least once in a fight in the last year and/or stating that they have been harassed at least once in the last few months. More than one third of Moldovan students 13-15 year old say they have participated at least once in a fight in the last year or have been harassed at least once in the last few months. During the academic year 2016-2017 almost 11,000 cases of abuse or violence against children were reported by teachers and school managers. In 2017, more than 1,400 cases of child abuse were registered by the police, including more than 300 cases of sexual abuse. Unfortunately, there is no statistical data on violence against children that happens to and from the road to schools, violence against children in the community and also information is missed about incidence of violence among children in schools.

Romania

Violence against Children in Romanian schools is a topic of concern for government officials and for NGOs focused on education. There is little research on the topic and the existing literature focuses on bullying. School bullying is the most studied form of in school violence against children. With little exception, the gender dimension of school bullying or school violence is rarely captured. Other forms of violence that children experience in connection to the school setting in Romania remain understudied.

According to a Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC) study, Romania fares very poorly when it comes to school bullying. Of the 42 countries studied in the report, Romanian students are in the top 5 countries, when it comes to the prevalence of bullying (HBSC, 2014). A total of 15% of Romanian boys and 9% of Romanian girls report being victims of bullying and harassment by colleagues in school. Romania is similar to countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Republic of Moldova. The social norms framework is not

used in conducting research related to violence against children. Moreover, the gender dimension of violence against children is rarely noted and to the present no clear study has been released on the topic.

The HBSC Study – Romania Report 2014

HBSC is a pioneer cross-national study focusing on young people's well-being, health behaviours and their social context. This research collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for Europe is conducted every four years in 49 countries and regions across Europe and North America. The survey is based on a standardized research methodology. Summary of findings related to bullying in Romania:

- Over 20% of boys and 11% of girls report that they engaged in bullying or harassment of other peers in the past 2 months.

- 15% of boys and 9% of girls report being victims of bullying and harassment by peers in school.

- The percentage of those who have been bullied via text messages or photos is 3.5% among boys and 2.5% among girls and drops with age regardless of gender.

- As compared to 2006 data, there is a noticeable decrease in bullying behaviour for both genders in 2014.

- Girls from a higher socio-economic background are more frequently victims of bullying.

- Students whose parents (mother or father) work abroad or who are in the care of grandparents are twice more likely to act as bullies. The same risk appears among children who lack sound communication with their families (especially with their father).

- Children with negative attitudes towards school, engage in tobacco smoking, alcohol consumption, or cannabis use are 3 times more likely to engage in bullying behaviour.

- Students who report being victims of bullying are twice more likely to report feeling alone, to report poor health, to use medication and to have a medically diagnosed illness.

As compared to HBSC international data, the prevalence of bullying behaviour among Romanian students is worrisome among all three age groups (11, 13, 15 year olds) and for both genders. Bullying Among School Children - National Sociological Study 2016 (Save the Children Romania, 2016).

This is a research report produced in house by Save the Children Romania (2016). It is a national study that covers both rural and urban areas and that targets children and their parents. The study looks at the prevalence of bullying and harassment among children in Romanian schools but also aims to connect certain socio-economic indicators, prior experience of violence within the family with the bullying behaviour. Key quantitative research findings:

- 18%-28% of children interviewed in the study say that they have initiated the exclusion of a child from a group.

- 22% of children said that they threatened another child with a "beating", 19% said that they have humiliated another child while 25% said that they have spread rumours about a child they didn't like.

- 13% of children who participated in the study said that it has happened to them to destroy another child's belongings, while 16% said that they have beaten another child and 30% said that they hit another child lightly.

- 84% of children said that they have witnessed situations when a child threatened another child; 80% witnessed a child being humiliated and 78% of children witnessed mild physical aggressions (pushing, mild hitting). Almost 69% of children witnessed two children fighting.

- 23% of children said that they were threatened to be excluded from a group of children, 31% were excluded and 39% said that they witnessed how a child was asked not to play or not to talk to a child.

- 29% of children said that they were threatened by other children with physical violence; 24% said that they have been humiliated among their peers while 37% said that rumours were spread about them.

- 40% of parents admit that it is possible that their child would marginalize another child. Almost 25% of Romanian parents acknowledge that their sons or daughters might physically abuse another child.

- 53% of parents say that it is likely that their child could be in a situation where other children push him/her.

- 66% of parents say that it is plausible that their child might end up being mildly hit or beaten by another child at school.

Serbia

At its meeting held on 21 May 2020, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence for the period 2020-2023, with the accompanying Action Plan for 2020 and 2021. This document is an important step in the process of strategic improvement of the protection of children from violence in Serbia, especially bearing in mind that the previous National Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence covered the period 2009–2015. The Strategy defines different types of violence and, unlike the previous one, it recognizes a larger number of environments in which violence occurs. In that sense, it also indicates that corporal punishment of children in order to correct or control their behaviour is child abuse and that society must have zero tolerance for it. This document also stresses the importance of special protection of children from vulnerable groups who are often exposed to multiple forms of violence, specifying that particularly vulnerable groups of children are, among others, children in street situations, refugee children, migrant children, LGBTI children and Roma children.

Research findings show that violence against children in Serbia is widespread in various forms. Serbia is one of the countries that initiated the Research to policy

and practice process - an approach designed by the UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti that aims to build an evidence base upon which to ground interventions designed to prevent and respond to violence against children, with a focus on the underlying determinants and factors of violence. The aim of this process is to better understand what drives different forms of violence against children in different settings and to provide good evidence as a basis for improving the system of preventing and protecting children from violence. During the initial stage of the R3P process, the national study on determinants and factors of violence against children in Serbia was produced.

Determinants refer to factors at the institutional and structural level that create the conditions in which violence is more or less likely to occur. Determinants are recognized as (1) structural determinants, among which we underline two very important areas to this research: Cultural factors appear in different forms: as high tolerance for violence resulting from wars, crisis, and social unrest; as discriminatory attitudes towards minorities; and as norms and values related to gender roles and relations and digitalization, development of information and communication technologies, Internet, and social media are linked with new forms of violence against children using new technologies as a means of violence, and (2) institutional determinants, among which are ineffective instruments of coordination, identification and treatment in cases of violence.

Risk and protective factors reflect the likelihood of violence to occur due to characteristics most often measured at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels. The risk and protective factors were divided into: (1) Community risk factors, such as: Attitudes about corporal punishment, legitimacy of violent disciplining methods, and parenting methods, (2) interpersonal risk factors, among which: Norms and values creating a specific "school culture/atmosphere" in regard to violence, (3) Individual risk factors - studies show exposure to violence is connected to certain characteristics of the child, such as gender, age, disability or other form of vulnerability. However, these personal factors are not "real" factors of violence. If girls (or boys) are more exposed to violence in the family, this is not due to the fact that they are girls (or boys), but rather the fact that cultural norms defining legitimate or desirable child-rearing and disciplining methods determine the gendered patterns of violence.

Specific forms of violence against children in Serbia are: (1) violence that affects girls to a greater extent- child marriages, sexual exploitation and violence and trafficking and (2) violence affecting boys more: child labour in rural areas and peer physical violence in urban areas. Two groups of children are particularly exposed to risks of violence: children living and working on the street (and easily becoming victims of exploitation, especially sexual, and are at risk of human trafficking) and children living in residential institutions for protection.

"School should be a safe place devoted to learning, youth socialization and norms transfer. However, research on violence in this setting has documented a high prevalence of violence. In 2013, 44% of students reported that they were exposed to peer-to-peer violence in the three-month period preceding the survey. Among

them, 45.8% experienced verbal abuse, 33% physical violence, another 33% social violence (plotting, manipulative relations, etc.), while 21% of children perpetrated violence. Boys were slightly more likely to declare themselves as bullies than girls and were more often exposed to violence by peers and adults. A quarter of the students in 5th–8th grade of primary school were victims of bullying by a teacher, 15% of them said that they had been hit by a teacher, while 5% were threatened by a teacher (Popadić et al., 2014). Gender-based violence is widespread in schools, as 69% of primary school students and 74% of secondary school students reported they had been exposed to at least one form of gender-based violence. Boys, more often than girls, express views justifying gender-based violence against women (Ćeriman et al., 2015).

Digital space is an increasingly significant space in which children face violent experiences. Violence from school and the community is often transferred to the digital space, but new threats and forms of violence are also lurking on the Internet and social media. Almost two thirds (62%) of primary school and 84% of secondary school students were exposed at least once to an Internet risk during the year preceding the survey (Popadić & Kuzmanović, 2013). Violence against children in the community exists in various forms. Some are based on ethnic affiliation (e.g., violence against Roma children, between Serbian and Hungarian youth in Vojvodina), political affiliation (e.g., the LGBT movement attacked by right wing groups), sport fan club affiliation, etc. Instead of being a zone of promotion of healthy lifestyles, sport clubs are an arena of violent experiences. Among children involved in sports, 51% of them said they had experienced some form of violence by their teammates, and 41% by their opponents; as many as 61% of them experienced violence by their coaches (Popadić et al., 2011: 73).

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

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