COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PUPILS AND THEIR PARENTS ABOUT THE PEER VIOLENCE

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Abstract
This paper deals with research of social characteristics of parents and connectivity with their communication with children – pupils of older elementary school about peer violence. The aim of the work is to establish whether and to which extent residential factor and education grade of parents influence communication with children – pupils about peer violence. The initial hypothesis was that communication between parents and their children - pupils about peer violence is significantly connected with quoted characteristics. For the purpose of research was applied descriptive – analytical method and questionnaire as research technique. Parents of pupils of older elementary school have been polled at the territory of the municipality Jagodina, in total 107 participants in October 2017. The h² test was used as the measure of statistical conclusion. The level of connectivity of some variables was determined through coefficient of contingency (C). The results show that (a) parents insufficiently perform conversation with their children about their school problems including peer violence; (b) achieved communication between parents and their children about peer violence is significantly connected with residential factor and mother’s education level.

Key words: parents, children-pupils, communication, elementary school, peer violence

1. INTRODUCTION
Peer violence is present in schools in the modern Serbian society in spite of many years of engagement by the employees in the institutional education within the project School without Violence (2005), which main objection was control and prevention of the violence in school. Since February 2012 the program is realized under the umbrella of the Ministry for education, science and technological development Republic of Serbia, i.e. the Unit for

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violence prevention in partnership with UNICEF in order to reduce and stamp out the violence among the children in elementary and secondary schools. The problem of violence in school and peer violence, however, is not eradicated – it is permanently present characteristics of so called school life of pupils (Popadić, Plut & Pavlović 2015; Popadić, 2009; Trifunović, 2006). The conducted research works that dealt with such problems mostly have identified the presence of the violence itself, its forms of expression and reactions of pupils exposed to the violence. There have not been searched the causes of peer violence that can, conditionally, be divided on subjective (psychological profile of a person, character and characteristics of a pupil) and objective (social, economic, cultural, and other). Just with sound understanding of the widest context in which the violence is expressed including causal-consequential and other links inducting the violence in mega structures and mezzo structures (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979) it is possible to grasp the violence at micro level, such as violence in school and peer violence. Therefore, the preventive programs trying to find solution for the problem in the climate change exclusively at the micro level, so in the school – are not effective. Only synergies at all levels of society can provide different approach to violence as a kind of performance which can deliver rejection of the violence among school pupils.

In conditions of several decades of so called society in transition disorganization, where Serbian society also belongs, occurred a devastation and rejection of the system of values and valuable orientations that are altruistic. An individual is exposed to random forces having been a witness and an object of various kinds of violence leading to particular insensitivity to violence. Competition, sharp confrontation of interests, non-constructive problem solving, and conflicts are just some among permanently present characteristics of economic, social and cultural organization of society as the widest context were the school is placed.

In school, as a microcell of the society (Mialare, 1989) processes happen including phenomena shaped by the environmental factors such as violence. Peer violence is one of expressions of violence but its performers are, to some extent, placed in special position: the violence act occurs in segregated school environment standardized by the certain rules; it happens within and between different social groups of school children with certain models of behaviour imposed by socialization often contrary to their own codex. Peer violence, in its base, represents (a) violation of school and legal norms; (b) expression of behavioural model embedded in specific norms and values that justify satisfaction of own interests to detriment and injury of others; so, norms including violence. Therefore, it is important that performer who suffers peer violence is ready to open communication with significant other (parent, teacher, etc.) in order to enable such behaviour to be identified and to become a part of the public discourse where the socially acceptable solutions will be investigated.

This paper illustrates the communication within the family between parents – children (pupils) relation about school life and it offers basic information about (1) representation of themes such as school problems and peer violence in conversations between parents and children; and (2) variables connectivity such as residential factors and level of education of parents and communication between parents and children about peer violence, a domain which was dealt with by relatively small number of research works.

2. THEORETICAL APPROACH
Theoretical framework for analysis of achieved communication between parents of pupils of older elementary school and their children-pupils about peer violence is developed on the basis of literature that explores: (1) a family as an agent of socialization; (2) significance of
communication for inclusion of an individual into social environment; (3) violence in school including peer violence.

1) Study of the influence of family on development of different strategies for problem solving as part of cultural pattern can be defined within two basic approaches: (a) the first approach emphasises influence of family on creation of certain culture within own framework by imposing certain values to members of the family group; (b) other emphasises the ability of the members of the family group to independently, through action and interaction with other members of the family and out-of-family (environmental) factors, create own culture embedded in specific values and valuable orientations. It is even today considered that the role of the family role in the process of socialization is primary (Milić, 2007; Budimir-Ninković, 2009). Family transfer to children norms, values and cultural patterns that are complied with social (Kon, 1991) imposing valuable choices which further determine their position in the society and culture. Children behaviour is shaped by, both, perception of allowed social forms of behaviour and personal choice of accepting or rejecting the same. Personal choice of children are connected with family patterns, acceptable models of behaviour within wider social and cultural environments and with cultural patterns transformed by the school, media, peer groups, and other out-of-family factors.

2) Communication is the base of interpersonal relations and one of the levels is family communication (communication between family members) that depends on communicating context. Under the communication is meant all procedures by which people perform mutual influence, and communication is also defined as structural behaviour in space-time with symbolic determination (Hawes, 2009). Communication represents an interaction between individuals performed by signs (Rot, 2010) by which one person interfere behaviour of other person. During the communication between parents and their children – pupils, the parents can achieve intentional or unintentional influence to their behaviour: positive interpersonal relations can lead to children’s initiative to talk with parents about different difficulties and problems including peer violence. The interpersonal communication means establishment of communication with other person and depending factor is the social environment it performs within, which emphasises the importance of communication examination in relation parent-child (pupil). Permanent interaction and communication with others provides to an individual a structure and form to what such individual does (Giddens, 2001:61). Children within the family are exposed to so-called a cultural hegemony which means domination of one system of ideas over the other (Hall, 1995). Parents and relations they create with children are important factors which influence reflects to formation of child’s relation with others (e.g. peers).

3) Violence in school is observed as phenomenon shaped by influences from school and environmental context (Trifunović, 2006) and all complex inter-influences of the ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the research the violence definition includes the following forms of behaviour: (a) exposition to deliberately negative and repeated behaviour of one or more pupils, of disproportionate real or perceptive strength due to which a child suffers physical and (or) emotional damage, while such child is week to resist (Olweus, 1993); (b) physical or emotional injury of other person; while intention of such behaviour is to hurt other person; and injury is unjustified (Popadić, 2009; Popadić ,Plut & Pavlović, 2015). In the realized research the basic standpoint considering the violence is ecological or systematic approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that was adopted by Popović et al: The violence, first of all, is a group phenomenon and group norm, either norms within the family, peer group, classroom, or school having strong impact no matter if violent behaviour will be demonstrated and with which will be the respond (Popadić et al, 2015:22). Peer violence is a
form of expressing the violence in school as interaction where pupils relates one toward other within roles they have within school context even when the interaction is not occurred in the school. Peer violence is related with distinct phenomenon of preferring value orientation directed to the power among adolescents promoting violence in order to achieve own aims (Jevtić, 2016).

Communication examination between parents as leading mediators of socialization and their school children about the peer violence, at one deeper level, shows (a) parent`s concern in all aspects of school life and growing up of their children including violation of rules of school regulatory environment; and (b) confidence of children in parents as mediators of family regulatory environment to talk with them about the problems in school.

3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH
The subject of this paper is research of connectivity of social characteristics of parents of older elementary school pupils and their communication with their children about peer violence. The aim of the paper is to establish to which extent the residential factor and education of parents are related with achieved communication with children-pupils about the peer violence.

According to the subject and aim of the paper the following tasks are defined:
(1) To establish the most often themes of talk between parents of older elementary school pupils and their children;
(2) To establish whether the parents of older elementary school pupils have insight in school problems of their children including peer violence;
(3) To establish whether communication between parents of older elementary school pupils and their school children about peer violence is linked with residential factor of parents;
(4) To establish whether the communication between parents of older elementary school pupils and their school children about peer violence is linked with education level of parents;
(5) To establish whether parents of older elementary school pupils have any proposal on stamping out and prevention of peer violence.

The following hypotheses were defined:
1. The main hypotheses – in this paper the initial assumption is that parents of older elementary school pupils, since they are concerned with all aspects of school life of their children, achieve an intensive communication with their children regarding peer violence problem.
2. Additional hypotheses:
   - It is assumed that the most often theme of conversation of the parents of older elementary school pupils with their children is their success in school (evaluations).
   - It is assumed that parents of older elementary school pupils in their conversation with children learn about their school problems including peer violence problem.
   - It is assumed that communication of the parents of older elementary school pupils with their children about peer violence significantly linked with residential factor – parents whose permanent place of residence is a village talk with their children more often about violence than parents who live in a city.
   - It is assumed that communication between parents of older elementary school pupils and their children about peer violence is significantly linked with the education level of both parents – parents who have higher education grade talk with children more often about violence.
- It is assumed that parents of older elementary school pupils have clear proposals for stamping out and prevention of peer violence.

In the paper is implemented descriptive-analytical method and questioning technique. For the purpose of this research an instrument was constructed – Questionnaire for parents of older elementary school pupils. Research was conducted in October 2017 at the territory of the municipality Jagodina. The sample is made of 107 parents of older elementary school pupils: 66 of them female and 41 male. The $h^2$ test is applied as statistical concluding measure. The level of connectedness of single variables is determined through coefficient of contingency (C).

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research investigated answers to the following questions: Which are the most often themes in conversation between parents of older elementary school pupils and their children; whether parents have any insight about problems of their children including peer violence problem; whether residential factor and education level of parents impact their decision to talk with children about peer violence; and whether parents have any proposal for this problem prevention.

Communication between parents and their children-pupils about peer violence can strengthen their mutual confidence; can prepare children for inventing adequate responds to violence challenges in a peer group; and perhaps, initiate cooperation of parents with school in order to activate a school mechanism of protection against violence.

1. Research showed that certain themes in communication with parents are more often than others. As the most often themes of talks are separated the following: marks, behaviour of pupils in school, health problems of pupils, organization of pupil’s free time, pupil’s professional orientation, peer violence, asocial behaviour, and prevention of deviant behaviour.

Daily conversation with children performs about marks in school – 6.4% of parents; about pupil’s behaviour - 5.5% of parents; about peer violence, asocial behaviour and deviant behaviour – 3.6% parents.

Interval of such themes of talks and specific problems occur within refers to assumption that parents express a practical interest in continual communication with children in (1) domain of achievement of desired individual positioning of children-pupils in school regulatory environment (success in learning and behaviour of pupils in school); and (2) domain of remedying the factors that can disturb desired position of child in school (peer violence, asocial behaviour).

Parents are mostly interested in conversation with school children about their success – effects of participation in educational process. Obtained finding provides conclusion that the first additional hypothesis: It is assumed that the most often theme of conversation of the parents of older elementary school pupils with their children is their success in school (evaluations), is confirmed.

Positioning of children in competitive unit (school class), as showed in other research papers, is in the focus of parents. Increased interest of parents for school success of children in our condition, we can observe as consequence of the fact that knowledge becomes the main
development resource, and, accordingly, represents open channel for social promotion. (Trifunović, 2001:230)

2. Research showed that parents of older elementary school pupils in conversation with them try to inform themselves: about all happening in school (56.9% of parents); particularly about marks and discipline (about 26% of parents); particularly about violence in school, including peer violence (about 11% of parents). Obtained results show that majority of parents, about 56% of them, have insight about all aspects of school life of their children. About 37% parents talk with children about themes particularly interested in, including peer violence. Answering the question does your child-pupil has problems in school, the major per cent of parents, 84.4%, state that their children have no problems in school; 8.3% state that their children have problems with peer from the classroom; 2.8% of parents state that their children have problems with pupils form other classrooms; while 1.8% of parents emphasize that their children have problematic relation with teacher. Data show that according to parents’ knowledge gained from these conversations with their children, about 11% of children are exposed to violence problem performed by the pupils from the same school. Obtained results enable conclusion that second additional hypothesis: It is assumed that parents of older elementary school pupils in their conversation with children learn about their school problems including peer violence problem is confirmed.

3. Research monitored connectedness between themes choice in conversation between parents and children about the school (about all events in school, particularly about marks and discipline, especially peer violence) and permanent residence of parents. Obtained results showed that:
(a) 6.6% of parents confirming they talk with children about everything that happens in school live in the village and this makes 50.0% of total number of parents whose residence is village; 42.6% of parents that choose the same topic for talk live in city, and that is 51.0% of total number of parents that live in city; 63.3% of parents stating they talk about all events in school live in suburb which presents 28.7% of total number of parents whose residence is suburb.
Research showed that only among parents that live in village is one group separated with 12.5% of parents who do not talk at all with children about school.
(b) 28.6% of parents confirming that talk with children about marks and discipline live in village and that is 25.0% of total number of parents that live in village’ 42.9% of parents that choose the same topic for talk live in city which presents 5.9% of total number of parents living in city; 28.6% of parents that talk with children about marks and discipline live in suburb and that makes 4.1% of total number of parents whose residence is suburb,
(c) 20.0% of parents who talk with children about violence in school live in village, and that is 12.5% of total number of parents with residence in village; 80.0% of parents testifying that talk with children about violence in school live in city which presents 7.8% of total number of parents that live in city; violence in school was not topic for conversation with children whose parents live in suburb settlements.

Calculated Hi square (Chi-Square) = 29.377 at grade of significance p = .022 (df = 16) is statistically significant and illustrates that parents of older elementary school pupils, depending on residential factor, differ in between upon topic selection for talk with their children.
Obtained data provides conclusion that third additional hypothesis: *It is assumed that communication of the parents of older elementary school pupils with their children about peer violence significantly linked with residential factor is confirmed.*

Data show that parents whose place of residence is village point to increased interest in talk about *marks and discipline* of a child in school, as well as in problem of *violence in school* than parents who live in city; curiosity to know *all that happens in school* equally is shared with group of parents whose place of residence is city but they are unique in fact that even 12.5% of them decided not to talk about school with children. Parents whose place of residence is suburb, on the other hand, show the least interest in talking about school with their children.

4. Monitoring connectedness between theme choice for conversation parents with children about school and *education grade* of parents showed the following: (1) fathers of older elementary school pupils *do not differentiate* in between in theme selection for conversation about school with their children according to the education level; (2) mothers of older elementary school pupils *do differentiate* in between in selection of themes for conversation about school with their children according to the level of education. Level of education of mothers of older elementary school pupils is linked with theme selection for conversation with them:

(a) About everything that happens in school talk 1.7% of mothers that have incomplete elementary school, which makes 100.0% of total number of mothers with incomplete elementary school; 3.3% of mothers stating that talk about everything that happens in school with completed elementary school which makes 22.2% of total number of mothers with completed elementary school; 66.7% of mothers stating that talk about everything that happens in school with completed secondary school which makes 60.6% of total number of mothers with secondary school; 15.0% of mothers that talk with children about everything that happens in school have higher education which makes 64.3% of total number of mothers with higher grade of education; 13.3% of mothers that talk with children about everything that happens in school have high education which makes 50.0% of total number of mothers with high education.

Research showed that only among mothers with completed elementary school is separated the group of 11.1% of mothers who do not talk about school with their children.

(b) About *peer violence* problem, as separate topic, do not talk mothers with uncompleted elementary school and mothers with high education; 20.0% of mothers stating that talk particularly about peer violence problem with their children have completed elementary school which makes 11.1% of total number of mothers with completed elementary school; 40.0% of mothers stating that talk about peer violence with their children have a secondary school completed which makes 3.0% of total number of mothers with secondary school grade; 40.0% of mothers that talk particularly about peer violence problem with their children have higher school education which makes 14.3% of total number of mothers with higher education grade.

Calculated Hi square (Chi-Square) = 51.858 at grade of significance p = .015 (df = 32) is statistically significant and illustrates that mothers of older elementary school pupils, according to acquired education level, differ in between upon topic selection for talk with their children.
Obtained data enable conclusion that fourth additional hypothesis: *It is assumed that communication between parents of older elementary school pupils and their children about peer violence is significantly linked with the education level of both parents* is not confirmed.

5. Research showed that parents emphasize, as one of the most important goals of cooperation between parents and school, finding *solution for the violence in school* problem: (a) 57.8% parents believe that basic aim in cooperation of family and school is prevention of violence in school; (b) 11.9% parents think that basic aim is informing parents on violence in school; (c) 10.1% of parents emphasize as the most important goal the cooperation in *solving the existing problem/current cases of peer violence*; (d) about 20% of parents think that all said goals of cooperation are equally important. According to data, more than one half of parents think that *prevention of violence in school* is the key factor of its elimination from the school context.

However, whether parents have any proposal for prevention?

Obtained data points that majority of parents, about 68%, think that prevention of the peer violence is task for school which by its entire engagement (teaching contents and activities) can promote and develop non-violent patterns of behaviour. 16.2% of parents believe that prevention of peer violence is also task for school which, by involvement of experts like pedagogues and psychologists in workshops within the subject *civil education*, can contribute prevention of peer violence. About 15.4% of parents think that prevention of peer violence is not primarily task for school and responsibility for peer violence is on the side of parents who by their own values and patterns of behaviour create relation of children with violence phenomenon.

On the basis of exposed attitudes it is possible to conclude that fifth additional hypothesis: *It is assumed that parents of older elementary school pupils have clear proposals for stamping out and prevention of peer violence* is not fully confirmed. Parents have too many expectations from the school system in domain of stamping out the peer violence and they have no clear concepts about proper actions and performance except the general idea that engagement of school resources can significantly impact the peer violence phenomenon.

**5. CONCLUSION**

The peer violence is the problem that have been repeatedly examined, however, there is small number of research papers focused on parents of elementary school pupils and their readiness to talk with own children about the violence phenomenon. Conducted research provided an opportunity to emphasize certain specific qualifications of achieved communication between parents of older elementary school pupils and their children that are an expression of conditions and influences of social and cultural environments parents are coming from. Results of this field research are primarily certain description of events in certain environment and in that sense do not embody a base for developing full picture about communication between parents and children of the peer violence in school, but, at least, provide an opportunity to emphasize some local characteristics.

Parents of older elementary school pupils are mostly interested in limited number of questions about school life of their children such as in the most of cases: marks and pupil’s behaviour in school. Selection of themes for talk between parents and children about school live is related with variables: residential factor and level of education.
Solution for the problem of the peer violence parents see as one of the major tasks for school and research showed, in majority of per cents that they do not recognize the role of family in this problem prevention. Proposals and suggestions are, however, directed to content and activities that solve the problem in palliative manner avoiding the ground of the problem occurrence regarding the wider social context where the violence is a usual phenomenon and where from it is transferred to school. Stamping out the peer violence in elementary schools is not sufficiently successful because such violence is a mirror of disorganization of entire society and it is not just a product of so called school culture. The violence is an expression of disorientation in values. It is first of all an ethics and axiological question and not cognitive. It seems that strategies of the violence stamp out and prevention of the peer violence in elementary schools cannot be efficient if engagement of the school is reduced, mostly, to introduction of teaching contents within the framework of different teaching subjects of non-violent forms of communication and interaction while communication between parents and children is only about marks and discipline. Change can occur only if entire society changes own paradigm of development that generates the violence in new paradigm which will be based in the culture of peace.

REFERENCES


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