

Research Report

Perceptions of students, parents and officials on the right to education, bullying and discrimination in schools

Primary and low secondary school “Ramiz Sadiku”, Pejë/Pec



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This report came as a result of the research carried out under the “Governance and child rights – monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child” project which is implemented by “Syri i Vizionit” organization. Opinions expressed in this publication are sole responsibility of the author and they do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Save the Children.

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1. Introduction

The legal framework in Kosovo, starting from the Constitution, followed by other laws guarantees the respect and care for children. Nonetheless, implementation of this legislation is not at the satisfactory level.

“Save the Children” organization in partnership with “Syri i Vizionit” is implementing the “Governance and child rights – monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child” project, which aims to create knowledge on monitoring implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on child rights in Kosovo.

The research was carried out through questionnaires in three Kosovo municipalities, namely in three primary and low secondary schools: “Naim Frashëri” in Prishtinë/Pristina, “Ramiz Sadiku” in Pejë/Pec and “Zekeria Rexha” in Gjakovë/Djakovica. The research was carried out by the children themselves and the support of project staff.

Reports on municipal level and a summarized report for the three municipalities were drafted from the research findings. Reports together with the respective recommendations will be handed over to all institutions at the local and central level which deal with protection of children's rights. In special meetings, reports will also be handed over to children rights' municipal officials, the Ombudsperson, Centre for Social Welfare, Police and other institutions in each of the three municipalities.

These reports will also be handed over to schools where the monitoring was done, same as to the relevant municipal institutions.

This monitoring report will help institutions in general and schools in particular to take measures for improvement of child rights situation, as well as to create a safe and friendly environment for all children.





2. Methodology

The research was carried out through questionnaires that covered the three fields: The Right to Education, Bullying and Anti-Discrimination. Questionnaires were conducted with children, parents and officials. In each of the three selected schools a number of students were chosen, who, under project staff supervision conducted the questionnaires.

Research sample was determined based on statistical data from the three schools. All classrooms of the low secondary level (VI-IX classes) were included in the research. Between four and five students were selected in each classroom to take part in the research. Selection of children within the classroom was done by using the classroom diary, where every fourth or the fifth student was selected, according to their order in the diary.

The research was carried during a teaching hour and after teaching hours. Questionnaires were distributed to all students selected for participation in the research, providing them sufficient time to fill them in. Collection of questionnaires was done in the manner that ensured participant's anonymity. Meanwhile, questionnaires for parents were handed over in envelopes to students. The questionnaire for officials was conducted through interviews with them, which were carried out by children themselves.

3. Data Analysis

The following data reflect perceptions of 72 students, 64 parents and 15 officials that took part in the research. Figure 1 presents gender structure of research participants.

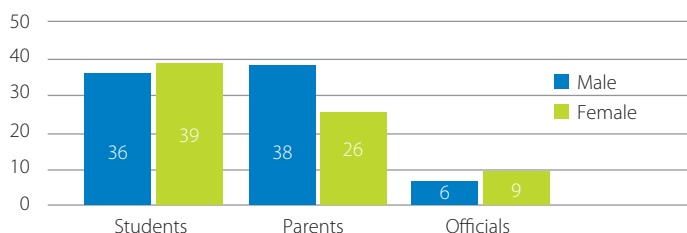


Figure 1. Gender structure of respondents

Participating students and parents in the research come from primary and low secondary school “Ramiz Sadiku” from Pejë/Pec. The officials that took part in the research come from these institutions: Kosovo Police, Municipal Directorate of Education and Human Rights Unit – Municipality of Prishtinë/Pristina. All respondents replied to three questionnaires that covered the three fields: The Right to Education, Bullying and Anti-Discrimination.

3.1. The right to education

The right to education is guaranteed with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This right is also guaranteed with Kosovo legislation. Article 47 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo stipulates that “Every person enjoys the right to free basic education¹. Mandatory education is regulated by law and funded by public funds²” and “Public institutions shall ensure equal opportunities to education for everyone in accordance with their specific abilities and needs³”.

The research findings reveal that children are considerably aware that the right to education is part of the Convention, but not all of them are aware that this right is guaranteed with the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. So, from Figure 2 we might understand that 16% of children responded that they do not know that the right to

¹ Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 47, point 1, page 14

² Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 47, point 1, page 14

³ Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 47, point 1, page 14

education is guaranteed with the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, while 3% of them even think that this right is not guaranteed at all.

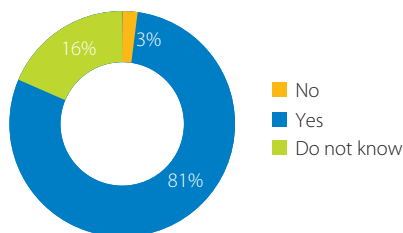


Figure 2. Is the right to education guaranteed with the Constitution of Kosovo?

An almost similar situation is when it comes to education of children with disabilities. The Figure 3 shows that students have relatively different opinions if children with disabilities should only go to special schools. Here we note a higher percentage of children who believe that children with disabilities should only go to special schools, which implies that respondents are not informed about the rights of children with disabilities.

It is interesting that almost the same response was given by their parents, as well. Figure 3 shows the comparison of students' and parents' responses. At the same time, from the responses of the officials, there are also relatively different opinions about this issue.

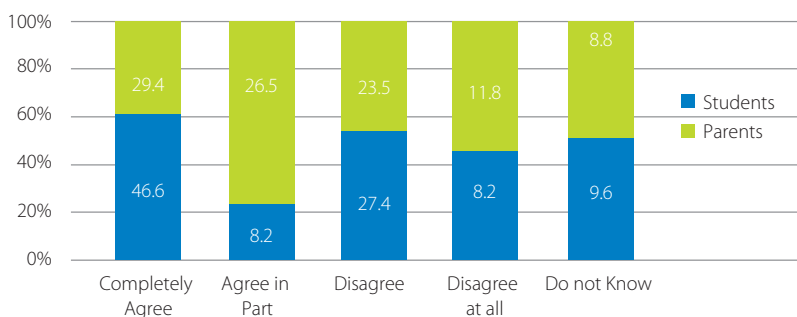


Figure 3. Children with disabilities should only go to special schools / Comparison of students' and parents' responses

Starting from the fact that the right to education does not entail only drafting of the legislation that guarantees this right, but also creation of adequate conditions for materialization of this right, we will present perceptions of students, parents and officials regarding the home-school safety issue, the school infrastructure, same as quality of teaching and assessment.

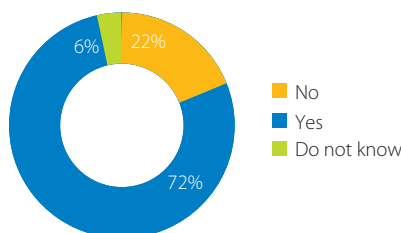


Figure 4. Students' safety in home-school relation

As far as safety in home-school relation is concerned, the Figure 4 reveals that children feel safe enough during this trip; however, it is important to underline that we the number of interviewed students represent the 22 per cent of all interviewed, who do not feel safe and the main reason for their insecurity is lack of sidewalks, their exposal to risk from cars, stray dogs as well as fear from unknown persons.

Students' safety issue in this relation is also shown in Figure 5, where, besides the traffic safety, it is notable that stray dogs present a major threat for children, same as hooligans which was stated by 3.4% of the interviewed students. From this figure, it is concerning the fact that 13.6% of interviewed students said that their peers present a threat in their home-school relation.

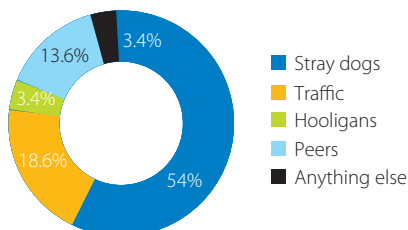


Figure 5. Students' safety in home-school relation

Parents and officials have almost the same responses to these questions. Parents believe that the key problem that their children face in their home-school relation are stray dogs (82.4%). They also consider traffic as a serious problem that students encounter almost every day (11.8%). Meanwhile, they consider their peers as the third problem with 2.9%.

Students' perceptions on school infrastructure were shown in Figure 6. The fact that 54.1% namely 90.5% of students involved in the research think that there is insufficient water, namely toilets are not cleaned, is a concerning fact.

Parents' perceptions for these issues are the same, 29.6% namely 82.1% of parents think that there is insufficient water, and respectively the toilets are not cleaned.

In order to have a better picture on the (un) cleanliness of toilets, we made one more question in another sector of the questionnaire. The consistence in response is notable, because even in this question children in their vast majority (37.8%) said that the situation of toilets in their school is bad, namely very bad (20.3%, respectively 17.5%).

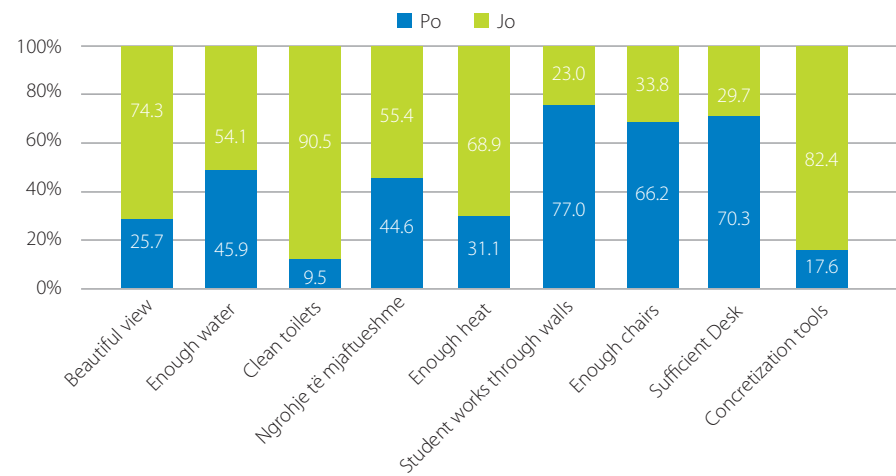


Figure 6. Students’ perceptions on school infrastructure

Asked how free they feel to make questions or ask explanations from teachers, we received the following responses from students (see Figure 7). Out of 75 children that responded to this question, 69% of them consider that they feel free to make questions and ask explanation from teachers.

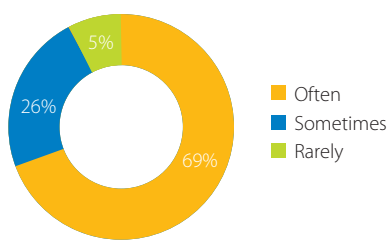


Figure 7. I feel free to make questions and ask explanations from teachers

70.3% of children respondents in this research believe that teachers justly assess their work. Students’ responses in relation to freedom of expression of opinion and the right to information together with the responses to these questions make us understand



that children are to a considerable amount (over 65%) pleased with the work that their teachers perform.

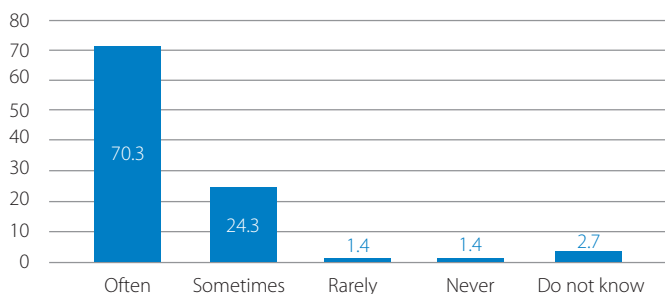
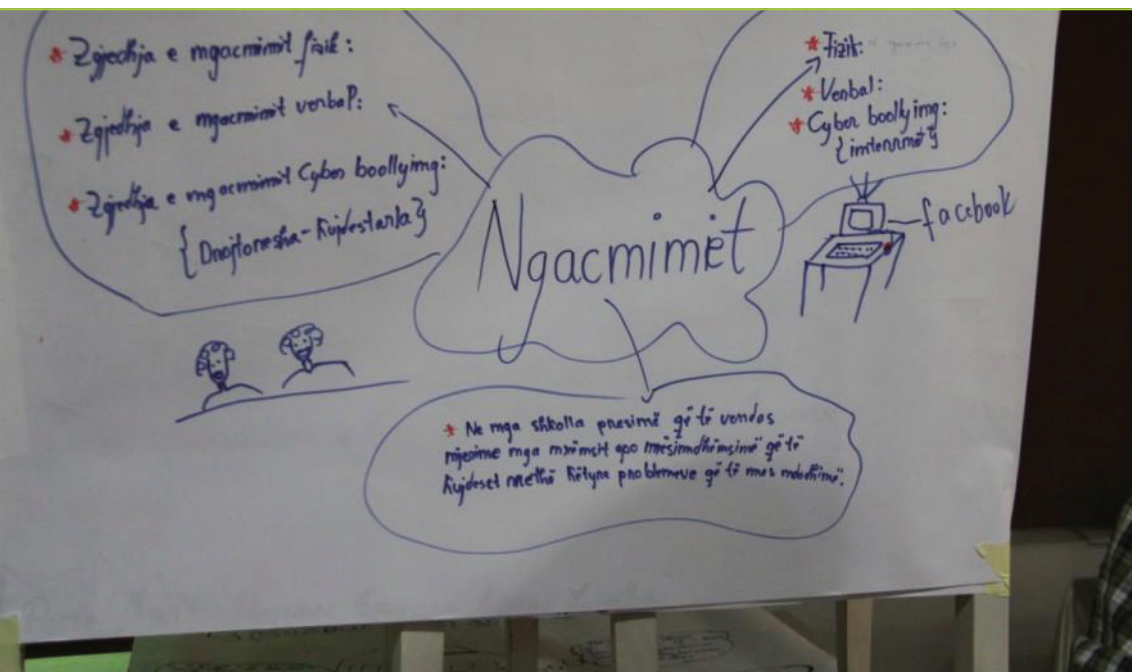


Figure 8. Teachers justly assess my work



3.2. Bullying

Bullying as a phenomenon is manifested in different forms, from labelling with various names, gossiping, exclusion from the group up to physical violence. Factors that lead to appearance of bullying are different. Through this questionnaire, we tried to put forward some data on the presence of bullying in the school.

The thing that is notable starting from the first question is that children do not possess sufficient knowledge on bullying and the forms through which it manifests. Only 27% of participating children in the research said that the act of exclusion from his/her group, with certain purpose is bullying, or, only 21.6% believe that sending of inappropriate contents (messages, photos, videos) over the phone, computer and other electronic devices is bullying. At the same time, 25.7% of the respondents believe that physical contact that aims at harming a person (hit, kick, punch, etc.) is not bullying.

Although from the Figure 9 it can be seen that the vast majority of students (58%) believe that equal treatment of everyone within the classroom, irrespective to their ethnic, cultural, religious and social backgrounds, prevents bullying as a phenomenon, the group of children that responded with 'I do not know' (21%) and the ones with 'No' (21%), should not be ignored.

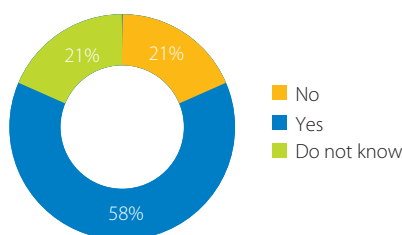


Figure 9. Does the equal treatment of everyone within the classroom, irrespective to their ethnic, cultural, gender, religious and social background prevent bullying?

The data from Figure 10, which bring out that teachers and students quite often use insulting/derogatory words (13.7% respectively 30.1%) are quite concerning. While in the previous questions the respondents, students and parents, stated (students 62.2%; parents 54.8%) that labelling with different insulting names, or jokes related to gender, personality, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or the manner they look, are considered as bullying, than usage of insulting words from their part to the level of 58.9% (frequent cumulative and sometimes - children) comes to be intentional.

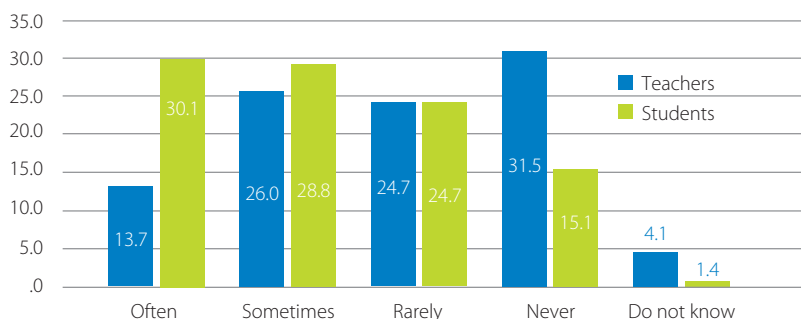


Figure 10. In my classroom, the insulting/derogatory words are used by teachers/students

Findings of the following question in a way verify the course of responses given so far. Here, it can be noted that 67% of students and 45.7% of parents, believe that bullying is present in their classroom, namely in the classroom of their children.

Earlier it was said that bullying can be manifested in different forms. Use of violence as the most extreme form of bullying is reflected in Figure 11 (left). Looking at it in general, these data are hope-giving because 2.7% might be considered “normal”, however, the fact that parents believe that violence is expressed to the level of 7.7% by the teachers and 10.6% by the children’s’ peers is concerning.

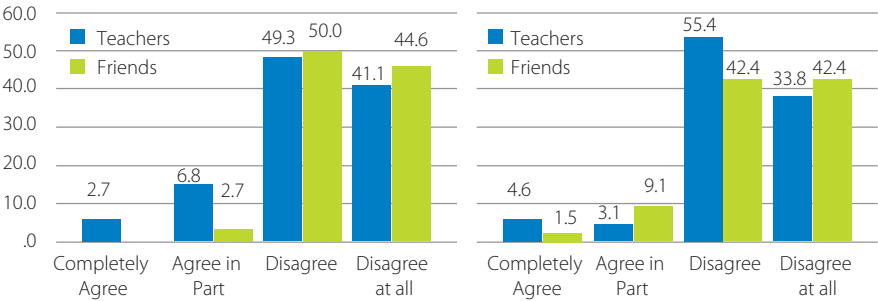


Figure 11. Teachers/friends punish me physically or they exercise violence against me.

Findings from the question as where the bullying most often takes place, demonstrate that bullying happens or originates from the schoolyard (85.1%). Parents also believe that most bullying happen in the schoolyard (72.6%).

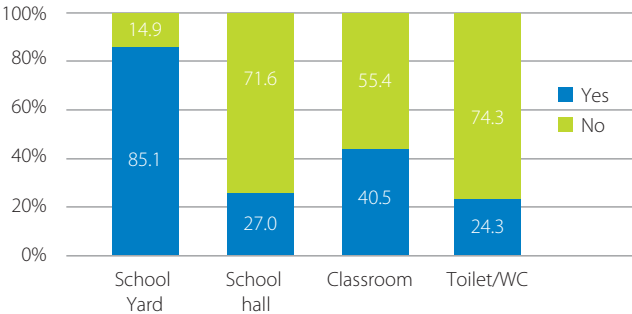


Figure 12. Where does most bullying take place?

Parents stated that they have a place to complain (58.1%), in case bullying cases come from the teachers. However, in the following question if their complaint is taken into account, a part of them refused to respond (34.9%) while 11.1% of them said that their complaint is not taken into account.

3.3. Anti-discrimination

The Kosovo Anti-Discrimination Law (Ref. no Law No.2004/ 3) aims at preventing and combating discrimination, promotion of effective equality and putting into effect the principle of equal treatment of the citizens of Kosovo under the rule of Law. Research findings show that not everyone is aware that such a Law exists, 21.7% of the interviewed children said that they did not know of existence of such a Law. At the same time, 28.6% of parents are not aware that such a Law exists.

As Figure 13 reflects, 31 % of the interviewed students believe that discrimination is present in their classroom. According to students, economic situation based discrimination happens at the level of 8.2%.

4.2% believe that religion-based discrimination is present in their classroom. According to students' responses, discrimination based on others' skills is at the level of 11.1%.



Parents also gave the same responses for these questions. According to them, economic situation based discrimination is present at the level of 12.9%, than religion-based discrimination is at the level of 9.2%, while discrimination based on others' skills is at the level of 12.7%.

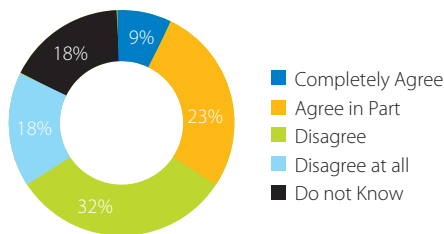


Figure 13. Discrimination is present in my classroom

Research findings show that the school meets the conditions for all children without any distinction to attend classes. (see Figure 14)

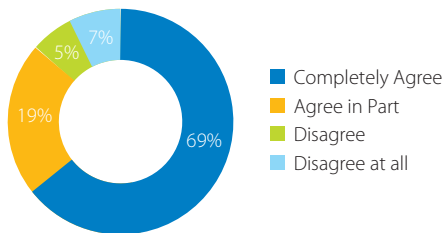


Figure 14. My school meets all the conditions to attend regular classes for all children, irrespective to their ethnicity, race or religion

The mechanisms that treat appearance of discrimination cases exist within the classroom and within the school, as well. Complaints randomly are addressed to the class representative and o the principal. At the same time, students stated that they possess regulations that also sanction discrimination at the classroom level (see Figure 15 and Figure 16). Nonetheless, students' impressions in general are that these regulations are not that functional and that some advancement should be made, in particular for raising awareness of all to implement and respect these regulations.

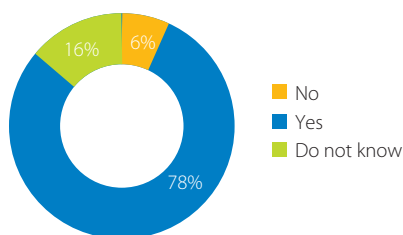


Figure 15. Do you have a place where to complain if a discrimination case happens?

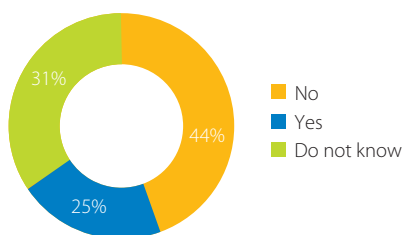


Figure 16. In your classroom, do you have a regulation that condemns and sanctions discrimination?

4. Recommendations

Based on the findings it comes out that there are generally improvements in the work contexts of the three fields that were object of the study. A range of measures should be taken for further improvement. In the text under we will enlist a number of recommendations that directly derive from the research findings:

- » Organizing of formal and non-formal meetings with the purpose of informing children, school staff and parents with international documents regulating this matter, and with legislation of the Republic of Kosovo in particular.
- » Increase of school's cooperation with MDE/other municipal departments with the purpose of treating the issues of traffic and stray dogs as the two issues that students face in their home-school relation.
- » The school in cooperation with MDE and MEST should look at the possibility of improving toilets' situation, because both the students and their parents have identified it as a major problem.
- » The school in cooperation with MDE and MEST should look at the possibility of solving the heating issue within the school.
- » The school council in cooperation with the principal should functionalize and reinforce internal school mechanisms, regulations, codes, etc.
- » The school council in cooperation with the principal, teachers and students should functionalize and reinforce internal school mechanisms to address the issue of violence among peers.
- » The school in cooperation with MDE and MEST should look at the possibility of increasing supervision of schoolyard and school hall, through electronic surveillance system, as from the findings we concluded that schoolyard and the hall are the two places where most bullying between students take place.
- » The research was carried out only at a single school, problems identified are problems and challenges of this school and must not be generalized, therefore, we recommend that a similar research should be carried at the municipality level, or even at the country level.



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