

Connection between Classroom Abuse and Manifest Aggressiveness, Anxiety and Altruism

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to find out if the students exposed to abuse differ in their level of anxiety, aggressiveness, and altruism from other students, and to test if the pattern of these differences differs depending on whether the abuse they suffer is emotional or physical. The research was carried out on a sample of 127 senior elementary school students. The data was gathered at the end of the 2003/04 school year, and obtained through the respondents' self-statements in questionnaires about childhood abuse and by the scales of manifest aggressiveness, anxiety and altruism. The frequency analysis has shown that various forms of emotional abuse are more common in schools than physical abuse, and that they are reaching disturbing proportions. For example, more than half of the participants in the study reported facing intimidation and threats in school, and over a third of them have been yelled at. Although less commonplace, physical abuse in school can by no means be ignored. Those students who suffer from frequent physical abuse are more dissatisfied with school ($r=0.174$, $p<0.05$), display more aggressiveness ($r=0.441$, $p<0.001$), and are more often boys ($r=0.324$, $p<0.01$). Those students who are frequently emotionally abused are more anxious ($r=0.281$, $p<0.01$), dissatisfied with school ($r=0.237$, $p<0.01$), and display more manifest aggressiveness ($r=0.398$, $p<0.01$). The discriminant analysis has shown that the bullied students can be differentiated from their non-abused schoolmates as they are manifestly more anxious and aggressive, regardless of whether they suffer physical or emotional abuse. Instances of different forms of emotional and physical classroom abuse have increased alarmingly. Such traumatic experiences affect children's health and functioning in school, as well as in their private lives. The interdisciplinary studies of this phenomenon and the education of all those who work with young people emerge as the top priority in the prevention of this kind of abuse.

Key words: *abuse, anxiety, aggressiveness, altruism, school dissatisfaction, school performance*

Introduction

In this day and age, when the phenomenon of violence and abuse has generally escalated, it has suddenly become of great interest to scientists, doctors, teachers, parents, and the general public. The phenomenon of violence and abuse of children has become a current topic of anthropological, psychological, and pedagogical discussions.

Although peer violence is an age-old phenomenon, and the subject of numerous works of art, books, films, and personal memories of many adults, it became an object of serious scientific interest and study only in the 1970s¹.

Statistical indicators have given rise to concern about the ominous upsurge of classroom abuse. For example, 14% of Norwegian schoolchildren are bullied in school every day, 15% in Japan, 16% in the USA, 17% in Australia and Spain, and 19% in England².

According to the research carried out in 2003 by the Medical Centre for the Protection of the Children of the City of Zagreb, 27% of Croatian schoolchildren are victims of some form of classroom abuse: 19% are passive victims (they suffer violence), while 8% are provocative victims (both the victims and the victimizers). The same research shows that 16% of them regularly abuse other children².

Abuse occurs when one student or a group of students are repeatedly or perpetually exposed to intentional obnoxious acts by one student or a group of them. When discussing classroom abuse, we cannot ignore the fact that teachers may also be classroom abusers.

For the purposes of this paper, the focus has been placed on the forms of emotional and physical bullying, both open and hidden.

Neglect and abuse of children in their families and in school leaves short-term and long-term effects on their functioning and development. The most usual problems that lead to disorders are emotional by nature. They are most often displayed through externalized disorders, i.e. through children's mental difficulties characterized by antisocial behaviour: confrontation, destructiveness, aggression, delinquency, or through internalized disorders which are characterized by withdrawal from others, anxiety, fear, and dissatisfaction. A well-known study of 2500 children, Achenbach et al. (1991) found that the patterns of externalized behaviour changed with age³. The older the children, the amount of aggressive behaviour decreased while the amount of delinquent forms of behaviour increased. Anxiety generally increased with age, and girls displayed more symptoms of anxiety than boys. The sample of school age adolescents from various Croatian regions studied by I. Begovac, V. Rudan, M. Skočić, O. Filipović, and L. Szivovicza showed matching results and corroborated the major behavioural and emotional problems listed by adolescents, while the students themselves proved to be the most important source of information about their own problems⁴. This encouraged us to test the connection between classroom abuse and manifest aggressiveness, anxiety, or even altruism. The objective of this paper is to find out if the students exposed to abuse differ in their level of anxiety, aggressiveness, and altruism from other students, and to test if the pattern of these differences differs depending on whether the abuse they suffer is emotional or physical.

The term *physical abuse* by peers and teachers implies repeated exposure to physical violence or intentional affliction of bodily harm. The consequences of such acts are often visible in the form of bruises, broken bones, injuries; the number of cases when medical assistance was required in such situations is on the increase.

Even when the injuries heal, the emotional scars remain. That is why physical abuse is at the same time a form of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in the classroom refers to a lasting and deep-seated attitude on a student's – sometimes teacher's – part that impedes the development of a child's positive self-image or their self-respect and social competence⁵. The forms of emotional abuse are: yelling, mocking and derision, cursing and swearing, intimidation and threatening, chastisement and insults, bans and restrictions, blaming, ignoring and ostracizing, lack of understanding, and unfair response to classroom performance.

It is important to distinguish between the *open abuse* – when the victim is openly bullied physically or emotionally – and the *hidden abuse*. We are going to focus on indirect or hidden abuse. Bullying behaviour in the classroom, namely, is often manifested in the form of bad language, offensive gestures, repeated usage of hideous nicknames, pointing out mistakes/errors, failures, imperfections, etc. Such »covert« acts may turn into »psychoterror«. The *victims* are mostly physically weaker, shy, insecure and unassuming children, who shun fight-

ing and do not know how to defend themselves. Exceptional students and overachievers are also victimized since other children envy them and have a need to belittle their achievements. Often, the victims are newcomers whose style, speech and behaviour deviate from the majority's accepted conduct. Children with some blemish or physical handicap are often mistreated as well. After a prolonged period of exposure to ridicule, hostility or humiliating stratagems, children respond with fear, confusion or open confrontation. Whatever the reaction, the abusers use it as a pretext for new aggression. Teachers do not show much sympathy when bullied children turn to them for help. Similarly, when they complain to their parents they get labelled as »sissies«, incapable of functioning among their peers.

The outcome of a prolonged exposure to peer abuse may be loss of self-confidence and profound feeling of guilt. Such children become exactly what their group wants them to be. They feel insecure, misunderstood and lonely. After a period of introspection and self-reproaching and some discreet searching for help, the pressure may become unbearable and then the children cry out for help in some outrageous way: a tantrum or a crisis. If their efforts to get protection fail, they resort to self-pity, come to the »something-is-deeply-wrong-with-me-indeed« conclusion and become resigned to their cruel fate. All this can seriously affect their future functioning.

Bullies can be individual students or a group, whose leader is usually a more aggressive student with a deficient sense of guilt and the need for domination. Such children are joined by others with a similar agenda or because they dislike another child, but also by some of those who fear rejection and who bury their individuality in a gang. There is always a group of children who do not want to interfere or take sides, who are neutral regarding the violence they are witnessing, and keep their distance from the problems their schoolmates have to cope with.

In the dynamics of hidden classroom abuse by a group, the most usual forms are combinations of ostracizing, exclusion, isolation, pressuring, and deliberate misleading. The forms of abuse are extremely perfidious, and the results are disastrous. It is absolutely essential to unmask these forms of hidden abuse that make many childhoods miserable in order to help the victims – and the abusers – to mend their ways and become healthy adults^{6,7}.

Undesirable developmental outcomes, internalized and externalized disorders – primarily *anxiety* and *aggressiveness*, ensue from such traumatic events.

Threatening experiences are usually related to anxiety, which has been corroborated by Keresteš as well, 2002⁸. According to the same source, the traumatic experiences characterized by violence and conflicts are usually connected with aggressiveness and antisocial behaviour.

Anxiety refers to a diffuse feeling similar to fear without a clearly threatening object, when the threat is not

obvious and its rational estimation not possible. The limits of the danger are not visible, and the situation is not fully understood: there is only a kind of floating fear.

Aggressiveness is usually defined as a set of various forms of behaviour which include physical or mental harming of other people, destructive behaviour aimed at punishing others or destroying property. More recent studies mention the reactive and the proactive aggressiveness. The reactive aggressive behaviour is a reaction to certain situational conditions, primarily threats, provocations or thwarting goals. The proactive aggressiveness, on the other hand, occurs when a person, in anticipation of a desirable goal which he/she presumes may be achieved only by violence, adopts – unprovoked – some form of aggressive behaviour. Most aggressive individuals manifest both types of aggressiveness, the so-called reactive-proactive chains of aggressiveness.

This paper looks into the connection between classroom abuse and the incidence of anxiety and aggressiveness. Also, we wanted to see whether the violence school children are subjected to encourages the bullied children not to behave in the same way towards other children, i.e. whether this can motivate them to pro-social behaviour, primarily altruism, and whether they practice unselfish, helping behaviour (verbally, or in the form of helping other children with schoolwork or coming to their aid in dangerous situations) solely for the benefit of others. *Altruism* presupposes genuinely selfless, voluntary behaviour and affection for other people without any personal and material benefits.

Materials and Methods

The survey was conducted on a sample of 127 senior elementary school students (69 or 54.3% girls, and 58 or 45.7% boys) from Zagreb. At the end of their formal elementary education they were asked to appraise whether they had ever been bullied in school.

The following instruments were used in the study:

The childhood abuse questionnaire

The questionnaire was adapted by A. Karlović from the questionnaire »The comprehensive child maltreatment scale for adults« (CCMS) (Higgins and McCabe, 2000, cit. acc.⁹). The questionnaire validation was done by Karlović, Buljan-Flander and Vranić (2001)⁹. The reliability of the questionnaire proved to be very high (Crombach $\alpha = 0.95$). The scales of emotional and physical maltreatment have been used in this paper with some additional questions regarding the frequency of abusive behaviour and who abusers are⁹.

The manifest aggressiveness scale

The manifest aggressiveness scale (P. Bezinović and S. Smojver-Ažić, 2000) comprises ten items in which the respondents state how often they behave aggressively. The responses to individual units range from 0 (»never«) to 4

(»very often«). The internal consistency coefficient for this scale (Crombach α) is 0.80¹⁰.

The anxiety scale for children

Wieczerkowski et al. (1973) (cit. acc.¹¹) constructed this scale, which was adapted by A. Vulić-Prtorić and I. Sorić. Three subscales were used in this paper: the subscale to test the tendency to anxious reactions in different situations (Crombach $\alpha=0.78$); the school dissatisfaction subscale (Crombach $\alpha=0.63$); and the subscale of children's tendency to behave in an adjusted and socially desirable way (Crombach $\alpha=0.81$)¹¹.

The altruism scale

The altruism scale was created by Z. Raboteg-Šarić (1995). Three criteria have been used for the operationalization of the term: that the behaviour in question is voluntary and unforced, that its purpose is to benefit other people, and that it excludes expectations of material or social rewards or avoidance of external inducements and punishment. The scale is quite reliable and internally consistent (Crombach $\alpha = 0.84$)¹².

All of the data were obtained by means of the students' self-statements regarding their behaviour in a variety of situations. The data were collected at the end of the 2003/04 school year, with the permission of the ethics committees and the school principals.

The respondents were given some general instructions about the purpose of the research, its general and particular benefits, and the possible risks. The confidentiality of the results and the anonymity were guaranteed. The participation was completely voluntary. The students were asked to be perfectly honest. Aware that the questionnaire may bring back some unpleasant memories, the children were provided with psychological support and counselling, if needed.

The analysis of the results was carried out through their description. The relationship between the variables was treated with Pearson correlation coefficient. The reliability and the validity of the tests used was checked by Crombach α . The difference between groups was treated with a canonical discriminant analysis. All statistical actions were undertaken with the assistance of the SPSS program package.

Results

The objective of this paper was to find out if the students exposed to abuse differ in their level of anxiety, aggressiveness, and altruism from other students, and to test if the pattern of these differences differs depending on whether the abuse they suffer is emotional or physical.

Table 1 shows the frequency of abusive behaviours to which the subjects of our study were subjected. According to the given data, emotional abuse is much more frequent in schools than physical, and it is reaching disturbing proportions. For example, more than half of the

TABLE 1
FORMS OF EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL CLASSROOM
ABUSE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (N=127)

Form of abuse	% of students exposed to abuse
Emotional abuse	
Intimidation and threatening	52.0
Yelling	34.6
Swearing and cursing	30.7
Harsh criticism	21.3
Mocking and derision	15.7
Physical abuse	
Throwing on the ground and pushing down the stairs	23.6
Punching or hitting with an object	7.9
Slaps and blows	6.3
Physical injuries that require medical assistance	5.5

participants in the study reported experiencing intimidation and threats in school, and more than a third of them have been yelled at. Although less commonplace, physical abuse in school can by no means be ignored. Almost a quarter of respondents have been thrown onto the floor or pushed down the stairs, and over 5% of the students were subjected to physical abuse which required medical assistance.

To test the correlation of emotional and psychological abuse in correlational analyses, we formed variables of total emotional and total physical abuse. These variables were formed as simple linear combinations of frequency of exposure to emotional and physical abuse.

Table 2 shows the Pearson coefficients of the correlation variables that were used in the study. What is of special interest to our study is the fact that the variables of abuse have the following pattern of connection with the predictor variables. Physical abuse is significantly re-

lated to gender ($r=0.324, p<0.01$), dissatisfaction with school ($r=0.174, p<0.05$), and manifest aggressiveness ($r=0.441, p<0.01$). Students who suffered more frequently physical abuse are more dissatisfied with school, display more aggressiveness, and are more often boys. Those students who suffered more frequently emotional abuse are more anxious ($r=0.281, p<0.01$), dissatisfied with school ($r=0.237, p<0.01$), and display more manifest aggressiveness ($r=0.398, p<0.01$). It is interesting to note that both types of abuse are in correlation: those students who are frequently abused physically, also suffer frequent emotional abuse ($r=0.503, p<0.01$).

In order to test the degree and nature of the differences between the abused students and those who have never been abused in the variables of anxiety, altruism, aggressiveness, gender, and school performance, we carried out two linear discriminant analyses. One of them tested the pattern of differences between physically abused students (N=34) and those students who were never abused (N=93) in the given variables. The other tested the structure of differences between emotionally abused children (N=45), and those who never suffered any emotional abuse (N=82). The groups mentioned were formed in such a way that the groups of physically and emotionally abused children included all those students who had been exposed to any form of physical / emotional abuse at least on one occasion.

The discriminant analysis of physically abused students and those who were never physically abused resulted in a considerable discriminant function ($\lambda=0.368$, Wilks $\Lambda=0.731$; $\chi^2=38.07, df=7, p<0.01$). The coefficient of the canonical correlation (R_c) of 0.519 points to a moderate connection of the results of the discriminant function and affiliation with the group of physically abused children or the ones who were not abused. Exactly 26.9% of the total variability in the discriminant variables can be explained through the differences between groups.

Table 3 contains correlations of manifest variables with the discriminant function. The analysis of these correlations leads to the conclusion that the variables that

TABLE 2
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND CORRELATIONS AMONG VARIABLES USED IN ANALYSIS (N=127)

Variables	X	SD	Coefficients of correlations									
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1 Gender ^a	1.5	0.50	-									
2 School performance ^b	1.1	0.36	0.158	-								
3 Manifest anxiety	11.9	5.53	0.068	-0.253**	-							
4 School dissatisfaction	8.9	3.02	-0.188*	-0.015	0.235**	-						
5 Social desirability	7.0	3.52	0.041	-0.187*	0.259**	-0.052	-					
6 Manifest aggressiveness	18.6	3.02	-0.204*	0.127	-0.027	0.223*	-0.405**	-				
7 Altruism	37.5	13.03	0.130	-0.051	-0.080	-0.197*	0.408**	-0.262**	-			
8 Physical abuse	0.5	1.01	-0.324**	-0.004	0.138	0.174*	-0.084	0.441**	-0.026	-		
9 Emotional abuse	2.3	2.47	-0.205	-0.065	0.281**	0.237**	-0.054	0.398**	-0.038	0.503**	-	

6^a gender: 1 - male, 2 - female, ^b school performance: 1 - excellent, 2 - very good, 3 - good, 4 - bad, * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

TABLE 3
STRUCTURE OF THE DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION WHICH
DIFFERENTIATES THE PHYSICALLY ABUSED CHILDREN
FROM THOSE THAT WERE NOT ABUSED

Manifest variables	r
Manifest aggressiveness	0.639
Gender	-0.523
Manifest anxiety	0.410
School dissatisfaction	0.288
Grade	0.102
Social desirability	0.025
Total altruism	-0.022

TABLE 4
CENTROIDS OF PHYSICALLY ABUSED CHILDREN AND THOSE
WHO WERE NOT ABUSED ON A DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION

Groups	Centroids
Children who were not physically abused	-0.364
Children who were physically abused	0.995

best discriminate between the abused children and those who were never abused are: manifest aggressiveness, gender, and manifest anxiety. Statistically significant differences between the above mentioned groups on the uni-variant level (all $F > 7.51$, $df = 1/125$; $p < 0.01$) are found in these very variables.

Taking into account the groups' centroid signs and their values, we can conclude that physically abused students display more manifest aggressiveness and anxiety, and that they are more often boys than girls.

The second discriminant analysis tested the differences between emotionally abused children and those who suffered no such abuse. Significant discriminant function was gained ($\lambda = 0.218$, Wilks $\Lambda = 0.821$; $\chi^2 = 23.97$, $df = 7$, $p < 0.01$). The canonical correlation (R_c) of 0.423 points to the fact that the differences between the groups account for the 17.8 % difference in the above mentioned variables.

TABLE 5
STRUCTURE OF THE DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION THAT
DISCRIMINATES THE EMOTIONALLY ABUSED CHILDREN
FROM THOSE WHO WERE NOT ABUSED IN SUCH A WAY

Manifest variables	R
Manifest aggressiveness	0.632
Manifest anxiety	0.616
School dissatisfaction	0.384
Grade	0.293
Social desirability	-0.060
Total altruism	-0.040
Gender	-0.039

TABLE 6
CENTROIDS OF EMOTIONALLY ABUSED CHILDREN
AND OF THOSE WHO WERE NOT ABUSED ON
A DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION

Groups	Centroids
Children who were not emotionally abused	-0.625
Children who were emotionally abused	0.343

The matrix of the discriminant structure shows that the variables that define positive polarity of the discriminant function are, just like physical abuse, manifest aggressiveness and manifest anxiety, and, unlike physical abuse, school dissatisfaction.. These differences were also found with the above mentioned variables on a uni-variant level (all $F > 4.03$, $df = 1/125$; $p < 0.05$).

According to Tables 5 and 6, the emotionally abused children are manifestly more aggressive, more anxious, and more dissatisfied with school. Unlike physical abuse, gender does not appear as one of the discriminant variables.

In conclusion, the analyses that were carried out show that the abused children differ from those who were not abused by manifest anxiety and aggressiveness, regardless of whether they were abused physically or emotionally. When looking at gender and school dissatisfaction, the differences do depend on the type of abuse. Gender appears as a relevant discriminant variable only in cases of physical abuse (male students are more often exposed to physical abuse than female students), and school dissatisfaction in cases of emotional abuse (emotionally abused children are dissatisfied with school).

Discussion

On the basis of this research results it can be concluded that students are predominantly exposed to emotional abuse (intimidation and threatening, yelling, swearing and cursing, chastisement, mocking and derision, bans and restrictions, insults, ostracism, ignoring). This conclusion is in line with the observed situation in practice, outlined in the introductory part of this paper. Children are usually subjected to the mentioned forms of emotional abuse by a group of their peers. Since this is hidden mistreatment, which is hard to notice, adults rarely respond timely and appropriately. Emotional (especially indirect) abuse, albeit less tangible, is nevertheless devastating, and if recurrent or persistent it may start to dominate the child's life. The most typical consequences of emotional abuse are an impaired self-image, undermined self-respect and problems with social competence.

The forms of physical classroom abuse that schoolchildren are most often subjected to are throwing on the ground, being punched or hit with an object, and also occasional injuries requiring medical assistance. Physical abuse is usually a person-to-person affair. There are statistically significant differences regarding the frequency

and the exposure to physical abuse between boys and girls. According to this study, boys are more often mistreated in general, and also more often abused physically. Regarding emotional abuse, there are no statistically significant differences between the genders. Physical abuse is in a way emotional abuse as well, because even after the bruises have faded and wounds healed, the emotional scars of the abused children remain.

According to the findings of this study (though the sample is rather small), it is evident that bullying is becoming part of school life, encroaching upon a setting in which it is not supposed to exist. Schools should be safe environments for growing up, but the findings of the study show they are not. Not only is the schoolchildren's physical safety jeopardized, but due to a variety of forms of classroom emotional abuse and its consequences, children have problems in functioning emotionally and socially as adults. Also, schoolchildren are subjected to abuse by their teachers: teachers yell at them, berate them, and sometimes even slap them. It has already been said that such behaviour is unpardonable but – though this is not a justification – it must be mentioned that the teachers are also subjected to different forms of abuse by their students, their parents and often by their superiors, and they find it increasingly hard to cope with this extra stress. A study of teacher abuse would provide a more objective picture of the situation in Croatian schools.

Joint efforts and prevention of all forms of abuse require first of all proper education of teachers, general practitioners, and parents as well as instructing schoolchildren to develop more acceptable forms of behaviour. Children need instruction because this is a problem they know little about, and they need help and advice based on the research insights into this complex phenomenon. An early recognition and provision of even minimal assistance, encouragement and comfort, or referral to appropriate institutions, can be more helpful than even the most expert but belated assistance.

The first important conclusion of this research is that the abused schoolchildren differ from the ones who are not subjected to abuse by being manifestly more aggressive, more anxious, more dissatisfied with school, and their school performance is also somewhat poorer.

Also, the physically abused schoolchildren are more often manifestly more aggressive and anxious than their peers who are not abused, and are mostly male.

Also, the emotionally abused schoolchildren are more often manifestly more aggressive, anxious, and dissatisfied with school than their peers who do not suffer abuse.

The variables of altruism and social desirability have not proved to be significant in any analysis.

Manifest aggressiveness, thus, occurs in the physically and emotionally abused children; it also discriminates between the abused children and the children who are not abused. According to its very definition reactive aggression occurs as a reaction to certain situations, usually threat, provocation or thwarted goals⁸. The side-effects

of this basically hostile interpersonal behaviour are powerful emotions of anger accompanied with intense physiological agitation. It is only natural, therefore, that after a series of various forms of emotional and physical classroom abuse, children begin to behave in manifestly aggressive ways. Very often they are aware that such behaviour of theirs is defensive and stems from fear. Such forms of behaviour, the need for appreciation or domination, low frustration tolerance, may result from a lack of support, a painful awareness of existential insecurity, and a deep mistrust of one's social immediate surrounding, and are typical for bullied children. The results of this study corroborate different theories and are in line with some research of children's aggressive behaviour⁸. However, the studies of the behaviour of abused children are few, especially in Croatia.

The results of this study will be especially useful to schoolteachers and help them not to brand the manifestly aggressive students as »naughty«, but to be aware that there is something else underlying their behaviour, that their aggressiveness is but a symptom of a more serious problem i.e. abuse, family interactions, etc. Social factors, such as the behaviour of parents, teachers or peers determine an early adoption of patterns of aggressive behaviour. Today it is universally accepted that aggressive behaviour is transmitted by learning by reinforcement and by modelling. How can a child subjected to violence, or who witnesses violence daily, who is shaped by hopeless educational procedures, behave? It has often been said that a battered child beats other kids, since this is the only option he/she has ever known. Such children only apply familiar models of behaviour. Childhood exposure to violence is one of the most reliable predictors of subsequent delinquency⁸.

We have already mentioned the research conducted by Achenbach et al. (1991), which found that the quantity of aggressive behaviour decreases as the child ages, while the quantity of delinquent behaviour increases³.

This must be borne in mind particularly when dealing with the prevention of aggressiveness and the assistance to schoolchildren with such problems; the results of this research show that the exposure to physical and emotional classroom abuse is conducive to students' manifest aggressiveness, and for the future unfavourable outcomes.

Manifest anxiety has turned out to be the discriminant variable between the abused children and the ones who were not abused, in general. The emotionally and physically abused students are manifestly more anxious than their schoolmates who suffer no such abuse. Similar results have been obtained in a number of studies⁸. As has already been pointed out, going to school every day with a feeling that you are going to be – once again – ridiculed, humiliated, that instead of joy you will meet only unpleasantness and perhaps even be physically abused, and that you are helpless, in many children results in anxiety, apprehension, insecurity and tension, which affects their school performance and increases their school dissatisfaction. This is more often the case

with girls, which correlates with the results of the already mentioned research by Achenbach et al.³ An anxious schoolchild lives in constant fear of an impending disaster he/she is not able to define, accompanied with a strong feeling of uneasiness. Although this threat is vague, it presents, nevertheless, a danger for the child's psychological well-being. This state of trepidation, of pervasive anxiety and torment, is manifested psychologically as a feeling of tension, restlessness and fearfulness. The ensuing edginess and lack of concentration affect the ability of memorizing and school performance. Sleeping disorders and nightmares further intensify the tension and edginess, which consequently triggers off physiological changes. The problem of anxious children in schools is harder to notice and thus very often goes unrecognized, mostly due to teacher's unfamiliarity with it. And it is this anxiety that can make the time spent in school difficult and miserable for many children. Recognizing the symptoms of anxiety and the timely reaction to them, ought to be an important component of teacher training. The results of this research show the connection between students' manifest anxiety and classroom bullying, and further stress the need for such education and research, both about the abuse and the resulting anxiety, and about the ways they affect each other in different stages of education.

This research has also showed that the abused schoolchildren are much more *dissatisfied with school* than their schoolmates who are not abused. Uneasiness, uncertainty and threat they so often feel, makes their school dissatisfaction understandable and only too logical. All this affects their school performance which, consequently, increases further their school dissatisfaction and disenchantment in general and quite often determines the course of their adult lives. A number of studies have shown that the mistreated children manifest emotional and behavioural problems, are cognitively dysfunctional and are consequently underachievers in school¹³. It is well known that children bring to school from their homes the potential for aggression, fear and sorrow, familiar behavioural patterns; if this is further exacer-

bated by an unfavourable school setting – a lack of understanding or bullying – their psychological health may be seriously impaired. Naturally, school situations, particularly the extreme ones, affect the functioning and health of families and societies.

Conclusion

Abuse, especially various forms of peer abuse – emotional or physical, hidden or open – is becoming an everyday occurrence in schools. Also alarming is the frequency of teachers' outrageous forms of behaviour.

The consequences of traumatic classroom experiences have far-reaching effects on children's health and functioning both in school and in life.

Especially obvious is the connection between abuse and certain developmental outcomes, e.g. classroom abuse is connected with manifest aggressiveness and anxiety. Other significant variables are school dissatisfaction, poorer performance and gender. The variables of altruism and social desirability are not significant in any of the analyses.

Education of teachers that would enable them to recognize forms of abuse and to provide expert and opportune help emerges as a must – the most essential part of prevention. Apart from teachers and physicians, parents should also be educated, and recognized as partners in this joint and extremely important task. When working with schoolchildren, it is important not solely to create straight A-students but to have in mind the kind of persons these young people are eventually going to turn into and whether they are going to leave school unscathed and healthy. A child is shaped by the entire environment and its values. That is why it is important that all those who work with young people join hands in fighting violence as this is the only way in which we can make our communities more protective and schools safer and nicer settings for children's healthy development – all in the interest of a better future for all of us.

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POVEZANOST ZLOSTAVLJANJA U RAZREDU S MANIFESTNOM AGRESIVNOŠĆU, ANKSIOZNOŠĆU I ALTRUIZMOM

S A Ž E T A K

Cilj ovog rada je provjeriti razlikuju li se učenici izloženi zlostavljanju u anksioznosti, agresivnosti i altruizmu od ostalih učenika te ispitati je li obrazac razlika drugačiji ovisno o tome radi li se o emocionalnom ili tjelesnom zlostavljanju.

U istraživanju je sudjelovalo 127 učenika završnih razreda osnovnih škola. Prikupljanje podataka provedeno je krajem školske godine 2003/2004. Podaci su dobiveni samoiskazom sudionika na upitnicima o zlostavljanju u djetinjstvu te skalama manifestne agresivnosti, manifestne anksioznosti i altruizma. Frekvencijskom analizom utvrdili smo da su u školi dominantniji oblici emocionalnog zlostavljanja od tjelesnog i dosežu zabrinjavajuće razmjere, primjerice više od polovice sudionika izvještava o plašenju i prijetnjama koje doživljava u školi, a više od trećine doživjelo je da netko na njih viče. Premda je manje prisutno, tjelesno zlostavljanje u školi nije zanemarivo. Učenici koji su tjelesno češće zlostavljani nezadovoljniji su školom ($r=0.174$, $p<0.05$), iskazuju veću agresivnost ($r=0.441$, $p<0.001$) i češće su muškoga spola ($r=0.324$, $p<0.01$). Emocionalno češće zlostavljani učenici su anksiozniji ($r=0.281$, $p<0.01$), nezadovoljniji školom ($r=0.237$, $p<0.01$) i manifestno agresivniji ($r=0.398$, $p<0.01$). Diskriminacijskom analizom utvrdili smo da zlostavljanu djecu od nezlostavljane razlikuje iskazana manifestna anksioznost i agresivnost bez obzira radili se o tjelesnom ili emocionalnom zlostavljanju. Različiti oblici emocionalnog i fizičkog zlostavljanja poprimaju zabrinjavajuće razmjere u školskoj svakodnevici. Posljedice takvih traumatskih iskustava utječu na zdravlje i funkcioniranje djece u školi ali i životu. Interdisciplinarna istraživanja ove pojave i edukacija svih ljudi koji se bave mladima, nameću se kao neophodnost i prvi zadatak prevencije.