

# Sociological features of violence among students in conditions of social crisis

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**Abstract.** Violence is a dynamic process, a rapidly changing phenomenon having a regional manifestation. The causes of violence in a school environment are complex and arise from various factors of a personal and societal nature. The research interest is related to the review of current issues related to violence, physical education and sports, as well as normative aspects of regulation to optimize social processes in the specific sphere, as part of the processes taking place in our society. The purpose of the empirical sociological research is to establish the content and characteristics of violence among students at school, ways to overcome and control in conditions of social crisis. To solve the main tasks, achieve the goal and prove the hypothesis, a complex methodology of researching literary and normative sources, content analysis was applied. Based on an in-depth analysis of qualitative and quantitative data in several metropolitan schools, the dominant causes and factors of student violence are explored. The impact of physical education and sports as a factor in the prevention of violence is analysed. Conclusion: the prevention of violence in schools between students requires systematic actions and specialized training, preparation of all institutions, educational programs in support of tolerance.

## 1 Introduction

Violence is a problem that has attracted public attention in recent years. This interest is due to the fact that global social problems triggered mechanisms leading to the disintegration of the processes of upbringing and socialization, which in turn led to an increase in the percentage of adolescents with significant serious deviations in behaviour. Violence is a dynamic process, a rapidly changing phenomenon having a regional manifestation.

Violence and abuse are all around us. If until ten years ago the official policy was to deny or cover up the happening acts of violence, now we witness in everyday life the widespread

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and diverse forms of violence and abuse. Violence against and between children at school is particularly worrying. The causes of violence in a school environment are complex and arise from various factors of a personal and societal nature.

Violence as a form of expression is the most primitive aggression. Different factors influence the origin of the phenomenon of aggression, such as heredity, genetic, psychological and cultural influence. The structures of the central nervous system, hormonal mechanisms, as well as social patterns of behaviour exert their influence and importance on aggression. Violence is any form of behaviour intended to injure or harm another being who is motivated to avoid such treatment [1]. Violence between children at school covers a wide range of manifestations - insults and ridicule, propensity for fights and physical abuse [2]. It is a phenomenon of serious proportions and has long-lasting effects on the mental health and behaviour of both children who suffer abuse and those who perpetrate it [3].

The child's right to protection from all forms of violence is enshrined in Art. 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [4]. In Bulgaria, in official use is the definition of violence given in & 1, items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the additional provision of the Regulations for the implementation of the Child Protection Act [5].

The research interest is related to the review of current issues related to violence, physical education and sports, as well as normative aspects of regulation to optimize social processes in the specific sphere, as part of the processes taking place in our society.

Hypothesis: we assume that in the research process, different dominant factors and forms of violence will be registered among 7th grade students and we assume that physical education and sports will contribute to the reduction and prevention of violence.

The purpose of the empirical sociological research is to establish the content and characteristics of violence among students at school, ways to overcome and control in conditions of social crisis.

The following main tasks arise from this goal:

- to reveal the specifics of the violence perpetrated on 7th grade students in conditions of social crisis;
- to establish the leading causes and factors of violence in the school environment;
- to draw conclusions and recommendations for the theory and practice of physical education and sports with a view to preventing violence against students.

## **2 Methods**

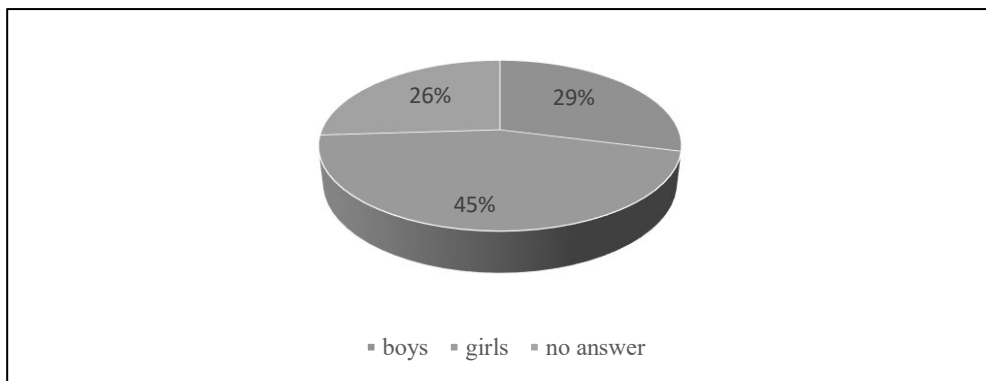
The subject of the research is the manifestations of violence among students. The object of the conducted empirical sociological research are 100 students of the 7th grade in the city of Sofia - 119 SU "Acad. Mihail Arnaudov" and 137 SU "Angel Kanchev", 29% boys, 45% girls and 26% without an answer for their gender. To solve the main tasks, achieve the goal and prove the hypothesis, a complex methodology of researching literary and normative sources, content analysis was applied. A specially developed questionnaire for researching violence in a school environment was also used. The survey is anonymous and contains 15 (open and closed) questions. Students took part in it of their own free will, at a time convenient for them, and with the informed consent of their parents. The emphasis on the survey is focused only on some features of the violence perpetrated among 7th grade students and the influence of physical education and sports as a prevention factor.

The scientific research was conducted in the period from December 2022 to May 2023.

## **3 Results**

The data were subjected to mathematical and statistical processing with the power of the SPSS program [6,7]. The obtained results were processed by calculating absolute and relative frequency in unidimensional and multidimensional data distribution.

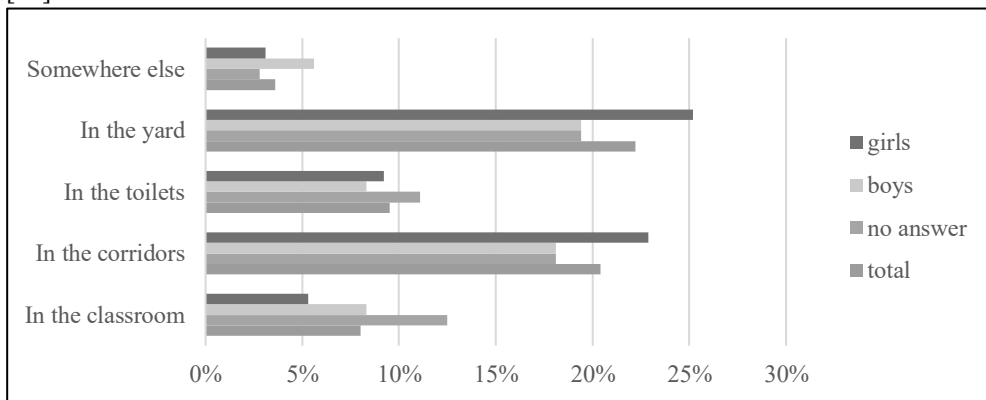
On the basis of an expert assessment, in the analysis of the obtained results, we focused our attention on some basic questions related to the investigated issues.



**Fig. 1.** Have you seen students at school behaving aggressively?

According to all students, the most frequent manifestations of violence at school are between themselves 92%, with variations by gender observed. Students who have weak social connections - are not popular at school and are not included in conventional activities - are at high risk of becoming bullies [8, 9]. From a sociological point of view, the lack of adequate self-esteem in some students reflects on their behaviour as increased anxiety, irritability, temper tantrums and violence.

When violence is exerted on the adolescent, some compensatory mechanism is always built in him to release these emotions. The most dangerous expression of this is when this adolescent becomes a bully and in situations that cannot be resolved peacefully, he imposes his opinion through violent means. Some of them see violence as an acceptable means of assertion [10, 11]. Factors that support it are the numerous, deep and rapid social changes associated with the COVID 19 pandemic and the resulting social crises, including problems with the lack of normative regulation, ineffectiveness or contradiction of the same (anomy) [12].

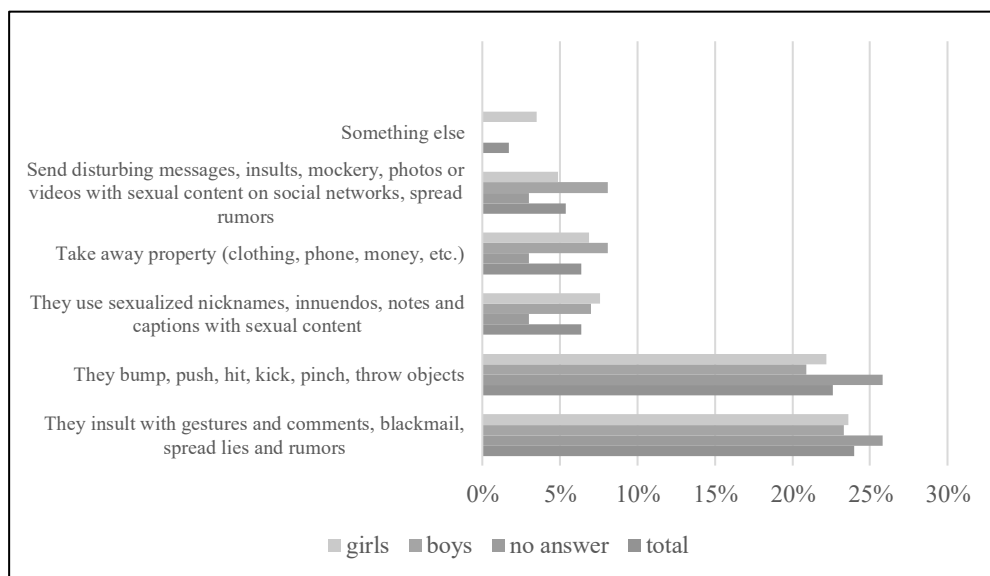


**Fig. 2.** Where in school have you most often seen acts of violence?

In the first place, the surveyed persons put the violence in the schoolyard (22%). In second place as a manifestation are corridors (20.4%) and in third place in toilets (9.5%). The reasons for the most frequent manifestations of violence are complex - understated formal and

informal control by teachers, the large number of students gathered together, psychological and value deformations of students, stimulating a subculture of violence and the right of the strong to impose their will on others. The destruction of both individual and collective consciousness and behaviour provokes fears, leads to emotional instability and increased anxiety, reproduces violence.

The 7th grade students (Figure 3) ranked constant criticism, insults and yelling first. 99% of all surveyed persons report that they have been the object of unwanted offensive conversations and gestures. Overall, the results show a high tolerance for psychological abuse 24%. A previously mastered and controlled aggression is often not manifested physically, but alternatively – through verbal violence. Here the question is raised about the influence of peers in shaping behaviour and socialization. Interestingly, 25.8% of respondents who did not answer their gender reported this type of abusive behaviour.



**Fig. 3.** What do aggressive children most often do at school?

In the second place, according to the students surveyed, physical violence is placed - 22.6%. In 71% of cases, seventh graders know victims of physical violence. The risk of participating in violence varies according to the dominant culture of the peers in the school, according to their own views about the use of violence [13].

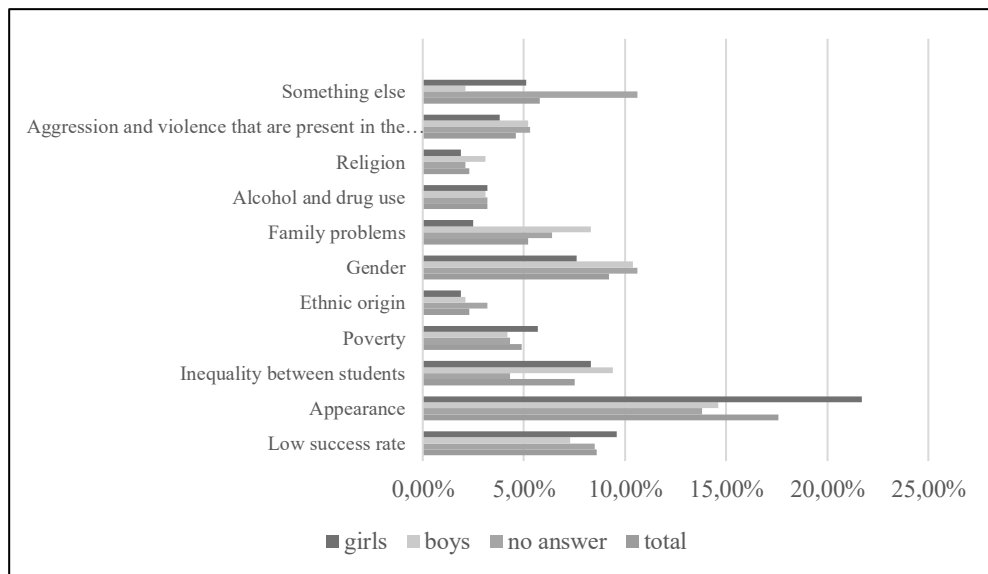
The responses related to theft of property (6.4%) varied in percentage by gender (Figure 3). The roots of such behaviour are diverse in scope and include both the past experience and learning of the "bullies" and a wide range of external, situational factors, the receipt or expectation of various forms of reward or punishment. Expert evaluations of specialists working in specialized institutions professionally involved in prevention and resocialization indicate "as the main cause of violence is the lack of affection, which leads to the feeling of the lack of social approval and a feeling of instability" [14].

In third place, seventh graders also rank sexualized nicknames, innuendos, notes and inscriptions with sexual content - 6.4%. These are manifestations related to sexual harassment among students at school, 5.4% also continue virtually - cyberbullying, cyber flattering and cyber sexism. "... cases of systemic school violence often go unnoticed or neglected by school personnel. Parents avoid reporting and seeking assistance from school management out of concern that this will lead to the formation of negative attitudes towards their child and resort to self-harm or other alternative ways of coping with the problem situation. From the

information reported by the children, there is a lack of trust in school psychologists...." [Appendix 1, 15]. Bullying, regardless of how it is practiced, is a destructive and dangerous form of violence [16].

**Fig. 4.** What do you think are the main causes of school violence?

The leading reason for the manifestation of this type of behaviour is the appearance, well-shaped and athletic body for achieving authority in the class and school - 17.6%, followed



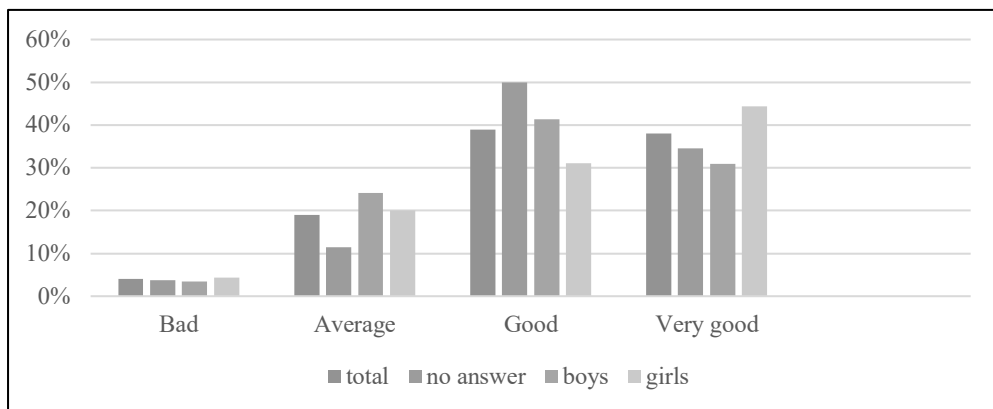
by gender - 9.2% and low academic success in school - 8.6 %. In fourth place is the unequal situation among students - 7.5%. Family problems are the fifth leading cause of school violence, with boys more affected. The causes of family violence are the increased time parents spend outside the home due to employment, overwork, stress, job and income insecurity. Ethnicity and religion had minimal influence as causes of violence in the study period (Figure 4).

Other students and friends have the strongest influence on the behaviour of aggressive children at school - 22.1%, parents - 16.9% and the class teacher 8.1%. They do not play the same role and have different status. In relation to children, parents have a superior position in their socialization, and the teacher reinforces their positions. They form the basic values, regulate the immediate behaviour of students [17], components of social and physical education and sports control [18, 19].

To the question "Can violence occur in physical education classes?", 67% of the surveyed persons answered positively. It is interesting the fact that 37% of seventh graders do not have an answer to the question, and the remaining 63% are aware of what measures the physical education teacher can take - runs in the electronic diary, expulsion from the class, calling the parents to the principal, observation, interesting activities.....

One of the tasks of physical education in the different grades of the Bulgarian school is the purposeful development of motor skills and achieving an optimal level for the age level of physical activity. In the 21st century, physical capacity should be considered as a means of improving the personality and increasing the quality of life. It is necessary to monitor the

level of physical activity of students in order to monitor their normal physical, mental development and health.



**Fig. 5.** How do you rate your current physical condition?

The prevailing general self-assessment of the physical condition of the students at the time of conducting the research is good (39%) and very good (38%), and 60% of the studied seventh-graders get tired only during prolonged loads (Figure 5). This shows that socialization to and through sport has gone well. In the educational process of physical education and sports, physical work ability is an expression of the physical ability of students. Considering the tasks that are realized in the educational work, the physical capacity is a criterion of the general working capacity of the student's organism, which is based on the complex development of physical qualities and the motor skills and motor habits necessary for their manifestation [20]. Their inclusion in physical education and sports classes provides a relief in the conditions of the ever-increasing nervous tension caused by rapid urbanization, the introduction of technology, noise and combats hypodynamia.

The lesson in physical education and sports is very suitable for overcoming aggression, because they allow negative emotions to be spent, and by using the game to be changed with positive emotions. The positive emotional tone has a beneficial effect on the student's overall behaviour and contributes to strengthening his nervous system. In the lesson on physical education and sports, three groups of tasks are solved: educational, rehabilitative and educational. Educational tasks are of interest to us. Namely, they are related to the manifestation of qualities such as moral - volitional qualities such as will, persistence, persistence, determination, discipline, mutual help and friendly relationships, respect. It is here that the subject of training has a decisive role, in order to realize the educational tasks, who must correctly select means and methods to achieve an optimal effect.

## 4 Conclusion

The prevention of violence in schools between students requires systematic actions and specialized training, preparation of all institutions, educational programs in support of tolerance, the rejection of hate speech, including by legal means. The ultimate goal is to preserve and improve the quality of life of European citizens and sustainable development of local self-governing communities under the rule of law [20]. In the sports legislation, a tendency towards the unification of the national legislations of the European countries is reported, which are based on the generally proclaimed international principles and national specificities [21].

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