



Action Paper on violence and security in public schools of the Municipality of Pristina

Reference document for the development of the Platform of the Municipality of Pristina on security in schools 2015-2018



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Executive summary

Violence in schools is one of the most disturbing phenomena of our society (Ministry of Internal Affairs & Ministry of Education, 2009). Despite approved strategies against this phenomenon, trends of violence in schools remain concerning. This study was conducted at the request of the Municipal Directorate of Education of the Municipality of Pristina, and its outcomes will be used to draft the Comprehensive Platform 2015-2018 Against Violence in Schools in the Municipality of Pristina. This report summarizes data collected from 353 students, 82 parents and 84 teachers.

The results of this study indicate that the situation in the public schools of the municipality of Pristina regarding safety in general, is not satisfactory. 21% of students do not feel entirely safe in schools, and 47% of parents share the same opinion when their children are in school. In general, cafés outside the school, school yards and toilets are identified as less safe places by students and parents. Whereas the least safe time according to students is the return home and during breaks between classes.

On the way to school, traffic vehicles threaten the safety of students, as well as stray dogs and harassment of students from gangs and hooligans. Given the insecurity of students when going to school and the time in school, students require the presence of the police, which entail civilian police officers, and regular patrols.

The safest address for most students, parents and teachers to report threats they might have in school, are the class teacher and the school principal. The latter, to tackle violence in schools, has developed codes of conduct, but these are not familiar to students and their parents. Moreover, the number of students failing to comply with the school rules is high. Almost every third teacher, student and parent declared that during the previous semester, at least once, a student offended a teacher, or the teacher seriously offended a student. In addition, 45% of students declared that during the last semester a teacher has hit or beaten a student. Student fights are the most commonly reported issues in Pristina schools, but there is also a high number of pupil-teacher fights. Furthermore, about 20% of students, teachers and parents believe that drugs and alcohol are used in schools by some students. Additionally, they also reported cases of students using firearms in fights and quarrels.

A significant number of students appear tolerant to the application of physical punishment by teachers. Parents and teachers are more reserved in this regard and do not prefer the use of physical violence by teachers. According to students and teachers, it is easiest to obtain tobacco, alcohol and cold weapons in schools in Pristina

Security measures undertaken thus far to tackle violence, included the installation of security cameras, use of school uniforms and school guards. However, teachers claim that the most frequently used measures to maintain discipline in class are verbal punishments and notifying parents when students' conduct is in violation to the rules and codes of school.

Finally, students, teachers and parents agree that the infrastructure in Pristina schools needs refurbishment. In addition, according to them, in order to improve the triangular relations student-parent-teacher, school councils must be operational.

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Introduction

The overall security situation in public schools in Pristina

Over the last decade, violence in schools has turned into a serious concern for many countries (Hiatt, 2012). Various reports have indicated that even in our schools, phenomena such as violation of rules, harassment, beatings, presence of cold weapons and firearms, have all been reported on a worrying level (Ministry of Internal Affairs & Ministry of Education, 2009). Until 2013, executive institutions had no clear program and platform to prevent acts of violence in schools. Violence prevention initiatives were not lacking, but they were chaotic, unsynchronized between institutions, and the schools had no plans to implement the initiatives. As a result of these initiatives, dozens of strategies and action plans have been drafted, including the School Safety Strategy (MIA & MEST, 2009) and Regulation GRK No. 21/2013 on the Protocol for the prevention and referral of violence in preuniversity education institutions (MEST, 2013). However, few have found practical application in Pristina schools. This prompted school directors to undertake initiatives to draft internal regulations, in order to maintain discipline and prevent violence.

While the Ministry of Education, Municipal Directorates of Education and schools have encountered various difficulties and challenges in the efforts to implement anti-violence activities, the results of recent studies provide concerning findings. According to the World Health Organization, 24% of students have been involved in physical fights in the last 12 months. In addition to the physical violence, 24% of teenagers have experienced psychological violence in the form of harassment by others, and 20% have admitted to have harassed others (WHO, 2014).

However, the details of these studies are generic and do not provide the possibility to identify the causes and sources of the insecurity of students. There has been a lack of researches detailing the phenomenon of violence in schools, from the perspective of the triangle “student-parent-teacher”.

Purpose and methodology

Given the existing situation, this research aims to reflect on the perceptions of students, parents and teachers about violence and safety in public schools of the municipality of Pristina.

Research on ‘Safety in public schools’ was developed at the request of the Municipal Directorate of Education (MDE) of the Municipality of Pristina. MED has planned 3 steps for 2014 to ensure a permanent and institutional approach on security issues in schools, investing in long-term programs to prevent violence. The first step is to identify the main problems and challenges, aimed to be accomplished through this research and report, then continuing to develop a comprehensive platform 2015 – 2018. This platform will detail concrete and daily steps to address security issues in schools. The second step will be the establishment of a municipal office for safety in schools, which shall be tasked to implement activities envisaged in the platform. Experts involved in the process of drafting the platform on the ‘Safety in schools’ will use the findings of this research, analysing specific sections as needed. This report summarizes data on 353 students, 82 parents and 84 teachers. The randomly selected sample for this study includes students aged from 11 to 19 (average 14.6 years).

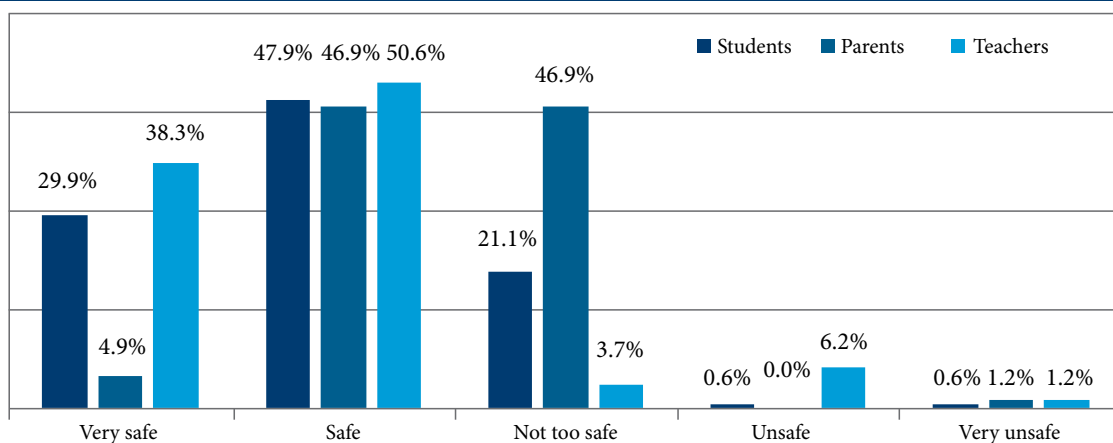
Of the 353 students surveyed, 52% are boys and 48% girls. Students, parents and teachers, in addition to having completed structured questionnaires, were also part of focus groups, used to identify trends and explore the causes and provide concrete recommendations for the prevention of violence in Pristina’s schools. In addition to descriptive statistical analysis, this report also provides conclusive (inferential) analysis of data .

Outcomes

Perception of security in school by students, parents and teachers

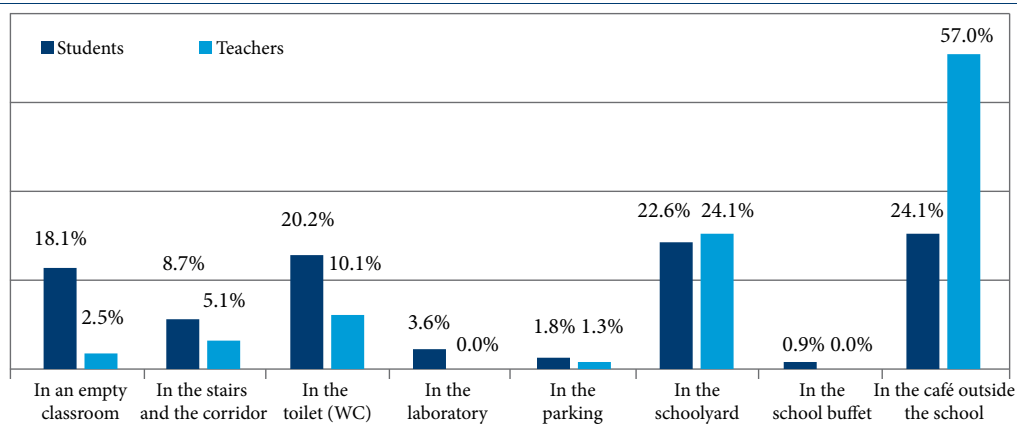
Students, parents and teachers have different impressions and perceptions on safety in schools. While teachers and students feel safe while at school, the feeling is not mutual by parents for their children. Almost half of parents (47%) do not feel that their children are very safe at school. On the other hand, only 21% of students do not feel very safe in school, in comparison to the 78% who declared that they feel safe or very safe. Similarly, the majority of teachers (88%) declared they feel safe or very safe at school. Only about 1% of students, parents and teachers feel very unsafe in schools.

Figure 1. The feeling of safety in schools, according to students, parents and teachers



Results indicate that students from cities (living downtown and in the suburbs) feel more unsafe in school, compared to students who come from villages. Also, results show that the older the students are, the more they feel unsafe at school. In comparison to lower secondary and upper secondary school, students showed that the latter report a higher level of insecurity. On the other hand, the differences between teachers and students are greater when asked to identify areas of the school where students do not feel safe. 57% of teachers and 24% of students consider that cafés outside the school are an environment where safety of students can be infringed. On the contrary, a quarter of students and teachers consider that the schoolyard is the second most unsafe place for students. Toilets were also identified as unsafe spaces by one fifth of students and one tenth of teachers, whereas other areas such as stairs, laboratories, parking and school buffet are listed as the least unsafe areas in school premises.

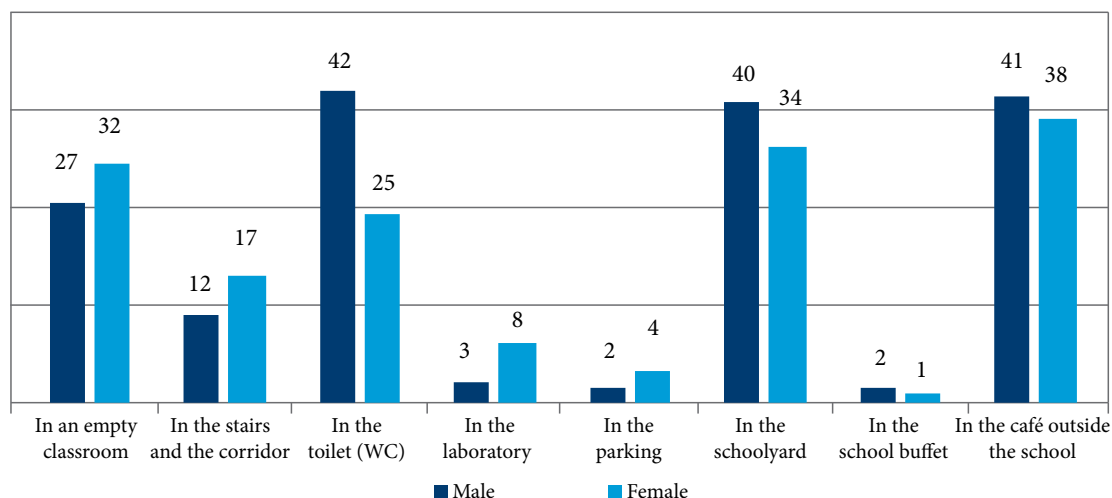
Figure 2. Most unsafe areas in school, according to teachers and students



¹ In order for the report to be clearer to readers, all results of statistical conclusive analysis (T-test, ANOVA, correlation and regression analysis) are interpreted and the document does not contain formulae of statistical tests. When comparing two groups (i.e. boys and girls), T-test statistical analysis is used. The correlational analysis was used to see the interaction of two variables. ANOVA was used to analyse the differences between three or more groups. To analyse the impact of a variable on another variable, the regression analysis was used. The report includes only significantly relevant results (p < .05).

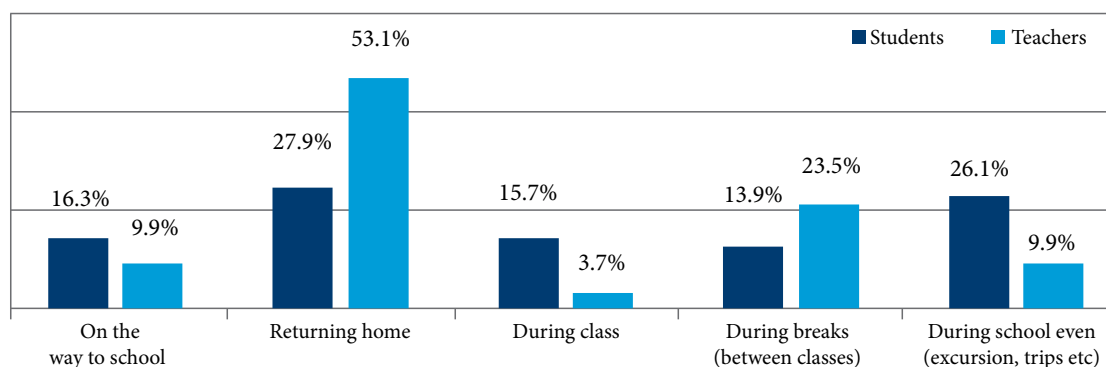
On the other hand, Figure 2.1 shows that men consider the toilets to be the most unsafe environment, compared to girls who consider that school cafeterias are the most unsafe environments.

Figure 2.1. Most unsafe areas in school, according to men and women



The majority of teachers (63%) consider that the time going to, or coming from school is the most unsafe period for them. Even the majority of students (44%) share the same perception and claim that they feel least safe during the time (when) they return home. For a quarter of students, school events such as school trips or programs are considered to be unsafe.

Figure 3. Time when students and teachers feel least safe



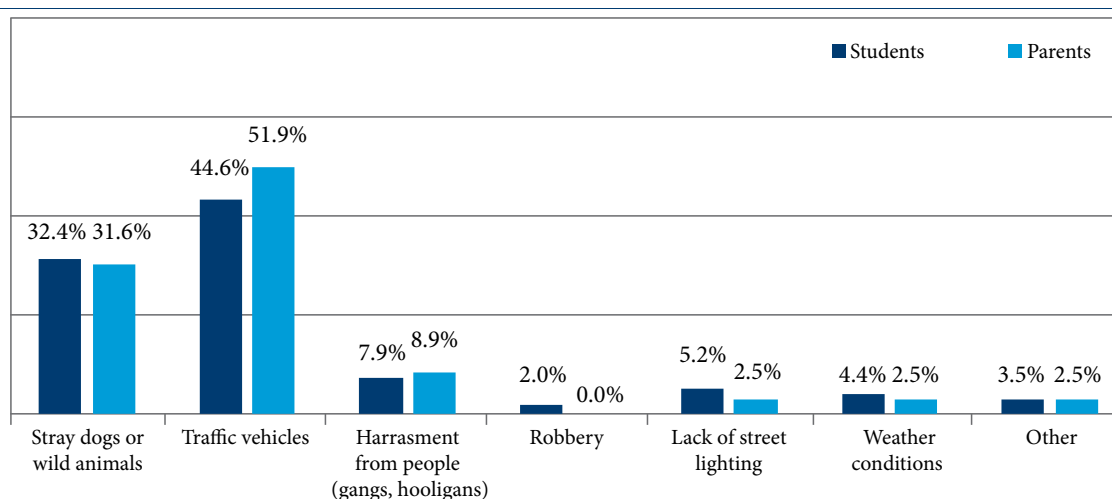
The biggest risk students face on the way to school

Two groups which include students and teachers, consider that the way to and from school is the most unsafe time of the day. While the differences in the perception of safety between parents and children are obvious, the same cannot be said about the risks both groups identify for students on the way to school. Vehicles have been identified as the highest threat or risk students face on their way to, and from school (see Chart).

Stray dogs have been identified as the second risk by one third of students and parents, while a small percentage (below 10%) highlight the harassment by people, gangs and hooligans as the third potential risk.

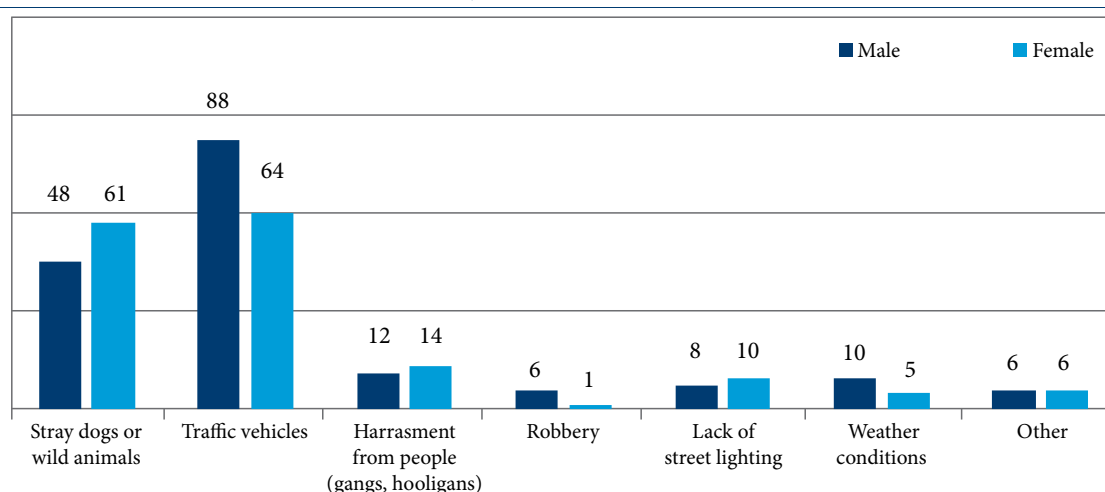
Chart 4.1 shows that the differences between girls and boys are not significant when they were requested to identify the greatest risk that students face on the way to, and from school. However, this chart also shows that girls consider stray dogs and wild animals to be the greatest risk, while boys believe that traffic vehicles are the highest risk.

Figure 4. Highest risk students face on the way to, and from school, according to students and parents



Only a very small number of students (1%) are escorted by their parents to school. On the other hand, about 60% of students choose to walk to school and 40% use means of transportation to school.

Figure 4.1. The highest risk students face on the way from, and to school, according to men and women

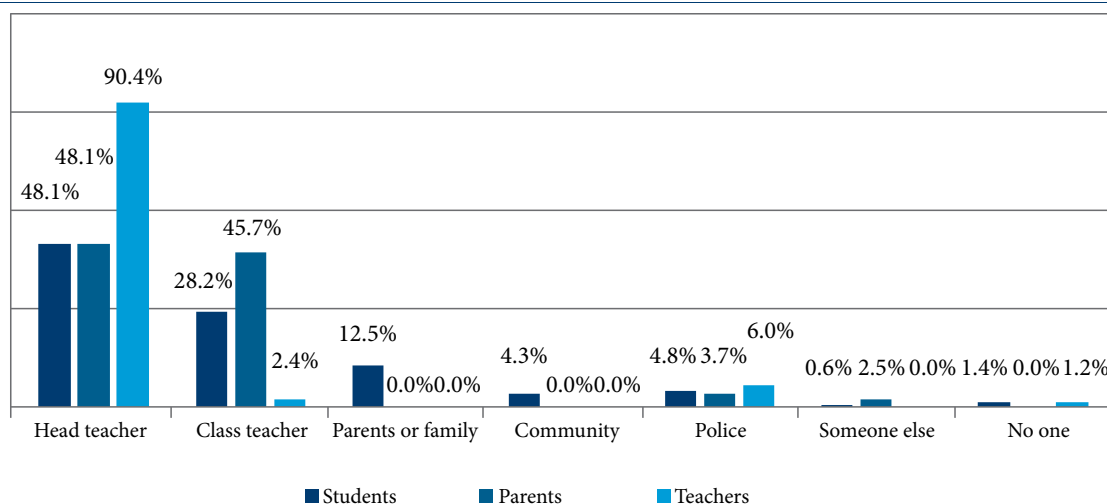


Reporting addresses for risks against students, parents and teachers

In case a student in school is put at risk, over 90% of teachers and parents will go to the head-teacher or the teacher of the class to address the issue. 70% of the students would also do the same, whereas 12% of them would discuss it with parents and 4% with the friends.

Girls, more than boys, would choose to report the threat to the class teacher, while boys, more than girls, would choose to address the threat to the friends, in order to seek for help.. Such differences also emerge when comparing students of lower secondary schools (LSS) with those from upper secondary schools (USS). The latter prefer to report such threats to the family or unlike LSS students who prefer to refer the issue to the class teacher or the head teacher.

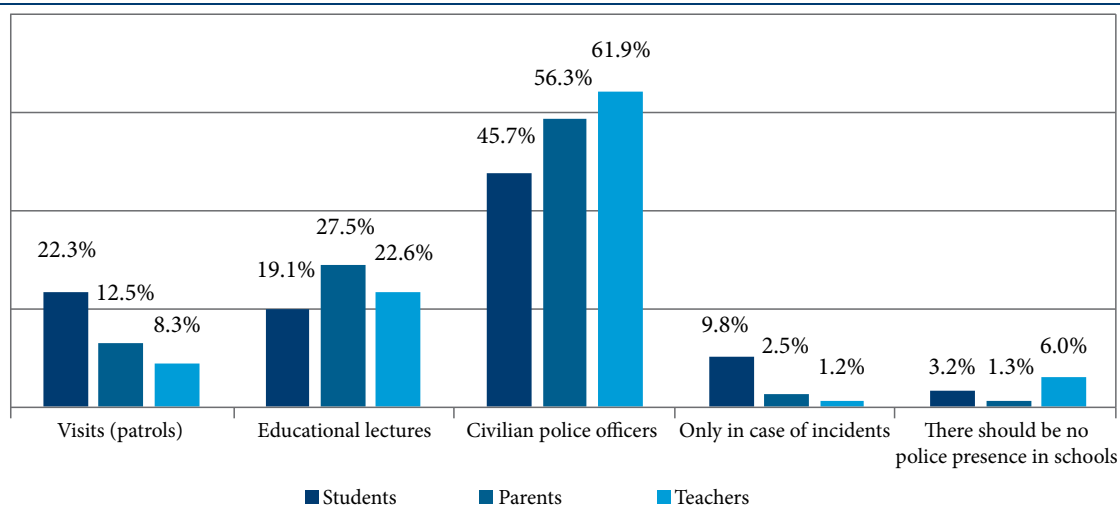
Figure 5. The body to which the students, teachers or parents would address the most, in case of a risk or threat in the school premises



Preferences of students, parents and teachers on the presence of police in schools

All three groups involved in this research would prefer the presence of a civilian police officer in schools, while the second preferred option is the involvement of the police in school through educational lectures. Similarly, a small percentage of teachers (8%), parents (12%) and students (22%) request police presence through visits or patrols.

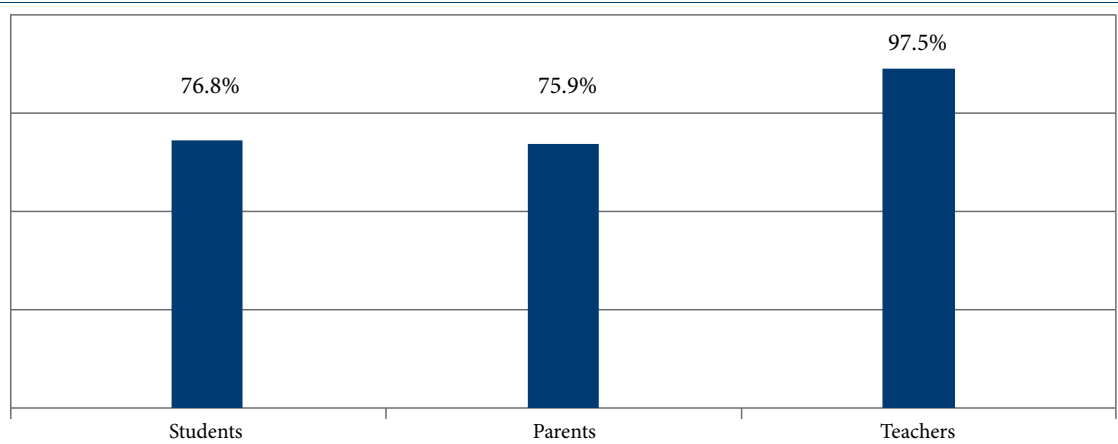
Figure 6. Preferences of students, parents and teachers on the form of presence of the Police in schools



Codes of conduct in Pristina's schools

Codes of conduct were often mentioned as an effective alternative to prevent violence and promote safety in schools. Codes of Conduct clearly define the rules of conduct for students in school and sanctions in cases of noncompliance. However, a quarter of students and parents do not know if their school has a code of conduct in place. As can be seen in the figure below, 97% of teachers report that the schools where they work have their own code of conduct.

Figure 7. Percentage of students, parents and teachers who are aware of the code of conduct in the school



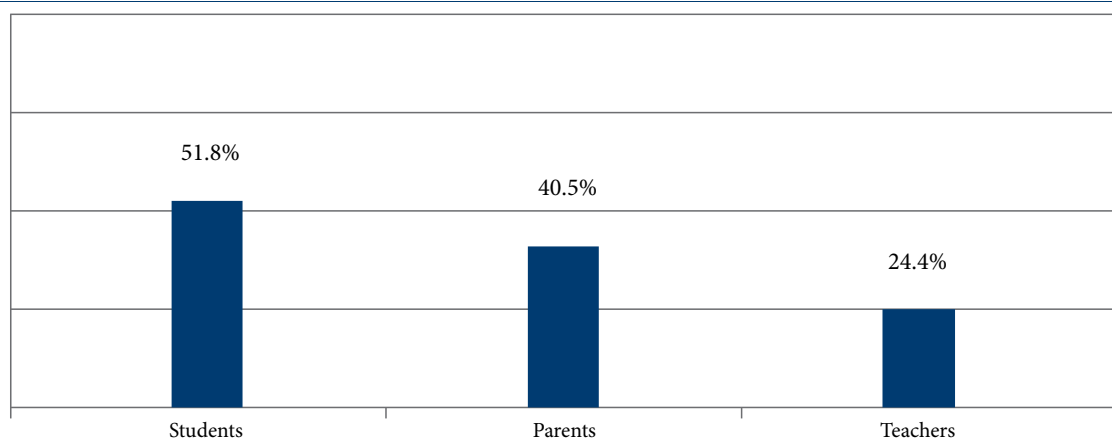
While 97% of teachers are convinced that their students are very or fairly informed about the code of conduct, about 30% of students and 40% of parents say they actually have little or no information about this regulation.

Equally profound differences are seen when it comes to the application of such codes of conduct. This is true to the fact that about 38% of students and 30% of parents believe that such a code is not applied, whereas 80% of teachers believe that the code of conduct is adequately applied in schools. However, teachers, students and parents are aware that sanctions are applied in case of a violation of the code.

Tolerance towards physical punishment in schools

The majority of students (52%) agree that physical punishment in school can be tolerated in specific cases. This feeling is shared by the 40.5% of parents, whereas 23% of teachers agree that physical punishment in schools should be tolerated in exceptional cases.

Figure 8. Percentage of students, parents and teachers, who agree and fully agree with physical punishments of students in specific cases



Results indicate that students of lower secondary schools are more tolerant towards violence, compared to students of upper secondary schools. Younger students are more tolerant of the use of physical punishment in specific cases. The results show that the higher the age, the lower the tolerance to physical punishment. The following table indicates that students are more tolerant to the use of various types of physical punishment in schools.

The majority (49%) consider that the use of violence depends on the situation and 8% reported that a slap is inevitable. Students also appear tolerant towards other forms of violence, as they consider that ear pulling (58%), hair pulling (41%) and a smack on the head or body (21%) are inevitable practices or that depend on the situation. Less tolerant in this regard are the parents, who appear more reserved on the use of physical punishment.

Table 1. Views on the types of physical punishments according to students, teachers and parents

		Inevitable	Depends on the situation	Unacceptable	Don't know
Slap	Teachers	1.3 %	9.3 %	77.4 %	12 %
	Parents	5 %	27.5 %	57.5 %	10 %
	Students	8.2 %	49 %	33.4 %	9.4 %
Ear pull	Teachers	1.4 %	6.8 %	76.7 %	15.1 %
	Parents	2.5 %	31.7 %	51.9 %	13.9 %
	Students	10.7 %	47.5 %	28.1 %	13.7 %
Hair pull	Teachers	1.4 %	4.1 %	78.1 %	16.4 %
	Parents	3.8 %	20 %	61.2 %	15 %
	Students	12.2 %	29 %	44.2 %	14.6 %
Smack on the head or body	Teachers	0 %	0 %	83.6 %	16.4 %
	Parents	8.8 %	2.5 %	73.7 %	15 %
	Students	10.2 %	10.8 %	59.4 %	29.6 %
Other	Teachers	1.4 %	2.8 %	75 %	20.8 %
	Parents	7.7 %	47.4 %	44.9 %	0 %
	Students	6.7 %	10.7 %	20.7 %	61.9 %

Results show that students of lower secondary schools and boys consider that certain forms of physical punishment are inevitable. Girls, however, expressed the highest objection against the use of forms of physical punishment for students.

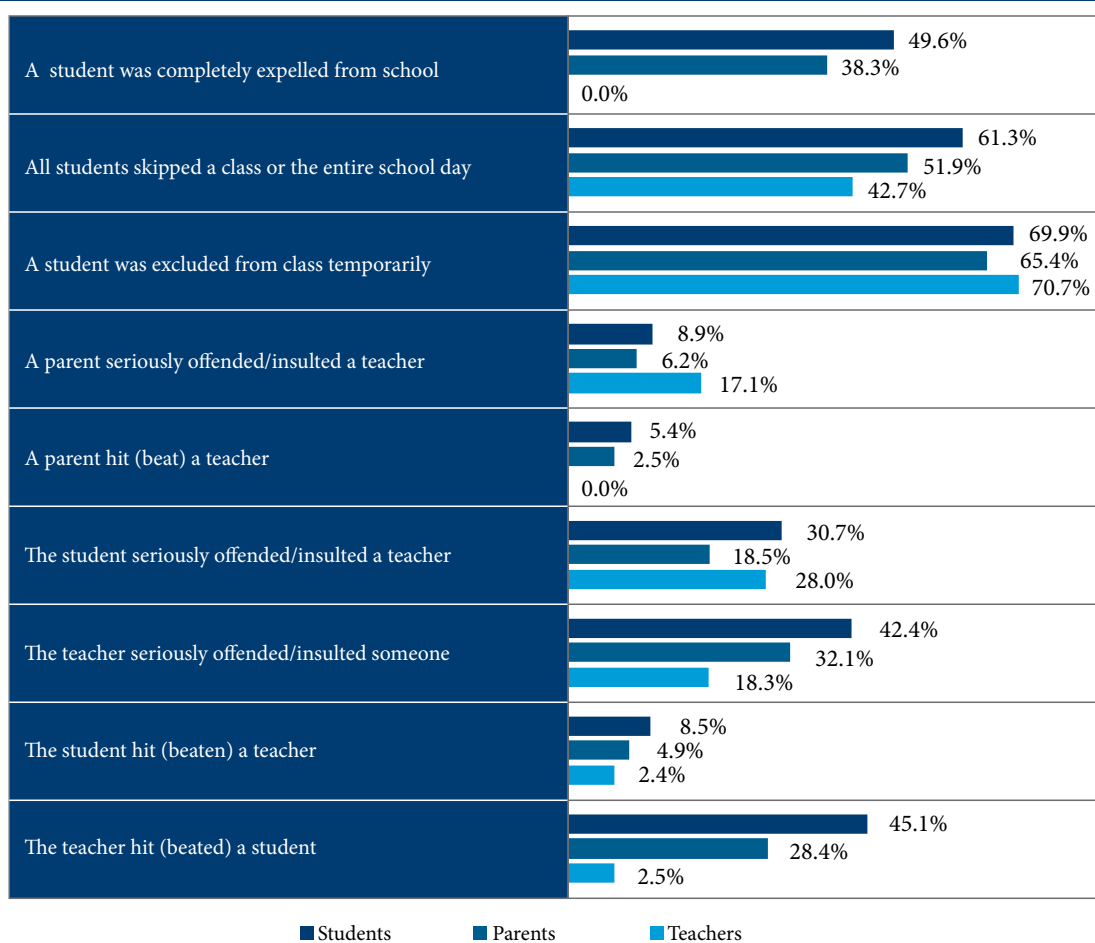
Prevalence of inappropriate behaviour of students in schools

Although the differences are significant, depending on the source (student, parent or teacher), it is clear that a large number of behaviours which contradict school rules have occurred in Pristina schools during the last semester. The majority of respondents acknowledge that as a result of such conduct, students are sometimes expelled temporarily from school. Almost 50% of students and 38% of parents (against no teacher) are aware of at least a case where a student was completely expelled from school. More than half declared they are aware of at least one case where the whole class skipped one class or all classes on a certain day.

According to students and parents, there are rarer cases when a parent seriously insulted or offended a teacher; however, teachers reported often cases of such nature. 17% of teachers agree to have encountered such a confrontation last semester. However, a higher number of number of pupils, parents and teachers are aware of cases when, during the last semester, a student insulted a teacher or vice versa. Every third student or teacher admits that during the last semester a student has seriously insulted a teacher, whereas almost every second student and only one in five teachers know about cases where the teacher seriously insulted a student.

Such differences between students and teachers also appear even when they were asked to report cases when teachers have hit or beaten a student. 45% of students and only 2% of teachers agree that in the last semester, in their school, a teacher hit a student. Although at a lower level, cases have been reported in the last semester when a student or parent hit a teacher.

Figure 9. Percentage of students, teachers or parents who are aware of the following occurrences in schools, during the last semester



Number of students from upper secondary schools to admit that during the last semester a student has carried a firearm to school, has insulted the teacher or was temporarily expelled, is higher than that of students from lower secondary schools reporting the same phenomena. Also, the differences are significant between schoolchildren from villages and those from cities, where the latter report the highest prevalence of nonconformist behaviour of students in school.

Fights without weapons, vandalism, quarrels between students, harassment in the entrance/exit of school and harassment when waiting for the bus, are reported to be the most common phenomena that occurred in the previous semester. As seen from the table on prevalence of such phenomena, around 20% of students, parents and teachers involved in this study report that students have used alcohol or drugs during the last semester.

In comparison to students from lower secondary schools, upper secondary school students reported a higher level to have witnessed in their school: theft of personal property, fights without the use of weapons, fights with the use of weapons, use of alcohol, or use of drugs.

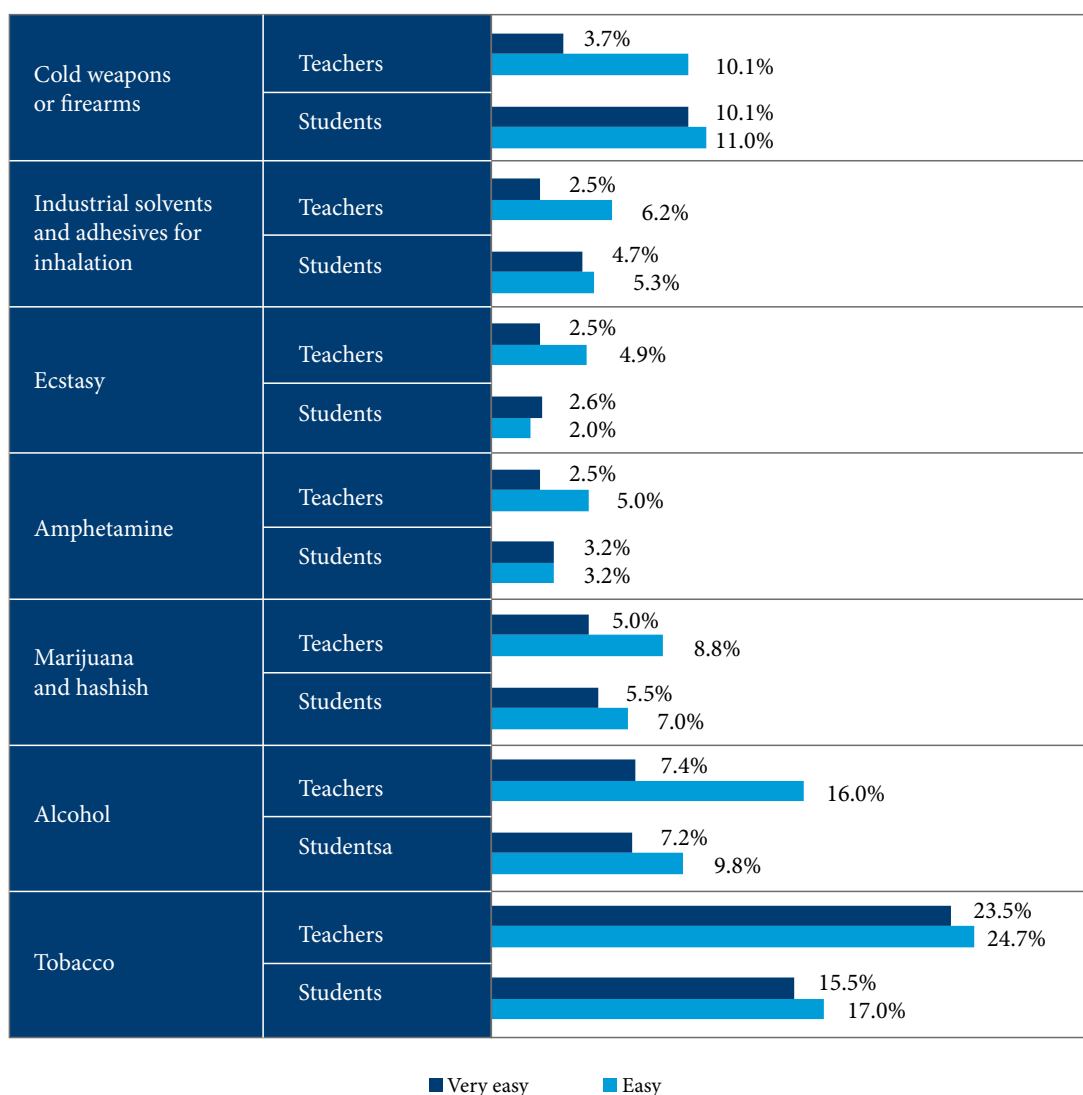
Students and teachers equally believe that it is the easiest to secure cigarettes, cold weapons, firearms and alcohol in school. However, while around 60% of students and teachers say it is impossible to secure marijuana in their school, and almost one in five stated that this is fairly easy or very easy.

Meanwhile, other drugs such as amphetamines or ecstasy, according to teachers, is very difficult or almost impossible to be found in schools.

Table 2. Prevalence of delinquent acts among students

		Never	Rarely	Sometime	Frequently
Theft of personal property	Teachers	65.1 %	21.7 %	12 %	1.2 %
	Parents	79 %	14.8 %	5 %	1.2 %
	Students	59.4 %	21.6 %	15.6 %	3.4 %
Theft of school property	Teachers	77.2 %	13.3 %	7.3 %	1.2 %
	Parents	87.6 %	9.9 %	2.5 %	0 %
	Students	82.2 %	12.8 %	4.7 %	0.3 %
Vandalism	Teachers	41.5 %	26.8 %	25.6 %	6.1 %
	Parents	51.3 %	26.2 %	17.5 %	5 %
	Students	37.5 %	28.2 %	24.3 %	10 %
Fights without weapons	Teachers	39.8 %	32.5 %	24.1 %	3.6 %
	Parents	35.8 %	25.9 %	23.5 %	14.8 %
	Students	20.1 %	25.1 %	30.3 %	24.5 %
Fights with weapons	Teachers	90 %	10 %	0 %	0 %
	Parents	87.6 %	6.2 %	6.2 %	0 %
	Students	73.3 %	17.2 %	8.1 %	1.4 %
Use of drugs	Teachers	82.7 %	9.9 %	7.4 %	0 %
	Parents	82.8 %	8.6 %	7.4 %	1.2 %
	Students	77.7 %	11 %	6.9 %	4.4 %
Use of alcohol	Teachers	86.8 %	9.6 %	3.6 %	0 %
	Parents	84 %	9.8 %	3.7 %	2.5 %
	Students	72.2 %	15.9 %	9 %	2.9 %
Sale of drugs/ alcohol	Teachers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Parents	96.3 %	2.5 %	1.2 %	0 %
	Students	86.3 %	6 %	4 %	3.7 %
Quarrels between students	Teachers	14.5 %	34.9 %	41 %	9.6 %
	Parents	28.4 %	22.2 %	23.5 %	25.9 %
	Students	10.6 %	22.5 %	29.7 %	37.2 %
Quarrels with teachers	Teachers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Parents	58 %	28.4 %	9.9 %	3.7 %
	Students	41.5 %	30.7 %	19.9 %	7.9 %
Harassment in the entrance/ exit of the school premise	Teachers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Parents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Students	41.4 %	32.9 %	19.9 %	5.8 %
Uncontrolled visitors in the school premise	Teachers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Parents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Students	46.5 %	24 %	18.7 %	10.8 %
Harassment when waiting for the bus	Teachers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Parents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Students	62.9 %	22.6 %	11.9 %	2.6 %

Figure 10. Percentage of students and teachers who consider that it is easy and very easy to secure tobacco, various drugs or weapons in the school territory.



Around three quarters of students, teachers and parents believe that very few or some of the students smoke. This seems to be the most frequent phenomenon in Pristina schools, according to the statements of students, parents and teachers. About one third of them believe that students use alcohol or marijuana (hashish). Also, a smaller percentage (about 10%) believe that students use ecstasy or other drugs. As seen from the table, 47% of students believe that other students carry cold weapons and 23% believe that other students carry firearms.

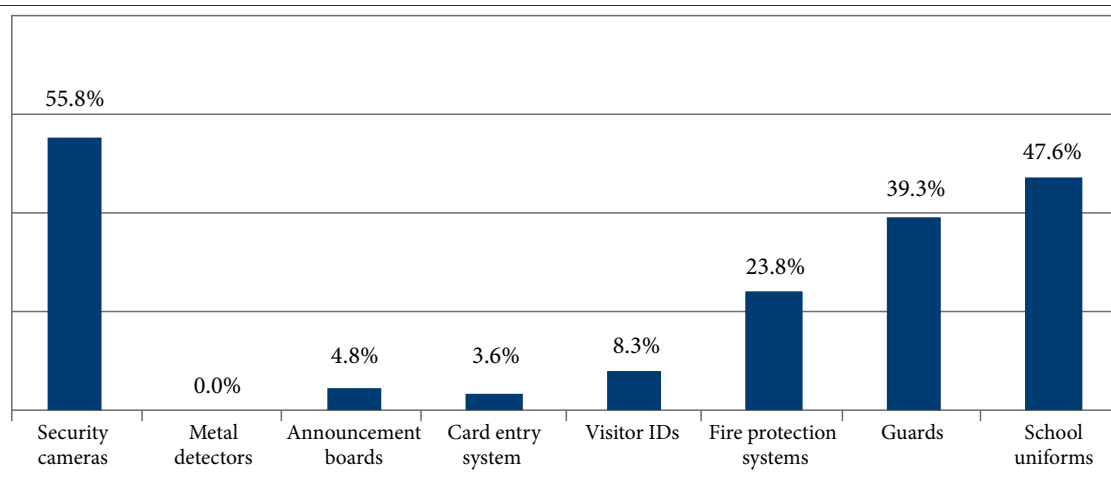
Table 3: Percentage of the use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and arms by schoolchildren, according to teachers, parents and students

		None	Very few	Some	Majority
Smoke	Teachers	22.5 %	26.3 %	43.7 %	7.5 %
	Parents	23.7 %	17.5 %	42.5 %	16.3 %
	Students	29.3 %	10.6 %	33.2 %	26.9 %
Use alcohol	Teachers	70 %	22.5 %	7.5 %	0 %
	Parents	68.8 %	20.5 %	7.4 %	3.8 %
	Students	55.4 %	24.4 %	17 %	3.2 %
Use marijuana or hashish	Teachers	81.4 %	12.3 %	6.3 %	0 %
	Parents	86.2 %	7.5 %	5 %	1.3 %
	Students	72.3 %	15.6 %	9.5 %	2.6 %
Use tranquilizers (with no prescription)	Teachers	77.2 %	11.5 %	1.3 %	0 %
	Parents	83.7 %	12.5 %	3.8 %	0 %
	Students	68.8 %	18.3 %	9.5 %	3.4 %
Use ecstasy	Teachers	91 %	6.4 %	2.6 %	0 %
	Parents	96.2 %	3.8 %	0 %	0 %
	Students	89.3 %	8.1 %	2.3 %	3 %
Use other drugs	Teachers	90 %	7.5 %	2.5 %	0 %
	Parents	87.4 %	8.8 %	3.8 %	0 %
	Students	82.5 %	10 %	4.9 %	2.6 %
Carry firearms	Teachers	91.2 %	5 %	3.8 %	0 %
	Parents	91.2 %	6.3 %	2.5 %	0 %
	Students	77.3 %	12.4 %	6.6 %	3.7 %
Carry cold weapons	Teachers	68.3 %	22.8 %	8.9 %	0 %
	Parents	61.2 %	26.3 %	12.5 %	0 %
	Students	53 %	20.9 %	17.5 %	8.6 %

Strategies of schools against violence

According to teachers (56%), security cameras are the first protective measures against violence and other delinquent acts used thus far. The use of school uniforms (48%) is another method of security, followed by the use of school guards (39%). 24% of teachers stated their schools have a fire protection system.

Figure 11. Security methods used by schools to prevent violence

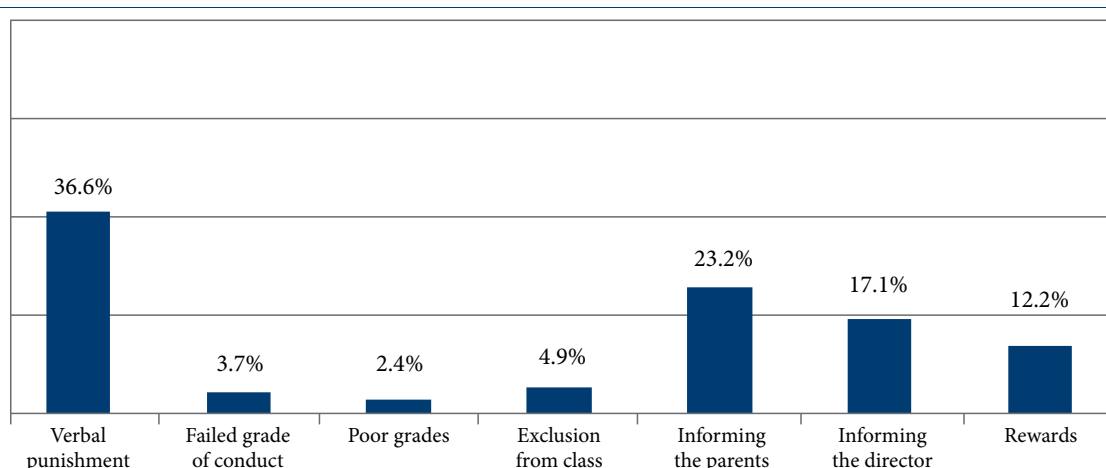


Otherwise, information desks, card entry system and visitor badges are practices applied much less, while less than 10% of teachers reported them as their school practice. To address their security issues, most schools have established Safety Councils. As reported by teachers, safety councils are comprised of parents (40%), teachers (37%), school director (37%) and students (27%). According to teachers, safety councils are functional in only 49% of schools. On the other hand, 35% of teachers stated that the school has no security council or are not aware of the existence of such councils. In schools where security councils are operational, it is reported that it meets regularly. 26% of teachers stated that the council has met twice during the first semester, 10% stated it met three times, whereas 26% claimed that the council was convened more than three times. This implies that such councils are not organized and operational in the same way in all schools.

Punitive measures as educational measures

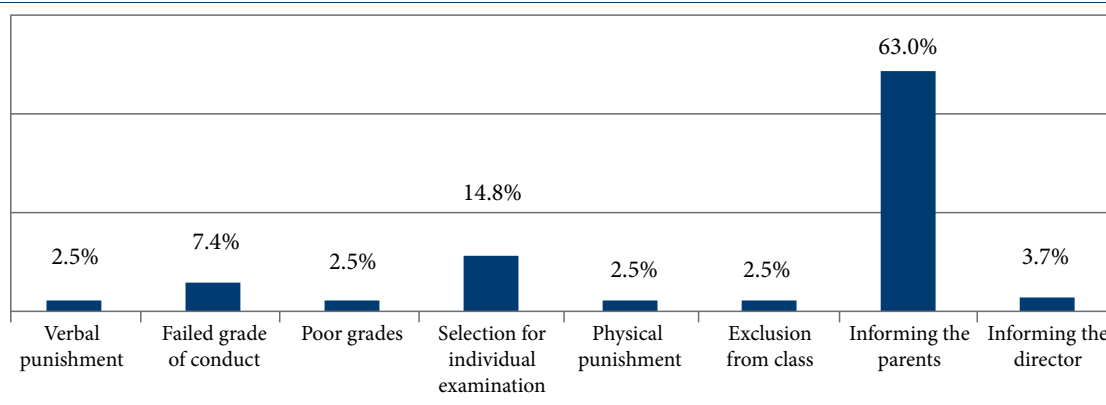
For teachers, verbal punishment (37%) is the most preferred punitive measure for students who fail to maintain discipline in class. Other alternatives also used by teachers are informing the parents (23%) and the informing the school director (17%), while only 12% preferred reward mechanisms to maintaining discipline. Failure to get a passing mark for behaviour, poor evaluation and expelling from class, are three other instruments used the least by teachers.

Figure 12. Most frequently used method of teacher to maintain discipline in class



Parents consider that the most appropriate method to maintain discipline in class is to inform the parents (63%) for the disorderly behaviour of students. Another preferred method to address disruptive students is to examine (test) (15%). Other methods are preferred by less than 10% of parents.

Figure 13. Preferences of parents for methods to be used by teachers to maintain discipline in class



Role of teachers in the education process

The role of teachers is central to all activities in the classroom and school, aimed to educate and prevent violent acts from occurring. This research also confirms this, and particularly highlights the importance of class teachers to prevent school violence. Over 76% of teachers involved in the survey declared to be the main teachers of a class in their school. The latter are very active in meetings with parents, and stated to have invited parents to meetings two or more times during the first semester. When it comes to their satisfaction with the parents' turnout in such meetings, teachers appear to have a divided opinion. Over 50% are very or fairly satisfied, while the rest are little or not at all satisfied with the participation of parents in these meetings.

When the teachers were asked about the extent of the parents' concern about their children, 50% say they are very or fairly interested, while the rest complain that parents are less or not at all interested about their child (students in the teacher's class). Main class teachers, in addition to joint meetings with parents, also contact parents individually, but only in certain cases. Most frequently, teachers choose this way of communication with parents in cases of incidents (over 43%) or if the parent was absent in the last teacher-parent meeting. It is not at all difficult for teachers to keep order in class. The answers provided by teachers give the understanding that there are no difficulties to manage the class in their presence. 7% of teachers declared that it is difficult to keep the order in class or school.

Role of parents in the educational process

The role of parents is irreplaceable in the educational process. A parent council representative chairs of School's Steering Council, the main decision-making and governance body in school. Parent Councils of all levels are not well organized and it was found that regular elections are not held in each class to choose representatives of parents of the class, a situation which continues in subsequent years. This procedural defect leads to a minimal role of parents in school governance to this date, and the school director in particular uses the parent representative only to formally adopt decisions which require the approval of the Steering Council or a parents' representative. Meetings with parents are not regular and an identified problem was the lack of the main class teacher. Many class teachers complained about the low turnout in meetings of parents whose children have regular problems with the rules and procedures of the school. Parents are invited at least twice during the school year to attend school meetings. Of them, 51% declared that they were invited 2 times in parent meetings, 18% have been invited three times and 16% more than three times. 14% have been invited only once while 1% never. A third of parents, have participated in meetings with parents three or more times in the first semester, 46% have participated twice, 22% once and only 1% have taken part in such meetings. Parents prefer to be informed about their child's performance in parent meetings. 70% of them stated to have received such information from parent meetings. Individual meetings are not very popular by both teachers and parents. Only 15% of parents are informed regarding their children in individual meetings with school representatives.

Results of focus groups

In addition to the quantitative aspect, presented through the survey of teachers, students and parents, this research also provides a qualitative component. To define the trends, and to also reflect in detail on the reasons and causes of such a situation, we have conducted three focus groups with teachers, students and parents. On September 17, 2014 in the premises of the Municipality of Pristina, three focus groups with teachers, parents and students from schools in the Municipality of Pristina were held.

Issues discussed included the main findings and recommendations of the research on the safety in schools in the Municipality of Pristina. All focus group discussion is divided into 3 parts, where participants expressed their opinions on school infrastructure, violence as a phenomenon and the role and functioning of the school councils. The focus groups were participated by 24 teachers, 24 parents and 45 students, separately.

Infrastructure

Teachers, parents and students agree with the results, which indicates that school infrastructure is poor and needs improvement. According to the teachers and students, traffic and stray dogs pose the highest risk to students, but also teachers who walk to, and from school. According to parents, a serious issue is cafés outside the school, which are truly unsafe environments for students.

Road signs, physical speed-reduction obstacles are some of the measures to be taken according to teachers. Also, sidewalks occupied by parked cars around the school, increase the risk of accidents and threaten the safety of students who are forced to walk in streets. It is proposed to establish clear lines prohibiting the parking of vehicles at the perimeter of the schoolyard. When it comes to internal infrastructure, in the yard and inside the school, teachers agree with most of the findings of the research. Parents request that no one enters the schoolyard, except for students, parents, teachers and school staff. On the other hand, students complain about poor hygienic conditions in schools. All three groups agree that standard fences installed by the Municipality, guards at the entrances/exits of schoolyards and surveillance cameras are necessary mechanisms to prevent violence in school.

Violence as a phenomenon and definition of disciplinary measures

Parents agree that it is currently unclear in the schools of the Municipality of Pristina what is a disciplinary measure and what is violence against children. During the discussion on these issues, parents admit that teachers and school staff, in certain cases, punish students with the use of violence. All students without exception claim that teachers use violence to maintain discipline in school. Students acknowledge and agree that the teachers and the school director may use violence against them, after a student has previously passed through several disciplinary procedures. Most students attending the focus groups stated that the police also used violence against students who, in one way or another, have broken the school rules or discipline. One of the students participating in a focus group indicated that he witnessed two civilian police officers brought two students in the principal's office, and the students came out with blood marks from the violence exercised by the police. However, most teachers object claims that violence is used in school. Although, they recognize that bullying among students is present and that such harassment is not serious. But, according to the parents, the origin of the problems with their children's behaviour is in the family, thus they require the intervention of the municipality in this societal institution, through additional education programs.

Teachers who participated in focus groups stated that during their teaching careers, they have never used violence to maintain discipline in class or school. They also stated that they are unaware of cases where their colleagues used violence against students. They acknowledge that some students are very difficult to manage (problematic students – as they call them), and that they have used punitive measures in these cases, such as exclusion from class, informing the parents or other punitive measures. On the other hand, parents and students believe that for some students, violence is the only way to comply with school rules and procedures. A rather concerning occurrence for teachers is the threats of students or their relatives against teachers. Most frequently, these came as a result of their work in school. Teachers request immediate actions by relevant institutions, to ensure that threats against teachers do not occur. On the other hand, students request that they are allowed to participate in meetings to establish school rules. Until now, the rules of conduct are only presented by class teachers or the head teacher.

School councils and educational measures

Teachers agree that school councils must become operational and functional and that their role should be strengthened in school governance. They stated that teachers' councils today have a secondary role and are not well-organized. Teachers request a greater involvement of parents through parent councils. They stated that parents are rather indifferent and do not engage sufficiently in school.

However, according to the parents, the elections for representatives of parents are not well organized and they usually occur when teachers propose or appoint a parent as representatives of the council. This phenomenon then continues with the parent council in other levels, but in those cases parents are selected as representatives by the school directorate. Thus, they agree that the best way to strengthen the role of parents in school is through parent councils, but they request a higher transparency in the selection of parents' representatives. Parents agree that their role should be increased in school and this can be best done through school councils. These councils are currently weak and parents do not have the power to influence governance in school at all, through them. Students are also dissatisfied with the organization of school councils. According to them, school councils are greatly influenced by teachers. All students have stated the class teacher either proposes a representative to the student council, or directly or indirectly affects the selection of representatives. Students also stated that there have been cases when the class teacher has selected its representatives in the student council without asking the students. Student councils, according to them, have a technical role and are never asked or invited to decide on formal school activities or security issues.

Conclusions

This report confirms the findings of the previous research indicating a fragile security situation in Pristina's schools. Moreover, the report provides detailed information on the security situation in the schools of Pristina, as well as results that are available to develop a platform on the safety in the capital's schools. The results indicate that one in five students do not feel very safe in school. Similarly, parents are only concerned about the safety of their children while they are in school. In particular, cafés outside the school, the schoolyard and toilets area areas identified as unsafe, and as where students feel most unsafe. Also, the way to school is unsafe for many students and teachers. Many complain about the risks on the road, including fast driving cars, stray dogs and gangs that threaten their safety.

The report confirms that the school director, as the main authority, is where students address to report threats. However, class teachers are an important address for many students, when they feel endangered or threatened. According to students, parents and teachers, the police must help to prevent violence and promote safety in schools. All three groups would prefer a civilian police presence in school, which will facilitate an easier and unnoticed identification of the potential for violence or security breaches in school.

It is clear from the results of the research that, in an effort to maintain order in the school, most schools have developed their own codes of conduct. However, it is clear that some students and parents are not aware of such codes and know little about the rules and sanctions in cases of non-compliance. This research highlights a high level of tolerance towards physical punishment of students. Half of them agree that teachers tolerate the use of physical punishment in specific cases. Less tolerant in this regard are parents and teachers, who would prefer other methods instead of those using violence. However, among the various physical punishments, slaps and ear pulls appear more tolerated by all three groups. Although such punishments are highly reported by students, there is a high prevalence in the schools of Pristina of behaviours that contradict school regulations. About one third of students reported at least one occasion in the last semester where a student seriously insulted a teacher. Almost similar is the number of students who claim that teachers have seriously insulted a student at least once.

As reported by the students, physical violence by teachers against students is high. In total, 45% of students admitted that in the last semester, teachers have hit or beaten a student. Such physical violence appears to be more common in upper secondary schools, compared to lower secondary schools. One in five students, parents or teachers involved in the survey, reported that students have used alcohol or drugs during the last semester. Such a high prevalence may be due to the fact that securing tobacco, alcohol, weapons and drugs in schools of Pristina is not considered impossible. To avoid cases of violence and to maintain security, schools have largely planned to install security cameras, apply school uniforms and have hired security guards. Moreover, teachers made efforts to reduce misconduct and violence through verbal punishments and informing the parents for student misconduct. However, despite this, security in schools seems to be infringed and the level of violence remains a concern. This is confirmed by the findings of focus groups. Ultimately, there is a need to mobilize all stakeholders to prevent violence and promote safety in schools.

Recommendations

Based on the data of the research, requests of students, parents and teachers, the following recommendations are provided:

Identify the boundary between a disciplinary measure and exercise of violence as a punitive measure against students;

- Incorporate duties and responsibilities of teachers and other school staff in the school regulation;
- Draft a formal and institutional procedure to report violence in school;
- Draft a procedure and deadline for the organization of elections in all levels, for parents', students' and teachers' councils;
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of school councils, based on the legal infrastructure;
- Identify and draft plans for leisure activities outside the formal school curriculum, which would improve safety in school;
- Develop operational plans for decentralization in school, particularly the decentralization of school finances;
- Provide teacher trainings on group management, with a focus on managing tensions or conflicts;
- Identify the role and responsibility of the police and the Ministry of Justice in matters of safety and violence in schools;
- Identify and clarify the role and responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Education Directorate on security issues in school;
- In cooperating with the MED and the Directorate of Public Services of the Municipality of Pristina, to develop a plan on stray dogs and traffic, as key issues identified for students walking to and from school;
- The data of this research to be used as the basis to organize further focus groups with students, parents, teachers and school directors, to ensure more in-depth analysis of certain concerns identified in this research.
- After completing this research report with the data from focus groups, design a municipal platform, providing all necessary measures and investments to address the issue of violence and security in the schools of the Municipality of Pristina.