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Verbal Abuse in Kindergarten and Primary School

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1 Introduction

UNICEF's understanding of violence derives from Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which defines the scope as "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child" (2014, 3).

The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), as amended and reauthorized by the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010, defines child abuse and neglect as: "Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or care-taker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm." (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013, 2) Child abuse and neglect includes acts of commission, that is, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, and acts of omission, that is, physical, emotional, medical, or educational neglect, all considered under the general label of child maltreatment (Leeb et al., 2008).

Bullying or abuse is a subset of aggression that is typically categorized as physical, verbal, or relational (Shore, 2005). It must be intended to harm, it must be repetitive, and a difference of power-physical, social, or other must exist between the bully and the victim (Olweus, 1993). The bullying behaviour or abuse can be "physical" (e.g. hitting, pushing, kicking), "verbal" (e.g. calling names, provoking, teasing, making verbal threats, spreading slander); it can also include other behaviour such as making faces or social exclusion (Fekkes et al., 2005).

There are many types of communication behaviours that may be defined as verbal abuse, and there have been numerous interpretations on what constitutes it. Brendgen et al. (2006) consider that behaviours of verbal abuse generally include ridiculing and teasing, name calling, yelling, verbal putdowns, negative prediction, negative comparison, shaming, cursing and swearing, and threats at the child. Anderson



(2002) classifies seven categories of verbal abuse, namely withholding, countering, discounting, jokes, blocking and diverting, accusing and blaming, and judging and criticizing. Another categorisation of verbal abuse is trivializing, undermining, threatening, name-calling, forgetting, ordering and denial. Cook et al. (2001) and Oweis and Diabat (2005) divide verbal abuse into eleven categories, namely judging and criticizing, accusing and blaming, abusive anger, discounting, condescending, ignoring, trivializing, blocking and diverting, threatening, abuse disguised as jokes, and sexual harassment. Another interesting and comprehensive understanding of verbal abuse is presented by Evans (1993), who lists 15 types of verbal abuse: withholding, verbal abuse disguised as jokes, trivializing, judging and criticizing, blocking and diverting, name calling, countering, discounting, accusing and blaming, undermining, forgetting, ordering and demanding, denial, abusive anger, and threatening. According to Moore et al. (2006), psychological maltreatment, including verbal aggression, has been implicated as an important contributor to children's behavioural problems. Teicher et al. (2006) note that verbal aggression is associated with moderate to large effects, comparable to those associated with witnessing domestic violence or non-familial sexual abuse, and larger than those associated with familial physical abuse.

Bullying in school is generally defined as repeated, intentional acts of aggression directed toward a student who has less status or power (Gladden et al., 2014; Olweus, 2003). Teachers and other school staff can abuse their authority and bully their students (Zerillo et al., 2011). Teachers and other adults in school have legitimate power over students, and often criticize and discipline them in certain situations. Accordingly, Twemlow et al. (2006, 191) defined teacher bullying as actions meant "to punish, manipulate [,] or disparage a student beyond what would be a reasonable disciplinary procedure." For example, physical forms of teacher bullying could include grabbing or shaking a student, and verbal bullying could involve insulting or ridiculing a student. Several authorities have asserted that bullying by teachers presents a serious problem that is readily recognized by students (Whitted et al., 2008). In a study of elementary school students, teachers identified bullying by their colleagues as a serious problem with potential for substantial harm to students (Zerillo et al., 2011).

Bullying and victimization by peers can be connected to lower school engagement (DiPerna, 2006), decreased academic achievement (Eisenberg et al., 2003; Vaillancourt et al., 2013), and poorer mental health (Benedict et al., 2015). However, bullying by teachers and other school staff is a less widely recognized problem (Zerillo et al., 2011).

A few studies have begun to investigate bullying by teachers (Brendgen et al., 2006; Khoury-Kassabri, 2006; Pottinger et al., 2009; Twemlow et al., 2006). Twemlow

et al. (2006) reports that 45% of elementary teachers admitted to bullying a student at least once in their teaching career. Delfabbro et al. (2006) observes that almost 13% of students stated they were often victimized by peers, 11% stated they were often victimized by teachers, and 1.4% stated both types of victimization at school. Multiple studies show that bullying may cause students to become disengaged from school, leading to poor achievement (DiPerna, 2006; Finn et al., 1997; Lacey et al., 2015). Wang et al. (2014) find that peer victimization remains significantly related to lower student-reported grades after controlling for school climate scores and demographic covariates. Bullying by teachers may have a similar effect on engagement and achievement, because students are working for their teachers. Students who resent their teachers for bullying them understandably might be less inclined to work hard for them and earn good grades. Research has shown that students are more likely to demonstrate prosocial behaviour when they perceive their school's policies to be supportive and respectful (Daly et al., 2014; Eccles et al., 1993; Shirley et al., 2011). Student perceptions of teacher fairness are associated with positive adolescent development, prosocial behaviour, and academic success (Daly et al., 2014; Eccles et al., 1993). Further, students who perceive their school climate as punitive generally have more strained relationships with adults in the school (Daly et al., 2014).

When bullied by peers, students show high levels of social and emotional distress (Delfabbro et al., 2006). Several studies have found different effects for students who were bullied by teachers versus peers; for example, students who reported bullying by teachers had lower levels of social-emotional adjustment (Monsvold et al., 2011; Pottinger et al., 2009). In contrast, an Australian study (Delfabbro et al., 2006) of 1,284 tenth-grade students from 25 schools finds that students who reported bullying by peers characteristically showed higher levels of social alienation and lower self-esteem than those bullied by teachers. Students bullied by teachers exhibited lower school engagement and academic performance, as well as more involvement in high-risk behaviours.

Especially in the primary school grades, the teacher-child relationship exerts a major influence on children's social, behavioural, emotional, and academic adjustment (Pianta, 1999). Children who have a very negative relationship with their teacher, especially those who experience frequent verbal abuse by the teacher, are thus not only likely to miss out on important learning opportunities with regard to academic content, but may also be at risk for further behavioural, emotional, and social maladjustment (Brendgen et al., 2006). As maintained by Casarjian (2000) teachers who have experienced particular students as potential threats to their ability to maintain control of the classroom are likely to expect similar behaviour from

these students in the future. As a result, these students may elicit hostile behaviour from the teacher, either because of the teacher's attempt to maintain authority of the class or because of the teacher's anger and frustration. In turn, the teacher's hostile responses provide the children with a model of aggressive behaviour as an acceptable means of social interaction, thus perpetuating the cycle of negative interactions (Bandura, 1986).

In the present study I was interested in the beliefs of future teachers about abuse, especially verbal abuse, among and towards children in kindergarten and primary school. Teachers are well positioned to identify possible cases of child abuse and neglect given the amount of time they spend with students. Several studies highlight the importance of teachers' beliefs about abuse/neglect and its impact on their students (Kenny, 2004; Smith, 2010). Additionally, it has been found that teachers' perceptions of maltreatment severity follow this same pattern: the more severe the maltreatment, the more likely teachers will identify and report it (Walsh et al., 2008; Smith, 2010). A study about teachers' beliefs about maltreatment effects on student learning and classroom behavior (Gamache Martin, DeMarni Cromer, Freyd, 2010) revealed that teachers' beliefs about the effects of maltreatment on their students' learning and classroom behavior varied by type of maltreatment. The teachers believed that physical and sexual abuse impacted their students' ability to learn not only by causing academic difficulties, reduced attention, and increased disruptiveness, but also by resulting in more internalizing behaviors. In addition, the teachers believed that emotional neglect affected learning ability primarily through academic difficulties, internalizing behaviors, and other maltreatment-related consequences, such as emotional dependence and self-harm behaviors.

2 The study

Verbal abuse is considered part of the broader concept of psychological abuse or maltreatment of children (Garbarino et al., 1986; Hart et al., 1987; Olweus, 1996; Glaser, 2002). Children's negative social experiences in the school context, however, do not necessarily only entail rejection and victimization from the peer group. Especially in the primary school grades, the teacher-child relationship exerts a major influence on children's social, behavioural, emotional, and academic adjustment (Pianta, 1999). To address this issue, the present study investigated the beliefs of students of three different undergraduate study programmes, i.e. preschool education, primary education and logopaedia/logopaedics-surdopedagogy (beliefs of pre-service preschool teachers, pre-service primary school teachers, speech and pre-service language therapists) about the verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school. The study also examined their

beliefs about the behaviour of verbally abused children. Preschool teachers, primary school teachers and speech and language therapists are well aware of the importance of enabling equal conditions for optimal development of each child; the consideration of individual differences in development and learning; consideration of group differences (based on gender, social and cultural background, worldview) and the creation of conditions for their expression; and consideration of the principles of diversity and multiculturalism at the level of the selection of content, activities and materials with regard to children, better enabling them to experience and learn about the diversity of the world.

2.1 Research questions

The research questions of this study were as follows:

1. What are pre-service preschool teachers', pre-service primary school teachers' and pre-service speech and language therapists' beliefs about verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school?
2. Are the beliefs about the verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school different between students of preschool education, students of primary school education and students of speech and language therapy and surdopedagogy?
3. What are pre-service preschool teachers', pre-service primary school teachers' and pre-service speech and language therapists' beliefs about the behaviour of verbally abused children?
4. Are the beliefs about the behaviour of verbally abused children different between students of preschool education, students of primary school education and students of speech and language therapy and surdopedagogy?

2.2 Research instrument

For the purpose of the study, a 16-item questionnaire was developed by the author, based on a literature review of verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school (Olweus, 1996; Boivin et al., 2001; Brendgen et al., 2006; Khoury-Kassabri, 2006; Pottinger et al., 2009; Twemlow et al., 2006; Delfabbro et al., 2006).

The questionnaire was designed according to two main concepts: the beliefs of pre-service preschool teachers, pre-service primary school teachers, speech and pre-service language therapists about the verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school (eight items), and the beliefs of pre-service preschool teachers, pre-service primary school teachers, speech and pre-service language therapists about the behaviour of verbally abused children (eight items). A 5-point Likert scale was used for the responses. The questionnaire items for the overall scale were found to be reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .591$; Cronbach's $\alpha = .457$ for the first set and Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.65$ for the second set).

2.3 Respondents and data collection

The data were collected in January 2018 at the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana. A total of 104 students of the three undergraduate study programmes, i.e. preschool education, primary school education and speech and language therapy and surdopedagogy participated in the study, with 101 female students (97.1%) and three male students (2.9%). The questionnaires were distributed and the instructions for filling out the questionnaire were given by the author of the research before the beginning of the chosen study course of each study programme. Respondents were given 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Since we wanted to investigate whether students' beliefs vary with the study programme, i.e. whether there are any differences between the beliefs of students of preschool education, primary school education, speech and language therapy and surdopedagogy, the study included 40 students (38.5%) from Year 3 of preschool education¹, 44 students (42.3%) from Year 3 of primary school education, and 20 (19.2%) from Year 2 of speech and language therapy and surdopedagogy². The study programmes were selected regarding the similarities in the curriculums, and the professional orientation after graduation, i.e. pedagogical work with children in kindergartens or primary schools. The students were all studying at the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Their ages ranged from 20 to 26, and the mean age was 20.85.

2.4 Data analysis

After verifying that the data were free from errors, matrix analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software. The data were controlled according to the assumptions of normal distribution, homogeneity of variance, and expected counts. In view of the research questions, mainly descriptive (absolute frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) procedures and statistical tests (one-way analysis of variance, post-hoc comparison Games-Howell and Hochberg test) were applied.

2.5 Results and interpretation

The results are presented in two sections. The first section shows the future preschool teachers', primary school teachers' and speech and language therapists'

1 The study programme Preschool Education is a three-year higher educational professional programme.

2 The study programmes Primary School Education and Speech and Language Therapy and Surdopedagogy are five-year university programmes.

beliefs about verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school (1-8), while the second section shows their beliefs about the behaviour of verbally abused children (9-16).

Pre-service preschool teachers', primary school teachers and speech and language therapists' beliefs about verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school

Future preschool teachers, primary school teachers and speech and language therapists had to state their agreement or disagreement with items related to verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school and the behaviour of verbally abused children (5 - strongly agree, 4 - agree, 3 - can't decide, 2 - disagree, 1 - strongly disagree).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the pre-service preschool teachers', primary school teachers' and speech and language therapists' beliefs about the verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school.

Item description (1-8)	M	SD
1. Aggressive forms of behaviour include physical, psychological and verbal abuse.	4.75	.478
2. Verbal abuse includes threats, abusive speech, comments with sharp words, the use of swear words, yelling, teasing, mockery, making ugly remarks, ridicule, and making the victim feel unworthy of love or respect.	4.87	.334
3. Verbal abuse belongs to a category of emotional torture that has long-lasting consequences.	4.60	.600
4. I detected verbal abuse among children in the kindergarten/primary school.	3.72	1.083
5. I detected verbal abuse from a preschool teacher/teacher in the kindergarten/primary school.	2.63	1.255
6. Boys are more likely to experience less verbal peer abuse than girls.	2.63	.997
7. Boys experience more verbal abuse from preschool teacher/teachers than girls.	2.62	.988
8. Children from families with lower socioeconomic status are more often victims of verbal peer abuse and verbal abuse from preschool teachers/teachers.	3.45	.891

Table 1 presents pre-service preschool teachers', primary school teachers' and speech and language therapists' beliefs about the verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school.

A total of 76.9% of all respondents strongly agree with the first item, that aggressive forms of behaviour include physical, psychological and verbal abuse. Smith et al. (2002), using a cartoon methodology, reported that younger children (aged eight years) were more likely to simply distinguish between aggressive and nonaggressive scenarios, whereas older children (aged 14 years) were able to make finer grained distinctions between types of aggression: physical and verbal bullying and social exclusion. Finally, younger children often nominate peers for the roles of aggressor, victim, and defender; they do not so often nominate peers for the more peripheral roles of assistant, reinforcer, or outsider in aggression (Monks et al., 2002; Monks et al., 2003).

The American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) highlights psychological maltreatment (PM) as a more unifying concept that embodies significant components of all forms of child maltreatment (Myers, 2005).

The highest level of agreement is demonstrated with regard to the second item, with 86.5% of all respondents completely agreeing that verbal abuse includes threats, abusive speech, comments with sharp words, the use of swear words, yelling, teasing, mockery, making ugly remarks, ridicule, and making the victim feel unworthy of love or respect. Although the specific definitions sometimes vary from one author to another, behaviours that are generally subsumed within the context of verbal abuse refer to ridiculing and teasing, name-calling, or yelling at the child (Casarjian, 2000; Garbarino et al., 1986; Hart et al., 1987; Olweus, 1996). A total of 93.3% of all the respondents agree with the third item, that verbal abuse belongs to a category of emotional torture that has long-lasting consequences. Supportive neuropsychological research indicates the association of verbal abuse and cognitive deficits (Teicher, 2002). There is growing evidence that verbal assault can alter the way a developing brain matures (Teicher, 2002; Teicher et al., 2006). The deleterious effects are reductions in the size of sensitive areas of the brain, and abnormal brain waves that mimic epilepsy. Brain scans of such children reveal decreased activity in parts of the brain concerned with emotion and attention. Patients with a history of intense verbal abuse show less blood flow in the cerebellar vermis. A total of 62.5% of all respondents agree with the item No.4, that they detected verbal abuse among children in the kindergarten/primary school, while 16.3% disagree with this statement. Emotional abuse may be the most prevalent type of child abuse; however, it is also the most hidden, under-reported, and least studied (McEachern et al., 2008; Aluede, 2004). The literature on emotional abuse is limited, which could be attributed to the fact that it is the most difficult form of abuse to research, because the lack of consistent definitions makes it challenging to detect, assess, and substantiate (Aluede, 2004). A total of 28.9% of the respondents agree with item No. 5, that they observed verbal abuse by the preschool teacher/teacher in kindergarten/primary school, while 53.9% disagree with this statement. Further analysis showed that there is

a statistically significant difference in the beliefs about verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school for item No. 5 according to the study programme of the respondents ($F(4.99) = 13.086, p < 0.001$). Post-hoc analysis using the Hochberg's test confirmed the statistically significant difference between the students of preschool education ($M = 3.38, SD = 1.213$) and the students of speech and language therapy and surdopedagogy ($M = 2.20, SD = 1.105$) ($p < 0.001$) and between the students of preschool education and the students of primary school education ($M = 2.18, SD = 1.0839$) ($p < 0.001$).

A total of 16.4% of all the respondents agree while 41.4% disagree with item No. 6. Altogether 42.3% of the respondents were not able to decide if boys are more likely to experience less verbal peer abuse than girls. A total of 51.9% of the respondents agree with the statement in item No. 8, that children from families with lower socioeconomic status (SES) are more often victims of verbal peer abuse and verbal abuse from preschool teachers/teachers, while 15.4% disagree with this. In general, SES was found to be a stronger predictor of bullying by peers in comparison to bullying by teachers, but students from lower SES homes experienced more of both peer and teacher bullying than students from higher SES homes (Delfabbro et al., 2006).

Pre-service preschool teachers', primary school teachers' and speech and language therapists' beliefs about the behaviour of verbally abused children

Table 2: Descriptive statics for the pre-service preschool teachers', primary school teachers' and speech and language therapists' beliefs about the behaviour of verbally abused children

Item description (9-16)	M	SD
9. Verbally abused children get confused a lot/often in conversation.	3.60	.718
10. Verbal abuse causes children to become dependent on others.	3.32	.839
11. Verbally abused children complain a lot.	2.49	.724
12. Verbal abuse makes children look frightened.	3.67	.756
13. Children who are victims of verbal abuse sulk a lot.	2.71	.666
14. Verbally abused children often resort to crying at the slightest provocation.	3.32	.938
15. Children who are abused verbally have the difficulty to express their opinion.	3.99	.887
16. Interaction with other children is always a problem for verbally abused children.	3.62	.957

Table 2 presents pre-service preschool teachers', primary school teachers' and speech and language therapists' beliefs about the behaviour of verbally abused children.

A total of 56.9% of all respondents agree with item No. 9, that verbally abused children get confused a lot in conversation, and only 6.7% completely agree with item No. 10, that verbal abuse causes children to become dependent on others. The lowest level of agreement is demonstrated with regard to item No. 11, with just 5.8% of all respondents agreeing that verbally abused children complain a lot. A total of 65.4% of the respondents agree with item No. 12, that verbal abuse makes children look frightened, while only 8.7% agree with item No. 13, that children who are victims of verbal abuse sulk a lot. A total of 41.3% of all the respondents agree with item No. 14, that verbally abused children often resort to crying at the slightest provocation. The results of a Welch test ($F = 5.858, p = 0.004$) indicated that there is a statistically significant difference in the beliefs about the behaviour of verbally abused children for this item according to the study programme of respondents. Post-hoc analysis using the Games-Howell test confirmed the statistically significant difference between the students of preschool education ($M = 3.60, SD = 1.033$) and the students of primary school education ($M = 2.95, SD = .714$) ($p < 0.005$).

The highest level of agreement is demonstrated with regard to item No. 15, with 72.1% of all respondents agreeing that children who are abused verbally have the difficulty to express their opinion. A total of 50.6% of all respondents agree with item No. 16, that interaction with other children is always a problem for verbally abused children.

At preschool age, children have similar reactions to the different types of abuse as younger children do. However, by ages 4 and 5, children might express their reaction to abuse through different behaviour. Boys tend to externalize their emotion through expressions of anger, aggression, and verbal bullying (Leeb et al., 2007). In contrast, girls are more likely to internalize their behavioural attitudes by being depressed and socially withdrawn, and having somatic symptoms such as headaches and abdominal pain (Dehon et al., 2010).

At primary school age, children develop through peer interaction. Abused children often have difficulties with school, including poor academic performance, a lack of interest in school, poor concentration during classes, and limited friendships (Zolotor et al., 1999).

3 Discussion

The present research demonstrates that Slovenian students of preschool education, primary school education, and speech and language therapy and surdopedagogy mostly do not differ in their beliefs about verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school and the behaviour of verbally abused children. This can be attributed to their comparable school backgrounds, i.e. all the respondents are students of Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, that takes into consideration the Resolution on the National Programme of Higher Education 2011–2020, which states: “Higher education has a strong impact on social development and ethical relations, and it covers a significant part of the population in the decisive phase of the formation of personality. The university is therefore subject to the ethical code and it is responsible that in the educational and research process the ethical aspect is taken into account. [...] The higher educated man/woman is expected to be capable of an ethical evaluation and an active commitment to humanity in the society.” (Resolution on the National Programme of Higher Education 2011–2020, 2011, p. 21).

A number of studies from different countries examine the rates of reported emotional abuse incidents by teachers within the school setting. For example, an early nationwide study in Israel states that 29% of elementary students attending grades 4–6 reported the experience of at least one type of emotional abuse (Benbenishty et al., 2002). Using a similar study design, Theoklitou et al. (2012) found that almost 86% of elementary school students indicated that they had been the victims of neglect and emotional abuse by teachers, respectively. In a recent school-based study, 18% of the participants reported at least one experience of emotional abuse by teachers, who insulted, mocked or referred to them using humiliating labels such as *loser*, *fool* or *idiot* during the previous academic year (Lee, 2015). These rates suggest that child emotional abuse by adults is in fact a phenomenon that exists not only within the family context, but in school settings as well.

Gender constitutes a structure of social practice that establishes relations of power, attitudes and hierarchies, not only among people, but also among groups and institutions, which would simply overcome the analysis or individual perception of being female or male. This permits an understanding of socially predefined roles for men and women as perpetrators of unequal hierarchical relations (Steinfeldt, 2012). Research on bullying suggests that boys are more prone to be both bullies and victims of bullying, especially in its physical expression, since girls are more likely to engage in situations of indirect bullying, such as teasing or gossip about peers (Carbone-Lopez, 2010). Boys are also at higher risk of becoming the target of teacher verbal abuse (Brendgen et al., 2006). Casarjian (2000) and several other studies also show that boys

are more likely to have a conflictual relationship with their teachers (Hughes et al., 2001; Birch, 1997; Birch et al., 1998; Kesner, 2000).

Moreover, the literature suggests some link between low SES and victims or bully-victims at school (Alikasifoglu et al., 2007; Jansen et al., 2011). Specifically, being a victim has been reported to be associated with poor parental education (Jansen et al., 2012; Nordhagen et al., 2005), low parental occupational status (Lemstra et al., 2012), economic disadvantage (Bowes et al., 2009) and poverty (Glew et al., 2005).

Exposure to verbal aggression in childhood may lead to the following conditions (Noh et al., 2012): a) a stressor that affects the development of certain vulnerable brain regions in susceptible individuals, resulting in psychiatric sequelae; and 2) the creation of a powerful negative model for interpersonal communication, which is subsequently incorporated as a behavioural response in future relationships. There is much evidence pointing towards the effects of abuse on children. Sachs-Ericsson (2006) suggest that childhood experiences of abuse, and in particular verbal abuse, may confer a greater risk for internalizing disorders, in part because verbal abuse influences the development of a self-critical style.

Comparing the beliefs of the Slovenian students examined in this study to those of other cultures, some significant differences can be observed, e.g. 62.5% of all Slovenian students who took a part in the survey agree that they detected verbal abuse among children in the kindergarten/primary school, and 28.9% respondents agree that they detected verbal abuse from the preschool teacher/teacher in the kindergarten/primary school, while 44% of all participants (undergraduate students enrolled in in psychology classes at a public university in the southeast of the United States) in the survey conducted by Fromuth et al. (2015) report at least one experience that they labeled as emotional abuse, while 52% reported that a teacher had bullied them. Approximately half of the students recruited from a northeastern university in the United States who participated in the survey conducted by Marraccini et al. (2015) report witnessing professor/instructor bullying, and 18% report being bullied by a professor/instructor. College students perceive instructor bullying as occurring, but may not know how to properly address it.

4 Conclusion

Peer abuse is a problem, but teacher abuse/bullying is even more so. Preschool teachers and primary school teachers are not only educators, they are also important socializing actors who help to meet a child's basic socioemotional needs, such as a sense of belongingness and esteem. Repeated acts of verbal abuse by the teacher could

thus have destructive consequences for the child's basic socioemotional needs and weaken their healthy development.

As the results of this study show, verbal abuse towards children in the kindergarten/primary school is often reported by the respondents. Therefore, it might be interesting to investigate in-service preschool teachers', primary school teachers' and speech and language therapists' beliefs about verbal abuse towards children in kindergarten and primary school, i.e. how they see the concept of verbal abuse and if they realize the harmful effects of verbal abuse (by the child's peers or her/his teacher) on a child's functioning in class. Furthermore, in-depth interviews to investigate how children feel about being verbally abused should be done in kindergartens and primary schools. Moreover, it would be interesting to observe, videotape and analyse the interactions between a child and her/his peer(s) and a child and her/his teacher in order to find out if/how the verbal abuse in kindergarten/primary school is demonstrated.

Preschool and primary school teachers should be aware of the fact that witnessing or experiencing any kind of violence/abuse as a child is linked to future use or acceptance of violence/abuse. Preventing and responding to verbal abuse requires a comprehensive response from the education sector and its partners at a number of different levels: leadership (laws, policies, reforms), environment (ensuring kindergartens and schools are child-friendly, safe and supportive learning environments), prevention (curriculum, teaching, learning), responses (in and around kindergartens and schools), partnerships (collaborating with and engaging key stakeholders) and evidence (monitoring and evaluating classroom interactions).

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Darija Skubic

Verbalno nasilje v vrtcu in osnovni šoli

Ključne besede: verbalno nasilje, otrok, vrtec, osnovna šola, prepričanja študentov

V slovenskem prostoru in v tujini obstaja dokaj obsežna literatura o nasilju različnih oblik, zaradi česar se pojavlja zelo različna in specifična raba posameznih pojmov, ki označujejo isto dejavnost oziroma problematiko, npr. nasilje, agresivnost, agresija, trpinčenje, prisila, ustrahovanje. Ena izmed pogostih oblik nasilja je verbalno nasilje, pri katerem gre za besedno izražanje nespoštovanja do žrtve. Živimo v času, ko med prebivalkami in prebivalci Republike Slovenije zelo hitro narašča družbena neenakost. V različnih dokumentih Evropske unije pa sta prav vzgoja in izobraževanje v predšolskem in zgodnješolskem obdobju izpostavljena kot tista, ki najbolj prispevata k pravičnosti v celotnem vzgojno-izobraževalnem sistemu in imata pomembno vlogo pri spodbujanju socialne vključenosti ter zmanjševanju socialno-ekonomskih in drugih razlik med otroki. Zato me je še posebej zanimalo, ali oziroma kako se verbalno nasilje kot posledica nestrpnosti in diskriminatornih praks kaže v vrtcu/osnovni šoli.

V ta namen je bila na Pedagoški fakulteti Univerze v Ljubljani izvedena raziskava o stališčih študentk in študentov treh različnih študijskih programov do verbalnega nasilja v vrtcu/osnovni šoli. Rezultati so pokazali, da anketirane študentke in anketirani študenti zaznavajo različne reprezentacije verbalnega nasilja v vrtcu/osnovni šoli, da pa bi bilo potrebno nenehno izobraževanje za t. i. kulturo aktivne strpnosti, ki bi pomagala pri prepoznavanju oblik nestrpnosti in diskriminatornih praks.

Darija Skubic

Verbal Abuse in Kindergarten and Primary School

Keywords: verbal abuse, child, kindergarten, primary school, students' beliefs

In Slovenia and abroad, there is a fairly extensive literature on abuse of different forms, making it appear that there are very different and specific uses of certain terms that indicate the same activity or issue, such as abuse, aggression, aggression, suffering, forcing, and bullying. One of the common forms of abuse is verbal abuse, namely verbal expressions of disrespect to the victim. We live in a time when social inequality is very quickly growing among the residents of the Republic of Slovenia. In various documents produced by the European Union, preschool education in particular, but also primary school education in general, is shown to be something that contributes to fairness in the whole educational system, and has an important role in promoting social inclusion and reducing the socioeconomic and other differences among children. Therefore, I was particularly interested in whether and how verbal abuse is demonstrated as a result of the intolerance and discriminatory practices in Slovenian kindergartens and primary schools.

For this purpose, a survey of the beliefs of students of three undergraduate study programmes in the Faculty of Education in Ljubljana about verbal abuse in Slovenian kindergarten and primary school was conducted. The results showed that the interviewed students perceived various representations of verbal abuse in kindergarten and primary school, and that there should be continuous education to achieve a so-called culture of active tolerance, that would help in the identification of forms of intolerance and discriminatory practices.