MEdiaMODEL

MANIFESTATIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

REPORT ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

YEREVAN 2014

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CONCISE DESRIPTION OF RESEARCH

The research on violence against children was conducted in Armenia's capital and northern Lori, Tavush and southern Vayots Dzor and Sunik Marzes in the months of March-July, 2014 by the research analytical team of the *MEDIA MODEL* company in collaboration with the office of the NGO *Hope and Help*. The primary goal of the research was to reveal manifestations of violence against children, specifically against those within the 14-18 age group, and cybercrime risks in Armenia.

A multistage probability sample was applied. The research sample comprised 780 persons including 711 9-12 graders from general education institutions in the covered

residential areas and 69 first-year students from selected higher education institutions.[1] The sample error stands at ±3, 5%` within 0, 95 credibility range[2]:

Five focus-group interviews were also conducted with representatives of the main staff of the educational institutions in the selected marzes (administrative regions). The number of FG participants was 41 (40 female, one male), their professions:
28 teachers, 5 social pedagogues, 5 psychologists, 1 deputy director of the school, 1 local government representative, 1 School-centres union employee.
Group 1 (8 persons), Group 2 (5 persons), Group 3 (6 person), Group 4 (12 persons), Group 5 (10 persons).
The concise findings of the research are:

Lack of special knowledge in the area of violence against minors and its prevention among the core teaching staff of general education schools, especially among the staff of the marz schools;

The tendency of shifting violence manifestations and oversight responsibility to those directions of education where the given institution/staff are not the immediate subject;

Absence of special **guideline instructions** for teachers **concerning discovery of children subjected to violence or special measures to be undertaken in such cases ;**

Restriction/minimum involvement in the core teaching staff/ **of participation of social pedagogues, social workers, psychologists and other specialists** by form monitors;

Not high comparable indicator of violence against children – about 54%, i.e. 46% of the interviewees are free of any violence risk factor envisaged by the study ;

Highest possible indicators of psychological violence as compared to almost equal indicators of physical and sexual abuse;

Educational institutions as a principal domain of physical violence: indicators of physical violence are highest for schools and higher education institutions with involvement of two primary subjects – classmates (the indicator is the highest) and teachers/lecturers;

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[1]   The target did not include special, boarding school and other institutions in anticipation that this would yield a more level and typical picture. In addition, we took into account the limitations related to filling in a standardized questionnaire by children with special needs and conducting non-mediated face-to-face interviews with them.

[2]   See Research Sample on page 15 for details

Prevalence of violence among peers: it is higher in Yerevan, then in the northern cluster (Lori and Tavush Marzes) and southern cluster (Vayots Dzor and Sunik Marzes);

High indicator of psychological violence in educational institutions, which exceeds psychological violence indicators in the family and streets. Subjected to psychological violence are primarily female children;

Existence of a risk group of uncontrollable minors in terms of their external appearance, free movement, socialization with their friends and other manifestations, the absolute majority of whom come from Yerevan. This group is represented by male interviewees who enjoy mid-level and higher than mid-level degree of welfare.

Tending of sexual abuse indicators towards zero, with the exception of peer (16 out of 70 interviewees have heard of cases of sexual abuse by peers) and other people of age (12 out of 70 interviewees have heard of cases of sexual abuse by other persons of age) indicators ;

Tendency to conceal the cases of sexual abuse: one-third of students, when they are victims of or witnesses to sexual abuse, would prefer to conceal the details of the case since they can be discredited or find themselves in a shameful situation;

The unsatisfactory awareness of children of special support organizations and responsible bodies: only three out of 70 interviewed students have mentioned a similar organization.

A comparable high indicator of cybercrime riskiness: approximately 79%. On average, an individual is affected by three risk factors making him/her a cybercrime victim, which is quite a lot. The group of minors, who are subjected to maximum danger since they are affected by simultaneously more than seven risk factors – about 12.5%, is also large.

The main group of cybercrime risk: boys, who, according to the research results, on the one hand, frequently access and spend much time in the Internet, and on the other hand, seek to make acquaintances and are adventurously ready for new meetings. This risk group is especially large in Yerevan, then in the northern marzes and southern ones.

Lack of literacy in the area of Internet security, which is demonstrated by data on violating the security rules while using the Internet.

CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the research results, we can single out the following:

- The core teaching staff of general education schools, particularly of marz schools do not have special knowledge in the area of violence against minors and its prevention. The definitions used by them lack clear categorization, typological bases or specialist terminology. In their perception, violence is closely knitted with a number of adjacent notions, such as trafficking, advocacy, academic overload of students and so on. As a result, the discovery and oversight of cases of violence through application of special pedagogical skills is decreasing.

- The area manifests hidden tendency to shifting the responsibility. The participants in the focus group meetings tend to consider prevalent those manifestations of violence against minors and those directions of general education, of which they are not immediate subjects. Moreover, this trend is manifest both at group and individual identification levels (In Yerevan, they believe that violence applies in the marzes ; secondary schools believe that there is violence in high schools ; general education schools point at the prevalence of the phenomenon in special schools.)

- Teachers do not have special guideline instructions on discovering children subjected to violence or undertaking special measures in such cases. In general, they tend to respond spontaneously and do not engage specific specialists or structures. In this respect, social pedagogues and psychologists are most active, who, within the range of their professional capacities, provide assistance, including, when necessary, cooperate with the police and other structures. However, form monitor teachers engage them in work with children to the minimum degree possible and try to control the situation independently.

- A comparable indicator of violence against children stands at approximately 54%, i.e. it is the 46% of interviewees, who is free of any violence risk factor envisioned by the study. It should be stated that this indicator is quite reassuring, especially if we take into consideration that the groups that are simultaneously affected by four or more factors are extremely small. The largest is the group of minors that has been revealed to be simultaneously affected by up to two factors of violence. Schoolchildren are at more risk of being subjected to violence than students.

- According to the obtained indicators, psychological violence is most prevalent, and indicators of incidence of physical and sexual abuse are equal. The main subjects of all

forms of violence are minors themselves since, according to the data, manifestations of violence by peers is most widely spread.

- Educational institutions – schools and higher education institutions appear to be the main domain of physical violence. Moreover, the physical violence is applied by two primary subjects – classmates (to the maximum degree since the indicator is the highest) and teachers/lecturers. Violence among peers is more prevalent in Yerevan, then in the North cluster (Lori and Tavush Marzes) and the South cluster (Vayots Dzor and Sunik Marzes). In terms of manifestations of violence against children by pedagogues, the capital again comes first. Physical violence indicators obtained on the basis of responses by private school pupils are lower than by those studying at state institutions. In terms of manifestations of physical violence, the lowest indicators are those received from cases of family members applying physical violence.

- In terms of psychological violence, the sphere of educational institutions once again comes as the most violent; the psychological violence indicator in this sphere exceeds the prevalence of psychological violence in the family and streets. Female children are most frequently subjected to psychological violence by both their peers and teachers and family members. In contradistinction to physical violence, the psychological violence by teachers is equally spread at both state and private educational institutions.

- In terms of psychological disharmony, risks are more manifest in town-dwelling extended (non-nuclear) families, where parents have secondary or mid-level vocational training. Minors without any oversight on the part of their parents are also considered a risk group from the perspective of manifestation of different kinds of deviationary behavior. It has been discovered that the group uncontrollable in terms of its external appearance, free movement, socialization with friends and other manifestations is composed in its absolute majority of city residents, and more specifically of residents of the city of Yerevan. It mostly comprises male interviewees who enjoy mid-level or higher than mid-level degree of welfare.

- All indicators of sexual abuse tend towards zero, with the exception of those by peers (16 out of 70 interviewees have heard of cases of sexual abuse by peers) and other people of age (12 out of 70 interviewees have heard of cases of sexual abuse by other

people of age). Girls have noted cases of sexual abuse by family members, peers and other persons of age more often than boys have, and only male interviewees have mentioned of cases of sexual abuse by teachers/lecturers. The main source of information on sexual abuse is external to minors and appears to be through informational streams in mass media and on the Internet.

- When becoming a victim of or a witness to sexual abuse, about one-third of students would prefer to conceal the details of the case since they can be discredited or can find themselves in a shameful situation. The awareness of children of special support organizations and responsible bodies is also unsatisfactory: only three out of 70 interviewed students mentioned such an organization.

- Eighty-eight per cent of the total number of the interviewed minors are registered at some social network, which can be considered a very high indicator. The comparable indicator of cybercrime riskiness is quite high. It stands at approximately 79%, i.e. only 12.5% of the interviewees is free of any risk factor envisaged by the study, and the responses of another 8.8% do not make it possible to assess the degree of being subjected to risks since at the time of the research they stated that they had not been using the Internet.

- On average, three risk factors affect one individual in terms of becoming a victim of cybercrime, which is quite a lot. Large is also the group of minors who are subjected to the maximum danger since they are simultaneously affected by more than seven risk factors: about 12.5%. Objective or risk factors external to the child, such as the security of means to connect to the Internet and of personal data, are more pronounced. It is much easier to carry out their control than that of the subjective factors.

- Subjected to cybercrime risks are first of all boys who, according to the research results, on the one hand, frequently access and spend much time in the Internet, and on the other hand, seek to make acquaintances and are adventurously ready for new meetings. This risk group is especially large in Yerevan, then in the northern marzes and southern ones.

- Lack of literacy is noticeable in the area of Internet security, which is demonstrated by the data on upholding security rules while using the Internet. It has come to light

that approximately 30% of the users do not have a powerful antivirus program; almost half of the users make use of the same password when using different services, and approximately 17% use sites restricted by age.

Based on the findings, the following suggestions of applied nature have been developed:

- To organize a three-level awareness raising campaigns on all forms and domains of violence manifestation, to undertake special measures to transfer conflict resolution skills with the purpose of amplifying, coordinating and expanding the knowledge of the core staff of educational institutions, parents and pupils through, among other things, joint working teams of teachers, parents and pupils. It is not social pedagogues and psychologists who need special retraining, but the core teaching staff of form monitors, and especially older teachers that have a long work record. The oversight and prevention of violence should first target to introduce changes in the perceptions, knowledge and world outlook of groups of male pupils residing in Yerevan.

- To strengthen the feedback from oversight bodies, in some cases by bypassing the intermediary administrative team of the school to encourage a non-mediated information circulation, especially in marz (administrative region) communities (for example, through anonymous school surveys, expansion of hotline services, and cooperation with parents' and pupils' councils).

- To elaborate and provide special guidelines to form monitors, social pedagogues and psychologists on identifying children subjected to and prone to violence and on undertaking preventive actions, as well as to create special sample reporting formats to specifically monitor cases of sharp deterioration of psychological state and to provide specialized support.

- To add/to create positions of specialists social workers, social pedagogues and psychologists in all schools, especially in marz communities, and to provide them with clear-cut sample reporting formats for monitoring. To enhance and expand the powers of the noted specialists in educational institutions.

- To introduce a three-level pupil-parent-teacher awareness raising system to improve the literacy of safe usage of the Internet, which should be developed and introduced by state structures, implemented/offered through the support of different professional

groups, including NGOs and school IT specialists, and be thoroughly overseen on-site by the school administration and form monitors.

- To increase in schools the number of technical means for external oversight, and specifically of cameras, antivirus program packages, and measures by programming administrators on safe usage of the Internet.

- To highlight and disseminate news on the revealed violations, cases of violence, cybercrime and **specific punishment** through mass media and the Internet.

- To focus future research on boarding schools, orphanages, special and other similar institutions and, based on the findings, to conduct studies of special cases using qualitative research methodology.