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The Role of Self-Assessed Teacher's Efficacy in Assessing the Severity of Violence, Predicting Interventions, and Choosing Strategies in Cases of Peer Violence

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Annotation. The aim of this paper is to examine the predictive role of perceived teacher's efficacy in assessing the severity of violence, predicting interventions, and selecting strategies in cases of peer violence. The research was conducted on a representative sample (N = 639) teachers in Croatia. Teachers with a higher perception of teacher's efficacy are more inclined to assess violence more seriously and are more likely to intervene, and those who assess violence more seriously will intervene more often.

Keywords: *teachers, school, violence, self-efficacy, prevention, strategies.*

Introduction

Peer violence was recognized in the late 20th century as a major public health and school problem worldwide (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Despite numerous efforts, campaigns, programs and research, the situation has not changed in the 21st century; in fact, the problem is progressing. Therefore, intensive search for ways to reduce or stop violence continues. So far, efforts of scientists and practitioners have been directed

towards children, but recently the focus has shifted to teachers whose role has been rather neglected (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Recent literature is increasingly focused on understanding teachers' responses to violent incidents (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Particular attention is paid to factors that predict teachers' response to peer violence, being mostly a) individual-professional (attitudes, beliefs, empathy, perception of efficacy, job satisfaction, etc.); b) relational (quality of teacher-student relationship); c) contextual and situational factors (class atmosphere, characteristics of violence, etc.) (De Luca et al., 2019; Yoon et al., 2016). This paper will analyze the individual-professional factor - the role of teacher's efficacy in assessing the severity of violence and predicting interventions, as well as selecting strategies in cases of peer violence.

Peer violence: characteristics, forms and frequency

Peer violence is often defined as a special form of aggressive, unprovoked, malicious behavior that recurs with the aim of inflicting pain and harm on the victim, who cannot defend himself, in the real (traditional) and / or virtual world (cyberbullying) (Bilić, 2018; Bjereld et al., 2019). In order to achieve the set goals, perpetrators who are more powerful than the victim (physically, psychologically, or socially) use a wide range of violence modalities which happen individually or in combination. Among them, the most recognizable and most noticeable are direct (open, immediate) forms, which include physical (intentional infliction of pain and injuries to hands, feet, objects) and verbal (infliction of pain by words) violence. In addition to these traditional forms of peer violence, there is also relational violence (aimed at destroying social relations, and damaging reputation and status of the victim), which is more often performed indirectly or covertly (Bilić, 2018). An increasing number of students use the possibilities of modern technology for malicious attacks and harm to peers, and the victim can hardly be protected and defended, and due to anonymity and covert action, the perpetrator is difficult to detect (Bilić, 2018; 2020). The literature mentions a wide range of forms of cyberbullying: insulting messages, harassment, gossip and slander, digital identity theft, exclusion from virtual groups, sexting and video recording of violence, etc. (Bilić, 2020).

Earlier research suggests that teachers perceive direct forms of violence, primarily physical, somewhat less verbal, as very serious compared to covert forms (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). However, latest research shows that they are increasingly directing their attention and noticing the seriousness of cyberbullying, while they do not recognize relational violence nor consider it serious (Bilić, 2022).

In a study conducted by Bradshaw et al. (2013), 43% of teachers surveyed stated that peer violence is an important or major problem in their schools. It is primarily worrying that a large number of children are involved in violence. This is confirmed by the results of research conducted by Husky et al. (2020), on a sample of primary school students

from the EU, and 14.3% of them were identified as perpetrators of violence, 18.2% as victims and 19% as perpetrators-victims. The largest number of children engaging in violence are 12–15 years old (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Another cause for concern is that peer violence leaves large and serious consequences for all children involved, and especially for victims. Recent research and meta-analyzes consistently show association of peer victimization with internalized problems: primarily with anxiety and depression in childhood and adolescence, but also during adulthood (Bilić, 2018; Okumu et al., 2020), suicidal ideas (Hindu and Patchin, 2018) and double chances of committing suicide (Baiden & Tadeo, 2020).

For these reasons, prevalence and severity of the consequences, there is a need to identify factors that can contribute to reducing peer violence. In this regard, according to recent research, teachers have an important role to play, and researchers are beginning to examine their characteristics which can predict interventions in cases of peer violence (De Luca et al., 2019). Accordingly, this paper analyzes the relationship between teacher's efficacy, perceived severity of violence and teacher intervention strategies in cases of peer violence.

Teacher interventions

Teachers are first adults to often witness direct forms of peer violence or to be approached by students in cases of indirect, covert peer violence. In such situations, they can react in several ways: they can a) observe, ignore, and trivialize violence and not intervene, or b) they can intervene (De Luca et al., 2019). When teachers are unaware of seriousness of violence or consider it normative behavior, common among peers, or do not feel sympathy for the victim, they most often do not respond. One of the common reasons for teachers' passivity in situations of violence is the perception that interventions will not be able to achieve any results (De Luca et al., 2019).

But if they do choose to react in situations of peer violence, teachers' responses vary considerably. Many of them use authoritarian-punitive strategies, most often towards perpetrators. A small proportion of them may also react inappropriately to victims, condemning their inability to protect themselves and stand up for themselves, and some even believe that victimization is deserved (Bjereld et al., 2019). Authoritarian-punitive strategies ultimately have minimal effects because they do not help children understand reasons and consequences of their behavior and do not lead them to change. Other teachers use individual-supportive strategies. They are most often focused on victims by helping them individually, providing emotional and social support, and showing understanding and empathy. A small proportion of teachers work with perpetrators individually instructing them on the need for behavior change. Recently, the importance of supportive-cooperative strategies has been pointed out. Their goal is to involve all students in solving the problem of peer violence, to precisely determine their activities and education at the class level, and to encourage mutual cooperation. In addition, efforts are

made to involve parents and other school professionals in solving this problem (De Luca et al., 2019). Regardless of the reasons and whether they choose a passive strategy or intervene in any way, teachers by their actions implicitly have strong influence on students' attitudes and behavior toward violence (Wachs et al., 2019).

Certainly, the crucial question is: why do some teachers not react in cases of peer violence and others do? Among the individual factors that predict teachers' response to peer violence, a factor which stands out is their efficacy.

The role of teacher's efficacy in predicting teachers' response to peer violence

Self-perceived teacher's efficacy can be determined as individual's assessment of their own ability to organize and execute certain actions necessary to achieve desired goals or outcomes (Bandura, 1994). What is also important is person's belief that he or she is capable of mastering certain, specific tasks, such as efficacy in dealing with peer violence (Fischer et al., 2021). Efficacy determines behavior and the amount of effort that individuals put into it, the choice of activities and perseverance in reviewing the difficulties that may arise (Ratkajec Gašević et al., 2016). Teachers' beliefs in their efficacy are influenced by successful personal experiences in similar situations and perceptions of the success of others. This paper will discuss the subjectively perceived ability of teachers, i.e., their own judgment that they are able to intervene and contribute to reduction of peer violence and achieve the desired educational outcomes.

Recent literature states that beliefs about one's own ability to address peer violence are likely to facilitate or hinder teachers' responses, or their behaviors in such situations (Yoon et al., 2016). If teachers think they can respond successfully in situations of peer violence and thus contribute to stopping it, they will also intervene more often (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Fischer & Bilz, 2019; Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Teachers who were more confident that they could successfully intervene intended to do so and believed that such interventions would lead to a positive outcome (Collier et al., 2015). In addition, teachers with a higher level of self-assessed efficacy are less likely to ignore peer violence (Yoon, 2004). Thus, this and other research suggest a link between interventions and teacher's efficacy (Acquadro et al., 2017; Fischer & Bilz, 2019). Some research shows that efficacy plays an important role in teachers' responses and reactions to various forms of peer violence. Thus, efficacy has been found to predict teachers' intention to intervene in situations of direct forms of (physical, verbal) violence (Yoon, 2004), but also in cases of indirect forms of violence, especially relational (Dedousis-Wallace et al., 2014; Yoon, 2004).

However, findings of empirical research on the role of perceived efficacy as a predictor of teacher intervention in cases of peer violence are inconsistent. Namely, in some of them, the connection between teacher's efficacy and reactions, i.e., a proactive role in incidents of violence, has not been established (De Luca et al., 2019; Yoon et al, 2016).

Research to date has mainly examined association of perceived efficacy with the likelihood of intervening in situations of peer violence, but not which intervention strategies

they apply (Fischer et al., 2021). Therefore, this paper examines whether teachers with higher self-assessment of efficacy choose a different intervention strategy than their colleagues with lower self-assessed efficacy.

Method

In order to examine the relationship between self-assessed efficacy and perceived severity of violent situations in predicting teacher intervention in cases of peer violence, we conducted a qualitative empirical study.

The aim of this research is to examine the role of self-assessed teacher's efficacy in assessing severity, predicting interventions, and selecting strategies in cases of peer violence.

Tasks and hypotheses

In line with the aim, the first task is to examine the relationship between teachers' perceived efficacy and their assessment of the severity of violence, and the likelihood of intervention in cases of peer violence. The second task is to examine the moderating effect of the perception of the severity of violence on the relationship between teacher's efficacy and the likelihood of their intervention, and the third is to examine differences in self-assessed efficacy levels depending on strategies used toward perpetrator and victim.

H1: We expect that there is a positive correlation between perceived self-assessed efficacy of respondents and the assessment of the severity of violence and the likelihood of intervention in cases of peer violence.

H2: We expect that in the relationship between self-assessed efficacy and the likelihood of intervention, the perception of the severity of violence has a moderating effect.

H3. We expect teachers to differ in their level of self-perceived efficacy depending on specific intervention strategies towards perpetrators and victims of peer violence.

H3: We assume that participants who choose cooperative strategies have the highest levels of assessed self-assessed efficacy, and those who tend not to intervene in cases of peer violence show the lowest levels of self-assessed efficacy.

Respondents

This study involved 639 (89% women and 11% men) primary school teachers from different macro-regions of the Republic of Croatia (Zagreb or Central Croatia, Osijek or Eastern Croatia, Rijeka and Split or Dalmatian macro-regions). The average age of the respondents was 43 (SD = 10,599), and the average length of service was about 17 years (M = 16.84, s SD = 10,858). Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics for the school year 2019/2020, a total of 29,422 teachers (of which 24,673 were women) were employed in primary schools in the Republic of Croatia. A representative sample size

was calculated using the online service *Sample Size Calculator*, with a confidence level of 95% and an interval of 4 and N = 590 teachers. The schools in which respondents work are located in rural and urban areas, and even islands are included. A slightly higher number of respondents work in the city (56%), and the remaining 44% work in a village (25%) or a smaller town (19%). An equal number of surveyed teachers are employed as class (47%) and subject (53%) teachers.

Procedure

The survey was conducted during 2020. Schools from different regions were randomly selected, after which the informed consent of school principals and respondents was obtained. Only one school refused to participate in this research. At the beginning of the questionnaire, the respondents were explained the purpose of the research, guaranteed anonymity, and possibility to give up at any time, and all the provisions of the Code of Ethics for research with people were respected. After part of the research was conducted using the paper-pencil method, schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so we were forced to conduct an online survey in some schools. An equal number of respondents completed the questionnaire online (N = 311) as well as the paper-pencil method (N = 328), but since subsequent testing did not reveal differences between these groups, it was concluded that they can be considered as one sample.

Instruments

1. The questionnaire of socio-demographic characteristics contained questions about gender, age, length of service, location of the school they work.

2. Vignettes (Yoon & Kerber, 2003).

Vignettes are short, carefully constructed hypothetical situations referring to peer violence, which represent a systematic combination of certain characteristics of the phenomenon being examined. They are considered a particularly useful technique when examining sensitive topics, including violence, because they "enable the assessor to express his or her response or attitude to a situation in a way which is not threatening to them" (Brković et al., 2012, p. 278). That way they can give a more honest answer on how they would act in a certain situation. For the purposes of this paper, extended vignettes originally created by Yoon and Kerber (2003) were used. They offered 6 vignettes (two each for physical, verbal, and relational violence). To this we added two more vignettes for cyberbullying. Each vignette or story begins in the same way, with a description of the situation of violence (Example: When entering the classroom, you hear a child tell another child that they will post ugly things about him and his parents on social media if he doesn't write their homework. This is not the first time it has happened). All vignettes showed violence as a repetitive pattern of behavior, were designed so that they could happen at all levels of schooling, regardless of gender and age, and all of them used the term child. After the vignettes were offered, respondents rated the severity of

each descriptive situation on a five-point scale (1 - not at all to 5 - very serious). They then assessed probability of intervening in the described situation on a five-point scale (1 - none to 5 - very probable). They also assessed which strategies they would use in situations of violence for the victim and the perpetrator (non-response or in situations of reacting - cooperative, punitive, or supportive strategies).

3. Teacher's efficacy scale.

The original, shorter version of the Teacher's efficacy scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), composed of 12 items, was used. Its two subscales were used in this paper: efficiency in engaging with students (4 items) and classroom management (3 items). Also, for the purposes of this paper, items on the perception of teacher's efficacy in preventing peer violence were constructed and added (five items; example: How much can you influence the prevention of verbal violence among students?). Participants, on a five-point scale (1 = none to 5 = high influence), assessed their agreement with individual statements. A higher score on the scale indicates a higher level of teacher's efficacy. Considering added items, factor analysis on the scale was performed by the principal components method. According to the scree plot criterion, it was shown that the scale should be best viewed as one-factor, i.e., its result can be viewed as a result of the perception of overall teacher's efficacy. The final factor solution explains 46% of the total variance. The scale modified in this way also shows high internal consistency where Cronbach's alpha is $\alpha = 0.89$ (all 12 items).

Results

In order to examine the role of perceived teacher's efficacy in assessing severity, predicting interventions, and selecting strategies in cases of peer violence, we made a descriptive analysis of the variables used, and they are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Indicators of the Scales Used (Probability of Intervention, Perception of Severity of Violence and Teacher's Efficacy)

	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Min	Max
Probability of intervention	638	4.74	0.313	-2.202	7.640	2.75	5.00
Perception of severity of violence	638	4.46	0.357	-1.384	4.526	2.25	5.00
Teacher's efficacy	626	3.85	0.501	-.413	.553	1.58	5.00

Table 1 shows that distributions of the probability of intervention and the perception of the severity of violence are negatively asymmetric. This indicates a high sensitivity of teachers to peer violence, i.e., most teachers choose higher answers on the offered scale,

which also indicate a higher probability of intervention in cases of violence. The average value of the probability of intervention is M = 4.74 (SD = 0.313), and the average value of the perception of the severity of violence, M = 4.46 (SD = 0.357). However, the average value of perceived teacher's efficacy M = 3.85 (SD = 0.501) is slightly lower, and the results on the efficacy scale are distributed normally.

According to the first task, we determined there is correlation between key variables, and the results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Relationship Between Teacher's Efficacy, Perception of Severity of Violence, and Likelihood of Intervention

	Teacher's efficacy	**Perception of severity of violence**
Teacher's efficacy		
Perception of severity of violence	.200**	
Probability of intervention	.305**	.713**

** $p < .01$

Self-assessed teacher's efficacy is significantly and positively connected to perception of severity of violence ($r = 0.200$, $p < .01$) and to probability of intervention in the case of peer violence ($r = 0.305$, $p < .01$). In other words, teachers with higher perception of efficacy are more likely to perceive violence more seriously and are more likely to intervene. A high positive correlation was also found between probability of intervention and perception of the severity of violence ($r = 0.713$, $p < .01$), which indicates that teachers with the perception of higher severity of violence will intervene more often. Thus, the first hypothesis is confirmed.

When talking about the relationship between self-assessed teacher's efficacy and teacher intervention in cases of peer violence, the most researched was the direct, linear relationship between them (Fischer et al. 2020). However, in recent years, increasing importance has been given to analyzes aimed at understanding more complex relationships and mechanisms on which the analyzed relation rests, i.e., the conditions in which the predictor predicts a criterion variable (Hayes, 2017; Hayes & Rockwood, 2017; Jose, 2013 according to Lazić, 2020). Accordingly, in this paper, the moderator effect of the perception of the severity of violence on the relationship between perceived efficacy and likelihood of teacher intervention was examined.

For this purpose, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed, and in the first step, self-assessed teacher's efficacy was included, i.e., the predictive value of efficacy was tested on the probability of intervention. In the second step, the perception of the severity of violence was added to the model and the predictor effect of teacher's efficacy and perception of the severity of violence on the likelihood of intervention was tested. In the third step, in order to test the moderating effect of these two variables, the inter-

action variable was included, i.e., the product of teacher's efficacy and perception of the severity of violence. Prior to performing the analysis, all included variables were centered to eliminate the problem of multicollinearity when testing the interaction effect. The moderating effect of the perception of the severity of violence on the relationship between self-perceived teacher's efficacy and the likelihood of intervention is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

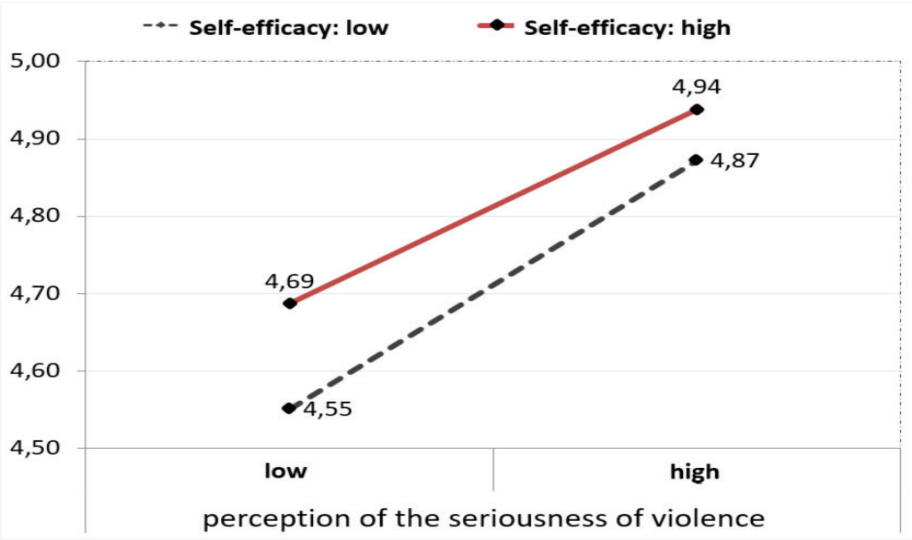
Moderating Effect of Perception of Severity of Violence on the Relationship Between Teacher's Efficacy and Probability of Intervention

		β	p	R^2	p	ΔR^2	p
1	Teacher's efficacy	.305	.000	.093	.000		
2	Teacher's efficacy	.169	.000	.538	.000	.445	.000
	Severity of violence	.681	.000				
3	Teacher's efficacy	.170	.000	.558	.000	.019	.000
	Severity of violence	.654	.000				
	Teacher's efficacy X Severity of violence	-.142	.000				

In the table 3 above, it is evident that self-assessed teacher's efficacy is a significant predictor of the probability of intervention in the case of peer violence in the first step of the analysis ($\beta = .305$, $p < .001$). It itself explains 9.3% of the variance in the probability of intervention, which is a relatively high percentage for the only predictor. When, in the second step of the analysis, the perception of the severity of violence is included, the percentage of explained variance in the probability of intervention increases significantly to as much as 53.8% ($\Delta R^2 = .445$, $p < .001$). Both predictors remain statistically significant (β (teacher's efficacy) = .169, $p < .001$; β (severity) = .681, $p < .001$) and positive. This indicates that participants who have higher levels of self-assessed efficacy, as well as participants who perceive violence as more serious, are also more likely to intervene. In the last step of the analysis, the inclusion of the interaction of self-assessed efficacy and perception of the severity of violence also leads to a significant increase in the explained variance of intervention probability ($\Delta R^2 = .019$, $p < .001$), and the interaction variable represents a significant predictor ($\beta = -.142$, $p < .001$). Such results indicate to existence of a significant moderating effect of the perception of severity of violence on the relationship between self-assessed teacher's efficacy and the likelihood of intervention, thus confirming the second hypothesis. The direction of the interaction effect of teacher's efficacy and perception of the severity of violence is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Interaction Effect of Teacher's Efficacy and Perception of Severity of Violence on the Likelihood of Teacher Intervention in Cases of Peer Violence



The Figure shows a slight interactive effect of the perception of severity of violence on the relationship between self-assessed efficacy and likelihood of intervention. The lowest probability of intervention is present in participants with low perceived efficacy and low perception of severity of violence. Participants with high levels of teacher's efficacy and high assessment of severity of violence have the highest probability of intervention. Still, in the group with low perception of efficacy, in the probability of intervention, a slightly sharper increase is observed between low and high perception of the severity of violence compared to the group of participants with high self-assessed efficacy. In other words, teachers with high level of efficacy are less prone to change in the likelihood of intervention when assessing severity of violence as lower.

Teacher's efficacy and selection of intervention strategies in cases of peer violence

To determine whether teachers are more prone to specific intervention strategies in cases of peer violence according to their level of self-assessed efficacy, we conducted the Kruskall-Wallis, a nonparametric test equivalent to one-way ANOVA. The test was chosen because of the asymmetry of the distribution of results on the vignettes and the large difference in the number of participants by groups of propensity to choose the intervention strategy. This procedure was applied when testing differences in teacher's efficacy between groups that choose different strategies towards perpetrators of peer violence and groups that choose different strategies towards victims of peer violence.

A post-hoc test (Dunn test, with Bonferroni correction) was performed for each analysis to see exactly which groups differed significantly.

Initially, there was a large difference in the number of participants depending on the dominant intervention strategy. Therefore, a criterion for grouping according to strategies was not the dominant strategy, but the tendency to select less represented strategies in at least one of the vignettes, i.e., more often than other participants. Thus, those who chose the option not to intervene in a case of peer violence on at least one of the vignettes are classified in the non-intervention group. The group of authoritarian-punishing strategies includes those who chose this type of intervention on at least one of the vignettes, but never chose non-intervention. The group of individuals-supportive strategies includes those who have chosen this type of strategy at least once, but have never chosen non-intervention or authoritarian-punitive strategies. Finally, the group of cooperative strategies included those who chose this type of intervention for all vignettes.

Differences in teacher's efficacy depending on the choice of intervention strategies towards the perpetrator of peer violence

As noted earlier, differences in level of teacher's efficacy depending on the strategy were tested especially depending on the strategies used towards the perpetrator and the victim. This chapter presents the results depending on which strategies the participants choose towards perpetrators. Table 4 shows the differences in average value on the teacher's efficacy scale between groups of teachers more prone to specific strategies towards the perpetrator of peer violence.

Table 4

Difference in Teacher's Efficacy Between Groups More Prone to Specific Strategies Towards the Perpetrator of Peer Violence

	N	M	SD	χ^2	p
No intervention	24	3.55	0.714	17.809	.000
Individual-supportive strategies	292	3.84	0.479		
Cooperative strategies	150	3.98	0.494		
Authoritarian-punishing strategies	159	3.80	0.482		

The results show that groups prone to choosing different strategies differ significantly in the average level of self-assessed efficacy ($\chi 2 = 17.809$, $p < .001$). A review of arithmetic means shows that the highest levels of efficacy are shown by teachers who choose only cooperative strategies ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.494$), and the lowest levels of efficacy are shown by those who at least sometimes choose non-intervention ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 714$). However, which specific groups differ significantly from each other and in which direction, we see in Table 5 and Figure 2.

Table 5

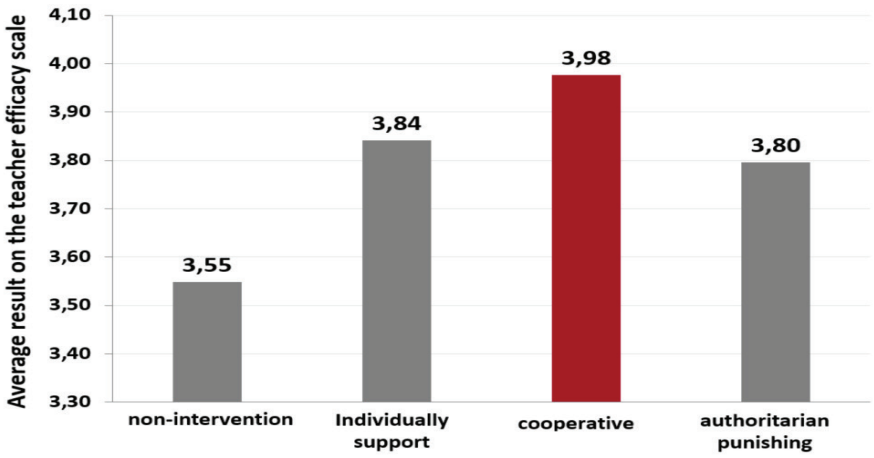
Post-Hoc Comparison of Individual Groups

	z	adjusted p
No intervention-Authoritarian-punishing strategies	-1.392	.984
No intervention-Individual-supportive strategies	-1.928	.323
No intervention-Cooperative strategies	**-3.175**	**.009**
Authoritarian-punishing strategies-Individual-supportive strategies	1.061	1.000
Authoritarian-punishing strategies-Cooperative strategies	3.455	.003
Individual-supportive strategies-Cooperative strategies	**-2.874**	**.024**

Table 5 shows that significant differences exist between the group that always chooses cooperative strategies and all other groups, i.e., teachers who are prone to other strategies. According to Figure 2, it is evident that participants who always choose cooperative strategies have the highest levels of self-assessed efficacy. Participants who chose non-intervention at least once showed the lowest levels of self-assessed efficacy, followed by participants who chose authoritarian-punitive strategies at least once, and participants who chose individual-supportive strategies.

Figure 2

Selection of Intervention Strategy Towards the Perpetrator of Peer Violence Depending on Self-Assessed Efficacy



Differences in teacher's efficacy depending on the choice of intervention strategies towards the perpetrator of peer violence

Table 6 shows differences in self-assessed efficacy, depending on the propensity to choose individual strategies towards victims of peer violence.

Table 6

Difference in Self-Assessed Efficacy Between Groups More Prone to Specific Strategies Towards Victims of Peer Violence

	N	M	SD	χ^2	p
No intervention	26	3.57	0.662		
Individual-supportive strategies	508	3.83	0.487	15.933	.000
Cooperative strategies	91	4.03	0.474		

As with the choice of strategies by perpetrator, we find a statistically significant difference in average efficacy between groups of teachers prone to choosing different intervention strategies in the case of peer violence ($\chi2 = 15.933$, $p < .001$). An initial review of arithmetic means indicates that the highest levels of efficacy are found in participants who choose exclusively cooperative strategies (M = 4.03, SD = 0.474), and the lowest levels of efficacy are found in teachers who at least sometimes choose non-intervention (M=3.57; SD = 0.662). According to the table, we also see that none of the participants, in any situation, chose authoritarian-punitive strategies towards the victim of peer violence.

We can see which specific groups differ significantly according to the post-hoc comparisons shown in Table 7.

Table 7

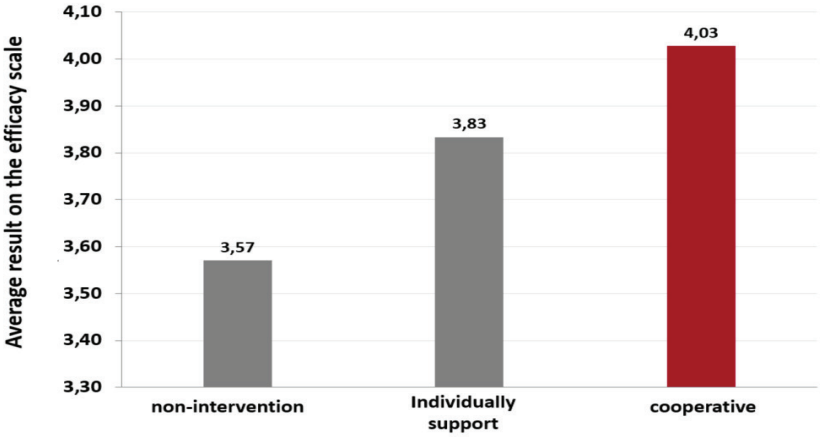
Post-Hoc Comparison of Individual Groups

	z	Adjusted p
No intervention-Individual-supportive strategies	-1.732	.250
No intervention-Cooperative strategies	**-3.324**	**.003**
Individual-supportive strategies-Cooperative strategies	**-3.434**	**.002**

The results show that significant differences exist between the group that always chooses cooperative strategies and the remaining two groups (Table 7). Participants who always choose cooperative strategies have the highest levels of self-assessed efficacy (Figure 3). At the same time, the same as when it comes to strategies towards perpetrators, participants who chose non-intervention at least once show the lowest levels of teacher's efficacy.

Figure 3

Selection of Intervention Strategy Towards the Victim of Peer Violence Depending on Self-Assessed Efficacy



Based on the above, we can conclude that, regarding the choice of intervention strategies for perpetrators and victims of peer violence, teachers who choose cooperative strategies have significantly higher self-assessed efficacy and differ from teachers who choose other strategies. The lowest levels of efficacy were recorded among teachers who at least occasionally chose not to intervene in cases of peer violence. Thus, the third and fourth hypotheses are confirmed.

Discussion

Based on the conducted research, it is evident that primary school teachers are highly sensitized to peer violence, have a high probability of intervention and perceive violence as a serious problem. It is possible that numerous education sessions about peer violence, which were organized as part of professional development of teachers, also contributed to this result. However, it should be noted that this is a teacher's self-assessment in hypothetical, prototypical situations, which could certainly have affected the results. In addition, teachers participated in this research voluntarily, so it is possible that they responded due to a special interest in this topic. However, some authors warn that teachers generally tend to overestimate their own capacities and abilities to recognize and address peer violence, and tend to underestimate its complex nature and lack a clear understanding of what violence is (Dedousis-Wallace & Shute, 2009; Oldenburg et al., 2015). It seems that teachers are somewhat more objective, but still assess their efficacy as high, i.e., their own ability to organize and carry out certain activities needed to combat peer violence. And in other studies, according to Fischer et al. (2021), teachers reported higher levels of

efficacy. These results can be explained by the fact that due to frequent incidents of peer violence, teachers had to face it at some point in their working lives and react in some way. In a study by Bradshaw et al. (2013) 62% of teachers stated that they had witnessed peer violence at least once in the last month. And it is known that beliefs about teacher's efficacy are influenced by successful personal experiences in similar situations, and this is one of the main sources of their efficacy (Bandura, 1994). However, teacher's efficacy is also formed on the basis of observing success of others (Bandura, 1994), and observing and analyzing how their colleagues act, which is often discussed in chambers due to a large number of cases of peer violence, and could affect this result.

Correlation analysis results show that self-assessed efficacy is statistically significantly and positively correlated to perception of severity of violence and probability of intervention in cases of peer violence. Thus, teachers with higher perception of efficacy are more likely to perceive violence more seriously and are more likely to intervene. This result is expected and confirmed in other research that suggests that teachers who think they can contribute to reducing violence will be more likely to intervene (Bradshaw Sawyer & O'Brennan, 2007; Fischer & Bilz, 2019; Yoon & Bauman, 2014; Yoon, 2004; Veenstra et al., 2014). It is also pointed out in literature that one's own beliefs are involved in the process of assessing a violent situation (Yoon et al., 2016). A clear correlation was found between probability of intervention and perception of severity of violence, i.e., that teachers with perception of a greater severity of violence will intervene more often. On the other hand, as stated by Yoon (2004), teachers take incidents of violence very seriously if they are extremely compassionate or show a high level of efficacy.

But it is not just about correlation; the results of regression analysis have shown that self-assessed efficacy is also a significant predictor of likelihood of intervention in case of peer violence, which has been confirmed in long-term research (Yoon, 2004). Thus, it was found that there is a significant predictive value of self-assessed efficacy on the likelihood of teacher intervention in cases of peer violence. When the perception of severity of violence was included in regression analysis, the percentage of explained variance increased to as much as 53.8%, which indicates the possible conditions under which teacher's efficacy predicts the likelihood of intervention. However, the perception of severity of violence proved to be a mild but significant moderator of the relationship between teacher's efficacy and the likelihood of intervention in such a way that a low perception of severity of violence has a stronger decline in the likelihood of intervention in teachers with low level of efficacy, then in teacher with high level of efficacy. These results significantly expand our knowledge and indicate that the relationship between self-assessed efficacy and intervention is complex, and perception of severity of violence has a significant interaction effect. The lowest probability of intervention was found in teachers with low perceived efficacy and low perception of severity of violence. Participants with high levels of self-assessed efficacy and high assessment of severity of violence have the highest probability of intervention. In addition, they are less susceptible to change in

likelihood of intervention in assessing the severity of violence as lower. In their review of empirical research, Fischer et al. (2021) also state that teachers with a higher belief in their efficacy are more likely to intervene in situations of peer violence than their colleagues who have lower perceived efficacy. However, in these papers, a linear relationship between efficacy and teacher intervention was observed, and the results of this research indicate the complexity of this relationship and the significant role of assessing the severity of violence.

Furthermore, Fischer et al. (2021) suggest that there is little knowledge on which intervention strategies teachers practice. Therefore, as part of the third task, we examined whether teachers with higher self-assessed efficacy choose a different strategy than teachers with lower perceived efficacy. When it comes to choosing intervention strategies towards perpetrators and victims of peer violence, in both cases, teachers who choose cooperative strategies have significantly higher self-assessed efficacy than teachers who choose other strategies. The lowest levels of efficacy were recorded among teachers who at least occasionally chose not to intervene in cases of peer violence. The perception of low efficacy and the associated feeling that interventions will not be able to achieve any result (De Luca et al., 2019) are common reasons for teacher passivity in situations of violence. Not intervening, ignoring, or trivializing violence can be interpreted by students as approving of such behavior, implicit acceptance, which has seriously detrimental consequences. In such situations, victims may feel less motivated to seek help, perpetrators encouraged to behave in a way that is approved, and other students demotivated to help victims or confront perpetrators (De Luca et al., 2019; Wachs et al., 2019). On the other hand, students most often perceive passive behavior of their teachers in situations of peer violence as an expression of their helplessness, incompetence, fear of violence, but also as a sign of negligence, and conclude that they will not help them in similar situations (Bjereld et al., 2019; Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Because of all of the above, it is likely that violence in such schools will increase.

Most students expect teachers to actively intervene when violence occurs, and such reactions increase the sense of security in the classroom (De Luca et al., 2019). Teachers who intervene in cases of violence, no matter how successful they are, send the message that violence is unacceptable behavior that should be actively combated. Thus, teacher's decision to act in situations of peer violence reinforces or inhibits the behavior of perpetrators, victims, but also other students and affects their perception and reactions to violence (Acquadro Maran et al., 2017). Another interesting result of this research is that teachers who perceive themselves to be more effective choose cooperative strategies. Most likely, they themselves noticed that peer violence is a collective phenomenon, and that focus on working only with main actors, victims and perpetrators, does not lead to desired results (Bilić, 2018). Other students, parents, and teachers also play an important role in prevention of peer violence. Until recently, teachers rarely involved peers in addressing peer violence (Yoon et al., 2016), so hopefully this shift points to a new direction.

Although this research expands our understanding of the complexity of relationships and the role of self-assessed efficacy in teacher reactions and the choice of intervention strategies in cases of peer violence, it also has its limitations. It is primarily a matter of teachers' self-assessment of their effectiveness, assessment of severity and reactions in situations of peer violence, and it would be desirable to include other, more objective sources of assessment (students, principals, colleagues) in future research. It should also be noted that respondents responded to hypothetical incidents, and it is possible that they behave differently in real situations of violence. In addition, the nature of this study did not allow for definition of causal relationships.

Conclusions

The results of this research confirm that teacher's efficacy is an important individual factor that predicts their response to peer violence. The dynamics, continuation, and possibly escalation of this serious problem in schools largely depend on the answers or reactions and quality interventions of teachers in situations of peer violence. If teachers think that they can react successfully in situations of peer violence and thus contribute to stopping it, they will intervene more often and are less likely to ignore violence.

The findings of this study show that there is a significant predictive value of self-assessed efficacy on the likelihood of teacher intervention in cases of peer violence. In addition, perception of severity of violence proved to be a mild but significant moderator of the link between teacher's efficacy and likelihood of intervention. The lowest probability of intervention was found in teachers with low perceived efficacy and low perception of the severity of violence. Teachers with high levels of efficacy and a high assessment of the severity of violence have the highest probability of intervention. When it comes to choosing intervention strategies towards perpetrators and victims of peer violence, in both cases, teachers who choose cooperative strategies have significantly higher self- assessed efficacy than teachers who choose other strategies. The lowest levels of efficacy were recorded among teachers who at least occasionally chose not to intervene in the case of peer violence.

All factors that predict the success of teachers' responses to peer violence should be a priority in their initial education. Likewise, one of the tasks of professional development of teachers should be to increase their specific efficacy in solving the problem of peer violence. On the other hand, work on prevention, teacher competence and intervention strategies in cases of peer violence can also contribute to increasing their efficacy. However, when the perception of efficacy is high, a person tends to engage in activities, in this case education, which contribute to development of his skills and abilities, so additional effort should be put into those who perceive themselves as less efficient.

Article Language

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Mokytojų savęs vertinimo veiksmingumo vaidmuo, suvokiant vaikų tarpusavio smurto sunkumą, numatant intervencijas ir pasirenkant strategijas

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Santrauka

Šio darbo tikslas – išnagrinėti numatomą mokytojų veiksmingumo suvokimo vaidmenį vertinant vaikų tarpusavio smurto sunkumą, numatant intervencijas ir pasirenkant strategijas smurto atvejais. Tyrimo reprezentatyvi imtis – 639 (N = 639) Kroatijos respublikos pradinių klasių mokytojai, kurių vidutinis amžius 43 metai (SD = 10 599). Duomenys buvo renkami naudojant vinjetes ir mokytojų veiksmingumo skalę kartu su socialinių ir demografinių charakteristikų klausimynu.

Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad mokytojai, kurių veiksmingumas yra aukšto suvokimo, labiau linkę rimčiau vertinti smurtą ir labiau linkę įsikišti į situaciją, o būtent tie, kurie smurtą vertina rimčiau, dažniau tai ir daro. Mokytojų veiksmingumas taip pat yra reikšmingas įsikišimo į smurtinę situaciją tikimybės rodiklis, o smurto sunkumo suvokimas yra reikšmingas tų santykių tarpininkas. Mažiausia įsikišimo tikimybė yra mokytojų, kurių veiksmingumas ir smurto suvokimo sunkumas yra žemiausias, o mokytojų, kurių veiksmingumas ir smurto suvokimo sunkumas yra aukštas, – didžiausia tikimybė. Mokytojai, kurie pasirenka bendradarbiavimo strategijas, turi aukščiausią savęs vertinimo suvokimo veiksmingumą, o tie, kurie yra linkę į nesikišimą, pasižymi žemiausiu savęs vertinimo suvokimo veiksmingumu. Visi veiksniai, lemiantys mokytojų reagavimo į vaikų tarpusavio smurtą sėkmę, turėtų būti mokytojų pradinio ugdymo prioritetas. Taip pat vienas iš mokytojų profesinio tobulėjimo uždavinių turėtų būti didinti mokytojų konkretų veiksmingumą sprendžiant vaikų tarpusavio smurto problemą. Kita vertus, darbas, susijęs su prevencija, mokytojų kompetencija ir intervencijos strategijomis vaikų tarpusavio smurto atvejais, taip pat gali prisidėti prie mokytojų veiksmingumo suvokimo didėjimo.

Esminiai žodžiai: *mokytojai, mokykla, smurtas, saviveiksmingumas, prevencija, strategijos.*

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