

Participation for Protection Questionnaire Findings

Introduction

The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre in the National University of Ireland Galway has joined with six research partners across Europe from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Romania, England and Northern Ireland to contribute to a project entitled 'Participation for Protection' (P4P). The project is led by the Centre for Children's Rights in Queens University, Belfast.

The aim of P4P is to include the voices and experiences of children and young people when it comes to training adult professionals on how best to respond to and help children and young people who are experiencing violence, while also helping children gain knowledge on how to report violence and where to find support if needed.

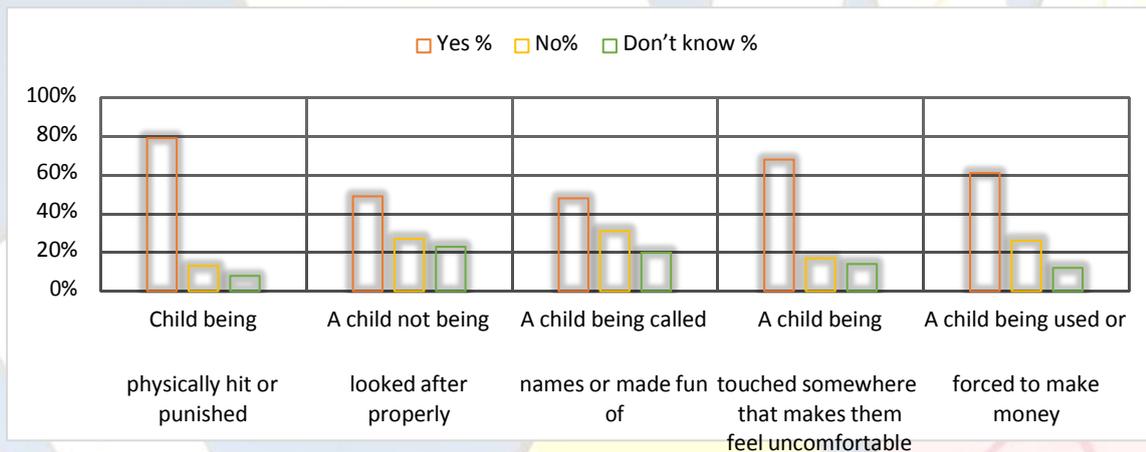
This report gives a summary of the findings from the questionnaires completed by young people in Ireland, aged between 9 to 12 years and 14 to 16 years. Over 200 children (106 boys and 97 girls) from Galway and Sligo took part. Here are the results.

What is violence?

When given a list of different forms of violence and asked which of these they recognised as actual forms of violence, most children and young people identified physical violence (being hit or punished) as a form of violence, with 83% of children seeing this as violence.

Regarding sexual violence (a child being touched somewhere that makes them feel uncomfortable), over half of the participants (73%) recognised this to be a form of violence, with more girls (81%) than boys (67%) believing this to be the case. Other behaviours identified as violence included, a child being used or forced to make money (56%) or a child being called names or made fun of (48%). Children and young people were least likely (42%) to identify neglect (a child not being looked after properly) as a form of violence. See table 1 below.

Table 1: Forms of Violence



Which forms of violence are children and young people most likely to experience?

Giving them the same list of types of violence as above, we asked the young people to tell us which forms of violence they believed children and young people are most likely to experience.

From the answers we can see that over three quarters (76%) believe that a child or young person being called names or made fun of are of the most likely forms of violence experienced. This is followed by physical violence (being hit or punished), with 63% believing that this is a form of violence children and young people are most likely to experience. A third of respondents (35%) believed sexual abuse was a form of violence children and young people are likely to experience. A point of interest was that more girls than boys believed neglect (not being looked after properly) to be a form of violence children and young people are most likely to experience.

What would children and young people do if they experienced violence or harm?

The results of this questionnaire indicate that 51% of children and young people would tell someone and ask for help, with more girls (61%) than boys (39%) saying they would ask for help. Also, 19% said they would defend themselves physically if experiencing violence, with more boys (37%) than girls (10%) indicating that they would do this. Only a small number (8%) said they would keep quiet about it.



If being harmed by a parent/guardian who would children and young people go to for help?

Most of the children and young people (33%) said they would seek help from another family member if they were being harmed by their parent or guardian, followed by a friend (21%) and the police (10%) being a source of help if being harmed. Other forms of help came from

organisations such as ChildLine or a teacher. Only a small number (4%) would not seek any help.

If being harmed by someone who is not the parent/guardian, who would children and young people go to for help?

The clear majority (73%) of children and young people would seek help from a parent/guardian if the child or young person is being harmed by someone who is not their parent. Although, if a child or young person was being harmed by a teacher, a significant number (17%) would seek help from their principal. Also, if being harmed by a friend, 52% would seek help from their parents, followed by seeking help from another friend (22%).

However, if being harmed in a public place the second source of help after their parents would be the police with 22% of children and young people saying they would contact the police for help. Only 4% of children and young people said they would not seek help at all if being harmed.

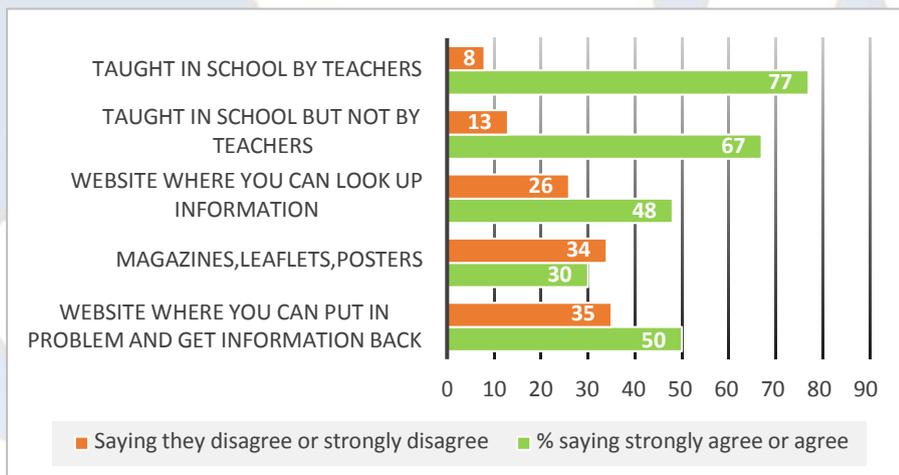
Why might children and young people not ask for help if being harmed?

A clear majority 69% said that being scared that telling someone would only make things worse would stop children and young people seeking help. This was closely followed by being afraid the person harming them would find out (61%). Other reasons for keeping quiet included, being embarrassed or self-conscious or not thinking the violence is serious enough.

What are the best ways children and young people can learn how to get help or information if being harmed?

The questionnaire provided a sample list of sources of information, advice and supports where children and young people can turn to if being harmed and asked if they agreed or disagreed that these sources were places children and young people could seek help from. The results show that respondents believe they can source information, support or advice if experiencing violence through the school system, with 80% agreeing that in schools taught by teachers is the best way, followed by 72% strongly agreeing that in the school but not by the teachers. Websites where information can be looked up was the next most popular source with just over half (56%) agreeing that this is a good source of information (see table 2). The least popular place to source information was on social media, such as Facebook.

Table 2: The Top Five Sources of Information



What is the best source of help?

Out of all the possible ways to get help, we asked children and young people to choose which one they felt was the best way of getting help. The clear majority (71%) of children and young people agreed that talking to someone personally is the best way to seek help if being harmed. A small number identified telephone helplines (7%) text helplines (3%) and websites (7%) as sources of help.

What is the best type of person to help children and young people when they are experiencing violence?

Respondents were given a list of nine qualities and asked to list in order of preference which was the most important for a person to have when helping children and young people who have experienced violence. The most important quality identified was, *a person they can confide in and who can get the violence stopped*, with 71% children stating this to be very important. This was followed closely by *listening and taking the child seriously* (69%). *Trusting the person will keep it private* is another important quality, with 52% of children and young people expressing this as a main quality. Similarly, just over half of children and young people also expressed a preference for *the person to believe them* (51%).

Two things that would best help children if being harmed?

The final question on the questionnaire asked the young people to list two things they believed would help children if they were being harmed. We created a word cloud which comprises all the words the children wrote. The larger words were those most frequently mentioned by the children and young people.



Key messages

Most children and young people perceived being physically hit and punished as a type of violence and were least likely to identify neglect as a form of violence or harm.

The majority believe that a child or young person being called names or made fun of is one of the most experienced forms of violence or harm.



A clear majority of children and young people would seek help if they were to experience violence.

Most children and young people said they would seek help from their parents or guardians if they were being harmed.



Most children and young people believed that schools were the best source of information, advice and support for children and young people.

When asked about the best qualities for a person to have and the best type of person to seek help from, someone who listens and takes children seriously is a quality very important to children and young people. Someone who can help get the problem stopped is also significantly important.



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The authors are responsible for the choice and presentation of views expressed in this report and for opinions expressed herein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organisation.

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