STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS TEEN DATING VIOLENCE –
IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Željka Jurlina1, Rozana Petani, Matilda Karamatić Brčić

University of Zadar (CROATIA)

Abstract

The phenomenon of violence can be called multi-dimensional because in different ways it affects social, individual and interpersonal areas. In the 1980s, the interest of researchers for the problem of violence among adolescents was growing because it noted that violent behaviours in intimate relationships started at a younger age. Attitudes on violence and gender roles often reflect socially acceptable settings on gender/sex, but are also the result of personal reflection on society and different social relations. Teen dating violence is an important social problem which affects a significant number of adolescents. Some of the important risk factors for violence are: stereotype beliefs about gender roles, gender based violence and the recognition of violence itself. Studies on violence in adolescent relationships usually start from the concept of gender-based violence. This indicates a link between sexual harassment, violence in partner relationships and violence against homosexual persons with deep-rooted stereotypes and expectations of gender roles. Violence in its various forms and manifestations is an integral part of our lives, and this paper will point to one of its forms affecting significantly a large number of young people.

The aim of this study was to examine the attitudes of students of third year high school in Zadar towards gender-based violence and gender roles and their perception of different forms of violence. The results show that a significant number of adolescents approve different stereotype beliefs of gender roles and gender violence, but also that a significant number of students does not recognize different forms of violence. The results of the study show that male students are more prone to different stereotype beliefs than female students. The results also show that male students fail in a significant number to recognize different forms of violent behaviour. The paper emphasizes the importance of education in gender equality as a foundation of gender-based violence prevention.

Keywords: teen dating violence, gender-based stereotypes, forms of violence, gender equality education.

1 THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE IN TEEN DATING

The notion of violence in teen dating refers to the systematic model of violent behaviour that is implemented for purposes of control, domination and intimidation of the partner [13], and in the process force, manipulation and threats can be a part of violent behaviour. Just like in intimate partner relationships with adults, violence in teen relationships is most often recognized in the next few forms: physical, emotional/psychological, sexual and economic. It is not always simple to recognize the potential signs of violence in a relationship. Namely, behaviour and gestures of persons in an emotional relationship, which could, in fact, be signs of jealousy, possessiveness and control, many adolescents consider these as commitment and passionate love. Young people in a relationship can be exposed to being called various bad names, jealous outbursts, frequent checking and control, behaviour justified by their peers and the community but also the family. Due to their experience in a violent relationship, adolescents start giving up what is important for them (i.e. going out and hanging out with friends) and they become withdrawn and isolated, completely directed towards their partner [13]. Visible changes in a person that can suggest violence in teen relationship are decline in school performance, noticeable changes in physical appearance and withdrawal. Young people who do not recognize the danger of a violent relationship in early adolescence do not know how to deal with problematic relationships, and, to a large degree, bear the risk of remaining in such a relationship, which can further develop after marriage, later causing greater intensity of violent behaviour in the family. [22].

1 Željka Jurlina ia a student of Pedagogy and Sociology at University of Zadar. She graduated in the Department of Pedagogy in April 2015.
Various researches on family violence and violence in intimate partner relationships have taken place from the end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s of the 20th century. Most of the researches were focused on violence against women, considering that women are most often the victims in intimate partner relationships. In the eighties, interest in the violence issue in teen relationships grew with researchers for it was noticed that forms of violent behaviour in intimate relationships started at an early age. Violence in adolescent relationships is a phenomenon that has only recently been recognized as a serious society issue in Croatia. The first school programmes on violence prevention in teen relationships [3] appeared parallel with the first systematic researches on violence in teen relationships. “Education, Counselling and Research Centre” was the first to conduct a research on this issue in 2004 and 2006. According to the acquired results, 60% young people had experienced a form of violence in a relationship, while 43% stated that they had behaved violently in a relationship [3]. The results of research performed in 2010 showed a higher percentage of experienced and performed violence. Namely, even 86.4% secondary school students that had been in a relationship in the last 6 months had gone through the experience of violence, while 93.1% stated that they had performed violence in a relationship [2]. Following the research conductions, this issue became even more spoken of in public. Witness were not only numerous researches on this theme within various projects, but the work of civil societies in the implementation of various prevention programmes aiming at reducing this issue through youth training as well as the training of teachers and other experts working with youth.

This work points out how violence in teen dating is one of the psychophysical and social challenges that a great number of young people are met with in their adolescent years. Namely, adolescence represents a period when partner relationships start being created and developed, and the pattern of behaviour learned then can continue even in later relationships [12]. It is difficult to cover the entire complexity of violence issue in teen relationships without an interdisciplinary approach covering cognition from different scientific disciplines (pedagogy, sociology, psychology, anthropology, medicine). This research represents only a small insight into youth attitude on violence in relationships, but can be of use in working out a wider research where violence in youth relationships will be seen into at many levels.

2 STEREOTYPES IN GENDER ROLES AND VIOLENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS

The gender division between female and male appears in all societies. However, in following changes in society through history and changes in culture, politics, economy and family relationships, it is evident that what is characteristic for a certain gender is what changes. Gender, understood as a social expression of biological sex, is closely connected to gender roles that represent different ideas, expectations and standards connected with attitude, appearance and behaviour that single societies or cultures attribute to and demand from a person of male or female gender [13]. Gender roles are developed very early through language, clothes, toys and poems. They are set down by society and their learning takes place through socializing processes with the main actors of such learning being parents, peers in a group, school and the media. [15]. Gender stereotypes are closely connected to the development of gender role and these are related to gender based prejudices which mark assumptions or beliefs expressed without any reason or justice but can lead to physical and psychological damages in men and women [16]. Even though closely connected, stereotypes in this work are divided into two groups: stereotypes in gender roles and stereotypes in violence and violence victims. Violence and violence victim stereotypes reflect some motives of violence that can be defined as different assurances, claims or studies of phenomena that are not based on proven facts, but they offer appropriate and simplified explanations of violence [4]. Besides influencing the victimization of the violence victim, stereotypes minimize the seriousness of the violence issue as well as the responsibility of the committer. [14]. Williams and Best (1990) point out that adopting gender stereotypes starts before the age of five and accelerates at the beginning of schooling and completes itself in the adolescence period [15]. Gender stereotypes have a significant influence on both genders. Namely, they contribute to the adoption of stereotype thinking which influences the further development of a person. Stereotypes also often support the existence of gender inequality through supporting prejudice, sexism and discrimination [14].

Even though the traditional understanding of “womanhood” and “manhood” is changing, the stereotype understanding of gender roles is further widespread in society. The research results on gender equality from 2009 confirm the herein mentioned, but they indicate the differences in men and women attitudes. It has been shown with about 60% men (compared to 26% women) that being a man means being firm, while even 57% of them declared that if someone offended them, they would defend their
reputation even by using violence. Also, around 36% men believed that the most important role of a woman was to be a housewife, unlike 87% women who did not support this attitude [6].

Research on the frequency of violence in teen relationships also includes the questioning of attitudes towards gender roles, and the acquired results indicate a high percentage of young people that base their system of values on gender stereotypes and expectations [2], [3], [12], [13], [19]. It is important to point out the support of traditional gender stereotypes and justification of the use of violence in certain situations distinguished as a risk factor for violence in relationships [2]. Research results from 2006 show that every third young man (29%) and every tenth young woman (9%) did not believe that a female “no” meant “no”, while half of the young men (50%) and one third of the young women (35%) considered that a woman’s “provocation” caused (and thus justified) a man’s violent reaction [12]. Furthermore, one in five young men (21%) and one in twenty young women (6%) agreed that sexual intercourse was the expected young woman's consideration for a dinner and entertainment in a club paid for by the young man. Similar results were acquired in a research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2008 [13]. A statistically significant difference in the answers from young men and women in single claims was acquired in both researches. Furthermore, the mentioned researches indicate that young people, besides their high percentage in supporting different stereotype claims, do not sufficiently recognize different forms of violence which are also indicated as one of the risk factors for performed and experienced violence in a relationship [12], [13].

3 THE RECOGNITION OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE

The results of researches conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina [13], show that many examinees do not recognize single forms of psychological/emotional abuse in a relationship as being violent behaviour, while in a certain number of young people it even refers to sexual and physical violence. Jealous behaviour, limiting the time a partner spends with his friends or family, backbiting and nagging about appearances and behaviour does not represent a type of violence and control in a relationship with more than half of young people. Also, in less than half of the examinees, ignoring and expecting him/her to always be at the disposal of the partner does not represent a kind of violence and need for control in a relationship. The report of the mentioned research stated that in all cases where there was a statistically significant difference with regards to gender, young men were more prone in not recognizing single behaviours as a form of abuse. Approximately every fifth young woman (22.6%) and every fourth young man (39.2%) did not consider emotional blackmail in an adolescent relationship as violent behaviour. Also, one in five young men (23.8%) and one in twenty young women (6.6%) thought that forcing a partner into sexual intercourse was not considered as violence. Almost every third young man (27.1%) and every tenth young woman (10.2%) did not consider striking as violence. With reference to justifying violence, research results indicated a quite high percentage of young people who agreed in certain claims that supported violent forms of behaviour and justified the use of violence connected to particular situations. According to the acquired results, young men were less conscious and informed on the real cause, forms, dynamics and consequences of violence in a partner relationship. [19], [12], [2].

One more significant fact acquired from the research was that young people who might experience violence in a relationship indicated close friends and not to adults or appropriate institutions as those from whom they would expect assistance. According to the acquired results, 54.2% young people stated that, if they experienced violence, they would turn to a friend, 35.7% to their brother, sister or cousin, 28.4% to their parents, and only 24.9% to an official person or institution [2]. This information should be significant to us as educationists, and it should encourage us to tackle with the issues of young people aiming to achieve a higher trust from them. School should be a place in which one regularly discusses with young people on issues connected with their age and a place to find solutions together. Reynolds (2007) thus states that discouraging pupils in questioning the relationships of power in society and in discussing their issues freely can result in their greater alienation from school and the classroom, considering that their life is not part of the curriculum. More on the role of the school and some of the possibilities of preventive action further in the work [16].

4 EDUCATION IN GENDER EQUALITY – THE BASIS FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN TEEN DATING

School is one of the most important institutions for the upbringing and education of children and youth. Youth is there exposed to numerous factors that have influence on the development of attitudes and behaviour in line with gender expectations. In other words, school is one of the most important places
where the process of gender socialization takes place. However, gender socialization often implies accepting sexist thinking and activity. It is, therefore, not possible to realize gender equality and a society without violence without systematic activity against sexism. We consider that school needs to be a place where the policy of gender equality is to be carried out, but not in the manner in which that implementation reflects only on fulfilling conditions forced upon from above. The basic condition for the implementation of the policy of gender equality is belief in the idea of gender equality, as well as understanding its basic concepts. Namely, we can ask ourselves how school employees can offer their pupils new behaviour models based on antisexist principles if they themselves consciously or unconsciously support sexist and stereotype thinking of gender. Bognar (2008) states that pedagogical activity turned to the future as "the highest pedagogical idea" must be value-based activity. Thereby, values do not represent only ideas but they are displayed in our entire activity and behaviour towards other people [8]. The school taken as a place of joint respect, study, reflection and self-reflection is in line with the idea of intercultural education, and the idea of gender equality is one of its components [20].

The conditions for change in the state of gender inequality, or better to say gender unawareness, already exist at legislative level, and we recognize them in the Gender Equality Act, National Policy of Gender Equality Promotion and, finally, in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia which guarantees all citizens "all rights and freedom, regardless of race, colour of skin, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, education, position in society and other characteristics" [10]. The most recent document adopted with the aim of influencing the state of gender (in)equality is the Health System Curriculum which consists of four modules: “Live healthy”, “Addiction prevention”, “Violent behaviour prevention and Sex/gender equality and responsible sexual behaviour” [1]. The last two modules cover the themes: non-violent solution of conflicts, self-respect, communication in relationships, gender stereotypes, sexual health and sexual rights, sexual/gender violence and violence in relationships. Nevertheless, if we think over contents and methodological oversights in the Health Education Manual [7] and other issues connected with the implementation of the mentioned modules, we can conclude that we cannot consider, for now, its implementation to satisfy the prevention of adolescent violence, and as such, it is not a satisfactory source of information on the questions of gender equality. Regardless of this, health education assumes systematic tackling with issues of gender equality and youth physical and mental health in general, and is, as such, an exceptionally important change in the Croatian school system.

We will additionally point out the document “Gender-conscious Education Policy” which gives recommendations and obligations to the European Union country members on the implementation of gender-conscious education policy. We can observe this document as a sort of precondition to instituting health education. The document states that gender-conscious policy represents active engagement in issues of gender equality and the consistent application of the gender equality perspective in all phases of policy development and implementation [21]. What is emphasized in several places is that schools hold a particular position in a community and their role in promoting gender equality is of fundamental importance. Raising awareness, expanding horizons, correcting wrong information and offering new school behaviour models can become an instrument of positive change [21].

Bartulović (2013) points out how the implementation of a gender-conscious policy in education lags behind other areas directed towards promoting differences, non-discrimination and social justice (i.e. education of national and ethical minorities) not only in Croatia but in the highly developed western democracies. Part of the responsibility surely lies the particular policy of local schools, which, either they do not recognize the issue of gender equality as a precondition creating a democratic and just society, or they are not at all familiar with it [5]. We consider that the responsibility of the educationist in a school is to warn of the importance not only of this but of all other human rights and freedom issues. Thereby, cooperation with parents is of the utmost importance for the basic task of schools is to help parents understand the upbringing goals and tasks of the school, as well as to give parents practical guidelines for their upbringing activity and work with youth at home [17]. In our research on the pupils’ attitudes towards violence in relationships and gender roles in schools, we wished to contribute to the discussion on the significance of upbringing and education in gender equality and freedom based any identity basis recognized in the Constitution.

5 METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research. To examine whether students supported stereotype attitudes towards gender roles and violence and to, thereby, determine if there was a statistically significant connection
between gender and attitudes towards gender roles and violence, and how students perceive
determined forms of behaviour, rather, to what extent they recognized them as violent. Finally, the
desire was to determine how many young people had listened to the lecture until then or had
participated in workshops on the theme of gender equality.

**Hypotheses.** Three hypotheses were established in the research: a) Male students represented
stereotype attitudes of gender roles and attitudes justifying violence more than female students; b)
Female students were better than male students at recognizing various forms of violence; c) Most
students had never listened to lectures or participated in workshops on the theme of gender equality.

**The Sample.** Research was conducted in four secondary schools in Zadar. A total of 165 students
was examined of which 88 were male and 77 females. Due to part of the surveys not being complete
(19), the analysis included 146 surveys whereby the number of female and male students was equal
(total of 73 male students and 73 female students). The survey was performed on third-year students
for it was presumed they were from 16 to 18 years of age, a period when a significant number of
young people had had a relationship. Even if they had nor had personal experience, through the
experience of their peers they were to an extent familiar with various forms of behaviour in a
relationship. More than 70 % of the students in the sample were 17.

**Instruments.** The research was performed through surveys. The measurement instrument – survey
based on measuring instruments used in recent researches [15], [12], [13]. The first part refers to the
characteristics of the examinees. The second part of the survey consists of 20 claims that represent
attitudes according to gender roles and some social expectations connected to sex/gender and
attitudes towards violence in teen relationships. 25 various forms of emotional/psychological, physical,
sexual and economic violence were stated in the third part of the survey. The students were thereby
obliged to answer to what extent they agreed that the mentioned forms of behaviour represented
violence. The fourth part of the survey included the question of whom they would probably first confide
in if they were abused, and whether they had ever participated in a workshop on the theme of equality
and if they would like to.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Stereotype attitudes of gender roles

In a total of five claims referring to attitudes towards gender roles and some social expectations
connected with sex/gender, three had statistically significant differences in the students’ answers. The
greatest difference in answers referred to the claim that “It is expected of young girls to consent to sex
with a young man who spent quite some money on her during their date”. Female students almost one
hundred percent did not agree with this (97.26%), unlike the 21.92% of male students who agreed with
this. Almost the same percentage of young men came out as indecisive (20.55%). A high percentage
of consent and indecision shown by young men is very concerning considered that the mentioned
claim reflects stereotype and degrading social expectations from women. This assurance can be used
as s justification for sexual violence, but also as transferring responsibility from the perpetrator to
the victim. This claim also expresses sexist objectification of young women, which is mentioned in
literature as an important aspect of stereotype male role in adolescence [6]. These data, therefore,
point out that a high percentage of young men has internalized the stereotype understanding of
gender roles, which legitimizes women’s subordination. Connell (1995) points out that it is the social
stereotypes that are a manner of expressing masculinity which implies “the configuration of practice
within the gender relation, the structure that includes institutions, economic relations, as well as
interpersonal relations and sexuality respectively” [6]. Furthermore, male students agree statistically
more (30.14%) than female students (6.85%) to the claim: “When a woman says NO, they think YES”.
The mentioned claim represents the belief in “symbolic” rejection of sex that is connected to the
traditional sex script, which refers to the regulations on acceptable sexual behaviour. [15]. The sexual
script acts at an individual, interpersonal and social level though the principal society institutions such
as legislature, medicine and the education system. Mamula (2011) states that according to the script,
women cannot openly show interest in sexual activity so they would not be taken for being “easy”. To
believe that a woman’s rejection of sex is actually insincere is connected to the problem of sexual
violation. As we can see, young men express much more than young women, their belief in line with
the traditional sex script which justifies sexual violence against women. It is also to be mentioned that
most young men and women spoke out as indecisive to this claim which indicates that a high
percentage of young people is not aware of the implications of this claim. The smallest difference in
answers was acquired at the claim “young men and women have different reasons for starting relationship – young men want sex and young women want love”. More than half of the young women did not agree with the mentioned claim (57.53%), while 28.77% young men agreed. Almost the same number of male and female students were indecisive with this issue. The mentioned claim expresses belief in line with the tradition sex script. This attributes double standards of sexual behaviour in men and women. The basis for double standards consist of the belief that male sexuality is stronger than the female one [15]. According to this claim, a young man’s expectations from a relationship are focused on sexual intercourse while the young woman’s are focused on the development of emotional intimacy. Mamula (2011) states that through the process of socialization, young people acquire the picture that men have a stronger sexual desire and a stronger need compared to women to whom sexuality is less important [15]. This belief is in line with the traditional understanding of masculinity and femininity.

6.2 Attitudes connected to gender conditioned violence

“It is acceptable for a young man to strike a young woman if she was unfaithful to him”, is a claim that showed male students (8.22%) to be more significantly prone to stereotype thinking connected to violence in a relationship than female students. Even though the majority of male students (82.19%) and female students (97.26%) did not agree with the claim that it was acceptable for a young man to strike a young woman if she was unfaithful to him, students in great measure supported the attitude that justified violence against women in certain situations. The next claim “It is good for some people to be sometimes hit by their partner”, also justified the use of violence, but this time the situation was not used as an excuse but the personal characteristics of an individual. A significant difference between young men and women was in the answers received in this case. Namely, more than 90% of girls did not agree with the claim that it was good for some people to be sometimes hit by their partner, more than 17% boys agreed with it. The same percentage (17.81%) of boys expressed indecision to this claim. These data are in line with the results acquired from the previous claim and indicate a greater inclination of boys to justifying violence. Attitudes that justify the use of violence are considered to be one of the risk factors for performing violence, but we cannot make conclusions on male and female student aggressiveness on the basis of these data. According to the evaluation from these two last claims: “Violence in youth relationships is a serious social issue” and “Violence in youth relationships requires the implementation of prevention programmes aimed at reducing violence”, it is reasonable to say that female students are more aware of the seriousness of the issue of violence in adolescent relationships than male students. Results showed that 82.19% female students agreed with the claim that violence in teen relationships was a serious social issue, while 17.81% male students did not agree with this claim or expressed indecision in the same percentage. Also, female students expressed to a greater degree agreement with the claim that violence in teen relationships demands the implementation of prevention measures aimed at reducing them. 19.18% male students did not agree with this claim, while 35.62% expressed indecision. It is necessary to state some results in which a statistically significant difference was not acquired in the answers of male and female students, but they showed a high percentage of young people accepting the stereotype claims that justify violence. Even though there was no difference in the answers of male and female students to the claim: “Not every forced sexual intercourse in a relationship should be considered as rape”, it must be mentioned that there is a noticeable difference according to which male students (23.29%) expressed agreement with the mentioned claim to a greater extent than female students (9.59%). This information goes in favour of the claim that young men support to a greater degree than young women stereotype attitudes and expectations from gender roles which reflects on the stereotype understanding of a relationship in partner relationships. This attitude also reflects the tendency to alleviate and justify sexual violence. It must, thereby, be pointed out that about 20% young men and women express indecision in this matter which can indicate not only insufficient familiarity with the violence issue in a partner relationship but also insufficient knowledge of general human rights and quality interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, data indicated that 36.99% young people agree with the claim that jealousy is a way of showing love. Results in a research conducted in 2006 showed that jealousy was most often a recognized reason for violence in youth relationships, but, at the same time, a great number of adolescents considered that jealous behaviour was a way of showing love and not a possible sign of control and domination in a relationship [12]. The set hypothesis that male students represent stereotype attitudes of gender role justifying violence to a greater degree than female students has partly been confirmed.
6.3 Degree of recognition of different forms of violence

The research results from 2006 [12] showed that young men were not prone to acknowledge different forms of violence, but they were to a greater degree than young girls inclined to force their partners into sexual intercourse. The results acquired in this research also show that young men to a greater degree than young girls do not acknowledge these forms of behaviour as violent. Thus, more than 13% young men did not consider persuading into sexual intercourse as violence, while 27.40% declared themselves as undecided. Furthermore, almost all female students considered that forcing into sexual intercourse was a form of violence, while 15.07% male students were undecided. Concerning physical violence, the results also showed differences in the answers of male and female students. While almost all young girls (97.26%) considered striking as violent behaviour, 19.18% young men were not sure whether it was a form of violent behaviour or not. The fact that young men acknowledge to a lower degree than young women some forms of physical behaviour was confirmed by the acquired difference in answers between female and male students concerning the following claim. Namely, about 90% female students agreed that throwing object on the partner was violence, while this was with about 70% male students. More than 40% young men and 67% young women considered yelling/screaming as a form of violence. About 20% young men did not agree with this claim while more than 35% were not sure whether it represented a form of violence. Furthermore, 95% female students and 75% male students recognized the boy’s insistence on having the girl perform an abortion even though she did not wish so was a form of violence. Here even 19.18% male students declared they were undecided on this issue. It would be interesting to have future research on the attitude of students towards abortions and see if there are any differences in the answers and experiences of this act. Concerning the following variable, results showed that young women to a greater degree (87.67%) than young men considered that to consider each other as property in a relationship was violence. An even greater difference in answers was received at the question whether they considered underestimation as a form of violence. Female students (82,19%) gave a positive answer to a greater degree than male students (61.64%). Forcing one to choose between a friend and a partner is a form of emotional/psychological violence recognized by most female students (79.45%) and male students (63.01%). However, about 20% young people were undecided on this issue, while about 12% young men did not consider this form of behaviour as violence. Furthermore, while about 84% young women agreed that tainting, surveillance and control were a form of violence, almost 20% young men were of the opposite opinion. Asked whether taking decisions instead of a partner was a form of violence, about 20% young people declared to be undecided. Young women (76.71%) recognized this as a form of emotional/psychological form of violence to a greater degree than young men (61.64%). The mentioned data indicate to what degree students recognize different forms of violence and how they differ among themselves. However, it is necessary to mention some more results where a statistically significant difference was not acquired in answers between male and female students, but which shows that a worrisome percentage of young people do not recognize some forms of violent behaviour where the most represented one is emotional/psychological violence. One third of male and female students did not think it was problematic for a young man and young woman to always be at each other’s disposal, and did not just as well consider slander/gossip as violence. At the question whether jealousy is to be considered as violent behaviour the greatest number declared themselves as undecided (39.04%) while 23% did not consider this form of behaviour as violent. Recent researches have shown that jealous behaviour is often observed in various tactics of psychological and emotional mistreatment, but a great number of young people still consider jealousy as a possible expression of love and attachment. [12], [13]. Furthermore, about 24% young people answered as undecided concerning blackmailing, while about 12% considered it not to be a form of violence. Even 28.77% of young people did not consider that limiting time of partners spent with friends and family to be a form of violence while the same number expressed themselves as undecided on this issue. A high percentage of young people was undecided in whether they considered rebuking due to appearance and behaviour as violence (29.45%), and 20% of them did not consider this as violence. Asked whether offence and being called bad names was violence, even 17.81% young people gave a negative answer, while about 26% were undecided. We can add to the non-recognition of these forms of emotional and psychological violence the non-recognition of certain forms of economic violence. Thus, when asked whether destroying objects and property was a form of violence, even 29.45% young people declared themselves undecided, while 17.12% gave a negative answer. The acquired results on (non)recognition of different forms of violence indicates that a great number of young people is not sufficiently familiar with the issue of violence and they do not have a clear picture of the meaning of quality interpersonal relationship. The set hypothesis that young girls recognize to a greater degree than young boys different forms of violence has been confirmed in most variables.
6.4 Confiding and participating in workshops and lectures

The answer to the question whom they would first confide in if someone violated them, 15% male and female students gave various answer. It was, therefore difficult to process statistics with this variable. However, the acquired results are in line with the recently acquired results according to which the greatest number of young people would first confide to their best friend [12], [13]. Thus, about 48% students stated that they would first confide to their best friend. The next most frequently mentioned people were: the mother, member of the family, partner. Almost 9% young people stated that they would not say anything if violated. Only one person stated that in such a case she would tell it to the school psychologist or educationist. The last two questions in the survey were such as to establish whether students had ever listened to lectures or participated in workshops on the theme of gender equality and whether they would like to do so. 63.70% young people stated that they had never listened to lectures or participated in workshops on the theme of gender equality; 28.77% stated they had done so once, and only 7.53% that they had done so several times. About 56% young people stated they would like to listen to lectures or participate in workshops on the theme of gender equality, while about 43% gave a negative answer to that same question. It would be interesting to analyse these data in a research on the relationship and familiarity of adolescents concerning gender equality. Namely, the acquired results that showed young men representing stereotype beliefs to a greater degree than young women and that they recognized to a lower degree different forms of violence showed their week familiarity with the gender equality issue which are closely connected to the theme of stereotypes and violence. It would surely be of use to examine why most young men stated that they would not like to listen to lectures or participate in workshops on the theme of gender equality. Does that mean they are not interested in the theme of gender equality, that they consider it useless to deal with this or that they have a certain aversion towards this? We can partly find the answers to these questions in the results of the research “Men and gender equality in Croatia” according to which most men think that gender equality has been reached (unlike 57% women who do not agree with this claim) [6]. A significant number of men (25%) think that gender equality between men has gone too far [6]. In the core of gender equality, transformation of gender relationships implies changes in the lives of men and women. Regardless of the fact that the existing gender system is observed negatively even by men, the fact is that they have greater benefit from it than women do. The third hypothesis has also been confirmed, according to which youngest people have never listened to lectures nor have they participated in workshops on the theme of gender equality. Therefore, the desire in the end is to point out how important it is to change such a state and for educationists to start to systematically deal with that issue.

7 CONCLUSION

This research wished to point at the importance of dealing with the issue of violence in teen dating, and to point out education on gender equality. Namely, the result of this, as well as recent researches shows that a great number of young people base their convictions of gender role and interpersonal relationships on society rooted stereotypes that influence the experience and interpretation of various situations that are basically discriminating and humiliating. Supporting gender stereotypes and non-recognition of various forms of violence are pointed out as risk factors for performances and experiences of violence. Work with young people on these themes is, therefore, of exceptional importance. According to the acquired results, it can be said how the need for working with young men is emphasized for it has been shown that they are more inclined to stereotype thinking and that they recognize various forms of violence to a lower degree than young women. Based on the results acquired in this research, we cannot bring conclusions on violence in young men and women, but we can say that young men are more exposed to the risk of experiencing and performing violence. Therefore, in working with youth, special emphasis should be put on the manner of maintaining traditional masculinity and the consequences this has on men and women. The phrase “working with youth” in this work implies upbringing and education on gender equality, and educationists should be the key actors in promoting and conducting this type of education. Even though students are in the focus of gender equality education, it also includes work with teachers and parents. If we promote the educationist’s practice in the context of dialogue theory of action by Paola Freire (2002), we can comprehend violence in adolescent relationships as a reality challenge that demands the cooperation

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2 Example: economic and political power is in the hands of men, men earn more than women for the same work „double load“ of women slows down women and disables them in realizing professional careers, stereotype social understanding of gender roles continues to place women in a subordinate position compared to men.
of parents, teachers, students and educationists. Critical analysis of reality is in the centre of cooperation, and we can say that it represents the study of different things with different people. We consider that, as educationists, we have the opportunity of changing the existing discrimination practice within society through work with students, teachers and parents. Concerning future researches, it is our opinion that they should be more directed to action. Namely, through workshops, group discussions and other interactive methods we would not only get much more information on student attitudes but we would be capable to understand and interpret them better. Action researches enable students, together with educationists, to become the subject of research, and, in the context of this theme, we consider them more appropriate. Furthermore, in this form of pedagogical action, research is based on methodological procedures of critical-theoretic and participating paradigm in pedagogy. Carr (2000) considers: critical theory is aimed at creating knowledge, which, through the critics of ideological awareness and existing social opportunities makes effort to stimulate social changes, emancipation of the individual and group respectively, which have been disempowered due to the existing power relations in society [9]. In the context of the theme of this research, it would mean that educationists need to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviour, need to deal with hidden curriculum analyses but also with different social practice, and together with students they need to discuss dialectically and to research the foundation of sexism in different social practices.

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