

STUDENT'S STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract

Stereotypes and prejudices are an integral part of our lives. Stereotypes are formed based on gender, age, ethnic differences, race, abilities, or learning difficulties and as such, greatly complicate communication between people. Therefore, through the educational process, different actions should be taken to overcome them.

Our research focuses on stereotypes and prejudices within the educational system and the possibilities for overcoming them. The purpose of our research is to study the attitudes and opinions of students regarding different stereotypes and prejudices in our society (ethnic communities, gender, profession, religious buildings, etc.) and worldwide (racial division), as well as the role of school and family in promoting diversity and overcoming stereotypes and prejudices. The sample consists of 194 students of different ages 10-14 years in primary education. In the data processing we used the standard statistical package SPSS.

Keywords: stereotypes, prejudices, students, primary education, overcoming

Introduction

Stereotypes and prejudices are an incorporated part of our lives. Humans naturally tend to categorize the world around them. (Dammigella, Licciardello, 2014:209). Stereotypes and prejudices are created by solely assigning people certain traits and characteristics based only on their belonging to a certain group. Stereotypes are formed based on gender, age, ethnic differences, race, abilities, or learning difficulties and as such, significantly complicate communication between people. Therefore, through the educational process, expedient action should be taken to overcome them. Attitudes also have a great influence on the creation of prejudices. It is known that attitudes are a person's view, which is shown about someone or something. In addition to the cognitive aspect, attitudes have an emotional aspect or part, which can sometimes be very strong, so it contributes to stubbornness or difficulty in changing attitudes.

Most common stereotypes and prejudices

In the educational process, the most common are the stereotypes such as: "Students who are meticulous, are diligent students or students with good handwriting are conscientious and responsible." Namely, it is known that "thanks" to stereotypes, Roma are considered to be children who lie and steal. For them, almost as an unwritten rule, the last benches are reserved. "They learn very poorly" is also a well-known stereotype about Roma students. Due to the expressed stereotypes and prejudices, they usually sit alone, if the number of students in the class is odd, etc.. The question in mind does not have a purpose to show what kind of stereotypes there are regarding Roma students, but how to overcome them. (Popova-Koskarova, 2010). The teacher must not marginalize Roma children. On the contrary, he should vigorously fight for their integration into the department, and at no point should he hesitate to do so. That's his duty, after all.

In addition to these well-known and present stereotypes regarding the Roma, in the schools in the Republic of N. Macedonia, the stereotypes are strongly expressed where students of mixed ethnic and linguistic composition study, and they usually do not have any joint activities, no communication, they usually study in

different shifts and often in different buildings. Such are the examples with Macedonians and Albanians or other ethnic communities, Turks, and Bosnians. Their division increases prejudices against each other, and thus impatience, disrespect, and unwillingness to accept differences. (This situation is a result of the parallel, instead of the real multicultural living in our country, which, unfortunately, is gaining momentum, because the division results in closure within its framework (areas of residence, places of entertainment, cafeterias, etc. where they go only "ours", only "our" music is heard). (Popova-Koskarova, 2008). We have become a society that declares itself to be multicultural, but in essence, ethnocentrism or the glorification of our own culture and ethnicity has long been a reality. In such conditions, the belief that one's language, one's religion is better than another, dominates. All this leads to great impatience and not acceptance, not respect for others. ethnic community, language, religion, and culture. For these reasons, we are increasingly witnessing fights between peers of different ethnicities, mostly between Macedonians and Albanians, which can often end tragically.

The role of the school in overcoming stereotypes and prejudice in the context of interethnic integration

Stereotypes and prejudices can be easily overcome, and at the same time develop compassion towards the "other", if children have the opportunity to get to know each other, or to work on joint activities, such as in regular classes, or especially in extracurricular activities. The school should provide as many joint activities as possible for students learning different languages of instruction, such as Macedonian and Albanian. Therefore, extracurricular activities are a particularly suitable form for joint activities between students of different ethnicities. (Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Roma). Joint excursions are especially suitable, as well as forms of socially useful work, where children of different languages and ethnicities within a school can improve their solidarity and humanitarian activities. Also, joint activities can be planned and implemented through extracurricular student activities, ie sections. It does not matter what will be done, much more important is the interaction between the children, their socializing, connection, mutual influence, and finally satisfaction with the final product which should be the result of the participation of all equally. Of course, the joint activities should be carried out with cooperation as well as on an equal basis, through mutual interaction which implies interdependence of each other to complete the work with quality and to achieve the set goal. (Collective authors,2009). These activities should be practiced throughout the elementary grades of primary school. The contents of the curricula so far in certain subjects were aimed at introducing the religious holidays to the program such as Orthodox celebrate Easter, and Muslims - Eid, Roma - St. George's, this is only formal information and it does not contribute to mutual interaction. The most appropriate is a specific visit to a religious facility for different religious confessions. In this case, it would be best to visit a church and a mosque. It is the way to get to know and respect each other from an early age, but also to overcome stereotypes and prejudices in children.

This is the goal of interethnic integrated education, which in the Republic of N. Macedonia is already a strategy in all primary and secondary schools.

Methods

Subject of Research

The subject of our research is the stereotypes and prejudices in the educational process and the possibilities for overcoming them.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of our research is to study the attitudes and opinions of students regarding different stereotypes and prejudices in our society in terms of ethnic communities, gender, profession, religious buildings, etc.) and worldwide (racial division), as well as the role of school and family in promoting diversity and overcoming stereotypes and prejudices.

General hypothesis:

It is assumed that stereotypes and prejudices are present among young people, but not to a large extent.

Specific hypotheses:

- There are more prejudices against Roma community.
- There are prejudices against other ethnic communities
- There are prejudices regarding religious buildings
- There are prejudices about the music they prefer
- There are stereotypes about some professions
- There are no distinct racial prejudices between blacks/whites
- School does not do much to overcome stereotypes and prejudices

Research method

For this research we used the survey as a technique, and as a tool - a questionnaire with closed-ended questions. Due to the ongoing pandemic, we conducted the survey online through the Google Meet platform.

Sample of research

The sample consists of 194 students of different ages 10-14 years all in primary education.

Results and discussion

Regarding the first question: **Do you think that Roma lie and steal?** we received the following answers which are presented in tabular and graphical formats: Out of 194 respondents, 151 or 77, 80% answered that they do not agree with the view that Roma lie and steal, while 22, 20 % think this is true. We can conclude that the students are not burdened with prejudices and stereotypes towards the Roma population, although out of 194 respondents 43 agreed with the attitude towards the Roma, the prevailing opinion is that young people do not consider Roma as thieves or liars, which means that there is no dominant stereotype in our population aged 10-14 years. $X^2 (9, N=194) = 23,039 \quad p < 0,01$

Regarding the second question: **I feel more confident if the bus is driven by a man than a woman.**

According to the results of the survey, out of a total of 125 female respondents (83) or 66, 40% share the opinion that their safety when riding a bus is not affected by whether the driver is male or female. Regarding the male respondents, out of a total 69, (60, 90%) or 42 respondents have an issue if the bus is operated by a female person, in other words, they do not feel safe enough. In conclusion, the research showed us that male

respondents have greater prejudices regarding gender than female respondents, although about 34% of them think that they are safer if the bus driver is male rather than female. Also, a large percentage, or 40% of male respondents do not have such prejudices, based on that their safety when riding a bus does not depend on whether the driver is male or female. Interestingly, an almost identical percentage (33.60%) of female respondents have prejudices regarding the profession of a female bus driver. So, the data from the table and the graph indicated the knowledge that there are still stereotypes regarding some professions that are considered more male than female, both among male and female respondents. $X^2 (3, N=194) = 24,311 p < 0,001$

Girls should play only with dolls, and boys with balls.

According to the obtained data presented in tabular, 91% of female respondents and 71% of male respondents do not have prejudices about the toys that female and male children should play with when they are young. From the received answers, only 9% of the female and a slightly higher percentage of the male respondents (29%) think that the doll should be a toy for the girls, and the ball for the boys. Although this percentage is slightly higher among male respondents, we can still be satisfied with the conclusion that our young population is slowly but surely overcoming the stereotypes of the past related to toys and gender. ($p < 0,1$).

	M		F	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
f.	20	49	11	114
%	28.90%	71.10%	8.80%	91.10%

If I have the opportunity to choose a teacher between a black man and a white man, I will choose a white man.

Regarding this question, we received the following answers: Namely, out of a total of 194 respondents, almost 94% think that the color of the skin (black or white) is not crucial for the choice of the teacher, and only 5% opt for the white, and 2% categorically stated that they will not choose the white. Given that it dominates an extremely large percentage of criteria that are not related to skin color, we can conclude that our young population has no prejudices regarding the race - white-black. Most likely, the quality of the educational activity has a greater impact on the decision, than the stereotype that whites choose a teacher of their race. ($p < 0,1$).

I do not want to visit a mosque because I am not a Muslim.

According to the results regarding this question 128 respondents or 66% answered that they have no problem visiting a mosque, even though they do not belong to the Islamic religion. 66 respondents, or 34% have a negative attitude towards visiting a mosque. They consider this religious building exclusively with religious affiliation. However, their number is much lower than those who do not have such an attitude. Thus, the respondents who want to visit the mosque dominate, which means that young people have no prejudices or they express a lesser degree about the mosque as a religious facility that would be intended only for Muslims. ($p < 0,1$).

If a student from another nationality should sit next to me I want the student to be:

From the data obtained on this issue, it can be concluded that the most acceptable other nationality for young Macedonians is Serbs, and the least acceptable is Roma. Namely, 146 respondents, or 75% answered that they want a Serb to sit next to them, 28 or 14.7% opted for a Turk, 11 or 5.70% opted for an Albanian; 5 or 2, 60 opted for Vlachs, and only 4 (2,%) opted for Roma. We can assume that due to the comprehensibility of the language, Serbs are the most acceptable, and there are still great prejudices against the Roma among the youth, hence some are the most desirable while others are the least acceptable. It is to be welcomed though that the young Macedonians opt for other nationalities, such as Turks and Albanians, more than Vlachs.

Conclusions

Based on our research from the project Stereotypes and Prejudices in the Educational Process and the Possibilities for Overcoming Them, we can draw the following conclusions regarding the set hypotheses:

- There are more prejudices against Roma.
- There are no clear prejudices regarding gender and toys in early childhood,
- There are prejudices regarding religious buildings
- There are stereotypes and prejudices regarding some professions
- There are no distinct racial prejudices between blacks/whites
- The school does not do much, to overcome stereotypes and prejudices

In general, there are still stereotypes and prejudices among young people aged 10-14, although we are pleased to note that they are not strong and that in certain situations they even exceeded our expectations. Stereotypes and prejudices can be easily overcome, and at the same time to develop sensitization towards the "other", if children have the opportunity to get to know each other, ie to work on joint activities, such as in regular classes, especially in extracurricular activities. The school should provide as many joint activities as possible for students learning different languages of instruction, such as Macedonian and Albanian. Young children need to get used to being in solidarity and helping each other. They need to show it in action, with concrete activities.

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