

# Exploring Adolescent Perceptions Of School Safety And Experiences Of Violence In Uzbekistan

Assoc. Prof. Veronika Duci<sup>1</sup>, Olga Kim<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Work and Social Policy, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana, Albania

<sup>2</sup>Health and Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF, Uzbekistan

## Abstract

School safety is a critical concern for educators, policymakers, and parents alike. Ensuring that students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and substance use is essential for creating a conducive learning environment. The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of students about school safety and their experience of violence – physical, emotional and online harassment. The study employed a quantitative approach, using a multi-stage stratified sampling with random selection of schools based probability proportional to enrolment from the sampling framework. A total of 299 schools from all 14 regions of Uzbekistan with  $N = 22,854$  students in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades, participated in the study. Results showed that despite the fact that the majority of students perceived school as a safe place, there was a constant proportion of students (varying from 1 to almost 2 out of every 10 students) who believed that schools are not safe due to students' risky, violent and discriminatory behaviours. Boys, 6th graders and working students were more prone to believe that. Similar results were found about their experience of violence during the last month. It is of crucial importance to implement evidence-based programs that address issues related to bullying prevention, conflict resolution, mental health support, and substance abuse prevention to help foster a culture of safety within schools.

**Keywords:** school, safety, violence, adolescence