

# THE EDUCATIONAL STATUS AND SCHOOLING PROBLEMS OF JUVENILE DELINQUENTS<sup>1</sup>

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Marija MALJKOVIĆ

Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, University of Belgrade,  
Belgrade, Serbia

Nikoleta GUTVAJN

Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia

Marina KOVAČEVIĆ LEPOJEVIĆ

Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia

Ljeposava ILJIĆ

Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade, Serbia

## INTRODUCTION

Primary delinquency research has indicated a significant correlation between schooling problems and juvenile delinquency (Maguin & Loeber, 1996). However, even today there is a lack of consensus regarding the nature of that relationship and the interpretation of empirical findings. Several possible mechanisms which explain the link between schooling and juvenile delinquency have been recognised: 1) problems at school influence the development of delinquency and other forms of behavioural problems; 2) delinquency and other behavioural problems influence the emergence of problems at school; 3) the relationship between problems with schooling and delinquency is reciprocal; 4) there is no connection between those two phenomena and both are the outcome of other mutual causes (Sweeten, Bushway, & Paternoster, 2009). On the basis of research into the influence of

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delinquency on schooling it has been observed that involvement in the judiciary system because of delinquent behaviour disrupts the education process, from lower academic achievement to school dropout in the most severe cases (Hjalmarsson, 2008; Lochner, 2004, 2011; Sweeten, 2006). Rud and associates (Rud, van Klaveren, Groot, & van Den Brink, 2018) claim that the chances of early school dropout are 11% higher if a minor is involved in delinquent activities. In their research into the relationship between delinquency and schooling, Ward & Williams (2015) concluded that delinquent behaviour under the age of sixteen reduces the possibility of completing secondary school from 7% to 10%, while Hjalmarsson (2008) found that this percentage goes up to 26%. Poldrugač (1992) emphasised that young people who drop out of school have a ten times higher likelihood of displaying delinquency than those who attend school regularly. Most authors believe that the connection which exists is neither simple nor unidirectional, but is multifactorial and reciprocal (Kubek, Tindall-Biggins, Reed, Carr, & Fenning, 2020; Popović-Čitić, 2008; Rud et al., 2018), which means that school dropout increases the risk of delinquency and *vice versa*.

A significant number of studies in Serbia and around the world indicate the link between problems in schooling on the one hand, and the development of delinquent behaviour among children and young people on the other (Aizer & Doyle, 2013; Farrington, 1979; Gottfredson, 2000; Ilić, 2019; Kranželić-Tavra & Bašić, 2005; Kubek et al., 2020; Najaka, Gottfredson, & Wilson, 2001; Nastić-Stojanović, Sicurella, Roglić, & Soćanin, 2017; Rud et al., 2018; Silberberg & Silberberg, 1971; Sweeten, Bushway, & Paternoster, 2009; O'Donnell, Hawkins, Catalano, Abbott, & Day, 1995). In comparison with their peers, delinquents are more frequently from poor families, have less educated parents, lower academic aspirations, a history of educational failure, and chronic absenteeism from classes; they have a tendency to drop out of school, lag behind their generation, socialise with delinquents of the same age, and have a history of asocial behaviour (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Elliott & Voss, 1974; Sweeten, Bushway, & Paternoster, 2009).

According to research results in our country, a significant number of delinquents had multiple problems during their schooling or did not attend school (Žunić-Pavlović & Pavlović, 2003). Studies of juvenile delinquents who are in correctional institutions point to specificities in their educational profiles. Ilić (2000) states that an educational deficit is clearly expressed for a large number of such wards, i.e. lagging behind in the primary school process. In most cases,

school grades for such juveniles lag behind those of their age group. Educational aspirations and motivation are significantly lower for this category, resulting in difficulties with accepting the role of pupil (Pejović-Milovančević, Popović-Deušić, Draganić-Gajić, & Lečić-Toševski, 2008). Rejection of school and teachers is also evident, manifested in a negative approach, frequent conflicts, trancies, and frequent school dropout. As a consequence of low achievement, absenteeism, and frequent school dropout, this population suffers a large gap in their fund of knowledge and functional literacy, and is also characterised by poorly developed working habits, no independent learning skills, and a lack of responsibility towards school obligations (Ilić, 2000). Specific learning problems include the ability to focus, concentration, and the conceptualisation of the curriculum, as well as difficulties in reading, writing and calculating (Pejović-Milovančević et al., 2008). These problems in educating juvenile delinquents are often combined with others which apply to the majority of young people with problems at school: difficulties in mastering the curriculum and ineffective learning techniques, a lack of self-discipline and poor concentration, lack of confidence in their own abilities, a negative academic self-concept, as well as significant differences in terms of knowledge, skills and personal potentials (Ilić, 2000).

The subject of our paper is school dropout as one of the biggest and most serious forms of school failure facing juvenile delinquents. In particular, our attention is directed at perceptions of the educational status of juvenile delinquents and their problems during schooling. We will firstly present the results of an analysis of judiciary statistics pertaining to registered juvenile crime in the Republic of Serbia, followed by the results of empirical research into the educational status and schooling problems of those juvenile delinquents who are currently in the process of serving criminal sanctions.

## **THE STATE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF JUVENILE CRIME IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

The term delinquency, as part of a widely recognised system of social reaction, is usually used to refer to different behaviours on the part of children and young people which are not approved of, and which are not punishable by law (for instance, vagrancy, substance abuse, disobedience towards parents and teachers) (Agnew,

2005; Regoli, Hewitt, & DeLisi, 2016). In this paper we will use a narrower formal-legal interpretation whereby delinquency denotes the actions of persons under the age of eighteen which are punishable under the law (Gottfredson, 2000; Nikolić-Ristanović & Konstantinović-Vilić, 2018).

On the basis of the results of judicial statistics about registered juvenile crime, it is possible to draw some general conclusions about the state and characteristics of juvenile crime in the Republic of Serbia. According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia's report on juvenile perpetrators of criminal acts, starting from 2006 when the Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and the Criminal Protection of Juveniles (Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and the Criminal Protection of Juveniles, 2005) came into force, until 2018, which is the last year for which data about the participation of juvenile criminal offenders in the entire criminal activity in the Republic of Serbia are accessible, i.e. a thirteen year period (2006-2018), this figure oscillates between 3.6% and 7.6% (average 5.6%). In the last five years, the participation of juveniles has been relatively stable and amounts to an average of 5.3 % (2014 – 5.4%; 2015 – 5.5%; 2016 – 5.9%; 2017 – 4.9%; 2018 - 5%). The structure of committed criminal acts indicates the predominance of property crime 58.9%, which accounts for almost two thirds of the total number of committed criminal acts. However, an 18% fall in the participation of property crime in the last five years has been noted (2006 - 66%; 2018 - 48%). On the other hand, in the same period a steady increase in criminal acts causing danger to life and bodily harm is evident, which on average make up around 12.1% of total crime. This is followed by public order offences at around 11.2%, then crimes against public health (substance abuse) at approximately 6.8%, crimes related to public transport safety at 2.7%, crimes against civil liberties at 1.6%, crimes against sexual freedom at 1.3%, economic crime at 0.5 and all other criminal acts at 4.9%. Juveniles who drop out of school show a greater tendency to be involved in various forms of delinquency, including substance abuse (Bjerk, 2012; Elliott, Huizinga, & Menard, 2012; Fagan & Pabon, 1990; Hirschfield & Celinska, 2011; Peguero & Bracy, 2015). The Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and the Criminal Protection of Juveniles (Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and the Criminal Protection of Juveniles, 2005) predicts the implementation of diversion orders under the assumption that the juvenile admits to the criminal act, and that his/her approach towards the criminal act and injured party is satisfactory. Since the new law came into effect the total number of diversion orders has amounted

to 2426, or an average of 202.2 per year (2007-2018). Since 2012, records have been kept about the types of diversion orders issued. Between 2012 and 2018, a total of 192 diversion orders for regular attendance at classes or work were issued (in 2018, 36 such diversion orders were issued, which accounts to 12.5% of the total number; 2017 - 54 (13.6%); 2016 - 28 (9.2%); 2015 - 6 (5.2%); 2014 - 13 (6.3%); 2013 - 20 (9.7%) and 2012 -13 (10.3%).

As regards criminal sanctions for juvenile offenders, educational measures are much more prevalent at 99.4%, compared to prison sentences at 0.6%. Within the structure of educational measures, those pertaining to increased supervision (49.5%) and alternative sanctioning measures (45.8%) are the most predominant, with institutional correctional measures (4.7%) in final place. In the Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and the Criminal Protection of Juveniles (Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and the Criminal Protection of Juveniles, 2005) article 14, paragraph 3 predicts the obligation to regularly attend classes and work, paragraph 4 to qualify for an occupation commensurate with the juvenile's abilities and talents, and paragraph 9 to attend vocational training classes or preparation for exams in a designated field of study. The judiciary statistics over the last few years show that the most implemented measure was the alternative sanctioning measure from paragraph 3, followed by that from paragraph 4, while the least implemented alternative sanctioning measure was from paragraph 9. On average, these measures account for 30% of all sanctions imposed on juveniles (2012 - 43%, 2014 and 2018 - 28%) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Juvenile Offenders, 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017 and 2018.).

*The educational status and school background of juvenile delinquents in Serbia.* In 2012 the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbian began monitoring the educational background of juvenile delinquents in relation to the level of inclusion in education of juveniles against whom charges were filed (Table 1) and juveniles with imposed criminal sanctions (Table 2). The data were analysed up to 2018, which is the last year with accessible official data.

**Table 1.** Juveniles according to criminal charges and inclusion in the education system 2012-2018

Year	Total	Included in schooling		Not included	Unknown
		Regular no. (%)	Part-time no. (%)		
2018	2744	1724 (62.9)	83 (3)	276 (10)	661 (24.1)
2017	3465	2085 (60.1)	77 (2.2)	378 (10.9)	925 (26.7)
2016	3643	1965 (53.9)	99 (2.7)	455 (12.5)	1124 (30.8)
2015	3355	1779 (53)	134 (3.9)	470 (14)	972 (28.9)
2014	3110	1576 (50.6)	121 (3.8)	413 (13.2)	1000 (32.1)
2013	3844	2173 (56.5)	140 (3.6)	648 (16.8)	883 (22.9)
2012	3913	1927 (49.2)	135 (3.4)	618 (15.8)	1233 (31.5)

**Table 2.** Juveniles according to imposed criminal sanctions and inclusion in the education system 2012-2018

Year	Total	Included in schooling		Not included	Unknown
		Regular no. (%)	Part-time no. (%)		
2018	1548	930 (60)	111 (7.1)	373 (24.1)	134 (8.7)
2017	1633	963 (58.9)	106 (6.4)	400 (24.5)	164 (10)
2016	2032	1174 (57.7)	140 (6.9)	444 (21.8)	274 (13.5)
2015	1926	1153 (59.8)	129 (6.7)	440 (22.8)	204 (10.6)
2014	2034	1226 (60.2)	132 (6.5)	426 (20.9)	250 (12.3)
2013	2648	1653 (62.4)	167 (6.3)	504 (19)	324 (12.2)
2012	2302	1279 (55.5)	129 (5.6)	449 (19.5)	445 (19.3)

The research results show that around 35% of juveniles were not included in the education system when the criminal act was committed (from 38.8% in 2012 to 32.8% in 2018) and around 45% (from 47.3% 2012 to 34.1% 2018 year) when sanctions were imposed, or such information was not known (Tables 1 and 2). Although, as to be expected, the amount of available information on a juvenile's educational status increases during criminal proceedings, there is also a significant increase in the number of juveniles who, until the imposition of criminal sanctions, remain outside the education process. For instance, in 2012 the percentage of juveniles who were not included in schooling and those for whom there was no

information about schooling when criminal charges were filed stood at 39.8% (Table 1), and at 47.3% when sanctions were imposed (Table 2). Considering the average length of criminal proceedings against juveniles, it is noticeable that young offenders often remain excluded from the education system for several months (pursuant to the Statistical Office's data for 2018, in 61% of cases the proceedings against juveniles lasted for over four months, while one fourth of the total number of cases went on for between six months and a year). Secondly, it can be seen from Table 2 that although the number of juveniles against whom criminal sanctions were imposed, particularly in the last two monitored years (2017 and 2018), is on the decline, at the same time there is an increase in the number of juveniles who remain outside the education process. The reason for this trend could lie in the wider implementation of educational orders, and the dropping of further charges and prosecution where cases with higher educational deficiencies dominate within the delinquent structure. However, these official statistics should be considered with some degree of reserve, and additional, targeted research needs to be conducted in order to establish the real situation. We should bear in mind that the relationship between delinquency and educational status is not unidirectional but it is more a case of reciprocal reinforcement. Pupils who need educational support are more prone to involvement in delinquent activities, and case study analyses have shown that their educational needs are often not adequately recognised, and they are given more severe sanctions than delinquents with less expressed education-related disabilities (Tulman, 2003).

The results of research into the high share of inmates with low education attainment in the prison population (Blomberg, Bales, Mann, Piquero, & Berk, 2011; Morgan & Kett, 2003; Peguero & Bracy, 2015; Rumberger, 2011; Rumberger & Lim, 2008) support the thesis that those who are excluded from school are at a greater risk of becoming delinquents. Harlow (2003) points out that in America, around 68% of prisoners failed to complete secondary school, while in Philadelphia persons with lower educational levels accounted for close to 70% of the total number of committed criminal acts (Wolfgang et al., 1977, according to: Sweeten, Bushway, & Paternoster, 2009).

**Table 3.** Juveniles according to criminal charges and educational background 2012 - 2018

Year	Total	Without school	Incomplete PS	PS	SS	Unknown
2018	2744	55 (2)	468 (17)	1239 (45.1)	453 (16.5)	529 (19.2)
2017	3465	75 (2.1)	714 (20.6)	1552 (44.7)	348 (10)	776 (22.3)
2016	3643	79 (2.1)	764 (20.9)	1584 (43.4)	257 (7)	959 (26.3)
2015	3400	172 (5)	659 (19.3)	1402 (41.2)	437 (12.8)	730 (21.4)
2014	3110	102 (3.2)	650 (20.9)	1246 (40.1)	311 (10)	801 (25.7)
2013	3844	151 (3.9)	730 (18.9)	1952 (50.7)	331 (8.6)	680 (17.7)
2012	3913	146 (3.7)	781 (19.9)	2112 (53.9)	325 (8.3)	549 (14)

**Table 4.** Juveniles according to imposed criminal sanctions and educational background (2012-2018)

Year	Total	Without school	Incomplete PS	PS	SS	Unknown
2018	1548	39 (2.5)	240 (15.5)	935 (60.4)	280 (18.8)	54 (3.4)
2017	1633	42 (2.5)	258 (15.8)	1072 (65.6)	204 (12.4)	57 (3.5)
2016	2032	47 (2.3)	324 (15.9)	1296 (63.7)	330 (16.2)	35 (1.7)
2015	1928	42 (2.1)	341 (17.7)	1227 (63.6)	242 (12.5)	74 (3.8)
2014	2034	57 (2.8)	331 (16.2)	1369 (67.3)	184 (9)	93 (4.5)
2013	2648	89 (3.4)	478 (18)	1602 (60.4)	340 (12.8)	139(5.2)
2012	2302	83 (3.6)	347 (15.1)	1636 (71)	175 (7.6)	61 (2.6)

In the period between 2012 and 2018, there was a noticeable drop in the number of juveniles without schooling and with incomplete primary school education among charged and convicted juveniles (Tables 3 and 4). There was also a decline in the number of charged and convicted delinquents with completed primary school, and an increase in the percentage of those with completed secondary school. If we compare the presented data with the general population, pursuant to the census in the Republic of Serbia from 2011 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia), the percentage of delinquents who failed to complete primary school is twice as high, a slightly higher percentage completed primary school, and half that number completed secondary school. However, it should be borne in mind that juvenile offenders are between 14 and 18 years of age, i.e.



they are of the age when it is expected that their education is still ongoing, and a fair number of them will complete secondary school. The Strategy for Education Development in Serbia 2020 states that the total dropout of pupils in primary education includes children who do not enrol in primary school, those who do not enter fifth grade, and those who do not complete primary school, which, pursuant to current analyses and estimations is between 10 and 15% per generation, with a much higher percentage of children from sensitive groups (primarily Roma children and children from rural areas). To this we should also add the percentage of children who do not enrol in secondary school, i.e. do not continue their education, which in recent years stands at around 2%. There are no precise data about early dropout from secondary and vocational schools. On the basis of the data from the Living Standards Measurement and the Development of Human Resources Study in Serbia (2010), the dropout rate in secondary education in 2005 was 2.3% (Strategy for Education Development in Serbia, 2020). However, other data indicate that this rate is much higher, even as high as 30% in secondary education, in comparison with official data which do not show pupils' age groups. According to the Ministry of Education's data, the survey carried out for the 2000-2008 generation showed a dropout level of 7.3%, and pursuant to other surveys in the Republic of Serbia, 10% of persons failed to complete initial vocational education (Piirto, Johansson & Lang, 2011). In contrast to those figures, the Living Standards Measurement Study provides estimations that one fifth of children in Serbia still do not attend secondary school, particularly boys and young people from socially vulnerable families (Strategy for Education Development in Serbia, 2020). The strategy's goal is to keep the dropout rate below 5%.

## METHOD

*Goal and tasks.* The aim of this research was to study schooling problems among juvenile delinquents who are in the process of serving criminal sanctions. The question arises as to whether juvenile delinquents who are excluded from the education system previously experienced more frequent problems at school than those who had continuity of schooling. Then, the second question is whether delinquents who are in the process of serving non-institutional criminal sanctions enjoy a more favourable educational status in comparison to those serving

sanctions in juvenile correctional facilities. The specific tasks are: research of the problems which preceded school dropout and research into the educational status of juvenile delinquents who are in the process of serving criminal sanctions of both a non-institutional and institutional character.

*Sample.* The research sample consists of 215 juvenile delinquents, of whom 195 (90.8%) are male and 20 (9.2%) female. The juvenile delinquents in the study mainly belonged to the young adult population of 18-21 (81 (38.2%)) and 21-26 years of age (61(28.7%)), older minors (16-18 (57 (26.2%)) and younger minors (15 (6.3%)), while one minor was under 14 years old and, in the criminal sense, belongs to the category of criminal non-responsibility. Most of the juvenile delinquents were from the Krusevac Correctional Institution for Juveniles (92 (43.3%)), the Juvenile Correctional Facility in Valjevo (60 (27.6%)), the Belgrade City Center for Social Work (43 (19.8%)) and the institutions for the education of children and youth in Belgrade, Nis and Knjazevac (20 (9.2%)).

*Method of data collection.* The research was carried out in 2019. Previously, pursuant to official procedures, we were granted consent from the Administration for the Execution of Penitentiary Sanctions of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, we signed a contract on cooperation with the Belgrade City Center for Social Work, and also signed a statement of data usage in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Data Protection in the Belgrade Institute for the Education of Children and Youth.

*Instrument.* An instrument specially designed for the needs of collecting data about schooling problems among juvenile offenders in Serbia was used for the data collection. The total number of variables in the research is 74, out of which 45 variables measure schooling problems, 17 measure delinquent behaviour and 12 are socio-demographic variables. For the purposes of this study we analysed only those answers to questions which referred to perceptions of the school atmosphere, the relationships between juvenile delinquents and teachers, as well as their approach to school obligations (20 items).

*Statistical data processing.* For the statistical data processing the IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0. software package was used. Multivariate analysis of variance was used to establish the effects of the educational status of juvenile delinquents on problems during their schooling. Correlation analysis was carried out for research into the strength and direction of the link between educational status and the

type of sanction imposed (institutional and non-institutional). Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to measure the correlations.

## RESULTS

The results of the multifactorial analysis of variance indicate the significant effect of the educational status of juvenile delinquents on the occurrence of problems in schooling such as: absenteeism (justified and unjustified), weak school affiliation, proximity to betting shops and casinos, labelling by teachers, humiliation, threats and arbitrary teacher evaluation (Tables 5 and 6).

**Table 5.** The multivariate effect of the educational status of juvenile delinquents on the researched variables

$\Lambda_w$	Value	F	Df	P	Partial eta squared
	.710	3.968	20.000	.000	.290

**Table 6.** Differences in problems during the schooling of juvenile delinquents based on educational status

	SA	N	Mean	SD	Df	Mean square	F	P	Partial eta squared
DC	YES	132	2.79	1.45					
	NO	83	2.92	1.26					
	$\Sigma$	215	2.84	1.38					
A	YES	132	3.73	1.40	1	50.180	24.272	.000	.102
	NO	83	2.73	1.48					
	$\Sigma$	215	3.34	1.51					
UA	YES	132	3.58	1.45	1	53.969	23.056	.000	.098
	NO	83	2.55	1.64					
	$\Sigma$	215	3.19	1.60					
SR	YES	132	3.67	1.26		2.40	23.565	.217	.007
	NO	83	3.89	1.23					
	$\Sigma$	215	3.76	1.25					

	SA	N	Mean	SD	Df	Mean square	F	P	Partial eta squared
SA	YES	132	3.13	1.52	1	13.242	5.96	.015	.027
	NO	83	3.16	1.42					
	Σ	215	3.33	1.50					
DS	YES	132	3.08	1.62	1	8.40	3.28	.072	.015
	NO	83	3.48	1.56					
	Σ	215	3.23	1.61					
SE	YES	132	4.33	1.00	1	.36	.33	.563	.002c
	NO	83	4.24	1.10					
	Σ	215	4.29	1.042					
ES	YES	132	3.18	1.46	1	.11	.53	.819	.000
	NO	83	3.23	1.46					
	Σ	215	3.20	1.46					
PC	YES	132	3.55	1.55	1	11.19	4.57	.000	.812
	NO	83	3.08	1.57					
	Σ	215	3.37	1.57					
CA	YES	132	3.05	1.65	1	4.40	1.59	.208	.007
	NO	83	2.76	1.66					
	Σ	215	2.94	1.66					
CD	YES	132	2.99	1.56	1	1.528	.624	.430	.003
	NO	83	2.82	1.57					
	Σ	215	2.93	1.56					
OP	YES	132	2.93	1.50	1	60.371	30.664	.000	.126
	NO	83	1.84	1.215					
	Σ	215	2.51	1.497					
TL	YES	132	3.70	1.497	1	82.295	36.078	.000	.145
	NO	83	2.43	1.532					
	Σ	215	3.21	1.629					
TC	YES	132	3.45	1.333	1	.022	.013	.909	.000
	NO	83	3.43	1.241					
	Σ	215	3.45	1.295					
TS	YES	132	-.234	1.324	1	2.06	1.290	.257	.006
	NO	83	.157	1.163					
	Σ	215	-.003	1.265					

	SA	N	Mean	SD	Df	Mean square	F	P	Partial eta squared
TA	YES	132	3.09	1.443	1	13.389	6.870	.009	.031
	NO	83	2.58	1.317					
	Σ	215	2.89	1.415					
SA	YES	132	2.66	1.487	1	8.909	4.285	.040	.020
	NO	83	2.24	1.367					
	Σ	215	2.50	1.453					
HT	YES	132	2.55	1.641	1	27.436	12.051	.001	.054
	NO	83	1.82	1.270					
	Σ	215	2.27	1.547					
TT	YES	132	2.41	1.577	1	19.205	8.677	.004	.039
	NO	83	1.80	1.332					
	Σ	215	2.17	1.514					
AE	YES	132	3.12	1.533	1	17.804	7.988	.005	.036
	NO	83	2.53	1.426					
	Σ	215	2.89	1.517					

DC – the level of difficulty of the curriculum; A – absences; UA – unjustified absences; SR – a school with a 'good reputation'; SA – school affiliation; DS – desired school; SE – the significance of education; ES – school engagement; PC – the proximity of casinos; CA – criminal activities in the school yard; SD – the distance between school and home; OP – older pupils; TL – teacher labelling; TC – communication with teachers; TS – teacher support; TA – teacher aggression; SA – substance abuse among teachers; HT – humiliation by teachers; TT – threats from teachers and AE - arbitrary evaluation

The research results show that absenteeism, whether justified or unjustified, was strongly correlated with school dropout, i.e. the problem of exclusion from the education system among juvenile delinquents. Namely, delinquents excluded from the education system are more frequently reported as absent. The research also points out that absence from school contributes to a drop in school achievement (Malinić, 2009). The authors believe that pupils' absence from school without the knowledge of their parents, guardians or teachers, could represent the first serious symptom of problems and conduct disorders in children and youth (Bouillet & Uzelac, 2007). Absenteeism is linked to a lack of working habits, insufficiently developed intellectual abilities, a negative approach towards school and teachers, an undesirable social environment, cognitive disorders on the personality spectrum (decreased control over aggressive behaviour, a low tolerance level to frustration and similar), negative and dysfunctional family relationships, socio-pathological phenomena in the social environment, poor parental control and

guardianship, unfavourable ecological circumstances in the place of residence (the existence of deviant groups, the lack of organized leisure activities and content, poor housing conditions) and difficulties in adapting to the new socio-cultural milieu after migration (Poldrugač, 1981).

Further, on the basis of these results, the negative approach of teachers towards juvenile delinquents is recognised as a serious problem in local school practice. Thus, delinquents who reported their teachers' poor conduct, from labelling and humiliation to threats, were more often excluded from the education system. Substance abuse on the part of teachers was also reported more frequently by delinquents with an unfavourable educational status. The labelling of children, combined with an entire spectrum of teachers' negative behaviours towards juvenile delinquents and children with behavioural problems, who face 'a sea of negativity' from both their teachers as well as their peers and parents, have been identified in school practice (De Laet et al., 2016; Jenson, Olympia, Farley, & Clarke, 2004; O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Furlong, 2014). To be more precise, research findings indicate that teachers interact more negatively with children with behavioural difficulties. The authors believe that the essence of the message which teachers thus send to pupils with behavioural difficulties is: if you do something appropriate, nothing positive will happen, if you do something inappropriate, you will be punished (Gunter, Denny, Jack, Shores, & Nelson, 1993). The results of a longitudinal research study into the quality of interactions between pupils and teachers point out that teachers on the second measuring point had a much more negative approach towards pupils who exhibited rule-breaking behaviour and had weaker educational achievements on the first measuring point, so that the third measuring point showed that those pupils who had been treated more negatively by their teachers (on the second point) expressed more rule-breaking behaviour and had poorer educational achievements (de Laet et al., 2016).

Research studies which observed various factors (from individual factors, to the family, to the environment etc.) that influence the evaluation of pupils by teachers confirmed that pupils with behavioural difficulties are perceived 'more negatively' in comparison to other pupils (O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Furlong, 2014). Coercive interaction between pupils and teachers increases negative exchange. The relationship between teachers and pupils with behavioural problems is considered very important for their further socio-emotional development. Research shows that good relationships between teachers and pupils can suppress the

negative influence of risk factors such as conflicts with parents and prevent the development of the delinquent trajectory (Wang, Brinkworth, & Eccles, 2013). A series of positive strategies for the improvement of the school climate, class management, teacher praise and others have been proposed (Jenson et al., 2004).

As expected, the research results point out that delinquents who were excluded from the education system showed a tendency to report weak school affiliation more often, as well as unfavourable situational factors, such as the proximity of casinos. The authors set aside the following characteristics of schools with larger numbers of delinquents: a greater level of mistrust between pupils and teachers, poor school affiliation, unclear and inconsistent school regulations and other differences related to the organisation of the school and the school climate (Farrington & Welsh, 2008). In the study which was carried out on a sample of 12 secondary schools, it was found that schools with higher rates of delinquency were characterised by: a greater number of unjustified school absences, low socio-economic family status, where mothers had more frequent psychiatric diagnoses, and fathers exhibited anti-social behaviour, and others (Rutter, 1982). Through the observation of socio-economic status and the key aspects of intelligence, it was established that certain other school factors (such as the strong presence of punishment and the weak presence of praise and rewards) also serve to determine school as an environment prone to higher rates of pupils delinquency (Rutter, 1982). The study conducted on a representative national sample in 254 high schools in America, with the goal of researching the connections between organisational aspects of schools and school crime and disorder, provided data that in schools where the rules are more fair and clear, delinquent behaviour and the victimisation of pupils are less expressed, but not the victimisation of teachers. On the other hand, in schools with a positive school climate and less victimisation of teachers, but not of pupils, delinquent behaviour is not less present (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson 2005). It is also noticeable that poverty as a characteristic of the social environment in which the school is located is in correlation with the victimisation of teachers at school, as well as with pupils' self-reported delinquent behaviour and victimisation (Gottfredson et al., 2005).

The research results show that juvenile delinquents who are placed in facilities of an institutional type (correctional institutions and juvenile correctional homes) drop out of school more often than those facing non-institutional criminal sanctions. According to Table 7, such juveniles were excluded from the education system

more frequently. It is noticeable that for delinquents with increased supervision by the Custodial Body, as a more severe form of non-institutional sanction, there was also a statistically significant correlation with exclusion from the education system. Above all, considering the length of criminal proceedings regardless of the principle of urgency, interrupted education is certain. However, it should be kept in mind that this refers to the population who previously went through most of the measures of a non-institutional character. Bearing this in mind, it is of exceptional importance to provide a systematic response to the specific educational needs of young people who, after leaving correctional intuitions, return to school. Numerous studies point out the need for individualised services within the framework of the school system, which would provide optimal conditions to facilitate the return of juvenile delinquents to the schooling process (Bullis & Yovanoff, 2005; Sinclair, Unruh, Griller Clark, & Waintrup, 2017). In this regard, Goldkind (2011) also indicates the importance of the presence of mental health experts in schools, whose special approach would help young people to reintegrate into the school system. A large number of studies confirm that the return to school after leaving correctional institutions could reduce the long term negative consequences of staying in such institutions (Blomberg et al., 2011; Bullis, Yovanoff, & Havel, 2004; Sweeten, 2006).

**Table 7.** The correlation between educational status and criminal convictions

	DO	CR	AM	IS1	IS2	IS3	IS4	EI	CF	SIR	JD	SM
ES	-	-	-	.334	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.105
	.039	.039	.013		.081	.142*	.072	.205**	.245**	.006	.105	

ES – educational status; DO – diversion order; CR – court reprimand; AM – alternative sanctioning measure; IS1 – increased parental supervision; IS2 – increased supervision in a foster family; IS3 – increased supervision by the guardianship authority; IS4 – increased supervision with day care in an appropriate educational-correctional institution; EI – educational institution; CF – correctional facility; SIR – special institution for rehabilitation and vocational training; JD – juvenile detention center; SM – security measures.

Regular school attendance, time spent in productive activities, positive connections with teachers and peers, as well as school achievement, reduce the likelihood of re-offending to a significant extent (Anderson, 2014; Blomberg et al., 2011; Bullis, Yovanoff, & Havel, 2004; Gottfredson, 1986; Hirsch, Dierkhising, & Herz, 2018; Kubek et al., 2020; Lochner & Moretti, 2004).



## CONCLUSION

Regardless of the fact that in the Republic of Serbia's current legislation (the Law on the Foundations of the System of Education and Upbringing, article 76), pupils with behavioural problems are recognised as part of the population who need additional educational support in the same way as children with intellectual, motoric, sensory and other developmental disabilities, as well as their greater representation in comparison with other problems and progression towards delinquency, they are rarely found among examples of good inclusive practice (Jerotijević & Mrše, 2015; NSIE, 2020). Considering the dominant orientation in international and local practice and in accordance with the research results, where the majority of juveniles in Serbia are given sanctions of a non-institutional character, which facilitates offenders' reintegration when compared with delinquents sentenced to correctional institutions, more local expert attention should be paid to this problem. In the situation where it seems that work on the schooling and professional orientation of delinquents only occurs when they enter correctional institutions (because in that way they are the most accessible), it may be concluded that juvenile delinquents and the society in which they are supposed to be reintegrated are both at loss.

On the basis of the research results, the conclusion drawn is that efforts should be made by all the main actors (from schools, through the family, to the judiciary) in order to prevent the interruption of schooling, i.e. the exclusion of juveniles from the education system. In this regard, examples of programmes can be found in the literature which refer both to the general population and to that of juvenile delinquents.

Since juvenile delinquents belong to the risk group for school dropout, often on the basis of several criteria (for instance, low economic status or poor parental control), programmes directed at the prevention of dropout could serve as examples of good practice. One such examples is the "Preventing dropout from the Education System of the Republic of Serbia" programme which the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia implemented in cooperation with UNICEF in Serbia and the Centre for Education Policy. The most significant result of that project is a 66.1 % reduction in the dropout rate, where individual support measures for pupils at risk of dropout proved to be the most effective (Veselinović, Vušurović, Jovanović, & Čekić-Marković,

2016). The special contribution of this project is reflected in the achieved results, which point out that a school can act preventively, even on those factors which are often considered as limiting (for instance, poverty, dysfunctional families or other problems with pupils' behaviour).

Cooperation between the judiciary and the education system in criminal proceedings against juveniles, the improvement of the school climate, the informal education of juvenile delinquents, mentorship programmes, and the improvement of relations with teachers and other actors in education and upbringing are all recognised as invaluable in work with juvenile delinquents. In order for a juvenile who was previously excluded from education because of criminal proceedings to continue schooling, what is required is an organised team of experts from different fields (the judiciary, education, mental health). Through the systematic analysis of over thirty scientific papers related to the reintegration of juveniles in schools, it was concluded that juvenile delinquents and their family members face numerous obstacles, from administrative ones to stigmatisation by other pupils and staff, the lack of psychological support and others (Kubek et al., 2020). It seems that the school's role in the prevention of juvenile delinquency is not sufficiently recognised, namely, programmes based on the restorative approach (conferences, peacekeeping circles) on the one hand, and intervention directed at the development of positive behaviour on the other, are recognised as very efficient in improving the school climate, and reducing conflicts and disciplinary offences in primary and secondary schools etc. (Hirschfield, 2018).

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