



Does Ethnicity of Victims and Bullies Really Matter? Suggestions for Further Research on Intra-Ethnic Bullying/Victimisation

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Accepted: 18 January 2021

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Abstract

This review aims to address a growing concern: Why are ethnic minority students, such as of Roma, bullied by their in-group peers for an ethnical reason? According to recent findings, intra-ethnic bullying is becoming more prevalent across Europe; ethnic minority students are often bullied by one another more than by White-European peers. However, less is known about how intra-ethnic bullying happens in the same- or cross-ethnic minority groups and how it differs from inter-ethnic bullying. How classroom ethnic diversity affects not only inter-ethnic but also intra-ethnic bullying needs to be identified for an accurate estimation of the prevalence rate, which appears inconsistent in the literature. This narrative review focused on common measurement methods leading to this inconsistency, provided theoretical explanations and proposed several hypotheses for further research. Prospective findings might help to meet the growing concern for educational and social integration of ethnic minority students, particularly across Europe, Canada and the USA.

Keywords Roma · Measurement method · Transactional framework · Power imbalance · Ethnic misfit · Social dominance

Introduction

This narrative review is aimed at providing theoretical and methodological explanations for “how the prevalence of bullies and victims varies with ethnicity” (Farrington, 1993, p. 397). This has been a recurring question for the last three decades in the bullying literature (Kisfalusi et al., 2020; Kuldass et al., 2021; Peguero, 2019; Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2019; Özdemir et al., 2018; Tolsma et al., 2013). There are two salient arguments which form its basis. The first argument is that ethnic-minority students are bullied because of their ethnicity (United Nations General Assembly, 2016; UNESCO, 2019). The second argument is that bullies are likely to be more prevalent among ethnic majority than ethnic minority groups (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2018).

However, there is “no clear evidence that ethnicity per se is a risk factor” for peer victimisation (Bellmore et al., 2004, p. 1160) and bullying (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2018). Regarding the first argument, two meta-analyses representative of 692,548 children and adolescents (aged

6–18 years) across several countries, particularly the USA, Canada and those in Europe found ethnicity alone as a demographic characteristic was not significantly associated with the prevalence of victims (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015). Such evidence for the prevalence of peer victimisation across ethnicities indicates that no ethnic group is consistently at higher risk or that there is no difference in bullying and cyberbullying victimisation between ethnic minority and majority groups (Kuldass et al., 2021; Llorent et al., 2016; Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015). As to the second argument, Vitoroulis and Vaillancourt (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of 53 studies ($N=740,176$ and 6 to 18 years old) to test whether ethnicity as a demographic characteristic is directly associated with a higher prevalence rate of bullies. The comparison was between (a) non-immigrants and immigrants, as well as (b) between white majority (European Americans) and non-white ethnic minority (i.e., Black, Hispanic, Asian, Indigenous and Biracial). They found very small and non-significant direct effect sizes for differences across all the ethnic group comparisons.

The present review argues that an accurate estimation of whether ethnicity is associated with the prevalence rate of victims and bullies across ethnicities requires a clear distinction between inter- and intra-ethnic bullying/

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victimisation. Less is known about how peer bullying/victimisation happens in the same- or cross-ethnic minority groups because of ethnicity (Kisfalusi et al., 2020; Özdemir et al., 2018). To make this distinction, a widely held argument is that bullies are of a specific ethnicity that promotes prejudicial attitudes towards an ethnic group. For instance, ethnic majority students who have prejudices towards their peers of an ethnic minority are more likely to engage in ethnic aggression or harassment (i.e., inter-ethnic bullying), particularly when classroom ethnic diversity increases (Özdemir et al., 2018). Therefore, Tolsma et al. (2013) asserted that such prejudicial attitudes are likely to account for why inter-ethnic bullying is more prevalent than intra-ethnic bullying. However, such prejudicial attitudes fall short of accounting for intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation, which is likely to become more prevalent in multi-ethnic schools, especially in Europe (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015). In recent research, some students of Roma ethnic origin bullied classmates they perceived as Roma rather than non-Roma (i.e., intra-ethnic bullying) (Kisfalusi et al., 2020). How such intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation happens or the extent to which it differs from inter-ethnic bullying/victimisation has largely remained an unclear issue in the literature. Studies on cross-ethnic comparisons devoted to these questions are scarce, falling short of describing an accurate prevalence of ethnicity-based bullying by peers of ethnic out-groups (inter-ethnic) and in-groups (intra-ethnic) in ethnically diverse classrooms or schools (Tolsma et al., 2013).

Hence, with the present narrative review of empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives, we pursue the question as to whether relationships of ethnicity with the prevalence of bullies and victims are mediated or moderated by other contextual and individual factors. To this aim, we put forward the “Transactional Framework of Ethnicity-Based Bullying” (Kuldass et al., 2021) to explain how the relationship is moderated by contextual characteristics, such as classroom ethnic composition, and mediated by individual characteristics (e.g., social dominance orientation). From this transactional perspective, we argue that an accurate estimation of prevalence rates of bullies and victims across ethnicities depends at least on six basic issues: (a) whether research participants are provided with a definition of (general or ethnicity-based) bullying/victimisation, (b) whether classroom ethnic composition is taken into account, (c) whether ethnicity is measured with standardised or delineated indicators, (d) whether ethnicity is a perceived reason to bully or to be victims, (e) whether only one side’s perspective (i.e., victim, bully, or peer nomination) is taken into account, and (f) whether ethnicity-based bullying/victimisation is distinct from general one across countries. These issues need to be addressed for further research to estimate, prevent, or reduce the prevalence of

inter- and intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation in schools/classrooms. This narrative review has attempted to address these issues. First, we define ethnicity and ethnicity-based bullying/victimisation, showing the difference between the inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation. Next, we briefly pinpoint common measurement issues in measuring moderated or mediated effects of ethnicity on the prevalence of bullies and victims. Thereafter, we exemplify Roma ethnicity as a case of inter- and intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation. Finally, from the transactional perspective, we address the question of how intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation might take place and propose seven hypotheses to be tested in further research.

Ethnicity and Ethnicity-Based (Inter- and Intra-ethnic) Bullying/Victimisation

Ethnicity refers to a common social origin, which is self-identified and/or identified by others. Ethnicity is identified with a social community that has shared sociocultural characteristics, such as cultural, linguistic, geographical and ancestral origins, to which that community members belong and/or are perceived to belong (Bhopal, 2004). This indicates that ethnicity has (a) an attributional dimension, the unique sociocultural characteristics, and (b) a relational dimension, relationships between an ethnic group and the surrounding social hierarchies (Ford & Harawa, 2010). In other words, an ethnic group may have a variety of language, social norms, cultural practices, religious beliefs, and worldviews but not necessarily have unique and common physical features.

To bully a person or group for their ethnic identity (e.g., Kurdish, Roma or Irish-Traveller) or ethnic origin (e.g., immigrant, indigenous or national), motivated by an ethnical reason and/or purpose, is often defined as ethnicity-based bullying (Kuldass et al., 2021). Ethnical reasons are usually power-imbalance and perceived social misfit, while an ethnical purpose can be ethnic or social dominance in a classroom/school context (Kuldass et al., 2021). These ethnical reasons and purposes are not solely relevant to inter-ethnic diversity. There is also intra-ethnic diversity, referred as to distinct social characteristics of the same ethnicity, such as differences in language (e.g., accents or dialects), traditional apparel, specific job profession, religious belief or geographical/regional residence. Such a diversity can be a perceived reason for bullies and victims. Intra-ethnic bullying can therefore be a perceived ethnical reason for bullies and victims of the same ethnic origin or different ethnic minority. An example for the same ethnic origin is two Roma communities, one adhering to the ethnic majority norms and another adhering to its own ethnic minority

norms (Kisfalusi et al., 2020). Examples for the different ethnic origin might be a group of Kurdish and Turkish students in Turkey (Cinar, 2015) or a group of Roma and Irish-Traveller students in Ireland.

Ethnicity-based bullying has much in common with the general phenomenon of bullying in that both are characterised by proactive-aggressive behaviour, target-directed (e.g., perceived social misfit), goal-oriented (e.g., social dominance orientation), frequency and social power imbalance (Kuldass et al., 2021). Growing findings indicate that ethnicity-based bullying is as common and harmful as other types of bullying (Felix et al., 2009; Hightow-Weidman et al., 2011). Ethnicity-based bullying can be direct (e.g., racial epithets, taunts and slurs) and indirect, such as social exclusion (McKenney et al., 2006). However, the distinctive feature of ethnicity-based bullying is that bullies and victims perceive or have an ethnical (reason or purpose) motivation (Monks et al., 2008; Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2019).

Measurement Issues: Suggestions for Further Research

As Vitoroulis and Vaillancourt (2015, 2018) acknowledged in their meta-analyses, moderating variables, particularly measurement methods (methodological approaches and limitations), may under- or over-estimate the prevalence of bullies and victims across ethnicities. Therefore, the prevalence rate of inter-ethnic bullying is inconsistent across studies. For example, literature on the most frequently studied ethnic minority groups (i.e., Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian) in North America has shown inconsistent associations (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2018). On one hand, African American youth are considered by peers as aggressive or bullies more than their European American, Hispanic/Latino and Asian peers. On the other hand, White/European American students are considered more aggressive than their African American and Asian peers (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2018). This inconsistency is attributable to common method bias or measurement methods.

The present review has therefore focused on six most common measurement methods leading to these inconsistent findings. These issues were arrived at after conducting a narrative review of the limited literature available on ethnicity-based bullying. We should point out that there are many more measurement issues that will influence prevalence rates and we of course recognise that other intersectional factors (e.g., school community, country, socioeconomic status, class, gender, sexuality, religion, disability, speciality, and other social and political identities) should also be taken into account. However, in an effort to be as specific as possible, we decided to focus only on the six issues we focused on are as follows: First, are participants

provided with a definition of (general or ethnicity-based) bullying? Second, is classroom ethnic composition taken into account? Third, how is ethnicity measured? Fourth, is ethnicity a perceived reason of bullies or victims? Fifth, is there only one side's perspective (i.e., victim, bully or peer nomination)? Sixth, is ethnicity-based bullying distinct from general bullying across countries? Other common issues, which are out of the scope this review, are (a) whether bullying/victimisation is measured by one, few or more items, and (b) whether measurement invariance across groups (grouped as age, gender, ethnicity/race, sexuality, disability, speciality, socioeconomic status, country or religion) is estimated. All these limitations yield inconsistent findings about percentages and characteristics of bullies and victims across different ethnicities and countries (Kisfalusi et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2019; Samara et al., 2019; Tolsma et al., 2013).

First: Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire Without Definition of Bullying

Participants who are provided with a definition of bullying are likely to report very different prevalence rate of bullies and victims than those who are not provided. Recent comprehensive meta-analyses (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015) revealed that ethnic minority students who are provided with a definition of bullying are likely to report being victimised less often than those not given. In contrast, White students who are provided with a definition tend to report more peer victimisation than Black students in studies using the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015). This might be a reason for why ethnic majority (White/European-American) youth reported peer victimisation in published studies more than those of ethnic minorities in the USA. This may in turn result in overestimating the prevalence of peer victimisation that ethnic majority students experience, but underestimating the prevalence of peer victimisation that ethnic minority students face (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015). Such an over- or under-estimation is also likely to happen if participants are provided with a definition of ethnicity-based bullying instead of a general one. This difference has yet to be tested.

Second: Classroom Ethnic Composition

One fundamental reason for contradictory findings is that the ethnic composition (i.e., the proportion of ethnic diversity) in a school/classroom was not taken into account in the earlier studies (Kuldass et al., 2021). Although two decades ago Hanish and Guerra (2000) had noted that the prevalence rate of ethnicity-based bullying/victimisation can be moderated by whether a classroom/school has more, less or no diversity

of ethnic minorities, there is still little attention allocated to this suggestion (Kuldas et al., 2021). The focus on cross-ethnic comparisons has just recently shifted from ethnicity (as demographic characteristic) toward contextual variables, such as classroom ethnic composition (Vitoroulis et al., 2016). Recent empirical and theoretical reviews (Kuldas et al., 2021) and meta-analyses (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015) found that the prevalence of victims among ethnic majority versus minority students has been more successfully captured in studies focusing on the proportion of ethnic majority–minority students in a school setting. However, with regard to ethnic differences in the prevalence of bullies, Vitoroulis and Vaillancourt's (2018) recent meta-analysis lacked the focus on classroom ethnic composition. The effect of classroom ethnic composition is likely to account for ethnic differences in the prevalence rate of bullies (Kuldas et al., 2021).

Third: How Is Ethnicity Measured?

How ethnicity is identified and operationalised in most studies is inconsistent from at least two aspects. The first aspect, whether participants' ethnicity is based on the country they were born or their parents (i.e., do students identify themselves with their citizenship or ethnic minority origin?) can make a significant difference in reporting peers bullying because of ethnicity, underestimating the prevalence rate of being a victim of inter- and intra-ethnic bullying, or both (Kisfalusi et al., 2020). As to the second aspect, whether an ethnic minority group in a specific research refers to an immigrant group (e.g., Kurdish and Roma in Ireland) or indigenous ethnicity (e.g., Irish Traveller in Ireland). When considering immigrant groups, a moderating variable can be whether they are the first, second, or third generation. From an ethnically diverse sample of 198 elementary and 308 high school students (42% immigrant, 61.9% girls) in a major city in Canada, 14.2% of first generation immigrants (who were born in Canada but their parents were born outside the country) reported the highest rates of ethnic victimisation, being bullied because of their ethnicity (McKenney et al., 2006). As such, further research should delineate how ethnicity is measured.

Fourth: Is Ethnicity the Perceived Reason for Victims or Bullies?

This point relates to whether or not ethnicity is a perceived reason for being bullied or bullying matters for an accurate estimation of ethnicity-based bullying/victimisation. In 2016, a global prevalence of victims of ethnicity-based bullying was estimated by UNICEF (in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General). To provide policymakers with up-to-date opinions

on the pervasiveness of bullying/victimisation behaviour globally, UNICEF launched an online opinion poll (a mobile application) to ask opinions of children and adolescents on their own experience of being bullied (United Nations General Assembly, 2016). The poll targeted the young population from 18 countries, including Burkina Faso, Chile, Guinea, Indonesia, Ireland, Liberia, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Uganda and Ukraine. Over 100,000 children and adolescents reported their reasons for being bullied, how it affected them, and what prevention and response measures were needed. Responses yielded a "U-Report" as Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children opinion (Sotomayor, 2016). The U-Report analysis showed ethnicity as one of fourth commonly "perceived reason" for being bullied, that is, 25% of the respondents perceived they were bullied because of their own ethnicity, race, or national origin (Sotomayor, 2016; United Nations General Assembly, 2016).

However, the percentage of students who were bullied because of their ethnicity, race or nationality appeared much lower in the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) across 144 countries (UNESCO, 2019). Across all GSHS regions, 10.9% of students who had been bullied reported that this was based on their ethnicity (UNESCO, 2019). In Europe, 8.2% of students reported to be victims of the ethnicity-based bullying (UNESCO, 2019). This inconsistency in the prevalence rates is attributable to issues in measurement and theoretical explanations. As such, ethnicity as a perceived reason for being bullied or bullying is still not clearly understood (Kuldas et al., 2021), mainly due to the lack of appropriate instruments designed to be sensitive to reporting this issue (Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2019). Indeed, it could be that widely used instruments fall short of measuring both (a) the extent to which victims are aware of bullies' motivations (Kisfalusi et al., 2020), and (b) whether bullies recognise or perceive reasons of ethnic-cultural difference for their own aggressive behaviour (Özdemir et al., 2018). This issue has yet to be explained for the better estimation of direct, indirect, or moderated, associations of ethnicity with prevalence of peer victimisation, bullying or discrimination.

The prevalence of inter-ethnic bullying can also vary according to how victims' ethnicity is perceived by bullies rather than how victims identify themselves with an ethnicity (Kisfalusi et al., 2020). Further research should take into account both victims' perception of their own ethnicity (self-identification) and bullies' perception of victims' ethnicity. Self-identification of ethnicity is more suitable for examining personal behaviours or attitudes, whereas perceived ethnicity by others is more explanatory for research on the prevalence of bullying, victimisation or discrimination (Boda & Néray, 2015; Roth, 2016).

Fifth: Perspectives of Bullies, Victims, or Peers?

Like the U-Report, many extant studies are solely focused on the prevalence of victims of ethnicity-based bullying (McKenney et al., 2006; Özdemir et al., 2018) or racial bullying (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002), particularly in the USA, Canada and Europe (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2015). They have adopted only the victim's perspective, measuring perceived ethnicity or race as a primary reason for being bullied (Fandrem et al., 2009; Özdemir et al., 2018; Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2018). In a recent large-scale study in the USA (Mendez et al., 2016), ethnicity as victims' perceived reason for being bullied was reported by 12% of 3305 students (5 to 12 grades). In European countries, prevalence rates of the perceived reason vary by ethnic minority groups. In a nationwide cross-ethnic research in the Netherlands (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002), 42% of Turkish, 34% of Surinamese and 33% of Moroccan ethnic minority children (10–13 years) perceived ethnicity as the reason for being bullied. These prevalence rates specific to countries give rise to the question whether they are comparable across countries. The country-specific studies and the U-Report fell short of a cross-ethnic comparison for whether a specific ethnicity has higher or lower prevalence rate for being bullied or bullying others. The studies yielded an underestimated prevalence rate for the perceived reason due to the fact that they did not account for (a) unreported cases of victimisations, and (b) bully's perceived reason for perpetration. As the U-Report highlighted, almost half of victims of bullying did not report to anyone, because they were either afraid or ashamed or did not know whom to talk to (Sotomayor, 2016).

Studies adopting perspective of bullies are very scarce (Özdemir et al., 2018; Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2018). As Kisfalusi et al. (2020) pinpointed, most studies “concentrated on the ethnic background of the bully (‘who bullies’) and of the victim (‘who is bullied’) separately, but did not take into account the combination of the two (‘who bullies whom’)”. This one sided perspective may result in an underestimated or overestimated prevalence rate of victims as compared to when bullies' self-reports (i.e., bullies' perceived ethnic-reason for bullying) are taken into account. The association of self-declared ethnicity with victims and bullies has appeared significant when bullies report it but not when victims do, especially in classrooms where an ethnic group is dominant (Kisfalusi et al., 2020).

Like the victim's perspective, the bully's perspective may be influenced by the country, nationality, or ethnicity of origin of the individual involved. The prevalence rate may therefore vary according to reasons perceived by bullies as well as types of bullying. A nation-wide research with a representative sample of 21,487 (aged 12 to 16 years,

48.3% girls) in Spain (Calmaestra et al., 2016) focused on self-reports by both bullies and victims, who also reported their perceived reasons (skin colour, culture, or religion) for traditional bullying and cyberbullying behaviours. The prevalence rate of the perceived ethnic reason for traditional bullying was 6.6% (77 out of 1160 perpetrators), for cyberbullying was 7.7% (49 out of 642 perpetrators), and for both traditional- and cyber-bullying was 9.3% (26 out of 280 perpetrators). The prevalence rate of the perceived ethnic reason for being victims of traditional bullying was 5.1% (102 out of 1998 victims), of cyberbullying was 5.0% (74 out of 1482 victims), and of both traditional- and cyber-bullying was 5.3% (42 out of 795 victims). These rates raise the question as to whether self-reports by bullies or by victims or a combination of them need to be taken into account to better estimate the prevalence of perceived-ethnic reason for a bullying behaviour. Although the suggestion for taking into account both sides or who bullies whom (Kisfalusi et al., 2020) seems tenable, estimates of the prevalence of inter- and intra-ethnic bullies and victims can also differ (e.g., low agreement rates between the reporter types) when obtained through self-report or peer-report (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2018). Hence, the more accurate prevalence rate of inter- and intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation might be estimated in further research taking into account a triangle perspective: victim, bully and peer nomination.

Sixth: Is Ethnicity-based Bullying Different from General Bullying Across Countries?

Although ethnicity is perceived as a reason for bullying or being bullied, to test or identify the prevalence of this perception warrants a clear distinction between the general phenomenon of bullying and the specific phenomenon of ethnicity-based bullying. To this aim, a recent cross-ethnic comparison (Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2019) involved a multi-ethnic sample of 27,369 secondary school students (11–18 years old, 51.3% girls) from the 17 communities across 2 autonomous cities in Spain ($n = 79.60\%$ Spanish natives). The sample consisted of 79.60% Spanish natives ($n = 21,284$, 51% girls), 11.19% immigrants ($n = 2992$, 52.4% girls), and 9.21% with an immigrant background ($n = 2463$, 52.1% girls). The immigrants' countries of origin mainly were Romania ($n = 504$), Morocco ($n = 426$), Colombia ($n = 282$), Ecuador ($n = 268$), Bolivia ($n = 118$), Argentina ($n = 106$), Dominican Republic ($n = 99$), Bulgaria ($n = 98$) and Peru ($n = 80$). As to a specific ethnicity, 334 participants were from a Roma ethnic group (13.98 mean age, 41.6% girls). As a result, ethnicity-based bullying occurred as a different phenomenon from general/personal bullying. Of the participants, (a) 12.9% ($n = 2813$) perceived themselves as victims of ethnic-cultural aggressions, 3.8% ($n = 815$) as

ethnic-cultural aggressors, and 7.7% ($n = 1,676$) as ethno-cultural bully-victims. Although the research context had a lower prevalence rate of inter-ethnic bullying/victimisation than the general one, a certain dynamism exists between both.

However, cross-ethnic group validity (measurement invariance across ethnic groups) for the distinction between the general and the specific phenomenon of bullying warrants further research in other multicultural school settings like in Canada and the USA as well as in other countries across Europe. Such a distinction further requires not to group distinct ethnic minorities under single ethnic minority. Most studies usually ask participants (school students) how often they bullied or were bullied because of ethnicity, race, or cultural group; thereby lacking the account for the ethnic/racial variations in direct or indirect relations with bullying/victimisation (Fandrem et al., 2009). For instance, Vervoort et al. (2010) stated that “we did not differentiate between different ethnic minority groups due to their small sample sizes.” As Fandrem et al. (2009) acknowledged, treating all surveyed immigrant pupils as one single group may fall short of estimating the prevalence of inter-ethnic bullying or victimisation and explaining possible associations of ethnic or racial variations with bullying or victimisation.

In conclusion, there is a general lack of research linking contexts and characteristics of a country to bullies and victims among ethnic-minority students (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2018). Taking this link into account can be more informative when estimating prevalence rates of inter- and intra-ethnic bullying than drawing conclusions from studies treating different ethnic groups as homogeneous (Vitoroulis & Vaillancourt, 2018). This suggestion requires researchers to examine whether the prevalence rate for a more homogenous ethnic group significantly varies from those different ethnic groups who are treated as homogeneous. For instance, the prevalence rate of bullies and victims may be peculiar to a more homogenous ethnic group in a specific country, such as a sub-group of Roma ethnic community in Hungary or Romania.

The Case of Roma Ethnicity

‘Roma’ refers to a heterogeneous community who identify themselves as Sinti/Manush, Kalé, Romanichals, Gypsies or Travellers on the basis of sharing the North Indian origin of ethnicity, history, culture, and language (Council of Europe, 2012). The Roma ethnicity has several sub-groups like Kelderash, Lovari, Gurbeti, Churari and Ursari (Council of Europe, 2012). Although Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, there is no systematic data collection

on Roma in the EU Member States (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016). With very few exceptions, the EU-wide large-scale surveys collected no information on ethnicity or insufficiently cover ethnic minorities, including Roma (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016).

Among the exceptions, two large-scale surveys by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2012, 2016) were aimed at determining the overall prevalence of discrimination according to the proportion of Roma respondents who personally felt discriminated against because of their skin colour and ethnic origin or other beliefs. The survey in 2016 was based on 7,947 individual interviews with Roma respondents in the nine EU Member States, namely Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. The surveyed Roma represented about 80% of Roma living in the EU. Four out of 10 (almost one in two) Roma (41%) surveyed in the nine EU Member States felt discriminated against (by either public or private service staff) because of their Roma background/ethnic origin at least once in the past five years ($n = 7745$). For one in four Roma (26%), the last incident of perceived discrimination happened in the 12 months ($n = 7875$) preceding the survey when in contact with public or private services. This finding is consistent with the two previous surveys of Roma (EU-MIDIS I and the 2011 Roma survey), in which about half of the Roma respondents felt discriminated against because of their ethnic origin (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2012, 2016).

However, the perceived reason of ethnicity is not necessarily associated with being discriminated, victimized, bullied, or with corresponding prevalence rates. Very recent findings suggest reconsidering this association. For example, a meta-analysis of exponential random graph models for 12 classes (347 students from 4 secondary schools) included self-identified Roma and Hungarian Roma ($n = 108$), and non-Roma ($n = 232 + 7$, Hungarian + other Western ethnicities) students (Kisfalusi et al., 2020). Results indicated that both Roma and non-Roma students are more likely to bully classmates they perceive as Roma rather than non-Roma. In contrast, there was no evidence that (a) students of Hungarian ethnicity bully self-declared Roma rather than non-Roma classmates, and (b) Roma students bully self-declared Roma rather than non-Roma classmates. In other words, Roma victims’ self-declared ethnicity was not significantly associated with the likelihood of being bullied, but bullies’ perceptions of their victims’ ethnicity was significantly related to the victimisation (i.e., Roma students are likely to be bullied not because of their self-declared ethnicity but because bullies perceive them as Roma). Accordingly, if a study on the prevalence of inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic bullying is solely based on the

association between Roma students' self-declared ethnicity and being victims (victim-reported bullying), the prospective finding will likely be no association or the prevalence rate will be underestimated. Similar findings are likely to occur when participants are from classes with a high proportion of Roma students (Kisfalusi et al., 2020).

As a result, an underestimation or overestimation of these prevalence rates for bullying/victimisation among Roma is likely to be due to at least three reasons. First, the majority of Roma who have an experience of being bullied or discriminated tend to not report it to an authority (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016). Although almost one in two Roma (41%) felt discriminated against because of their ethnic origin in the past five years and one in four Roma (26%) experienced this in the last 12 months preceding the survey, on average, only 12% of Roma reported their experience to an authority (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016). This indicates an underestimated prevalence rate. Next, Roma respondents not only assess or report their own experiences of discrimination but also of family members and Roma friends, which can lead to an overestimation of prevalence rate of discrimination (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2012). Last, how the ethnicity of Roma is defined, identified or operationalised for most studies is questionable, that is, how the difference between self-identified ethnicity and perceived ethnicity or intra- and inter-ethnic bullying is conceptualised. All these issues should be taken into account to improve the accuracy of prevalence rates of bullying/victimisation among the ethnic Roma groups across Europe.

Intra-ethnic Bullying/Victimisation

As the reviewed findings and measurement issues have revealed, to explain how intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation happens requires a comprehensive theoretical perspective on individual and contextual characteristics as well as their interdependent/dynamic effects. Such an approach was recently proposed by the 'Transactional Framework of Ethnicity-Based Bullying' (Kuldass et al., 2021). Although there is little empirical evidence, intra-ethnic bullying is

explainable from this transactional framework, which is a critical integration of theoretical perspectives on 'power imbalance' (Graham, 2006), 'social misfit' (Wright et al., 1986), 'group threat' (Blalock, 1967; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010), 'ethnic-group competition' (Coenders et al., 2004) and social dominance orientation (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). The first two variables are two contextual characteristics as antecedents of ethnicity-based bullying/victimisation, whereas the later three variables are individual characteristics (Kuldass et al., 2021).

Definitions of these individual and contextual characteristics are based on their interdependent relationships with ethnicity. According to the transactional framework (Kuldass et al., 2021), (a) ethnic misfits are culturally (e.g., mother tongue, communal norms, or values) and genetically (e.g., skin colour and other physical traits) heritable characteristics that are perceived by bullies as deviations from social norms of ethnic dominant group; (b) social power imbalance refers to the disproportionate number of ethnic majority and minority students in a classroom or school (Graham, 2006); (c) group threat is a collective phenomenon (not individual perception), collectively perceived threat to social dominance status, and it often triggers hostility towards ethnic minority students (Blalock, 1967); (d) ethnic-group competition is for maintaining or defending social dominance over an ethnically diverse classroom or school (Coenders et al., 2004); (e) social dominance orientation is the preference that members of in-group to be superior to (having social power over) members of out-groups (Salmivalli, 2010; Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001).

According to new findings (Kisfalusi et al., 2020), intra-ethnic bullying might happen when bullies perceive victims to be in the out-group of the same ethnicity, when there is a social misfit between two different groups of the same ethnicity (i.e., intra-ethnic misfit) in a school or classroom that is dominant by ethnic majority students. Victims are often those who somewhat do not fit the in-group norm, who are perceived as a misfit (Wright et al., 1986). Such social misfit may happen between members of the same ethnicity who have been assimilated into the social and cultural norms (language, lifestyle, worldview or religious

Fig. 1 Intra-ethnic misfit (H1-hypothesis 1) and social power imbalance (H2-hypothesis 2) as moderators of the relationship between ethnicity and intra-ethnic bullying

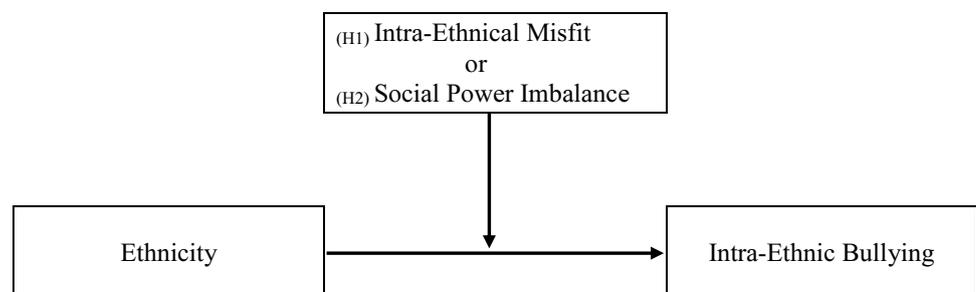
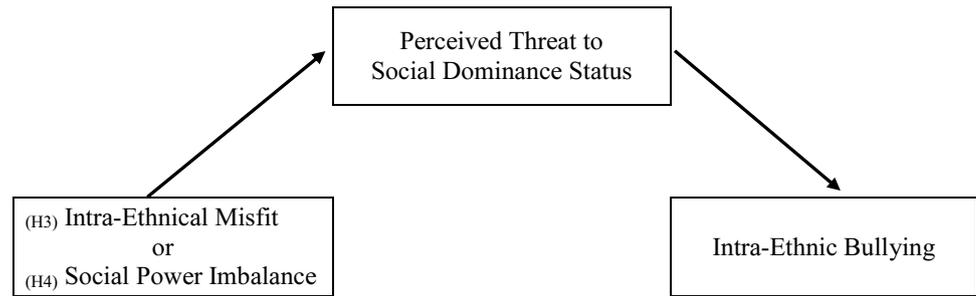


Fig. 2 Perceived threat (to social dominance status) as a mediator of the relationship of intra-ethnic misfit (H3-hypothesis 3) and social power imbalance (H4-hypothesis 4) with intra-ethnic bullying



belief) of the dominant ethnic group and those members who comply with their own social-cultural norms (Juvonen & Gross, 2005). For example, a group of Roma students who do not deviate from the dominant ethnic norms are more likely to bully their own Roma peers when perceiving them as deviant from the dominant norms (Kisfalusi et al., 2020). In a school context in Hungary, such intra-ethnic bullying could happen due to the intra-ethnic misfit between Roma students who speak a Romani language as mother tongue and those Roma who speak Hungarian as mother tongue (Kisfalusi et al., 2020). When this intra-ethnic bullying is approved by bullies' in-group members (those Roma students adhering to the dominant ethnic norms) as well by classmates of ethnic-majority, it creates social power imbalance. In other words, this approval is a type of social power imbalance that moderates the relationship of ethnicity with intra-ethnic bullying. Hence, further research might consider this moderated effect of ethnicity on intra-ethnic bullying when there is either intra-ethnic misfit or social power imbalance, as displayed in Fig. 1.

However, either intra-ethnic misfit or social power-imbalance does not necessarily increase or decrease the prevalence of intra-ethnic bullying, unless it is perceived as a threat to social dominance status. Given that bullies target victims who have lower social status or less support in a peer group, students of the same ethnic origin might no longer want to be affiliated with these victims because this could lower their own status and increase the risk of being the next target (Bellmore et al., 2004; Salmivalli, 2010). For instance, Roma peers who adhere to their own

social-cultural norms might remind another group of Roma, who adheres to ethnic majority norms, of their own ethnic minority origin, thereby triggering perceived threat to their place or role in social dominance in a classroom or school. The latter group might perceive the former group as a threat to (a) their own fit in the dominant ethnic norms (i.e., the fear of losing their privileges or dominant role), (b) to their sense of safety (i.e., the fear of being mistreated, discriminated, or bullied by ethnic majority group), or (c) both. Hence, the 3rd and 4th hypotheses, depicted in Fig. 2, need to be tested.

The perception of threat to their fit in a dominant group, sense of safety, or both might in turn motivate them to compete for maintaining or defending their role in the social dominance over classroom or school by engaging in continues aggression, hostility, or harassment. A growing number of research based on evolutionary and sociological theory shows that bullying is likely to be aimed at obtaining, maintaining, or defending social dominance rather than the intention to harm or to be mean (Olthof et al., 2011; Van der Ploeg et al., 2020; Volk et al., 2014). In other words, this can be considered as the competition for social dominance status rather than the intention to harm or to be mean. Fig. 3 illustrates this mediation effect of competition for social dominance status, which needs to be tested.

However, an ethnic minority group or its sub-group might prefer to no longer be identified with victims of the same ethnic origin (Bellmore et al., 2004) but instead be identified with the superior/dominant group (ethnic majority) in order to have or feel social power over the perceived

Fig. 3 Competition for social dominance status as a mediator of the relationship between perceived threat (to social dominance status) and intra-ethnic bullying

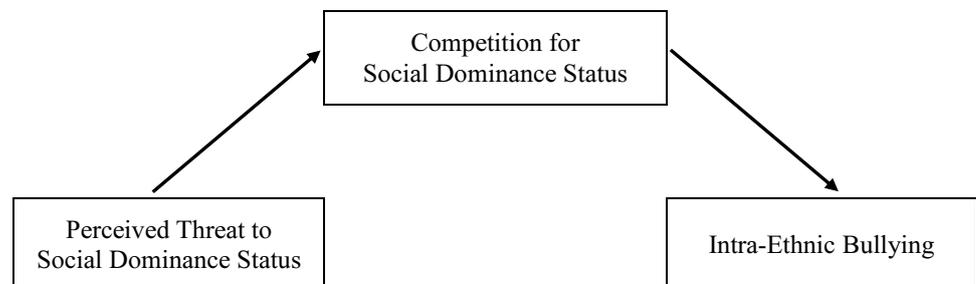
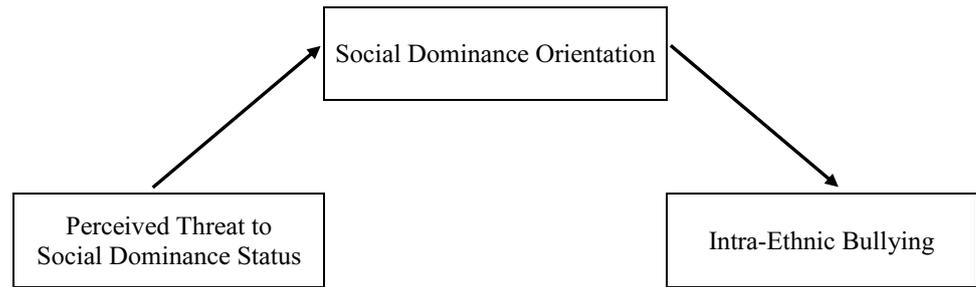


Fig. 4 Social dominance orientation as a mediator of the relationship between perceived threat (to ethnic dominance status) and intra-ethnic bullying



inferior out-group with the same ethnic origin. This can be considered as the ‘function’ of social dominance, which is a basic assumption of the social dominance orientation theory (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). This warrants to test whether social dominance orientation mediates relationships between the perceived threat to social dominance status and intra-ethnic bullying (see Fig. 4).

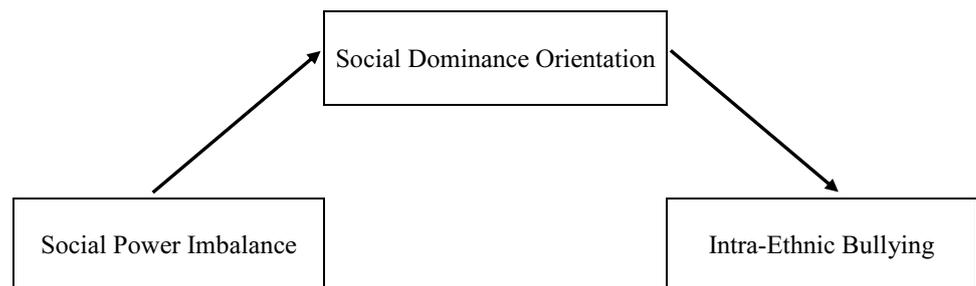
Individuals who perceive or identify themselves as being in a superior position in society strongly endorse the belief in social dominance orientation (Salmivalli, 2010; Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). This endorsement is based on common ethno-cultural beliefs or ideologies that rationalise or justifies in-group behaviours or attitudes towards out-group peers (Kuldass et al., 2021; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). This is why bullies are less likely to bully classmates if they fear disapproval from their in-group peers, but bully out-group classmates if they have got the approval (Veenstra et al., 2010; Verkuyten, 2003). As such, the preference for in-group dominance orientation is also likely to be stimulated or allowed by the social approval (i.e., social power imbalance) for bullying out-group peers of the same ethnicity. Further research might test this indirect effect shown in Fig. 5.

In sum, on the basis of the transactional framework, it can be hypothesized that intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation happens in ethnically diverse classrooms when there is either intra-ethnic misfit (hypothesis 1) or social power

imbalance (hypothesis 2). Given that intra-ethnic misfit is the collective perception of in-group and out-group peers, it might trigger the perceived threat to social dominance status (hypothesis 3). This trigger might also happen by social power imbalance between in-group and out-group peers (hypothesis 4). This perceived threat might in turn stimulate either competition for social dominance status (hypothesis 5) or preference for social dominance orientation (hypothesis 6). However, social dominance orientation might also be stimulated by social power-imbalance alone (hypothesis 7).

Antecedences of all these hypotheses are social power imbalance and ethnical misfit. However, as Kuldass et al. (2021) acknowledged, both power imbalance and ethnical misfit in a school setting can also ensue from the proportion of teacher ethnic diversity and be associated with school policies, ethos or norms, which may prioritise an ethnic or racial dominance. In some cases, power imbalance does not result merely out of disproportionate pupil numbers of one group or another but more in terms of the value that a school places on diversity and inclusion (Kuldass et al., 2021). Structural and functional issues at the school, such as best practice policies and procedures can also influence the power hierarchy of particular student groups and/or increase the risk of a particular group being associated with ethnic misfit (Earnshaw et al., 2018). Further research is needed to explain whether the teacher and school aspects of power imbalance and ethnical misfit influence the prevalence of inter-and intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation.

Fig. 5 Social dominance orientation as a mediator of the relationship between power imbalance and intra-ethnic bullying



Conclusion

This review addressed the question of how intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation occurs, providing further research with methodological and theoretical explanations. To this aim, we focused on the example of Roma ethnicity from the perspective of the transactional framework of ethnicity-based bullying, whereby we derived seven hypotheses to be considered for testing in further research. As the transactional framework (Kuldas et al., 2021) concluded, inter- and intra-bullying/victimisation is neither because of individual nor contextual characteristics alone, but because of their interdependent effects. In other words, neither ethnicity, context, victim nor bully holds a deterministic role in intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation. Bullies and victims are defined in terms of (a) how they “perceive and affect” their own ethnic identity as well as (b) how they are “perceived and affected by” each other within a particular time period, social-cultural context or school/classroom environment (Kuldas et al., 2021).

Both bullies and victims perceive, evaluate and act on their individual and contextual (classroom or school) characteristics, as their efforts to have, maintain, or enhance the fit between environmental and personal needs (Kuldas et al., 2021). This perception or evaluation of the fit merit further investigations, so as to help to meet a growing concern about the educational and social integration of increasing number of immigrant/ethnic minority students (Plenty & Jonsson, 2017). This increment in classroom/school ethnic diversity around the world, particularly in Europe comes along with both challenge and opportunity for promoting harmonious diversity (Kuldas et al., 2021; Peguero, 2019). One common challenge is not only inter-ethnic but also intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation in ethnically heterogeneous schools or classrooms. If bullying in an ethnically diverse classroom/school occurs often, it may undermine endeavours of policy makers and educators to promote diversity in schools by mixing pupils of different ethnic groups (Tolsma et al., 2013).

Ways to tackle this challenge starts with determining the extent to which inter- and intra-ethnic bullying is prevalent across ethnicities in a specific country, province, or school, especially across Europe. This further requires to identify the extent to which ethnic minority students are bullied by or bully their peers of ethnic in-groups (intra-ethnic) and out-groups (inter-ethnic) in ethnically diverse schools or classrooms. Research on this question is scarce. Although few studies focused on this question, findings were inconsistent, such as that students of an ethnic minority were either at risk to bully or to be bullied. Inconsistent findings obscure the issue of whether to

promote ethnic diversity in schools or classrooms (mixing ethnic minorities with the ethnic majority) will prevent, reduce, or contribute to bullying (Vervoort et al., 2010). Empirical evidence for this issue indicates that ‘bringing ethnic minorities and ethnic majority group members together in one school class does not automatically lead to positive interethnic contacts’ (Vervoort et al., 2010, p. 9).

Further research on inter- and intra-ethnic bullying/victimisation is needed to cast sufficient light on one of the fastest growing segments of the population—ethnic minority students (Peguero, 2019). Special attention must be devoted to Roma students, as the Roma ethnic-cultural group has been suffering discrimination and social exclusion in countries across Europe throughout history (Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2019). Ethnic-cultural bullying is an adverse factor for programs and policies aimed at assisting the Roma population for educational and social inclusion (Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2019).

Funding Dr Seffetullah Kuldas is funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020. Dr Mairéad Foody is funded by the Irish Research Council and the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 713279.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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