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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION AND BULLYING IN THE SAMI AND NON-SAMI POPULATIONS IN NORWAY: THE SAMINOR STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Objectives. To investigate the prevalence of self-reported experiences of ethnic discrimination and bullying among Sami and non-Sami adults.

Study Design. Cross-sectional, questionnaire-based survey.

Methods. SAMINOR is a population-based study of health and living conditions that was administered in 2003–2004 in 24 different Norwegian and Sami populated municipalities within central and northern Norway. This analysis was based on 12,265 men and women aged 36–79 years. Ethnic distribution was Sami (33.1%), Kvens (7.8%) and the ethnic Norwegian majority (59.1%).

Results. Overall, Sami and Kven respondents reported more ethnic discrimination and bullying in general than ethnic Norwegians ($p < 0.001$). The reporting was highest among the younger participants ($p < 0.001$). Men reported more ethnic discrimination than women, while women reported more bullying. Respondents with the strongest Sami affiliation reported higher levels of ethnic discrimination outside the Sami Language Act's district, while respondents with weak Sami affiliation, Kvens and ethnic Norwegians, reported higher levels inside this district. Among the respondents that reported bullying previously, the most common type was discriminating remarks and the most common location was public schools. For those who reported bullying in the past year, the most common types were gossiping and discriminating remarks, and the most common locations were at work and in the local community. Two out of three of those reporting ethnic discrimination, independent of ethnicity, also reported bullying.

Conclusions. The findings from this study show that the Sami and Kven population more often experience bullying and ethnic discrimination than ethnic Norwegians. These results are consistent with experiences from other minority and marginalized groups that experienced colonization. More research is needed to understand the role bullying and ethnic discrimination play in the well-being and health of the Sami and Kven population. (*Int J Circumpolar Health* 2008; 67(1):97-113)

Keywords: Ethnic discrimination, bullying, minority, indigenous, Sami, Kven

INTRODUCTION

In many Western societies, ethnic minorities and/or marginalized populations are frequently subject to ethnic assimilation, racism, discrimination and bullying (1–4). Consequently, many of these populations also experience related health problems and socio-economic inequities (5–9). The Sami and Kven population of Norway have over the years been exposed to intense assimilative pressures (10). The government led a strict policy of Norwegianization (i.e., the assimilation of the Sami people into the Norwegian culture) (11). A recent study (12) on self-reported ethnic discrimination among Norwegian Sami showed that 1 out of every 4 Sami respondents had experienced ethnic discrimination during the last two years, due to their Sami ethnicity.

More recently, the Norwegian government acknowledged the existence of past and present ethnic discrimination among the Sami people and has thus pledged support to investigate this problem (13). In the National Plan of Action to Combat Racism and Discrimination (2002–2006) (14), it is stated that everyone living in Norway, regardless of their background, shall have equal opportunities, equal rights and equal obligations to participate in Norwegian society. In relation to the Sami population, the plan emphasizes that the Norwegian authorities are obliged (by international conventions and Norwegian law) to create a framework that allows them to preserve and develop their own language, culture and community (15). In 2006, the Anti-Discrimination Act became Norwegian law (14).

The Sami are indigenous people who traditionally inhabit the circumpolar regions of

northern Fennoscandia (15). The Sami have their own culture and Finno-Ugric language, and originally they had their own religion. Their culture and language differ greatly from those of the Norwegians. Their indigenous status has often been compared with the First Nations and Inuit in Alaska and Canada and the Inuit in Greenland.

Over the years, the Sami population has been under a great deal of pressure to adopt Norwegian customs. During the period 1850–1959, the Norwegian government made intense efforts to force the Sami people to adopt the Norwegian language and change the basic value structure of their culture and indigenous identity (16). Failure to comply with this assimilative process often led to stigmatization and discrimination of the Sami identity, language and culture (17). This was particularly evident in the school system where, until the late 1960s, Norwegian was the only language of instruction (18,19). Ethnic discrimination led to the development of negative feelings among the Sami population, especially for those who lived in mixed communities, where sentiments of inferiority and inequality thrived (20). As a result, many Sami changed their everyday language, occupation and place of residence, and gradually adopted the ethnic Norwegian majority's way of life (21). To make matters worse, those Sami who chose to act in ways that conflicted with traditional Sami values, drew criticism from the traditionally minded members of their community. This often resulted in double discrimination, from both the ethnic Norwegian majority and the Sami groups (22).

During the last three decades, Sami society has undergone an ethnic and cultural

revival (23). The goals of this revitalisation of Sami identity have been land rights, self-government and the preservation of Sami livelihoods, language, schools and other cultural practices (23). This process has also started a search for Sami identity, especially among the youngest Sami generation, whose families have been exposed to forced assimilation. The revitalisation efforts, together with an improved understanding of Sami culture and identity and new laws against ethnic discrimination and bullying, have been important tools in the fight for equal status and recognition for the Sami population. Today, many Sami are proud to show the surrounding society that they are of Sami origin. This can be seen with the increasing use of the Sami language, the growing body of Sami literature and research activity, the increasing participation of Sami organisations in national and international politics and the more frequently held Sami festivals.

Northern Norway also has a Kven minority population. The Kvens are a people that emigrated from the northern parts of Finland and Sweden to northern Norway in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1996 the Kvens were granted minority status in Norway, and in 2005 the Kven language was recognized as a minority language in Norway (22). The Kven and Sami people share a common history of assimilation (20). However, the present survey was designed to study the Sami population and did not include the main settlements of the Kven population (24).

The main aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence of self-reported experiences of ethnic discrimination and bullying among the Sami, Kven and ethnic Norwegian majority adults.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

During 2003–2004, a health and living conditions population survey (SAMINOR) was administered for selected municipalities of Finnmark, Troms, Nordland and Trøndelag in Norway. SAMINOR is the first large cross-sectional study that was designed to investigate health and living issues among the Sami population in particular. SAMINOR was commissioned by the Norwegian Minister of Health for the Centre for Sami Health Research, University of Tromsø. The SAMINOR study is described in details elsewhere (24).

Respondents

A total of 16,538 men and women aged 36–79 years participated in the SAMINOR survey, with a response rate of 61%. Our study sample consists of 12,265 individuals (74% of the response sample) who responded to questions about ethnic identity and experiences of ethnic discrimination and bullying.

Classification of ethnicity

The term ethnicity or ethnic group is thought of as culture, with a focus on cultural characteristics of the particular group, such as norms, values, attitudes and behaviour, which are significant for a group and stem from a common original culture transmitted across generations (25). It is difficult to accurately depict the ethnic makeup of northern Norway, as the majority of the Sami people live in such close proximity to Norwegians. Due to forced assimilation, many Sami people today no longer identify themselves as Sami, or avoid reporting their Sami background (26). Furthermore, there are no current demographic numbers to indicate the size of the

Sami population due to a lack of information on ethnicity in public registers.

Language competency, the ability of an individual to converse fluently in a given language, is one method that may be used as an ethnic identifier. To date, an individual's language competency along with their parents' and grandparents' ethnicity is considered to be the best reliable measures of determining Sami ethnicity (21,27–29).

The participants were asked about the language that was used at home: for his/her parents, grandparents and self; Sami, Norwegian, Kven or another language (to be specified). For the participants and their parents the question on their ethnic background had the same 4 categories of answers. They were also asked about self-perceived ethnicity (24). For all questions, participants were allowed to give more than 1 answer. Based on the above questions, 5 ethnic categories were developed:

1. Sami I: Maternal and paternal grandparents, both parents and the participant speak the Sami language at home.
2. Sami II: At least 2 Sami-speaking grandparents in the family.
3. Sami III: Sami language or ethnicity for at least one of the grandparents, parents or for the participant.
4. Kven: Minority of immigrants from Finland.
5. Ethnic Norwegian: Participants reporting no Sami or Kven affiliation.

Participants with both Sami and Kven background are considered Sami in this study. Immigrants with languages other than Sami, Kven or Norwegian and who were born outside Norway have been excluded from the analyses.

The division of the Sami population into 3 subgroups gave us a graded ethnicity variable, with Sami I having the strongest Sami affiliation and Sami III, the weakest.

The Sami Language Act

In 1990, Norway issued the Sami Language Act, which legalized the Sami language as an official language in Norway, specifically for the municipalities of Kautokeino, Karasjok, Kåfjord, Nesseby, Porsanger and Tana, referred to as the Sami Language Act's district (30). The purpose of this Act was to enable the Sami people in Norway to safeguard and develop their language, culture and way of life. Within the Sami Language Act's district, the Sami population has the right to receive adequate instruction in Sami, to use the language in public transactions and to adopt the language in the school system. Even outside these designated municipalities, individuals also have the right to receive instruction in Sami (20). In the study sample, 26% of the individuals were living inside the Sami Language Act's district (Table I).

The definition of self-reported ethnic discrimination and bullying

If bullying refers to behaviours that can occur to anyone without necessarily being addressed to ethnicity, then ethnic discrimination or ethnic bullying refers to the unfair treatment of an individual because of her/his ethnicity or phenotypic characteristics (31,32). Self-reported ethnic discrimination is the person's appraisal of their experience of discriminatory treatment. Ethnic discrimination consists of actions that are derived from tribal stigma and are addressed to a group of individuals who share a common race or ethnicity. Stigma

refers to an attribute or set of attributes that is deeply discrediting. Goffman (33) defined tribal stigma as a situation in which a group of individuals who share a common undesirable trait or characteristic are disqualified from full social acceptance. Therefore, ethnic discrimination must be understood in its larger social context, which is socially structured and intended to maintain privileges for members of dominant groups at the cost of depriving others of theirs (9). Tribal stigma is constructed and reinforced in language (32). Ethnic discrimination can be direct, overt or unintentional, and can occur at the individual (intra-group or inter-group), institutional or structural level (31). In reference to the Sami

population, Harald Eidheim uses the term *the syndrome of signs* to be synonymous with the term stigma (34). A number of signs are used to categorise and shape the boundaries between the Sami and ethnic Norwegian groups.

Bullying is defined as the “repeated exposure over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons” (35,36). Negative actions can further be defined as an “individual’s intention to inflict injury or discomfort upon another person, through physical contact or words among others” (35,36). Bullying can occur in any setting where human interaction occurs. These settings can include schools, the workplace and the local

Table 1. Characteristics of the study population (n=12,265).

Ethnic classification	Sami I n=1360 %	Sami II n=1856 %	Sami III n=854 %	Kvens n=957 %	Ethnic Norwegians n=7238 %	Total % n
Gender						
Female	50.4	49.9	50.4	49.4	52.8	51.7
Male	49.6	50.1	49.6	50.6	47.2	48.3
Age group (years)*						
36–49	34.8	42.2	34.3	31.1	36.6	36.7
50–64	41.6	42.0	44.4	44.1	43.7	43.3
65–79	23.6	15.8	21.3	24.8	19.7	20.0
Sami Language Act’s district*						
Yes	80.0	45.4	33.4	26.5	10.6	26.4
No	20.0	54.6	66.6	73.5	89.4	73.6
Education in number of years*						
< 6	13.2	5.5	7.1	6.7	2.9	5.0
7–9	33.9	30.7	30.0	33.9	30.3	31.0
10–12	24.2	32.6	27.2	29.2	32.3	30.9
13–16	18.9	20.5	23.6	19.2	21.8	21.2
≥17	9.7	10.7	12.1	11.0	12.6	11.9
Boarding school*						
Yes	59.3	32.2	25.3	19.2	14.5	23.4
No	40.7	67.8	74.7	80.8	85.5	76.7
Household income in NOK*						
<150,000	18.2	10.6	10.3	11.7	8.6	10.3
150–450,000	59.0	58.5	61.4	55.7	57.4	57.9
>450,000	22.8	30.9	28.3	32.6	33.9	31.7

*Significant difference between the ethnic groups, as evaluated by chi-square tests, $p < 0.0001$.

community. In the present study, we try to differentiate between “bullying in general,” which can occur to anyone without reference to ethnicity, and “ethnic discrimination/bullying,” which attacks the target explicitly based on ethnicity.

Questions on ethnic discrimination and bullying

Questions pertaining to experiences of ethnic discrimination and bullying were asked in 2 different ways. The first question addressed ethnic discrimination or ethnic bullying: “Have you ever experienced bullying or discrimination on account of your ethnic background?” The respondents were given the option to range the experiences from “never,” “rarely,” “sometimes” or “very often.” During analysis, we dichotomized this variable into “often/sometimes” or “rarely/never.” This question was directly related to ethnicity, which meant that the victim was bullied or discriminated against because of her/his ethnicity. The question was not restricted to a time interval in the respondent’s life and is therefore a measure of lifetime experience. From her one, we mean ethnic discrimination when we refer to this ethnic discrimination/bullying question.

The second question asked about bullying in general. In the questionnaire, we gave a short definition about the term bullying to the respondents, which could be translated into English as follows: “With the term bullying we mean repeated exposure over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other person, where the negative actions are through physical contact or verbal abuse, and you are unable to defend yourself against these actions.” Participants were then asked the question; “Have you ever experienced bullying?” with answering

options “Yes, during the last 12 months”; “Yes, previously”; and “No.” If the respondents answered “Yes,” they were prompted to answer questions about “outcome type” and “location of bullying.” For types of bullying, the respondents had the answering options of “gossiping,” “discriminating remarks,” “being ignored” or “other types.” For locations of bullying the answering options were “at school,” “at boarding school,” “at work,” “in the local community” or “other places.” For both “outcome type” and “location of bullying” the participants were allowed to give more than 1 answer. The questions did not give any information as to whether the bullying was because of ethnicity. From here on, we use “bullying in general” when we refer to this question.

A common element in both questions was that we didn’t inquire about the “bully” or the victimizer. The measures we used did not answer the question about whether the experience of ethnic discrimination and bullying was at an interpersonal, institutional or structural level. Nor did we ask if the unfair treatment was between the different groups or within the same ethnic groups.

Ethics

Ethical approval was received from the Regional Committee for Medical Research Ethics in Northern Norway and from the Data Inspectorate.

Data analysis

SPSS statistical software for Windows version 14.0 and SAS for Windows version 9.1 were used for data processing and statistical analyses. We used Pearson chi-square tests to test for differences in distributions between the groups.

We used the Mantel-Haenszel method (37) to calculate relative risk (RR) estimates with respective 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the 3 Sami categories and the Kvens, with ethnic Norwegians as a reference group, controlling for potential confounders like gender, age and education.

RESULTS

Table I shows the characteristics of the respondents in the overall sample by ethnic groups. There were significant ethnic differences in the distribution of socio-economic indicators, such as education in number of years and household income; the Sami and Kven respondents had a lower level of education and income compared with the ethnic Norwegians. This was specially the case for the Sami I respondents, who were mainly living within the Sami Language Act's district (80%). More Sami and Kven respondents had attended boarding schools than ethnic Norwegians.

Table II shows the prevalence and relative risk of self-reported experiences of ethnic discrimination or ethnic bullying by ethnic groups (i.e., the first question described in Material and Methods above). A total of 1,269

respondents reported that they had been ethnically discriminated against. Sami and Kven respondents reported significantly more incidents of ethnic discrimination than the majority ethnic Norwegians. In the Sami I group, 36% of the respondents reported being discriminated against compared with only 3.5% among the ethnic Norwegians. Independent of their ethnic group, men reported a significantly higher prevalence of ethnic discrimination. After adjusting for age, gender and socio-economic indicators, the respondents with the strongest Sami affiliation were ten times more likely to have experienced ethnic discrimination (RR 9.76: 95% CI 7.57–12.58) than the ethnic Norwegian majority. Corresponding numbers for the Sami II were around five times more experiences (RR 4.68: 95% CI 3.81–5.75), and for the Sami III group (i.e., weakest Sami affiliation), four times more (RR 3.75: 95% CI 2.75–5.15). The Kvens reported around two times more than the majority (RR 1.93: 95% CI 1.37–2.71). This finding shows the trend that the stronger the Sami affiliation, the higher the prevalence of self-reported ethnic discrimination. Unfortunately, we don't have any information about "outcome type" or "location of ethnic discrimination" as we do for the question about bullying in general.

Table II. Prevalence and relative risk estimates of self-reported ethnic discrimination by ethnic groups, age groups and gender.

Ethnic groups	Total % (n)	Men*		Women*		Adjusted RR** (95% CI)	
		36–57 years % (n)	58–79 years % (n)	36–57 years % (n)	58–79 years % (n)		
Ethnic Sami I	36.0 (490)	40.9 (163)	34.4 (95)	35.3 (157)	31.3 (75)	9.76 (7.57–12.58)	
Discriminated	Sami II	18.8 (349)	22.3 (139)	17.7 (54)	18.5 (122)	12.7 (34)	4.68 (3.81–5.75)
	Sami III	12.3 (105)	16.8 (41)	12.2 (22)	10.5 (30)	8.3 (12)	3.75 (2.75–5.15)
	Kvens	7.4 (71)	7.5 (20)	8.3 (18)	8.4 (21)	5.4 (12)	1.93 (1.37–2.71)
	Norwegians	3.5 (254)	3.6 (73)	3.5 (48)	3.9 (96)	2.7 (37)	Ref.

*Significant for gender and age groups ($p < 0.0001$).

**Estimates adjusted for age, gender, education, boarding school and household income.

We also performed separate analyses for respondents that lived within and outside the Sami Language Act's district, with the ethnic Norwegians as the reference group. The adjusted estimates show that the Sami I participants reported the highest prevalence of ethnic discrimination both inside and outside this district. Outside the district, the Sami I respondents reported fifteen times more discrimination than the ethnic Norwegians (RR 15.13: 95% CI 9.49–24.11). Inside the Sami Language Act's district, the Sami III group (RR 5.64: 95% CI 3.53–9.01) and the Kvens (RR 2.79: 95% CI 1.72–4.52) reported a higher prevalence of discrimination compared with the ethnic Norwegians. Outside the district, there were smaller differences between Sami III and ethnic Norwegians (RR 2.91 95% CI 1.96–4.29). Kvens and ethnic Norwegians did not report significant differences outside the district (Table III).

For bullying in general (i.e., the second question described in Material and Methods), 403 respondents reported being bullied last year and 2,150 respondents reported being bullied previously. With regard to bullying, we did not find any significant differences in reporting outside and within the Sami Language Act's

district. Sami respondents reported significantly more bullying, both previously and in the last year, compared with the ethnic Norwegians (Table IV). In the Sami I, group 37.5% reported being bullied (either previously or last year) compared with 14.9% for the ethnic Norwegians. This question doesn't yield any information about the bullying being related to ethnicity. For respondents with the strongest Sami affiliation, bullying was reported more than twice as often compared with the ethnic Norwegians (RR 2.20: 95% CI 1.93–2.51). Corresponding numbers for Sami II (RR 1.71: 95% CI 1.53–1.91) and Sami III (RR 1.75: 95% CI 1.49–2.06) groups (i.e., weakest Sami affiliation) were almost two times greater as well. Also, Kven respondents reported a higher prevalence of bullying than the ethnic Norwegians (RR 1.29: 95% CI 1.09–1.53). All the estimates were adjusted for the characteristics presented in Table I. This finding shows a trend that the stronger the Sami affiliation, the higher the prevalence of self-reported bullying. Overall, women reported a higher prevalence of bullying ($p < 0.001$). For all ethnic groups and both genders, the youngest age groups reported a higher prevalence of bullying ($p < 0.01$).

Table III. Relative risk of self-reported exposure of ethnic discrimination by ethnic groups.

	Sami I RR (95% CI)	Sami II RR (95% CI)	Sami III RR (95% CI)	Kvens RR (95% CI)	Ethnic Norwegians
Sami Language Act' district (adjusted)*					
– inside the district	8.83 (6.68–11.68)	4.21 (3.25–5.46)	5.64 (3.53–9.01)	2.79 (1.72–4.52)	Ref.
– outside the district	15.13 (9.49–24.11)	4.99 (3.82–6.54)	2.91 (1.96–4.29)	1.47 (0.93–2.32)	Ref.

Data are RR (95% CI) with non-Sami as references.

*Adjusted for age, gender, education, boarding school and household income.

For bullying in general we have information about “outcome type” and “location of bullying.” For types of bullying, the respondents had the answering options of “discriminating remarks,” “gossiping,” “being ignored” or “other types,” “Discriminating remarks” must not be misinterpreted as meaning bullying necessarily based on ethnicity. “Discriminating remarks,” for example, could be about gender, occupation, place of residence or sexuality. The category “other types” includes all the other types of bullying, which the other 3 answering options did not cover, including physical contact. The respondents could choose between 5 different places where they had been bullied. In the last

category, “other places” are not specified but could be, for instance, in relation to getting hired, obtaining housing, receiving medical care, and so on. Figures 1 and 2 show radar plot representations of how often the type and place of bullying are reported in percent for each ethnic group, where respondents have reported being bullied previously or in the last year by ethnic group (i.e., the second question described in Material and Methods). Each axis in the plot represents either a type of bullying or a location where the bullying occurred. Each ethnic group has a line in the plot, and the reporting is presented as percentage from 0% (central point) to 70%. The reporting for each ethnic group is

Table IV. Prevalence and relative risk estimates of self-reported exposure of bullying in general by ethnic groups, age groups and gender.

Ethnic groups	Bullied	Total	Men		Women**		Adjusted RR*** (95% CI)
		% (n)	36–57 years* % (n)	58–79 years % (n)	36–57 years* % (n)	58–79 years % (n)	
Sami I	last year	5.4 (74)	7.5 (30)	2.9 (8)	6.5 (29)	2.9 (7)	2.20 (1.93–2.51)
	previously	32.1 (437)	33.1 (132)	26.4 (73)	36.6 (163)	28.8 (69)	
	never	62.4 (849)	59.4 (237)	70.7 (195)	56.9 (253)	68.3 (164)	
Sami II	last year	4.6 (85)	5.8 (36)	1.3 (4)	5.3 (35)	3.7 (10)	1.71 (1.53–1.91)
	previously	26.0 (483)	24.0 (150)	22.3 (68)	31.4 (207)	21.7 (58)	
	never	69.4 (1288)	70.2 (438)	76.4 (233)	63.3 (418)	74.5 (199)	
Sami III	last year	4.9 (42)	6.1 (15)	2.3 (4)	7.0 (20)	2.1 (3)	1.75 (1.49–2.06)
	previously	20.7 (177)	18.9 (46)	19.4 (35)	24.1 (69)	18.8 (27)	
	never	74.4 (635)	75.0 (183)	78.3 (141)	68.9 (197)	79.2 (114)	
Kvens	last year	3.9 (37)	3.7 (10)	4.1 (9)	4.4 (11)	3.1 (7)	1.29 (1.09–1.53)
	previously	14.9 (143)	15.4 (41)	12.0 (26)	21.2 (53)	10.3 (23)	
	never	81.2 (777)	80.9 (216)	83.9 (182)	74.4 (186)	86.5 (193)	
Ethnic Norwegians	last year	2.3 (165)	2.3 (47)	1.8 (24)	2.8 (70)	1.8 (24)	Ref.
	previously	12.6 (910)	13.1 (268)	8.8 (120)	15.8 (391)	9.7 (131)	
	never	85.1 (6163)	84.6 (1736)	89.4 (1218)	81.4 (2011)	88.5 (1198)	

*For all ethnic groups and both genders the youngest age group reported a higher prevalence of bullying ($p < 0.01$).

**Overall, women reported significantly higher than men ($p < 0.001$).

***Relative risk estimates for the combined bullied variable: last year and previously, with ethnic Norwegians as reference and adjusted for age gender, education, boarding school and household income.

the percentage of those who have reported each of the 4 types of bullying and each of the 5 locations of bullying – for the respondents who have reported being bullied. For respondents who reported being bullied previously but not in the last year, independent of ethnicity, the most common type of bullying was discriminating remarks and the most common location was public schools (Fig. 1). All 3 Sami groups reported a significantly higher prevalence of discriminating remarks as compared with ethnic Norwegians ($p < 0.0001$) and all 3 reported that the bullying took place in boarding schools ($p < 0.01$). We also detected a trend

where the stronger the Sami affiliation, the higher the reporting of discriminating remarks, as can be seen in Figure 1. The ethnic Norwegians, as compared with the Sami respondents, reported significantly higher levels of gossiping and other types (not specified) of bullying and that the bullying took place at work ($p < 0.05$). For the bullying reported in the last year, independent of ethnicity, the most common type was gossiping and discriminating remarks and the most common locations were at work and in the local community (Fig. 2). For the last year, discriminating remarks ($p < 0.01$) were reported highest among the

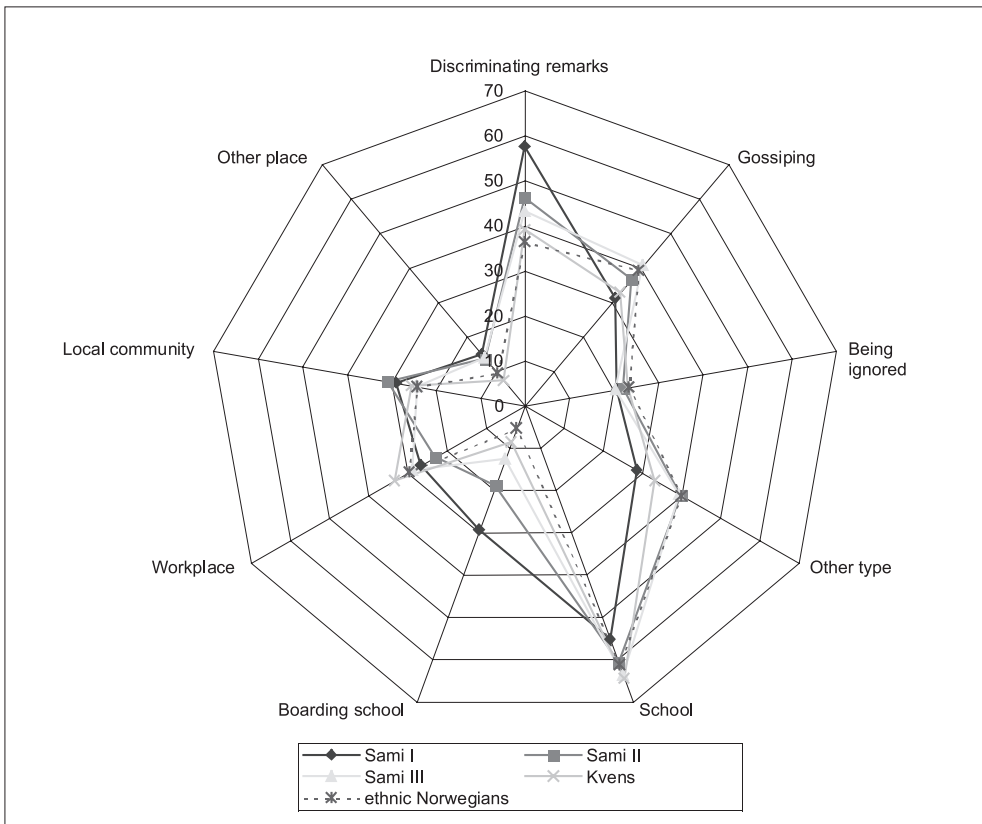


Figure 1. Type and place of bullying reported previously.

Sami respondents. These findings suggest that the type and place of bullying were different among Sami and the majority ethnic Norwegians, which suggests that ethnicity has a significant influence on the type of bullying one can be exposed to in Norwegian society.

In Figure 3, the 2 questions regarding bullying in general (last year or previously) and ethnic discrimination/bullying (very often/sometimes) are combined, producing a variable with the 4 categories: (1) reporting both bullying in general and ethnic discrimination; (2) reporting ethnic discrimination, but not being bullied; (3) bullying, but

not ethnic discrimination; and (4) neither bullying nor ethnic discrimination. Results are presented as stacked columns for each of the ethnic groups. Here we can see that half of the Sami I respondents (i.e., strongest Sami affiliation) have experienced some kind of bullying or ethnic discrimination as compared with only 1 out of every 6 for the ethnic Norwegian majority. In the Sami II and Sami III groups, the reporting was around 1 out of every 3, and in the Kven group, it was around 1 out of every 5. Based on the results in this figure, we also found that close to two-thirds of those reporting ethnic discrimination also reported bullying.

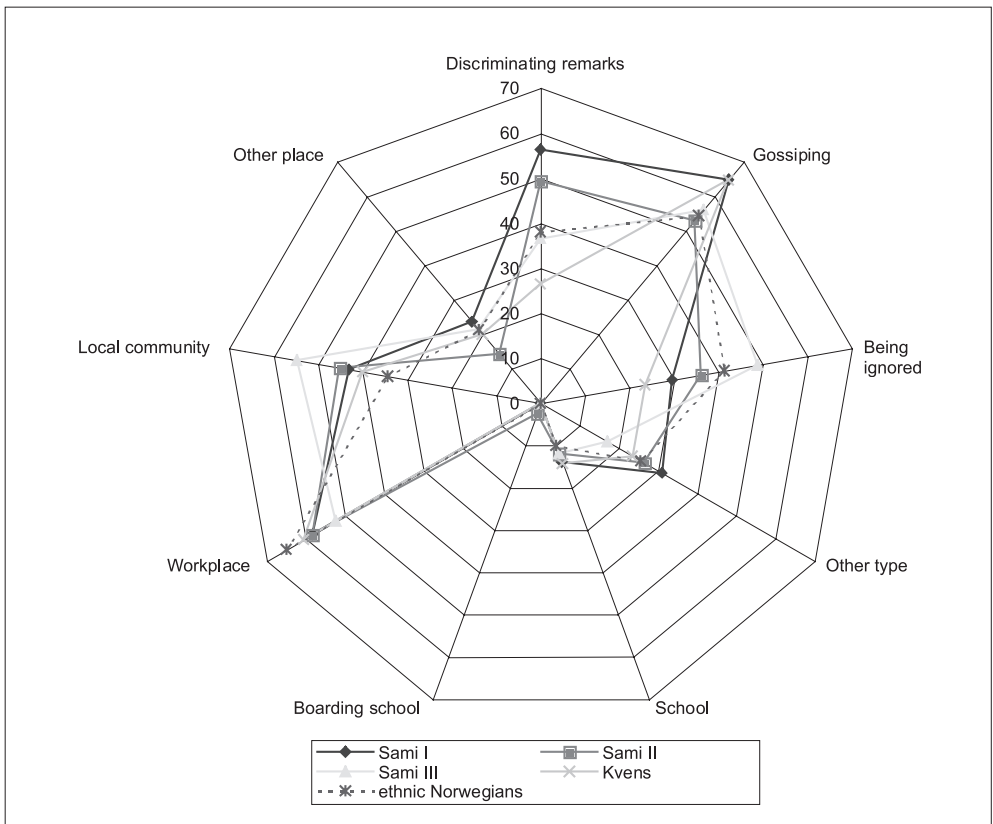


Figure 2. Type and place of bullying reported last year.

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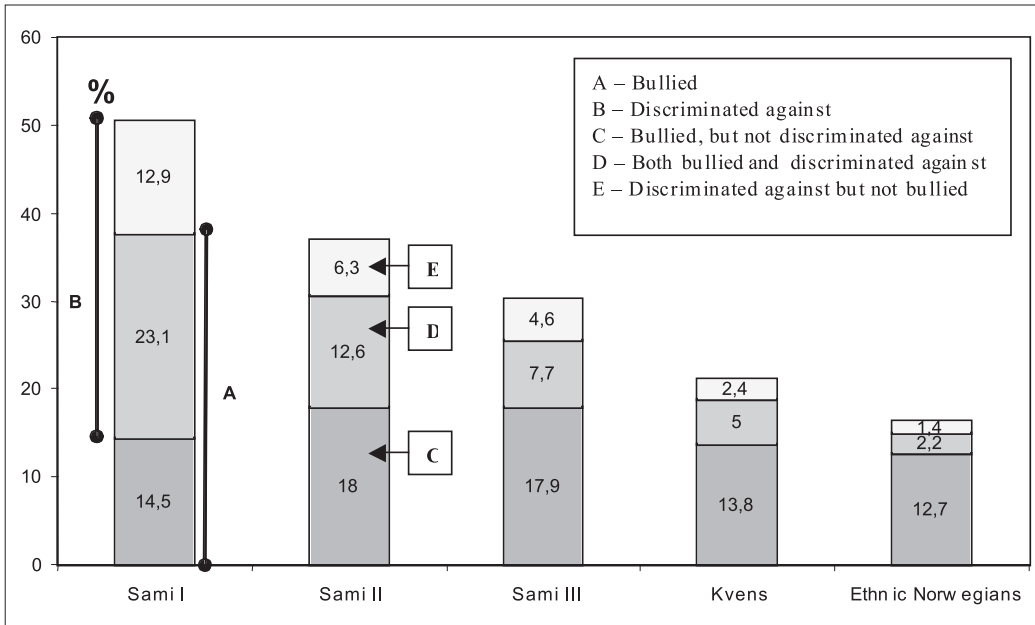


Figure 3. Prevalence of any kind of bullying and/or ethnic discrimination ever reported, by ethnic groups.

DISCUSSION

The main finding in this study is the high prevalence of ethnic discrimination reported by the Sami population, with the highest prevalence being among the Sami I group living outside the Sami Language Act’s district, with men in the youngest age group reporting the greatest discrimination. The second main finding is the higher prevalence of bullying reported by the Sami population, here also with the highest prevalence among the Sami I group, where women reported highest, independent of ethnicity. The different reporting between the genders has not been studied more closely in this report as our main purpose was to study the ethnic differences in bullying and discrimination.

Consistent with other studies that report higher discrimination or bullying rates among indigenous or minority groups than among the majority population (1,2,4,12), our findings show that ethnic discrimination was disproportionately higher among the Sami and Kven groups, specifically among the Sami I participants. The prevalence of discrimination and bullying for the Sami groups can be considered as very high, when compared with the ethnic Norwegian majority’s standard of normality for prevalence of discrimination and bullying in Norwegian society. However, it must be pointed out that using the ethnic Norwegian majority as a reference standard for ethnic discrimination can be misleading, as this group (being the majority) is rarely discriminated against. Today, in Norwegian

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society, we have a zero-tolerance policy towards ethnic discrimination and bullying. New laws against bullying and discrimination are to ensure that no one shall experience bullying or ethnic discrimination at an institutional level. Since this is the first large-scale cross-sectional study to investigate both ethnic discrimination and bullying among Sami, Kvens and the majority ethnic Norwegians in Norway, there is not much knowledge about ethnic discrimination and bullying and how it affects the well-being and health of the Sami and Kven populations. This study is, therefore, a useful contribution to the understanding of these issues.

To find a significantly higher prevalence of discrimination among the Sami respondents as compared with the ethnic Norwegians was expected on the one hand, due to the fact that the Sami population has a history of cultural assimilation (10). The Norwegian policy of assimilation, enforced upon the Sami and Kven populations from the 1840s onward, was in keeping with European colonialism. The assimilative policy led to a stigmatic attitude in Norwegian society, where Sami and Kven backgrounds and cultures were judged as inferior to Norwegian values (20). This was due to a number of factors, among them the ideas about race developed in the eighteenth century, where human beings could be categorized as exclusive biological entities and where some humans were considered superior to others.

On the other hand, to find as high prevalence of discrimination as we did among the Sami respondents was unexpected, since the welfare policy in Norwegian society after the Second World War has changed from one of cultural assimilation to one of cultural

equality for minorities. Cultural equality means an integration policy. The concept of integration is neither assimilation nor segregation. Assimilation implies that the minorities gradually become culturally identical with the majority, as we previously have discussed in the case of the Sami population during the policy of assimilation. Segregation is the opposite of assimilation, whereby groups are kept strictly separated from the majority culture and values. Integration means that the Sami population participate in the common activities of Norwegian society, and at the same time reserve the right to remain culturally separate from the ethnic majority. The Sami population today has achieved more cultural equality and is less socially disadvantaged compared with other indigenous peoples (38). However, ethnic discrimination is a major obstacle in the way of integration for the Sami population.

The prevention of bullying has high status in Norway. Former prime minister Kjell Magne Bondevik used his New Year's speech in 2002 to deal with the issue of bullying. A number of surveys have studied bullying in the workplace and in schools in Norway. These have found that about 5% of employees in Norway (about 100,000 persons) are subject to bullying (39). It is also a serious problem in schools.

We find that the types of bullying and the places where it took place in general were reported differently among Sami and the ethnic Norwegian majority. This suggests that ethnic membership plays a significant role in which kind of bullying the respondents are at risk of being exposed to. Ethnic minorities, such as the Sami people, are more at risk for racial bullying (40,41). Racial bullying

is unfair treatment towards others based on race or ethnicity and is closely related to, and often difficult to distinguish from, ethnic discrimination. Respondents with Sami affiliation reported significantly higher levels of discriminatory remarks directed at them as compared with ethnic Norwegians, which could possibly be directly based on their Sami background and therefore be expressions of racist bullying. However, this higher reporting of discriminatory remarks could be related to being a member of an ethnic minority, for example, issues with getting hired, using the Sami language in meetings with Norwegian authorities or getting medical care. To gain more insight into these issues, more qualitative surveys are needed.

Bullying during the last year, discriminating remarks and gossiping were reported as the most frequent types of bullying, and workplace and the local community were reported as the most frequent place of bullying. The Bergen Bullying Research Group completed a study on bullying which revealed that about 5% of Norwegian employees are bullied (39). In our survey, Norwegians reported bullying most frequently at their place of work, while the Sami reported experiencing most bullying in the local community. This different reporting among the ethnic groups is a very interesting finding and needs to be more closely investigated.

When we look at previous reports dealing with bullying, there are elements of discrimination, and this type of bullying has occurred at schools that have the highest levels of bullying. In Norway extensive research has recently been done on bullying in schools. Dan Olweus found in 2001 that 13% of chil-

dren from the 4th to the 10th grades reported that they were bullied by fellow schoolmates (32). Our numbers for previously reported bullying among the ethnic Norwegians are similar to Olweus's numbers. However, the numbers reported by the Sami respondents are considerably higher and this is alarming; Olweus's study showed that bullied children had higher levels of depression and frustration and low self-esteem. Thoughts of suicide were more common among children who were bullied than those who were not (32).

In our study, we used the proficiency of Sami language as the primary marker to categorise the ethnic groups. This is a usual way to make such a categorisation, but there are also other ways to categorise ethnicity. Different definitions of ethnicity could change risk estimates. We are aware that the ethnic definition has limitations, since it may have different validity in different geographic regions and within subgroups of the Sami population (24). However, we chose to use Sami language proficiency to categorise ethnicity because language proficiency has a high correlation with both self-perceived ethnicity and self-reported ethnicity. Sami I groups correlate very strongly with both self-perceived ethnicity (94.4%) and self-reported ethnicity (97.8%) and with feelings of belonging to the Sami culture (24). Sami II and Sami III are more mixed, with both Kven and Norwegian ancestors, and therefore reported weaker relationships to both self-perceived and self-reported Sami ethnicity. Thus, by using Sami language proficiency to categorise the ethnic groups in this study, we took self-perceived ethnicity and self-reported ethnicity and culture life-style into account (24).

One main question is, Why did the Sami respondents with the strongest Sami affiliation report the highest prevalence of ethnic discrimination and bullying? A reasonable answer could be that it has something to do with the skill and use of the Sami language for those respondents, according to our definition of ethnicity. And this could be the reason why the Sami I group both inside and outside the Sami Language Act's district reported the highest prevalence of ethnic discrimination and bullying, since they were not satisfied with the facilities for the Sami language in schools and other public institutions in Norwegian society. In the case of health services, Tove Nystad (42) has shown that Sami patients are less satisfied with the service they receive and with the Sami language skills of medical practitioners, irrespective of whether they live within or outside the Sami Language Act's district, although Sami speakers within the district are more dissatisfied (42). Research on schooling has also shown that Sami living outside the district are dissatisfied with the level of Sami language and culture in the public school system (43).

To study both bullying in general and ethnic discrimination in the same study are challenging, because they are two multidimensional phenomena that are qualitatively different in nature, yet they also have many features in common. They both tell about unfair treatment that the individual or group of individuals has experienced. The reason why we studied both ethnic discrimination and bullying in general was because we wanted to identify the total number of experiences of unfair treatment of those ethnic groups and to identify how much of

the unfair treatment could be attributed directly to their ethno-cultural characteristics or signs. Around two-thirds of Sami I participants who reported ethnic discrimination also reported bullying. This could indicate that two-thirds of the unfair treatment based on ethnicity was directly related to bullying. However, this area also requires more research in order to uncover similarities and differences between ethnic discrimination and bullying.

The results discussed in this paper are limited by several factors. The first limitation is related to the fact that there is no consensus in the literature that addresses the optimal measures to capture exposure to ethnic discrimination and bullying (44). To study self-reported ethnic discrimination and bullying is challenging, because reported experiences are subjective and, perhaps, not fully captured in a structured questionnaire and are subject to self-reporting and recall bias. Self-reported experiences are also very unique to the individual and, as such, may not necessarily be representative of the group collectively.

Second, because the bullying and ethnic discrimination questions we used were not specifically validated for use in our populations, we cannot identify the possible bias that may have influenced the estimate effect in that the different groups may have interpreted the question about ethnic discrimination and bullying differently. The ethnic Norwegian participants may not have seen themselves as a "distinct" ethnic group and, as such, may have under-reported discrimination.

One strength of this study is its large sample size, which gives a high statistical

power. A second is that the respondents come from different Sami areas in Norway, and therefore are representative of the diversity we find among the Sami population living in Norway. Also, there is no reason to believe that we have selection bias in our study sample because the characteristics of the respondents that we selected and the characteristics of those who were not selected are alike. All together, these should indicate that we have achieved a high level of validity in this study.

Conclusions

The findings from this study show that the Sami and the Kven populations experience significantly higher degrees of ethnic discrimination and bullying in their everyday lives as compared with the ethnic Norwegian majority. This can indicate that they still have not reached the goal of cultural equality and recognition among other Norwegians.

Using a more strict definition of Sami ethnicity compared with traditional definitions used in previous studies, we found that respondents with the strongest Sami affiliation reported the highest levels of ethnic discrimination and bullying. Several questions about how ethnic discrimination and bullying influence living conditions and health for the Sami population were not investigated. We, therefore, recommend future studies that can identify and answer those questions, because those aspects might independently affect ethnic inequalities among the Sami and Kven populations.

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