RE1

STUDENTS` ETHNIC BACKGROUND AS A FACTOR IN THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN BULLYING

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Abstract/Povzetek The multicultural character of EU countries has been steadily growing, and consequently, school classes are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. Research performed worldwide on ethnic bullying in schools has yielded inconsistent results. The present empirical study investigated differences between groups regarding ethnicity and bullying among 782 students from grade 6 and grade 8 of Slovenian primary schools; among them, 140 were 1st- or 2nd- generation immigrants. The results showed that, compared to Slovenian boys, immigrant boys reported more often having been involved in bullying as observers, and 6th- grade immigrant students perceived themselves more often in the roles of observer and victim.

Etnično ozadje učencev kot dejavnik vpletenosti v medvrstniško nasilje
Države EU postajajo vse bolj multikulturne, zato so tudi šolski razredi vse bolj etnično raznoliki. Raziskave medvrstniškega nasilja v osnovnih šolah po svetu, v povezavi z etnično pripadnostjo učencev, ne dajejo skladnih rezultatov. Predstavljena empirična študija je raziskala razlike med skupinami, glede na etnično pripadnost in medvrstniško nasilje, med 782 učenci iz 6. in 8. razreda slovenskih osnovnih šol, med katerimi je bilo 140 priseljencev 1. in 2. generacije. Rezultati so pokazali, da so, v primerjavi s slovenskimi dečki, dečki z etničnim ozadjem pogosteje opazovalci medvrstniškega nasilja, šestošolci priseljenci pa se pogosteje znajdejo v vlogi opazovalcev in žrtev medvrstniškega nasilja.

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Introduction

The multicultural nature of EU countries has been steadily expanding, and the same is happening in Slovenia. Consequently, school classes are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. In the theoretical part of the article, we introduce data about the increasing number of immigrants in Slovenia, most of whom come from the former Yugoslavia ("SURS", 2018). Primary schools generally seek to integrate immigrants (1st- and 2nd- generation) from countries of the former Yugoslavia. The exact number of immigrant students in Slovenia's primary schools can be deduced only indirectly, but classes are certainly becoming increasingly ethnically diverse ("Strategija", 2007). Immigrant students bring with them different cultural patterns, are members of various ethnic groups and have varying language skills (Kremenšek, 1973; Smith, 1991; Komac, 2007), all of which constitute possible reasons for being bullied. According to Nastran Ule (2004), those who are different, whether they are members of other nations or nationalities, or belong to different ethnic communities, races, cultures or religions, exhibit a variant sexual orientation, have special needs, lead a different way of life, or exhibit an unusual visual appearance, are often targets of stereotypes and prejudices that can easily lead to violence and bullying. Research also confirms that being somehow different can be the cause of bullying (Thornberg & Knutsen, 2011; Wilton, & Campbell, 2011; de Olivera et al., 2015). Thornberg (2010) listed seven social representations of the causes for bullying, the most prevalent being bullying as a reaction to deviance (offered by 82% of children), whether that was deviant appearance, deviant behaviour, deviant characteristics, or disability.

Research performed worldwide on ethnic bullying in schools has been inconsistent (Strohmeier, Fandrem & Spiel, 2012). According to some research, ethnic minority background is a risk factor for bullying (Graham 2006; Jansen et al., 2016), while others find no differences in bullying between native and minority students in general (Smith, Thompson & Bhatti, 2012).

The aim of the present study was to examine bullying in Slovenian primary schools regarding ethnic background. Although we cannot simply equate nationality with ethnic background, the factors *country of birth* and *language spoken at home* are commonly used as proxies for ethnicity and can be simply and objectively assessed (Priest, King, Becares & Kavanagh, 2016; Jansen et al., 2016). We were interested in whether there were differences in being the bully, victim or observer in physical, verbal, relational or cyber bullying, depending on whether a student was a native Slovenian or an immigrant.

Immigrants in Slovenia

According to the data, Slovenia is a relatively homogenous country; in 2002, around 84% of the population were native Slovenians ("List of Inhabitants", 2002). In Slovenia there also live (at least) the following ethnic groups: a) national minorities: Hungarian, Italian and Roma people (altogether less than 1%); b) immigrants from the former Yugoslavia; c) immigrants from the EU; d) non-EU immigrants (b +c + d = 6.1%), and e) other or unknown (8.9%) ("SURS", 2018).

Specifically, immigrants in Slovenia comprise the following groups: a) former immigrants with Slovenian nationality (people who were born and are living in Slovenia, or people who were not born in Slovenia but gained Slovenian citizenship); b) people who do not have Slovenian citizenship but have permanent or temporary residence permission to live in Slovenia; c) refugees; d) EU members and e) children of Slovenian migrants and emigrants who have returned to Slovenia ("Strategija", 2007; "Vključevanje otrok priseljencev", 2017).

The Statistical office of the Republic Slovenia reports that, between 2011 and 2018, the percentage of immigrants increased overall from 4.01% to 6.1%, with more males than females, according to data from October 2018 ("SURS", 2018) as much as 6.4%. The majority of these came from the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia); this number decreased, from 87.7% in 2011 to 76.2% in 2018. In contrast, the number of immigrants from other countries is growing: immigrants coming from EU countries (from 6.5% to 16.0% - it should be acknowledged that Croatia, a former Yugoslavian country, became a member of the EU in 2013) and immigrants from non-EU countries (from 5.8% to 7.8%) ("SURS", 2018).

Immigrant Students in Slovenian Primary School

The exact number of immigrant students in Slovenian primary schools can be only indirectly estimated because there is no central record of the number of children who speak Slovenian as a second language ("Strategija", 2007). According to data from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic Slovenia in 2010/2011, around 1% of the whole primary school student population were newcomer immigrant students attending Slovenian primary schools ("Bela knjiga", 2011, p. 176), based on the number of immigrant students for whom schools are demanding extra hours for the study of Slovenian language in the first and second years of their stay in Slovenia. The number has been increasing, from 1.3% in

2015/16 ("Vključevanje otrok priseljencev", 2017) to 1.46% in 2017/18 (Lunder Verlič, 2018).

Some authors (Kumer, Zlatar, Uzelac and Šmid, 2009) assume that the total percentage of children with immigrant backgrounds in Slovenian primary schools is much higher. In 2014, 2.2% of pupils aged from 1 to 15 years were born outside Slovenia ("MIPEX", 2015), while another 6.5% had parents born abroad. According to the Statistical office of the Republic Slovenia ("SiStat", 2019), the number of first-generation immigrant children, aged from 5 to 14 years, is 5.56% and is increasing; the number of second-generation immigrant children is not known.

Students` Ethnic Background and Bullying

An ethnic group is a group of people that differs from others in cultural traits that are common to members of the group. What most often binds them are names, common beliefs, religion, values, norms, traditions, language, history, settlement area, awareness of belonging and ethnic identity (Kremenšek, 1973; Smith, 1991; Komac, 2007), sometimes also race and physical appearance (Peguero & Williams, 2011; Tippet, Wolke & Platt, 2013). Student immigrants (1[st-] and 2[nd-] generation) who live in Slovenia are mostly from the former Yugoslavia (probably because Slovenia shares with them a common historical identity, based on having once shared the same country); and Albania (Burdiak, 2010; Rapti & Karaj, 2012; "SURS", 2018).

Stereotypes are general and simplified beliefs about characteristics, groups of people, things or events that are held regardless of circumstances (Nastran Ule, 1999). Collective notions about the world can be positive or negative; the latter, full of negative emotions, can lead to prejudice (Allport, 1958; Nastran Ule, 1999). The Balkans is a conglomerate of different cultures, religions and languages (Burdiak, 2010, Ültanır, Ültanır & Irkörücü, 2016), which has generated stereotypes about and prejudices between Balkan nations in all directions (Baltić, 2001; Rapti & Karaj, 2012; Ültanır, Ültanır & Irkörücü, 2016). Prejudices are judgments of individuals based on their membership in a specific social group (Musek, 1994; Baltić, 2001; Burdiak, 2010; Peguero & Williams, 2011; Tolsma, Van Deurzen, Stark & Veenstra, 2013), as for example, "Albanians are lazy" (Dekleva & Razpotnik, 2002; Europe is not dead).

In the present article, we take into account bullying associated with the stereotypes and prejudices held by Slovenians against people of the former Yugoslavia (today

there exist the following independent former Yugoslavian countries: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, whose status is still unclear), Roma people, Albanians, Romanians and Bulgarians (Dekleva & Razpotnik, 2002).

Definitions of and Research on Ethnic Bulling

Bullying is understood in accordance with Olweus' generally accepted definition (1995, 2003, cit. in Nansel et al., 2001; Kozmus & Pšunder, 2018) as repeated violence against another person, involving an imbalance of power, used intentionally by the bully to cause harm and obtain benefits from and domination over the victim.

The research already completed on ethnic bullying is inconsistent (Walsh et al. 2016). According to some research, ethnic background is a risk factor for bullying (Graham 2006; Jansen et al., 2016), while others state that ethnic background is not a risk factor for involvement in bullying (Smith, Thompson & Bhatti, 2012); or that involvement in bullying is a cross-cultural phenomenon and transcends ethnicity (Jimerson, Swearer & Espelage, 2010; Medarić & Sedmak, 2012).

Research has also listed some factors connected to bullying, whether they are researching immigrant students' personal characteristics (Strohmeier, Kärnä & Salmivalli, 2011; Peguero & Williams, 2011; Strohmeier, Fandrem & Spiel, 2012) or the effects of primary and secondary socialization - e. g. low family income, low education level of the mother, peer rejection and friendlessness (Peček & Lesar, 2008; Strohmeier, Kärnä & Salmivalli, 2011; Peguero & Williams, 2011; Medarić & Sedmak, 2012; Tippett, Wolke & Platt, 2013; Ültanır, Ültanır & Irkörücü, 2016) - or trying to define factors that influence the critical mass of social power to prevent bullying - e. g. the number of immigrants in a school, in a class, school composition or the classroom environment (Wright, Giammarino & Parad, 1986; Graham, 2006; Walsh et al., 2016).

Some authors state that the reason behind the inconsistency lies in the different methodologies used by separate researchers, e. g. the use of small research samples mostly in Europe, compared to big samples in the USA (Tippett, Wolke & Platt, 2013; Walsh et al., 2016).

Research Carried out in Slovenia

In Slovenia there have been studies of bullying in schools and interethnic bullying among youth (Baltić, 2001; Dekleva & Razpotnik, 2002; Peček & Lesar, 2008; Medarić & Sedmak, 2012). Most studies involved immigrants in general and focused on the importance of school inclusiveness. Peček and Lesar (2008) state that immigrant students from the countries of the former Yugoslavia on average achieve lower learning outcomes compared to their peers. These results are related not only to ethnic background, such as language and culture, but also to the lower level of parental education. In schools, 1[st-] generation immigrants are less successful than their peers, a finding made clear in the PISA study (Šori, Šušterič & Gaber, 2009). Dekleva and Razpotnik (2002) listed factors that predict the rate of being bullied in the future: biological and family factors, social position, value system, beliefs about violence and social skills.

Methodology

Aims of the Empirical Research

In the empirical part of the study, we were interested in whether ethnic background is the object of bullying between primary school students in Slovenia. We conducted an empirical study, the aim of which was specifically to determine whether there were differences in the perception of bullying between native Slovenian students and their peers from minority ethnic groups, whether first- or second-generation immigrants. We posed the question of how often both groups of students perceive themselves as having different roles in the bullying dynamics - as observers or victims of or bullies involved in various types of bullying: verbal, physical, relational and cyber bullying. We were also interested in establishing whether there are differences among distinct groups of students in terms of the perception of bullying, depending on gender and age.

Research Sample

In 22 participating schools from 7 statistical regions of Slovenia, the survey was carried out in 2015 in one 6th grade class and one 8th grade class. The questionnaire was answered by a total of 782 pupils, 390 (49.9%) girls and 392 (50.1%) boys. 360 (46.0%) pupils were from the 6th grade (11 or 12 years old) and 422 (54.0%) from the 8th grade (13 or 14 years old). The ethnic background assigned to these children was based on their and their parents' national origin, as stated by students on a questionnaire. A student was classified as native Slovenian if he or she declared him

or herself and both parents as Slovenians. A student was classified as a first-generation immigrant if the student's and at least one parent's nationality was declared as other than Slovenian. A student was classified as a second-generation immigrant if that student declared him or herself as Slovenian but at least one parent's nationality was other than Slovenian. According to these criteria, in our sample 642 (82.1%) were native Slovenian students and 140 (17.9%) were immigrants.

Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected with questionnaires. The first part of the questionnaire comprises general data about the students (e.g. grade, gender, students' and their parents' national origin, and other data that are not used in this study). In the second part, the School Bullying Scales (Cheng, Chen, Liu, & Chen, 2011; translated and adapted for Slovenia by Pečjak & Jakin, 2012, cited in Pečjak 2014) were used as self-assessment measurement instruments to measure four types of school bullying - verbal, physical, relational, and cyber bullying - from the observer's, victim's and bully's point of view. Each student reported how often in the last 6 months he or she had been in the position of bully, victim or observer in each type of bullying behaviour.

Each scale (the bully scale includes 15 items, the victim scale 14 items and the observer scale 16 items) was further divided into items of physical bullying (hitting or kicking, shoving or tripping, destroying goods, forcing others, taking others' belongings etc.), verbal bullying (laughing at someone, saying curse words, name-calling, speaking ill of others, treating others with disrespect etc.), relational bullying (isolating someone from a group, tattling, betraying friendship etc.) and cyber bullying (spreading rumours online, criticising others online, and posting disgraceful photos online without permission etc.). The questionnaires were completed during school time. School counsellors offered help to all students if they required it. Data was gathered anonymously; the choice of answers was not influenced in any way.

Students recorded their answers on a five-part Likert scale: 0 - never, 1 - once or twice in 6 months, 2 - two or three times a month, 3 - once a week, 4 - several times a week. A higher score represents a higher degree of bullying behaviour, victimization and observation of bullying. The scales have good validity; the bully scale is positively related to antisocial behaviour, the victim scale to depression, fear and observation of violence in school as a safe environment (Cheng et al., 2011; Pečjak 2014). Internal consistency measured by the Cronbach's Alpha test in our

sample showed good reliability for the roles of bully ($α = 0.85$), victim ($α = 0.86$) and observer ($α = 0.90$).

Data Processing Procedures

The collected data was analysed with the statistical analysis software SPSS and by suitable multivariate statistical methods. When analysing data, we used various statistical proceedings: basic descriptive statistics and interference statistics. In the applied t-test, we verified the validity of the assumption of the homogeneity of variance with the Levene F-test. In all cases where this assumption is justified ($P > 0.05$), the results of the normal t-test are listed. Where this is not the case, we refer to the results of approximate methods.

Results and Interpretation

Prevalence Rate of Students' Bullying Behaviour by Ethnic Background, by Role

First, we were interested in the roles students play in different bullying situations, whether observer, victim or bully, depending on their ethnic background.

Table 1: T-test results for total observer, victim and bully scales, comparing the mean differences in student perceptions by ethnic background.

Role in bullying	Nationality	Mean	Standard deviation	Test of homogeneity of variances		Test of differences between means	
				F	P	t	P
Observer	Slovenian	23.97	13.10	9.06	0.03	-2.42	0.02*
	Immigrant	27.28	15.07				
Victim	Slovenian	8.76	8.14	13.74	0.00	-2.01	0.05*
	Immigrant	10.64	10.52				
Bully	Slovenian	6.08	6.87	0.68	0.41	-0.17	0.86
	Immigrant	6.19	7.00				

*Values were significant.

As can be seen in Table 1, the results revealed significant differences between students by ethnic background on the observer and victim scale. Analysis showed that, compared to native Slovenian students, immigrant students more often reported that they had been involved in bullying as observers and victims. There were no significant differences between students by ethnic background on the bully scale. This means that native Slovenian and immigrant students were equally likely to perceive themselves as bullies.

Differences between Native Slovenian and Immigrant Students in Perceiving Bullying, by Gender

We were interested in establishing whether there were differences in the perception of different roles in bullying between Slovenian girls (n = 309) and immigrant girls (n = 79), and Slovenian boys (n = 311) and immigrant boys (n = 63). The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Slovenian and immigrant students distributed by gender and role in bullying.

Roles	Gender	Mean	Standard deviation	Test of homogeneity of variances		Test of differences between means	
				F	P	t	P
Observer	Slovenian girls	24.20	12.75	5.78	0.02	-1.40	0.16
	Immigrant girls	26.85	15.46				
	Slovenian boys	23.76	13.44	3.46	0.06	-2.17	0.03*
	Immigrant boys	27.83	14.68				
Victim	Slovenian girls	8.54	7.56	7.39	0.01	-1.02	0.31
	Immigrant girls	9.79	10.18				
	Slovenian boys	8.96	8.65	6.89	0.01	-1.89	0.06
	Immigrant boys	11.71	10.91				
Bully	Slovenian girls	4.62	5.30	0.58	0.45	0.21	0.83
	Immigrant girls	4.47	6.03				
	Slovenian boys	7.45	7.82	0.19	0.66	-0.84	0.40
	Immigrant boys	8.35	7.57				

* Values were significant

The t-test for the roles pupils play in violent situations showed no significant differences between girls with Slovenian nationality and immigrant girls. However, in our sample, compared to Slovenian girls, immigrant girls more often reported having been involved in bullying as observers and victims, but less often as bullies. Furthermore, the t-test showed significant differences between Slovenian boys and immigrant boys in the role of observer. Compared to Slovenian boys, immigrant boys reported more often having been involved in bullying as observers. Although there were no differences between boys by nationality in the role of victim and bully, in our sample, immigrant boys more often reported having been involved in bullying as victims and bullies than did Slovenian boys.

Differences between Native Slovenian and Immigrant Students in Perceiving Bullying, by Grade

We sought to establish whether there were differences in perception of different roles in bullying between 6th grade students with Slovenian nationality (n = 289) and those who were immigrants (n = 71) and 8th grade students with Slovenian

nationality (n = 351) and those who were immigrants (n = 71). The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Slovenian and immigrant students distributed by grade and role in bullying.

Roles	Grade	Mean	Standard deviation	Test of homogeneity of variances		Test of differences between means	
				F	P	t	P
Observer	6th Slovenian	23.83	13.08	2.42	0.12	-2.31	0.02*
	6th Immigrant	27.94	14.71				
	8th Slovenian	24.09	13.13	7.80	0.01	-1.28	0.20
	8th Immigrant	26.62	15.51				
Victim	6th Slovenian	8.83	8.01	11.47	0.00	-2.30	0.02*
	6th Immigrant	11.99	10.89				
	8th Slovenian	8.69	8.26	1.87	0.17	-0.54	0.59
	8th Immigrant	9.30	10.03				
Bully	6th Slovenian	5.70	6.31	0.73	0.39	-0.24	0.81
	6th Immigrant	5.90	7.00				
	8th Slovenian	6.40	7.29	0.13	0.72	-0.09	0.93
	8th Immigrant	6.48	7.06				

* Values were significant

The t-test for the roles pupils play in violent situations showed no significant differences in the roles of observer, victim and bully between 8th - grade Slovenian students and 8th - grade immigrant students. Both groups perceived themselves with equal frequency as observers, victims and bullies of bullying behaviour.

However, the t-test showed significant differences between 6th - grade Slovenian students and 6th - grade immigrant students in the roles of observer and victim. In both cases, compared to 6th - grade Slovenian students, 6th - grade immigrant students perceived themselves more often in the roles of observer and victim. There were no significant differences between 6th - grade Slovenian students and 6th - grade immigrant students in the role of bully.

Prevalence Rate of Students' Bullying Behaviour by Ethnic Background, by Type of Bullying

We analysed the differences between students by ethnic background on the total observer, victim and bully scales and verbal, physical, relational and cyber subscales. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: T-test results for role scales and subscales for type of bullying, by ethnic background.

Types of bullying	Nationality	Mean	Standard deviation	Test of homogeneity of variances		Test of differences between means	
				F	P	t	P
OBSERVER SCALE							
Verbal	Slovenian	10.97	5.28	0.05	0.83	-1.58	0.12
	Immigrant	11.77	5.46				
Physical	Slovenian	7.26	4.66	5.02	0.03	-2.01	0.05*
	Immigrant	8.21	5.23				
Relational	Slovenian	4.13	3.20	14.89	0.00	-2.82	0.01*
	Immigrant	5.11	3.83				
Cyber	Slovenian	1.62	2.39	11.12	0.00	-2.24	0.03*
	Immigrant	2.20	2.88				
VICTIM SCALE							
Verbal	Slovenian	4.67	4.39	11.12	0.00	-1.39	0.17
	Immigrant	5.32	5.25				
Physical	Slovenian	2.31	2.73	4.02	0.05	-2.14	0.03*
	Immigrant	2.92	3.18				
Relational	Slovenian	1.36	1.82	9.72	0.00	-1.35	0.18
	Immigrant	1.63	2.22				
Cyber	Slovenian	0.42	1.12	28.50	0.00	-2.30	0.02*
	Immigrant	0.76	1.69				
BULLY SCALE							
Verbal	Slovenian	3.40	3.70	0.18	0.67	0.39	0.70
	Immigrant	3.27	3.67				
Physical	Slovenian	1.55	2.43	3.24	0.07	-1.38	0.17
	Immigrant	1.87	2.73				
Relational	Slovenian	1.03	1.59	0.01	0.93	0.58	0.56
	Immigrant	0.94	1.48				
Cyber	Slovenian	0.10	0.59	0.06	0.80	-0.18	0.86
	Immigrant	0.11	0.48				

* Values were significant.

A closer look at Table 4 – the observer scale, shows significant differences between students by nationality in all observer subscales, except on the verbal subscale. Analysis showed that immigrant students reported having observed physical, relational and cyber bullying more frequently than Slovenian students. There were interesting results in the case of verbal bullying. Although there was no significant difference between students by nationality, the mean values in our sample do show that immigrant students observed verbal bullying more often than Slovenian students. The result on the total observation scale (Table 1) also showed that,

overall, immigrants self-reported more frequent observation of bullying than Slovenians did.

We analysed the differences between students by ethnic background on the total victim scales and victim subscales. The results are shown in Table 4 - victim scale. Results revealed significant differences between students by nationality on the subscales for physical and cyber victimization. Analysis showed that immigrant students reported having experienced physical and cyber bullying more frequently than Slovenian students. There were interesting results in the case of the verbal and relational bullying scales. Although there were no significant differences between students by nationality in these scales, the mean values in our sample do show that immigrant students reported more frequent experiences with verbal and relational victimization than Slovenian students did. The results on the total victim scale (Table 1) are in line with the stated results. This showed that, overall, immigrants reported having been victims of bullying more frequently than Slovenians did.

We analysed the prevalence rate of student self-reported bullying behaviour by ethnic background. The results are shown in Table 4 - bully scale. The results revealed no significant differences between students by ethnic background in all bully subscales. This means that native Slovenian students and immigrants are equally likely to perceive themselves as bullies.

Conclusions and Practical Implications

This study investigated ethnic differences in bullying involvement among Slovenian students and immigrant students of the 1[st-] and 2[nd-] generation, aged from 11 to 14 years, as observers, victims or bullies in physical, verbal, relational and cyber types of bullying. The results showed that students with an ethnic minority background were at higher risk of becoming victims and observers of bullying. Compared to Slovenian boys, immigrant boys reported more often having been involved in bullying as observers. Sixth-grade immigrant students were more likely to perceive themselves than sixth-grade Slovenian students in the roles of observer and victim. Immigrant students reported having observed physical, relational and cyber bullying more frequently than Slovenian students did. Results also revealed differences between students by nationality on the physical and cyber victimization subscales, but no significant differences in all the bully subscales.

Stereotypes and judgements that can easily lead to violence and bullying can be overcome most easily in youth (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006); therefore, schools play

a crucial role in educating youth about tolerance and inclusion. Teachers must be aware of bullying and of the fact that immigrants can often be a vulnerable group of students and in need of help. Important factors that predict teachers' readiness to intervene in bullying situations are the level of perceived seriousness (of all types) of bullying and the degree of emphathy towards victims of bullying (Posnic & Košir, 2016). Teachers must provide valid information about and experiences with varied groups of people, preventing the accumulation of unverified information. Knowing foreign cultures helps in overcoming incorrect opinions, stereotypes and prejudices; contact with members of other groups reduces the amount of misinformation about these groups. ("+ Break Barriers – No Prejudices", 2017). There is also a significant influence exerted by the social policy of the country, which can formulate measures to reduce institutionalized discrimination; according to the migrant integration policy index ("MIPEX", 2015), Slovenia is in 26th place regarding education (out of 38). Systematically educating teachers and raising their awareness about bullying should be the main focus of improvement, which is another purpose of our study.

Research Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

In conclusion, some limitations of our research need to be mentioned. Although a high number of respondents was initially included in our study, only some were categorized as immigrants. Moreover, the sample is applicable only to the schools included in the study, and care should be taken when and if applying it to any other school, while the group of students with ethnic backgrounds is heterogeneous, and there are differences between various groups of immigrants, regarding country of origin (Haramija, 2016). In the future, it would be reasonable to explore the differences in bullying behaviour, regarding immigrants' nationality. Nor did we ask students about the language spoken at home, which could be helpful in determining the precise immigrant status of students (Jansen et al., 2016), particularly because there is no central register of all (1[st-] and 2[nd-] generation) immigrant students in Slovenia. In addition, our study discusses a contentious subject. There is the possibility that some student responses avoided self-classification classification in the bully role for fear of being revealed as a bully; conversely, they could have been afraid to admit being victimised. To prevent socially desirable answers about being bullies or victims of bullying, quantitative research methods should be combined with qualitative ones. There is also a possibility that not all the immigrants fully understood the questionnaire.

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