

Recommendations for Reducing Racist Bullying in Finnish Schools

Master's Thesis in
Peace, Mediation and Conflict Research
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Spring 2020

Abstract

Objective: To examine the current state of racist bullying in Finland and some of the current anti-bullying campaigns already being implemented in the country in order to identify any potential shortcomings.

Method: Semi-structured interviews conducted with subject matter experts to identify potential recommendations for future implementation were used in addition to the study of current anti-bullying campaigns.

Results: Bullying can have significant negative effects on their victims, both in the short and long term. The current anti-bullying campaigns operating in Finland do not focus specifically on racist bullying, nor does teacher training provide enough tools for staff members to effectively combat the problem. The complex nature of deeply founded structural racism requires a more targeted effort to address it.

Conclusion: Not enough data is available to accurately assess the scale of the problem. More research on the topic is needed along with additional teacher training.

Keywords: Racism, Bullying, Finnish Schools.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Aim

The purpose of this paper is to put forth evidence-based recommendations that, if and when put in place, should greatly reduce the amount of ethnicity-based bullying and discrimination that takes place in Finnish schools. Even though bullying happens for many more reasons than just ethnicity, this paper will only focus on ethnic bullying. This is because despite the numerous studies already made into the topic of school bullying, e.g. Hästbacka (2018), (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos (2019), Salmivalli, (1998), none have considered the specific nature of ethnicity and how that might increase the likelihood of students being bullied. The ethnicity-based bullying, i.e. racist bullying, is part of the larger issue of racism happening within Finnish society. Failing to account for how the societal structure affect the school environment, both directly and indirectly, will only lead to superficial methods that will not bring about significant and long-lasting change. A more comprehensive approach is needed.

These recommendations will be separated along the lines of ones that should be implemented starting at the state and municipality level, going all the way to the school level with principals and the individual teachers and students.

This paper does not claim to hold the answer to eliminate the problem of ethnic bullying, which is a complex problem with a myriad of actors affecting the situation. No school environment can be made into a completely safe space where those of visible minorities will never be discriminated against. However, by analysing the specific characteristics of ethnicity-based bullying, the aim is to provide effective tools and procedures to combat the problem. Both in terms of preventative measures, as well as conflict management tools for when the bullying incident/s have already taken place.

In the current study, several anti-bullying campaigns that are already in place around Finland will be examined. An analysis of how they are set up, and of studies on their effectiveness, will provide some of the tools and methods to be used in the recommendations, and hopefully reveal pitfalls to avoid in the future. In addition to this, experts from the field inclusion and ethnic relations will provide valuable input to the paper.

The anti-bullying campaigns that will be analysed are the KIVA-koulu project, the K-O project by Asemanlapset, and the KYTKE-project. An examination of these should help to provide tools on how to deal with conflict once it has already happened. These projects have

been selected because they have been found to show some effectiveness in improving the bullying situation in schools.

1.2. Research Questions

1. How do current anti-bullying campaigns in Finnish schools address racist bullying?
2. What are the recommendations for reducing the amount of racist bullying in Finnish school?

2.0 Method

2.1 Research Methods

The method of answering the research questions will be a combination of case studies and interviews. The three selected case studies from current anti-bullying programs will provide an insight into the work currently being done to tackle racist bullying. In addition to the case studies semi-structured interviews with experts will be done. The reason for not having fully structured interviews comes from the complex nature of the research topic. The semi-structured nature of the interview will give the interviewee the flexibility to answer in a way that allows for any questions that the interviewer may not have considered to still be addressed. (Edwards, & Holland, (2013). All the interviews will be conducted face-to-face.

2.2 Ethical Considerations

An important aspect to any research process is the ethical implications that need to be considered. The researcher must be aware of these potential pitfalls throughout the design process of the research project. Taking ethical issues into considerations will help ensure the quality and the integrity of the research results. In addition to this, participants in the research should be informed on the purpose and future use of the research findings and voluntarily want to participate in it. Respecting their wishes to ensure their privacy and protection. (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Yin, 2014)

Consent was obtained before and during the interview from those individuals interviewed for this research paper. They were encouraged to ask questions at any time of the process to ensure their full agreement and engagement in the process. Participants were protected from possible harm by avoidance of deception. All information gathered will be used solely for the agreed purpose of this research paper and they had the right to refuse the use of data they provided during the interviews.

3.0 Bullying as a Phenomenon

3.1 Definition of School Bullying

There are several different definitions of school bullying:

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2019), bullying is defined ‘as the abuse and mistreatment of someone vulnerable by someone stronger, more powerful.’ This abuse can be both physical and/ or psychological. Bullying can be at times hard to recognise because different actions will have different impacts on people, what might be received as a funny joke by one individual may be experienced as a hurtful insult by another. One of the biggest challenges for teachers in schools is realising when bullying is taking place. Where some students might feel comfortable coming forward to tell teachers about bullying, others are held back with feelings of both fear and being ashamed.

The council of Europe offers the following definition: bullying is destructive behaviour among school aged children that can include physical and sexual violence, threats and social exclusion among other things. This bullying can be a one-time event or a series of events. The negative effects of bullying can have long lasting consequences. (Council of Europe, 2019).

A similar definition is provided by Kiva-koulu which states it as when a student is repeatedly and deliberately targeted. The perpetrators are somebody or some people who are hard to defend against (Kiva-koulu, 2019). A similar definition is provided by Olweus (1993) as well. They continue with saying that bullying differs from regular play or arguments in that it is intentional, repeated and that the bullied individual is either defenceless or in a weaker position than those who are the bullies.

The part of the definition that states the bullying must have been repeated over time has been questioned by some. If bullying is only considered bullying after it has been going on for a sustained period, we run the risk of not recognising and intervening early in the process. For this early intervention to take place, there are two factors that are notable from the side of the victim; the power imbalance that prevents the bullied from defending themselves, and their subjective experience (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2011).

The problem of bullying is widespread with various studies having shown that around 5-15% of students in primary school have been bullied in Finland (Salmivalli, 2010, p. 17). This figure jumps to 40 % for young people that have different abilities or were born outside Finland

(Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, 2017). 5.5% of students at the lower secondary level were bullied at least once a week during 2019. This amount has been decreasing since 2008, when it was 8.4%. (Kouluterveyskysely, 2019). This paper focuses on the bullying based on visible ethnic characteristics such as skin colour, language, culture, religion, and traditions.

3.2 Types of Bullying

There are several different main types of bullying that have been identified. Physical bullying – where the bully tries to harm the victim using physical force for example hitting, kicking, throwing things at them. Indirect bullying is where the bully tries to isolate the victim from the rest of the social group and damage their relationships or reputation. Verbal bullying is when mainly words are used to hurt the victim. Cyber bullying takes place online mainly on social media platforms, and can include prank calls and texts, spreading rumours and photos and abusive messages (Don't Stick It, 2019; Limber, Olweus, & Breivik, 2019; Macklem, 2003, p.35; Salmivalli, 1998; Stomp Out Bullying, 2019),

Physical bullying is overt and therefore easier for teachers and parents to recognise. However, indirect bullying such as social exclusion is a type of bullying that can be very difficult to notice. This is because seen from the outside, it does not look like anyone is being harmed. This is one of the greatest challenges facing teachers trying to address the issue, knowing when to do something.

Studies have shown that most bullying that happens with boys is psychical, whereas girls tend engage in more indirect bullying (Salmivalli 1998, p. 37).

3.3 Effects of Bullying

Bullying is an issue that can have serious effects on the individuals and families of those affected. Studies have shown that the effects of bullying can be quite severe. Victims are more likely to develop common somatic problems like sleeping problems and having colds and headaches. They are also more likely to have disorders such as depression and anxiety and have thoughts of self-harming and suicide. These negative effects tend to worsen if the bullying goes on over a long period of time, which is referred to as chronic bullying (Rigby, 2003; Turner, Exum, Brame, & Holt, 2013; Wolke & Lereya, 2015).

Questions are often asked on why bullying happens; is it the fault of the bully? Or the bullied themselves? Or teachers and the school's environment? Or society itself that plays a

part? There is, however, no simple answer to the question. Every bullying situation is unique and will require different actions to resolve it. Every bullied student will require a different set of solutions that benefit them specifically. There is no solution that is one size fits all. This, however, does not mean that teachers will need to reinvent the wheel every time they have a bullying case to handle. This paper will help provide a means with which to identify the key factors influencing the situation and some tools in which to tackle the problem.

Part of the reason why current anti-bullying campaign fail to have a lasting impact is because they try to deal with complex issues with only superficial methods and tools. There is no one type of person that becomes a bully; some bully because they are aggressive and make a conscious effort to abuse others. Some may try to hide their low self-esteem by putting others down. Some may use bullying others to get attention for themselves if they lack that at home. Some on the other hand do it to impress their friends, and in some cases the bullying is a result of unintentional or thoughtless behaviour. Prejudices against others can also be a reason for some to bully (Earnshaw et al., 2018; Shetgiri, 2013; Tippett & Wolke, 2014; Wang et al., 2018). Only models that consider the complexity of the human interactions can hope to achieve long lasting and good results.

3.4 Bullying is a Complex Problem

Complex problems refer to problems that are dynamic in nature, and they include factors that can overlap or influence each other. Due to this, complex problems are unpredictable. Complex problems also exist in a constantly shifting world where the conditions change. As these conditions change, any plans to combat the issues will also need to change accordingly. Racist bullying is a complex problem. In terms of action plans for school bullying, any plans made to tackle it will have to be able to change to accommodate those specific conditions that exist during that specific bullying situation. Teachers and school staff will have to understand the complexity of the situation properly, in order to adjust their processes to be effective. Trying to simplify a complex problem can lead to increased tension and an escalation of the conflict.

4. Current Anti-bullying Campaigns in Finland

4.1 The KiVa Koulu Anti-bullying Campaign

According to their website (KiVa Koulu, 2018), the KiVa Koulu project was developed by the University of Turku as an anti-bullying programme, and it was implemented in 2009. It is currently in place in over 900 schools around Finland and the world. One of the things the

programme highlights is the fact that it might to be implemented schoolwide, not just a few teachers or classes at a time. Students are involved throughout primary and secondary school levels with the first tasks starting in the 1st grade. A detailed list of all KiVa Koulu activities and when they are implemented can be found in Table 1. An important part of this programme is that it requires a core team of at least three people from each school to act as the driving force to coordinate and implement the KiVa Koulu activities. These can be teachers or other school staff such as curators, school nurses, or principals. One of the activities the core team coordinates is the student questionnaire to find out how the amount of bullying going on and how enjoyable students find the school environment. This questionnaire is filled in on a regular basis to allow the school to monitor their progression over the years. This data is also gathered and monitored by the KiVa programme for all participating schools around the country. This allows an individual school to compare themselves with other schools in their region or nationwide.

According to the programme, their uniqueness lies within:

1. Their diverse and practical materials with contents for teachers, students and parents.
2. Digital tools and learning environment, where they use digital environments, games and apps.
3. Whole group impact, where they emphasize that each student is responsible for helping to reduce the amount of bullying taking place and provide safe methods for bystanders to intervene in bullying situations.
4. Students and parents are both involved in the actions against bullying.
5. The programme includes both prevention and intervention, but the emphasis is on the prevention of bullying. However, targeted actions are put in place when the bullying has already taken place. These are directed foremost towards the bullies and their victims.
6. Feedback and follow-up, regular student and staff questionnaires allow for a systemic follow-up on the progression the school is making.

Table 1.

KiVa Koulu Programme Central Activities for Primary and Secondary Schools

GENERAL ACTIONS	PRIMARY SCHOOL	SECONDARY SCHOOL	TIME (estimation)
STAFF			
Staff questionnaire	X	X	May
Staff meeting	X	X	August
Posters	X	X	Continuous
Recess monitor high visibility vest	X	X	Continuous
STUDENTS			
Students questionnaire	X	X	March
Start	X	X	August
Lessons and KiVa game, 1 st & 4 th grade	X		Whole academic year
Seppo exercises, 1 st grade	X		
Themes and KiVa street, 7 th grade		X	Whole academic year
Pulmikas-game, 4 th -9 th grades	X	X	
PARENTS			
Bulleting for parents	X	X	August
Parents evening	X	X	September-October
Parents manual (digital/printed)	X	X	Continuous
TARGETED ACTIONS			
Clarification meeting	X	X	Whenever needed
Discussion with a few of the bullying victims' classmates			
Follow-up			

Adapted from: http://www.kivakoulu.fi/assets/files/kiva_koulu_opettajanopas_avain_kivaan_kouluun_fi_2018.pdf

Several studies have over the years examined the effectiveness of the programme, and the results seem to show that it has had a positive impact on the bullying situation in the participating schools. As shown in Figure 1. The levels of reported bullying, both by the victims themselves and the bullies, has gone down (Kärnä et al., 2011). It had a positive effect on all types of bullying, including verbal, cyber and physical bullying (Salmivalli, Kärnä & Poskiparta, 2011). Positive results also been reported were an increase in academic motivation and achievement (Salmivalli, Garandeau, & Veenstra, 2012). In addition to these effects, the programme also helped reduce the levels of anxiety and depression among students while improving the intrusion of their peer climate in school (Williford et al., 2011).

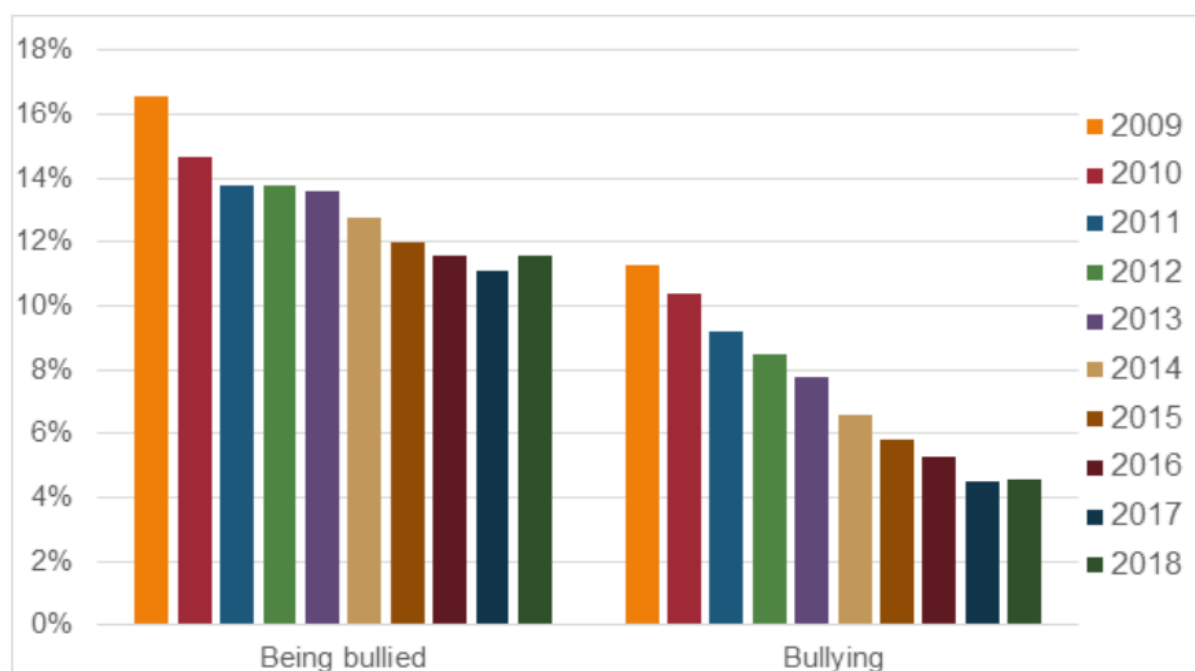


Figure 1. Reported levels of bullying by those being bullied and by the bullies themselves. Reprinted from the KiVa International website. (<http://www.kivaprogram.net/is-kiva-effective>).

The KiVa Koulu antibullying campaign has had an impact in reducing the amount of bullying in Finnish schools. In developing recommendations for reducing racist bullying in Finnish schools, there are some steps that the programme implemented that can be reused. However, this programme is also very limited in that it does not take into consideration the complex and interwoven historical, economical and societal realities that influence racist bullying and discrimination. Therefore, it cannot provide the answer to the dilemma this paper is researching.

4.2 The K-0 Project

The K-0 project was first implemented in 2016 by Aseman Lapset ry. Aseman Lapset (Children of the Station, in English) is an independent NGO operating nationwide in Finland established in 1990. Their focus of work is to help the healthy growth of youth and children as well as providing them with safe network of adults they can interact with. (K-0 - Kiusaamiseen puuttuva hanke, 2020). Aseman Lapset have several different projects ongoing, but the need for the K-0 came about in 2016. That was when the police shared their concern about official reported cases they had from schools. In Finland, anyone under the age of 15 years old cannot be held criminally accountable for any offense, therefore, essentially tying the hands of the police. In the first half of 2016, most of the 90 reported cases from schools made to the Helsinki Police department were cases involving disputes among students themselves (Hästback, 2018). The most common offence reported was that of assault, with minor assault, deformation of character and cyberbullying the next most common offences reported (Ellonen & Peltonen, 2011).

The project is a collaboration between Aseman Lapset and the police, as well as other parties. When the police refer a case over to the K-0 project, the team then disembark at the school, where they go about creating an action place for the situation together with school staff, after having established the causes behind the situation. In addition to just resolving the issue at hand, the project looks at why the situation got so serious that normal school procedures for dealing with these types of situations did not suffice.

Part of how the project works is K-0 staff will interview all relevant individuals in the case, including students, school staff, and parents, as well as police officers if need be. This is to understand the root causes of the conflict and how it escalated. What they then try to do is facilitate dialogue between the relevant individuals to try and bring about a solution to the conflict. They can, also involve outside parties such as youth workers to facilitate team building exercises with the affected classes, if this is deemed something that might be beneficial. The Hästbacka (2018) study showed that both the processes for dealing with bullying, and the cooperation and communication between the various parties involved in these issues, had to be improved. As the pressure on teachers is so great and ever more being demanded from them, they are limited in the time they can spend in trying to resolve complex bullying cases. Hence, the greater cooperation between parties such as the school, youth workers, Ministries of Social & Health and of Education is needed.

4.3 The Kytke Project

The Kytke Project holds informal workshops in schools to discuss issues such as discrimination, racism, identity, and Finnishness. Its goal is to promote intercultural interaction among youth and children, and to create an atmosphere of more tolerance and understanding. The project was first piloted in 2010 with schools in Southern Finland, and in 2012, it was expanded nationwide (Walter, 2020).

The way the project operates is unusual in the sense that despite its setting within the school, the 60-minute long workshops are very informal in their nature. Each workshop is geared towards a specific class grade at a time, so for example for all the 8th graders from the participating school at a time. The project is primarily targeted at secondary schools, but workshops can also be delivered to primary or high school students as well. Each workshop can take up to 80 students at a time. They are held in the school's gym to break away from the normal classroom setting where the setup and power structures are always focused on the teacher. The project staff are mainly current or retired professional athletes, musicians or actors who have multi-ethnic backgrounds. The fact that the staff members are not traditional teachers helps to create a more relaxed atmosphere which in turn helps the discussion progress further than it normally would. Project staff members usually give examples of their experiences during the workshops as well to help promote sharing from the participating students. The combination of famous staff members, openly sharing the thoughts and experiences in a very informal settings, have proved to be successful in encouraging the students to share their views as well. Walter (2017).

The setup for the workshop is easy, it starts off with the whole group being presented with the definitions of some of the terms to be discussed, ensuring everyone has the same understanding of their meaning. Then, smaller groups of 5 members are formed in which they discuss questions posed by the staff. Questions touch on the topics of racism and identity, and each group's discussion is helped along with the facilitation from the staff members. The students appreciate the fact that their opinions are asked and are usually eager to share what they think and how they feel. The staff members make sure all the atmosphere remains supportive to all, especially to those that would not normally speak up. This is where the staff member sharing their own experiences is vital in enabling students to speak up.

In addition to the workshops, Kytke also hold parents' evenings and have created materials that allow schools to continue the discussion once the team members have left. The feedback from internal surveys have shown the workshops to be successful in helping students

understand how their behaviour might affect others and better acceptance of differences within their schools (Walter, 2018). Similar positive results for the project were achieved in an independent survey as well (Ahtiainen, Hienonen, Lintuvuori, & Hotulainen, 2015).

5.0 Results

5.1 Finnish Social Context

It is the premise of the paper that in addition to the current anti-bullying campaigns that already exist, more options need to be developed that focus purely on the discrimination that is based upon the differences, whether real or perceived, in ethnicity, skin colour, culture, and nationality. A process needs to be developed for Finnish schools because of the reality of such high numbers of racist harassment and discrimination in the country (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017). Students do not live in isolated bubbles from the rest of society, things that happen in the society will influence the environment inside the schools as well. The extremist far right movements operating in the country have created a polarising discourse within society that is spreading fear and anger. Their 'us versus them' mentality portrays all immigrants and refugees as dangerous and as a homogenous group that Finns need protection against. The rhetoric is also taking place at the highest political levels by some, which furthers gives legitimacy to the extremist groups. The lack of a balanced and productive discussion on issues such as immigration, and the exaggeration of its negative effects, have led to an increase in the hateful behaviour.

In the 2017 EU-MIDIS II study conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Finland has the second highest level of overall discrimination based on ethnic or immigrant background in the European Union, with 45% for respondents from Sub-Saharan African region. (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017). Finland also had the highest level of perceived racist harassment in the previous 5 years before the survey was done with 63% of respondents reporting this. The most common reasons were reported to be the victim's colour of skin and ethnic origin (European Union of Fundamental Rights, 2019).

As a result of this, those with an immigrant background are 2,5 times more likely to be victims of assault compared to those without such a background in Finland (KPMG, 2018). The social status of the ethnic group in society plays a part in the likelihood of students being bullied in school. In 2017, 24% of boys and 13% of girls with immigrant backgrounds reported

repeated school bullying, while the figures for native Finnish students were 5% and 4% respectively (Halme, Kanste, & Klemetti, 2017).

To bring about real change in the current situation, actions need to be taken at all levels of society, to ensure that the wide spread mistrust towards immigrants and refugees, the fears over their financial burden on the state, the misunderstood views on their various cultures and religions are effectively rooted out. This will need to be a process rather than a one-off quick fix. The current culture of mistrust, lack of understanding and fear is deeply embedded into the collective Finnish consciousness. Rectifying this problem will take time. The following recommendations are meant to be a starting point from where Finland needs to commence addressing its problem with “non-whites”, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees facing high rates of violence and threats of violence, and other structural discriminatory practises. Continuous reflection on the process itself will be needed as well to ensure its effective and making necessary adjustments.

5.2 State Level Interventions

One of the problems in regard to racist bullying is that there is not enough information on the topic. There is not enough research data for the state and municipalities from which to build effective actions on. Without the correct actions, those facing violence, discrimination and hate speech will continue to suffer and become isolated from the rest of society. The lack of enough data was also highlighted by the study conducted by KPMG in 2018 that was commissioned by the ministry of the Interior. Hence, the state needs to implement a yearly study on the frequency of racist bullying and discrimination, both within the school system and in general society as well. This will provide the data needed to gain a comprehensive picture of the situation nationwide, it would also provide a chance to compare different regions within Finland. It would allow the possibility of follow-up studies where the effectiveness of implemented actions can be monitored. It is difficult to have constructive discussions on such sensitive issues without data backing up claims. As seen in the past with racism and the act of gaslighting, constructive discussions are impossible to have when some parties dismiss the experiences of discrimination of others to simply being ‘too sensitive’ or ‘just imagined it’ or ‘it’s not that bad’. It is more difficult to dismiss empirical data. The study should not only look at the rates of discrimination suffered by those with an immigrant background, but those of racialized Finns as well. Finland does not keep track of the number of citizens with multi-ethnic backgrounds. Ethnicity data that can be collected is only the native language of the individual

or where they were born. This leaves out a great number of racialised Finns, many of which have been born in Finland, or have Finnish, Swedish or Saami as their first language. This would rule them out from taking part in many studies conducted on racism, because they are considered as Finns, and therefore not subject to racist behaviour. This, of course, is based on the false assumptions that the norm for being Finnish is being white.

Having empirical data on the amount of racist bullying in school alone is not enough. That information must be used in an effective manner. A vital step will be increasing the competency of teachers to recognise and properly address racist behaviour when it arises. This requires teacher training to embrace the complexity of racism. In her interview, Micheala Moua, in 2019, pointed out that racism operates on several different levels; however, it is mostly only at the interpersonal level, where there is open conflict between certain individuals or groups, that it is seen. Harder to see is the racism taking place on the structural and institutional levels, and internalised racism, the latter being where the individual who has been the target of racism for so long, begins to believe the negative statements told about them. For example, being continuously told that people from his own ethnic group are not being good enough or are inferior to others. As a result of starting to accept these statements as facts, he begins to put himself down.

Structural racism is the normalisation and legitimisation of the preferential treatment of white people, and the concentration of privilege and power to them at the expense of people of colour (POC) (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004). This form of racism is harder to see, because there might not be any direct visible conflict or any conscious intent to act in a racist way. Many times, the racist behaviour is in the forms of micro-aggression that might be meant as a positive thing. If the teacher training on racism is going to be effective, it must educate the teachers-to-be on the historical background on how the current societal structure was created and is maintained. The process of racializing certain people must be clarified so that teachers can understand how they might be helping to create and maintain a society of white privilege. Simply having good intentions alone will not remove the hurt caused by racist actions or comments. In her interview, Moua (2019) describes the process of racialisation as a long and historical five-step process. The first step is the division of people based on superficial features such as hair type, skin colour, and facial features. This sort of division is a normal cognitive behaviour for humans. Secondly comes the separation of people into groups along physical and psychological lines. The third step of the racialisation process is that of defining the previously groups with certain characteristics such as personality, intelligence, cultures etc. The third stage becomes problematic because many of the defining characteristics are based on assumptions,

fear, and stereotypes. The fourth step is action, where certain groups receive racist treatment and are discriminated against based on the characteristics assigned to that group. The fifth and final step is that of essentialisation, whereby the characteristics given to a group are permanent and non-changing, and any individual belonging to that group can never be anything else.

Understanding the process of racialisation, and the historical and colonial origins of the mindset of superiority of the whites over others, is essential for combating racism today. Schools do not operate in a bubble separated from the rest of society. Any racist behaviour conducted in school is merely reflecting how they see POC are being treated in society. One cannot be separated from the other. Therefore, understanding the wider concept of racism in society will help teachers to notice the racist behaviour in schools, and allow for creating more effective measures against it. The topic is generally a hard one to discuss and therefore, many times people prefer to use the term multicultural training where the racially based realities are not fully addressed. The commonly used 'I do not see colour' argument is used to avoid the difficult discussion. One of the challenges facing anti-racist work is the unwillingness of people to self-reflect on their own behaviours. When someone says they do not see colour and treat everyone the same way, it is harmful, because they are not recognising that some people face greater challenges than others. Moreover, it allows people to ignore the complex nature of racial issues, and it does not allow people to actively challenge their own prejudices.

One of the additional benefits to include racism into teacher training as a specific topic is that the teachers-to-be can then become more norm-critical and able to challenge some of the problematic materials being used in schools. The current basis for schoolbooks now is a Eurocentric one, where being white and the European cultures are the norm, and what everything else is compared to. A concrete example of this is the geography books and the map of the world. Most maps used up to now have been using the Mercator projection, where the map shrinks the size of the Earth around the equator and for example making the size of the African continent look smaller than it is. The areas around the poles are in turn made to look larger and increases the size of Western countries. This map helps to reinforce the notion of white colonial superiority (Routley, 2017). Another common problematic issue with some Finnish history books has been depicting the pharaohs of ancient Egypt as white or with very light skin while the slaves are black. This false distinction made with the skin colour further reinforces the notion that Africans were inferior to whites. If teachers are not aware of this implicit bias in the teaching materials, they run the risk of simply replicating and reinforcing that bias. Misrepresentation in history books is not the only problematic issue they have; another issue is the omission of data as well. The general public in Finland know little about

the Saami people, the only indigenous ethnic group in the European Union. The forced assimilation by the Finnish government and systemic attempt to erase their culture and language is for the most part missing from schoolbooks (Ahola, 2011; Ranta & Kanninen, 2019).

It is important to note that schools should not be left on their own to solve cases of bullying. There needs to be coordinated effort from all related parties to ensure that the actions taken are timely, effective and well communicated to everyone. Especially keeping the family of the bullied up to date on what is going on will help to decrease the amount of anxiety caused and help maintain communication channels open. (Hästbacka, 2018)

5.3 School Level Interventions

Efe Ewvaraye is the project manager for the Kytke-project run by the NGO Walter ry. In his interview for this paper, he highlighted the complex nature of racism and how this is an issue that must be addressed (Ewvaraye, 2020). He says that racism is a complex issue with many contributing factors. He points out the importance of understanding this in order to achieve effective actions plans to combat it. According to Ewvaraye, it is important when discussing racism and discrimination, to address the topic of equality. There are two types of equality: formal and factual equality. Formal equality refers to the treating people the same and providing everyone with the same amount of resources regardless of their history or background. This at first might sound fair; however, it does not consider the different realities people live in. Some groups enjoy more privileges in society than others, therefore, giving everyone the same amount of resources will still leave those from disadvantaged background behind the rest. Factual equality on the other hand considers the background of the people and shares the resources in a way that bring everyone onto the same level. Teacher must understand that students have different realities they live in, and the way society will treat them will be different.

Ewvaraye points out that after the Kytke-workshops their organisation provides, how schools subsequently highlight how important the topic of dealing with racism is, and how teacher training now does not provide any course on how to deal with racism. Before a teacher can effectively tackle racist bullying in schools, they first must be made aware of what it is, the different ways in which it can manifest, and provided with tools to address it. The quality of the teacher training is important, in that it not only addresses the historical background of the phenomenon, but also gives the participants the opportunity to explore themselves. Part of the

learning process for teachers should be inner reflection on their own prejudices and assumptions, to make sure they are not unintentionally acting in a discriminatory way. Being confronted with some of your own prejudices, participants may react negatively or defensively. This in turn would not allow the mental space the individual needs to learn and grow. White fragility is a term that was coined by the author Robin DiAngelo. It refers to the defensiveness and discomfort a white person might experience when confronted with facts about racial injustice and discrimination. (DiAngelo, 2018).

The building blocks for the society we live in today have been in place for hundreds of years. Many of these building blocks have been built based upon the thinking that certain groups are inferior to others. It was only inevitable that some of this prejudiced thinking would have robbed off on some of the teachers today. The teacher training should highlight the fact that it is not the fault of teachers that there has been racism going on for hundreds of years. They should, however, understand how it works and how some of the privileges they enjoy nowadays came about. Everyone is a victim of racism; some just sit on the other side of the fence. According to Ewwaraye, the teacher training of racism should highlight the fact the racism is not just a single event, or just the use of offensive language, it is a series of events and a process. A process that is constantly playing in the background affecting peoples' lives whether we are aware of it or not. This process greatly affects a school's culture.

The culture in a school is led by the school management, but the responsibility to maintain it falls equally on the shoulders of both school management and the teachers. The school has a duty to provide education to all its students in such a manner that they all leave with an equally good chance of progressing to further studies or into the job market. The school's duty is to ensure that all students get treated just as fairly, regardless of their background. It should not be left to chance if a child with a minority background gets admitted into a school that happens to take the issue of racism seriously, or a classroom where the teacher understands the severe impact racist bullying can have. All schools should be able to provide the same level of support to any student. This means all school management personnel should also be trained about racism the same way the teachers are. This will help ensure that knowledge on racism is obtained by all staff members. This will make their daily life easier when they understand how to deal with different cultures, backgrounds, and nationalities. Teachers do not need to have lived the lives of the students with minority backgrounds to understand some of the struggles they face. However, studying their realities will help ensure that all students are given the same chances.

One of the most important lessons from the teacher training should be that they no longer are afraid to discuss the topic and have confidence and ability to tackle problems when they arise. Teachers must be given the tools to deal with the issues. Evwaraye points out that high quality teacher training should not only provide a broad understanding of the history and process of racism, and the tools on how to combat racist bullying in school, but it should also allow for teachers to self-reflect and challenge some of their own assumptions. The training should provide clear structure and content during the sessions as well as examples teachers can relate to. An important aspect of the training should be to allow space for participants ask questions and discuss the topics rather than just sitting there are having the content delivered at them. Teachers should also be able to explore if and how current teaching materials for students might provide a biased view on some aspects of society.

The phenomenon of racism has been around for a long time and it has far reaching consequences in modern societies. The process for school staff to get a good grasp of it will take a long time. We cannot expect teachers to fully understand it after just one training session. That is why a part of the teacher training should include a future follow-up sessions on how they have been able to implement the teaching so far, as well as which issues still need to be addressed further. Teacher training is a process rather than a one-time thing. The reality of racism is that it is an issue that will not go away on its own. Deliberate and sustained actions must be taken in order to combat it. Simply turning a blind eye to it will not make things better. The longer the suffering from racist bullying is ignored, the greater its impacts on the victims will be, and the harder it becomes to remove from the school environment the more ingrained it becomes.

In her interview, Mona Eid from the Kaikkien Koulu podcast, a journalist with a teaching background, agreed that additional teacher training was vital in improving the situation with racist bullying. (Eid, 2020). She suggested that an important factor in the process is the need for more data on the amount of racist bullying taking place right now. Although some studies have shown students with a minority background have suffered higher levels of school bullying (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, 2017) there is still not enough information of the frequency of these behaviours, the possible reason behind them, the actions taken by the schools to address the bullying, the impact it has had on the victims both in the short and long term, as well as what kind of follow-up the schools have had to track the progress of the bullying. Eid agrees that the government should implement an annual survey that can provide more data for

the scientists and school staff on the phenomenon. Only once we truly understand the nature and scale of the problem can we hope to be able to develop effective measures to combat it.

Eid also agrees with statements made by Evwaraye in that she believes that teacher training is at the core to combating racist bullying in schools. Understanding that racism is a series of events and not just isolated incidents, and how racism is deeply embedded structural issue, is the starting point to be able to recognise and react, and hopefully in the future prevent racist bullying from ever taking place. Eid points out that teacher training should not only be included in the training of future teachers but all current teachers as well. It is important that all teachers and other schools' personnel i.e. School nurses, psychologists, principals, and cleaners should be educated on the topic. That way, the school staff can create a unified and consistent manner in how they behave and address any potential problems. This would help to provide clarity for the students in understanding what kind of behaviour is tolerated within the school environment. A consistent, proactive, and empathetic approach from the school staff should also help to encourage students suffering from the bullying to come forward and inform staff of any incidents.

Eid mentions that simply making school staff aware of the structural racism is not enough. The new training should also include the specific ways the information should be implemented by the teachers in the classrooms. It should not be left up to the teachers alone to decide how to incorporate the new information because there is a risk some teachers might not be able to fully implement everything they have learned. They might not yet be fully confident to do so. However, not all teachers will struggle with this, and they should still be able to modify and adapt things to suit their own classrooms.

Students also carry a big responsibility in creating and maintaining an inclusive culture within the school. Students alike should be taught about the history and process of racism, and the different ways it manifests itself today. This will help the students understand some of the behaviour they see in people around them. This, in turn, would help explain why certain things are considered hurtful and unacceptable. Although the students play a big part in maintaining the inclusive atmosphere in schools, the initiator for this and the main responsibility lays with the school management. Every school in Finland should have an equality plan in place. These plans have been created to ensure that educational institutions are places that do not discriminate against anyone for any reason. However, these plans are only as good as the way they are implemented. If the school management lacks the conviction to follow through with

the guidelines set out in the plan, it quickly becomes not more than a paperweight. Therefore, the school management should lead the push for non-discriminatory environment with their own actions and examples.

In her interview, Eid points out that an important factor for the effectiveness of the teacher training to be implemented would come from how well developed it is. To start, a broad selection of experts should be brought in to develop the curriculum. This would include experts from the ministry of education, scientists conducting research on the topic of racism and bullying, local NGOs that work within the community in the fields of discrimination and helping to build more peaceful and inclusive societies. The matter of representation is also an important one; therefore, an important invoice in the development of the teacher racism curriculum must be those people and communities that have been on the receiving end of racism. Purely looking at history of racism and current statistics on the topic alone will not give the participants of the training a full understanding on the impact it has on the people that have been affected by it on a personal level. Racialised people and people of colour should not be brought in solely as experts in terms of the racist experiences they have had, but because they are also trained subject matter experts.

The wider the group of experts involved in developing and implementing the teacher training, the more possibilities it gives the provider of the training to strategize on how best to deliver the content. Eid pointed out that in the book on white fragility, written by Robin DiAngelo (2018) who is a white woman, she mentioned that the person delivering the message has an impact on how well it will be received. White fragility, as already mentioned, means the defensiveness some white people might get when introduced to racial injustice. She suggests that some messages might be better received if told by a white person, because this might reduce the amount of resistance the white listeners have. If the same message was told by a POC trainer, some participants might see this as accusations and as personal attacks against them. This might lead to the individual becoming defensive and hostile, a state of mind not conducive for inner reflection and learning. Having a white trainer say the same message might help to alleviate some of the resistance to learn. Therefore, having a group of experts developing and delivering the teacher training will help it to be effective.

Eid also feels that additional teacher training would enable teachers to more critically assess the teaching materials they use in the classrooms. Some materials still portray some issues from an outdated and biased point of view. The teacher would now be able to recognise this better.

However, since teachers already have their hands full with other responsibilities, it cannot be solely their responsibility to address the auditability of all teaching materials. That is why Eid believes that the creators of the teaching materials should also be included in those teacher trainings as well. Once the authors of the schoolbooks also are fully aware of the structural racism around us, they would modify the content accordingly.

6.0. Discussion

6.1. Summary of Findings

Despite the limited amount of data available on the frequency of racist bullying in Finnish schools, there is evidence to show that there is a higher chance that students from different minority backgrounds face more discrimination and bullying than students that are not. (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, 2017). General studies of the topic of bullying have shown that bullying can take several different forms. Some of these are harder to notice from the outside looking in. Bullying has been shown to negatively affect those that have been its victims (Rigby, 2003; Wolke & Lereya, 2015). These effects can be either long term or short terms effect. Racist bullying is a complex issue that has many underlining and structural components to it, whatever or not the people engaging in the racist behaviour are aware of it or not. Only a targeted and sustained effort to address this long-standing problem will have any hope of effectively reducing the amount of racist bullying taking place. This paper has aimed at showing some of the possible set of actions that could be taken in order to reduce the problem.

An important factor for increasing the level of awareness of the general public, school staff, government officials and scientist alike, is the availability of data on the phenomenon. Much more research is needed, otherwise, there is a great chance that the reported cases of racism will not be taken seriously enough or will be brushed off as single incidents that do not require future actions. This is what has been happening until this point. As a result of this, one of the recommendations of this paper to remedy this is to create a yearly study on the amount of racism students suffer in Finnish schools. Such a study should consider not only the locations and frequency of these events, but also the perceived causes for the racism. The more data that can be collected on the reason behind the racist action, whether it was the victims skin colour, perceived nationality, culture, language, religion, ethnicity or any other defining factor, the more accurate and effective interventions can be developed.

Another recommendation is to use this new empirical data to help develop trainings on racism that should be directed towards all school staff members and content provider for school teaching materials. A large part of the kind of culture and atmosphere a school has comes from the examples the school staff show to the students. Racist bullying is much more likely to happen if teachers themselves act in a racist manner or turn a blind eye to the racist abuse they see or are informed about. Victims of racism are less likely to come forward and report any abuse if they lack trust in the school procedures and the teachers' motivation to act upon that information. This training should be made compulsory for all teachers in training. In addition, all already qualified teachers must take part in the same training as part of their professional in-service training. The teacher training curriculum should also be made compulsory for writers and editors of teaching materials and schoolbooks. This would enable them to be able to critically assess the suitability of the content in schoolbooks. This would greatly decrease the likelihood of teachers unintentionally teaching biased narratives about certain cultures and people.

School management carry the largest role in assuring that all staff members are properly trained on the topic of racism. Only when all staff members are aware and able to recognise racist behaviour can a school hope to fully implement procedures aimed at tackling the problem. Rooting out racism in schools will require everyone's effort in maintaining a consistent approach. Principals and other supervisors must also lead the way by showing with their own examples how important an issue this is; if they have a relaxed attitude and do not take any highlighted incidents seriously, it is unlikely their staff will do so.

Teachers should demand that the school provides them with tools and training on how to deal with racism in the school. If the school management does not take the necessary steps to adequately train the staff on their own accord, then the staff must make the first move to demand it. It is also the individual teachers' responsibility to ensure that they educate themselves on the topic outside the official teacher training. They do not need to wait for an official training to take place to learn about the issues.

In terms of the level of inclusiveness of the school culture, the students play a central role. They should all help to ensure that everyone is given the space and opportunity to learn, express themselves, and make friends without any fear of discrimination. Even though the students carry some responsibility in creating the atmosphere, they are not the ones responsible for creating that safe place. A safe place refers to space that is safe both in physical and mental

terms. A safe place is free of the threat of physical violence, and individuals can express their thoughts and feelings without the fear of being ridiculed and discriminated against.

6.2. Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study come from the small number of interviews conducted with subject matter experts. While the author was, in the literature review, able to include a variety of sources on the topic of bullying, the amount of semi-structured interviews with experts was limited. While their inputs were vital in enabling the completion of this paper, more interviews should have ideally been conducted. Inputs from the ministry of education and their thoughts and plans on the additional training for teacher on racism would have been very beneficial. Interviews with researchers currently working on the topics on racism, education and bullying might have provided more insight into the current situation in the country, and possibly more recommended actions to be taken. Interviews with teachers in order to ask their feelings on their ability to address racism in school could have been included. It would be beneficial to know what sort of training or tools they feel they need to be able to confidently tackle the problem. A study of students that have been victims of racism would also have been informative in hearing exactly what kind of support they did receive, and what support they would have needed, both from the school staff but also from outside organisations as well. Surveying the parents of these students would also be beneficial to assess what kind of information and support the parents would have needed in those situations. It would also have been essential to hear from school curators and psychologists what they felt about the current situation, if they feel that they have had enough training to deal with racist cases, and what additional resources they might need. These central support worker in the schools are vitally important for the mental wellbeing of the victims of racism, because they are the ones victims are often sent to first. If the school psychologists and curators are unable to properly address the victims and their needs, it could greatly impact the willingness of the victims to seek help in the future. Psychological support is critical in reducing the long-term negative effects of racism.

In order to achieve a comprehensive overview of the current situation, to assess the capabilities of the relevant staff members, and to understand the level of support needed from victims of bullying, the research undertaken in this paper will need to be expanded and carried out in more depth. Only then will enough information on how to best solve the problem of racist bullying be available for decision makers.

6.3 Implications of the Study

One of the main recommendations from the paper has been the development of annual studies to be conducted on the current levels and reasons of racist bullying. This nationwide study would need to be carried out by the government. However, schools and municipalities can already adopt their own studies and develop their action plans and procedures independently. Such independent studies would be possible to conduct well before the central government is able to have a nationwide study implemented. Even though the municipality or school level data would have limited use for nationwide purposes, they could still make a significant difference in the local school environment.

In addition to the development of new trainings and procedures on the topic, new follow up methods need to be developed in order to accurately assess the effectiveness of the newly implemented procedures. This would provide vital data on which areas of the trainings and procedures still need improvement.

The issue of representation is important among the members of school staff. Current government guidelines make it very hard for qualified teachers from outside Finland to have their qualifications and work experience should recognised, severely limiting their ability to find teaching jobs in Finland. The more multicultural and multi-ethnic work environments are, and the more people are exposed to different cultures and ideas, the less of a taboo and misunderstood topic they become. The government needs to re-evaluate their guidelines to make it easier to create more multicultural working environments.

The main issue for future research is to get a better understanding of the scale and nature of current racist bullying in Finland. Without such data, the emphasis on the severity of the problem will be lost, because the discussion will be based merely on people's assumptions.

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