

Experiences of Discrimination Among the Irish Traveller Community

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Abstract

Aims: This study investigated whether there were differences in experiences of discrimination between the settled community (control group) and the Irish Traveller community. This study also investigated whether there were differences in experiences of discrimination between Traveller males and females, across age groups, and between type of accommodation. While also investigating whether there was a relationship between levels of discrimination and levels of stress. **Method:** An online based survey was hosted on Google Forms through various social media platforms and completed by participants ($n = 62$), which included a control group of non-Traveller participants ($n = 35$) and an experimental group which included Traveller participants ($n = 27$). The survey included a demographics questionnaire, the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire-community version, and the Perceived Stress Scale. **Results:** Results showed that the Traveller group scored significantly higher in levels of perceived discrimination than the control group, there was no significant differences in levels of perceived discrimination within the Traveller group between gender, age, and type of accommodation. However, higher levels of discrimination were associated with high levels of stress among the Traveller group. **Conclusion:** This study found that Travellers experience higher levels of discrimination than individuals who are not Travellers, this study also found that higher levels of discrimination were associated with higher levels of stress among the Traveller group. These findings have expanded on previous research and addressed the gap in literature regarding the Irish Traveller community. Practical implications to reduce conflict and discrimination between groups and suggestions for future research are discussed.

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Introduction

The Irish Traveller Community

The Irish Traveller community are recognised as an ethnic minority in the Republic of Ireland and in the United Kingdom. The 2016 census for the Republic of Ireland recorded 30,987 for the Irish Traveller population, representing 0.7% of the general population (Central Statistics Office, 2016). Whereas the 2011 Censuses for England and Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland recorded an estimated total of 11,100 individuals who identified as “Gypsy or Irish Traveller” representing 0.1% of the United Kingdom’s general population (Office for National Statistics, 2011; Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2011; Scottish Government, 2015). The Irish Traveller community have experienced decades of social inequality especially in relation to education (Levinson, 2007; McCaffery, 2009), social and housing exclusion (Van Cleemput, 2010; Van Hout & Staniewicz, 2012; O’Donovan, 2016) and healthcare (McGorrian et al., 2012; Dar et al., 2013; McFadden et al., 2018).

Compared to the general population of Ireland, Travellers have poor health outcomes which was brought to light by the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS). In 2010 the AITHS was the first study of its kind which highlighted Traveller health across the north and south of Ireland. This study which included 6,540 participants from the Irish Traveller community, found that the average life expectancy for Traveller men was 15 years less than the general population and 11.5 years less for Traveller women. Suicide rates for Traveller men were seven times higher than the general population and five times higher for Traveller women. This study also found that the levels of discrimination faced by Travellers has a negative impact on their engagement with health services (All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, 2010).

Discrimination

Discrimination is a global issue which can affect any person, from any background. Discrimination may be based on age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, race, and many other characteristics of an individual’s identity (Kirkinis et al., 2018; Baumle et al., 2019; Bunbury, 2019; Manzi, 2019; Chang et al.,

2020). To understand the meaning of discrimination we first need to understand attitudes, stereotypes, and prejudice. An attitude is a construct composed of an individual's beliefs, feelings, and behaviours towards something in their environment. Attitudes can be positive or negative and they can influence how we act towards other people; an example of a negative attitude is prejudice (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019; Verplanken & Orbell, 2022). Stereotyping is the belief that all members of a group share the same characteristics, stereotyping usually leads to prejudice which is a negative attitude towards an individual or group based on their membership of that group. Prejudice can lead to discrimination, which is prejudice in action, discrimination involves treating someone differently based on their membership of a social group (Bernstein et al., 2008; Phills et al., 2020; Esses, 2021).

The Impact of Discrimination on Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minorities frequently experience prejudice and discrimination, an ethnic minority is a group of people that's culture or race differs to the majority population (Zick et al., 2008). Many studies in different countries have found that individuals that belong to ethnic minorities experience prejudice and discrimination. One of which found that professionals from ethnic minority groups experience subtle discrimination in the workplace (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). Another study found that ethnic minorities in Malaysia experience both social and institutional discrimination (Pietsch & Clark, 2014). Experiences of discrimination can have a negative effect on an individual's mental health resulting in depressive symptoms (Missinne & Bracke, 2010). Parental experiences of discrimination can also have a negative effect on children's mental health (Tran, 2013) while college students experiences of discrimination had a negative impact on academic performance (Stevens et al., 2018). Research has also shown that there may be gender differences in the impact of experiences of discrimination. One study found that discrimination was associated with psychological distress in Arab Americans with a higher association between discrimination and psychological distress in males than females (Assari & Lankarani, 2017). Another study found that discrimination was associated with poor self-rated health but only in females and not males (Kim et al., 2016).

This research has shown that experiences of discrimination can have a negative impact on the mental health of the individual who experienced the

discrimination first-hand and also their children. This research has also shown that discrimination can have a negative impact on academic performance, and that various negative outcomes associated with discrimination may be gender dependent. However, this research does not give us an idea on the impact of discrimination among the Irish Traveller community and does not examine gender and age differences in discrimination. Although research in this area is limited discrimination does seem to have a negative impact on Travellers' well-being as mentioned previously, discrimination was found to have a negative impact on Travellers' engagement with health services, including mental health services (All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, 2010; Villani & Barry, 2021). Discrimination has also been found to have an impact on frequent mental distress in Travellers (McGorrian et al., 2013). The AITHS also found discrimination to be a cause of stress among male Travellers (All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, 2010). Long term stress has been found to lead to many negative physical and mental health implications (Chauvet-Gelinier & Bonin, 2017; Cameron & Schoenfeld, 2018; Weger & Sandi, 2018). Therefore, if stress is associated with experiences of discrimination, discrimination may also be associated with even more negative implications to the well-being of Travellers.

Realistic Group Conflict Theory

There are many theories that explain the formation of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. This paper will focus on Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Sherif et al., 1961) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) as explanations of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. Sherif et al. (1961) Realistic Group Conflict Theory suggests that conflict between groups happens when there is competition for limited resources. Sherif's (1954) study, known as The Robbers Cave Experiment, shows how conflict between groups and competition for resources can influence prejudice and discrimination and that working together towards a common goal can bring two groups in conflict together (Sherif, 1954). Although it is not without limitations, the study is not generalisable especially to ethnic groups as all participants were from a similar white, middle-class background. This study also lacks ecological validity as the children were in a controlled environment with many aspects of the experiment being manipulated by the researchers. However, since The

Robbers Cave Experiment multiple studies have been conducted to investigate realistic group conflict theory.

Zárate et al. (2004) found that perceived group conflict was a predictor of prejudice towards Mexican immigrants in the United States. Brief et al. (2005) found that perceived group conflict among white individuals was associated with negative attitudes towards black individuals. Terhune & Matusitz (2016) investigated realistic group conflict theory in relation to the conflict between the Uighur Muslims and the Chinese government in Xin-Jiang. This study found that as a result of intergroup conflict and discriminative acts of violence from the Chinese government, the Uighur Muslims resorted to terrorism. These studies show that half a century later Sherif's (1961) Realistic Group Conflict Theory is still a valid explanation of prejudice and discrimination. These studies show that Realistic Group Conflict Theory may be applied to American and Chinese populations as an explanation of discrimination against ethnic minorities. However, it is difficult to generalise the findings of these studies to an Irish population and discrimination against Travellers.

Fetzer (2016) investigated opposition to halting sites in relation to Realistic Group Conflict Theory and found it to be a valid explanation of prejudice attitudes towards Travellers in Ireland. This study may be generalised to an Irish population as it had a large sample of participants ($n = 1,284$) across Ireland that responded to the question about Travellers. However, this study does not give a Travellers perception on experiences of discrimination. Another limitation to this study is that it only investigated negative attitudes towards Travellers in relation to opposition to Traveller-specific accommodation, it did not investigate whether there were negative attitudes to Travellers living in "typical" or non-Traveller specific accommodation.

Social Identity Theory

Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory advances on Realistic Group Conflict Theory as it explains conflict between groups when there is no competition for resources or conflict between groups. Social identity is how an individual views themselves in relation to the social group that they belong to, the formation of social identity is a process that starts with social categorisation. Social categorisation is when an individual distinguishes between different groups, their in-group which is the social group that they belong to and the out-group the social group

that they do not belong to. Once groups have been distinguished social identification begins, this is when an individual starts to identify with their in-group, after this is social comparison. Social comparison is when an individual makes comparisons between their in-group and the out-group leading to positive distinctiveness involving beliefs that the in-group is better than the out-group in some way. Positive distinctiveness can influence in-group bias and the out-group homogeneity effect. The out-group homogeneity effect is when an individual makes generalisations of the out-group which can influence stereotypical beliefs about the members of that group and result in prejudice (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

One study investigating the relationship between in-group identification and prejudice between French and North African individuals found that individuals who identified highly with their in-group were more prejudice towards the out-group (Gabarrot & Falomir-Pichastor, 2017). This suggests that positive distinctiveness plays a role in prejudice. Sanchez et al. (2018) looked at social identity and found that Asian Americans and Latino Americans experience stereotyping, prejudice, and American Identity Threat even though participants Identified as American. This suggests evidence for social identity theory and specifically the out-group homogeneity effect, as Asian American and Latino American individuals experienced stereotyping and prejudice due to assumptions of nationality even though they were American.

Research on Social Identity Theory and discrimination against Travellers is limited, however this theory may still be applied as an explanation of discrimination against Travellers considering the out-group homogeneity effect as research has shown that the Traveller community has been subject to stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination throughout the years (Power, 2003; Hutchison et al., 2018; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019).

Rationale and Research Aims

There has been extensive research on stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination over the last fifty years and there are many studies investigating experiences of prejudice and discrimination among ethnic minority groups (Zárate et al., 2004; Brief et al., 2005; Zick et al., 2008; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011; Pietsch & Clark, 2014; Gabarrot & Falomir-Pichastor, 2017; Sanchez et al., 2018). There has

also been research on how experiences of discrimination influences health outcomes (Missinne & Bracke, 2010; Tran, 2013), academic performance (Stevens et al., 2018) and conflict (Terhune & Matusitz, 2016). Previous research has also shown that various negative outcomes associated with discrimination may be gender dependent (Kim et al., 2016; Assari & Lankarani, 2017). However, there has been very little research done specifically on experiences of discrimination among individuals within the Irish Traveller community (Power, 2003; Fetzer, 2016; Hutchison et al., 2018; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019). There is very limited research on gender and age differences in discrimination among the Irish Traveller community, and also whether there is a difference in discrimination among Travellers based on accommodation. There is limited research on how experiences of discrimination impact on Traveller mental health (McGorrian et al., 2012; McGorrian et al., 2013; Villani & Barry, 2021) and whether there is a relationship between experiences of discrimination and stress levels, apart from discrimination being found to be a factor contributing to stress in male Travellers (All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, 2010).

To address the gaps in the literature this study firstly aims to investigate whether there are differences in experiences of discrimination between non-Travellers (control group) and the Irish Traveller community. More specifically this study aims to investigate differences in experiences of discrimination focusing on the Irish Traveller community. This study aims to investigate whether there were differences in experiences of discrimination between Traveller males and females, across age groups, and between Travellers living in Traveller-specific accommodation and Travellers who do not live in Traveller-specific accommodation. The final aim of this study was to investigate whether there is a relationship between levels of discrimination and levels of stress.

The Traveller community are an indigenous ethnic minority in Ireland, with a historically rich culture and traditions yet they have one of the poorest health outcomes in Ireland. Although Travellers only make up 0.7% of the general population, there is a higher suicide rate and lower life expectancy among Travellers (All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, 2010; Central Statistics Office, 2016). Investigating experiences of discrimination among the Irish Traveller community will not only help to advance scientific knowledge but may also influence positive social change through educating the settled community and helping to reduce stigma and discrimination and gain a better understanding between both communities.

Investigating age differences may give an indication whether discrimination against Travellers has increased or decreased over time, investigating gender differences may give an indication whether applications such as gender-based support are needed. Investigating differences in type of accommodation may give further knowledge into factors that influence discrimination against Travellers and how to overcome those factors. As a result of this research, knowing whether there is a correlation between levels of discrimination and levels of stress could help us in understanding more about what factors influence mental health in the Traveller community. Suggestions for further research and applications from this study could lead to positive implications on discrimination, academic performance, and physical and mental health in the Irish Traveller community.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

There are five research questions in this study; (i) are there differences in experiences of discrimination between the control group and the Irish Traveller community? (ii) Are there differences in experiences of discrimination between Traveller males and females? (iii) Are differences in experiences of discrimination in Travellers across age groups? (iv) Are differences in experiences of discrimination between Travellers living in Traveller-specific accommodation and Travellers who do not live in Traveller-specific accommodation? (v) Is there is a relationship between levels of discrimination and levels of stress?

There are five hypotheses in this study; (i) There will be a significant difference in experiences of discrimination between the control group and the Irish Traveller community. (ii) There will be a significant difference in experiences of discrimination between Traveller males and females. (iii) There will be a significant difference in experiences of discrimination in Travellers across age groups. (iv) There will be a significant difference in experiences of discrimination between Travellers living in Traveller-specific accommodation and Travellers who do not live in Traveller-specific accommodation. (v) There will be a relationship between levels of discrimination and levels of stress.

Method

Participants

There was a total of 62 participants in this study which included 20 males and 42 females. There was a control group and an experimental group, the experimental group included individuals who were members of the Irish Travelling Community. The control group included individuals who were not members of the Irish Travelling Community. There was a total of 35 in the control group which included 10 males and 25 females. There was a total of 27 participants in the experimental group which included 10 males and 17 females. Participants were between 18-58 years of age with a mean of 32 years of age with a standard deviation of 9.42. Some participants were recruited through various social media platforms via convenience sampling and other participants were recruited through reaching out to multiple Irish Traveller organisations and individuals known to the researcher via snowball sampling. Participants were not compensated for taking part in the study.

Materials & Apparatus

This was an online based study. However, participants were also given the option to complete the survey over the phone or via zoom. All participants took part via the online study survey which was hosted on Google Forms. Google Forms is an online software that allows the researcher to create surveys and send a URL link to participants. Participants needed access to a device with internet connection to take part in the online survey. Responses were kept anonymous and were also password protected, encrypted, and given an identification code so there was no personal information. Only the researcher had access to the data.

Demographic Questionnaire

The Demographic Questionnaire was used to assess what country participants lived in, their ethnic identity, gender, age, and type of accommodation that they lived in.

The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire-community version

The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire-community version (PEDQ-CV) is a modification of The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire (PEDQ) developed by Contrada (2001) which has 36 less questions and uses a less

difficult level of vocabulary than the PEDQ which was more suitable for the target population of this study. The PEDQ-CV is a 34-item, 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The PEDQ-CV is a scale used to measure lifetime exposure to experiences of ethnic discrimination which includes four subscales, social exclusion, stigmatisation, discrimination at work/school and threat/aggression. Kwok et al. (2011) validated this scale and found the reliability to be high with the Cronbach's alpha at .95 for lifetime exposure and the subscales ranged from .76 to .87. The PEDQ-CV is scored by averaging the participants answers the higher the score the higher the level of perceived discrimination.

The Perceived Stress Scale

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) was developed by Cohen et al. (1983) it is a 10 item, 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The PSS is the most commonly used scale used to measure the perception of stress. Cohen and Williamson (1988) found the reliability of the PSS to be high with the Cronbach's alpha at .78. The PSS is scored by adding up the scores for each answer, scores on the PSS can range from 0 to 40. Stress scores from 0-13 are considered low stress, 14-26 are moderate stress and 27-40 are high perceived stress.

Design

This study is a quantitative, cross-sectional within subject's research design. The reason for this choice of design is to investigate four hypotheses exploring multiple dependent and independent variables. There are two dependent variables (i) experiences of discrimination (ii) perceived stress. There are three independent variables. (i) Gender with two levels: males and females. (ii) Age with three levels: young (18-25 years), middle (26-35 years) and mature (36 years and older). (iii) Type of accommodation with two levels: (i) Traveller-specific accommodation and (ii) non-traveller-specific accommodation.

Procedure

The control group were recruited first followed by the experimental group. This study originally planned to include individuals from the Roma community however the researcher was unable to recruit any participants from the Roma community. Participants who were recruited via convenience sampling will first see a

brief explanation of the study on a social media post containing a URL link to the online survey. Participants who were recruited via snowball sampling were given a brief explanation of the study by someone known to them and sent a URL link to the online survey. The URL brought participants to a page containing an information sheet (see appendix i) fully explaining what the study is about and what is expected of them to take part. The participants were then be asked to provide informed consent (see appendix ii). Once informed consent was given participants could proceed to the questionnaires (see appendix iv) on the next page which brought the participant to a short demographic questionnaire followed by the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire- Community Version (Brondolo et al., 2005) and the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983). Once the questionnaires were completed the participants were thanked for their participation and provided with a debriefing sheet (see appendix iii). This process took approximately 10 minutes.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 62 participants took part in this study, which included 20 male participants and 42 female participants. Participants were divided into groups; Identity was divided into two groups (Group 1 = control group, n = 35; Group 2 = Traveller group, n = 27). Age was divided into three groups (young = 18-25 years old; middle = 26-35 years old; and mature 36 years old and above). Type of accommodation was divided into two groups (Group 1 = Traveller-specific accommodation; Group 2 = non-Traveller-specific accommodation). Frequencies for country, identity, groups, gender, age, accommodation, type of accommodation and ethnicity/race are presented in Table 1. Descriptive statistics for age, PEDQ-cv (lifetime experiences of discrimination), social exclusion, stigmatization, workplace discrimination, threat/aggression, and perceived stress are presented in Table 2. Frequencies for country, identity, groups, gender, age, accommodation, type of accommodation and ethnicity/race are presented in Table 1. Descriptive statistics for age, lifetime experiences of discrimination, social exclusion, stigmatization, workplace discrimination, threat/aggression, and perceived stress are presented in Table 2.

Table 1

Frequencies for categorical variables – country, identity, groups gender, age group, accommodation, type of accommodation and ethnicity/race (n=62).

Variable	Frequency	Valid %
Country		
Republic of Ireland	55	88.7%
The United Kingdom	7	11.3%
Identity		
Irish Traveller	27	43.5%
Control Group	35	56.5%
Gender		
Male	20	32.3%
Female	42	67.7%
Age		

18-25yrs	16	25.8%
26-35yrs	28	45.2%
36yrs+	18	29.0%
Accommodation		
House	50	80.6%
Apartment	3	4.8%
Mobile home	1	1.6%
Mobile on a site	4	6.5%
Caravan on a site	2	3.2%
Chalet on a site	2	3.2%
Type of Accommodation		
Traveller Specific	8	12.9%
Non-Traveller Specific	54	87.1%
Ethnicity/Race		
White	9	14.5%
Irish	15	24.2%
Irish Traveller	27	43.5%
Caucasian	7	11.3%
Irish Algerian	1	1.6%
White Lithuanian	1	1.6%
Black Irish	1	1.6%
Pacific Islander	1	1.6%

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for continuous variables – age, PEDQ-cv (lifetime experiences of discrimination), social exclusion, stigmatization, workplace discrimination, threat/aggression, and perceived stress

Variable	<i>M [95% CI]</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Age	31.73[29.33-34.12]	29	1.20	9.42	18-58
PEDQ-cv	2.10[1.88-2.33]	1.99	.11	.89	1-4
Social Exclusion	2.24[2.00-2.48]	2.11	.12	.95	1-4
Stigmatization	2.08[1.82-2.34]	2	.13	1.04	1-4

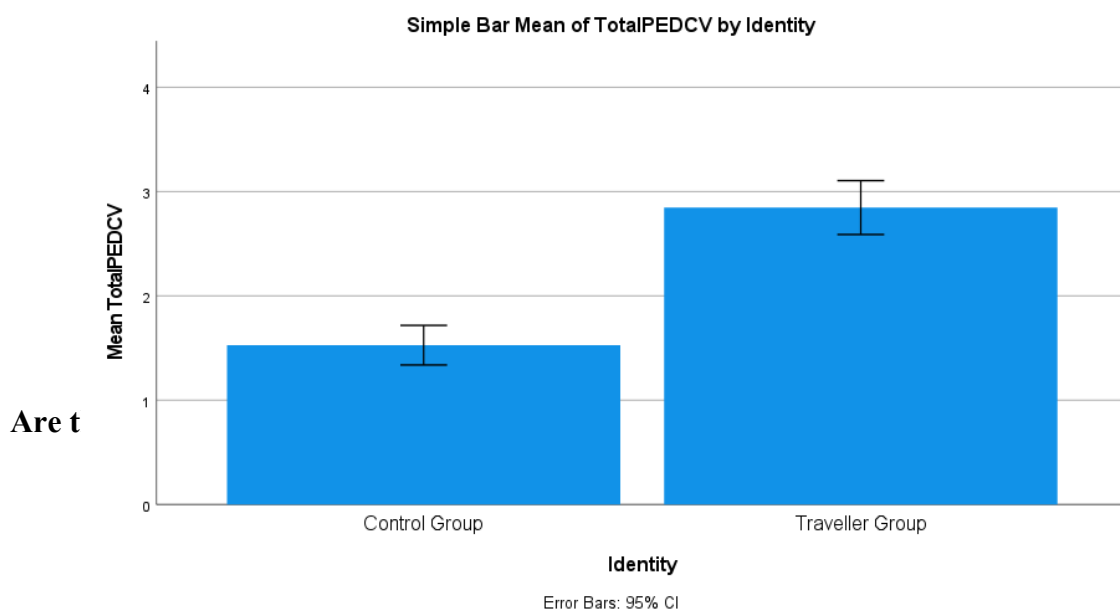
Workplace Discrimination	2.08[1.85-2.32]	1.88	.12	.94	1-4
Threat/Aggression	1.62[1.43-1.81]	1.20	.10	.75	1-3
Perceived Stress	21.58[20.49-22.68]	22	.55	4.31	14-34

Inferential Statistics

Preliminary analyses were performed on continuous variables age, lifetime experiences of discrimination and perceived stress to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality shows a significance of .001 for age, .003 for lifetime discrimination, and .016 for perceived stress. Skewness and kurtosis values for each variable are in the acceptable range of between -2 and +2 (Age, skewness = .819, kurtosis = -.064; PEDQ-cv, skewness = .359, kurtosis = -1.248; Perceived Stress, skewness = .854, kurtosis = -.836). However, this does not represent a perfect normal distribution as these variables are negatively skewed which was indicated by the histograms. As a result, non-parametric statistical analyses were conducted.

Are there differences in levels of discrimination between the control group and the Traveller group?

A Mann Whitney U test was conducted to determine if there was a difference in levels of lifetime discrimination between the control group and the Traveller group. This non-parametric test was used as the variable lifetime experiences of discrimination was not normally distributed. There was a significant difference in levels of lifetime discrimination between the two groups with the Traveller group ($Md = 2.97, n = 27$) scoring higher than the control group ($Md = 1.32, n = 35$), $U = 876, z = 5.73, p = .000$, the effect size was very small $r = .09$.



A Mann Whitney U test was conducted to determine if there was a difference in levels of lifetime discrimination between males and females within the Traveller group. This non-parametric test was used as the variable lifetime experiences of discrimination was not normally distributed. There was no significant difference in levels of lifetime discrimination between males ($Md = 2.96, n = 10$) and females ($Md = 3.00, n = 17$), $U = 83, z = -.08, p = .941$.

Are there differences in levels of discrimination across age groups?

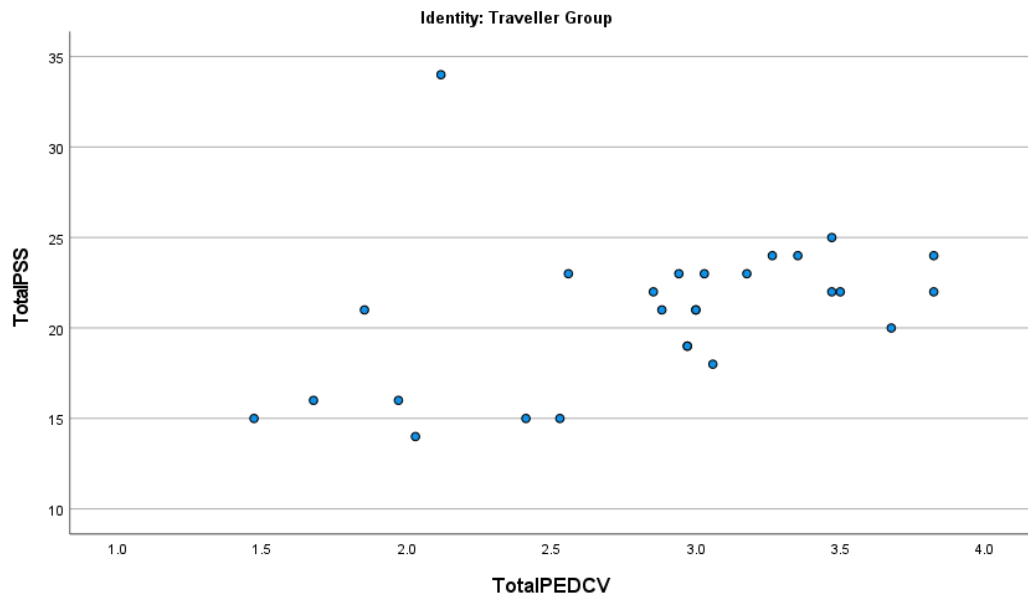
A Kruskal Wallis test was conducted to determine if there were age differences in levels of lifetime discrimination. Participants were divided into three age groups (young = 18-25 years old; middle = 26-35 years old; and mature 36 years old and above). This non-parametric test was used as the variables age and lifetime experiences of discrimination were not normally distributed. There was no significant difference in levels of discrimination between the three age groups (Group 1, $n = 9$; 18-25 years old; Group 2, $n = 9$; 26-35 years old; Group 3, $n = 9$; 36+ years old), $X^2(2, n = 27) = 1.124, p = .570$.

Are there differences in in levels of discrimination between types of accommodation?

A Mann Whitney U test was conducted to determine if there was a difference in levels of discrimination between types of accommodation. Participants were divided into two groups (Group 1 = Traveller-specific accommodation; Group 2 = non-Traveller-specific accommodation). This non-parametric test was used as the variable lifetime experiences of discrimination was not normally distributed. There was no significant difference in levels of lifetime discrimination between Group 1 ($Md = 2.97, n = 8$) and Group 2 ($Md = 3.00, n = 19$), $U = 80, z = .239, p = .815$.

Is there a relationship between levels of discrimination and perceived stress?

The relationship between lifetime discrimination and perceived stress was investigated using a Spearman's Rank Order correlation coefficient, this non-parametric test was used as the variable lifetime experiences of discrimination was not normally distributed. There was a large, positive correlation between the two variables ($r_s = .53, n = 27, p = .004$). Results indicate that higher levels of lifetime discrimination are associated with higher levels of perceived stress.



Discussion

This study aimed to investigate whether there were differences in experiences of discrimination between the settled community (control group) and the Irish Traveller community. This study also aimed to investigate whether there were differences in experiences of discrimination between Traveller males and females, across age groups, and between Travellers living in Traveller-specific accommodation and Travellers who do not live in Traveller-specific accommodation. The final aim of this study was to investigate whether there is a relationship between levels of discrimination and levels of stress.

The first hypothesis was that there will be a significant difference in experiences of discrimination between the control group and the Irish Traveller community. The first hypothesis was accepted as the findings of this study show that the Traveller group scored significantly higher in lifetime discrimination than the control group. These results indicate that within this sample Travellers experience higher levels of discrimination than individuals who are not Travellers. These findings are consistent with previous literature investigating discrimination among ethnic minorities in other countries that found ethnic minorities to have experienced higher levels of discrimination (Zick et al., 2008; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011; Pietsch & Clark, 2014).

In relation to Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Sherif et al., 1961), this theory is a valid explanation of discrimination against ethnic minorities in other countries (Zárate et al., 2004; Brief et al., 2005; Terhune & Matusitz, 2016), and Travellers in Ireland (Fetzer, 2016). However, the findings of this study are not consistent with Realistic Group Conflict Theory as there is no indication of whether conflict between groups impacted levels of discrimination amongst Travellers in this sample. In relation to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which explains how discrimination occurs when there is no real conflict between groups. The findings of this study are consistent as Social Identity Theory as experiences of discrimination were investigated based on the individual's identity. It has also been found in previous literature that Travellers experience discrimination based on their Identity (Power, 2003; Hutchison et al., 2018; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019).

The second hypothesis was that there will be a significant difference in experiences of discrimination between Traveller males and females, the second

hypothesis was rejected as the findings of this study show that there were no significant differences in lifetime discrimination between genders. These results indicate that within this sample Traveller males and females do not differ in experiences of discrimination. This hypothesis was formulated based on the gap in previous research investigating gender differences in experiences of discrimination, as a result the findings of this study were not consistent with previous literature due to this gap. However there has been research conducted on gender differences in the impact of discrimination, that show discrimination can have different impacts on males and females (Kim et al., 2016; Assari & Lankarani, 2017).

The findings of this study are not consistent with Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Sherif et al., 1961), as there is no indication of whether conflict between groups impacted levels of discrimination amongst Travellers in this sample. However, it could be speculated that there was no difference in levels of discrimination due to the out-group homogeneity effect which influences stereotypical beliefs of all members of a group which would be consistent with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Therefore, the reason why there was no difference between male and female Travellers could be because of stereotypical beliefs that influence discrimination regardless of gender.

The third hypothesis was that there will be a significant difference in experiences of discrimination in Travellers across age groups, the third hypothesis was rejected as the findings of this study show that there were no significant differences in lifetime discrimination across age groups. These results indicate that within this sample experiences of discrimination do not differ between ages groups. This hypothesis was also formulated based on a gap in the literature, that gap being that there was a lack of research conducted on age differences in experiences of discrimination. As a result, this study is not consistent with previous research, also it is not consistent with Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Sherif et al., 1961) as there is no indication of whether conflict between groups impacted levels of discrimination amongst Travellers in this sample. The findings of this study are consistent with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), as it indicates that Travellers experience discrimination regardless of age, these results could also indicate that discrimination against Travellers has not increased or decreased over time. However, the sample size was small which could have impacted results.

The fourth hypothesis was that there will be a significant difference in experiences of discrimination between Travellers living in Traveller-specific accommodation and Travellers who do not live in Traveller-specific accommodation. The fourth hypothesis was rejected as the findings of this study show that there were no significant differences in lifetime discrimination between type of accommodation. These results indicate that within this sample experiences of discrimination do not differ between Travellers who live in Traveller-specific accommodation and Travellers who do not live in Traveller-specific accommodation. This hypothesis was also formulated based on a gap in the literature, that gap being that there was a lack of research conducted on differences in discrimination between types of accommodation. As a result of this gap in the literature the findings of this study are not consistent with previous literature. Although there is previous literature which found that members of the settled community were opposed to Traveller-specific accommodation being built in their area (Fetzer, 2016).

The results of this study do not indicate that there is a difference in experiences of discrimination based on type of accommodation. These results were not consistent with Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Sherif et al., 1961) as there is no indication of whether conflict between groups impacted levels of discrimination amongst Travellers in this sample. The findings of this study are consistent with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), as it indicates that Travellers experience discrimination regardless of type of accommodation. However, this could be due to the lack of Traveller-specific accommodation available in Ireland.

The fifth and final hypothesis was that there will be a relationship between levels of discrimination and levels of stress. Through the findings in this study the final hypothesis was accepted as the findings of this study show that within the Traveller group higher levels of discrimination are associated with higher levels of stress. These results indicate that within this sample experiences of discrimination may influence stress levels in Travellers, these findings are consistent with previous literature on the impact of discrimination against ethnic minorities on mental health (Missinne & Bracke, 2010; Tran, 2013) and the impact of discrimination on Travellers mental health (McGorrian et al., 2012; McGorrian et al., 2013; Villani & Barry, 2021). The findings of this study are also consistent with a finding in the ALTHS study that male Travellers reported discrimination to be a cause of stress (All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, 2010).

In relation to Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Sherif et al., 1961), the findings of this study are not consistent as there is no indication of whether conflict between groups impacted levels of discrimination amongst Travellers in this sample and whether group conflict could have impacted on levels of stress amongst Travellers. In relation to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the findings of this study are only consistent with levels of discrimination. The relationship between levels of discrimination and levels of stress cannot be interpreted using Social Identity Theory as the theory focuses on how discrimination occurs and not the mental impact discrimination can have on the individual.

Implications

As this study found that Travellers experience higher levels of discrimination than the control group, this highlights the issue that Travellers are experiencing discrimination. Realistic Group Conflict Theory suggests that working together towards a common goal can bring two groups in conflict together (Sherif et al., 1961). Community development groups do great work in both the Traveller community and the settled community, currently there is a housing crisis in Ireland which is affecting both the Traveller community and the settled community. Although there were no differences in levels of discrimination between types of accommodation within this study, it was highlighted that there is a lack of Traveller-specific accommodation. There is also a lack of social housing which is affecting both communities. Advocating against the housing crisis is a common goal that could possibly bring both communities together, reducing conflict and discrimination between both groups whilst also benefiting both groups.

As this study found there were no differences in levels of discrimination between Travellers across age groups, this highlights the issue that discrimination may not be decreasing over time and young Travellers may be experiencing as much discrimination as older Travellers. One way to tackle this would be educational workshops based on discrimination and including Traveller history in the curriculum in primary schools, which would educate both Traveller and non-Traveller children whilst providing a more inclusive environment in schools for Travellers. This study found that there was a relationship between levels of discrimination and levels of stress, this highlights the need for more Traveller focused mental health interventions.

As there were no differences in levels of discrimination between Traveller males and females within this study, these interventions may not need to be gender specific.

Strengths and Limitations

One key strength of this study is that it investigated an under researched and typically hard to reach population. Another strength of this study is that it has addressed gaps in the literature by investigating whether there were differences in experiences of discrimination between the settled community and the Irish Traveller community, while further investigating whether there were differences in experiences of discrimination between Traveller males and females, across age groups, and type of accommodation. Another strength of this study is that it looked further than just discrimination by investigating whether there was a relationship between levels of discrimination and levels of stress, laying a foundation for future research in the area of Traveller mental health and the impact discrimination may have.

Limitations to this study could be a suggestion for future research. For example, this study did not look at gender differences in the impact of experiences of discrimination and whether stress levels differed between genders. It is suggested that other impacts of discrimination on Traveller well-being are investigated. Another suggestion for future research would be to investigate the social acceptability of discrimination against Travellers. This study also had a small sample of participants which does not make it generalizable to the Irish Traveller population both in the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The small sample also resulted in non-parametric analyses to be conducted, it is suggested that a similar study with a larger sample be conducted as this may have had an effect on the outcomes of this study.

Conclusion

This study found that Travellers experience higher levels of discrimination than individuals who are not Travellers. Within the Traveller group, this study found that there were no significant differences in lifetime discrimination between gender, age, and type of accommodation. This study also found within the Traveller group higher levels of discrimination were associated with higher levels of stress. Doing so this study expanded on previous research and addressed the gap in literature regarding the Irish Traveller community. Practical implications including working with

community development groups, workshops, and the inclusion of Traveller history in primary schools, and Traveller focused mental health interventions to reduce conflict and discrimination between groups were discussed. Suggestions for future research to investigate the impact of discrimination on stress levels and whether there is a difference between genders on the impact of discrimination, and to investigate whether there are other health factors influenced by discrimination among the Traveller community were also discussed.

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Appendices

Appendix i

Information Sheet

You have been invited to take part in my final year project, thank you so much for considering taking part in my study!

The name of this study is “Experiences of Discrimination Among the Irish Traveller and Roma Communities” the aim of this study is to investigate experiences of discrimination among individuals from the Irish Traveller and Roma communities while also investigating if there is a relationship between experiences of discrimination and stress levels. I am a final year psychology student in The National College of Ireland.

This is an online based survey study. If you would like to take part but do not want to complete the survey online you can do it over the phone, zoom or in person depending on your location.

You can contact me on +353XXXXXXXXX if you would like to do the survey over the phone

What is expected of you?

To take part in this study you will need to answer 3 questionnaires, the first one is a short demographic questionnaire with 5 questions. The second one is the Perceived Experiences of Discrimination Questionnaire-Community Version (PEDQ-CV) with 34 questions. The PEDQ-CV is used to assess experiences of discrimination such as stigmatisation, workplace discrimination, exclusion, threat, and harassment. The third one is The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) with 10 questions, this is used to assess levels of stress. This should take 10 minutes.

Who can take part?

If you are from either the Irish Traveller Community or the Roma Community and are 18 years or above, you can take part.

Risks involved?

There is a potential risk for distress in taking part in this study as it is investigating discrimination and stress which may be sensitive topics. To address this issue appropriate resources will be given at the end of the study.

Confidentiality & Commitment

If you choose to take part in this study all the information you give will be anonymous and will only be used for the purpose of this study. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. There will be no compensation given for participation in this study.

Informed Consent

If you have read and understood all of the information given on the previous page and wish to take part in this study, click “yes! I agree to take part”.

If you do not wish to take part in this study, click “no thank you! I do not agree to take part”.

Do you consent to take part in this study?

Yes! I agree to take part

No thank you! I do not agree to take part

Appendix iii

Debriefing Sheet

Thank you for taking part in this study! Your participation is highly appreciated, if you feel distressed from taking part in this study there are several resources listed below that can offer you support.

The National Traveller Mental Health Service

Phone: 01 8721094 (Monday – Friday between the hours of 9AM – 5PM, 4PM on Fridays)

Email: info@exchangehouse.ie

Traveller Counselling Service

Landline: 01 868 5761

Mobile: 086 308 1476

Email: info@travellercounselling.ie

Aware

Freephone: 1800 80 48 48 (available Monday – Sunday 10am to 10pm)

Samaritans (Republic of Ireland & United Kingdom)

Phone: 116 123

Chat online: <https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

For Free 24/7 Support in a Crisis

Free-Text: HELLO to 50808.

Appendix iv
Questionnaires

Demographics Questionnaire

What country do you live in?

Which of the following do you Identify with?

The Irish Traveller Community

The Roma Community

None of the above

Gender?

Male

Female

Other

What age are you?

Type of accommodation? (e.g., House, Mobile, in an estate or on a site etc.)

The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire- community version (PEDQ-CV)

This questionnaire contains 34 questions to measure experiences of discrimination. Think about your **ethnicity/race**. What group do you belong to? **Do you think of yourself as:**

Asian? Black? Latino? White? Native American? American? Caribbean? Irish? Italian?

Korean? Another group?

Your Ethnicity/Race:

How often have any of the things listed below happened to you, **because of your ethnicity?**

BECAUSE OF YOUR ETHNICITY/RACE

How often...

1 – never 2 – almost never 3 - Sometimes 4 - often 5 - very often

1. Has someone said something disrespectful, either to your face or behind your back?

1 2 3 4 5

2. Have you been kept out of a public place or group?

1 2 3 4 5

3. Have you been treated unfairly by teachers, principals, or other staff at school?

1 2 3 4 5

4. Have others thought you couldn't do things or handle a job?

1 2 3 4 5

5. Have others threatened to hurt you (ex: said they would hit you)?

1 2 3 4 5

6. Have others actually hurt you or tried to hurt you (ex: kicked or hit you)?

1 2 3 4 5

7. Have others avoided talking to you or answering you?

1 2 3 4 5

8. Have you felt that you were kept out of certain places?

1 2 3 4 5

9. Have policemen or security officers been unfair to you?

1 2 3 4 5

BECAUSE OF YOUR ETHNICITY/RACE...**How often...**

Never Sometimes Very often

10. Have others hinted that you are stupid?

1 2 3 4 5

11. Have others threatened to damage your property?

1 2 3 4 5

12. Have others actually damaged your property?

1 2 3 4 5

13. Have people called you bad names related to your ethnicity?

1 2 3 4 5

14. Have others made you feel like an outsider who doesn't fit in because of your dress, speech, or other characteristics related to your ethnicity? 1 2 3 4 5

15. Were you left out when others were planning a party or get-together?

1 2 3 4 5

16. Have you been treated unfairly by co-workers or classmates?

1 2 3 4 5

17. Have others hinted that you are dishonest or can't be trusted?

1 2 3 4 5

18. Has someone made rude gestures?

1 2 3 4 5

19. Have others avoided touching or sitting next to you (ex: in class or on a bus)?

1 2 3 4 5

20. Have you been left out of social gatherings or get-togethers (ex: going to lunch or to a bar)?

1 2 3 4 5

21. Have people like waiters, bank tellers, or secretaries been unfair or treated you badly?

1 2 3 4 5

BECAUSE OF YOUR ETHNICITY/RACE...

How often...

Never Sometimes Very often

22. Has a clerk or waiter ignored you or made you wait longer than others to be served?

1 2 3 4 5

23. Have people been nice to you to your face, but said bad things about you behind your back?

1 2 3 4 5

24. Have people who speak a different language made you feel like an outsider?

1 2 3 4 5

25. Have people on the street been unwilling to help you or give you directions?

1 2 3 4 5

26. Has a taxi driver passed you by or refused you service?

1 2 3 4 5

27. Have others hinted that you must be violent or dangerous?

1 2 3 4 5

28. Have others physically harmed members of your family?

1 2 3 4 5

29. Have others ignored you or not paid attention to you?

1 2 3 4 5

30. Has your boss or supervisor been unfair to you?

1 2 3 4 5

31. Have others hinted that you must not be clean?

1 2 3 4 5

32. Have people not trusted you?

1 2 3 4 5

33. Have people not taken you seriously or not wanted to give you responsibility?

1 2 3 4 5

34. Has it been hinted that you must be lazy?

1 2 3 4 5

The Perceived Stress Scale

For each question choose from the following alternatives:

0 - never 1 - almost never 2 - sometimes 3 - fairly often 4 - very often

_____ 1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

_____ 2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

_____ 3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?

_____ 4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

_____ 5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

_____ 6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?

_____ 7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

_____ 8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?

_____ 9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?

_____ 10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?