INTRODUCTION

In Europe, school violence has been recognised as an important problem over the last few years, especially the minor and subtler forms of violence (verbal harassment, rudeness) that are increasing (Kane 2008). Despite a general recognition of the importance of school violence, there is presently no common EU legal or policy framework regarding violence in schools. Among European countries there exist significant differences in legislation and governmental intervention related to school violence, as well as differences in expertise and experience in this field. While in most countries there has been some attention put to the violence in the school environment, the issue of interethnic violence in schools often remains an under-researched and inadequately discussed phenomenon, despite the fact that Europe is facing an increase of migration flows and growth of ethnic diversity along with apparently growing xenophobic and racist attitudes towards ethnic minorities and migrant communities reflected also in schools. Nevertheless, in recent years there has been some interest in the issue of violence in ethnically diverse school (Verkuyten and Thijs 2002, Strohmeier et al. 2008, Vervoort 2010, Stefanek et al. 2012, Tolsma et al. 2013).

The general negative attitudes towards migrants and ethnic minorities in Slovenia, observed also through public opinion surveys (Toš et al. 2009, Eurostat 2010, Kirbiš 2012) will thus presumably be reflected also in the attitudes and opinions of Slovenian pupils. Namely, attitudes of young people towards others,
their normative believes on equality of people of different cultural background or ethnic affiliation etc. and level of their acceptance of multiculturalism are influenced by the wider social context. It is not only family that influences attitude of school children towards people of other ethnic background. It is general socioeconomic circumstances of the society, such as economic crisis, growing unemployment, instability of jobs that boost process of “othering”. These stated arguments – socioeconomic crisis along with the argument of jet un-researched phenomenon support the need to illuminate the issue of peer interethnic relations and peer interethnic violence in the school environment in Slovenia.

Slovenia declared its independence in 1991. In the period when joint with other states in the multicultural and multi-religious Yugoslavia, the issue of ethnicity and ethnic affiliation was ‘under-communicated’ (Eriksen 1993). The prevailing political ideology of the former common state reduced the importance of ethnic affiliations. Principles of ‘brotherhood and unity’ were promoted within the frame of the socialist ideal of the former state in order to ensure interethnic equality, tolerance and coexistence as well as to strengthen the position of class above the attributed ethnic determinants (Sedmak et al. 2013: 220). Nowadays Slovenia is still uncritically perceived as relatively monocultural regardless of the presence of native Italian and Hungarian minorities as well as a high number of (mainly economic) immigrants from the territory of the once common state of Yugoslavia (Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Macedonian, etc.). Additionally, since 2000 the number and diversity of immigrants by country of citizenship has been increasing until 2008 economic crisis when a decline in immigration has been observed (Povhe 2010). Consequently, the issue of interethnic violence in schools does not gain a lot of attention.

Though in Slovenia there have been conducted some researches on peer violence in school environment (for example Dekleva 1996, Pušnik 1996, 2004, Krek et al. 2007, Mugnaioni Lešnik et al. 2008, Pavlović et al. 2008), none focused specifically on the issue of interethnic peer violence in school. The paper will thus discuss findings of the first research exploring and understanding children and young people’s experiences of interethnic conflict and violence in Slovenian primary and secondary schools\(^1\). Interethnic violence in school was examined multi-dimensionally – from the points of view of children, school staff and experts. Also, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to gain an in-depth, layered perspective on the issue. The paper will

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\(^1\) Research was a part of the project Children’s Voices: Exploring Interethnic Violence and Children’s Rights in the School Environment (2011–2012), funded by the European Commission Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme and implemented in Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Cyprus and United Kingdom.
focus on two issues, namely a) the attitudes of children towards ethnic diversity, rights and equality of people with different ethnic or cultural background and b) the prevalence of different types of interethnic violence among primary and secondary school pupils. By interethnic violence we mean either physical, verbal or relational violence on the basis of someone’s ethnic background.

Since recent research in the field revealed the importance of intersectionality in peer violence (Hrženjak and Humer 2010, Busche et al. 2012, Peguero 2012), the issue will be researched through these lens. The concept of intersectionality, first introduced by Crenshaw (1989 in Peguero 2012), considers interlocking of several social categories that influence social position of an individual in the society and his/her predisposition to social inequalities. In order to understand the dynamics of school violence it is thus important to analyse phenomenon in the context of interplay of a) social categories such as ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class and b) individual factors such as age, physical appearance, school success and other relevant factors that influence victimization among peers. We will therefore take into account all the above mentioned factors when discussing the case study of interethnic violence in the school environment in Slovenia.

THE SLOVENIAN CONTEXT

First, we will briefly present the contextual background in which the research took place. As mentioned above, Slovenia became independent in 1991, after the dissolution of once common communist state of Yugoslavia that besides Slovenia comprised also Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

According to the 2002 Census Slovenia is not ethnically very diverse country. Out of 1,964,036 inhabitants registered in the 2002 Census, 83.06% of population was of Slovenian ethnic origin. Those of non-Slovenian ethnic background can be roughly divided into two groups: historical national minorities (autochthonous as defined by the Slovenian constitution) – including the Italian, the Hungarian and the Roma community, that also enjoy special rights, but less than the other two groups, and the so called “new” national communities, the members of which belong to the nations of the former common state of Yugoslavia (Croats, Serbs, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Albanians) who migrated as economic migrants either in times of economic prosperity and growth (in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s) and in the newest immigration flow after 2000 or came as

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2 In the last census, 2012, the data on ethnic origin/nationality was not gathered.
refugees in the period of Yugoslav Wars, following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, mostly from Bosnia. Even though immigrants from former Yugoslavia present much bigger communities than historical national minorities (in accordance with the 2002 population census there were 38,964 Serbs, 21,542 Bosniacs, 10,467 Muslims, 3,642 Croatians, in comparison to 2,258 Italians and 6,243 Hungarians living in Slovenia), they do not have official minority status and, consequently, they do not have any special or additional political, economic or cultural rights.

Immigrant children regardless of their status (either foreign citizens, refugees, asylum seekers residing in Slovenia etc.) are entitled to compulsory basic school education under the same conditions as Slovenian citizens. Italian and Hungarian ethnic minority have also the right to be educated in their mother tongues and to develop their own education policies. The data on the size of migrant population in schooling is fragmented and scarce. Various institutions, such as Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, National Education Institute, Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia gather the data, but they give only a partial picture. Data of Ministry of Interior show at the end of 2008 among residents there were 3.84% foreigners (4.4% in 2012, SORS). In the age group 6–14, which roughly corresponds to compulsory years of schooling, foreigners represented 1.66% and data is similar in age group 15–18 (1.64%). But data of percentage of children of other ethnic groups grow much higher, when we take into account the fact, migrant status is carried over for generations:

Basically, children never get rid of the migrant status. Even if your parents belong to the 1st generation and you’re born as a Slovenian citizen, you’re still treated as a migrant /…/ some are still stigmatized even after 4 generations. (Expert, Peace Institute)

When answering the question of the perceptions of number of students of other ethnicity, culture, religion in the school, young boy, half Slovenian and half Croat, explained the importance on definitions of “others”:

If you take into account also the ones from ethnically mixed marriages, than we represent more than a half. /…/ Yes there’s more than a half of others.” (Jože, 10)

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology followed a two-stage sequential mode, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research started with a quantitative study, surveying children in the school environment, followed by a qualitative
study, organized in the form of focus groups with two groups of 5 to 6 pupils per school and interviews with the school staff – with teachers, headmasters, school counsellors etc. An additional insight into the field of interethnic relations, peer violence and similar was apprehended through interviews with experts from governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with these issues. The essential aim of the qualitative part of the research was to provide an insight into the reasons and causes behind the answers acquired in the quantitative study.

In the first, quantitative phase of research pupils aged 10–11 and students aged 16–17 were surveyed through the questionnaire consisting of 44 questions, covering demographic data, normative statements on equality and multi-ethnic background, experiences of violence, perceptions on violence, etc. In Slovenia, 767 pupils completed the questionnaire in 8 primary schools and 9 secondary schools. The schools were selected in four ethnically mixed regions, namely: Coastal region, Ljubljana region, Jesenice region and Prekmurje region. The overall gender breakdown was the following: 50.2% of male pupils and 49.8% of female pupils. In primary schools, the age ranged between 9 and 12, with 77.2% of pupils being 10 years old and 19.2% 11 years old. In secondary schools, the majority of pupils were aged 17 (71.2%), followed by 18 (15.2%) and 16 (12.2%). Overall, 65.7% of pupils included in the survey were of Slovenian ethnic background and 34.3% were of other ethnicities, of those most were of Croatian, Serbian, Bosniac, Hungarian and Macedonian background, including a large share of those who declared themselves of being of mixed ethnic background.

The second, qualitative phase of research consisted of three parts: focus groups with children, interviews with school staff and interviews with experts in the field. Focus groups were carried out in four above mentioned regions in 5 primary and 6 secondary schools. In each participating school, 2 focus groups were conducted, except in one secondary school where it was only possible to conduct one focus group. Altogether, 21 focus groups were conducted with 112 participants (52 male and 60 female participants). Predominantly, participants were selected by teachers, who were asked to select children from classes that already participated in the survey according to the following criteria: gender balance, ethnic heterogeneity and loquacity. In each of the schools participating in the qualitative research were conducted 2 in-depth interviews with school staff – in one school one interview was held simultaneously by two interviewees.

3 UP SRC research team conducted qualitative research in all included regions, while for the purpose of the project qualitative research in schools was limited to one region only.
4 When we use quotes of pupils, age of the pupil is written next to the chosen nick name, while in the case of school staff there is information on occupation as well as type of the school (PS for primary school and SS for secondary school).
In total, 21 such interviews were held (11 with school counsellors, 5 with headmasters, 5 with teachers and 1 with headmaster assistant).

Six interview sessions were conducted with experts in the field – representatives from the National Institute of Public Health (simultaneous interview with two experts), researchers at the Peace Institute (simultaneous interview with two researchers), a representative of the School Students’ Organisation of Slovenia, an expert from the Institute for Ethnic Studies, a representative of the human rights ombudsman’s office and a representative of Unicef.

Through mixed method approach we gained a layered perspective on the issue and enabled us to apprehend differences between perceptions of different groups involved in the research. As for example, while in some schools (interethnic) violence was not considered an important issue by school staff, the narratives of children revealed a different picture and brought into focus also more covert and subtle forms of peer violence that were often not recognised as violence.

We would like to draw attention also to the limitations of the research methodology. The sample selected for the quantitative research is not representative of the pupil population in Slovenia – it was rather a purposive sample that met certain theoretical prerequisites specified by the project and agreed upon by all research partners. Therefore, the results reflect the situation in four ethnically mixed regions in Slovenia that might differ from the situation in ethnically less diverse regions. Also, the schools that have agreed to be involved in the research might be the ones that are already more aware of interethnic issues or do not have many interethnic conflicts. Additionally, with regard to the qualitative research, as mentioned, participants of the focus groups were selected by teachers which may have affected the results in the way that participants who were expected to be more positively oriented towards interethnic coexistence or similar. Still, the results we present below give us the comprehensive first insight into the complex issue of interethnic violence, its various forms and reasons for its occurrence.

RESULTS

In the following chapter we will focus on the attitude of pupils towards people of non-Slovenian ethnic background, rights and equality of people with different ethnic or cultural background etc. The level of interethnic coexistence in schools will be examined through the analysis of the agreement with positive and negative normative statements as well as through existing prejudices and stereotypes among pupils against other ethnic groups. In the core subchapter the emphasis will be given to experiences of different types of interethnic violence. While general data confirm that interethnic peer violence is not a burning issue
in Slovenian schools (see also Žakelj and Kralj 2012), there are considerable differences in the prevalence of experiences of different types of interethnic violence, difference in the prevalence according ethnic background, differences in experiences according to age, and also differences that base on gender. Our aim is to highlight stated differences that were confirmed through both, quantitative and qualitative research as well as to put attention to some additional factors indicated in qualitative research. The analysis of interethnic peer violence in the school environment will therefore follow the abovementioned intersectional approach.

**Attitudes towards “Others”**

One of the aspects of young people’s attitude towards people of other ethnic groups or nationalities – i.e. “others”, may be observed through the level of agreement with normative statements that pupils evaluated on the scale from 1 – totally disagree to 5 – totally agree. There is high general support of normative statements regarding equality of people of different ethnic background and their rights, which is quite typical for normative believes that are prescriptive and reflect the views on how things should be as well as a feeling of “oughtness” (Thijs and Verkuytem 2013: 177). Still, some important differences can be observed among different age and ethnic groups of the respondents. Unsurprisingly, pupils that declared themselves as of mixed or non-Slovenian ethnic background support statements on right of immigrants to follow customs of their country more strongly. They also like the fact that there are people of different ethnic backgrounds in Slovenia and in their class/school in higher degree. On the other hand they disagree strongly that children, who come to Slovenia from other country, should give up their language and culture and that immigrant children should follow Slovenian language and culture. What is interesting is the level of agreement with the idea of equality of all people, regardless language they speak, their religion or culture. In this case support is a bit higher in group of Slovenian pupils (in case of primary school) or is exactly the same for both groups (case of secondary school). According to age, we may claim that younger pupils support normative statements on equality and rights more strongly. On average it seems younger generations are more tolerant and accept ideas on multiculturalism in higher degrees also in comparison to adults. For instance, public opinion data reveal quite negative attitude of full age population of Slovenia towards immigrants. More than half of respondents of Slovene Public Opinion Survey 2008 supported the statement “Because of the immigrants number of committed crimes grow” (54.9%) and “Immigrants burden social system of the state” (52.4%). (Toš et al. 2009: 382). In addition Eurobarometer 71 research on the Future of Europe revealed above average intolerance towards people of other ethnic groups of the Slovenians. Less than a half of Slovenians (44%) think that the presence of people from other ethnic
groups enriches the cultural life of their country (EU average 54%), 58% feel presence of people from other ethnic groups leads to insecurity (in comparison to 45% of average and 52% of Slovenians consider that the presence of other ethnic groups increases unemployment (EU average 49%) (Eurostat 2010).

**Figure 1.**

Agreement with normative statements by ethnic background and age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that children that come to Slovenia from other countries should follow Slovenian language...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the fact that there are pupils of other ethnic backgrounds in our class/ at our school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children that come to Slovenia from other countries should give up their language and culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the fact that there are people of different ethnic backgrounds in Slovenia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who come to Slovenia from other countries should have the right to follow the customs of...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All people are equal, regardless of the language that they speak, they religion or culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stereotypes and prejudices**

While attitudes on normative level may be evaluated as positive, focused conversations with pupils revealed numerous stereotypes and prejudices about people of different ethnic background as well as intolerance towards expressing their customs and traditions. Usually pupils support right to use own language in the private sphere but expression of their culture on public places is often disapproved:

I do not think it is right, like when »čefurji« come here, older also, who live here already 30, 40 years, and they still talk with other Slovenian in their mother tongue. They just do not want to adjust. (Jožef, 18)

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5 Pejorative term for migrants from other countries of former Yugoslavia.
But this is weird isn’t it? Because when we go to their country, women have to clothe and wear head-scarfs. Here, they can just walk around in head-scarfs, can’t they? (Francl, 17)

Their culture really (bothers me). Women with headscarfs walking in Slovenia. I do not know. If they live here, they should put it of. …. I do not know, I am Catholic and I would have to have it on down there (in prevalently Muslim states). (Marta, 18)

General public opinion towards different social categories of »others« was in Slovenian public opinion survey 2008 measured with the question »Which of the listed groups you would not want to have as a neighbour?«. Among categories of ethnic/religious groups6, highest percentage of respondents (38.0%) would not want to have Roma people for a neighbours, followed by Muslims (28.4%) people of other race (28.2%), immigrants/foreign workers 27.8% and Jewish people 27.4% (Toš et al. 2009: 365). Among all ethnic groups Roma have the position of less accepted ethnic group that is target of multiple prejudices, persistent intolerance and continues to be the least respected ethnic group in Slovenia. Invidious position of Roma was identified also by several researches that confirmed media discourse on Roma is biased by negative characterisations (Erjavec et al. 2000, Kirbiš et al. 2012). Opinion of older pupils were compliant to mentioned public opinion and revealed numerous prejudices related to Roma that were expressed in their persuasions like “Roma are unclean, they are unwilling to work, they live in disorderly, untidy conditions, surrounded with trash, they take advantages of state’s social support scheme, they disobey legislation, poses weapons and threaten other with guns” etc:

Well, they’re Gypsies, right? They don’t work and yet they’re full of money. We help them and they only stroll around stealing stuff and they don’t work. /…/ If they would be more cultivated, if they would work, have a job...then it would be ok. But, no, they steal, they have guns, they behave as they’re somehow superior, right? (Marta, 18)

On the other side, a young Roma girl, who at the beginning of the conversation declared being of Croat ethnic affiliation, explained her experiences:

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6 Besides ethnic/religious categories (Roma, Jewish people, Muslims, immigrants/foreign workers) question also checked willingness to be a neighbour with people being legally sentenced, left-wing extremists, right-wing extremists, drunks, people with big families, emotionally unstable people, people with Aids, drug addicts and homosexuals.
Sometimes Kristjan says to me, we Roma should go to Roma school. /…/ Jan said to me, we Roma are dirty. (Tamara, 10)

**Hierarchy of “otherness”**

In the categories of “others” there is an evident differentiation between nations from South-Eastern parts of Europe (like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia etc.) and Western or Northern parts of Europe. Stereotypic beliefs are rooted already in the opinions of younger participants of the research. In their view Western and Northern nations “are more civilised” and differentiation between nations is a consequence of “not being equal.” Macedonian girl explained the reason of differentiation:

Because countries like France and England are more developed as Macedonia or Bosnia. (Martina, 10).

Secondary school students agree difference in attitude towards migrant groups exist. While tolerance is higher in case of western nationalities, Balkan nations are less accepted among Slovenians:

There are no problems with people from Western cultures. We have, how to say, the same values... (Steve, 17)

Once a woman said to me: “Ow, Bosnians, you know, they’re bandits...” and we know each other for a long time, so I said to her: “Don’t you remember, I told you two years ago that I’m Bosnian as well” and she said “Ow, but you’re not like them!” (Huso, 18)

Pupils agreed Balkan nations are less accepted, which can be also recognised in media discourse (Kuzmanić 1999, Leskošek 2005). Again responsibility for negative attitude is ascribed to “them”:

I do not think so (media influence attitude towards nationalities). To the certain extent it is their responsibility. Because they are a bit more aggressive, but that’s just the way they are. (Brian, 17)

This kind of differentiation can also be observed in the Slovenian public opinion where immigrants from ex-Yugoslav countries, Asia, Africa, etc. are less “desired” compared to immigrants from Western Europe, USA or Australia (Zavratnik et al. 2008).
**Historic reasons**

Reasons for prejudices towards “others” often lie in the history. Historic reasons for intolerance among nations are recognised especially in case of disputes among ex-Yugoslav nations:

Yes, in history there were some disputes, and this still drags on, instead of giving the opportunity to the individual to show in a different light. (Andika, 17)

Young Bosnian-Croat girl, attending primary school known as having highest percentage of migrant pupils in Slovenia, explained:

You have asked why does this happen. Sometimes because some pupils subconsciously talk about old grudges…When it was the war. But I do not know about it. I do not know…/…./ She (her school mate) said to me you trudged us with the tank, you killed us… (Kiara, 11)

Another girl included in focus groups from other region, stressed the burden of the past events influencing interethnic relations transmitted from parents to the children:

When you mentioned old grudges...I resent my father. When I was little, we lived on xy street and he has such old grudges, because his parents also had them. And I resent my parents very much, that they had such bad relationship with others. For example, when we used to live in xy street, when I was in the first grade, my father went into a fight with an axe with a neighbour, who is Serb. I resent that, because he has this old grudges. /.../ I do not know why this old grudges are borne, if we now are a new generation. I don’t know why... (Uma, 11)

**Interethnic violence in the school environment: relevance of gender, age, socioeconomic status and other factors**

**The role of ethnicity in peer violence**

One of the key starting questions of the research focused on the importance of ethnic background for peer victimization in the school environment. Previous research highlight race and ethnicity as important influence increasing the vulnerabilities of youth to be victims of bullying at school (Peguero 2012). Our research findings show that peer violence follows different channels. Ethnicity is one of the circumstances that influence development of violent acts:
It’s hard to say that there’s more of such violence then among children in general. If the comparison would be made, it’d be hard to say that children from ethnic minorities are more often victims of violence – we didn’t find that, violence occurs in many different dimensions. Ethnicity isn’t the only one, it isn’t crucial ... \slash/ Yeah, it’s about the circumstances, the combination of factors … (Expert, Peace Institute)

Ethnicity itself is usually not the reason for the outburst of peer violence but it becomes an important characteristic of identification which comes out in the conflict:

You know what it is like, if dispute occurs, usually this is because of other reason. But when dispute evolves, nationality comes out. \slash/ It (nationality) is not a cause for a dispute. When two have nothing else to say to each other, than nationality comes out. (Nives, 17)

Age differences and interethnic violence
General data on experiences of different types of interethnic violence among pupils reinforce findings of several research papers that recognise verbal and psychological violence as most widespread in the school environment (Popp 2003, Gittins 2006), while physical violence is less spread.

Figure 2 shows that prevalence of experiences of all types of interethnic violence (physical, verbal and relational) depends on the age of the respondents. Interethnic violence is less prevalent among secondary school students, which confirm also other researches that generally found higher scores of victimisation in younger students (Scheithauer et al. 2006, Stefanek et al. 2012). According to previous research with increasing age, forms of bullying become more subtle and complex, thus being more overt/physical in younger children and becoming more indirect, verbal and social-manipulative with age (Björkqvist et al. in Scheithauer et al. 2006), however in our research focusing specifically on interethnic violence we found that all forms of violence are decreasing with age.

Differences are also evident in experiences of younger and older pupils of mixed/other ethnicity in comparison to experiences of Slovenian pupils. While 30.9% of pupils of mixed/other origin reported being called names or insulted in the primary school sample, only half as many (15.1%) Slovenian pupils reported similar problems. Almost one quarter of the primary school pupils of mixed/other ethnic background (24.1%) reported also that other pupils said untruthful

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7 The focus of our research was specifically violence based on ethnicity. Children and youth were questioned about their experiences of different forms of violence because of their ethnic background (culture, religion, language).
things about them behind their backs. The same is true for 14.2% Slovenian pupils. Additionally, 24.0% of pupils of mixed/other ethnic background said they were ignored or avoided because of their ethnic background. Slovenian students reported 13.7% of such cases. The differences regarding ethnic affiliation and experiences of interethnic violence are similar in secondary schools. In comparison to Slovenian pupils far more pupils of mixed/other ethnic background experienced the following: being called names or insulted (16.7% mixed/other ethnic background vs. 8.9% Slovenian), having untruthful things said behind their backs (14.3% mixed/other ethnic background vs. 9.2% Slovenian), being ignored and avoided (10.7% mixed/other ethnic background vs. 5% Slovenian).

![Figure 2](image)

Experiences of interethnic violence by ethnic background and age

Ten to eleven years old pupils stressed pupils from higher grades are more often violent towards them.

That there are some three, like bigger, and they start teasing some smaller ones and kicking them. (Jože, 10)

In some primary schools physical fights (though usually not exclusively related with ethnic background) happen in schools almost on a daily basis, while cases of physical fights in secondary school are rare.
Lower age groups – much more physical violence: kicking, pulling, crowding.
Higher age groups – far more psychological type. (Expert, Unicef)

Age differences do not only matter if we focus on prevalence of interethnic violence but also in reactions to it. When experiencing interethnic violence, primary school pupils of mixed or non-Slovenian ethnic background mainly ask for help (27.5% in comparison to 30.1% of Slovenian pupils) or do the same as bully (17.5% and 17.8% of Slovenian pupils). On the other hand secondary school pupils of mixed or non-Slovenian ethnic background mainly fight back (47.4% in comparison to 28.5% Slovenian pupils) or put up with it (31.6% and 11.4% of Slovenian pupils). Another telling data is secondary school pupils almost never ask for help if they experience interethnic violence (0.0% of pupils of mixed or non-Slovenian ethnic background in comparison to 2.9% of Slovenian pupils). In case primary school pupils notice interethnic violence they mainly tell a teacher or another school staff what is happening (43.2% of pupils of mixed or other than Slovenian ethnic background and 49.4% of Slovenian pupils), while secondary school pupils do nothing but they think they should help (29.5% of pupils of mixed or other than Slovenian ethnic background and 32.0% of Slovenian pupils). Some of them explained, they do not want to involve in fight of dispute not to put themselves into a danger:

Truth to be hold I would not dare (to intervene). /…/ Otherwise you can suffer.
(Katja, 17)

Gender and interethnic violence

Gender is one of crucial social categories that influence experiences of peer violence, perceptions of it and reactions to it. As many researches show, gender differences are confirmed among experiences of different types of peer violence. Gender differences are evident, especially when statistics are restricted to physical forms of violence, as boys experience much higher levels of physical violence than girls (Smith 2003, Ministry of education and sports RS 2004, Scheuthauer et al. 2006). Physical violence, such as hitting, pushing, kicking, and the destruction of property, is more often reported by boys, while verbal and relational, such as gossiping, manipulation, and social isolation of the victim, is more often reported by girls (Peguero 2012: 405). Our findings confirm physical violence is problem ascribed to boys and their masculinity expressions and verbal violence is perceived as pervasive type of violence among girls:

Girls are not directly violent it’s true as claimed in theory. Among girls there are many symptoms of Spanish series, this is a disaster, catastrophe, it’s a lot of this. But not direct physical violence. And it is true, it is less sanctioned, more
allowed, while we would jump immediately in case of the physical violence, we would take measures write away, here everything is…and also the rule book does not say, if you will talk behind classmates’ back you will get a reprimand. (School counsellor, SS)

That’s how it is with boys, they fight, and girls, girls are just insulting. (Doris, 10)

Violence among girls is evidently rising:

Recently, we are witnessing a trend of increased violence among girls, mostly psychological violence in the form of rumour spreading or social isolation of some girls. I believe the social networks and the Facebook can be very problematic in this sense. (School counsellor, SS).

Though untypical, several secondary school counsellors stressed physical violence among girls is increasing. Physical violence among girls is supposed to derive from conflicts regarding emotional relations, such as for example taking over someone’s boyfriend:

Yes there were also cases when girls had a fight because of a boy. It is more about thing like that. (School counsellor, SS)

It’s interesting, that recently we had some fights among girls. A fight breaks out between two girls; mostly it happens because of a boyfriend. /.../ I just wanted to add that girls are skilful not only verbally, but sometimes even in using their hands. (Headmaster, SS)

Girls of both age groups experience all analysed types of interethnic violence (teasing and name-calling, talking behind backs, sending insulting messages via internet or mobile phones, ignoring, avoiding contacts, hiding or destroying property and physical violence because of someone’s ethnicity, culture etc.) less often. Most evident differences are found in experiencing physical interethnic violence.

Another gender difference can be observed in violence towards others on the basis of nationality or ethnic background. Girls bully someone because of his/her nationality or ethnic background less often. Only 2.2% of primary school girls and 1.0% of secondary school girls reported bullying someone because of his/her nationality/ethnic background (compared to 10.8% primary school boys and 11.8% secondary school boys, included in the research). The results do not differ from other research on school violence, finding that significantly more boys reported bullying others, regardless of bullying form. (Scheithauer et al. 2006: 271)
Violence among girls should be understood as gender specific violence (one of the experts mentioned a case of competing in breath holding until some girls fainted). Gender(ed) differences in observed types of peer violence confirm peer violence is gendered (Sauer and Ajanović 2013).

**Socio-economic status and interethnic violence**

Socioeconomic status of the family of immigrant influences the inclusion in peer groups and is decisive for students’ interethnic friendships (Van Houte and Stevens 2009: 217). Potential of exclusion from peer group on the basis of lower socioeconomic status was recognised by experts and school staff mentioning that youngsters from socioeconomically disadvantaged families are more likely to be bullied than others, which is in line with the findings of other studies in this area (e.g. Due et al. 2009). Poverty is holding one of the strongest potentials for social exclusion from the peer group:

Social stratification among students is very visible – those, who are rich and those, who are poor. Then, the violence and teasing may occur because of clothing, behaviour... (School counsellor, PS)
On other schools I have noticed pupils of lower socioeconomic status sometimes experienced certain kind of differentiation. (School counsellor, PS)

Immigrant kids – this 2nd generation is still deprived. Their parents on average do not achieve equal socio-economic status, children have less incentives at home… unfortunately. It is interesting it is so long since they have assimilated, but they still possess lower paid jobs and consequently they can also enable less to their children. It is true class of economists if more ethnically diverse. (School counsellor, SS)

Socio-economic status and ethnicity overlap a lot. In Slovenia, especially in Ljubljana, some try really hard to cover the location they live and so on. (School counsellor, SS)

Lower socioeconomic position or poverty does nor only stimulate potential for victimization but is also recognised as a factor that may encourage aggressive behaviour in order to gain status within schools and on the street (National Science Foundation 2013). Younger girls explained diversity of reasons for insults, among which factor indicating socioeconomic position seem very relevant:

We argue a lot, also for some stupid stuff, like a schoolmate has a special nickname because her big eyes, some schoolmates are insulted they are fat, others they are ugly. And we have a Roma girl and she is insulted as being a Gipsy, and that they do not have money and thing like that. /…/ (Mia, 12)

And about what you are wearing, how much your stuff cost, who you socialise with, eee, and so… What are your parents like, where do they work. (Ina, 11)

And how much money you have got, which car do your parents drive, what is your house like and whether you sell copper… (Kiara, 11)

Immigrant background along with lower socioeconomic status seems to be one of important combinations that lead to high potential for not being accepted among peers and consequently the potential for victimization. Parental occupation, material mediums of status, recognised by youth (like clothes, family car etc.) up to the living area\(^8\) are transmitters of information of how well

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\(^8\) In the capital city of Ljubljana there are areas where population is predominantly of other ethnic background (Fužine, Rakova Jelša, etc.). Living in one of these areas is indicating a status of low socioeconomic position (cheaper apartments, high fluctuation) and when economic status improves, people move out. Muslim girl from Kosovo explained her fears when moving to the area:

*Am, I have moved from village to Fužine. And at the beginning I was really afraid if there will be any problems or anything because of nationalities. Because there are lots of Serbs and we do not understand well with Serbs, though I only had positive experiences with them.* (Mojca, 17)
individual is integrated into the socially desired status, or contrary how far he/she is from its attainment. Intersection of stated two factors though important, is quite hard to be confirmed with direct measures.\footnote{Estimations of socioeconomic status are a) always a subject of personal evaluation which are proved to be moved towards middle values (like middle economic class); b) hard to be measured, while respondents (when adults) usually do not want to give information on family monthly income or (when we focus on youth) mainly do not have information on family income. Consequently we can usually, as in our case, only check some indirect dependence of two variables (like experiences of interethnic violence according to the parent’s educational level).}

**Other relevant factors**

Besides already mentioned factors such as ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status participants of the research stressed wide range of factors that encourage potential victimization of young people. Especially physical appearance, school achievement, personality trait and sexual orientation influence peer relations. Being short, overweight, know more than average of pupils or having some troubles learning, being introverted and having no skills to stand up for yourselves along with having homosexual tendencies are all aggravating circumstances:

Or for example if your school achievements are not so good or if you are above average – than others argue with you. (Laura, 10)

And they tell those who are small we will never grow up. (Messi, 10)

They also messed with me sometimes, but they don’t anymore. Cuz I’m Austrian, and a bit more chubby, and stuff. (Beni, 11)

In principle I think victims do not have any special characteristics except not being empowered to know how to say no, and because he/she complies to everybody others take him/her for a fool,.. Or exploit him/her on different ways. (Teacher, PS)

These homophobic insults come out. They are an everyday practice. (Expert, Peace Institute)

Now, if we can still find discrimination, it may be towards homosexually oriented, but they are not recognised by classmates. I know for some boys and girls but they are not recognised by anybody, but if they would be, it might result in discrimination /…/ (Headmaster, SS)
To conclude, victimization potential grows on the basis of accumulation of circumstances that install the individual into the position not accepted among the peer group. Being immigrant or having migrant background by itself may not determine disposition for victimization. What is crucial is the interplay of social categories (ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation) and the individual factors (family background, addiction problems, school success level, personality traits etc.) which all influence the possibility of victimization.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this article was to present the question of violence based on ethnicity in the school environment through analysing children’s views towards different ethnic groups and the occurrence of interethnic violence amongst children and youth. Results show that while multiculturality has been acknowledged as an important value by children and youngsters, at the same time they express prejudices, stereotypes and intolerance towards “others” (migrants, minorities), as well as evident differentiation between “us” and “them”. To some extent this is the reflection of the wider society where intolerance, hostility and prejudices towards migrants and minorities are present as well as perpetuated through media and political discourse (Erjavec et al. 2000, Zavratnik et al. 2008, Toš et al. 2009, Kirbiš et al. 2012). According to our research, cases of interethnic violence among primary and secondary school pupils exist, although sometimes more covert and not always identified as violence. Through the research of interethnic violence in schools, various factors such as ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, age and some other individual factors were taken into account. Findings reveal the complex nature and the interaction of abovementioned elements in (interethnic) violence. Due to growing ethnic diversity in schools and the complexity of peer violence, educators should take the interplay of various factors into consideration when addressing (interethnic) violence in school. Intersectional perspective as a critical extension of merely gender mainstreaming, intercultural/diversity management or the concept of inclusion, assumes the understanding of underlying structures that constructs dynamics of violence and discrimination, such as differentiation between “us” and “them”, stereotypes and hierarchy of otherness (Buche et al. 2012: 9). Being aware of and, more importantly, actively unveiling inequalities through critical intersectional approach would help understanding and eventually diminishing interethnic violence in school.

Unfortunately, there is still an important shortage of funding as well as common guidelines or directives and long-term strategies for educators on how to combat (interethnic) violence in school – a lot still depends on personal initiative.
of educators. To conclude, while limited in scope the presented study gives a comprehensive first insight into the topic of interethnic violence in Slovenia through various perspectives and draws attention to interaction of different factors in peer violence that should be taken into account also in the future research as well as integrated in efforts of school violence prevention.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


