

The well-being of young people with an immigrant background in School Health Promotion Study 2015 in Finland

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Abstract:

Background: Knowledge on well-being of young people with an immigrant background in Finland is poorly known. Due to the brisk growth in immigration, it is important to find out whether young people with an immigrant background have special needs of support.

Objective: The aim of this study is to provide information about the well-being of young people with an immigrant background in Finland.

Methods: The School Health Promotion (SHP) study is an anonymous and voluntary classroom-administered questionnaire carried out nationwide every second year. The SHP study surveys the health and well-being of 14–20-year-old young people at three different levels of schools. This study examines the responses (N=120400) given in 2015. Response rate varied between the levels of the school from 43% to 64%. Background status was classified into four categories according to the country of birth of the young people and their parents: native young people (n=105 502), children in multi-cultural families (n=7 364), second-generation immigrants (n=2 057) and first-generation immigrants (n=3 909). The well-being was measured by self-reported experiences of bullying, threats of physical violence, sexual violence and harassment, and whether they have close friends. Data were analyzed by the immigrant status and the gender. The immigrant groups were compared with the native young people.

Results: Young people with an immigrant background stood out from native young people. They were more often bullied, physically threatened, sexually harassed and subjected to sexual violence. They were also less likely to have close friends. Especially, these matters were emphasized among the young people representing first-generation immigrants, and even especially among the boys. Furthermore, considerable part of the girls was sexually harassed regardless of the background.

Conclusions: Immigrant background is clearly connected with the well-being of young people. The results may be utilized in services for planning, allocating resources and providing support to young people. Further research is needed about well-being of young people with an immigrant background.

Keywords: young people, immigrants, well-being

Key reference: Anni Matikka, Pauliina Luopa, Hanne Kivimäki, Jukka Jokela, Reija Paananen. The well-being of eighth-year and ninth-year pupils with a migrant background. School Health Promotion study 2013. National Institute for Health and Welfare. Report 26/2014. Helsinki 2014. (in Finnish)