

Who's at risk?

Sexual orientation, disability and gender as cumulative risk factors for victimization and discrimination



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Introduction

Everyone belongs to social groups that create parts of their identity. However, some groups can be the target of prejudices and bad treatments. Among them, LGBTQI+ community, allochthones and people who suffers from a disability are at greater risk for discrimination and victimization (Smith, 2013 ; Schimtt et al., 2014).

According to Russel (2012), a large proportion of bullying is based on bias. This type of aggression is particularly harmful for the victim. One limit of researches on identity-based bullying is that they often study one bias at a time. Indeed, studies that address the experiences of individuals that belong to multiple minority categories are rare.

Aim of this study : to explore if young people who belong to multiple minority categories perceived more discrimination & bullying.

Methodology

Sample and procedure

769 young Belgian people from 16 to 25 years old (Mean = 19) filled in a paper or online questionnaire.

Analysis

- First, each group membership was dichotomized.
- Then, t-tests we performed to determine if being part of a minority group increase perceived discrimination and victimization.
- Finally, we conduct an ANOVA with number of belonging to a minority group as a factor variable and victimization, discrimination and well-being as dependent variables.

All scales were standardized.

We did all our analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics 27.0

Measures

Category	Examples of items	Alphas
Group membership	- Gender : 50% women - Ethnicity : 72,5% at least one Belgian parent - Sexual orientation : 84,5% heterosexual - Disability : 86,7% don't suffer from a disability - Weight : 81,1% is considered overweight	/
Perceived discrimination 7 items Likert : 0-5	In your daily life, how often these situations happen to you ? - i'm treated with less respect than the others (Williams et al., 1997)	.836
Perceived victimization 10 items Likert : 0-4	This last six months, how often have you... - been teased ? (Galand & Hospel, 2013)	.819

Results

Differences within groups

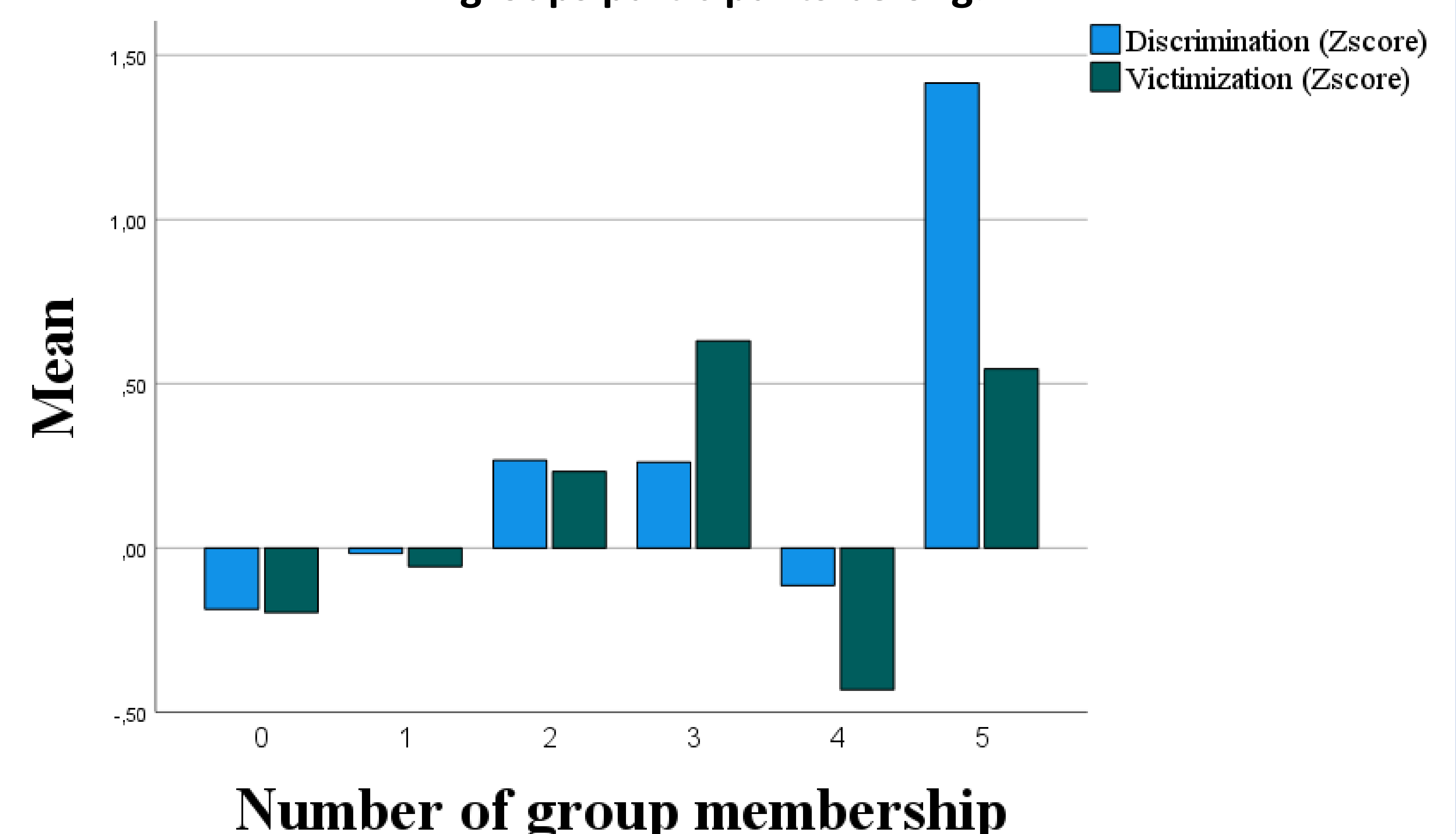
- Sexual orientation:** non-heterosexual people reported more victimization ($t(716) = -3,932$; $p > .001$; $d = .985$) and discrimination ($t(709) = -3,408$; $p = .001$; $d = .995$).
- Disability:** young people with disability reported more victimization ($t(39,938) = -3,364$, $p = .002$; $d = .975$) and discrimination ($t(40,004) = -3,335$, $p = .002$; $d = .984$).
- Gender :** women reported more victimization ($t(704, 038) = -2,318$, $p = .021$; $d = .995$), but they were no differences in the discrimination measure.
- Ethnicity:** no differences
- Weight :** no differences

Cumulative risk

ANOVA results showed a significant difference between all groups (fig. 1) in term of discrimination ($F(5, 670) = 3,674$, $p = .002$) and victimization ($F(5, 677) = 5,002$, $p < .001$).

In general, it seems that the more participants belong to minority groups, the more they perceived discrimination and victimization. However, this effect it's not linear.

Figure 1 : Discrimination and victimization Z Score by number of minority groups participants belong.



Discussion

Implication: These results suggest that it could be helpful to put special attention to non-heterosexual young people or with disabilities. Indeed, it seems that these groups suffer more from discrimination and victimization. For example, we could propose anti-discrimination activities in bullying prevention programs.

Limits and future research: One of the limits of this study is that we cannot target which combination of group membership is more at risk. Indeed, our sample doesn't include enough people with multiple group membership. Future research could investigate the concept of intersectional bullying and discrimination to answer this question (e.g., Garnett et al., 2014).

Also, research should investigate more deeply the link between these two types of violence. For instance, studying if identity-based bullying is really driven by prejudice or if negative stereotypes are simply an easy way to instill dominance and facilitate moral disengagement.

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