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Perceived discrimination against Dutch Muslim youths in the school context and its relation with externalising behaviour

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ABSTRACT

The role of the source of discrimination in relation to minority Muslim youths' psychosocial well-being has received remarkably little attention in the post-9/11 climate. We have examined one of the aspects of psychosocial well-being that is given prominent attention in the media and public discourse, namely externalising behaviour. The article reports whether perceived discrimination by four sources (school peers and teachers, peers, and adults outside the school) is related to externalising behaviour. Links between perceived discrimination sources and externalising behaviour among Dutch Muslim youths (n = 308, ages 14–18) were examined through surveys. The quantitative findings guided our qualitative analyses of interviews with 10 Muslim Dutch youths on their accounts of discrimination in the school context. When comparing different discrimination sources, only teacher discrimination was found to predict externalising behaviour significantly (explaining 15% of the variance). The qualitative follow-up illustrated the significance of teacher discrimination: Some Muslim youths felt that their teachers held back their school progress, while others reported receiving insults from teachers about their parents' native country and their religion. We argue that students' perceived powerlessness within the teacher-student relationship deserves further attention, as some Dutch Muslim youths reported painful experiences, with perceived teacher discrimination linked to higher levels of externalising behaviour.

KEYWORDS

Discrimination; Muslim Youth; Turkish; Moroccan; School

Introduction

When reaching adulthood, many ethnic minority youths will have experienced discrimination based on culture, religion, race, or language (Maes et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2003). A large body of extant literature, synthesised in systematic reviews (Pachter & Coll, 2009; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009), has shown that discrimination experiences are associated with decreased psychosocial adjustment among minority youths. Experiences with discrimination have been found to result in minority youths increasingly feeling that their self-

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esteem is threatened, as well as internalising and externalising behaviour (Marcelo & Yates, 2019).

This article focuses on externalising behaviour. In developmental psychology (Carr, 2015), this term is used to identify and help children who have difficulty dealing with their social environment in a healthy or functional way when they are facing challenging situations, and who respond with behaviours such as defiance, verbal bullying, and physical or relational aggression. Previous research has shown that this so-called externalising behaviour is more prevalent among minority youths in western countries (Adriaanse et al., 2014; Maynard et al., 2007; McLaughlin et al., 2007). However, this does not imply that minority youth has an aggressive or delinquent nature. On the contrary, there is more reason to presume that the increased risk of externalising behaviour among ethnic minority youth is tied to bias and inequality that youths encounter in western societies. Empirical studies which applied a longitudinal design offered evidence for the idea of discrimination as a causal factor (Brody et al., 2006; Marcelo & Yates, 2019). These studies (Brody et al., 2006; Marcelo & Yates, 2019) suggest that being discriminated against evokes resistance and rebellion from some minority youth against unjust treatment, a response that often falls within the spectrum of externalising behaviours. Furthermore, considerable empirical evidence showed that externalising responses are associated with perceived discrimination experiences among Muslim minority youths in various European countries, including the Netherlands (Adriaanse et al., 2014; D'hondt et al., 2017; Oppedal et al., 2005; Paalman et al., 2013; Van Oort, 2006; Vedder et al., 2007), as well as among American minority youths (McLaughlin et al., 2007).

The present study concentrates on the relative weight of perceived discrimination in the school context and its association with externalising behaviour of Dutch Muslim youths. Scholars have recently drawn attention to the importance of the school context vis-a-vis other sources of discrimination in youths' psychosocial development. Benner and Graham (2013) studied the relevance of the discrimination source in a sample of American ethnic-minority middle school students in regard to internalising problems and self-esteem. They showed that internalising problems were linked to peer discrimination, but not discrimination by school personnel or societal institutions. An earlier study (Greene et al., 2006) that examined developmental patterns in discrimination by peers and adults in relation to internalising problems also showed that both sources of discrimination mattered for youths' psychological well-being. However, peer discrimination was found to be more detrimental by comparison. Extending this still-small body of extant literature, in our present study we explore how different discrimination sources relate to externalising behaviour, which to the best of our knowledge has rarely been addressed.

The socio-political context and discrimination of Dutch Muslim minority youths

In many Western countries a socio-political context has developed in which particularly Muslims, who are the largest minority group, are portrayed as 'negative others', i.e. those who have religious convictions that are incompatible with Western values (Savelkoul et al., 2012; Van Bergen et al., 2017). In combination with media and political attention to externalising behaviours in this group, Muslim youths (males in particular) suffer a double jeopardy (Paalman et al., 2013). A harmful consequence may be that deviant behaviour (e.g. aggressive behaviour or vandalism) is ascribed to the attitude of Muslims or their

families, while their problem behaviour actually has societal origins. This is illuminated, for example, in a study by Archer and Yamashita (2003), who theorise the profound impact of social class to manifestations of 'deviance'.

In the Netherlands, Turks and Moroccans are the largest non-Western immigrant groups. Out of a population of 17 million, 2.5% are of Turkish and 2.5% are of Moroccan descent (95% are Sunni Muslims). Religious identification in the second generation is even higher than in the first generation (Maliepaard & Gijsberts, 2012). Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch youths are also similar with respect to their family situations and living conditions. Both Moroccan and Turkish families experience physical and mental health inequities, higher unemployment, housing problems, and lower income compared with the majority group (Paalman et al., 2013; Van Oort, 2006). Both Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch youths are disproportionally enrolled in vocational (non-academic) compared with academic school tracks (75% compared with 50% in the majority group). They are also more likely to drop out of school and are at an increased risk for mental health problems (Paalman et al., 2013; Stevens et al., 2005; Vedder et al., 2007). Both groups also share a similar migration history: First-generation Turkish and Moroccan Muslim (mostly male) immigrants from rural areas came to the Netherlands during the 1960s and 1970s to work in lower labour-market segments.

Two in three Muslim Dutch youths of Turkish or Moroccan descent experienced discrimination at least once in the past year (Andriessen et al., 2020). Perceived discrimination is an important precursor of a heightened risk for externalising behaviour among Moroccan-Dutch youths (Adriaanse et al., 2014; Paalman et al., 2013; Stevens et al., 2005) and Turkish-Dutch youths (Van Oort, 2017; Vedder et al., 2007). For instance, a study by Vedder et al. (2007) found that a bicultural orientation of Turkish immigrant adolescents in Europe was associated with less externalising behaviour, suggesting that those minority youths who primarily value and express their ethnic minority identity may fare worse in European societies. Additional risk factors for externalising behaviour established among Moroccan-Dutch adolescents were male gender, lower socio-economic class, poor literacy, and having repeated a grade in school (Paalman et al., 2013).

The school context and discrimination of Muslim minority youths

Most experiences with discrimination among minority youths appear to occur in the school context, with peers and teachers as possible perpetrators. This has been found both in the US (Spears Brown, 2017), as well as in European countries (D'hondt et al., 2015; Wesselhoeft, 2017). Muslim youths in Europe are a particular vulnerable population as, for instance, highlighted in a study in France showing that 47% of all perceived Islamophobic discriminatory events occurred in primary or secondary schools. Moreover, qualitative empirical studies among Muslim pupils in Sweden and the UK have revealed that Muslim youths sometimes perceive their teacher as prejudiced (Berglund, 2017; Moulin-Stożek & Schirr, 2017). For example, Swedish Muslim youths met with disapproval from their teacher for engaging in Qu'ran classes (Berglund, 2017).

A safe school environment, with positive peer relations and encouraging interactions with teachers, is critical for youths' development (Ballantine et al., 2017), yet this seems to be lacking for (some) minority students (D'hondt et al., 2016). Teachers are potential attachment figures (Ainsworth, 1989), whom students tend to consult for support if they

perceive them to be accepting (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). In contrast, a negative relationship with a teacher, including a perceived lack of acceptance or bias, predicts poorer socio-emotional and behavioural functioning in youths (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Furthermore, adolescents increasingly turn to their peers as a reference source for their identity development and in order to meet their need for social belonging. Therefore, being picked on, being called names, or being otherwise bullied for ethnoreligious reasons by school peers whom they encounter daily may be particularly harmful to minority youths' well-being (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004).

As youths have little choice concerning their teachers and school peers and considering the fact that they spend a substantial amount of time at school each day, we expect that discrimination from these sources is particularly detrimental to youths' psychosocial development. We therefore expect that, compared with discrimination in contexts that can be avoided more easily, the school context has a relatively strong impact on young people's psychosocial development, potentially leading to externalising behaviour (e.g. Ahmed et al., 2011; D'hondt et al., 2017).

Types of perceived discrimination

In addition to the influence of the context in which discrimination takes place, recent extant studies have found that a distinction can be made between personal experiences with perceived discrimination and perceptions that one's group is being discriminated against (Maes et al., 2014; Stevens & Thijs, 2018). Notably, (perceived) group discrimination was reported twice as often as personal discrimination by Dutch Muslim youths (Maliepaard & Gijsberts, 2012). Religion and ethnicity are listed as principal reasons for being discriminated against. For example, almost half of all Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch students who struggled to find internships (an obligatory element of their degrees) blamed ethnoreligious discrimination for their plight (Andriessen et al., 2020). Thus, Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch youths report similar discrimination experiences and at rather high rates. Stevens and Thijs (2018) recently reported that group discrimination may be somewhat more strongly associated with externalising behaviour in ethnic minority youths compared with personal discrimination (and also dependent on identification with the in-group). However, review studies (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2014) show that both types of discrimination are related significantly to decreased psychosocial well-being among ethnic minority youths, and that differences in effect sizes are quite small ($r = -.23$ vs. $r = -.15$).

The present study

Based on survey data, we first test whether perceived discrimination is positively associated with higher levels of externalising behaviour in Muslim Dutch youths, as can be expected based on research on Moroccan-Dutch youths (Maes et al., 2014). We then test whether externalising behaviour varies in relation to the discrimination source, focusing on four sources – two within the school context (school peers and teachers) and two outside the school context (peers and adults outside of school). Thus, we focus on participant sources with demographics similar to those used by Benner and Graham (2013) and Greene et al. (2006), but we are sensitive to the potential weight of sources

in the school context *vis a vis* other sources, as research has identified the school setting as a high-risk site for discrimination (Spears Brown, 2017; Wesselhoeft, 2017). The quantitative analyses are complemented by qualitative interview data to illustrate how Dutch Muslim minority adolescents experience discrimination from different sources, as well as how this discrimination affects them. We are mindful of the fact that a study of externalising behaviour of Muslim youths can be read as one that reinforces stereotypes. However, we argue that since discrimination is a real problem for many minority youths, academic insights on how this operates and how these experiences affect youth are important not only for academic progress, but particularly for society to develop adequate policies.

Methods

Participants and procedure

Quantitative part

The present study's data come from a larger multimethod project on intergroup relations and precursors of ethnoreligious antagonisms carried out among minority and majority youth (ages 14–22) in the Netherlands (Van Bergen et al., 2017). For the quantitative survey, 75 schools were approached through a letter, and we contacted 50 principals through follow-up phone calls. Eventually, 11 schools agreed to participate. In three of the 11 schools that agreed to participate, more than 95% of students were of non-Western descent; in five schools, between 20% and 40% of students were of non-Western descent; and in three schools the total was fewer than 20% of students. School boards notified parents about the study's general objectives and content, and asked them to contact us should they wish to prevent their children from participating in the study. Students provided written informed consent. The ethical board in the Department of Education and Pedagogical Sciences at Groningen University approved the study. For this manuscript, the school sample that forms the basis for the quantitative analyses comprised 144 Turkish-Dutch (M_{age} = 15.6, *SD* =.95) and 164 Moroccan-Dutch students (M_{age} = 15.7, *SD* = .88), of which 54.2% were female, with a total of 47 classrooms included.

Qualitative part

After completing the survey, participants indicated whether they were willing to be interviewed. To enhance the interviewee pool, we obtained a second sample (i.e. web sample, n = 469, ages 14–22) by distributing a shorter version of the survey through two websites that function as community platforms for either Turkish-Dutch or Moroccan-Dutch Muslim youths. This survey assessed discrimination, but not externalising behaviour; thus, data gathered online were used only to select interviewees, but were not included in the quantitative analyses. We used a purposeful sampling strategy for interviewing and focusing on contrasting cases (Teddlie & Yu, 2007), i.e. only participants who had scored either the maximum high or low on two or more of the following survey items were invited for an interview: engagement in conflicts for ethnic/religious reasons; engagement in physical fights for ethnic/religious reasons; a favourable attitude towards violence in defence of the in-group; feelings of in-group superiority, and a social distance with out-groups (Van Bergen et al., 2017). Although approximately 30% of the school-survey participants and 50% of the online-survey participants said they

were willing to be interviewed, our criteria narrowed our pool to about 15% of all respondents. For our broader project, we conducted 60 in-depth interviews (20 Moroccan-Dutch, 20 Turkish-Dutch, and 20 native Dutch youths ages 16–22). However, for the present study, we focused on Muslim minority youths only, and after our quantitative analyses, we narrowed the interviewee sample further by setting the age limit at 19 (in line with the survey) and selected only interviewees who (following our assumption and quantitative findings) reported experiences with discrimination in their school context. This resulted in a sample of 10 interviewees (six Moroccan-Dutch and four Turkish-Dutch; 50% female), half of whom were recruited based on school surveys and half based on web surveys.

Survey instruments

Externalising behaviour

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)–Conduct Problems Scale (Goodman, 2001), with its proven validity and internal consistency in minority groups in the Netherlands and other European countries (Oppedal et al., 2005; Paalman et al., 2013), was used to assess how often adolescents engaged in lying, stealing, obedience (reverse-coded), aggression, and anger (0 = *never* to 3 = *often*). Since research suggests that the SDQ's adolescent self-reporting measure is more reliable than parent or teacher reports when measuring externalising behaviour among Moroccan-Dutch youths, and that having multiple informants does not seem to enhance reliability (Paalman et al., 2013), we opted to use students as informants. We used the Dutch version of the SDQ subscale, as participants were second-generation migrants with Dutch fluency, and this Dutch version had been tested for validity among Dutch minority youths (Paalman et al., 2013). In order to improve the scale's reliability, we excluded the obedience item and computed the four remaining items' mean (M = 1.33, SD = .38, *range* 1–3, Cronbach's α = .62).

Ethnicity

Adolescents indicated their own and parents' countries of birth and stated their self-identified ethnicity. We coded those who indicated their own or at least one of their parents' country of birth as Morocco or Turkey and self-identified as 'Moroccan-Dutch' and 'Turkish-Dutch', respectively. A small number of adolescents (3%) who identified as 'Kurdish-Turks' were combined with the Turkish-Dutch group. One participant belonged to the third generation of immigrants, but all others were second generation.

Gender, educational track and ethnic composition of classroom

These were controlled for in all analyses. The rationale for this is that externalising behaviour is often gender-skewed (Carr, 2015). Gender was coded so that 0 = *girl* and 1 = *boy*. Educational track was included, as problems with literacy are known to be confounders of externalising behaviour among Moroccan-Dutch youths in the Netherlands (Paalman et al., 2013). Educational track was measured according to the Dutch educational system. In the higher score (=2) we combined two academic tracks (i.e.

the only two tracks in Dutch secondary schools that will provide access to Dutch universities (43.2% Moroccan-Dutch and 29.9% Turkish-Dutch students). In the lower score, we combined two more practical (vocational training) tracks combined into a lower score (=1; 4.5% Moroccan-Dutch and 22.4% Turkish-Dutch students). Additionally, we also controlled for classrooms' ethnic composition considering that may impact students' externalising behaviour (D'hondt et al., 2017). We first counted the number of minority students in each classroom, and then calculated the proportion of minority students in the classroom. Scores ranged from 0 = no students are minorities to 1 = all students are minorities. Twenty-five of the 47 classrooms (53%) had a proportion range of 0.5 or less. Sixteen of the 47 classrooms (34%) had a proportion of children with an ethnic background of 0.9 or higher.

Discrimination

We assessed perceived discrimination with two constructs. A single measure that we call 'personal discrimination' examined whether youths felt that they personally had been victims of ethnoreligious discrimination, through this question: 'In the past 12 months, have you been treated badly or unfairly because of your ethnic or religious background?' (1 = *never* to 5 = *at least once a week)* (M = 1.68, SD = 1.02, *range* 1–5). Four items pertaining to the source of discrimination – school peers, teachers, peers outside of school, and adults outside of school – were presented if participants affirmatively responded to the general discrimination question.

We also assessed 'group discrimination' (Doosje et al., 2013) with three items (e.g. 'People with my ethnic background or religion are discriminated against in the Netherlands'), scored on a scale from 1 (*fully disagree*) to 5 (*fully agree*), Cronbach's α = .80 (M = 3.44, SD = .99, *range* 1–5). We assessed both personal discrimination and group discrimination in relation to either ethnic and/or religious background as Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch Muslim youths see their religious and ethnic minority identities as highly overlapping and positively correlated (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2014).

Analytic procedure quantitative part

To examine the association between discrimination and externalised behaviour, we conducted multilevel analyses with restricted maximum likelihood (REML) using SPSS, following guidelines by Hox (2010). Multilevel analyses allowed us to control for any effects that may come from the fact that students are nested within 47 different classrooms. We first computed a model in which only general personal discrimination and group discrimination experiences were entered as predictors of externalising behaviour, followed by a model that also included different sources of personal discrimination. The adjusted model informs about sources that are predictive above and beyond other sources and highlights discrimination experiences presumably of highest subjective meaning to the adolescents. Both models were conducted for Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch adolescents in a combined sample due to overlapping discrimination experiences, similar religion, high levels of religious affiliation, comparable migration histories, school performances, and socio-economic status (Adriaanse et al., 2014).

Analytic procedure qualitative part

Qualitative analyses aimed to yield a better understanding of the quantitative findings. Therefore, we focused on the school context and selected all interview excerpts from 10 adolescents who talked about discrimination in the school contexts. We interviewed using a narrative approach (Wengraf, 2001), with all interviews recorded and transcribed verbatim. We studied the stories that these 10 adolescents shared in the interviews about their discrimination experiences, their perpetrators' roles, as well as reactions and emotions related to those experiences. Potential support that youths received afterwards also was noted. These topics were selected specifically for this study's analysis, while the full interview included several other topics, as it was conducted for the broader project (Van Bergen et al., 2017). Examples of interview questions utilised and analysed here include the following: 'Has it ever happened to you that you felt unfairly treated due to your Turkish/Moroccan origin?', 'Has it ever happened to you that you felt unfairly treated due to being a Muslim?', 'Could you tell me what happened?' 'How did you respond?', 'What happened next?'.

The first author and a graduate student developed the full coding list, and the last author read the coding list for agreement (Van Bergen et al., 2017). The first author and the graduate student conducted the coding separately and the first author double-checked all coding. One example of a code used for the current analyses was 'Discrimination by teacher,' with the sub-codes 'religious insult' and 'emotional response: anger.' The coders agreed in approximately 90% of cases and discussed disagreements until consensus was reached.

Quantitative results

Discrimination by school peers was rarely reported (3.3%), while discrimination by teachers (11.4%) and peers outside of school (10.7%) was reported more frequently by Dutch Muslim youths. Discrimination by adults outside school was the most frequently experienced form of discrimination, being reported by one out of four (25.3%) participants. Table 1 depicts the ranges of the measurement scales, means, and standard deviations in our sample.

In Table 2, bivariate correlations between measures are provided (with estimates representing Pearson's correlation coefficient, in which both variables were continuous,

Table 1. Scale range, means and standard deviations of variables and covariates and main variables in the study.

	Scale range	M	SD
1. gender	0 = girl; 1 = boy	-	-
2. age	14–18	15.66	.91
3. education	0 = vocational; 1 = academic	.73	.44
4. ethnic div. class	0 = school with natives only; 1 = all students are minorities	.88	.19
5. discr. teacher	0 = no; 1 = yes	.11	.32
6. discr. school peers	0 = no; 1 = yes	.03	.18
7. discr. adults outs.	0 = no; 1 = yes	.25	.44
8. discr. peers outs.	0 = no; 1 = yes	.11	.31
9. group discr.	1 = low; 5 = high	3.44	.99
10. overall pers. discr.	1 = low; 5 = high	1.68	1.01
11. ext. problems	1 = low; 3 = high	1.48	.40

Table 2. Means (standard deviations) and correlations between covariates and main variables in the study.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11
1. gender	1										
2. age	.04	1									
3. education	.04	.12*	1								
4. ethnic. div. class	−.02	.04	.55***	1							
5. discr. teach.	.10†	.04	.10†	.06	1						
6. discr. school peers	.02	−.03	.03	−.07	.40***	1					
7. discr. adults outs.	.20***	−.03	−.07	−.14*	.14*	.27***	1				
8. discr. peers outs.	.15**	−.01	−.10†	−.13*	.11†	.35***	.14*	1			
9. group discr.	−.04	.07	−.05	−.02	.16**	.15**	.27***	.06	1		
10. overall pers. discr.	.24***	−.02	−.03	−.06	.48***	.23***	.72***	.44***	.27***	1	
11. ext. problems	.20***	.02	.02	−.03	.25***	.18**	.09	.16**	.12*	.25***	1

†$p < .1$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$; Spearman's rho is given for categorical variables, Pearson's r is given for continuous variables.

and Spearman's *rho* for pairs involving categorical variables). Boys were somewhat more likely to indicate types of externalising behaviour, as well as report discrimination by adults and peers outside the school context. Therefore, in the subsequent analyses, gender was included as a covariate. No significant correlation between gender and discrimination or group discrimination was found. For age and educational track, no significant correlations were found with personal discrimination or group discrimination. Students in classrooms with many minority students reported less personal discrimination outside the school compared with participants in classrooms with few ethnic minority students (a correlation that was not significant for group discrimination).

The influence of classrooms was controlled for as we conducted multilevel analyses to examine the association between group discrimination, personal discrimination, and externalising behaviour. Externalising behaviour was included as a dependent variable and overall discrimination as the predictor variable. A significant positive association was found: $t(303{,}836) = 3.70$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.04 to .13] Cohen's $d = .43$. Greater perceptions of being discriminated against personally were associated with a greater likelihood of reporting externalising behaviour.

Subsequently, an analysis was conducted with externalising behaviour as a dependent variable and group discrimination as predictor. Again, a significant positive association was found: $t(302{,}446) = 2.41$; $p < .05$, 95% CI [.01 to .10] Cohen's $d = .28$. The more group-based discrimination students perceived, the more likely they were to report externalising behaviour.

In the next step, we included both experiences with personal discrimination and group-based discrimination as predictors. A significant association was found only for personal discrimination: $t(302{,}521) = 3.13$; $p < .01$, 95% CI [.03 to .12] Cohen's $d = .36$. No significant effect was found for group-based discrimination: $t(301{,}859) = 1.42$; *n.s.*, 95% CI [−.01 to .08] Cohen's $d = .16$. This result implies that experiences with personal discrimination had a relatively stronger effect.

Finally, we included four sources of personal discrimination – discrimination by school peers, discrimination by teachers, discrimination by peers outside school, and discrimination by adults outside the school context – simultaneously as predictors. The results are provided in Table 3. Only discrimination by teachers was found to be associated with more externalising behaviour: $t(275{,}21) = 3.28$; $p < .001$, 95% CI [.10 to .40]. All other *t*'s

Table 3. Results for the multilevel analyses with perceived teacher, school peer, non-school peer and adult discrimination as predictor variables and externalising problem behaviour as outcome variable.

					95% Confidence Interval	
Variable	SE	df	t	sig	Lower bound	Upper bound
Intercept	.07	252.22	18.05	.001	1.09	1.35
Teacher	.07	275.21	3.28	.001	.10	.40
School peers	.15	301.66	1.32	.187	−.09	.48
Non-school peers	.08	301.66	1.30	.194	−.05	.25
Parents	.05	301.87	.48	.632	−.08	.13
Gender	.04	301.41	3.19	.002	.05	.23

(301) < 1.32, *n.s*. This shows that of all sources of discrimination that were measured, teacher discrimination was associated most strongly with increased externalising behaviour.

Qualitative findings

Table 3 shows that almost all adolescents who reported teacher discrimination also felt discriminated against by others in the school context, including school administrators, school peers, and individuals whom they encountered during school-related work placements. Indeed, qualitative accounts elucidate an interplay between teacher (and school administrator) discrimination and other school-related sources (notably school peers). In Table 4, we provide characteristics of the interviewees in our sample.

Table 4. Characteristics of 10 Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch interviewees in the study who reported discrimination in their school context.

	Name	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Educational Track	Parental level of education	Discrimination Source	Response
1	Nur	Turkish (Kurdish)	female	16	Practical	Low	School peers	Anger Verbal retort
2	Adem	Turkish	male	16	Practical	Low	Teacher School peers Peers outside school	Anger, frustration Physical fighting
3	Yavuz	Turkish	male	16	Practical	Low	Internship School peers	Anger Physical fights
4	Jamel	Turkish	male	17	Practical	Low	Teacher	Work harder to proof them wrong
5	Laila	Moroccan	female	17	Academic	Low	School peers	Seeking support Report to authorities
6	Basma	Moroccan	female	17	Academic	Low	Teacher Adults outside school	Discussion Verbal retort
7	Zohra	Moroccan	female	18	Academic	High	School Administrators Adults outside school	Discussion
8	Esma	Moroccan	female	19	Practical	Low	Teacher School peers	Anger Verbal retort
9	Jabir	Moroccan	male	16	Practical	Low	Teacher School peers Media	Anger Verbal retort
10	Mustapha	Moroccan	male	19	Practical	Low	Teacher Internship	Frustration

We first discuss youths' experiences and responses in cases where teacher discrimination was most prominent. Furthermore, as our qualitative analysis showed that discrimination by school peers also seemed to be linked potentially to symptoms signalling externalising behaviour, we also report on these experiences and responses.

Youths' experiences with teacher discrimination

Interviewees described teacher discrimination in three forms: The first started as a conflict between school peers, which led to teacher interference, including discriminatory remarks from the teacher. Three youths reported this type of event (Adem, male, 16, Turkish-Dutch; Jabir, male, 16, Moroccan-Dutch; and Esma, female, 19, Moroccan-Dutch). In Esma's case, the initial conflict involved perceived discrimination by school peers, but in Jabir and Adem's cases, the initial conflict with school peers seemed unrelated to ethnoreligious issues. Esma described how school peers constantly taunted Muslims, and Moroccans in particular. One of her teachers had told Esma that by getting angry at her peers, she matched the stereotype of '*a hot-blooded Moroccan*' and suggested that it would be best to ignore school peers' insults – that fighting back would reinforce her school peers' prejudice against Moroccans. According to Esma, the teacher did not reprimand the school peers for their behaviour. Jabir narrated an incident in which he was joking with a peer in the classroom, when the teacher (of South-Asian descent) told his peer to '*be careful that you don't get pig flu*,' making it clear that she was referring to Jabir's religion, in which pork is forbidden. Later, when Jabir borrowed paper from aclassmate (who was ethnic minority), the same teacher remarked, *'We have many Moroccan students who always borrow everything from black people; they better make sure to bring their own stuff.'* Finally, Adem described how he felt about the fact that only majority Dutch students received the opportunity to tell their side of the story whenever a fight occurred and that Turkish-Dutch students were assumed to be at fault.

The second form of perceived teacher discrimination entailed being held back from progressing academically, as described by Jamel (16) and Mustapha (19), both Moroccan-Dutch. Jamel narrated an incident at school in which he asked for additional Dutch lessons to be admitted to the academic track. Although the instructor responsible for these special Dutch lessons had admitted Jamel, his form teacher did not grant permission and stated that Jamel '*would not be capable (of doing) the academic track.*' Jamel suspected that the teacher's denial of his academic qualities was linked to his ethnoreligious background, much in line with sardonic remarks that this teacher had made about Muslim traditions. Next, Mustapha described how all students in his class received approval to start their compulsory work placements except for himself and one other Moroccan-Dutch student. Mustapha insisted that ethnicity had played a role in his teacher's decision because several majority Dutch students who had not even fulfilled the conditions for starting the work placement nevertheless were given the '*green light*.'

The third form of teacher discrimination pertained to the Islamic dress code, as described by two girls (Basma, 17, and Zohra, 18, both Moroccan-Dutch). When Basma wore a headscarf to school for the first time, her teacher pretended not to see her when reading students' names to take attendance. Basma reported that after class, the teacher shouted to her, '*It does not say in the Qu'ran that you need to wear a headscarf! So why do you wear this?*' Basma also narrated a conflict she had with the principal who, despite the

school not having dress regulations, had issues with her *Niqaab* (Islamic dress) and tried to convince her to wear a blazer on top of the dress, to have a more Western look. Next, Zohra, who had become more religious over recent years and by her own choice wore a Niqaab to her Catholic school, received a letter addressed to her parents in which they were told not to force their daughter to wear this dress.

In short, youths of Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch descent reported various discrimination experiences from teacher and/or school administrators, including derogatory comments and insults with respect to ethnicity and religion, as well as unfair treatment compared with majority Dutch youths, including barriers to educational advancement.

Youths' responses to teacher discrimination

Based on their narratives, adolescents in this study responded to these experiences in five different ways: verbal retorts, feeling frustrated and/or angry, feeling disappointment, working harder to '*prove them wrong*,' or seeking support.

With respect to verbal retorts (two youths, Jabir and Basma), Jabir, upon being insulted by his teacher (who has a South-Asian background) for being a '*lazy Moroccan*' who has the '*pig flu*', used a provocative term to refer to the ethnicity of his teacher, thereby escalating the conflict. Jabir was pressured into acknowledging that there had been misunderstandings between him and his teacher and had to engage in a reconciliation process. Jabir did not speak out about the teacher's racist remarks to avoid angering his parents, whom he feared would not understand what had happened. Basma, whose majority Dutch teacher reproached her for wearing a headscarf, clarified to her teacher after class in no uncertain terms that she did not *'care if this is written in (the) Qu'ran or not; I just really want to wear this because it feels good to me, so please let me. This is my choice.'*

Adem and Esma, and to some extent Mustapha, reacted with anger and frustration to teacher discrimination. Adem, in perceiving that majority Dutch teachers never gave Turkish-Dutch students the chance to tell their side of the story concerning a conflict, expressed an us-vs.-them perspective: *'A majority Dutch teacher will never click with a Turkish boy. Deep at heart, they will always be in conflict.'* Adem believed that such experiences made him aggressive and led to fights in school and elsewhere. Esma explained how angry she became every time she perceived ethnoreligious discrimination from her school peers. Esma's outbursts towards her classmates had led to conflicts with a teacher, who repeatedly reprimanded her for becoming angry and reiterated Moroccan stereotypes, to which Esma responded with further rage that she later regretted: *'Usually, I (feel) stupid afterwards for becoming so angry, but I cannot stop myself the next time it (injustice) happens.'* Mustapha shared his frustration about the majority Dutch treatment of Muslims with his ethnic peers, and they jointly believed that violence in defence of their ethnoreligious group was an expected reaction.

Turning to the third strategy to deal with discrimination, Zohra and Basma were disappointed about the school's approach to wearing headscarves. Referring to teachers and administrators, Zohra said, '*This school is so-called multicultural, but in fact, they are against us minority students here!*' Zohra initially tried to assimilate by taking off her headscarf so as not to jeopardise her education. Once she started college, Zohra started dressing in a Niqaab again, but to her dismay, she continued to receive derogatory

comments and said she wants to *'move to Morocco [after my studies], as I feel I will fit better in a society that is Muslim all round.'*

'Working harder to prove them wrong' emerged as yet another reaction to perceived discrimination, one that Jamel applied. When his teacher told him he could not attend Dutch lessons, he worked harder than others to prove that ethnic minorities are just as intelligent and disciplined to handle college: *'It's hard to say a bad thing about a person with a high level of education while someone who never went to college can be easily accused of hanging around and causing trouble.'*

Finally, Basma and Zohra reported seeking family support to deal with discrimination. Basma's (adult) brother accompanied her when she met with the principal about her desire to wear the (Islamic) dress. In the end, Basma's school admitted that it had no grounds to prohibit such a dress. Zohra's father responded to the letter from the school, telling officials that it was a misunderstanding and that he did not demand that she wear a headscarf: It was Zohra's wish.

Youths' narratives of experiences with school peer discrimination

Three youths in this study reported both teacher and school peer discrimination, while three others reported peer discrimination but no teacher discrimination. Interviewees described three forms of peer discrimination: denigration of people of colour through social media; offensive remarks about Islam; and ethnic stereotyping. Laila (female, 17, Moroccan descent) gave an example of the first type, as she described a group of her majority Dutch school peers who launched a blog called '*the party against the apes*', on which they ridiculed minorities with racist pictures. Yavuz (male, 16, Turkish descent) remembered an incident in his school belonging to the second type of discrimination, in which a majority boy shouted insults at him about Allah and Muslims. An example of the third kind came from Nur (female, 16, Kurdish-Turkish descent), who described how she felt being under constant verbal attack by a (non-Kurdish) Turkish boy in her class, who '*joked*' that she was *'a terrorist of the Turkish worker party PKK'* among other verbal taunts.

Youths' responses to school peer discrimination

Individual responses to discrimination by school peers varied, with one youth seeking support and reporting taunts to authorities, three youths expressing anger and responding with verbal retorts, and two youths getting into physical altercations. Laila's response is an example of the first type. When her school peers created a racist website, she talked about it with her parents, who advised her to discuss the issue with the principal, which resulted in the suspension of the main perpetrators for several days. An example of anger and verbal retorts came from Nur, who described her reaction to being stereotyped as a PKK terrorist as follows: *'When I get angry, I shout (...) I may be a girl, and I may be small, but I have a big mouth when it comes down to discrimination (…) I make sure that my big mouth shuts them up.'* Finally, Yavuz talked about beating up a student in his class who insulted Allah and Islam. In short, these various reactions to discrimination by school peers reveal that some minority youth sometimes act out against their peers.

Discussion

A study that focuses on externalising behaviour of Muslim youth in the West can be misconceived as sustaining ethnoreligious stereotypes. However, we believe that it is important for both academic and societal reasons to know how their externalising behaviour is influenced by (experienced) discrimination. Our analyses dovetailed with extant studies that showed that discrimination is tied to the psychosocial well-being of Muslim minority youths of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the Netherlands and other European countries (Maes et al., 2014; Steevens & Thijs, 2018; Vedder et al., 2007). Our first objective was to fill a gap in extant literature on the role of discrimination sources in relation to externalising behaviour among Muslim youths. Quantitative models were unambiguous in highlighting the link between teacher discrimination and externalising behaviour, even when other discrimination sources as well as common confounding variables (gender, age, education level) were controlled for. This is remarkable, as only about 10% of youths reported teacher discrimination, compared with roughly 25% reporting discrimination by other adults outside of school. As such, while relatively uncommon, teacher discrimination was of significance for youths' psychosocial development, a finding that mirrors prior research on Belgian Muslim youths of Turkish and Moroccan descent (D'hondt et al., 2017). Our finding also confirms prior US research that demonstrated the harmful impact of discrimination for youths' psychosocial development in the long run (Marcelo & Yates, 2019).

In our quantitative analyses, the missing link between classmate discrimination and externalising behaviour can be attributed to the very low occurrence of the former, which is a positive finding. The fact that many extant studies (e.g. Andriessen et al., 2020; D'hondt et al., 2015; Spears Brown, 2017) found higher rates of teacher and school peer discrimination may be due to a substantially broader formulation of this item(s) (e.g. 'any experience that *possibly* may have been a case of discrimination' (Andriessen et al., 2020). Alternatively, some studies (e.g. D'hondt et al., 2016) asked all respondents about multiple, concrete forms of discrimination by teachers and school peers through a sequence of items that might have led to more positive answers on either of those items.

A second objective was to pay special attention to discrimination in the school context through a qualitative approach. In line with what we expected, the apparent weight given to teacher responses in our study seems to result from an unequal power balance in multiple ways. First, as argued by D'hondt et al. (2016, 2017), a specific feature of the teacher-student relationship is the hierarchy between students and teachers, in which the latter has the final say in grading and managing daily classroom interactions (backed up by the school's administrators). If a teacher has a bias this may impact these procedures (Van den Bergh et al., 2010). Furthermore, as a result of teachers' and school managers' powerful position, their perspective is also dominant during ethnoreligious discrimination events and their aftermaths. Young people may find it difficult to take constructive action against discriminating teachers. When a perpetrator holds a more powerful position it is almost impossible to counter discrimination. This leaves victims without control over the situation, which is detrimental to youths' psychosocial development (Scott & House, 2005) and may explain their externalising behaviour.

With our combined approach comprising a quantitative investigation with qualitative illustrations, we wanted to improve insight into what acts of discrimination in

school happened and how they felt from the perspective of Muslim minority youths, as well as to gain an understanding of why teacher discrimination particularly taps into feelings such as anger and a desire to retaliate. The narratives of Dutch Muslim youths who felt victimised by their teachers underlined the possibility discussed in the previous paragraph – that acting out seems particularly likely when discrimination is experienced in contexts from which one cannot easily escape (Scott & House, 2005). Although interviewees reported externalising behaviour only infrequently, discrimination experienced by teachers (and administrators) in the school context clearly impacted their lives, ranging from academic setbacks to deep feelings of frustration (in line with Moulin-Stożek & Schirr, 2017). The sociological concept of *anomie* can illuminate the problematic consequences (e.g. 'deviance') of academic setbacks that originate from teacher discrimination. Anomie indicates a discrepancy between (initial) aspirations (e.g. academically) in minority groups and subsequent disappointment and resistance when 'a reality check' shows that these aspirations are thwarted by, for example, discrimination in the school context (Ballantine et al., 2017).

Most importantly, qualitative findings also showed that adolescents did not use externalising behaviour directly against their teachers, although in one exceptional case a girl did talk to them in no uncertain terms when she perceived bias from her teacher. Furthermore, in line with our suggestion that it is immensely difficult for youths to stand up against teacher discrimination, minority youths in our qualitative study only received favourable responses from school administrators when their families became involved and discussed the issue on behalf of the youth. This corresponds with research by Swim and Thomas (2006), who reported similar results.

Regarding the type of teacher discrimination, interviewees reported being unfairly graded or evaluated, punished by default when classroom conflicts occurred, or receiving derogatory comments related to Islamic practices. While the first two forms of teacher discrimination are in line with extant literature on minority youths in general (Spears Brown, 2015), the third type might be specific for discrimination against Muslims (Berglund, 2017). Western Muslim girls who choose to follow Islamic dress codes seem to face increasing hostility, also in schools (Isik-Ercan, 2015). These examples show the relevance of distinguishing between Muslim and non-Muslim minority adolescents' discrimination experiences.

Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods resulted in a corroboration of findings, yet one apparent contradiction was noted. The quantitative association between discrimination by school peers and externalising behaviour was not significant, while qualitative findings showed that some interviewees experienced anger and reported fighting in response to discrimination by their school peers. A potential explanation is that, compared with teacher discrimination, anger evoked from discrimination by school peers may result in more assertiveness to tackle discrimination, due to being on an equal footing with peers. A relatively greater sense of agency possibly could prevent youths from exhibiting a wider range of externalising symptoms that comprise our (quantitative) scale of externalising behaviour.

We distinguished between personal and group discrimination in relation to externalising problems and found that only personal discrimination was a significant predictor. This implies that personal experiences with discrimination in our sample were relatively more important in explaining externalised behaviour than group-based

discrimination. As previous research on personal- vs. group-based discrimination showed inconclusive results regarding psychosocial well-being (e.g. Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2014), we think this result should be treated with caution and needs further replication in future studies. Nevertheless, our findings indicate that experiencing discrimination at a personal level plays an important role in externalising behaviour.

Limitations and future directions

Our analyses were based on archived data, so it was not possible to conduct interviews with the explicit purpose of elucidating quantitative findings. We were restricted to interviews that had been conducted in the recent past. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of minority interviewees had spoken about school-based discrimination, thereby confirming the quantitative findings that school-based discrimination experiences matter and should be studied further in the future.

Using archived data also meant that we had to slightly compromise with respect to quantitative measures. The SDQ has proven validity in our population (Paalman et al., 2013) but had somewhat low reliability (Cronbach's alpha) in our study as well as in other studies (Oppedal et al., 2005). The obedience item in particular does not seem to be as applicable to adolescents as it does to children. However, this measure has been evaluated as having good internal consistency (another parameter for reliability) among Moroccan-Dutch youths (Paalman et al., 2013).

Although the data's cross-sectional nature prevents drawing conclusions about any temporal order, it is feasible that discrimination preceded externalising behaviour. Although we cannot draw any final conclusions on causality based on our study, as we argued in the introduction, other researchers in the field have used a longitudinal design that lends more support to the direction that we propose than vice versa (Brody et al., 2006; Marcelo & Yates, 2019).

As for the type of discrimination discussed in the interviews, the youths mostly described incidents entailing unfair treatment, ethnoreligious verbal insults, and being held back from advancing academically as being the forms of teacher discrimination that they experienced. Thus, the form or type of discrimination from teachers (Stevens, 2008) in relation to Muslim and other minority youths' psychosocial health is a factor that future studies should examine.

Future studies also could examine whether the interviewer's ethnicity or religion influences the contents of interviews. For example, Van Gemert (2002) found that Moroccan-Dutch youths were reluctant to provide information in qualitative interviews that would give their ethnic group a bad reputation. This may have caused underreporting of ethnoreligious fights of Dutch-Muslim youths in our interviews conducted by a majority (non-religious) interviewer. Furthermore, it would be interesting to include narratives from teachers about interactions that students perceived as discrimination to compare their views.

Our sample size did not allow for running models for each ethnic group separately. Although youths of Turkish and Moroccan descent share many similar discrimination experiences, future studies would need to test ethnic groups' differences and interaction affects with acculturation styles and religious identification strength (Maes et al., 2014; Vedder et al., 2007).

Conclusion

To some extent, the Dutch majority population views Muslims as followers of a religion that is incompatible with liberal Western values (Savelkoul et al., 2012). Therefore, it may not be surprising that, despite the presence of Muslim youths in Dutch schools for decades, at least some teachers do not live up to a central Dutch value to be tolerant of people regardless of religion or ethnicity. Furthermore, politicians with an anti-Islam agenda have been attracting increasing votes in the Netherlands in the past decades (as in other European countries), which may have given some teachers reason to believe that their criticism of Islam represents a ('new') Dutch value (see also Wesselhoeft, 2017, for a rather similar argument about France). Such trends are likely to be mutually reinforcing, leading to an ever-more negative climate and increased Islamophobia (Moulin-Stożek & Schirr, 2017).

Being a (second generation) migrant and a Muslim leaves these adolescents twice as vulnerable to discrimination in school contexts which can be linked to externalising behaviour (as our quantitative findings demonstrate) as well as negative affect and distancing from the majority culture (as shown through our interviews). Previous work shows that Muslim students highly value having a teacher who speaks out against stereotypes about Muslims rather than having to deal with teachers who have internalised these images (Isik-Ercan, 2015). As minority youths' discrimination experiences in school likely inform their experiences in the broader communities in which they live (Spears Brown, 2015), schools need to educate their teachers on how to take an approach in which cultural and religious diversity in the classroom is valued and embraced.

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