



## INSTITUTIONEN FÖR SOCIALT ARBETE

### If they only knew

Bullying victimization among children and youth in the Nordic countries

av

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Akademisk avhandling

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Fakultetsopponent är Professor Faye Mishna, University of Toronto

The thesis is based on the following papers:

I: Bjereld Ylva, Daneback Kristian, Petzold Max (2015) Differences in prevalence of bullying victimization between native and immigrant children in the Nordic countries: A parent-reported serial cross-sectional study. *Child: Care, Health and Development*. 41(4):593-599 doi:10.1111/cch.12184

II: Bjereld Ylva, Daneback Kristian, Gunnarsdóttir Hrafnhildur, Petzold Max (2015) Mental health problems and social resource factors among bullied children in the Nordic countries. A population based cross-sectional study. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*. 46(2):281-288 doi: 10.1007/s10578-014-0468-0

III: Bjereld Ylva (2016) The challenging process of disclosing bullying victimization: A grounded theory study from the victim's point of view. *Journal of Health Psychology*. doi: 10.1177/1359105316644973

IV: Bjereld Ylva, Daneback Kristian, Petzold Max (2017) Do bullied children have poor relationships with their parents and teachers? A cross-sectional study of Swedish children. *Children and Youth Services Review*. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.01.012

## ABSTRACT

Title: If they only knew - Bullying victimization among children and youth in the Nordic countries

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Bullying is a social and public health problem recognized across the globe. The aim with this thesis is to describe and understand bullying victimization of children and youth in a social-ecological perspective with the focus on prevalence, mental health, social relations and disclosing bullying victimization.

This thesis includes four studies based on three different data sources: the parent-reported Nordic Study of Children's Health and Wellbeing (NordChild, Studies I-II), interviews with Swedish youth (Study III) and the child-reported Swedish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey (HBSC, Study IV). As well as descriptive statistics, the data from NordChild was analysed with logistic regression (Studies I, II) and the HBSC data was analysed in a multi-level logistic regression. The interview study was based on grounded theory, analysed by two-step coding.

The results of this thesis showed that parent-reported bullying victimization had decreased from 1996 (21.7 percent) to 2011 (19.2 percent) in the combined Nordic countries, but immigrant children were bullied more often than native children. Between 29.2–44.3 percent of the bullied children had mental health problems, varying between age and gender. A protective factor that gave higher odds of bullied children being mentally healthy was having several close friends. Not all parents knew whether their child was being bullied, and children with unclear status regarding whether they were being bullied had higher levels of mental health problems than non-victims. When bullied children disclosed victimization it was not simply a matter of telling or not telling, it was a circular process in transition between hidden and open victimization. Victims withheld disclosure of victimization for reasons associated with personal identity and/or reasons originating in distrust of adults. Bullied children, especially frequent victims, had higher odds of having poor relations with their parents and teachers than non-victims.

The social-ecological perspective is used to understand the interplay between individual factors and the social context where the bullying exists. The results from the four studies is understood at different system levels; in the interaction with and between peers, family and school, and in interplay with norms and attitudes about victimization and bullying in the broader society.