

A qualitative study of Irish Travellers' perceived mental health needs

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A minority ethnic group affected by high levels of mental health inequalities

- Irish Travellers: a nomadic population group indigenous to the island of Ireland
- High socio-economic inequalities, marginalization and unemployment
- Higher rates of poor mental health and mental distress (All-Ireland Traveller Health Study, 2010)
- A rate of suicide 6 times higher compared to the general population – 11 per cent of Travellers die by suicide

Study aim and methods

- Study aim:

To explore the views of a sample of Irish Travellers, on their perceived mental health needs, and what type of policies and services would enable them to meet these needs

- Qualitative research design
- 4 focus groups conducted with 25 adult Travellers
- Inductive thematic analysis undertaken with the software NVivo 12

Major theme: Prejudice and Discrimination

1. Discrimination is experienced in all domains of life, especially in the school setting and place of entertainment
2. **Overwhelming impact on the psychological, emotional and mental wellbeing**
3. Anticipation of prejudice: fight-or-flight response and chronic stress
4. Internalization of negative stereotypes and feeling of inferiority has devastating effects on Travellers' social identity, self-esteem and confidence

Low level of embeddedness in Irish society

1. Low level of trust towards public services and 'settled' community
2. High level of internal cohesion but **low level of cohesion with other communities**
3. Disruption of nomadic communal lifestyle reduced interactions, reciprocity, collaboration and social capital
4. Social relations are a key determinant of mental health and mental health inequalities

The need for healthy public policies

- Travellers' mental health is multidimensional and requires a holistic approach that addresses the structural, societal and individual factors that push them to the margins of society
- Foster inclusion through employment, education and trainings
- Combat hate speech and discrimination
- Raise awareness on Traveller culture and identity, improve collective self-esteem
- Create a **culturally competent health system**

Thank you!



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