

Experiences of Outstation Students in Bengaluru: Perceived Discrimination, Socio-Cultural Adaptation and Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research is to tap into the experiences of outstation students in Bengaluru with respect to perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation and well-being. The data was collected from 120 students belonging from different regions of India, categorized as- South India, Northeast India, Rest of India and Karnataka (outside of Bengaluru), 30 data from each category was gathered. The results show that there is a significant relationship between all the three variables- perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation and well-being and there is a significant difference in experience of sociocultural adaptation and well-being in all the regions, but none with respect to perceived discrimination. Language is seen to be one of the reasons for negative experiences and adaptation problems for most of the regions but for Northeast Indians physical features and origin/ancestry are prominent reasons. Some of the other factors hindering adaptation are traffic, infrastructure, pollution and food. Factors aiding adaptation are liveliness and diversity of the city, opportunities for growth.

Keywords: *Perceived Discrimination, Socio-cultural Adaptation, Well-being, Outstation students.*

Globally, the frequency and extent of intercultural contact and interactions are increasing rapidly. As a result, as per Nguyen & Benet Martínez (2007) many individuals are exposed to and often internalize more than one culture. According to Berry (2006) these individuals may be immigrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, and sojourners like international students and expatriates.

Such movement is not new in India too. More than 50% of the movement within India is triggered by the search for quality education. According to the 2011 census, 42.12% of Bengaluru's population originates from outside the district/ state and ranks second in the comparable metros with migrant population, 47% intra-state migrants and a huge portion of it is that of students. Studies have indicated that international students experience more adjustment problems than their domestic counterparts and have limited resources to deal with the problems (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007).

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All migration students go through the process of adjusting to a new educational system and social environment can be a stressful process a lot of people (Li & Gasser, 2005), with additional stresses of adapting to new culture, values, language, food, balancing and managing education, work and finances, unfamiliar living circumstance and, building a social circle. These can range from smaller day-to-day problems to a larger cultural adaptation (Okazaki, 2005, Portman, 2004). Some of the other factors that add onto the stress of cross-cultural transitions are: unfamiliarity with the social and physical environment (Oberg, 1960), poor social support, lack of satisfaction about the living condition (Virupaksha, 2014) and being subjected to discrimination and prejudice.

Discrimination often comes from a space of negative attitude towards a person or a group due to lack of knowledge about the groups as per the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954). And similarities between the groups can lead to positive evaluations, as per similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971). This gives an easy explanation for why people do not appreciate cultural differences.

In a meta-analytic review by Pascoe and Smart Richman (2009), it was found that perceived discrimination was negatively correlated with both psychological and physical health, producing significant stress responses and is related to participation in unhealthy and nonparticipation in healthy behaviors. Past research indicates the possibility of mediating variables like social support, coping style, ethnic identity, and personality variables impacting perceived discrimination and health.

The health consequences of perceived discrimination also vary according to personal coping styles. People actively coping tend to engage in good health habits (Bianchi et al., 2004), whereas some emotion-focused strategies, like eating, or the use of alcohol and drugs blocks out the immediate negative effects of perceived discrimination on one's mood and affect. In the student population, it is seen that perceived discrimination could lead to academic underachievement, questioning one's self-identity, lower self-esteem and loneliness. But extra-curricular activities could be used to neutralize the above-mentioned phenomenon (Billingsley & Hurd, 2019). A study by Zimmermann (1995) shows that increased contact and talking with domestic students support and enhance in the sociocultural adaptation.

The self-concept emerges through social interactions, others' views of the self are often internalized (Goffman, 1963) and negative evaluations from the group impacts the self-esteem, further the social-psychological well-being and adjustment (Lysgaard, 1955).

Four domains of problems identified in the adaptation process of foreign students are: environmental (food, living/housing environments and transportation), sociocultural (interpersonal relations), academic (proficiency in the language, adjusting with assessment systems and meeting deadlines), and psychological (stress, homesickness, loneliness, etc).

Outstation students often face different challenges in the process of adapting to new teaching and learning systems, this process has been termed 'academic shock' (Savic, 2008), the initial struggle to adjust to an environment which differs from the prior educational experiences. Students may also have problems adapting to the social and cultural way of life, research has identified that ease of sociocultural adaptation has a major bearing on academic outcomes and their psychological well-being (see Leung, 2001; Wang & Xiao, 2014).

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Robertson (2000) conducted a study on Environments and Perceptions, it was found that the most common problems faced by international students are understanding colloquial language, bearing cost of education and feelings of isolation. It was also found that the academic personnel were critical of international students' poor writing and critical thinking skills. Language is one of the most important factors contributing to cultural adaptation, a better understanding of the same can help in integrating with a culture (Ward & Kennedy 1999). Kim (1988) highlighted effective social communication to be one of the key factors to successful adaptation in a new culture (Wilson, 2011).

The process of adaptation to a new culture is influenced by a number of different factors, like: type of residence in the new place- temporary/ permanent (Ward & Kennedy, 1993), knowledge about the host culture (Ward & Searle 1991), length of residence in the host place (Ward et al. 1998), language proficiency or communication competence (Furnham 1993), quantity and quality of contact with people from host culture (Bochner, 1982), friend circle/network (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin 1977), previous experiences with host culture (Klineberg & Hull 1979), cultural distance (Ward & Kennedy 1993), cultural identity of the individual (Ward & Searle 1991), modes of acculturation (Ward & Kennedy 1994) and cross-cultural training (Deshpande & Viswesvaran 1992).

Adjustment becomes easier if the host culture accepts the individuals, shares the values, beliefs and such characteristics (Tajfel, 1978), similarities in the individual and the host (Byrne, 1971) or get to know each other and each other's culture better (Allport, 1955).

Research on a variety of disadvantaged groups has demonstrated that recognizing prejudice against one's social group is negatively related to psychological well-being. According to Ryff's model, six of the key-elements of psychological well-being are: self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, autonomy and positive relations with others. All of the above factors can show depreciation in the adaptation process, if hampered. The mistreatment and poor life events resulting from discrimination pose a threat to the well-being of an individual (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), creating a sense of powerlessness, as it implies a lack of control over important life outcomes (Verkuyten, 1998), lowering self-esteem, making adjustment process harder and exclusion from positions of power (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), impacting one's self-concept.

In a study conducted by Mazzucchelli and Purcell (2015) on psychological environmental correlates of well-being among undergraduate university students, it was found that university contributes to students' well-being by providing a social role, externally generated goals and variety. Students' perception of their physical security was found to have an important influence on their well-being.

Two general explanations have been proposed to understand the association between migration and psychological problems. The first one focuses upon the predisposing factors like the personal characteristics of the individuals or reasons for movement. The second argues that mental health changes might be a consequence of migration experiences, like negative life events, lack of social support networks and the impact of value differences (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008). Lacking social skills and the ability to learn the new culture may cause cross cultural problems further impacting the well-being (Argyle & Kendon 1967). Stressful life changes can result in shock, hence, people engaging

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in cross-cultural encounters need to be resilient, adapt well, develop coping strategies and tactics (Zhou et. al, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

Aim:

To study perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation and well-being among out station students in Bengaluru.

Objectives

- To examine the differences in outstation students from regions in perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation and well-being.
- To study the relationship between perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation and well-being.

Hypotheses

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation and well-being.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference in outstation students from different regions in perceived discrimination.

H₀₃ There is no significant difference in outstation students from different regions in sociocultural adaption.

H₀₄ There is no significant difference in outstation students from different regions in well-being

Research Design

Quasi experimental ex-post facto research design is used to understand the influence of the independent variable present previously in the participants and affects the dependent variables.

Variables

Independent Variables: Regions of India

Dependent Variables: Perceived discrimination, Sociocultural adaptation and Well-being.

Operational Definitions

- **Regions of India:** Karnataka (students from outside of Bengaluru and within Karnataka), South India (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana), North East India (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura) and the Rest of India.
- **Perceived discrimination:** Personal perception or the subjective experience of being treated unfairly relative to others in everyday experience (Dion, Dion, & Pak, 1992; Williams et al., 2003).
- **Sociocultural adaptation:** Sociocultural adaptation is defined as a behavioral competence, influenced by factors underpinning culture learning and social skills acquisition, also including length of residence in the new culture, knowledge of the culture, amount of interaction and identification with host nationals, cultural distance, language fluency and acculturation strategies (Searle & Ward, 1991).

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- **Well-being:** Well-being is a broad category of phenomena which includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions and global judgments of life satisfactions (Deiner, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999).

Sample

The data was collected from 120 outstation students (30 each from North India, South India, Rest of India and Karnataka; that is, students from outside of Bengaluru but within Karnataka), between the ages of 18-25, who have resided in Bengaluru from at least one year. The data was collected using purposive and snowball sampling.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Students above the age of 17.
- Students living in Bengaluru

Exclusion Criteria:

- Students above the age of 25.
- Students resided in Bengaluru for less than a year.
- Rest of India would exclude students from Middle India- Maharashtra, Goa, Madhya Pradesh and Kashmir.

Instruments

Informed consent and socio demographic details was collected from all the participants.

- **Everyday Discrimination Scale (Williams and Mohammed, 1997):** The Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS) is a 9 item self-report scale that reflects thoughts and beliefs about experiencing discrimination (Williams and Mohammed, 1997). This scale measures subjective experience of discrimination. The alpha reliability coefficient is 0.87 and split-half reliability 0.83 ($p < 0.0001$). Higher scores indicate higher perceived discrimination. The scores range from 1 to 6.
- **The Revised Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS-R) (Ward & Kennedy, 1999):** Originally given by Ward & Kennedy, 1999. The SCAS-R consists of 21 items that are based on a Likert Scale of 1 (Not at all competent) to 5 (Extremely Competent). The items in the SCAS-R are further divided into 5 subscales which are, Interpersonal Communication, Academic/Work Performance, Personal interests and Community Involvement, Ecological Adaptation and Language Proficiency. Internal consistency measures have ranged from 0.75 to 0.91 ($M = 0.85$)
- **WHO- 5 Well-being scale:** The WHO-5 (5-item scale) is suitable for children aged 9 and above. Normative data is available for some European countries (WintherTopp et al., 2015). The WHO-5 has been found to have adequate validity in screening for depression and in measuring outcomes in clinical trials.

Procedure for data collection

Data was collected from the participants using google forms where they were briefed about the study and consent was taken. Later socio demographic details and responses on everyday discrimination scale, Revised sociocultural adaptation scale and WHO well-being scale was collected.

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Procedure for analysis

The responses collected was analyzed using SPSS (descriptive results, correlation, ANOVA and Post-Hoc Test) and interpretations were derived, qualitative responses were used to support the results.

RESULTS

Graph 1: Mean Scores for sociocultural adaptation, perceived discrimination and well-being of all the four regions (n=120)

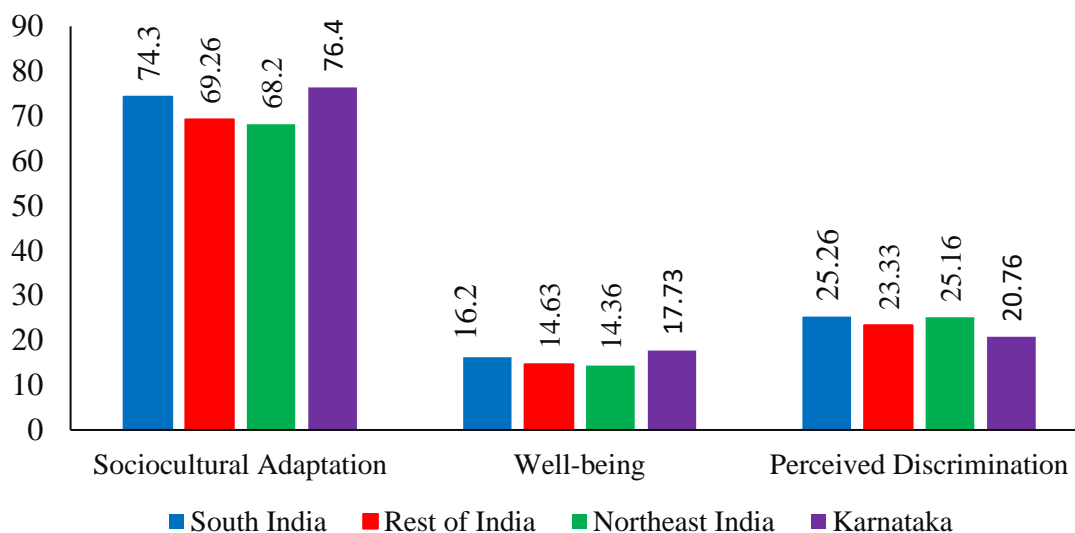


Table 1: Correlation between sociocultural adaptation and all the sub-areas with perceived discrimination (PD) and well-being (WB) of students from different regions

	Overall		South India		Rest of India		Northeast India		Karnataka	
	WB	PD	WB	PD	WB	PD	WB	PD	WB	PD
Sociocultural adaptation	0.47**	-0.32**	0.32	-0.15	0.50**	-0.51**	0.46**	-0.21	0.43*	-0.39*
Interpersonal relationship	0.44**	-0.33**	0.30	-0.26	0.46**	-0.41*	0.52**	-0.33	0.41*	-0.34
Academic or Work Performance	0.37**	-0.23**	0.22	-0.02	0.41*	-0.40*	0.44*	-0.24	0.39*	-0.36
Personal Interests and Community Involvement	0.37**	-0.23**	0.29	-0.17	0.28	-0.32	0.30	-0.02	0.51**	-0.43*
Ecological Adaptation	0.35**	-0.21*	0.28	-0.09	0.49**	-0.41*	0.41*	-0.08	0.20	-0.31
Language Proficiency	0.21*	-0.16	0.02	0.18	0.12	-0.27	-0.17	-0.02	0.14	-0.00
PD (Perceived Discrimination)	-0.36**	-	-0.05	-	-0.56**	-	-0.29	-	-0.48**	-

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

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Table 2: ANOVA for well-being, perceived discrimination, socio-cultural adaptation of all the regions

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Well-being	Between Groups	218.86	3	72.95	3.27*	0.02
	Within Groups	2584.60	116	22.28		
	Total	2803.46	119			
Perceived Discrimination	Between Groups	399.80	3	133.26	1.74	0.16
	Within Groups	8852.06	116	76.31		
	Total	9251.86	119			
Sociocultural Adaptation	Between Groups	1396.62	3	465.54	3.4**	0.01
	Within Groups	15538.16	116	133.95		
	Total	16934.79	119			
Interpersonal Relationship	Between Groups	54.69	3	18.23	0.96	0.41
	Within Groups	2181.90	116	18.80		
	Total	2236.59	119			
Academic/Work Performance	Between Groups	19.36	3	6.45	0.81	0.49
	Within Groups	923.80	116	7.96		
	Total	943.16	119			
Personal Interests And Community Involvement	Between Groups	70.60	3	23.53	2.86*	0.04
	Within Groups	954.60	116	8.22		
	Total	1025.20	119			
Ecological Adaptation	Between Groups	17.66	3	5.88	0.64	0.59
	Within Groups	1065.00	116	9.18		
	Total	1082.66	119			
Language Proficiency	Between Groups	384.96	3	128.32	34.69**	0.00
	Within Groups	429.00	116	3.69		
	Total	813.96	119			

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 3: Tukey test for multiple comparison

<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>(I) Region</i>	<i>(J) Region</i>	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>p</i>
Sociocultural adaptation	South India	Rest of India	5.03	2.98	0.33
		North East India	6.10	2.98	0.17
	Rest of India	North East India	1.06	2.98	0.98
	Karnataka	South India	2.10	2.98	0.89
		Rest of India	7.13	2.98	0.08
		North East India	8.20*	2.98	0.03

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Personal Interests and Community Involvement	South India	Rest of India	1.56	0.74	0.15	
		North East India	1.50	0.74	0.18	
		Karnataka	0.00	0.74	1.00	
	North India	East	Rest of India	0.06	0.74	1.00
		Karnataka	Rest of India	1.56	0.74	0.15
			North East India	1.50	0.74	0.18
Language Proficiency	South India	Rest of India	0.60	0.49	0.62	
		North East India	1.83*	0.49	0.00	
	Rest of India	North East India	1.23	0.49	0.06	
		Karnataka	South India	3.03*	0.49	0.00
	Karnataka	Rest of India	3.63*	0.49	0.00	
		North East India	4.86*	0.49	0.00	
Well-being	South India	Rest of India	1.56	1.21	0.57	
		North East India	1.83	1.21	0.43	
	Rest of India	North East India	0.26	1.21	0.99	
		Karnataka	South India	1.53	1.21	0.59
	Karnataka	Rest of India	3.10	1.21	0.05	
		North East India	3.36*	1.21	0.03	

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

The analysis of reasons of perceiving discrimination amongst outstation students showed that, students from South India reported certain bodily features (height, weight, skin color, aspects of physical appearance, physical disability) mostly as the reason, some mentioned religion, ancestry, one mentioned language problems and reserved personality as a reason. Weight, skin color and other aspects of the physical appearance are most frequently reported reasons, some other reported factors are caste, religion, ancestry/origin, height, education and income status. Ancestry/ origin is the most reported reason, with a few reports of gender, other aspects of physical appearance, religion, caste and sexual orientation. Karnataka students reported education/income, height, weight, skin shade, caste, other aspect of physical appearance, religion, ancestry and one responses of communication, working style/presentation and personal interests as reasons.

DISCUSSION

The research study aims to understand the experiences of outstation students in Karnataka with respect to the regions they belong from- South India, Northeast India, Rest of India and Karnataka (Non-Bangaloreans). The experiences were studied with respect to variables- perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation, and well-being.

The results indicate that there is a significant correlation between all the three variables- perceived discrimination, sociocultural adaptation and well-being. There is a negative correlation between perceived discrimination and well-being. The effects of perceived discrimination on health is well established. It is congruent with perceived discrimination

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and stress model given by Pascoe & Richman (2009), indicating pathways through which discriminatory experiences may affect mental and physical health.

Sociocultural adaptation and perceived discrimination also show a significant negative correlation, which is parallel with a study conducted by Lindert (2008). It was found that there is a negative relationship of perceived discrimination with psychological and sociocultural adaptation.

Lin and Yi (1997) noted that international students face the problems such as discrimination, language problems and accommodation difficulties, financial stress, misunderstanding, and loneliness, creating anxiety and depression, leading to complaints of nervousness, insomnia and physical illnesses. All of these can interfere with adaptation and overall well-being. As the responses to the survey questions indicate, a lot of students particularly find it hard to cope with traffic, pollution, hectic transportation facilities, food and diverse cultures. The results show that there is a significant correlation between ecological adaptation and well-being. Quoting from one of the students talking about adjusting to the city, and the city contributing to his well-being captures this relationship,

“Neither the city nor the people are contributing to my happiness or well-being. Bangalore is a concrete jungle in which people have caged themselves up.”

These responses indicated the important the physical environment and facilities play on well-being of an outstation student.

Students from South India scored the highest in perceived discrimination along with students from Rest of India, but so is the average score higher in other two areas-sociocultural adaptation and well-being. These areas did not share any correlation amongst South Indian students, this indicates the presence of other mediating factors. The responses to the survey indicated that most of the students from South India weighted the positives and the negatives and chose to focus on the positives despite the negative discriminatory experiences. Quoting a response of one of the students,

“I have gone through both negative and positive experiences, which in turn improved my character a lot.”

Others talked about the independence attained after moving to the city, the dynamic nature of the city life, diverse population, liveliness of the city, learning opportunities, personal space and lack of interference from other people as compared to life at home. Having a support system and social group (friends and others) can be seen as contributors of well-being. This openness to new culture or integration could be contributing to well-being (Berry, 2004).

The results also show that there is a positive correlation between sociocultural adaptation and well-being, all the above studies also indicate that better adaptation to a culture could decrease the physical and psychological complaints, improving the overall well-being.

There is a significant difference between the experience of sociocultural adaptation and well-being among students from different regions of India. Results from the post-hoc test clarified that there is a significant difference between the sociocultural adaptation among

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students from Karnataka and Northeast India. The adaptation to the culture is better in students from South India and Karnataka, as opposed to Rest of India and Northeast India. This could be due to the shared values, beliefs and such characteristics (Tajfel, 1978) by the South Indian states, similarities in the individual and the host culture and people (Byrne, 1971) or having gotten to know each other and each other's culture better (Allport, 1955), presence/absence of social support (Heckman, Kochman, & Sikkema, 2002). A study by Searle and Ward (1990) on Malaysian and Singaporean students in New Zealand found that the greater degrees of cultural distance can contribute to experiencing of sociocultural adjustment problems

Results indicates that the students from Northeast India are majorly discriminated because of their heritage/ origin and other aspects of their physical appearance, this apparent difference could be one of the reasons of experience of discrimination, a physical difference of not belonging might contribute to difficulty in sociocultural adaptation. But there is no significant difference in experience of perceived discrimination among students from different regions of India, indicating similarity in experiences with respect to perceived discrimination.

Most of the students from all the regions have mentioned the language barrier and discrimination due to the same, but Northeastern students on an average being least proficient of the local language majorly focused upon their looks as a reason for the discrimination. The apparent or visible differences can be grounded to their feeling different or being made to feel different. Most of the students from all the regions talked about language being one of the reasons of discrimination, some for talking in different dialect of Kannada and some for not speaking it altogether. Quoting some of the responses from students from different regions:

Karnataka students (Non-Bangaloreans).

“Due to the difference in dialect, people sometimes act as if I'm very rude.”

“People look weirdly sometimes when I talk in broken English.”

Rest of India:

“Bus conductors get rude and made fun of me, because I talked in Hindi”

“If you do not know how to speak the language you are mostly excluded from convos”

South India:

“The kannada teachers..... using their native language even though they are supposed to use English in class”

“Because of the language barriers. I wouldn't understand what my friends would be talking half the time”

In a study conducted by Malcolm Lewthwaite (1996) to discover and describe how international students experience and adapt to their new academic, social, cultural and linguistic environment. It was found that the obstacles to integration as loneliness, mismatch of culture, frustration with the lack of deep integration with the host culture and irritation with certain aspects of the host culture. The greatest block to adaptation was lack of intercultural communicative competence. Despite having good social experiences, Northeastern students have complained about the infrastructure, the road, experiences in public areas and transports. Quoting a few responses,

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“I look different, I sound different, so it gets attention. I hate it, I don't like getting so much attention. I don't have much friends and because of this I have a hard time making friends. It makes me feel really bad but I have found a really good community of artists for myself here, so I am somehow managing.”

“Auto drivers tend to charge a high price because of my facial features, thinking I'm a foreigner”

Despite similarities in perception of discrimination, the varying sociocultural adaptation and well-being scores in the groups indicate towards presence of other factors. Past research studies indicate the possibility of mediating variables impacting perceived discrimination and health. Some of those factors are social support, coping style, ethnic identity, and personality variables. For example, having people to turn to in times of ill health indicates access to more health resources (Heckman, Kochman, & Sikkema, 2002), the availability of friends or family to talk to after experiences of discrimination which could help in rebuilding an individual's feelings of self-worth, potentially preventing depressive symptoms from developing because of the social support (Pascoe & Richman, 2009) and certain personal resources like positive attitude could help, which is reflected in the responses of the subjects:

“Diversity of people there teaches or brings you different kind of experiences you won't get in other cities.”

“This city offers many opportunities to students who want to achieve great heights”

Some of the factors contributing positively to the adaptation is good people, weather, diverse culture, growth opportunities. The varying interests and outlook for the individuals have an impact too.

CONCLUSION

The differences in experiencing well-being and sociocultural adaptation despite similar perceived experiences of discrimination could be due to other factors like social support, friends, personal attributes, etc. Some factors that seem to be aiding the adaptation and well-being processes are having friends, positive interactions, diversity of the culture, learning opportunities, independence, liveliness of the city, opportunities to keep oneself engaged and grow in terms of education and career. Some of the negative factors that came up was being pushed to learn the local language, maltreatment on public transportation, considered as an outsider, differential treatment at educational institute and place of work.

Implications of the study

Due to the influx of people coming to this city especially for education and work, it becomes important in understanding the experiences they go through and working towards it to make the process easier for people on both the sides. This study can be used to substantiate the existing body of knowledge, such an area centric study can help trace out the experiences of people living there, especially this being a less researched upon topic. This data can contribute to curating certain group targeted interventions, which could be used in various institutions to enhance the experiences of outstation population.

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Limitations of the study

The qualitative data was only used to substantiate the quantitative data, a proper qualitative analysis can be undertaken to enrich the data more. This study could be done with a larger sample, to get a better understanding to improve the generalizability. The data was collected through online forms, one on one interactions and interviews could give a better perspective about the issue.

Scope for the further study

The study can be used to understand and tap into the experiences of outstation students, device techniques by understanding areas that could be worked upon and curate the interventions. Moreover, this study adds on to the existing body of knowledge to be used and referenced for future research studies.

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Conflict of Interest

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