Research Paper

Interplay of Perceived Discrimination, Self-Esteem, and Academic Motivation in North East India

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the intricate interplay in-between perceived discrimination, self-esteem and academic motivation among North East Indian youth living outside their native region. Through an empirical investigation with a sample of 100 young adults using the Perceived Discrimination Scale, Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and Academic Motivation Scale. Descriptive statistics provided insights into the central tendencies and variability of self-esteem, perceived discrimination and academic motivation. Correlational analysis unveiled significant relationships, revealing a correlation that is positive between perceived discrimination and self-esteem, and a negative association between academic motivation and perceived discrimination. Further, the regression analyses confirm that there is a visible impact of perceived discrimination on self-esteem. These findings reveal that there is a complex dynamic that the North East Indian youth residing outside their home region live with, along with that it also shows that perceived discrimination influences self-esteem positively by diminishing academic motivation. The study also showed findings that these youth employ adaptive mechanisms and resilience to navigate prejudice while striving to maintain their academic goals and mental well-being.

Keywords: *Perceived Discrimination, Academic Motivation, Self-esteem, Northeast India*

The Indian preamble declares "India to be a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic committed to Justice, Equality and Liberty for the people"(Indian Constitution, Preamble). Still, multiple news articles mention how youth from the Northeast face racism in their own country, especially when they move out of their hometowns and into major metro cities for education. Over the last few years, discrimination and its relationship with self-esteem and academic motivation have been widely studied.

People migrating from the Northeast to mainland India has become a very common practice, as mentioned by Mistri and Sardar in their 2022 study that the motivating factor for migration is largely the lack of education opportunities. The Northeast part of the country is in a less advantageous position in comparison to the rest of the country due to the clear lack of educational facilities and available resources for the youth living there.

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The trend of young adults migrating from the Northeast to other parts of the country illustrates the interplay of socioeconomic factors, cultural dynamics and aspirations for growth. Migration presents great opportunities for education and employment within the broader Indian society but the other side to this are the challenges it poses in terms of cultural adaptation, social integration and the preservation of ethnic identity.

In a study by Narzary (2014) conducted across major metro cities like New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Bangalore, it was suggested that the prevalence of discrimination is prominent across all metro cities and has its roots in the issues of social profiling, When young people are subjected to discrimination based on their identities like race, ethnicity or culture it very evidently has a detrimental effect on self-esteem which leads to them feeling inferior and questioning their abilities. When students are subjected to negative experiences it may lead to feelings of demotivation which can also lead to them eventually withdrawing from their enrolled institutions. Therefore, through this study, the researcher aims to delve into this nexus relationship between discrimination, self-esteem and academic motivation for developing interventions to support and set up the youth from the Northeast for academic excellence and success.

The Northeast region of India has a unique composition regarding its culture, social and economic attributes. The region is often subjected to diverse challenges like inequality, deprivation and underwhelming economic progress. There is a clear inconsistency when we look at the policy environment and the comprehensive strategy for policy-making, it reflects on the economic growth of the area making it inferior to mainland India. All these factors lead to a large population of young people from the Northeast migrating to mainland India. Sarkar (2020) conducted a study that mentions that the out-migration for education from the Northeastern states is double the national average and ranges from 5.72% to 6.9% during the 2011 census. Studies and data like this suggest the trend of a strong desire among the youth to seek educational opportunities outside their regions.

Education is a right for every Indian citizen and is safeguarded by government policies. Still, these policies don't take into account the challenges that the diversity of the country brings. When Northeast Indians relocate, the challenges are not limited to those that a new space brings in, but also the discrimination from the community they're moving into. The Mongoloid features are what the people from the Northeast are reduced to as they move to mainland India as explored by Bitharai Narzary in his study on the Problems Faced by The Students from North-East India in Metropolitan Cities in 2014.

Based on the author's first-hand experiences as a young person from the Northeast part of the country, they've realized how deeply discrimination makes an impact on the mental well-being of an individual. As discrimination is perceived by an individual it can have an adverse impact on mental health. The recent trends being seen in research have given enough examples to help us validate that perceived discrimination is clearly associated with mental health issues like anxiety, eating disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder etc (Yu hu et al., 2022). There is a visible transition that can be noted, where discrimination moves into perceived discrimination, this then plays an integral in how the mental status of an individual is shaped which gives us further insight into why it's important to address discrimination to promote overall better mental well-being.

Perceived discrimination is best understood when looking at an individual's subjective perception of negative attitudes, judgements, or unfair treatment on the basis of specific

traits such as age, gender, ethnicity, or race. The researcher aims to study this variable in the context of the youth from the Northeast and their experience in other regions of the country because it involves building an understanding of how youth from this specific region subjectively interpret and experience discriminatory behaviours or treatment. The variable also focuses on how young people from the Northeast perceive and internalize instances of discrimination, which can vary based on cultural, social and historical factors that are unique to this population. Overall, studies shared findings that the transition from discrimination to perceived discrimination plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's mental health outcomes, highlighting the importance of addressing discrimination to promote better mental well-being and enable individuals to live to

their fullest potential. In an article in The Economic Times in December 2014, it was revealed that 54% of people from the Northeast of India feel that discrimination is a reality and out of which only 67% of people reported being victims of racial discrimination.

A study conducted on ethnic minority adolescents in the Netherlands showed that perceived discrimination has a significant impact on self esteem, this study revealed that personal self esteem is closely intertwined with personal discrimination and group self-esteem is linked with perceived discrimination. Discrimination has a very visible negative impact on self-esteem through a reduced sense of control and ethnic self-esteem. This suggests that discrimination can influence the self-esteem of individuals and therefore it's essential to address all discriminatory behaviour and promote positive self-esteem (Verkuyten M, 1998)

It's widely been observed with young people that feelings of perceived discrimination can lead to feelings of inadequacy, lower levels of self-worth and overall have a visible influence on self-esteem levels. Self-esteem and perceived share a relationship that is multi-faceted in nature. While looking at studies, it's been noted that perceived discrimination is often a stressor that has had a clear impact on an individual's perception of themselves and has a lasting impact on their self-esteem. (Yinyin Ji, 2022). Most young people are subjected to to a lot of negative biases when they're away from their native communities, these stereotypes can add to significant drops in their self-esteem levels the research aims to delve into this relationship between self-esteem and perceived discrimination.

Self-esteem as a variable, refers to how an individual evaluates their worth, value and capabilities subjectively. It's also a clear representation of the attitudes and perceptions an individual has towards themselves and is also the representation of self-worth, self-confidence and self-respect. As a variable, self-esteem is a critical psychological concept that has a very clear and significant influence on an individual's behaviour, emotions and mental health outcomes.

In this study, self-esteem acts as a mediator between academic motivation and perceived discrimination. The existing research gives us insight and enables us to build an understanding that individuals with higher self-esteem have higher chances of exhibiting positive behaviours and overall have better mental health outcomes and can cope more effectively with stressors like for example, discrimination concerning this study. This relationship between them illustrates the overall importance of self-esteem as a shield towards the negative impact of discrimination and further is able to foster academic persistence and achievement.

This study has a clear focus on youth and their academic motivation as it is critical in terms of the impact it has on influencing educational outcomes. The internal and/or environmental factors that originate, direct, intensify, and maintain behaviour linked to learning and education are referred to as academic motivation. It includes the motivation and inner desire that push people to pursue academic success and participate in learning activities. Academic motivation is an essential aspect that needs to be taken into consideration because of its highly influential nature on a student's goals, aspirations, and perseverance and helps an individual create a subjective evaluation of their competence (Koyuncuoğlu, 2021).

Through the research being conducted on academic motivation and self-esteem, the findings show that there is a positive correlation between self-esteem and academic motivation (Jäschke, 2021). Along with that, it's essential to remember that the concepts of discrimination and resilience are interconnected, especially for marginalized groups like people from the Northeast of India. This study unveils the complex relationship between discrimination and resilience where discrimination can negatively impact mental health and resilience may act as a protective factor.

Rationale
The Northeast of India has witnessed a consistent trend in the migration of young people to other parts of the country, one of the major reasons that young people relocate is in pursuit of educational and professional opportunities mixed with bigger aspirations of growth. When people migrate there are multiple challenges that they're expected to conquer in the new environments and unfamiliar social communities. The migration experience and adaptation skills do have a remarkable impact on the individual's mental well-being and overall aspirations. The existing research already illustrates how people from the Northeast are subjected to discrimination which does have a strong impact on the individual's self-esteem and can further hinder the academic motivation of these young people. This study investigates and understands the intersection of perceived discrimination, self-esteem and academic motivation. The findings from this study can help create safer spaces that are supportive and inclusive for young people migrating from their native regions, it also can help in developing interventions and supportive services.

METHODOLOGY
Objectives
1. Examine the impact of perceived discrimination on the self-esteem of youth in the seven sisters.
2. Investigate the relationship between perceived discrimination and academic motivation among the youth in Northeast India.
3. Look at the overall impact of perceived discrimination on the self-esteem and academic motivation of the youth.

Hypothesis
- H1 – There will be a positive relationship between perceived discrimination and self-esteem among the youth in Northeast India.
- H2 – There will be a positive relationship between perceived discrimination & academic motivation among the youth in Northeast India.
- H3 – There will be a significant impact of perceived discrimination on self-esteem among the youth in Northeast India.

- H4 – There will be a significant impact of perceived discrimination on academic motivation among the youth in Northeast India.

Sample
The study included 100 participants, both male and female. Purposive and random sampling was the technique.

Variables
Independent Variable
- IV1 - Perceived Discrimination

Dependent Variable
- DV1 - Self Esteem
- DV2 - Academic Motivation

Operation Definitions
Perceived Discrimination is "when people themselves perceive or experience discrimination. This may include events that are not discriminatory according to the law or scientific definitions. Similarly, it can exclude events that are discriminatory by law or scientific definition if they are not experienced as such by the person in question" (Andriessen I, et al., 2014)

Self Esteem according to the APA dictionary is "the degree to which the qualities and characteristics contained in one's self-concept are perceived to be positive. It reflects a person's physical self-image, view of their accomplishments and capabilities, and values and perceived success in living up to them, as well as the ways in which others view and respond to that person".

Academic Motivation. plays a crucial role in determining students' engagement and persistence in academic tasks, it encompasses the drive and desire to engage in learning activities, pursue academic goals, and strive for excellence (Cerino, 2014).

Measures
Participants answered a series of questions regarding their current age, gender, and the region they belonged from.
- **Perceived Discrimination Scale:** Developed by Williams, Yu, Jackson, & Anderson in 1997, A 20-item question that determines how frequently people believe others treat them unfairly. It addresses discrimination based on physical appearance, sexual orientation, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and other attributes. It has a reading level of sixth to eighth grade and takes three to five minutes to finish. The scoring procedure involves two subscales: Lifetime Discrimination and Daily Discrimination. For the Lifetime Discrimination subscale, respondents provide answers in a fill-in-the-blank format for questions Q1 to Q11. To calculate the score for this subscale, the number of items to which the respondent answered affirmatively, indicating occurrence one or more times, is summed. On the other hand, the Daily Discrimination subscale comprises questions Q12 to Q20, where respondents rate their experiences on a scale of 1 to 4 (often, sometimes, rarely, never). Notably, items Q12 to Q20 are reverse-scored, meaning the scoring is adjusted inversely to the direction of measurement. For instance, if a respondent

selects 2 on a 4-point scale for one of these items, the score is recalculated as (4 + 1) - 2 = 3. To calculate the score for this subscale, all responses are summed, resulting in a score range of 0 to 36.

- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:** A 10-item scale to assess self-esteem, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSS). It is the most used instrument for assessing self-esteem and a standard measurement in psychological studies. The scoring procedure involves reverse scoring items marked with an asterisk (*), where Strongly Agree (SA) corresponds to a score of 0, Agree (A) to 1, Disagree (D) to 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) to 3. These reversed scores are applied to the 10 designated items, and the resulting scores for each item are summed together.
- **Short Academic Motivation Scale:** The Short Academic Motivation Scale is a tool designed to gauge academic motivation, rooted in the principles of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes individuals' inherent need for autonomy. Comprising 14 items spread across seven sub-scales, the AMS offers a comprehensive assessment. Notably, the AMS captures both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations related to education. To score the AMS (Academic Motivation Scale), you add up the responses to the relevant items for each subscale and then divide by the number of items on that subscale. This calculation results in a score ranging from 1 to 7 for each subscale, where higher scores signify higher levels of motivation.

Research Design
This study employed random sampling and employed a quantitative correlational and re-design to investigate the research questions

Statistical Analysis
The research will employ SPSS software for data analysis. The hypothesis will be examined through descriptive statistics tests, utilizing Pearson correlation analysis and regression analysis for validation.

RESULTS
The interplay between perceived discrimination, self-esteem, and academic motivation among North East Indian youth living outside their native region constitutes a significant area of inquiry with implications for understanding socio-psychological dynamics in multicultural contexts. This chapter delves into the results and interpretations derived from an investigation into the complex relationships among these variables, aiming to illuminate the experiences and challenges faced by this demographic group. Through empirical investigation and statistical analysis, this chapter presents findings regarding the interrelationships among perceived discrimination, self-esteem, and academic motivation in North East Indian youth living outside their native region. By examining the extent to which perceived discrimination influences self-esteem and academic motivation, as well as potential moderating factors or mechanisms at play, this study seeks to unravel the intricate dynamics shaping the educational experiences and psychological well-being of this demographic group.

The table presents descriptive statistics for three variables: Self-Esteem, Academic Motivation, and Perceived Discrimination. Each variable's mean score, standard deviation, and sample size (N) are provided. For self-esteem, the average score is 23.04 with a standard deviation of approximately 6.49. Similarly, academic motivation has an average score of 32.685 with a standard deviation of about 7.22, while perceived discrimination has an

average score of 22.76 with a standard deviation of roughly 7.84. All variables have a sample size of 100. The statistics offer insights into the variability, central tendency, and sample representativeness of each variable, providing a foundation for further analysis of the relationships and dynamics among them. (see Table 1)

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of all variables

	Self-Esteem	**Academic motivation**	**Perceived discrimination**
Mean	23.0400	32.6850	22.7600
Standard deviation	6.48996	7.22253	7.84331
N	100	100	100

The table shows the findings of a Pearson's correlational study it examines the relationship between young people's self-esteem and their perceptions of discrimination in Northeast India. It is found that a statistically significant association (r =.435) links self-esteem and perceived discrimination at the 0.01 (2-tailed) level. This suggests that youngsters in Northeast India have a favourable association between their self-esteem and their perception of prejudice. (see table 2)

Table 2 Pearson correlation analysis of the relationship between perceived discrimination and self-esteem among the youth in Northeast India.

	Perceived discrimination	**Self-Esteem**
Self-Esteem	.435**	1
	0.000*	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

H1 – There is a positive relationship between perceived discrimination and self-esteem Hypothesis (H1), which suggests a positive correlation between self-esteem and perceived prejudice, is accepted. Thus, the study suggests that youth in Northeast India are likely to have higher self-esteem in proportion to reported prejudice.

The table shows the outcomes of the Pearson correlation study that examined at how academic motivation and the perception of prejudice were related among young people in Northeastern India. Perceived discrimination and academic motivation are statistically significantly correlated (-.353) at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 Pearson correlation analysis of relationship between perceived discrimination and academic motivation among the youth in Northeast India.

	Perceived discrimination	**Academic motivation**
Academic motivation	-.353**	1
	0.000*	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

H2 – There is a positive relationship between perceived discrimination & academic motivation among the youth in Northeast India.

A youth's level of academic desire is negatively correlated with their perception of discrimination (r=-.353) in Northeastern India. The above information reveals that students' academic motivation tends to decline in correlation with the perceived severity of prejudice.

In simple terms, those who experience more prejudice may be less motivated to succeed in school.

We adopt the Hypothesis (H2) that suggests a negative correlation between academic desire and perceived prejudice.

Table 4 Impact of perceived discrimination on young people's self-esteem in Northeastern India

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
0.466	0.217	0.209	5.77067		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	906.379	1	906.379	27.218	0.000
Residual	3263.461	98	33.301		
Total	4169.84	99			

H3 – There is a significant impact of perceived discrimination on self-esteem among the youth in Northeast India.

The regression model is considered to be statistically significant at the chosen level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) since the p-value is 0.000 and the F-value is 27.218. Since the p-value linked to the F-statistic is smaller than the selected significance threshold (0.05). As a result, we agree with the Hypothesis (H3), which states that young people in Northeast India self-esteem is significantly affected by their perceptions of discrimination. This provides more evidence that young people's perceptions of prejudice have a substantial impact on their self-esteem in this area.

Table 5 Impact of perceived discrimination on Academic motivation among the youth in Northeast India

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
0.353	0.124	0.115	6.79324		
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	641.808	1	641.808	13.908	0.000
Residual	4522.519	98	46.148		
Total	5164.328	99			

H4 – There is a significant impact of perceived discrimination on academic motivation among the youth in Northeast India.

The regression model's overall significance is evaluated using the F-statistic. The calculated p-value is 0.000 and the F-value is 13.908, which means that the regression model is significant at the selected significance level (often $\alpha = 0.05$). Thus, we agree H4, which states that the perception of discrimination has a substantial effect on the academic motivation of young people in Northeast India. This provides more evidence that young people in this area are less motivated to succeed academically when they feel discriminated against.

DISCUSSION

Insights into the socio-psychological dynamics of the North East Indian adolescents residing outside their original region were gained from the examination of the connection among perceived discrimination, self-esteem, and academic motivation. The findings provide insight into the experiences and difficulties encountered by these people in multicultural settings by revealing intricate connections.

First, a more complex view of the ways discrimination affects the mental health of young North East Indians is suggested by the positive relationship between the self-esteem and perceived discrimination. In contrast to the hypothesis that one would have decreased self-esteem after experiencing discrimination, the results show that self-esteem rises in proportion to perceived discrimination. Resilience mechanisms or the reinforcing of one's identity in the face of prejudice are two possible explanations for this surprising association. It suggests that some people may be able to withstand the damaging impacts of prejudice on their sense of self-worth by finding strength in their cultural identity or in local support systems.

Second, perceived discrimination has a negative effect on North East Indian youth's desire to pursue higher education, as seen by the negative association found between reported discrimination and academic motivation. The results imply that people are less likely to be motivated to participate in academic activities when they perceive higher levels of prejudice. This may be explained by the psychological anguish discrimination causes, which lowers interest in and commitment to academic objectives. Discrimination may also make it more difficult to get chances or resources that are necessary for academic achievement, which lowers motivation even more.

Furthermore, the regression analysis results demonstrate how much perceived discrimination affects North East Indian youth's self-esteem and academic motivation. The regression models show that perceived discrimination contributes significantly to the variation in academic motivation and self-esteem, suggesting that it plays a significant role in determining the psychological health and academic achievements of this population.

Overall, these results highlight the complex dynamics at work in multicultural settings, where adolescents from North East India who are residing outside of their home area view discrimination as a significant factor impacting the associated domains of academic motivation and self-esteem. Understanding these processes is crucial in order to establish therapies and support systems that are intended to cultivate resilience, encourage a positive self-perception, and enhance academic involvement within underrepresented adolescent demographics. In order to address the socio-psychological difficulties that North East Indian youth in multicultural settings face, future research could go deeper into examining the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that mediate or moderate the relationships identified in this study. This would ultimately lead to more focused and successful interventions.

CONCLUSION

The exploration into the interplay of perceived discrimination, self-esteem, and academic motivation among North East Indian youth living outside their native region has yielded insightful findings, shedding light on the socio-psychological dynamics within this demographic group. Through empirical investigation and statistical analysis, this study aimed to unravel the complexities of the relationships among these variables, offering

implications for understanding the educational experiences and psychological well-being of North East Indian youth in multicultural contexts.

The descriptive statistics gave a fundamental knowledge of the variables' central tendency, variability, and sample representativeness. The distribution of answers within the sample of 100 participants was shown by the mean scores and standard deviations for perceived discrimination (M = 22.76, SD = 7.84), academic motivation (M = 32.685, SD = 7.22), and self-esteem (M = 23.04, SD = 6.49).

Significant correlations between North East Indian youth's perceptions of discrimination and their self-esteem and academic motivation were revealed by the correlation analyses. The first prediction was challenged by the positive correlation (r =.435, p <.01) between self-esteem and perceived discrimination, indicating young people's self-esteem grew in connection with perceived discrimination. Likewise, there was a negative association (r = -.353, p <.01) between academic motivation and perceived discrimination, suggesting that low levels of academic motivation were linked to high levels of perceived discrimination.

These results were confirmed by further study using regression analysis. The results of the regression model that looked at how perceived discrimination affected self-esteem among North East Indian teenagers showed that there was a significant influence (F(1, 98) = 27.218, p<.001) of perceived discrimination on self-esteem. Similarly, a significant statistical impact (F (1, 98) = 13.908, p <.001) was found in the regression model evaluating the relationship between academic motivation and perceived discrimination, suggesting that academic motivation levels within this demographic group were strongly influenced by perceived discrimination.

The results of this study highlight the complex dynamics that young people from North East India who are residing outside of their home region are experiencing. These people showed a complex connection between discrimination, self-esteem, and academic drive despite experiencing perceived discrimination. Remarkably, perceived discrimination had a negative correlation with academic motivation but a good correlation with self-esteem. These findings demonstrate how North East Indian teenagers use adaptive mechanisms and resilience to overcome prejudice and retain their academic goals and psychological well-being. Implementing support and intervention systems to improve this demographic group's educational experiences and sociopsychological outcomes in multicultural contexts requires an understanding of these dynamics.

Implication and Limitations
The study highlights the impact of perceived discrimination on self-esteem and academic motivation of young people from Northeast who are living away from their native regions.

This study suggests that young adults who have grown up in the Northeast and have moved away from their native region have visibly shown how they've developed resilience mechanisms in response to perceived discrimination. It also highlights the importance of fostering a strong sense of cultural identity and awareness about the different cultural groups that co-exist in India and also creating space to provide support for marginalized groups.

The findings of this study offer valuable insight into developing changes at a policy level for education institutions to address discrimination, promote diversity and inclusion and provide enough resources and support that set students from the Northeast up for success, it's

essential to have these tailor-made interventions because perceived discrimination tends to have a detrimental impact on the academic motivation of young people who have migrated from the Northeast to other parts of the country in pursuit of academic and career growth opportunities.

Through this study, we must note that this study's findings are limited to the sample of Northeast Indians living outside their native region and the cross-sectional design can only provide a snapshot of the relationship between perceived discrimination, self-esteem and academic motivation at a single point in time, a longitudinal study could however provide a better in-depth insight into the long-term impact of these variables.

Along with that, The accuracy of the data may be impacted by response biases like social desirability bias or recall bias when self-report measures are used to gauge factors like perceived discrimination, self-esteem, and academic motivation. Lastly, Language and cultural differences among participants may affect the interpretation of survey items, potentially leading to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the constructs under investigation.

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Conflict of Interest
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