



## Ethnic discrimination and self-esteem of Santal adolescents

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### Abstract

Different ethnic groups comprise around 1.6 million of the national population. Santals, the second largest ethnic community are mostly found in the northern part of Bangladesh. With their own distinct language and culture, these ethnic groups have significantly enriched the entire culture of the country. However, lower socio-economic conditions along with a different language and culture hinders free intermingling of these people with mainstream population and leads ethnic discrimination. Perception of discrimination lowers the psychological wellbeing, and in the long run undermines self-esteem, of the individual. Mental wellbeing is recognized as a part of health, according to the definition of health accepted by World Health Organization. In 2017, a cross sectional study was undertaken to find out the relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and self-esteem of Santal adolescents. A total of 159 Santal adolescents, boys and girls of age 11– 17 years from 3 secondary schools of Dinajpur district were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire containing questions on perceived ethnic discrimination and self-esteem by using Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire (PEDQ) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSS). Female were higher in number (66%) than male. Half of them were below age 14 years (49.7%) and 40% studied in boarding school. Large proportion of respondents' parents were illiterate (father 49.7%, mother 59.7%). Nearly half of the fathers (47.8%) earned through agricultural work and mothers were found to be housewives (65.4%). Result indicated all most all respondents stated that, they experienced ethnic discrimination. Among them older adolescents perceived higher ethnic discrimination than younger ( $p=0.070$ ). Again it was higher among the respondents studying in boarding school ( $p=0.000$ ) than those who lived with their parents. Self-esteem is higher in younger adolescents ( $p=0.037$ ) and females ( $p=0.000$ ). Other variables like parents' and respondents' academic attainment, monthly expenditure of the respondents were found associated with level of respondents self-esteem ( $p=0.006$ ,  $p=0.007$ ,  $p=0.020$  respectively). Multiple linear regressions indicated sex and monthly personal expenditure of respondent can predict the levels of self-esteem. Correlation analysis showed that self-esteem was positively associated with higher perceived discrimination. Besides influence of perception of ethnic discrimination on self-esteem, further studies need to be

conducted to discover factors related to psychological health among the members of ethnic groups.

### INTRODUCTION

**Potential Moderators of the Effects of Racial/Ethnic Discrimination during Adolescence** In addition to examining the extent to which perceived racial/ethnic discrimination is a key driver of well-being, our meta-analytic study also places attention on whether these links are conditioned by characteristics of the adolescent, the study, and the discrimination measure.

#### Race/ethnicity and gender

To fully understand the impact of discrimination on adolescents from diverse backgrounds, we employ an intersectionality framework to investigate variations in the developmental implications of discrimination by race/ethnicity and gender and their interactions. This framework acknowledges the multiple social identities that adolescents possess and the pernicious effects of possessing multiple stigmatized identities, while also asserting that the salience and potential stigma associated with identities is context dependent. Race/ethnicity is a primary source of social stratification that delineates Whites from their racial/ethnic minority counterparts. Qualitative work suggests that experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination may vary across groups, and quantitative research indicates that the effects of racial/ethnic discrimination may look quite different based on the race/ethnicity of the reporter/target. The intersectionality suggests that investigating differential effects by race/ethnicity or gender alone provides an incomplete picture given the multiple identities adolescents possess. As such, we integrate race-by-gender interactions into moderation analyses.

#### Developmental period

Adolescence is a developmental period rife with physical, social, and cognitive changes, but how the links between discrimination and well-being shift with advances in thinking and identity development is unclear. Advances in formal operational thought, deductive and inductive reasoning skills, the ability to understand abstract concepts (e.g., egalitarianism, civil liberties and rights), and the engagement in social perspective taking all facilitate young people's thinking about race/ethnicity. It may be that as cognitive development unfolds, it leaves early adolescents especially vulnerable to the long-term effects of social marginalization, as they are only gradually acquiring the more sophisticated cognitions (i.e., formal operational thinking) and adaptive coping skills, such as social support seeking and primary control coping, that help them better manage their experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination. In contrast, as young people age they have more well-formed notions of their own ethnic identity and how others view their racial/ethnic group and they are more likely to encounter discriminatory treatment all of which may make late adolescents more vulnerable to discrimination's negative effects.

#### Timing of retrospective measurement

Discrimination experiences vary according to the timeframe participants are asked to use. Although reports of discrimination within one's lifetime are rather common for racial/ethnic minority adolescents, rates of discrimination reported on any given day.

Parallel to this, the effects of perceived discrimination also may vary based on the referenced time. Some measures of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination either specify lifetime experiences or are nonspecific in their designation of time, whereas other studies ask adolescents to reflect on their experiences in a more time-limited way (i.e., last two weeks, last six months). To the extent that the effects of discrimination on adolescents' well-being are cumulative in nature, then perceived racial/ethnic discrimination reported over one's lifetime would likely be more potent for adolescent well-being than more recent experiences of discrimination (e.g., discriminatory treatment over the past three months). This is consistent with cumulative risk theories of child development which suggest that risks accumulate and compound across time, compromising children and adolescents' growth and development.

#### **Specific versus general perpetrator of discrimination**

The majority of studies examining racial/ethnic discrimination during adolescence use general measures, but limited evidence suggests that the effects of racial/ethnic discrimination may vary depending on both the perpetrator and the outcome under study. For example, the relations between academic outcomes and racial/ethnic discrimination are often stronger when considering teachers versus peers as the perpetrators. Similarly, differential relations across perpetrators have also been observed for associations between racial/ethnic discrimination and both self-esteem and depressive symptoms all of which suggest needed attention to variation by perpetrator. Consistent with this empirical work, bio ecological theory asserts that proximal contexts of adolescent development exert stronger influences on developmental domains most closely tied to the context

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