

Running Head: PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS  
WITHIN IRISH COLLEGES



Perceived Discrimination of International Students within Irish Colleges

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### **Abstract**

The present study aimed to investigate perceptions of discrimination towards International students within Irish colleges. The study examined perceived discrimination from both the perspectives of Irish students and International students in third level education. This study explored levels of perceived discrimination being higher amongst International students than Irish Students. A questionnaire was administered to participants (n=114) through an online link posted to the researchers' social media as well as being emailed to third level education institutes. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of demographic questions. The second part assessed perceived discrimination using adjusted subscales of the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students. Likert scales were used with higher scores indicating a higher level of perceived discrimination and lower scores showing lower levels of perceived discrimination. Results showed that International students scored higher on the perceived discrimination questions than did Irish students. Findings support International students being more aware of discrimination within colleges. The findings also provide an understanding of discrimination within an Irish college setting from two perspectives.

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## **Introduction**

As the number of international students in Ireland continues to increase it raises the question of awareness regarding ethnic and racial discrimination within Irish colleges.

According to the Economic and Social Research Institute (ERSI) the number non-European Economic Area (EEA) students increased by 45% from 2013 to 2017 with nearly 18,500 students attending third level education (Groarke & Durst, 2019). Non-EEA students account for more than half of all international students in Ireland. The top five countries that contributing to full time international students in Ireland are the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Canada (Groarke & Durst, 2019). During the early 2000's diversity issues became a main concern for colleges and various studies were carried out regarding perceived discrimination towards international students. While studies in the US have seen the number of international students enrolling in their institutions drop, Ireland has seen an increase. The United States were even deemed to have "the foreign student problem" as they heavily relied on international students but could not create sustainable implementations to provide for international students (Rhodes & Smart, 1996, p. 142). Perhaps Ireland could have a similar situation in which as numbers of International students increase, we do not accommodate or make any changes for these large increases to our society. Even though there is a huge number of international students and it is increasing yearly in Ireland, the literature on international students and discrimination in Ireland is limited therefore this review contains other national studies.

Discrimination can be defined as a judgement that a person has been treated with prejudice because of their racial and ethnic membership (Major Quinton & Mc Coy, 2002). Perceived discrimination can be understood as the perception of being treated unfairly by others due to ones own personal attributes (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999).

Therefore, the difference between discrimination and perceived discrimination can be seen as subjective versus objective. Acts of discrimination are objective and perceived discrimination can be seen as subjective, as a person may be influenced by their own emotions (Meyer, 2003). Some studies describe the discrimination of international students as direct or in direct neo-racism. (Spears, 1999; Hervik, 2004). Spears describes and defines neo-racism as follows

Neo-racism rationalises the subordinate of people of colour on the basis of culture, which is of course acquired through acculturation within an ethnic group, while traditional racism rationalises it fundamentally in terms of biology. Neo-racism is still racism in that it functions to maintain racial hierarchies of oppression

Madubata et al., (2019) discussed two forms of discrimination, overt and subtle discrimination. Overt discrimination is obvious and undisguised discriminatory behaviours. These behaviours can include unconcealed prejudice, victimizing, slurs and explicit disparities towards different races and ethnicities. These can be physical or otherwise. Examples of overt discrimination can include being verbally harassed or physically harassed based on race and ethnicity. On the contrary, subtle forms of discrimination are not nearly as blatant as overt ways. These expressions may be known as microaggressions. This form of discrimination may be expressed in verbal and non-verbal conversations that have underlying prejudice, inequities, and unfair treatment towards individuals of ethnic minority groups.

Predictors of perceived discrimination can be ascribed (heredity/aging process such gender, race, height, and appearance), achieved (performance, skills, effort) or psychosocial

(psychological and social development e.g loneliness and social integration) characteristics. Older adults are less likely to report perceived discrimination than younger adults (Kessler et al., 1999). This is also consistent with reporting perceived discrimination results in the workplace (Chou & Choi, 2011). Students of colour are more likely to report higher levels of perceived discrimination than European and American students (Cokley, Hall-Clark, & Hicks, 2011). Gender within ethnic groups can also determine higher rates of discrimination. A cross-national European study also showed that men are more likely to report ethnic discrimination. (Ayalon, 2014). Ye, (2006) found that male Asian students reportedly experience more discrimination than female Asian students. However, results have shown that in regard to reporting perceived discrimination, women within ethnic minorities report higher levels of perceived discrimination that in contrast to men in ethnic minorities (Barnes et al., 2004; Carr et al., 2000; Kessler et al., 1999). There are contradictory results in relation to this. Several studies suggest that women of colour experience the most discrimination (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Sanchez-Hucles, 1997; Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2008). However, Williams (2003) would argue that men of colour are more likely than women colour to receive discrimination. The results of this study were also supported by Arai, Bursell, & Nekby, 2008. Stigma consciousness also plays a role as a predictor of perceived discrimination. Individuals who are stigma conscious “focus on their stereotyped status and believe it pervades their life experiences” (Pinel et al. 2005 p, 482). This suggests that if a person expects to be stereotyped, they are more likely to perceive acts as discriminatory (Pinel, 1999). This is important as Ayalon (2014) found that in European countries the interpretation of discrimination was more important than actual discrimination. In relation to achieved characteristic, Gary (1995) suggests that being racially conscious is associated with higher levels of perceived ethnic discrimination among ethnic minorities.

The stereotype expectation mentioned above has similarities to the prototype theory which has been reported as a way of understanding perceived discrimination (Harris, Lievens & Van Hoye, 2004). The prototype model is based on widely held beliefs, expectations and norms, regarding the infringement of social responsibilities can dictate perceived discrimination. In the instance where individuals have preconceived expectations of who commits acts of discrimination (perpetrator) and who receives acts of discrimination (victim). These notions of perpetrator and victim will determine what will be judged as discriminatory. For example, an individual in a position historically deemed to be powerful is more likely to be judged as discriminating than a person who is in a position not seen as being historically powerful (Harris, Lievens & Van Hoye, 2004). A recent study developed a new theoretical framework to identify the underlying source of discrimination (Bohren, Imas & Rosenberg, 2019). They identify the source of discrimination in 2 parts. Firstly, how discrimination evolves dynamically and secondly how discrimination counters to the level of subjectivity in judgement. Their theoretical model focuses on evaluators gaining an understanding of their workers ability based on other evaluators appraisals of them. This theoretical analysis shows that based on accurately specified belief-based partiality, discrimination does not dynamically reverse, also this belief based partiality decreases as judgement specifications become more objective. Partiality being two measurements that show observable patterns of discrimination and rely on an underlying source. In difference to this, if the discrimination is preference based the levels remain unchanging in regards to subjectivity in judgement. However, Bohren, Imas & Rosenberg, 2019 show that discrimination can be reversed if evaluators have biased stereotypes. The authors also carried out experiments in which they explored their theoretical framework which results supported.

Racial discrimination is an important topic because of the impact it can have on a person or ethnic groups mental health. Within the literature, perceived discrimination is

emphasized as a psychosocial stressor (Clark et al., 1999; Mays, Cochran, & Barnes, 2007). One of the most prevalent concern is the psychological distress it can cause. Moradi & Risco (2006) examined Latinos and Asian Americans and found that Latinos perceived discrimination was linked to higher frequencies of psychological distress. The link between perceived discrimination and depressive symptoms was also consistent across various studies. (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Araujo & Borrell 2006). Discrimination can even lead to anxiety and depression (Moradi & Risco, 2006; Mossakowski, 2003; Noh & Kaspar 2003). While studying the impact of perceived racial discrimination on the mental health of Asian American and Latino college students, results not only supported a link between discrimination and psychological distress, clinical depression, and anxiety (state and trait anxiety) but also for suicide ideation. Madubata et al., (2019) suggests that there is also a link between subtle discrimination and suicide ideation. The results also indicate younger international college students are more at risk of psychological distress (Hwang & Goto, 2008). In some countries, discrimination can even lead towards violent behaviour, for example, in the Ukraine and in Japan (MacWilliams, 2004; Brender 2004). Bevis, (2002) found that specifically for women whose culture was to wear a sari or veil struggled with inclusion on campus resulting in negative college experiences. Cole and Ahmadi, (2003) found results consistent to the 2002 study. Also, according to Bevis, (2002) it is up to the international student to integrate themselves into their new host culture.

Knowing the effect perceived discrimination can have on International students is concerning as this gives rise to a negative racial climate for many racial or ethnic minority groups in a college setting. This can include feeling invisible, racial segregation, and low expectations which can have a negative impact on mental health (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Rong & Brown, (2002) believe the main goal or aims in all colleges and universities should be to inform their multi-ethnic student populations that they are multiculturally

competent and can successfully function in their society. Also, with the number of international students, many institutes of higher education promote internationalisation. Internationalisation can be understood as the integration of international culture into the purpose/functions or delivery of higher education (Knight, 2003, p. 2). Studies suggest this rarely happens. A 2004 qualitative study found that white teachers in Western institutions would question the ability of their African female students. The professors would go as far as suggesting they take extra classes for help and mocking their accents (Beoku-Betts, 2004). This not only demonstrates the difficulty of integration but also the lack of awareness by educators. This lack of successful integration can negatively impact students. If students of ethnic minority groups receive insufficient support from their social networks, they are more likely to drop out (Meeuwisse et al. 2010). Also, there is a link between students who are disconnected from their academic and social life and students experiencing considerable amounts of stress (Russell et al. 2010). Social and academic integration is vital for international students as students who have successfully integrated and feel comfortable with their fellow students and teachers as well as participating in extracurricular activities are more likely to graduate (Severiens and Wolff, 2008). An Australian study consisting of 900 international students found that 41% of those students experienced a substantial amount of stress which can be attributed to perceived discrimination, cultural shocks, or homesickness (Russell et al. 2010).

Simply being born in the country or having their family live there for many generations is not enough to avoid discrimination. Asian Americans who have come from similar situations continued to experience forms of discrimination, including the “perpetual foreigner” meaning they are not exotically foreign nor are they being classified as American (Yu 2006). A study conducted to examine college students’ attitudes towards racial discrimination found some interesting insights and results (Biasco, Goodwin & Vitale, 2001).

Firstly, the research stated that White ethnicities perceived discrimination lower than Blacks, Hispanics and Asians did. 81% agreed racial discrimination is a learned behaviour while 73% agreed many people experience racial hostility but do not openly express it. 41% of students believe uneducated people racially discriminate more than those who are educated. Finally, 64.62% agreed that racial discrimination is not as prevalent in recent years, it remains problematic to society. There have however, been suggestions as to what can reduce racial bias. Physical proximity has been supported as a method of reducing racial bias (Marmaros & Sacerdote, 2006; Dovidio, Eller & Hewstone, 2011). Richeson, & Nussbaum, (2004) conducted a study on multiculturalism and colour-blindness in relation to discrimination. Multiculturalism is the idea that race groupings are not important and should not play a role when making decisions, for example job applicants). Contrasting to colour-blindness, multiculturalism is the belief that racial group and their differences are important and should be acknowledged and even proposes celebrating them. Their study suggests increased exposure to multi-cultural education can reduce discrimination. This method would be ideal for colleges and universities, especially those with large numbers of international students.

There have been few studies conducted in which the marginalisation of international students by institutions and their individuals have been addressed (Lee, 2005). This study aims to advance the literature by investigating perceived discrimination within Irish colleges and if international students have higher levels of perceived discriminated than that of their fellow Irish students. This is important as although discrimination as a whole is not as big of a problem as it has been in the past, it continues to be an obstacle for society to overcome. Perceived discrimination has been widely studied in various countries, mostly America, however, there is limited information regarding discrimination within Irish colleges (Lee,& Rice, 2007; Poyrazli, & Lopez, 2007; Steinfeldt, Reed, & Clint, 2010). Considering the vast amount of international students in Irish colleges, this is an important area that needs more

attention (Groarke & Durst, 2019). Many of these discrimination studies have been conducted in America, yet Americas number of international students is decreasing while Irelands numbers continue to rise. Perhaps one of the causes is lack of awareness from Irish students or in any culture that has cross cultural integrations. Furthermore, very few, if any, studies examine discrimination from the perception of people native to the country they are studying. Evidence suggest that international students and national students will not have the same levels of discrimination. Does the awareness or lack of awareness of the other students contribute to the problem? By inquiring into different perspectives, we can possibly help the problem. The research question for this study questioned How do International students and Irish students view discrimination as perceived by International students in Irish colleges. The hypothesis for this study is International students will be associated with higher levels of perceived discrimination.

## Methods

### Participants

The research sample consisted of 118 college students. However, 4 of these participants were excluded due to unanswered questions. The remaining sample consisted of 114 participants (n= 114), 51 of which were International Students and the remaining 63 were Irish Students. Convenience sampling was used as the survey was uploaded to the researchers social media accounts. Colleges were also emailed asking permission to send the survey to be distributed to college students. 59% of participants were female while the remaining 40% were male. The majority of international students were South Asian (18%) and Black (12%). Other ethnicities included East Asian, Latino, Indian, Chinese, and Mixed. The research population included students enrolled in Irish colleges. Participants ages ranged from 18 – 33.

### Measures

A questionnaire was created using google docs (see appendix D). The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions and subscales of the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). Demographics included age, sex, ethnicity, country of origin, type of student (if international, how many years they have been in Ireland), and what college they are currently attending. The answer options were multiple choice, dropdown boxes for those with a large amount of choices (country of origin and college they are enrolled in). There was also an option to type in an answer (age and years in Ireland). Questions also come with a prefer not to say option (Gender)

The scale being used is The Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students. The current study used an adjusted version of the scale. ASSIS consists of 36-item, to be rated on 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = unsure, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 =strongly agree) with higher scores indicating greater acculturative stress.

The ASSIS consists of twelve subscales which include the following Perceived Discrimination, Homesickness, Perceived Hate/Rejection, Fear, Stress due to Change/Culture Shock, Guilt, Social Isolation, Threat to Cultural Identity, Inferiority, Anger/Disappointment, Mistrust, Communication Problems, (see appendix E). The adjusted scale would use eleven of the twelve subscales (Perceived Discrimination, Perceived Hate/Rejection, Fear, Stress due to Change/Culture Shock, Social Isolation, Threat to Cultural Identity, Inferiority, Anger/Disappointment, Mistrust, Communication Problems. This scale has also been modified to make it suitable for Irish students. “I” and “me” pronouns have been changed to “international students” For example, one item on the standard scale is “Many opportunities are denied to me.” On the adjusted scale it will say ‘Many opportunities are denied to me /others’ (see appendix E). The scale being used in the study have been widely used in the past and shown to be valid and reliable. The scale being used is The Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). Poyrazli et al., (2004) and Yeh & Inose, (2003) reported that items using Cronbach’s alpha had an internal consistency for this scale ranging from .87 to .95. The Cronbach’s alpha was also reported to be 0.94 (Sandhu and Asrabadi 1998).

### **Design**

The current study used a quantitative approach, using a cross sectional survey based on Irish colleges and universities. A within subject’s design is used as both sets of participants were exposed to the same scales and questionnaire. Perceived discrimination is the dependent variable and type of student (International or Irish) are the independent variables. Any students enrolled in higher education in Ireland will be invited to participate in a survey through an online link. Independent sample t-test were conducted in order to test the hypothesis. A one way between groups anova was also conducted to investigate further how ethnic groups rate perceived discrimination towards International students.

## **Procedure**

A link to the survey was posted to the researchers' social media. Colleges were also emailed, asking permission to be sent the survey with some information regarding the survey. The survey would then be sent onto the institution if they asked. A participant information leaflet outlining the aim of the study and assuring the participants of anonymity was included with the survey (see appendix A). An informed consent form was then presented after the study information leaflet. One consent was gained participants were given the survey (see appendix B). The survey consists of two components. Firstly, participants will answer a short questionnaire taking less than five minutes. This is a multiple-choice questionnaire consisting of demographic questions. Questions include age, gender, ethnicity, country or origin, type of student, years living in Ireland, current college they are attending and what year in college they are in (see appendix D). Once these demographic questions were completed, participants moved on to complete a Perceived Discrimination subscale (ASSIS; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). Participants will be asked to rate items on a 5-point Likert scale). Higher scores on the ASSIS indicate greater perceived racial discrimination. This scale will also be adjusted to make it suitable for Irish students. For example, one item on the standard scale is "Many opportunities are denied to me." On the adjusted scale it will say 'Many opportunities are denied to me /others' (see appendix E). Participants will be asked to rate items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (see appendix E). Once completed participants will be presented with a debriefing sheet (see appendix C).

## **Ethical Considerations**

Voluntary Participation was communicated using the study information leaflet and the informed consent form (see appendix A). As there were no rewards or remuneration offered for participating in this study, it ensures participants took part on their own behalf and not as

a result of bribery. Participants were aware of all potential risks, however minimal, to make sure they make an informed decision to consent. As this was an online survey there was physical risks to participants. The participants had the right to withdraw at any time and all the data that would have been entered thus far was automatically lost. The survey was completely confidential as personal information such as names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses were not required. Also, IP addresses were not be stored.

Participants were provided with all or as much information before and after the survey. In any case of confusion or distress after the survey participants were given a debriefing sheet explaining the study and their involvement (see appendix C). They were also provided with contact details for the researcher and supervisor for questions or support as result of distress. Support services were included for participants.

## Results

Descriptive Statistics for gender, ethnicity, country of origin, type of student, and college are presented in Table 1. The current data sample consisted of 114 participants ( $n = 114$ ).

Table 1

### *Descriptive Statistics for Categorical Variables*

Variable	Frequency	Valid %
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	67	58.8
Male	45	39.5
Other	2	.18
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	59	52.2
Mixed	2	1.8
Other	2	1.8
East Asian	1	.9
South Asian	20	17.7
Black	13	11.5
Latino	5	4.4
Indian	7	6.2
Chinese	4	3.5
<b>Country of Origin</b>		
Ireland	51	44.7
Poland	2	1.8
Austria	1	.9
Japan	1	.9

Canada	3	2.6
United States of America	6	5.3
Lithuania	1	.9
Nigeria	3	2.6
Burundi	2	1.8
Iraq	1	.9
Sudan	3	2.6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	.9
Australia	2	1.8
Pakistan	8	7
Egypt	1	.9
Malaysia	8	7
India	7	6.1
Brazil	4	3.5
Mexico	1	.9
Croatia	1	.9
Latvia	1	.9
Saudi Arabia	1	.9
China	4	3.5
Philippines	1	.9
<b>Type of Student</b>		
Irish	63	55.3
International	51	44.7
<b>College</b>		
National College of Ireland	8	7.0

Dublin City University	39	33.3
Dundalk Institute of Technology	9	7.9
ICD Business School	8	7.0
Mary Immaculate College	1	.9
Maynooth University	18	15.8
National College of Art and Design	1	.9
Trinity College Dublin	5	4.4
University College Cork	4	3.5
University College Dublin	20	17.5
Dublin Business School	1	.9
Marino Institute of Education	1	.9

Descriptive Statistics for participants for ages and years spent in Ireland are presented in Table 2. The mean, standard deviations and range for each of these continuous variables have been

Table 2

*Descriptive statistics for continuous variables*

Variable	<i>M</i> [95% CI]	<i>SD</i>	Range
Age	22.15 [21.63, 22.66]	2.77	18-36
Years in Ireland	3.66[3.21, 4.12]	1.65	2-13

### **Inferential Statistics**

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare levels of Perceived Discrimination between International students and Irish Students. There was a significant

difference in scores, with International Students ( $M = 130.4$ ,  $SD = 20.4$ ) scoring significantly higher than Irish students ( $M = 117.99$ ,  $SD = 21.23$ ),  $t(111) = -2.18$ ,  $p = .0314$ , two-tailed. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =  $-12.42$ , 95% CI:  $-20.25$  to  $-4.58$ ) showed a medium effect size (Cohen's  $d = .59$ ). The null hypothesis is rejected as the significant difference is  $.002$  ( $p < .002$ ).

A one-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were differences in levels of perceived discrimination scores within in the different ethnicities. Participants were divided into nine groups according to their ethnicity (White, Mixed, Other, South Asian, East Asian, Latino, Black, Chinese, and Indian). There was a statistically significant difference in levels of total perceived discrimination scores for the ethnic groups,  $F(8, 103) = 3.43$ ,  $p = .002$ . The effect size indicated a very large difference in perceived discrimination scores (eta squared =  $.27$ ). It should be noted that Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test were not performed due to there being one participant in the East Asian group. However, the following data was obtained. Whites had the lowest mean scores ( $M = 115.12$ ,  $SD = 22.89$ ) along with Others ( $M = 114$ ,  $SD = .00$ ). Indians ( $M = 139.57$ ,  $SD = 15.51$ ) scored the highest, they were not significantly higher than Latinos ( $M = 139$ ,  $SD = 7.21$ ). South Asians ( $M = 134.35$ ,  $SD = 13.66$ ) followed excluding East Asian which only had one participant ( $M = 138$ ), followed by Mixed ( $M = 132.5$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) Blacks ( $M = 131.92$ ,  $SD = 4.97$ ), and Chinese ( $M = 123.78$ ,  $SD = 24.66$ ).

## Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate perceptions of discrimination towards International students from the perspectives of International students and Irish students within Irish colleges. Specifically, this study was interested in finding out if International students perceived discrimination to be higher than Irish students would. Results found that International students scored significantly higher on the perceived discrimination scale than Irish students did, supporting the hypothesis. Furthermore, results indicated that Indian students and Latino students perceived discrimination higher than any other ethnic group. Interestingly, White students did not have the lowest perceptions within this sample group. 'Other' scored the lowest, however as the ethnicities was not specified a valid interpretation cannot be drawn from it. Mixed and Black students perceived discrimination to be higher than Chinese students. Stigma consciousness or prototype theory could be a plausible explanation for the significant difference in scores between the two types of students. For example, in prototype theory where individuals will already have assumptions of who commits acts of discrimination (perpetrator) and who receives acts of discrimination (victim). These ideas of perpetrator and victim will determine what they will judge as discriminatory. Put that into the context of this study, International students migrating to an Irish college may view who commits acts of discrimination as Irish students and who receives acts of discrimination as ethnic minorities. Perhaps as it is widely known that students of ethnic minority are more likely to be discriminated against, they may perceive certain behaviours are discriminatory towards them. Also, since the students were not scoring based on their own experiences but what they believed to be accurate reflection of what International students receive. As Irish students in Irish colleges do not expect to be discriminated against or do not experience discrimination within a college setting, they would not be familiar with others being

discriminated against. On the contrary, it is possible for International students to answer according to their own personal experiences of discrimination.

The results of this current study are consistent with and provide support for previous literature on discrimination amongst students and within a college setting. Previous research has also found that International students will report higher levels of perceived discrimination than non- International students (Poyrazli, & Lopez, 2007). Likewise, prior studies on this topic have found similar results concerning discrimination among ethnic minority students (Moradi & Risco, 2006). Biasco, Goodwin & Vitale (2000) also found that Black students and Asian students scored racial discrimination of minority students on an American college campus higher than White students did.

Findings in the current study are important and have worrying implications FOR colleges and International students. The effect of discrimination on a student's wellbeing is detrimental. Discrimination has gained a lot of attention within the literature for being a psychosocial stressor (Clark et al., 1999; Mays, Cochran, & Barnes, 2007). Discrimination is known to cause depressive symptoms, anxiety and even influence suicidal thoughts in students (Araujo & Borrell 2006; Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Moradi & Risco, 2006; Mossakowski, 2003; Noh & Kaspar 2003). The age range in this study consisted of younger International students (18 – 33), which is an even greater cause for concern as prior research has found that psychological distress is prevalent in younger international students. These unfavourable impacts on mental health should be concerning for colleges and should encourage them to promote cross cultural integration and acceptance between students. Not only are these impacts unwanted for the individuals, but institutions should want to provide a positive experience and environment for students to maintain the number of international students enrolling to their institution each year and to reduce the number of International students dropping out due to discrimination in the college environment (Meeuwisse et al.

2010; Severiens and Wolff, 2008). The rich literature on the perceived discrimination has highlighted the many negative effects it can have on an individual's mental health. This is especially worrying given the results of this study. Knowing that International students have been struggling with discrimination we can infer that this has had undesirable consequences on their mental health. It should not be assumed that since a country or institution is enrolling a large number of international students that measures have been put in place to accommodate for this large change and most importantly to create positive experiences for these students. Institutions should have policies to encourage internationalization to reduce their student's psychosocial stress. One of the first steps for college students is to become more aware that discrimination takes place against their college peers and the forms in which this discrimination can manifest in. It is recommended that these individuals become aware of the college environment and how they play a part and their responsibility in it. In order to promote internationalization, International students should be made aware of the support available to them and be able to discuss possible new avenues of support or discuss possible problem areas that could be addressed by other students or college faculty and staff. It should be noted that while international students have many differences within their respective ethnic groups and how this may affect the ways in which they receive discrimination. However, some of their important commonality's stem from adjusting to a new environment and their reception in this new environment. With the numbers of International students in Ireland increasing it worth considering if the country could have what the United States called "the foreign student problem". As International students increases the question should be raised, are there sustainable implantations in place to accommodate for the change. As seen when numbers of International students increased in the United States increased and they who had relied so heavily on international students but could not create sustainable implementations to provide for international students.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

While there is a vast amount of literature on topics relevant to this study such as perceived discrimination, international students, and ethnic minorities on college campuses and with similar and consistent results, this study used different approaches. There are few studies which examine perceptions of discrimination from the perspective of individuals who are not as likely to be discriminated against than those who are. This study aimed to advance the literature by investigating other perspectives, the perspectives of individuals who are likely to be part of a discriminatory environment. These individuals may also be the ones whose behaviour or words come across as discriminating and may be unaware of it. Perhaps these results can bring awareness to these individuals. This is also amongst one of the first to examine perceptions of discrimination within an Irish college. As the number of International students in Ireland continues to rise it is important that colleges are aware of the environment they are creating for these new students, as results clearly indicate Irish students are not aware of how International students feel adjusting to life here and the obstacles in their way.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, years living in Ireland was not investigated or controlled for. This could affect the results as perhaps an International student that has lived in Ireland longer may not score as highly on the perceived discrimination questionnaire than an International student who has spent a very short amount of time living in Ireland. For example, certain questions on the survey asked about language barriers and feeling confident communicating English. An individual who has lived here longer may be more comfortable in speaking English. Relating to this, the study may have limited its International student sample population in its need for fluent English. While the survey was not complex, a certain level of English fluency would have been needed to confidently fill out the survey, giving answers that accurately reflect one's own opinion. The sample size for international students

was also small ( $n = 51$ ). Although, this did not seem to be large limitation with respect to findings being consistent, it did limit the statistical analysis. Few of the ethnicity options had little participants in them, specifically East Asian, Mixed, and Other. As a result of only having one participant in the East Asian ethnic group, a tukey post-hoc analysis could not be carried out with the anova even though the anova reported significant differences between ethnicity groups. Finally, this study could have had gained a greater understanding of perceptions of discrimination if the 'mixed' and 'other' options in the questionnaire could have been more specific or given students the option to elaborate on their ethnicity.

However, with the number of international students in Ireland rising and perhaps a dependency on this there has not been a study on this in Irish colleges. The literature also tends to focus on perceived discrimination from the perspective of those likely to be discriminated against and not from others. This study aimed to investigate both perspectives as unawareness of discrimination could be part of the problem in college or students not understanding to what degree international students experience discrimination. This study believes that perceptions can contribute to discrimination if students are unaware of how International students are treated or perhaps even in ways they would contribute to unknowingly.

This study has several limitations. First of all, years spent in Ireland was not controlled for and research into time spent in a foreign country may affect results. Perhaps a longitudinal study could give more in depth. Does a level of perceived discrimination decrease over time what factors play a role in this decrease? Do international students become more aware of Irish culture, do pick up Irish ways of living, are they surrounded by different people or does their institute or workplace affect this. The sample size for international students was also small ( $n = 51$ ). Although, this is not a major implication, a larger sample size would The study may also have been limited in its use of social media to

gain participants. Lastly, only students who were fluent in English would have been able to complete the survey, this may have limited responses from international students.

### **Future Directions**

Building on the limitations of this research, future studies gain a better understanding if they examined the amount of time International students have spent living in Ireland. Possibly, if results found a significant correlation between years in Ireland and lower score of perceived discrimination, a longitudinal study may provide in dept understanding and examine the factors that have changed or how these scores changed over time. A larger number of participants would also be beneficial for future studies with a more inclusive range of ethnic groups. Statistical analyses on the questions or an exploration into the exact causes of perceived discrimination are recommended for future studies. Identifying specific problem areas for international students can help to bring awareness and possible solutions to these areas that negatively influence an International student's life. Future research could also explore the perspectives of faculty and staff within colleges. This may have a significant difference creating solutions for this issue as these individuals have a greater ability to implement changes in college campuses and highlight the importance to students.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the present study found a significant difference between International students and Irish students perceived level of discrimination of International students. International students, specifically Indian and Latino students scored the highest on the perceived discrimination scale indicating that Irish students are not aware of the discrimination on college campuses. This study is consistent with previous findings that International students or students of ethnic minority are more likely to find college environments as discriminatory. This study contributed to previous literature by examining

both the perspectives of those who are more likely to experience discrimination than those who are not. This study provided an insight into discrimination in Irish colleges.

Discrimination is an important issue that needs to be addressed due to its many negative impacts not only on individual's mental health but also for the country. Discrimination is dangerous to a person's mental health and more change and support is needed to reduce this issue. Future research could further investigate what form of discrimination these students are experiencing as well as conducting a longitudinal study into factors that may increase or decrease discrimination over time. This study aims to raise awareness of the importance of social and academic integration and internationalization within colleges to create an environment in which International students can thrive.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Study Information Leaflet

<b>Information Sheet for study on discrimination within Irish colleges</b>
--

You are invited to participate in a research study that will form the basis for an undergraduate thesis. I am a final year student in the BA in Psychology programme at National College of Ireland. As part of our degree we must carry out an independent research project. For my project, I aim to investigate discrimination awareness in colleges. Please take this time to read this document which explains why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. If you have any questions about the information provided, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details at the end of this sheet.

**What are the objectives of the study?** To investigate the perceptions of discrimination towards international students from both the perspectives of international students and Irish students. This study aims to find out if Irish students are as aware of discrimination as International students.

**Participation?** If you are over the age of 18 and are currently enrolled in higher education in Ireland, you are eligible to participate. By taking part in this study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire in a web-based online survey. The questionnaire will ask questions about discrimination you have received or observed in colleges. You will be asked to rate each question on a scale of 0-5.

**Right to withdraw** Participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time for whatever reason. You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time without penalty. However, once you have submitted the data you cannot withdraw as the data is fully anonymised.

**Are there any benefits from my participation?** You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us understand college climates in relation to discrimination, one of the biggest problems in our society.

**Are there any risks involved in participation?** There is the risk that you may find some of the questions to be sensitive. Some of the questions may cause emotional discomfort as you think about your experiences in how you have been treated

**Confidentiality** Your survey answers will be sent to a link at Google Docs where data will be stored in

a password protected electronic format. Google Docs does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know you participated in the survey.

**Contact Details**

If you have any further questions about the research you can contact:

Researcher: [x18485782@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x18485782@student.ncirl.ie)

Supervisor:

## Appendix B

### Consent form

In agreeing to participate in this research I understand the following:

This research is being conducted by Jade Reilly, an undergraduate student at the School of Business, National College of Ireland.

The method proposed for this research project has been approved in principle by the Departmental Ethics Committee, which means that the Committee does not have concerns about the procedure itself as detailed by the student. It is, however, the above-named student's responsibility to adhere to ethical guidelines in their dealings with participants and the collection and handling of data.

If I have any concerns about participation I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw at any stage.

I have been informed as to the general nature of the study and agree voluntarily to participate.

There are no known expected discomforts or risks associated with participation.

All data from the study will be treated confidentially. The data from all participants will be compiled, analysed, and submitted in a report to the Psychology Department in the School of Business. No participant's data will be identified by name at any stage of the data analysis or in the final report.

At the conclusion of my participation, any questions or concerns I have will be fully addressed.

I may withdraw from this study at any time and may withdraw my data at the conclusion of my participation if I still have concerns.

**Contacts and Questions:** If you have any questions about this study you may contact Jade Reilly through email [@x18485782@sudent.ncirl.ie](mailto:@x18485782@sudent.ncirl.ie) or my supervisor at:

Click the "Next" button (below) to get started with this survey. By clicking the "Next" button you have given your consent to participate. However, if you would like to leave the survey at any time, just click "Exit this Survey" button in the upper right corner.

## Appendix C

### Debrief Information

#### **Perceptions of discrimination towards International Students**

This experiment was designed to examine perspectives and awareness of discrimination in Irish colleges. The research hypotheses for this study were

Your answers to the survey will help in the understanding of how Irish students view discrimination in comparison to international students.

If you have any questions or comments, feel free to ask the researcher now. If you have further questions or comments, please contact Jade Reilly at [x18485782@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:x18485782@student.ncirl.ie)

You can also find help and support using the online links below:

Pieta house: Call free on 1800 247 247

Text help to 51444

Samaritans: Call 116 12

Chat online at <https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

HSE: 50808 is a free text service providing support for a mental health or emotional crisis for students

Thank you for your participation!

**Appendix D**

## Socio Demographic Questionnaire

**Age**

Your Answer\_\_\_\_\_

**Gender**

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnicity**

Choose from drop down box

**Country of Origin**

Choose from drop down box

**Type of Student**

- Irish
- International

**If you are an International Student how long have you been in Ireland**

Your answer\_\_\_\_\_

**What college are you currently attending**

Choose from drop down box

**Perceived Discrimination Scale**

Please rate the following questions on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

**International students are treated differently in social situations.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**Some people ostracize international students**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students are losing ethnic identity**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students feel lost for being unable to find roots in this society.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students are made to feel inferior in this society**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students feel inadequate to function here.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**It makes me angry when I hear negative stereotypes about other cultures and people.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students get angry when people use racial slurs and jokes about their culture**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**It is hard for international students to make trustworthy friends here**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students cannot trust somebody to discuss personal problems**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students feel nervous to communicate in English**

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**Due to language difficulties, international students feel unable to express themselves**

**fully**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**Many opportunities are denied to international students**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students are treated differently in social situations**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**Others are biased toward international students**

strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

strongly agree

**I feel that international students receive unequal treatment.**

strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

strongly agree

**International students are denied what they deserve.**

strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

strongly agree

**I feel that international students are discriminated against**

strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

strongly agree

**International students are treated differently because of race.**

strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

strongly agree

**International students are treated differently because of skin colour**

strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

strongly agree

**International students feel sad living in unfamiliar surroundings.**

**strongly disagree**

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students feel sad leaving relatives behind.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**Homesickness bothers international students**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students miss the people and country of their origin.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**People show hatred toward international students non-verbally.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**People show hatred toward international students verbally**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**People show hatred towards international students through actions.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**Others are sarcastic toward international students cultural values**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**Others don't appreciate international cultural values.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students fear for personal safety because of a different cultural background.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students generally keep a low profile due to fear.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students feel insecure here.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students frequently relocate for fear of others.**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**Multiple pressures are placed on international students after migration**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

**International students feel uncomfortable to adjust to new cultural values**

Strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly agree

## Appendix E

Evidence of data and SPSS output (full data file available upon request)

Visible: 43 of 43 Variables

	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	CountryofOrigin	TypeofStudent	TimeInIreland	College	PD
1	20	0	0	1	0	.	.	0
2	22	1	0	1	0	.	.	10
3	20	0	0	1	0	.	.	10
4	22	0	0	1	0	.	.	1
5	21	0	0	1	0	.	.	10
6	21	0	0	2	1	13.0	.	6
7	21	0	0	1	0	.	.	10
8	19	0	0	1	0	.	.	5
9	21	0	0	1	0	.	.	12
10	20	2	0	1	0	.	.	0
11	26	1	0	1	0	.	.	0
12	20	0	0	1	0	.	.	10
13	22	1	0	1	0	.	.	0
14	19	0	0	1	0	.	.	2
15	18	0	0	1	0	.	.	5
16	21	1	0	1	0	.	.	5
17	19	0	0	1	0	.	.	2
18	21	1	0	1	0	.	.	1

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
1	Age	Numeric	2	0	Age	None	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
2	Gender	Numeric	17	0	Gender	{0, Female}...	None	17	Right	Nominal	Input
3	Ethnicity	Numeric	12	0	Ethnicity	{0, White}...	None	12	Right	Nominal	Input
4	CountryofOr...	Numeric	24	0	Country of Origin	{1, Ireland}...	None	24	Right	Nominal	Input
5	TypeofStudent	Numeric	13	0	Type of Student	{0, Irish}...	None	13	Right	Nominal	Input
6	TimeInIreland	Numeric	3	1	Time In Ireland	None	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
7	College	Numeric	34	0	College	{0, National ...	None	34	Right	Nominal	Input
8	PD1	Numeric	1	0	PDQ1	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
9	PD2	Numeric	1	0	PDQ2	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
10	PD3	Numeric	1	0	PDQ3	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
11	PD4	Numeric	1	0	PDQ4	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
12	PD5	Numeric	1	0	PDQ5	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
13	PD6	Numeric	1	0	PDQ6	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
14	PD7	Numeric	1	0	PDQ7	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
15	PD8	Numeric	1	0	PDQ8	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
16	PD9	Numeric	1	0	PDQ9	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
17	PD10	Numeric	1	0	PDQ10	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
18	PD11	Numeric	1	0	PDQ11	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
19	PD12	Numeric	1	0	PDQ12	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input
20	PD13	Numeric	1	0	PDQ13	{1, Strongly ...	None	12	Right	Scale	Input

