

The Sociocultural Depression Factors among International Student and Domestic Student

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Abstract: This paper delves into the multifaceted realm of depression symptoms and impact factors among university students, specifically examining the differential impacts on international and domestic students. The escalating prevalence of depression disorder within the student population necessitates an in-depth analysis of the factors that contribute to these symptoms. The characteristics that differentiate these student subgroups, including cultural background, acculturation, racial discrimination, and interpersonal relationships, are explored as integral components shaping their susceptibility to depression. By examining the unique challenges faced by both international and domestic students, this paper aims to explore the distinctive dynamics that underlie depression symptom development. Through a comprehensive literature review, the paper delves into how acculturative stress and racial discrimination as depression factors play among international students, while also investigating the role of racial discrimination and interpersonal relationships in domestic students. The implications of the findings highlight the necessity for enhancing mental health support, the needs of international student helping orientation, anti-racial discrimination education, and the creation of an inclusive university environment that satisfies the diverse needs of all students. Future research should further explore on the patient with multi-cultural background, examine the differences of depression symptoms and the efficiency of therapeutic strategies based on cultural variation.

Keywords: international student, domestic student, depression

1. Introduction

The prevalence of depressive disorder, a widely observed mental ailment among university students, has demonstrated an escalating trajectory in its frequency rates. According to the findings from a comprehensive systematic review conducted in 2013, there was a distinct indication that university students manifest considerably elevated levels of depressive symptoms in comparison to the broader population [1]. In affirmation of this observation, an additional systematic review identified a notable 26.1% prevalence of depressive symptoms spanning across 40 nations, a cross-cultural survey conducted across regions including the Americas, Asia, and Africa, encapsulating a voluminous sample size of 56,816 global university students [2]. Furthermore, an expansive study conducted in University of Sharjah concentrating on international students revealed even more amplified prevalence rates of depressive disorder, varying from 22.6% to an astonishing 45.3% with a slightly gender differences [3]. The foundational origins of this phenomenon can be ascribed to a myriad of

factors, among them inadequate social support and a lack of widespread attention among university student patient group. Although prior research has illuminated a constellation of elements contributing to depressive symptoms within the realm of university students, encompassing stress associated with academics, familial influences, coping proficiencies, and constrained social support, these investigations have regrettably not acknowledged the nuances in the experiences of depression among distinct subgroups, notably including the differentiation between domestic and international students.

How exactly do the sociocultural risk factors exert their influence on the emergence of depressive symptoms within disparate factions of student bodies? An investigation endeavors to carefully exploration on sociocultural constituents regarding the prevalence of depression symptoms, as experienced by students both on an international scale and within domestic contexts [4]. The paramount significance of the research is underlined by the challenges facing in among the numbers of international students, marking an exponential growth of 85% over the previous decade [4]. However, the extreme lack of social support and university support mechanisms within the academic environment potentially casts an adverse shadow on international student's daily mental health.

Consequently, this review delves into the influencing factors of depression symptoms among university students, especially the different impacts on international and domestic students. Factors that undertaking by both student group will be targeted, regarding the sociocultural fundamentals for example racial discrimination or interpersonal relationship that prompting depression, systematically dissecting the distinctions between cohorts of international and domestic students.

2. The Characteristics of University Student

In examining the intricate web of factors that influence the levels of depression symptoms among college students, it is imperative to recognize the distinctions in characteristics between two significant groups: domestic students and international students. These distinctive attributes shape their experiences, perceptions, and vulnerabilities, consequently impacting their susceptibility to depression level.

First, cultural background stands as a foundational divergence between domestic and international students. Domestic students often have an inherent familiarity with the customs, values, and social norms of their home country, which can shape their outlook on college life [5]. On the other hand, international students can experience completely different social norms. This contrast can influence their sense of identity and belonging, thereby influencing their psychological well-being. The process of acculturation further amplifies this distinction. While domestic students might already possess a sense of belonging to their society, international students undergo the transformative process of adapting to a foreign culture. The degree to which they adopt and integrate aspects of the host culture into their self-concept can impact their psychological adjustment, contributing to differences in their experience of depression symptoms.

Second, experiences of racial discrimination pose a particularly noteworthy divergence. International students often are outsiders, lacking social support, facing prejudices that can manifest as overt discrimination, which could eventually serve as factor for influencing a feeling of isolation, also influences individual's low self-esteem, and psychological distress, contributing to higher levels of depression symptoms [6]. Conversely, domestic students may face discrimination as well, but their familiarity with the cultural context might provide them with more coping mechanisms and support networks to mediate the negative impact on their mental well-being.

Third, Interpersonal relationships can be a crucial facet of the college experience to both student groups. Domestic students frequently need to move to another region for studying just like international students, with loss of pre-existing networks of friends, family, and acquaintances, they both have to establish new relationships from scratch. These challenges can impact their social

integration and feelings of loneliness, which are known contributors to depressive symptoms. Furthermore, both domestic and international students can face interpersonal difficulties, but the nature of these challenges varies due to their distinct backgrounds and circumstances.

In conclusion, the characteristics that differentiate domestic and international college students play an integral role in shaping their experiences and vulnerability to depression symptoms. Cultural background, acculturation, experiences of racial discrimination, and interpersonal relationships collectively contribute to the influences of mental well-being

3. International Student's Depression Factors

In the realm of psychology, international students' mental well-being has emerged as a critical area of concern, with depression being a prevalent issue. Among the huge number of factors contributing to this mental health challenge, two stand out prominently: acculturation and racial discrimination. In the following section, a few amounts of past journey will be covered to reveal the factors that often cast a shadow over the lives of international students.

The exploration will delve into the mechanisms behind acculturation and racial discrimination, shedding light on how they interplay with an individual's mental state. By understanding these dynamics, this paper aim to provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by international students and potential strategies direction for support and intervention.

3.1. Acculturation

Acculturation, the process through which an individual dive into a new culture and undergoes consequential behavioral and psychological shifts, holds implications for the mental illness among international students, can be a crucial factor for developing depression among international student group. Within past evidence, individuals frequently grapple with specific stress stemming from cultural transitions, potentially influencing the evolution of depression symptoms [7].

A noteworthy study conducted by Hovey centered on 114 elderly Mexican immigrants, reveal the intricate relations between several factors - acculturative stress, depression, and thoughts of suicide [8]. Results unveiled those adult Mexican immigrants encountering elevated acculturative stress that transforming from one cultural to one another were prone to the development of depression and the emergence of suicidal ideation [8]. Similarly, Revollo et al. delved into the role of acculturative stress serve as a risk factor that may influence student's positive tendency of developing anxiety and panic [9]. Study using 414 Latin American immigrants as sample group, applying the Barcelona Immigration Stress Scale (BISS) to gauge acculturative stress, their results were along with Hovey's observations, underscoring the weighty significance of acculturative stress and cross-cultural interactions as pivotal factors of depression and anxiety [9]. It's imperative to acknowledge that the consequences of acculturative stress can extend to the likelihood of international students experiencing depression symptoms [9].

Supportive evidence from investigations by Atri et al. and Hahn reveal that international student frequently articulate heightened levels of acculturative stress in contrast to their domestic peers [7, 10]. This stress may emanate from a constellation of sources, including academic hurdles, linguistic challenges, financial constraints, and encounters with racial discrimination [10]. Consequently, as international students stay on the journey of studying abroad, the process of cultural adaptation can stimulate acculturative stress, potentially serving as a stressor that contributes to the incubation of depression symptoms.

3.2. Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination pertains to adverse occurrences arising from an individual's affiliation with a particular group, it is pertinent to note that international students are confronted with increasing levels of racial discrimination when align with their domestic counterparts [9]. The differences in treatment from society potentially weaves intricate links with the onset of depression symptoms among international students. Insight from research by Brondolo and his collages, examining the effects on elements of racism which includes cognitive vulnerabilities, social identity regarding depression and interpersonal stress, hypothesis that the linking route from discrimination to depression symptoms underlying the realm of social cognition processes, within this sphere, social cognition envelops both the applications and mechanisms governing an individual's understanding of their social background [11]. Also, evidence illustrated that these schemas evolve from day-to-day social interactions, with racial discrimination as a social stressor potentially catalyzing the generation of negative relational schemas [12]. Notably, schemas associated with rejection and non-acceptance are powerfully linked with a positive tendency toward depression, making individuals higher vulnerability toward mental illness, Eberhart conducted a 6-weeks long study on adults who will be assessed weekly examining two stress models which are diathesis-stress and stress generation to explore the specific mechanism of life stress on depression, the results provide evidence of maladaptive schemas underlying rejection and non-acceptance may be important part of mechanism cycle [13]. Consequently, the emergence of negative relational schemas as a byproduct of racial discrimination augments the individual's vulnerability to arise symptoms of depression.

Supplementing this perspective, Wallace et al. expounded that the cumulative exposure to racial discrimination precipitates lasting repercussions on the mental well-being of minority communities [14]. These pivotal insights underscore the vital role of cultural congruence in shaping the interplay between international students and the shadow of depression. As the drive for racial parity gains momentum, the projection is that racial discrimination within the university society will decreasing. However, a more in-depth exploration is necessitated to find strategies aimed at decreasing racial discrimination targeting international students, prompting by the cultivation of an environment that is cultural harmony.

4. Domestic Student's Depression Factors

Within the realm of psychology, it is essential to recognize that depression is not limited to international students; domestic students also grapple with this mental health challenge. In this discussion, the attention will turn to the factors influencing the mental well-being of domestic students, with a particular focus on two pivotal elements: racial discrimination and interpersonal relationships.

By exploring the dynamics of racial discrimination and interpersonal relationships among domestic students, this paper aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing their mental health, ultimately paving the way for greater awareness and support.

4.1. Racial Discrimination

Despite the array of challenges faced by international students, university life can pose hard difficulties for domestic students as well. These challenges encompass changing interpersonal relationships and the weight of racial discrimination, both of which are believed to contribute substantially to the heightened likelihood of depression symptoms among domestic students [5]. The ensuing section delves into an examination of the intricate interplay between these two factors and the emergence of depression symptoms in domestic students.

Primarily, it's worth noting that racial discrimination's influence not only play on minority students but also on domestic students in every culture, potentially triggering repercussions for

depression symptoms. An illuminating mixed-method study, involving in-person surveys of 60 university students in Canada [15]. The study found a noteworthy observation: these students reported encountering a heightened frequency of racist incidents, leading to responses characterized as “racial battle fatigue”, a term encapsulating exhaustion derived from confronting racial biases as being in a racially discriminated group member in campus [15]. This study inherently underscores a link between racial discrimination plays on domestic student and the manifestation of depression symptoms, students considered themselves are cultural congruency and traditional were also highly potentially influenced by racial discrimination in Canada, compared to African- and Latino-American in United States. Consequently, it is noticeable domestic student are also facing the stress under racial discrimination, these experiences of discrimination, whether subtle or overt, can provide individuals’ mental well-being with profound effects, eventually contributing to negative feelings, for example, self-doubt, worthlessness, and depression symptoms.

4.2. Interpersonal Relations

Another catalyst that could impact the manifestation of depression symptoms revolves around the transformative shift in interpersonal dynamics as students are facing huge life changes switching from high school to college. Generally, the shift to university often severs the proximity of close friends from high school who might not find themselves in the same academic setting, inevitably precipitating shifts in the difficulties of interpersonal relationships. This alteration might be a potential cause of emotional solitude, intertwining with a higher sense of loneliness stemming from a lack of profound and intimate connections in different living area [16].

It is worth noting that a substantial majority of local students assimilate effectively into unfamiliar social environments, cultivating fresh connections and dedicating time to nurturing these bonds, thereby potentially reducing the prevalence of social isolation [5]. Nevertheless, Diehl et al. astutely highlight a frequently disregarded aspect – the relationships formed during the college period often remain superficial, characterized by a lack of emotional depth [5]. This insufficiency in establishing meaningful emotional attachments can exacerbate the emergence of emotional solitude within the university context, potentially heightening the vulnerability of young individuals to symptoms of depression.

Furthermore, the longitudinal study conducted by Wilde and Dozois delves into the intricate interplay between depression and emotional loneliness, revealing a bidirectional relationship [17]. More specifically, various prominent theories, aligned with their respective research findings, posit a significant correlation between diminished social competence or less-than-optimal social relationships stemming from feelings of loneliness and the susceptibility to depression [18]. Conversely, Kleiman et al. interpersonal theory of depression declares depression could also arise emotional loneliness [19]. As such, the transformation of interpersonal connections from high school to university exposes a compelling finding in which loneliness embodies a bidirectional influence, functioning both as a potential catalyst and outcome of depression.

In summation, international students grapple primarily with the stressors of acculturation and racial dynamics, while domestic students are predominantly encounter with challenges concerning interpersonal relationships and environment pressures. As deliberated above, both domains possess the potential to act as triggers for the emergence of depression symptoms.

5. Suggestion

This paper intends to explore distinct factors impacting mental health between the group of international and domestic students. From the above discussion, there are sufficient earlier research indicates international students grapple predominantly with acculturation and racial discrimination,

while domestic students primarily confront the challenges of academic transitions and interpersonal relationships. Racial discrimination stands as a shared concern among both groups [5]. Thus, progressing the research to the next step to examining the intersection of racial discrimination, specific cultural backgrounds and cultural dimensions. For example, are students in Asia facing different racial discrimination challenges than students in Europe? Different country can have different cultural dimensions, which shape on several sociocultural aspect that may be potential risk factors for mental illness, including individualism-collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance [11]. To be more specific, these factors can shape how students perceive and cope with stressors, potentially influencing depression outcomes. Students from individualistic cultures might internalize stress, while collectivist cultures may emphasize social support. Moreover, cultural stigma surrounding mental health could block students from seeking help. Understanding how these dimensions intertwine can guide culturally sensitive interventions, promoting mental well-being across diverse student populations.

Also, differentiated responses to racial discrimination in students' mental health services should consider the perception of racial discrimination and its impact on the development of depression symptoms differ between international and domestic students, this finding should signal to educational institutions the need for providing different approaches regarding different group of university students in campus mental health services and student support systems. The conventional coping strategies addressing racial discrimination-induced depression among domestic students may not be equally effective for international counterparts. Firstly, international students often face a unique set of cultural and linguistic challenges, which constrain their ability to access traditional campus support systems. For example, domestic students might rely on established community networks when seeking help, whereas international students might struggle to find such support within a host guider. Secondly, international students may have limited awareness of available mental health resources or hesitate to seek assistance due to stigma under some specific cultural background. Lastly, the coping strategies employed by domestic students might not fully address the distinct experiences of international students. For instance, domestic students may rely on exist cultural understanding to avoid racial discrimination, while international students may lack specific cultural insight to cope with discrimination effectively. In light of this, institutions should consider implementing cultural anti-racial discrimination education, specifically targeted at minority student groups, coupled with the organization of anti-racial discrimination. By mediate the incidence of racial discrimination experienced by international students, these efforts could indirectly diminish the likelihood of depression symptoms.

In essence, recognizing the potential disparity in the impact of racial discrimination on international and domestic students can prompt institutions to enhancing their mental health services, design distinct coping strategies, and promoting anti-racial discrimination program. This multifaceted approach could give helps for a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students, irrespective of their background.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of depression symptoms and impact factors among university students discovered intricate patterns of influence that are contingent upon their status as international or domestic individuals. Cultural background, acculturation, racial discrimination, and interpersonal relationships emerge as crucial elements that shape vulnerability to depression symptoms. The experience of acculturative stress and racial discrimination significantly affects international students, underscoring the importance of targeted mental health interventions and anti-racial discrimination efforts.

Conversely, domestic students grapple with changes in interpersonal relationships and the potential consequences of racial discrimination, necessitating enhancing coping strategies. The implications of this paper focus on the circumstances of depression patients in university among different cultural background, student with different cultural should be mainly focused and noticeable that different strategies for preventions and treatments are highly needed. Also, a minority of domestic students are also facing the same challenges, which are also needed to drive attention. The future research underscores the urgency of recognizing these divergent influences and implementing contextually specific mental health support systems. Also, the immigration group of patients in university can be vulnerable facing depression challenges based on conclusions, psychologists should further explore what role does social schemas play on the immigration students for prevention and treatment purposes.

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