

## Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Scale: Research Progress on Ethnic Discrimination with Urban Mapuche Youth in Chile

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### KEYWORDS

Ethnic discrimination, perceived ethnic discrimination, subjective perception of ethnic discrimination.

### ABSTRACTs

The present study is framed in the context of historical violence in the central-south zone of our country, as a result of the conflict between the State, the Chilean society and the Mapuche people. The study presents an advance of a larger research, which aims to contribute to the understanding of the impact on mental and physical health of ethnic discrimination in Mapuche and non-Mapuche young people, high school and college students, who live in urban areas of the Metropolitan, Biobío and Araucanía regions. This paper shows the preliminary results obtained from the validation of a scale of perceived ethnic discrimination, which was obtained with the participation of 246 young students, who declared to be part of the Mapuche people. The findings suggest schools and justice centers are the places where the highest level of discrimination is perceived.

## 1. Introduction

At present, we have sufficient evidence to assert that both native peoples and social and ethnic minorities in various parts of the world are affected by psychosocial problems such as ethnic and cultural discrimination. It was documented in both developed and developing countries. Some of them are the United States, Canada and Australia, in addition to Chile, Peru and Ecuador. (1–3)

Let us understand discrimination, as a type of social abuse, which can be exercised directly from one human being to another; or indirectly, for example, through the State, public or private institutions and public policies, among others. Discrimination always manifests itself in a context of power asymmetry, where one sector of the population devalues the other, generally through stereotypes, stigmas and prejudices, which are passed down from generation to generation. When this type of violence is directed at a specific group of people, just because they belong to an ethnic group different from that of the dominant outgroup or social group, it is called ethnic discrimination. The young and urban population of these minorities of these groups is usually more exposed to this type of abuse, since it remains in constant interrelation with the dominant group, mainly from the schooling processes, but also because many of them have always inhabited the city. (4) (5) (6)

However, young students not only perceive themselves as discriminated against by the outgroup, but also accuse them of receiving discrimination from their own group of belonging or ingroup. This type of abuse is particularly painful, as it permanently questions these people's feelings of belonging. This process of constant questioning of their identity generates anxiety-depressive symptomatology, feelings of both physical and mental discomfort. (7,8) (9,10)

## 2. Development

This publication presents a part of the procedure used to investigate a series of psychosocial factors that are related to the perception of ethnic discrimination and the impact that these can have on the subjective well-being of young Mapuche students, from urban areas of three regions of Chile. All of them are characterized by a high demographic presence of the Mapuche population. (11)

## 2.1 The sample

The sample was intentionally selected in relation to the objectives of the research, the participation of educational establishments from different urban areas that are installed in the large cities of these regions was requested, trying to obtain people from different provinces. In the selection of the sample, care was taken to ensure that it was balanced considering the variable declaration of biological sex of each respondent. For this, three classifications were used, male (103), female (136) and others (7). The third classification sought to generate a space in case it was necessary to reflect some dissidences, but it was withdrawn from the final data analysis, because statistically it did not provide significant information. Another of the strategies used to attract participants was the Snow Ball technique, adding participants from the same people who voluntarily agreed to be part of this sample, as referrals.

## 2.2 Procedure and ethical considerations

The procedure began with the presentation of the project and the signing of the informed consents and assents (for minors); In the latter case, the authorization must be delivered by a parent or guardian of legal age. In the event that he or she chose not to participate, despite the fact that his or her parents gave their authorization, his or her decision was evidently respected. The letters of introduction, invitation, consents and informed assents were approved by the ethics committee of the University of Concepción and presented in all the educational institutions that facilitated our access.

The sample collection stage began with porters and significant informants, which allowed a first approach to educational establishments and/or cultural groups. A pilot was carried out to observe the behavior of the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Scale when applied, but not before consulting six expert judges. Three of them, prominent researchers on issues such as discrimination and/or indigenous peoples. And three others, representatives of the target population. After reviewing the comments and suggestions, it was applied to the final sample. For this stage, there was a team of 9 surveyors, all belonging to the last years of careers such as anthropology and psychology. This team was led by a field manager, a sociocultural anthropologist, with extensive experience in working with different native populations of our country, both in the north and in the south.

## 2.3 Instrument characteristics and validation

The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination variable seeks to measure the subjective perception of ethnic discrimination that the participants of this study reported through an online survey on the Google Forms platform. Considering that we live in a post-pandemic social scenario, we made the decision to use an online tool as a primary source of information, as it seemed to us the most appropriate. In cases where there was no access to the internet or the facilities for online application, the interviewers had the instrument on paper. We worked with a Spanish adaptation of the scale of Krieger et al., (2005), experiences of discrimination (EOD). Although other researchers in our country used this adaptation, there was no validated version in Chile, so a confirmatory factor analysis was performed. The analysis confirmed that it is a unifactorial instrument that is made up of 9 items. These are presented on a Likert scale, where the participant must score from 1 to 7, the perception of having been discriminated against for reasons that allude to their belonging to an indigenous people, in this case Mapuche. Number 1 is the absence of perception of discrimination and number 7 is the maximum perception of feeling ethnically discriminated against in different social dimensions such as educational, labor, judicial, among others.

The EOD has been used since 1990, with a Cronbach Alpha of .74 and a reliability of .70. This scale has been used mainly in health institutions, especially mental health institutions, to demonstrate the impact of racism, ethnic discrimination or social injustice on people's health. In a systematic review, the DOE is reported as one of the scales that has acceptable psychometric properties, when evaluated together with 23 other scales that measure racism or discrimination. (12)

The version validated in this research presents a Cronbach Alpha of .86. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are presented in the ANNEXES section.

## 2.4 Conclusions

When Mapuche researchers and/or those of us who work with indigenous populations or social minorities (migrants, LGBT+ communities or others) in our territory, we always face the great difficulty of demonstrating

through figures the impact that psychosocial dysfunctions, such as discrimination, have on the physical and mental health of people who perceive themselves as discriminated against. Despite the fact that there is research in the world that relates racism with anxiety-depressive symptomatology, substance abuse and episodes of school violence for years, in our country there are very few instances and/or references in which this type of abuse has been studied quantitatively. (10,12–15)

Although there is a long tradition in the study of discrimination, from the perpetrators we find less documentation when we turn to research that speaks from the voice of those affected. In this sense, we have great researchers who have been working on this qualitative line of research for more than 20 years, such as Aravena and Merino. However, when it comes to quantitative research, we find very few studies that focus on the northern macrozone of the country. (16) (17) (18) (19,20)

In the tireless search to make visible the asymmetry and historical violence of the State towards our native peoples, we have wanted to strengthen the voice of those who have been affected daily for centuries by stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination; This path has led us to work from discourse analysis on the stories of discrimination and its consequences in Mapuche youth and adults. Thus, through a critical epistemological perspective, it provides us with a clear and detailed overview of the damage and pain with which these people live during practically their entire lives. However, we do not know the relationship that ethnic discrimination has on the incidence of diagnoses such as mood disorders, anxiety disorders, disorders related to trauma and stressors, behavioral disorders and food intake, and substance use disorders and addictions, among others. (21) (22)

Studies on stigmas present in health workers about people with diagnoses of the spectrum of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder have clearly shown us that the health of these people is differentially harmed, compared to the population with other types of diagnoses. We have also observed this phenomenon in the attitude of teachers towards young people in secondary education with a diagnosis of mental disorder. (23,24)

It does not seem unreasonable to conclude that the perception of ethnic discrimination is reducing the health of our young Mapuche students, accentuating the gap of inequality in access to health, education and social justice between the Mapuche and non-Mapuche population. Authors such as Bourdieu and Passeron propose how education and school is a fundamental element to understand culture, so that the imposition of cultural symbols or meanings on an ethnic minority group or not, makes visible the imposition and symbolic violence associated with the force of cultural agency. Therefore, as he puts it, educational spaces, such as schools, are not neutral structures but rather prepare students in a differentiated way according to the social and economic structural forces of the broader institutions, and ideologically tie the schooling process to the reproduction of gender, class and racial inequalities, these constitutive ideologies of social discourse become part of the daily life of the classroom. Giroux suggests that those who are in possession of power will be the ones who will try to define what should be considered knowledge. (25) (Giroux, 2004)

That is why it is so important that we can carry out research that aims to establish statistically significant relationships between variables such as the subjective perception of ethnic discrimination and the well-being of our native peoples and migrant minorities.

The validation of this small scale is, for us, a small big step, since it means having a fast, economical and friendly instrument to be able to measure the variable perception of ethnic discrimination. It is a starting point to be able to work on relationships with independent variables, such as intervention programs in socio-emotional skills that contribute to the identification of racial prejudice in health, education, and justice professionals. This is our proposal.

The educational context is the place where our participants perceive themselves as most discriminated against and at the same time it is the institution where all our young people spend most of their time. In Chile, the schooling process lasts about fourteen years, without considering higher education. That is, it goes through the middle of human development, considering first and second childhood, puberty and adolescence, in addition to early adulthood. It is urgent to make visible the consequences of this type of social abuse on our native peoples and/or migrants on a large scale, and it must be demanded in the agenda of any government in power to invest in economic resources for intervention programs in schools, technical-professional institutes and universities, extra and intra-curricular. In the same way, it is necessary to work urgently with health officials and the judiciary, since it is not enough to hire intercultural facilitators to support professional actions, through translation into (27) Mapudungun, since the vast majority of our urban Mapuche youth do not have this linguistic resource;

however, they build their identity as Mapuche from a feeling of belonging and activism to vindicate their culture. (28)

We will not be able to move forward in a more just and healthy society if we are not able to go beyond accounting for these intergroup conflicts. Focusing all efforts on the demand for land return is a risky strategy; although it is indisputable that the State must recognize and repair the usurpation of land in the Mapuche communities of the south, this does not solve the mental and physical health of thousands of young Mapuche. Young people who are always in the city, because of mobility in the countryside or because of the new educational and economic needs of globalization, are in the cities building their future from a feeling of belonging to indigenism, but with the hope of achieving social mobility through formal education. It must also be our commitment to attend to the needs of those who walk day by day through the streets of our cities, carrying their Mapuche identity, while listening to K-POP or Reggaeton on their headphones.

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