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Post-Secondary Education Student Mental Health: A Global Perspective
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CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

The Lived Experience of how Punjabi International Students Navigate Mental Health Concerns at Ontario Post-Secondary Institutes

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has contributed to a significant increase in migration of international students to study at Canadian post-secondary institutions over the last two decades. In 2019 there were 642,480 international students enrolled, of which the plurality (34%) came from India—and nearly half of these enrolled at Ontario-based schools. In 2018, a prominent Ontario public post-secondary school became the first in Canada to formally adopt the Okanagan Charter, thereby committing to creating a physically, socially, and mentally healthy and inclusive campus culture. As part of this process, they administered the American College Health Association-National College Health Association (ACHA-NCHA) survey, a nationally recognized research survey for collecting precise data on students' health habits, behaviours, and perceptions. Data from the ACHA-NCHA survey in 2016 and 2019 showed that on-campus mental health services and various additional coping approaches are endorsed by the student population that identified themselves as "white," but as a result of minimal input from racialized and ethno-cultural international populace in this data, it is difficult to understand how they address mental health concerns. Considering Thakur (2018) shared that the significant efflux of Indian international students enrolled at Ontario post-secondary institutes come from the province of Punjab, this chapter aims to create a better understanding and awareness of how this diverse subset of students cope with mental health-related concerns. This could inform Canadian post-secondary institutions on the underlying variables contributing to the disparity in their utilization of campus mental health supports. Above all, such an awareness would undoubtedly address the current ethnocentric research that fails to recognize the unique cultural, racial and ethnic characteristics specific to Punjabi international students enrolled at Canadian post-secondary institutes.

Keywords: Post-Secondary Institution, Mental Health, Service, International Students, Punjabi.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, globalization has contributed to a substantial growth of international students enrolling in Canadian post-secondary institutions. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), 642,480 international students were enrolled in 2019, of which the plurality (34%) originated from India. Of these Indian students, 48% chose Ontario-based schools (CBIE, 2020).

The "Building on Success: International Education Strategy 2019-24 presented by Global Affairs Canada (2019a, 2019b) has prioritized building on this boon to gross domestic product (GDP) in the international education sector as an essential pillar of its strategy for competing with other hosting countries to attracting international students. Besides increasing GDP and enhancing the skills of the labour force to address economic shortfalls, it briefly mentions how internationalization supports the cultivation of diversity, inclusion and cultural awareness amongst the domestic campus communities. However, scholars like Buckner et al. (2020) question how this is being done by hosting institutes in the absence of acknowledging the international students experiences and racial identities. A priority that needs to be addressed especially since this international education strategy aims to double the number of international students in Canada by 2024 by implementing key initiatives at the federal, provincial and territorial levels to improve existing immigration and economic partnerships between Canada and countries like India (Global Affairs Canada, 2019a, 2019b). Although this strategy involves long-term commitment and investment from various stakeholders to benefit Canada, it lacks provisions supporting physical and mental well-being for these inbound international students.

Researchers have highlighted the limited resources across Canadian post-secondary

institutes that continue to face increasing demands for accountability and effective mental health services for their diverse student populations. In response, the Okanagan Charter was created in 2015 to make sure that both the government and post-secondary institutions, bring greater attention to the importance of inclusivity when addressing the mental health and overall well-being of students (Okanagan Charter, 2015). The Charter is an "international charter for health-promoting universities and colleges" calling on post-secondary institutions to create a platform that utilizes a "common language, principles and framework" (Okanagan Charter, 2015).

In 2018, a prominent Ontario-based college became the first public post-secondary school in Canada to formally adopt the Okanagan Charter. In doing so, it committed to creating a physically, socially and mentally healthy and inclusive campus culture (Okanagan Charter, 2015). As part of this process, the college administered the American College Health Association-National College Health Association (ACHA-NCHA) survey, developed by ACHA in 2000 (Lederer & Hoban, 2020), a recognized research survey for collecting precise data about students' health habits, behaviours, and perceptions that has proven to be a useful tool (Lederer & Hoban, 2020). Data from both 2016 and 2019 indicated high levels of depression and anxiety among students at this college (ACHA-NCHA, 2016, 2019). In particular, a large proportion of information from the ACHA-NCHA data shows that accessing mental health services and various additional coping approaches are endorsed by the student population that identifies as "white" (ACHA-NCHA, 2016, 2019). As a result of minimal input of information on the part of ethno-cultural student populace, there's a significant disparity in data, making it difficult to understand how they address mental health concerns.

Because Canada is aiming to double the recruitment of international students from India in the years to come, and Ontario post-secondary institutes are looking to uphold the adopted

Okanagan Charter our priorities should be to better understand the experiences and racial identities of the inbounding populace. Especially, if we know that a large proportion of inbounding international students from India come from the province of Punjab (Thakur, 2018). It is pertinent that we understand the lived experience of Punjabi international students experiencing mental-health concern. This will not only raise awareness of what they face, but also how they manage them. The hope is to empower their experiences and fine tune the types of support needed—not just within the institutions but also at the provincial, federal and territorial levels of government in Canada. Current published works are Euro-centrically stereotyped and so are unable to recognize and share the unique values and sociocultural diverse ways of coping indigenous to this population.

Definition of Terms

Before reviewing the research bearing on possible reasons for the minimal uptake of campus-based mental health resources by international students, I will define some key terms used in this literature. This includes two basic terms as they are recognized by the Canadian Government, "mental health" and "international student," and two more specialized terms utilized by scholars, "coping" and "ethnocentrism." Finally, I will describe Punjabi as a language and how it is uniquely woven into the culture.

Mental Health

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *About Mental Health* (2021) website defines mental health as a state of social, psychological and emotional well-being necessary for living a healthy life, and a main factor in overall health. I will use this term in relation to domestic and international students enrolled in U.S. and Canadian post-secondary institutes.

International Student

As per Statistics Canada's definition, international students are non-Canadian students who do not have permanent resident status and require authorization from the government to enter Canada to pursue an education (Statistics Canada, 2010). This term will be used as such, specifically in reference to Punjabi international students.

Coping

Coping is a conscious dual process of changing one's thoughts and behaviourally adapting to manage external or internal demands that an individual evaluates as exceeding their resources (which causes stress; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Significant overlap has been noted in the numerous conceptual frameworks that have been used to explain the different types of coping, and how they mediate and moderate mental health for post-secondary students (Coiro et al., 2017). Those empirically and theoretically associated with fewer internalizing symptoms and increased positive mood are: (1) engagement coping strategies, which entail primary control coping strategies (includes problem solving, emotional expression/support seeking from others), and (2) secondary control coping strategies (includes cognitive reappraisal, acceptance, approach and problem-focused strategies). In contrast, disengagement coping strategies entail avoidance (includes efforts to disengage from the stressor) distraction (includes a wide variety of alternative pleasurable activities) and emotion regulation (includes efforts to palliate emotions to return to a stable, pleasurable mood or keeping calm; Coiro et al., 2017). This term will be used in relation to how international post-secondary students cope with mental health concerns while adjusting to studying abroad.

Ethnocentrism

Bircan (2010) defines ethnocentrism as judging the culture of other ethnic groups myopically from one's own cultural perspective. Some go further than this and describe it as a tendency to believe one's own ethnic group or culture is superior to others and their cultural standards can be applied in a universal manner (Hooghe, 2008). An abundance of research (e.g., Ketab et al., 2019) has shown ethnocentrism to have harmful effects on the feelings, reactions, attitudes, social interactions, and trust of individuals from diverse ethnicities. Culturally based empirical research indicates that ethnocentrism is generalized toward all outsider groups.

Punjabi International Students

Punjabi is one of the prominent languages spoken in the province of Punjab, India. It is classified as an Indo-Aryan subgroup of the Indo-European languages, and as the world's tenth most widely spoken language (Kachru et al., 2008). The numerous provinces of India have distinct ethnicities, traditions, cultures and religions. Like many of these unique cultures, the Punjabi culture is collectivist: family and community relationships are highly valued, and social cohesion and interdependence are promoted (Chadda & Deb, 2013).

This study will bring attention to the unique subtleties and nuances of this distinct sub-category of Indian international students which up until now has been understudied (Marom, 2021). For it is only just recently due to socio-economical distresses in Punjab, that Punjabi international students have become part of the internationalization mobility process involved in immigration policies, and the marketization of international higher education (Government of Punjab, 2020; Kahlon, 2021).

To date, the dearth of theories and research that provide a general understanding of Indian international students' experiences in the Canadian post-secondary education system, tend to incorporate relevant works focused on viewing collectivistic cultures as a whole.

Current Demographics

According to the Government of Punjab (2020), a significant increase in the diasphoric migration of Punjabis to Canada has been made possible by the large number of recruitment agents in Punjab affiliated with Canadian post-secondary institutes (Coffey & Perry, 2013). Although this province is only 1.5% of India's geographic area, up until more recent times, it was considered to be the most economically viable farming/agricultural resource to the whole of India (Government of Punjab, 2020, p. 5). However, instability in the farming/agriculture sector has led to high unemployment rates, poor opportunities for the next generation and an increase in Punjab's drug crisis. These poor socio-economic conditions have left Punjabi families with little to no choice than to sell their properties or take a loan to fund their child's education migration (Government of Punjab, 2020, p. 25). A migration that has supported the significant influx of Punjabi international students wanting to obtain a study visa and hoping to settle in Canada for a better life. As a Punjabi counsellor at a post-secondary student wellness and centre, I have observed minimal uptake of mental health services by this particular population in comparison to domestic students in general.

Time for a Better Understanding

Considering this situation, a better understanding of this population is needed to help determine how this diverse student populace copes with mental health concerns, and to inform post-secondary administrations of the underlying variables contributing to the disparity in use of campus mental health supports. Such an awareness would address the current gaps in the research, which fails to recognize the unique cultural, racial and ethnic characteristics specific to Punjabi international students.

Current Ethnocentrically-Based Published Works

As the literature review to follow will describe the vast majority of research into the underlying reasons for the disparity between international and domestic students in use of campus mental health resources have focused on Asian students. While India is in Asia, these publications tend to categorize Asian students under one banner regardless of their specific origin (e.g., Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.). Common across these studies is the assumption that their findings are generalizable to all Asian international students, regardless of cultural and ethnic differences.

Most interestingly, the literature review found two recent studies and one report to date that has made an effort to address this flaw. In response to this short-coming, this chapter attempts to take a step to better understanding the factors underlying the under-utilization of mental health services, specifically among Punjabi international post-secondary students in Canada. By uncovering these variables, it may also encourage this population to provide feedback or more information, potentially improving future involvement in the NCHA survey across Canadian post-secondary institutes. In alignment with the Okanagan Charter, the eventual goal of this study is to create a platform to improve uptake of mental health supports for these students, as well as the student population overall.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will review the literature on how post-secondary institutes have attempted to support the mental health needs of domestic and international students alike. While it incorporates relevant published works highlighting theoretical models and empirical research devoted to supporting campus-based initiatives, their relevance is uncertain in relation to Punjabi international students. As more post-secondary campuses are moving toward diversifying their

portfolio by building alliances and providing opportunities to students from an array of foreign countries, accountability toward providing an inclusive health and mental health platform reflective of the Okanagan Charter has become much more pertinent.

The recent administration of the NCHA survey (ACHA-NCHA, 2016, 2019) at a prominent Ontario college indicated high levels of anxiety and depression. More relevant to the current topic, it described how students that identify as "white" cope with mental health concerns, and that there is a lack thereof for the racialized ethno-cultural student populace. This reflects a need to better understand the barriers they encounter in accessing campus mental health resources. This is especially the case because the research published to date indicates that mental health issues tend to peak within the age range of a typical post-secondary student (Kessler et al., 2007), and that many students suffer from persistent untreated mental health problems not being addressed by on-campus services (Zivin et al., 2009).

Mental Health Services and the Domestic Student Population

This section will describe the current challenges associated with providing campus based mental health supports for the domestic student population. This will form a sort of baseline from which to extrapolate which particular forms of mental health support may be most effective to support the needs of Punjabi international students. This study will begin by highlighting and unpacking the various hypotheses formulated by scholars focused on supporting efforts to provide campus-based services to address the mental health and well-being of domestic students.

Many studies have been done on the barriers to post-secondary students accessing campus mental health resources. Holmes and Silvestri (2016) sought to address an overall lack of research investigating the link between mental health and academic performance in post-secondary settings with a descriptive correlational analysis of Ontario college students, specifically targeting complex

mood disorders. They found an increase in the prevalence of complex mood and anxiety disorders amongst students across 15 of the 24 Ontario college counselling centres that took part in the research. More importantly, they noted common behavioural patterns and academic challenges faced by the students and described how this in itself took away from their ability to access counselling and disability services. Specifically, the behavioural patterns that challenged attention, memory and social interaction supported markers indicative of low mood and anxiety disorders. Accordingly, the authors queried whether factors such as the resource framework, the level of preparedness, and staff experience in counselling centres play a role in effective management of complex mood and anxiety disorders.

Carmack et al. (2018) looked at how minimal use of counselling services, or *help-seeking*, among college students is affected by the relationship between stigma, shame, communication and mood disorders. The authors noted that prior research had understood stigma as having three elements; the personal/self, perceived/public, and shame, where personal/self-stigma is an individual's personal behaviour toward a stigmatized person, whereas perceived/public stigma is the perceived beliefs about others' negative behaviour (Gilbert et al., 2007). Accordingly, Carmack and colleagues sought to find out how stigma relates to affect perception and communication for college students suffering from depression and anxiety. They utilized three scales to measure depression stigma, general anxiety stigma and attitudes toward mental health, and found that like previous research, personal/self-stigma was significantly higher for the students than perceived/public stigma. Interestingly, personal stigma was higher for depression than for anxiety, which they suggested could be explained by the tendency for students to normalize anxiety feelings and consider them situational. On the other hand, depression is most often perceived as a state, and so it is considered to be dispositionally situated. Nevertheless, shame seemed to be a significant

factor, despite the use of communication having a diminishing effect on personal stigma. The authors contend that service providers should focus on applying different communication strategies, as this approach could reduce shame and stigma and thereby better promote the use of mental health services. Furthermore, they suggest that investigating these variables across different student age/year groups could yield different outcomes altogether.

Arora et al. (2016) noted that historically, findings from broader Asian American student populations had often been generalized to specifically South Asian American students. Accordingly, they sought to investigate barriers to help-seeking among South Asian American students, including personal or perceived stigma and gender. Student participants that identified themselves as first generation South Asian (Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani or Sri Lankan) were administered the Perceptions of Stigmatization by Others for Seeking Help scale (PSOSH; Vogel et al., 2009). The researchers found significantly higher levels of personal stigma than perceived stigma, and that being male was associated with more negative attitudes toward accessing mental health services on campus, which they attributed to traditional role expectations and cultural beliefs for males. They highlighted the need for mental health service providers to attend to and provide education that encompasses these differences while respecting cultural beliefs. Most importantly, they expressed uncertainty around causation, and a need to investigate whether there would be a bi-directional association between the variables in a larger, more representative, and more vulnerable sample of South Asian American students.

Rosenthal and Wilson (2008), conducted a cross-sectional correlation study attempting to explain disparities in help-seeking between college students of different gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Although they found a positive relationship between use of counselling and levels of psychological distress, they found no relationship between help-seeking and the other

aforementioned variables and concluded that those variables appeared to be associated with the student's perceived needs, values and attitudes instead.

In a study on how stigma and psychological symptoms may influence student help-seeking behaviour, Baptista and Zanon (2017) performed a multiple regression factor analysis on four clusters of variables: (1) symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress; (2) feelings of shame, inadequacy and inhibition; (3) perception of therapy to seek therapy; and (4) self-stigma and stigma by others. Only four of the 17 total variables were significant predictors of help-seeking. In order of strongest to weakest, they were: (1) attitudes toward the search for help ($\beta = .272$, $p < .001$); (2) the expected benefits of seeking help ($\beta = .190$, $p = .01$); (3) the quality and proximity of interpersonal relationships ($\beta = .148$, $p = .03$); and (4) the expected risks of seeking help ($\beta = -.139$, $p = .056$). . The dominance of the 'attitudes' predictor shows that students' beliefs about service providers competency is of critical importance to promote help-seeking. The authors suggest that further research into the role that social and familial supports play in tendency to access mental health services may be necessary.

Stewart et al. (2014) contend that in order to better serve the mental health needs of Canadian post-secondary students, it is essential for counselling service centres to familiarize themselves with how students prefer to receive information about specific mental health concerns, treatment options, and how to access these resources. They presented students with vignettes describing symptoms of panic disorder and depression and asked them to rate their familiarity with resources to help someone with such symptoms based on their experiences and preferences for information. They found that students tended to reach out to informal sources such as friends and family, and that developing evidence-based websites that specifically address the documented needs of students and their treatment choices would improve mental health literacy for students as

well as the friends and family they confide in.

Previous research by Dietsche (2012) found that the lack of use of on-campus support services by Ontario college students was due to institution-based barriers. In alignment with earlier research (Grubb, 1996; Komiya et al., 2000; Le Surf & Lynch, 1999), he found that common barriers to using mental health services included the use of denial as a coping strategy, perceived self-sufficiency, unwillingness to discuss concerns, not knowing what to ask, and the perception of stigma related to receiving counselling. He suggested that this may be remedied through the implementation of structured, live, web-based access to campus support services; a structured case worker like proactive process that would involve interaction with key members from each service and with peers.

More recently, Lipson et al. (2018) indicated that the disparities in the utilization of mental health services are better explained by reference to race and/or ethnicity. The results from this multivariate correlational study indicate that the mental health needs of students of colour are less adequately addressed than those of white students because of their minimal use of such services provided on campus. They described unique needs within and across racial/ethnic groups that were not being supported for students ranging from Arab/Arab American, Asian, African American, Latin and multiracial identities. Like Stewart et al. (2014), they also found that that this student population is reaching out to informal sources in times of distress rather than counselling services. Also, as in the studies by Arora et al. (2016) and Carmack et al. (2018), the results demonstrated low significance for stigma (perceived and personal) across race and ethnicity. Overall, Lipson et al. (2018) stressed the importance of better understanding the protective factors and experiences of racial/ethnic minority groups and argued that this could be achieved through the development of culturally based outreach and education programs delivered through the kinds of information

pathways suggested by Dietsche (2012) and Stewart et al. (2014). They also highlighted the need for more research on mental health utilization within and across subsets of the international student population.

On the topic of whether stigma predicts help-seeking behaviour among post-secondary students within and across racial or ethnic groups, Vogel et al. (2017) investigated this on an international level across ten countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Hong Kong, Portugal, Romania, Taiwan, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. The authors used the Self-Stigma of Seeking Help Scale (SSOSH; Vogel et al., 2006) to measure self-stigma, the Stigma Scale for Receiving Psychological Help Scale (SSRPH; Komiya et al., 2000) to measure public stigma, and the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-Short Form (ATSPPHS-SF; Fischer & Farina, 1995) to measure their attitudes toward help-seeking, using a multiple group confirmatory factor analysis and a mediation model to account for measurement invariance across countries. Their findings confirmed all of the hypothesized relationship between public stigma and self-stigma, and between self-stigma and negative attitudes toward help-seeking within most countries and regions. They posit that not only do these findings show that self/personal stigma mediates the relationship between public/perceived stigma and help-seeking behaviour, but also that public/perceived stigma is internalized as self/personalized stigma over time. They further speculate that in countries with non-significant results for both variables, it is likely that perceived/public stigma is dispositionally placed, resulting in negative ramifications to the self and therefore minimal help-seeking behaviour. They also note that for some countries, significant changes in social, cultural and economic status may have an opposite effect due to the influence of Western cultural ideas, and that the differences across countries between public/perceived and self/personal stigma are likely attributable to regional factors. Due to the scales in the measures

used to assess the constructs being normed in the United States, the authors shared concerns about validity and whether they were able to capture all aspects of stigma in all countries, despite efforts to remove and translate negatively worded items from the measures. They also questioned how stigma is conceptualized by other countries and whether it involves differing variables.

Mental Health Services and the International Student Population

This section of the literature review will now turn toward how the international student population fairs in comparison to domestic students under similar conditions. Much of the literature neglects to capture the intersectionality's and unique experiences of the diverse international student population, resulting in a Euro-centrically stereotyped outcome wrought with generalizations. One effort to address this gap by Becker et al. (2018) attempted to predict help-seeking and access of mental health services by international students across the United States on the basis of variables including mindfulness, belonging, sense of coherence, integration (social and academic participation) and sense of connection to the school. The findings indicated that as found with regard to lack of help-seeking in domestic students in other studies, international students preferred to reach out to informal supports when encountering stressors, and rarely accessed professional campus-based services. Those that sought informal help endorsed the benefits of mindfulness, sense of belonging, sense of coherence, integration and connection to their school. While they did not tend seek professional help for highly distressful concerns, they did so more often for physical health related matters, which may be attributed to cultural factors. As such, the authors suggested that developing skill-building workshops that incorporate peer support training and outreach efforts as conduits to professional help may be effective.

Bedi (2018) posits that the incorporation of indigenous healing practices by mental health service providers may help to diminish racial, ethnic, cultural and national disparities in help-

seeking and access of mental health services at Western post-secondary institutions. Bedi argues that culturally adapted counselling and psychotherapy (CACP)—the most commonly accepted alternative to conventional approaches for accommodating other cultural values—though sometimes effective, should be questioned due to its embeddedness within the colonialist pharmaco-medical paradigm of the Western world. A paradigm that is insufficient in adapting to the cultural values compatible with non-Western countries and those that reside in Western countries but are less accultured to the Western norms. He ultimately argues for a culturally conditioned approach which involves the promotion of indigenous healing practices in isolation and in context-dependent collaboration between indigenous healing practices and CACP as the best approach for reducing mental health disparities globally.

Meghani and Harvey (2016) considered acculturation in a study of the psychological adjustment patterns and acculturation processes of first year Indian graduate students studying in the United States. The authors chose Indian students because they represent the largest proportion of international students across American college campuses. They wanted to investigate whether levels of acculturation, level of enculturation (the degree to which they maintain orientation toward their own culture of origin), social support, coping strategies, academic and financial concerns, and societal discrepancies (e.g., gender role attitudes and perceived degree of adjustment) would result in different trajectories of depression. They found that a large portion of students reported stable and low levels of depression over the first nine months, a few reported depressive symptoms over the course of a year and those that endorsed the fewest depressive symptoms reported experiencing reduced symptomatology over the year. With regard to acculturation and enculturation, they found that the international students-maintained identification with their home culture while their identification with the United States culture increased—a result they described

as “distinct” from previous published findings. Similar to other studies, social support—specifically in-group, community-based support—was a significant negative predictor for depression. However, none of the coping strategies assessed were significant predictors. Results for academic and financial concerns were consistent with other studies that had found significant associations between academic distress and financial concerns. Fewer depressive symptoms were attributed to the possibility that the international students adjusted their expectations upon arrival to be more socially flexible in gender role behaviours as the year progressed. Overall, Meghani and Harvey (2016) shared that since their study did not properly capture and account for the domains in which the students’ experienced changes, it is difficult to infer how much bearing this had upon the student’s decision to/not to utilize the mental health supports provided on campus. The researchers also highlighted that since not all international students experience depression, and that even those from the same country can have different values, beliefs, practices and cultural adjustment approaches, it is important to better understand all of these factors in more detail. Finally, they suggest developing and implementing programs with the input of senior international students as a possibly effective way forward.

Li et al. (2013) focused their mixed methods research with Asian international students at a US University on determining the factors that predict their willingness to seek counselling and their perceptions of it. Using the short form of the Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH-SF; Fischer & Farina, 1995), the Willingness to Seek Counselling Scale (WSC; Gim et al., 1990) and the College Stress Inventory (CSI; Solberg et al., 1993) to measure these constructs, they found that academic stress was significant predictor of willingness to pursue counselling. Furthermore, the general perception among these students they inferred from the data was the belief that counselling services are for individuals that have exhausted all

other options and those that have “serious mental illness”. They further posited that the Asian collectivist culture of resiliency may influence students to conceal distressing events from family and attempt to address them on their own to avoid embarrassment. Interestingly, the researchers suggest the possibility that these students tend to access counselling ostensibly for academic stressors as a way of concealing their underlying psychological concerns. They also suggest that investigating the impact of acculturation may assist in understanding this issue. Because other studies had indicated that Asian international students favour sharing their concerns with friends, the authors recommend that providers in post-secondary settings should consider developing peer-based outreach programs or international student peer coaches acting as liaisons for counselling centres.

On the other hand, Yakunina and Weigold (2011) argue that integrating cognitive predictors such as counselling attitudes and stigma, and cultural predictors such as acculturation, Asian values and loss of face, can better serve to understand help-seeking behaviours amongst Asian international students and their willingness to access mental health services on campus. Their findings from twenty American universities with large international student populations indicated that students that align with more traditional values endorsed fewer positive attitudes and less intention to seek or access counselling. The researchers attributed this to differences between the Western tendency toward individualism and open expression of emotion, and the Asian cultures non-Western tendency toward collectivism and emotional self-control. Surprisingly however, acculturation level had no significant relationship to help-seeking, and loss of face and stigma actually had a positive effect upon their intention to seek counselling. The researchers infer that this could be due to fear of violating cultural norms, loss of face and stigma from friends and family, as opposed to the confidential nature of counselling. In keeping with the findings, the

researchers impress the need for culturally normed assessment measures and for post-secondary mental health service providers to adapt their approach to the values of Asian clients.

Chao et al. (2017) believe that an effective approach to address the disparate usage of mental services for international students is to focus on training mental health providers themselves. In their study predicting the effectiveness of service learning on multicultural counselling competence (MCC) for on-campus therapists, they found that a combined practical and didactic approach in MCC enhanced their cultural sensitivity and awareness of the importance of implementing approaches that offer resources, advocacy and interventions beyond typical counselling for international students.

Mental Health, Inclusivity and the Hosting Campus: Mattering and Belonging

International Students

Perhaps the belief that one should feel that they matter, and that they belong in the host campus setting, could be a better predictor of low help-seeking on campus by international students. Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) described mattering as an alternative to feeling marginalized and as the affirmation needed when one questions if they belong. As research progressed in this area a further, five elements were identified as being part of mattering: attention, importance, ego extension, dependence and appreciation (Schlossberg, 1989). Schlossberg et al. (1989) contend that without feeling appreciated and like they matter, an individual will feel marginalized or disconnected.

In light of the many marginalizing forces on post-secondary campuses, Dueñas and Gloria (2017) investigated whether belonging would mediate the relationships of collective self-esteem, cohesion and congruity with mattering amongst domestic first generation Latin post-secondary

students at a predominantly white campus in the United States. The authors describe collective self-esteem as an individual's level of social identity based on their interactions with others, and cohesion and congruity as the degree to which one's cultural values are mirrored by their institution. The results illustrated a partial correlational relationship for belonging, a significant relationship between collective self-esteem and feeling they mattered to others on campus, and that belonging mediates the relationship of collective self-esteem, cohesion and congruity with mattering—more so for students new to campus.

Following Dueñas and Gloria, Van Horne et al. (2018) administered a survey across nine United States post-secondary institutes to determine the role belonging plays in how international students perceive challenging experiences compared to domestic students, using the Input, Environment, Output, Involvement model (IEOI; Astin, 1993) to examine similarities and differences between them. The *input* construct focused on the characteristics each student brought to the college; the *environment* construct focused on experiences while attending the post-secondary institution; the *outcome* construct comprised particular changes that had occurred for the student; and finally, the *involvement* construct focused on how frequently the student had meaningful interactions with others. In general, the results illustrated similar levels of academic engagement and financial insecurity concerns for international and domestic students, but considerable discrepancies in social integration and belonging (though low for both). This was also noticed in a previous study by Poyrazli and Lopez (2007), who found difficulty making social connections and feelings of disconnectedness among international students when controlling for academic achievement. Even though Van Horne et al. (2018) could not infer cause from their findings, they argued the necessity to better understand and address low levels of social integration and belonging among international students to improve inclusivity across post-secondary

institutions.

In their efforts to address marginalization, Glass and Gesing (2018) posited that improving social capital for international students could improve inclusivity and sense of belonging and attachment to the host campus. Along with previous researchers, the authors found that facilitating social involvement and interactions with campus organizations to build social capital can help international students gain a sense of community and better adapt to the host campus (Beech, 2015; Lin et al., 2012; Glass & Gesing, 2018; Trice, 2004). Glass and Gesing (2018) sought to determine differences in size, composition, strength and density of the social networks of international students that participate in specific campus organizations. They found significantly larger and stronger social networks for international students who took part in campus organizations and interacted with domestic students more often, and so acquired a greater social capital in their neighbourhood. This effect was strongest for those that took part in service type campus organizations, as this allowed them to develop networks outside their own culture and in turn allowed for greater social capital development. On the other hand, sense of belonging and attachment was greater for those that took part in campus organizations related to their own cultural heritage.

Garcia et al. (2019) argue that the onus to reduce the challenges and create a sense of belonging for international students should fall upon the host institution itself, through the development of socio-academic support. Using Deil-Amen's model (2011) to determine predictors associated with sense of belonging and academic, social and socio-academic integration, they found that socio-academic integration was the strongest predictor for sense of belonging. The authors attributed this finding to international students having a close relationship with faculty and administrative staff compared to the domestic students because of their need to maintain fulltime

enrollment in order to fulfil visa requirements.

In a qualitative interview study, Rivas et al. (2019) focussed on understanding which internalized narratives interplay an international-student's sense of belonging and connectedness to the host institute, and whether their perceptions of the host country's culture and social interaction affects their feelings of marginalization. Three prominent themes emerged from the interviews; international students' perspective of the United States impacted their (1) social well-being, (2) social life and their (3) academic and campus experience. The international students perceived a great difference in their cultural worldviews and attitudes, and therefore felt a stronger connection with other international students than with American students. They also shared that their sense of belonging grew over time, especially for those that described themselves as being socially extroverted and were satisfied with their academic performance despite some initial difficulties adjusting.

Punjabi Domestic Students

It is highly probable for students that identify as "white" (ACHA-NCHA, 2016, 2019) to assume that both domestic and international students that speak Punjabi are similar in their trajectories to resolving mental health stressors because of their common ethnicity and/or religion; however, as many scholars have stipulated, this is far from the truth (e.g., Bedi, 2018; Meghani & Harvey, 2016). This may be due in large part to existing research being focused on South Asian student experiences broadly, and the lack thereof pertaining to the experiences of the domestic and/or international subset of Punjabi students (Arora 2019; Houshmand et al., 2014; Sandhu & Nayar, 2008). Utilizing any form of simplistic formulation such as a South Asian banner understandably can result in many oversites in attuning to and understanding the unique aspects indigenous to any cultural being coping with mental health concerns whether they are domestic or

international. Thankfully, scholars like Bedi (2018), Meghani and Harvey (2016) have shed light on the distinct trajectories of how international students/students from collectivistic cultures much like domestic students/students from individualistic cultures from the same origins of country can have different values, beliefs, practices and cultural adjustment approaches, owing to their levels of acculturation and enculturation. Domestic Punjabi students have often negotiated their identities, and at some level-maintained orientation toward their own culture while adopting some of the Western individualist values foundationally upheld by Western educational institutions (Jodhka, 2009).

Unsurprisingly, authors that have neglected to disaggregate the unique ethnic and cultural aspects of the domestic Punjabi student experience have tended to group them under the South Asian banner, minimizing this subset with the implicit notion that they are somehow culturally devoid and incapable of interacting and assimilating with the mainstream community (Brah, 2005). In response, some scholars have contested this perspective, stipulating that the values of domestic Punjabi students should not be viewed as discrete, but rather on a continuum that ranges from collectivism to individualism (Sandhu & Nayar, 2008). This continuum allows for many unique permutations and variations that enable this subset to culturally adjust their approaches to mental health based on their unique experiences, values, beliefs and practices (Meghani & Harvey, 2016).

Punjabi International Students

Challenges both outside and within academia can significantly affect the academic success of any post-secondary student. It should therefore not come as a surprise that such effects would be much stronger for Punjabi international students in a non-Punjabi foreign country such as Canada, which has boasted substantial growth in the enrollment of international students from

India at the post-secondary level since 2015 (CBIE, 2019, 2020). There have been few published works on Punjabi international students, which is a unique subset of Indian international students, and those that are available tend to focus on theoretical constructs and not the unique intersectional identities of this particular subset (Arora 2019; Houshmand et al., 2014; Sandhu & Nayar, 2008).

Considering the dearth of empirical research into the impact of racial microaggressions on people of colour, only a handful of studies have investigated its impact on international students/students from collectivistic cultures (Sue et al., 2007; Kim & Kim, 2010). Although these have provided theories and conceptualizations aiding a better understanding of how these particular students experience subtle racism in Canada and the U.S., they have fallen short of capturing the specific cultural nuances and subtleties of coping, indigenous to a particular collectivistic culture, much like the Punjabi international student populace. This is primarily due to the fact that they tend to view the issue from an ethnocentric lens that places all international students/collectivistic cultures under one broad banner, such as East and South Asians, making it difficult to tease apart elements unique to each intersectional identity (Jacob & Greggo, 2001; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004).

One such study by Houshmand et al., (2014) qualitatively explored the experiences of first-year East and South Asian international students with racial microaggressions at a Canadian post-secondary institute. The participant sample consisted of a disproportionate ratio of students from China and South Korea, with minimal to absent representation of students from India and Pakistan. The findings supported the students experiencing racial micro-aggressions, for categories of micro-insult, micro-assault and micro-invalidation (Sue et al., 2007; S. Kim & Kim, 2010). Furthermore, the authors explained that they stumbled across some broad coping themes because students felt that they were nothing more than economic revenue to Canada. The coping themes

that emerged from the interviews included (1) engaging with their own cultural groups/peer networks, (2) withdrawing from academic spheres, and (3) seeking comfort from their immediate environment, their surrounding multicultural milieu. However, the findings varied due to the students' unique intersecting identities (e.g., country of origin, language proficiency, gender), and the authors therefore acknowledged the need to consider within-group differences amongst international students (Houshmand et al., 2014).

Similar sentiments were found by Shah et al., (2019), where international students at a Canadian post-secondary institute felt that they were considered nothing more than a revenue source for the school—sentiments that appeared to be common for international students generally, irrespective of their country of origin. The belief that they are nothing more than a financial commodity appears to take away from their ability to focus on their academic responsibilities due to experiencing difficulties in managing and acquiring accommodations and employment, which is further compounded by them feeling lonely and isolated in the absence of the valued social and cultural networks that they had in the homeland. It is likely that these feelings weigh heavily on the minds of international students, and even more so for those from underdeveloped or developing countries (Shah et al., 2019).

There seems to be a consensus amongst scholars that research is needed to better understand the subsets of international students rather than homogenizing them into a whole. For example, the theoretical concept of mattering has yet to be investigated in relation to the unique subset of Punjabi international students. This is especially the case because some findings have indicated that a sense of belonging and being connected to one's ethnic group has allowed international students to ameliorate some distress in the face of high tuition fees and lack of institutional support, while adjusting to academic challenges and their student life at post-

secondary institutions (Brondolo et al., 2009; Houshmand et al., 2014; Arora, 2019).

Considering this consensus, there has been two recently published studies and one report that has taken a step toward attuning to the intersectional identities of Punjabi international students at Canadian post-secondary institutes. Marom (2021) explored their experiences after noticing the recent influx of this populace at Canadian post-secondary institutes, with particular interest in the dynamics of this influx in relation to its proximity to the larger, older, more established Punjabi community of the Indian diaspora. Her study focused on intra-ethnic othering experiences and challenges/tensions, inside and outside their post-secondary institute, of sixteen Punjabi international students, all of whom were financially supported by their families in India to various degrees, and had arrived in Canada within the past three years. The findings indicated that the female participants, in particular, felt Canada offered them both more personal freedom and more professional opportunities than they had in India. However, contrary to previous published works suggesting that having a community/multicultural milieu would mitigate feelings of isolation and loneliness within this unique subset, this study did not find this to be the case because their experiences of belonging were tainted by intra-ethnic tensions that impeded on their academic aspirations. Three levels of tension were noted: within the group of Punjabi international students; between the Punjabi international students and the domestic Punjabi students; and with the local Punjabi community. Specifically, she noted how observed intra-ethnic relations on campus (i.e., dynamics in courses, groupings during breaks) manifested off campus too (i.e., work, housing) which affected their well-being and academic success. She attributed this to the present revenue-based business model utilized by various stakeholders at the provincial, territorial and federal levels regarding the post-secondary education system and suggested that it would be beneficial to provide on-campus housing, employment, information on mental health services on campus, and

how these services maintain confidentiality in providing support for personal safety against harassment and rights violations. From an infrastructural perspective, the author recommended that educating faculty about intra-ethnic tensions and how to recognize them so they can intervene and implement intercultural based teachings, could improve the connection between the institute and the Punjabi community. Finally, the author shared that for the sake of supporting communication and creating transparency, the institute under study has piloted a designated peer mentorship program to serve the needs of all international students, on and off campus.

Kahlon (2021), in his recent report, brought to the forefront the vulnerabilities and inadequacies plaguing the Punjabi international student populace migrating from India's poverty-stricken province of Punjab, only to find themselves trapped in another exploitative system. The author illustrates the prevalence of exploitation of Punjabi international students across communities in Canada, ranging from academia, housing and employment. In particular, how financial and labour exploitation is affecting the livelihood and mental well-being of this student populace. Much like the concerned local marginalized communities, he gave voice to unfortunate themes that have been recently surfacing in the local community-based newspapers on the current exploitive conditions and how they have resulted in elevated sexual violence and trauma concerns towards female Punjabi international students and an overall disturbing rise in suicides amongst the Punjabi international student population as a whole (Abraham, 2021; Bascaramurty et al., 2021; Sidhu, 2021). He draws upon factual perspectives and experiences to bring to our attention the lack of publicized reforms in attending to the underlying causes highlighted in his report, hoping that stakeholders at federal, provincial and territorial levels address the needs and human rights of Punjabi international students seeking a better future, rather than seeing them as a GDP boosting commodity (Kahlon, 2021).

Similarly, in a recent case study, Marom (2022) delved into understanding the experiences of Punjabi international students enrolled at a Canadian post-secondary institute in relation to labour mobility, immigration policies and the marketization of international higher education. She finds that the recruitment process from the get-go is riddled with high costs via un-scrupulous recruitment agents, misinformation and limited program choice opportunities for inbounding Punjabi students, leaving them with low skilled job prospects post-graduation. In the absence of involving the Punjabi students in any collaborative academic considerations, the author describes the internationalization of higher education to be market driven and equivalates it to a societal order upheld by racial and economic hierarchies (Marom, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Up until more recently, common to all areas of literature covered in this chapter, is the assumption that international students are similarly represented in the published findings, regardless of their unique intersectionality and cultural characteristics. The published works include differing initiatives and hypotheses presented by renowned scholars and researchers in the field attempting to explain the observed disparity between domestic and international students in the use of campus mental health resources. However, each were conducted across institutional settings embedded in a Western colonialist paradigm, working with students of varying racial, ethnic and cultural characteristics. Unsurprisingly, they fall short of speaking to the unique aspects of individual ethnic demographics in their findings, resulting in ethnocentric invalid conclusions. Furthermore, considering the economical aspirations of Canada's International Education Strategy (Global Affairs Canada, 2019a, 2019b), many studies on this topic have been published in the United States. Some of these studies are methodologically sophisticated and well designed, while

others are rather limited in design, sophistication, and generalizability. While the literature on this topic is evolving, it remains in critical need of further elaboration in relation to familiarizing with the lived experiences of the largest proportion of inbound Indian international students, the Punjabi international student populace, arriving and currently enrolled in Canada's higher education economical model.

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