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# SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTION OF DISCRIMINATION IN URBAN MAPUCHE YOUTH. GENDER DIFFERENCES: RESEARCH PROGRESS

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## ABSTRACT

*In the context of ongoing violence in the south-central region of the country, and as a result of the historical conflict between the state, Chilean society, and the Mapuche people, the present study aims to understand the impact that ethnic discrimination has on the mental health and well-being of young Mapuche students residing in metropolitan areas. The regions of Biobío and La Araucanía. The following presentation will offer preliminary results obtained from the application of a scale of perceived ethnic discrimination to a group of 246 young students, 103 men and 136 women who self-identify as the Mapuche people. The findings indicate that the environments where significant discrimination is perceived include schools, judicial institutions, law enforcement, and public spaces. The aforementioned element functions as a distinguishing factor between men and women, with women perceiving a greater degree of discrimination in comparison to men.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Ethnic Discrimination, Perceived Ethnic Discrimination, Subjective Perception of Ethnic Discrimination.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A substantial body of evidence has accumulated that suggests the presence of ethnic and cultural discrimination against indigenous populations and minority groups in various regions of the world. This phenomenon has been documented in both developed and developing countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia, as well as Chile, Peru, and Ecuador (Basabe & Bobowik, 2013; Gall *et al.*, 2021; Merino & Mellor, 2009). Discrimination is defined as a form of social abuse that can be perpetrated directly from one individual to another, or indirectly through various channels such as state institutions, private organizations, and public policies (Allport, 1954). When this type of violence is perpetrated against an ethnic group solely on the basis of their ethnic identity, it is referred to as ethnic discrimination (Martín-Baró, 1989).

An alternative approach that may facilitate comprehension of the phenomenon of ethnic discrimination in indigenous populations is the one proposed by Blumer (1958). Blumer asserts that an ethnic group is shaped by its historical experiences, which in turn are influenced by the initial contact with the colonizing population. In this sense, when analysing the association that exists between the Mapuche people and the level of prejudice against them, one cannot fail to consider the historical relationship that exists between the native peoples and the Chilean State, even before its constitution as such. The young and urban population of large minority groups is usually more exposed to this type of abuse, since it remains in constant interrelation with the dominant group, especially because they have always inhabited the city. Furthermore, the Chilean educational system is comprised of a 14-year period of schooling, which commences at a young age and extends through adolescence. This period is legally mandated and guaranteed by the state in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2016), which was ratified in 1990.

## 2. FIGURES AND TABLES

It is of particular importance that young students not only perceive themselves as discriminated against by the outgroup, but also report suffering discrimination from their own group or ingroup. This form of mistreatment can be particularly distressing, as it profoundly challenges the sense of belonging for these individuals (Oteíza & Merino, 2012; Zañartu Canihuante *et al.*, 2021). This can lead to heightened tension surrounding the formation of their identity, potentially resulting in anxiety and depressive symptoms, characterized by physical and mental

discomfort (Chao & Otsuki-Clutter, 2011; Straiton *et al.*, 2019). A seminal stream within the field of evolutionary psychology is the psychosocial theory of human development. According to Erikson (1971), identity is the manner in which individuals assess their own selves, taking into account the evaluations they receive from others. The concept of identity, therefore, is formed through a process of comparison between one's self-perception and the internalization of the valuation of others. In contrast, Vygotsky (1996) incorporates the notion of emotional experience into the concept of identity. However, their approach is analogous; as he notes, the nature of this experience is contingent upon the impact of the environment on it.

Another significant reference in the development of identity is the theory of social identity by Henri Tajfel (1984), a social psychologist who subscribed to the cognitivist perspective. Tajfel's theory laid the foundations of the social construction of identity, and he also introduced the concept of "social," defining it as "that part of an individual's self-concept that derives from the knowledge of his or her belonging to a social group, together with the evaluative and emotional meaning associated with this belonging" (Tajfel, 1984: 292). The notion of identity, as elucidated by several seminal perspectives in the field of psychology, has been theorized as being inextricably linked to the dynamic interplay between an individual's environment or cultural influences and their personal identity. It is imperative to comprehend the profound implications of any form of discrimination on individuals undergoing pivotal phases in their personal and psychological development.

According to the framework, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights underscores the significance of human dignity, asserting that all individuals possess inherent rights and freedoms, irrespective of factors such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, or other characteristics (Vázquez & Hernández, 2022). In Chile, however, there is a recognition of social violations that can adversely impact the human development of indigenous peoples, whether individually or collectively (Zañartu Canihuante *et al.*, 2017). Considering a historical perspective on state violence against the Mapuche population, which has been based on the search for invasion and settlement in Mapuche territory, causing the loss of Mapuche territory, knowledge, and language, among other processes entailed by racial subordination (Nahuelpan and Antimil, 2019; Vergara & Mellado, 2018), it is evident that such violations have been committed by the State itself. These elements are intertwined with the relevant aspects of the identification of the Mapuche community. A

review of recent history reveals the case of the Arauco region, which has undergone increasing militarization since the 1990s. This phenomenon is accompanied by a media and state-sponsored portrayal of "terrorists" within the autonomous communities, particularly those engaged in indigenous political initiatives (Hiner & González, 2023).

When discussing indigenous violence in the Americas, it is imperative to examine the experiences of women in these communities, who have historically and continue to endure various forms of discrimination based on factors such as ethnicity, gender, social class, disability, and other characteristics. This discrimination exposes them to human rights violations in their daily lives (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2017). It is imperative to undertake an intersectional analysis, which endeavours to elucidate how intricate forms of oppression and discrimination can coexist and occur concurrently within populations that are structurally vulnerable (Moreno et al., 2021). Consequently, when examining the phenomenon of discrimination against young people, it is imperative to acknowledge the heterogeneity among this demographic. This heterogeneity, in essence, signifies the presence of a diverse group of individuals within the youth category (Duarte Quapper, 2000). A case in point is that of young university students assigned to a Mapuche community, who possess their own particularities and perceptions of discrimination.

### 3. METHOD

This publication presents an advance of the research carried out within the framework of the FONDECYT POSTDOCTORAL N° 3210537 project, which is funded by the National Agency for Research and Development in Chile (ANID). This finding corresponds to the initial segment of the results obtained from an investigation into the psychosocial factors associated with the perception of ethnic discrimination and its subsequent impact on the subjective and social well-being of young Mapuche students from urban areas in three regions of the country. The Mapuche population is notably prominent in all of these areas, as indicated by the Ministry of Social Development's (2015) data. This study is an advance of a research project that is considered quantitative in terms of methodology, with a cross-sectional descriptive design.

#### 3.1. The Exhibition

The sample was obtained through the Snowball research strategy, which involves the addition of participants from the same individuals who

voluntarily consented to participate in this research (Flick, 2018). During the sampling process, we sought to incorporate people from various provinces, ensuring that the sample was territorially balanced between the Biobío, La Araucanía, and Metropolitan regions. The sample was meticulously balanced according to the biological sex declared by the subjects, thereby ensuring an equal proportion between men and women. The total sample size of the study was 246 participants, all of whom were enrolled in either higher or secondary education. Of these participants, 103 were classified as "Male," based on their biological sex as declared at birth, while 136 were designated as "Female." For the purposes of this analysis, the third category, "other/non-binary," was excluded from consideration due to its lack of statistical significance.

#### 3.2. Procedure And Ethical Considerations

The procedure commenced with the presentation of the objectives of the project and the invitation to participate in it. Following this, the signing of informed consents and assents (for minors) was carried out. In the latter case, authorization was given by a father, mother, guardian, and/or proxy. However, if a minor expressed a decision not to participate, that decision was respected, even if the minor had previously obtained the consent of an adult in their care. All documentation, including but not limited to cover letters, consents, and informed assents, had previously received approval from the Ethics Committee of the University of Concepción in Chile. The collection of the sample commenced with the identification of key doorkeepers and informants who provided a preliminary approach to educational establishments and cultural groups. Initially, interviews were conducted with directors, presidents, and representatives of various educational institutions, social and cultural organizations. These interviews were conducted to present the objectives of the project and to discuss any concerns that may arise from this invitation.

The collection of information was overseen by a multidisciplinary technical team, led by the responsible researcher, who is a community psychologist. The work in the field was conducted by a sociocultural anthropologist with extensive experience working with native peoples in the northern and southern regions of the country. For this study, a team of approximately 10 interviewers, who were nearing the culmination of their social sciences careers, was assembled. Prior to commencing the data collection process, the enumerators underwent training. This training was conducted by the

researcher responsible for the project in collaboration with the field manager. In the second instance, a pilot procedure was carried out to observe the behavior of the Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Scale, which had previously been consulted on by six expert judges. The participants were divided into three groups. The first group was composed of researchers who specialized in topics such as discrimination and/or native peoples. The second group was composed of representatives of the target population. The third group was composed of individuals who identified as having some Mapuche territorial identity. Following a thorough review of the comments and the incorporation of the suggestions, the instrument was applied to the final sample.

### 3.3. Instrument Features

The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination variable is intended to measure the subjective perception of ethnic discrimination that the participants of this study reported through an online survey application from Google Forms. The study was grounded in a Spanish adaptation of the Krieger *et al.* (2005) scale of experiences of discrimination (EOD), which lacked prior validation in the Chilean population. Therefore, a confirmatory analysis was conducted, resulting in the creation of a unifactorial instrument comprising nine items presented on a Likert scale. Participants were instructed to assign a score from 1 to 5 to their perception of having experienced discrimination due to their affiliation with an indigenous community in various contexts, including education, employment, and the judicial system, among others. The EOD has been utilized since 1990, exhibiting a Cronbach Alpha of .74 and a reliability of .70. The scale has been utilized within mental health institutions to demonstrate the impact that racism, ethnic discrimination, and/or social injustice have on people's health. In a systematic review (Bastos *et al.*, 2010), the EOD scale was evaluated alongside 23 other scales that measure racism or discrimination.

The EOD scale was determined to have acceptable psychometric properties. The version that was validated in this research yielded a Cronbach alpha of .86 (Zañartu-Cano *et al.*, 2024).

### Analysis

The results indicated that the scale of perceived discrimination exhibited the most significant gender disparities. For the purpose of conducting comparisons by sex, the 15 respondents who preferred not to disclose their sex or indicated that they identified as having another sex were excluded due to their low representativeness. Accordingly, the subsample under consideration contained 473 subjects, including 201 (42.5%) men and 272 (57.5%) women, with a mean age of 21.54 (SD = 4.29). With respect to the Mapuche ethnic group, 239 (50.5%) subjects identified as Mapuche, while 234 (49.5%) declared that they did not belong to an ethnic group. Significant differences were found by sex in the following variables: positive affectivity T (280.37) = 3.10,  $p < 0.01$ , ES=0.21, negative affectivity T (282.94) = 3.89,  $p < 0.001$ , ES=0.25, discrimination T (271.75)=3.07,  $p < 0.01$ , ES=0.21, F1 (Emotional support / Social support) T (261.53) = 2.32,  $p < 0.05$ , ES=0.18, F5 (Religion) T (281.42) = 2.52,  $p < 0.05$ , ES=0.18 and F7 (Negation) T (282.84) = 3.16,  $p < 0.01$ , ES=0.2 (see table N°1).

## 4. METHOD

The findings of this research suggest that the study participants would experience minimal discrimination. However, women are considered to be significantly more discriminated against than men. The institutions that have been identified as the most significant sources of subjective perceptions of discrimination are the judiciary, educational institutions, and religious institutions. However, women also perceive a degree of discrimination in public spaces, such as on the street or in parks. This finding does not reflect the subjective experience of ethnic discrimination among men. Consequently, it is regarded as the most salient gender disparity.

*Table 1: Mapuche Sample Results.*

N°	Item	Mapuche (n=246)		male (n=103)		female (n=136)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I1	In the judicial-police system (by police, judges, etc.)	3.01	2.20	2,86	2,20	3,10	2,24
I2	In medical services	2.35	1.78	2,28	1,83	2,37	1,75
I3	In educational institutions (schools, institutes, universities)	3.32	2.03	3,17	2,03	3,44	2,04
I4	In a religious institution (Catholic church, evangelical church, etc.)	2.87	2.17	2,67	2,06	3,01	2,23
I5	In public places (restaurants, shops, banks, government offices, airport, supermarkets)	2.44	1.84	2,30	1,82	2,54	1,87
I6	On the street, in the park	2.24	1.71	1,99	1,54	2,43	1,81
I7	At someone's house, at a party, at a wedding, etc.	2.50	1.79	2,49	1,86	2,54	1,76
I8	When I have tried to rent a room, apartment or house	2.07	1.72	2,01	1,64	2,10	1,77
I9	Where I work or have worked	2.37	1.85	2,25	1,68	2,44	1,98

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