Ethnic Discrimination and Self-esteem of Santal Adolescents

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Different ethnic groups comprise around 1.6 million of the national population. 'Santals', the second largest ethnic community are mostly found in the northern part of Bangladesh. With their own distinct language and culture, these ethnic groups have significantly enriched the entire culture of the country. However, lower socio-economic conditions along with a different language and culture hinders free intermingling of these people with mainstream population and leads ethnic discrimination. Perception of discrimination lowers the psychological wellbeing, and in the long run undermines self-esteem, of the individual. Mental wellbeing is recognized as a part of health, according to the definition of health accepted by World Health Organization. In 2017, a cross sectional study was undertaken to find out the relationship between perceived ethnic discrimination and self-esteem of Santal adolescents. A total of 159 Santal adolescents, boys and girls of age 11 – 17 years from 3 secondary schools of Dinajpur district were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire containing questions on perceived ethnic discrimination and self-esteem by using PEDQ and RSS. Female were higher in number (66%) than male. Half of them were below age 14 years (49.7%) and 40% studied in boarding school. Large proportion of respondents' parents were illiterate (father 49.7%, mother 59.7%). Nearly half of the fathers (47.8%) earned through agricultural work and mothers were found to be housewives (65.4%). Result indicated all most all respondents stated that, they experienced ethnic discrimination. Among them older adolescents perceived higher ethnic discrimination than younger (p=.070). Again it was higher among the respondents studying in boarding school (p=.000) than those who lived with their parents. Self-esteem is higher in younger adolescents (p=.037) and females (p=.000). Other variables like parents' and respondents' academic attainment, monthly expenditure of the respondents were found associated with level of respondents self-esteem (p=.006, p=.007, p=.020 respectively). Multiple linear regression indicated sex and monthly personal expenditure of respondent can predict the levels of self-esteem. Correlation analysis showed that self-esteem was positively associated with higher perceived discrimination. Besides influence of perception of ethnic discrimination on self-esteem, further studies need to be conducted to discover factors related to psychological health among the members of ethnic groups.

Biography

Borsha Soren, MBBS, is a graduate of Dinajpur Medical College under Rajshahi University, Bangladesh. Soren has been working as a Government Physician for Peoples Republic of Bangladesh for last 4 years.

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