

# Ethnic Discrimination, Coping Strategies, and Psychological Well-Being Among Indigenous Communities in San Gabriel, LA Union: A Correlational Study

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## ABSTRACT

*The study explored the link between ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being among Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union, focusing on the coping strategies they use. Perceived Discrimination Scale, Discrimination Coping Strategies Scale, and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale were among the modified standardized questionnaires used to gather data from 200 Indigenous participants using a descriptive-correlational approach. The results showed that respondents commonly encountered moderate degrees of ethnic prejudice, especially stereotypes pertaining to cultural identity and place of origin. There is a significant negative association ( $p = -0.644, p < 0.001$ ) between psychological well-being and ethnic discrimination. This suggests that as discriminatory experiences increase, levels of well-being decrease. Despite all these challenges, participants reported frequently employing adaptive coping methods in reaction to discrimination, such as seeking social support, clearing misconceptions, and retaining ethnic pride. Retaliatory coping and avoidance were less frequently reported. To address discrimination and strengthen psychological well-being, the findings underscore the tenacity of Indigenous communities and the necessity of culturally appropriate therapies, peer-support programs, and legislative measures.*

**Keywords:** ethnic discrimination; coping mechanisms; psychological well-being; Indigenous peoples

## INTRODUCTION

Discrimination remains a pressing issue worldwide, affecting individuals from various ethnic backgrounds and communities. Discrimination at many different levels has been shown to have a significant effect on mental health across the lifespan (Schouler-Ocak & J. K., 2023). Among the many groups affected, Indigenous peoples often bear the brunt of discrimination, as they are among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in many societies. Racism, the perception that some population groups ('races' or ethnic groups) are more significant than others, ensures that the group(s) perceived as superior receive power and advantage within society. Ethnic discrimination, a behavioral manifestation of racism, is described as "unjust, unequal treatment based on ethnicity". It refers to the unjust, uneven, or discriminatory treatment of people based on their ethnic or cultural heritage. It includes both overt and subtle types of bias, such as stereotyping, exclusion, and microaggressions, which disadvantage members of minority or Indigenous communities (Crengle et al., 2012). It is a prevalent and growing phenomenon in many people's lives, with negative consequences for their mental health. In this study, ethnic discrimination is measured by perceived instances of unfair treatment in social, educational, and occupational contexts.

While international and national research have emphasized the negative impacts of discrimination on mental health and the importance of coping methods, gaps remain in understanding how these dynamics unfold within Indigenous communities in the Philippines. Cultural groups interpret and respond to discrimination differently, shaped by their histories, traditions, and communal life. As a result, the issue must be examined within the specific context of the Cordilleran ethnicity of San Gabriel, La Union, whose experiences of marginalization may mirror and differ from those documented in other civilizations. This movement from global ideas to local reality forms the foundation for the current investigation.

To better understand the context of these communities, it is essential to define what constitutes Indigenous peoples. Various socioeconomic and cultural groups who share ancestral links to the land and resources that they currently occupy or were previously displaced from are known as Indigenous people. People's identities and customs, and bodily and spiritual well-being are all strongly linked to the land and the resources they depend on.

The setting for this study, San Gabriel, is in the easternmost region of the province of La Union, is a prime example of such as a community with deep ancestral ties to the land. Lorenzo Lok-king, a

Sabangan Mountain Province native, introduced Sagrada Familia when he moved to the neighborhood of Lipay. Lok-king's amicable style of virtuous leadership earned him widespread acclaim and a good reputation among the people. For this reason, many people were drawn to reside in this barrio; many came from Mountain Province and other regions of the Cordillera. Due to the flood of migrant settlers from many provinces, the leader of Sagrada organized the settlers into ethnicity.

The Bago ethnicity controlled Lipay proper and Balbalayang, the Itneg immigrants settled in Lipay Norte, the Bauko-Bagnen immigrants settled in Lipay Este, and the immigrants from Sagrada occupied Lon-Oy. These days, much of the population in San Gabriel is the Kankanaey ethnicity from western Bontoc. This rich history of migration and settlement provides a backdrop to their current social dynamics. While San Gabriel's settlement history demonstrates the tenacity and solidarity of its Indigenous populations, these communities continue to endure prejudice, undermining their social inclusion and self-concept. The persistence of preconceptions, labels, and unequal treatment reveals how past migration patterns and cultural identities intersect with contemporary concerns. The psychological discomfort that Indigenous People are experiencing can be worsened by the discrimination they face daily. Being labeled as "taga sidsidi" or "taga banbantay" is one of the challenges they are experiencing, which leads to being uncomfortable with many people and affects how they view themselves.

These experiences of being labeled represent only one part of a broader set of difficulties. The Indigenous people, specifically the Cordilleran Ethnicity in San Gabriel, continue to deal a range of social challenges, including limited support systems and experience of isolation. The Cordilleran Ethnicity of San Gabriel confronts problems when joining or interacting with other communities. These include stereotyping, being perceived as outsiders, and being questioned about their education and ability. Such problems promote social isolation and make integration difficult, exacerbating discrimination and poor well-being.

This call for resilience from leaders like Windel Bolinget, a Cordilleran leader from the Cordilleras of the Philippines, echoes the community's historical spirit: *"In these trying times, we must rise against the storm as a people. We must not allow our children and the people to be fed with injustice or clothed with fear."* This inherent resilience is not only a response to social challenges but is also evident in their traditional livelihoods. Previously, the primary income source for San Gabriel residents was highland farming. They farmed rice, corn, sweet potatoes, and other root crops. As the years went by, the uplands' severe soil erosion caused a decline in crop yield. However, the locals decided to advance their farming methods and built terraces. The residents of San Gabriel produced more because of their tenacity in building rice terraces and irrigation systems throughout the hills and mountains.

This historical tenacity in overcoming agricultural challenges is mirrored in the psychological strategies they employ to navigate social stressors. In fact, one of the coping mechanisms they use in discrimination is a problem-focused coping strategy. Problem-focused coping involves confronting stress head-on and taking action to address its underlying causes. Coping mechanisms are cognitive and behavioral techniques that people use to deal with internal or external stressors that endanger their well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the context of this study, coping mechanisms refer to how Indigenous people respond to experiences of ethnic discrimination, such as seeking social support, retaining cultural pride, or addressing prejudice, to help participants manage their psychological and emotional well-being.

In the study of Forster et al. (2022), problem-focused coping mechanisms were used in response to internalizing symptoms. Problem-focused strategies, for example, aggressively seeking assistance, might address the detrimental effects of stressors on the body and mind. These methods of coping, however, cannot be comprehended independently. To fully understand their significance, they must be contextualized within the larger area of empirical research on discrimination and well-being, which shows how adaptive and maladaptive reactions impact mental health outcomes across varied populations.

To fully appreciate the importance of these coping strategies, it is necessary to situate them within the broader empirical landscape that connects discrimination to its consequences. Specifically, numerous empirical studies tried to determine the relationship between discrimination and psychological well-being. Psychological well-being refers to an individual's total mental and emotional functioning, which includes self-acceptance, healthy connections, meaning in life, autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal progress (Ryff, 1989). In this study, psychological well-being refers to how Indigenous people evaluate their quality of life and emotional equilibrium in the midst of social and cultural problems.

Psychological well-being is a complex and multidimensional concept that includes an individual's happiness, life satisfaction, and mental and emotional health. Key components include pleasant emotions, autonomy, positive connections, low negative emotions, a sense of purpose in life, life satisfaction, and personal progress (Dhanabhakya & Sarath, 2023). Bottiani et al. (2020) found that higher levels of school detachment were substantially correlated to lower levels of school participation with the frequency of discrimination. The overwhelming body of evidence demonstrates the harmful effects of discrimination on both physical and mental health across multiple racial/ethnic groupings (Chen et al., 2021; A. B., 2021). The results imply that ethnic minority people's mental health can continue to be affected by prior

experiences with ethnic discrimination throughout their lives or by knowledge of such experiences, among others (Priest et al., 2019).

Indeed, a large body of research corroborates this negative relationship. Indigenous and minority adult populations report more excellent rates of ethnic discrimination (Crengle et al., 2012). Ethnic discrimination is associated with decreased well-being, lower life satisfaction and self-esteem, and mental health concerns (Coimbra et al., 2022). Indigenous people are at significantly higher risk of self-harm and forgoing health care when they experience discrimination based on ethnicity or culture (Chan et al., 2023). The incidence of ethnic discrimination varied significantly by ethnic group. Students who encountered ethnic discrimination were less likely to give an excellent/excellent/good assessed general health, feel comfortable in their neighborhood, and are prone to report an episode of excessive drinking in the prior four weeks (Crengle et al., 2012). These consequences can harm their overall quality of life, including their mental health, social relationships, and sense of belonging.

This link between discrimination and poor outcomes is particularly evident in specific societal domains, such as healthcare. Ethnic discrimination, as a form of social injustice, has far-reaching consequences for the psychological well-being of individuals. Experiences of discrimination are considered one of the root causes of the health inequities that exist among indigenous people. Their experiences are expected, with patients reporting mistreatment, stereotyping, and an absence of quality care provided (Wylie et al., 2018; Smith, 2018). Remarkably, perceptions of discrimination relate to poorer health across various outcomes and among socially disadvantaged groups in multiple nations (Williams et al., 2003).

Similarly, the educational sector is another critical area where discrimination manifests. Ethnic discrimination is a significant concern in education. It is a highly destructive experience for teenagers but less is known regarding the impact of the school (D'hondt et al., 2021). In the study of Benner et al. (2018), the findings demonstrate the negative impacts of ethnic discrimination on teenagers' mental health, risky health behaviors, and educational success. Many studies and legal discussions today center on the more subtle, indirect, and covert forms of discrimination, as well as how discrimination were associated descriptively to the prevailing racial and ethnic inequalities in society at large. A discernible decrease in the most overt kinds of racism and discrimination, which specifically exclude minorities from housing and employment prospects, is partially to blame for this (Pager & Shepherd, 2008).

Bringing the focus back to the local context, Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in the Philippines have long been subjected to discrimination and a dearth of educational opportunities, according to historical narratives (Eduardo et al., 2021; A. G., 2021). The study by Luong et al. (2023) revealed that students' academic achievement was severely impacted by their encounters with ethnic discrimination. Beyond education, the workplace is another setting where such prejudice is prevalent. Ethnic discrimination in the clinical context has induced psychological discomfort among healthcare personnel (Serran et al., 2023). This research suggests that when there is perceived ethnic prejudice or daily racial discrimination, it influences job satisfaction at work. The studies also showed that ethnicity is associated to perceived ethnic discrimination. Threats to job satisfaction due to ethnic/racial discrimination can negatively relate to the organization and the individual (Tabor, 2021).

This issue within professional settings extends profoundly into the healthcare experience for patients. Ethnic minorities are inclined to report receiving lower-quality health care; however, the factors influencing such patient reports remain unknown (Sorkin et al., 2010). Care for people who are socially disadvantaged because of their gender, immigrant status, race, or religion may be hampered by discrimination in the healthcare industry. As potential areas for intervention, researchers and policymakers should look at obstacles to healthcare that arise during the healthcare experience (Rivenbark et al., 2020). Given these widespread negative impacts, researchers have begun to focus on helping factors that can address the harm. For instance, Goreis et al. (2020) concluded that the association between ethnic discrimination and high stress levels was partly explained by coping and social support, illustrating possibilities for interventions to strengthen adaptive coping strategies and promote social support-seeking. Examining which coping techniques are effective or unproductive in dealing with racial and ethnic stressors allows for the development and implementation of prevention and educational initiatives to prevent further mental and physical harm to minority populations (Ezzedine & Poyrazli, 2020).

Central to this discussion of response is the concept of coping itself. Coping is the thought and activity of managing internal and external stressful events. It is a word that refers to the conscious and intentional mobilization of activities, as opposed to 'defense mechanisms,' which are subconscious or unconscious adaptive responses that try to decrease or accept stress. Despite the clear importance of these variables, research continues to uncover new complexities. Chen and Mallory (2021) noted that, despite the large amount of evidence, few studies have sought to determine racial discrimination as a causal factor in poor health among racial minority populations. In their study, participants who reported experiencing racial discrimination exhibited a 3% higher risk of depression and a 2% higher risk of developing substance use disorder. Moderation effects were discovered for ethnicity, gender, economic

status, location, and health insurance coverage. Houkamau et al. (2023) found that there has been little evidence for the directionality of the relationship between ethnic identity effect and well-being measures on Indigenous people. Few studies, especially for Indigenous peoples, examine the connection between affect—positive or negative feelings—and well-being about one's ethnic group.

From this body of work, several key recommendations for future inquiry and practice have emerged. Future studies should investigate whether people's experiences and perceptions of interpersonal and institutional racial discrimination hinder people's ability to strengthen their academic and professional lives (Hudson et al., 2013). It is recommended that educators and professionals in mental health have supportive and validating talks with students to help them process their experiences with discrimination and discover which coping methods work best for them (Sanchez et al., 2018). Although a variety of effect modifiers have been studied in studies looking into the health implications of ethnic discrimination, relationships between student attitudes, health outcomes, and their experiences of ethnic discrimination have not yet been thoroughly investigated (Priest et al., 2014).

Furthermore, research has clarified the specific psychological pathways through which discrimination inflicts harm. Gibbons et al. (2014) found that perceived racial discrimination is associated with increases in both internalizing and externalizing responses. There is a correlation between a decline in health status and an increase in internalizing (depression and anxiety). An increase in externalizing, or hostility, is linked to the rise in substance use disorders.

Taken together, this research highlights the intricate relationship between discrimination, coping, and well-being. However, despite the expanding amount of data, little research has been conducted on Indigenous communities in the Philippines, whose cultural background and daily reality may impact these dynamics in unique ways. This gap in literature serves as the basis for the current study. Despite the growing awareness of the importance of addressing ethnic discrimination and its impact on well-being, there is a notable gap in research specific to the experiences of indigenous communities. Hackett et al. (2020) emphasized the need for effective interventions to battle racism to reduce health disparities. This study seeks to bridge the gap by exploring indigenous individuals' unique challenges in this region and examining their coping mechanisms in response to discrimination. Indigenous groups frequently have distinct historical and cultural settings. By examining how ethnic discrimination affects this community, researchers can consider the factors that may impact coping strategies and psychological discomfort present.

Ultimately, the findings are intended to have a practical and positive impact. The result of the study can be employed to educate the public about the harm that racial discrimination causes to indigenous communities, specifically the Cordilleran Ethnicity in San Gabriel, La Union. The study holds significant potential for benefiting local communities in several ways. This raised awareness, promotes a more inclusive and equal workplace, and alters societal views. Beyond public awareness, this research aims to inform policy and institutional change. The study could reveal whether improved laws or actions are required to address ethnic discrimination locally and nationally.

It can provide evidence to assist the execution of anti-discrimination laws and programs aimed at helping Indigenous communities' rights and welfare. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of developing psychological resilience and culturally grounded coping strategies that strengthen well-being, rather than treating coping as a variable in research models. By emphasizing practical and policy-driven measures, the study helps to promote Indigenous peoples' inclusion, equity, and empowerment. Better mental health was substantially correlated with satisfaction with the racial/ethnic background sensitivity of the healthcare professional. Sohn and Harada (2008) emphasized how crucial it is to create policies that address racial and ethnic discrimination.

Finally, the study aims to directly empower the community. Through collaboration with local researchers, community leaders, and members, it is expected to offer valuable training, skill development, and educational opportunities. Additionally, community members can participate in workshops, seminars, and training sessions designed to enhance their understanding of mental health and coping strategies. By investing in local capacity-building initiatives, the study not only empowers individuals within the community but also fosters sustainable knowledge transfer, strengthens social networks, and promotes resilience among Indigenous peoples in San Gabriel, La Union.

To understand the relationship between ethnic discrimination and its effect on the psychological well-being of Indigenous people, theories and concepts were gathered from different online journal articles.

Numerous types of health impacts have been researched about perceived discrimination. The research findings by Smart Richman and Pascoe (2009) proposed a link between poorer physical and mental wellness and higher levels of experienced discrimination. These findings demonstrated the link between perceived discrimination and several detrimental effects on one's physical and mental health, such as elevated psychological discomfort and elevated depressive symptoms.

For Asian students, discrimination in 2020 had a significantly more significant impact on psychological distress and suicide than it did in 2019. Discrimination was identified as an important

contributing factor to psychological distress and suicide among Asian students during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rivera et al.; S. S., 2023). The findings showed an indirect relationship between the number of discrimination-related categories reported by the participants and their sense of belonging, which in turn was linked to their levels of loneliness, sadness, and anxiety (Wilson et al.; M., 2023).

All members of the family had sleep issues and depression symptoms at the same time when they experienced racial discrimination. The enduring effects of racial discrimination are reflected in the persistent correlations between it and depression symptoms and sleep issues (Hart, A.R. et al., 2021). Both forms of negative emotion showed a strong relationship with discrimination. This indicates that enduring discrimination for a long time may lead to elevated depression levels (Gibbons et al., 2014).

Findings from the research of Haeny et al. (2023) indicated that racial discrimination had a detrimental influence on individuals' worldviews, and this negative effect persisted even in the presence of trauma. Furthermore, preconceptions about the world were severely impacted by local violence and low community support, which affected people of all racial backgrounds. Unfavorable psychological outcomes (anxiety, depression, and Secondary Traumatic Stress) were predicted by both individual and vicarious discrimination. The association between Secondary Traumatic Stress and both forms of discrimination was moderated by racial/ethnic identification, and the relationship between all three mental health outcomes and both forms of discrimination was mediated by negative affect.

Discrimination based on race or ethnicity consistently has detrimental effects on one's physical and mental well-being. With the evidence that ethnic discrimination at different levels has a significant impact on mental health over the whole life span, other forms of racial prejudice are discussed in the following paragraph.

Studies on how everyday discrimination and bias affect racial and ethnic groups' mental and physical well-being are becoming more frequent. Researchers examine the connection between commonplace racism and bigotry and health using self-reported experiences of these phenomena on measures (Bourabain et al., 2021). Discriminatory experiences, such as everyday racism, have physical and mental health implications for children and adolescents, as well as challenges in assimilating into host cultures. A study of Metzner et al. (2022) proposed that exposure to racial/ethnic discrimination is a negative predictor of outcomes related to children's and teenagers' mental and physical health. Discrimination is linked to decreased well-being, worse self-esteem, and worse general (mental) health. In a similar vein, discriminatory experiences are predictive of depressive symptoms and both internalizing and externalizing issues.

The study by Wong-Padoongpatt et al. (2022) demonstrated that Asians reported there was more discrimination in everyday life during the COVID-19 epidemic. Asian perspectives on commonplace racism were directly investigated in this study. The results showed that there were multiple meaningful connections between reported improvements in everyday racism and race. First, there was a general perception of racism in daily life. The study concluded made clear that racism still occurs daily—sometimes quite literally—and that these people are typically the ones who must deal with the unfavorable effects of discrimination. Furthermore, the investigators discovered that a noteworthy mediator for the racial impact on internalized racism was the perceived encounters with prejudice daily during the pandemic.

Both overt and covert forms of racism persist, and although overt forms of racism have received much attention from researchers, everyday forms of racism are still little understood. By examining the lived, everyday experience of oppression, everyday racism sheds light on how racist behaviors infiltrate both macro and micro-level relationships. The phrase emphasizes how commonplace these discriminatory acts and procedures are in people's daily lives (Barbara, 2019).

Systemic racism occurs when racially unequal opportunities and outcomes are ingrained or essential to the way a society's institutions operate. Racial differences in opportunity and treatment throughout life are the cause of and contributing factors to systemic racism. It is the result of individual discrimination and racialized interactions being reinforced by institutional and societal structures. Systemic racism may or may not be intentional and conscious. But because they are based on socially established racial categories, these responses are racialized, and because they are negative, they reveal the roots of racism (Banaji et al., 2021). As noted by the U.S. bishops in *Open Wide Our Hearts*, addressing racism requires confronting the policies and institutional barriers that perpetuate economic and social inequalities still present in society today.

Studies have indicated a negative correlation between daily discriminating experiences and overall well-being. Urzua et al. (2021) found that discrimination based on race and ethnicity has a detrimental impact on psychological health, with racial discrimination having a more substantial effect.

The study by Haslam et al. (2008) showed that those with low social discrimination and low need to belong also had higher levels of environmental mastery than those with intense social discrimination and low need to belong. According to this research, those who experience more excellent social discrimination, and a lower sense of social belonging are more likely to become competent and masterful environment managers. They take advantage of the opportunities around them and manage intricate arrays

of external activity. These people can better select or create environments that fit their needs and ideals. Because they face discrimination based on their faith, which has an impact on their psychological health, these people may be doing this to survive in society and to the best of their abilities. Previous research findings indicate that religious discrimination has a detrimental impact on people's life satisfaction, and this impact is often sustained (Vang et al., 2018).

Adolescent psychological well-being positively correlates with personal growth initiative, while psychological discomfort is inversely correlated. Following a goal demonstrates intrinsic motivation that is suggested for personal development. When motivated by external factors, a person is likelier to feel subjectively happy when working toward goals. Individuals, in comparison, exhibit higher levels of personal growth initiative and are more focused on improving themselves, recognize themselves more, feel that their lives have more meaning, have better interpersonal relationships, have a greater sense of self-sufficiency, and feel in control of their surroundings. Likewise, they experience a stronger sense of belonging to their community, a greater understanding of contribution, a more considerate awareness of the community around them, a progressive outlook on the world, and an optimistic outlook on life. In addition, they feel content with their lives, are generally happier, and have more positive beliefs (Ayub et al., 2012).

People with low social discrimination and low need to belong have more favorable relationships with others than people with high social discrimination and low need to belong. This indicates that those who experience significant social discrimination because of their faith feel less integrated into society. As a result, they often cultivate good relationships with others as a compensating behavior. They do these actions to fit in with society by showing excellent care for the well-being and well-being of others, demonstrating a high degree of empathy for others, and being open to giving and receiving in interpersonal connections (Lambert et al., 2013).

A sense of purpose in life is positively correlated with lifespan and health. This suggests that resilience may be mediated by the capacity to derive meaning from events, particularly while facing difficulties. A sense of purpose in life can encourage rephrasing difficult circumstances to address them more constructively, speeding up the healing process from trauma and stress (Schaefer et al., 2013). Higher levels of life purpose indicated better recovery from an unfavorable stimulus, as self-reported on average across two years earlier. Furthermore, there was still a substantial relationship between having a life purpose and emotionally recovering from stressful situations.

It was discovered that people with low social discrimination and low need to belong have higher levels of self-acceptance than people with high social discrimination and high need to belong. This result differs from other studies that have been done. This suggests that people who experience significant levels of social discrimination because of their religious convictions feel less like they belong in society and have a more optimistic outlook on themselves. They feel good about their previous life and acknowledge and accept a variety of features about themselves, including their excellent and undesirable traits (Liu et al., 2014). Previous research has suggested that people who experience excellent social discrimination have lower self-acceptance levels; however, this study's results provide evidence for a contrary view. This could result from the feeling of social exclusion that those who experience social prejudice already have. Therefore, to succeed in this society and ensure their survival, individuals must have a good self-image that will enable them to run in the race of life and tackle the problems it presents.

People commonly use coping methods to help them deal with difficult or painful feelings when they are under stress or trauma. People can retain their mental health while adjusting to challenging events by using coping mechanisms. As the breadth of each strategy's effects becomes more apparent, we can offer more information to people so they may make better decisions about how to deal with racism and safeguard their health (Brondolo et al., 2009). Fanta et al. (2023) found that indirect coping strategies were substantially linked to greater levels of symptoms related to anxiety and sadness. These findings suggest that the employment of indirect coping strategies may increase a person's vulnerability to mental health problems. Moreover, the relationship between anxiety and racial prejudice was also modulated by indirect coping strategies. Research indicates that higher levels of observed parental cultural exposure and socialization of coping with prejudice are predictive of lower levels of depression (Yasui et al., 2015).

Years of experiencing prejudice might have emphasized resilience or resulted in the development of useful coping mechanisms (Jang et al.; B. J., 2008). The study highlighted how crucial it is to deal with prejudice and familial and cultural indoctrination while building resilience (Yasui et al., 2015).

Psychological resilience boosts tolerance for unpleasant feelings and setbacks, encourages tenacity and adaptability to changing circumstances, and enhances mobilization to take corrective action when things get tough. A person with high resilience views challenges as opportunities to learn new things, approaches life more optimistically, maintains emotional stability, and believes he is a decision-making entity. Goralska et al. (2019) reported a statistically significant correlation between flexibility in coping and resilience. All the resilience components and the total resiliency score correlate favorably with all the coping flexibility dimensions. The research results indicated that coping flexibility, a dependent variable, is significantly predicted by resilience.

Ethnic or Cultural identity were associated positively to psychological health, and both entirely and partially addresses the adverse effects of racial and ethnic prejudice on psychological health (Urzua et al., 2021). Racial and ethnic identities are formed to fulfill various purposes, such as bolstering self-esteem and loyalty to one's cultural community and assisting people in creating effective plans for handling prejudice based on race or ethnicity. Research indicates that, in some situations, having a racial identity—characterized by feelings of pride and belonging—may be advantageous (Brondolo et al., 2009).

The most critical psycho-social helping resource is social support, where people may effectively manage their stress and avoid worsening their psychological suffering. The findings suggest that coping mechanisms and heightened social support were used in response to psychological distress and could form the basis of future interventions (Akbar et al., 2021; M. S., 2021).

Social support is said to act as a coping response against stress and its negative consequences. Reducing the importance of negative occurrences or providing useful coping strategies for stressful situations are two ways to prevent stress. Social support is a crucial strategy for assisting individuals in their recovery from traumatic experiences. It has long been believed that having strong social support promotes health and guards against stress. It is one of the most significant measures of well-being, according to research (Aflakseir, 2010).

Roohafza et al. (2014) found that substantial helping factors against depression and anxiety include perceived social support, particularly familial social support. Furthermore, the results of coping styles indicated that avoidance or passive coping is a risk factor for both anxiety and depression. In contrast, active coping, except support seeking for anxiety and acceptance for depression, is a helping factor. Most of the research has similarly noted that active coping is negatively associated with depression and anxiety, while passive coping is positively related to these conditions.

Tindle et al. (2022) demonstrated how greater degrees of psychological flexibility are facilitated by social support. Furthermore, by lowering avoidant coping and raising approach coping techniques, psychological flexibility indirectly addresses psychological suffering. Seawell et al. (2014) documented those higher levels of both general and personalized social support predicted greater optimism one year later. Over time, shifts in optimism were similarly predicted by shifts in both types of support. Smith, Sun, and Gordon (2019) highlighted the need for further research on the role of social support as a coping mechanism, despite extensive evidence demonstrating the adverse effects of racial discrimination on psychological well-being. The results imply that the frequency of situations in which teenagers encounter or worry about racial discrimination influences the relationship between racial discrimination and psychological discomfort. Social support has multiple dimensions (Thoits, 2011). First, support can be described as perceived, feeling supported, or knowing that support is available, as opposed to receiving and reporting that assistance was provided. Second, help might be practical, informative, or emotional. Third, social support can be identified by its source. Members of an individual's primary group, such as family and friends, are typically regarded as sources of support. The essential sources of support, the quantity of support in a relationship, and the impact of support on behaviors fluctuate over life (Umberson et al., 2010).

Main Effect theory by Cohen and Will (1985) stated that those with strong social support groups experience fewer physical and mental health issues than those with weaker support. Stallman's Healthy Theory of Coping recognizes that all coping mechanisms are adaptive and may initially relieve suffering. It categorizes these strategies as healthy or unhealthy based on possible adverse effects. Categories are conceptually obvious, mutually exclusive, complete, functionally homogeneous, functionally distinct, generative, and adaptable beyond the constraints of prior theories. The idea describes a hierarchy of techniques across the continuums of internality, intensity, and adversity. Healthy coping strategies include self-soothing, relaxing/distracting activities, social support, and professional support. Unhealthy categories include negative self-talk, hazardous activities, social disengagement, and suicide ideation.

Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioral reactions that people utilize when confronted with stressful circumstances that may affect their psychological well-being. Coping is defined as cognitive and behavioral efforts in reaction to external or internal stressors that the individual perceives endanger their well-being, as a result of this generally accepted transactional approach. According to Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory (1984), people actively engage with stressors by assessing them and using various coping methods to control the emotional and psychological consequences. In the context of racial discrimination, the concept allows for an examination of how Indigenous people perceive and respond to discrimination, as well as how these processes be associated to their psychological well-being. The study further examines Indigenous people's experiences with ethnic discrimination and the coping strategies they employ within their socio-cultural context. Lazarus and Folkman defined coping as the ever-changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to cope with specific external and internal demands that are judged to be stressful or beyond an individual's resources. Spence et al. (2016) found that while cultural resiliency had a modestly negative impact on stress levels, racial discrimination had a rise in stress as a risk factor. Stress and coping theory focus on how people cope with the adverse effects of

stress. Individuals cope with stress differently depending on personal and environmental factors. Coping strategies vary across individuals and situations. Coping methods are always different for two people.

According to the theory, individuals cognitively assess and manage stressors using different coping responses that may relate to psychological well-being. Stressors may negatively affect psychological well-being when effective coping strategies are not utilized. Ezzedine and Poyrazli (2020) identified a significant correlation between seeking social support and both perceived stress and race-related stress. The study investigated whether coping styles were associated with the perception of ethnic discrimination after accounting for race-related stress. However, the efficiency of coping with mechanisms is determined by the nature of the stressor and the individual's resources. Stressors that are not well controlled can cause psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and other undesirable emotional states. To better understand how individuals respond to prejudice and racial discrimination, further research on coping mechanisms is necessary. (Brondolo et al., 2009).

Understanding the relationship between ethnic discrimination and the psychological well-being of Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union is therefore not only timely but also vital, as it sheds light on the community's unique struggles while contributing to broader discussions on equity, resilience, and social justice. This research can shed light on the experiences of Indigenous people who often face discrimination, racism, and marginalization. Understanding these experiences is crucial for acknowledging and addressing systemic injustices. Jang et al. (2008) explained how perceived discrimination affected psychological well-being and offered suggestions for reducing the harmful effects linked to discriminatory experiences. Health disparities among Indigenous peoples are thought to have their roots in discrimination experiences (Wylie et al., 2018). Awareness of the effects of discrimination can empower Indigenous communities to address these issues themselves and advocate for change. A quality improvement plan must address the problem at all healthcare system levels. Providing fair health services for Indigenous peoples will necessitate a considerable shift in the attitudes, knowledge, and capabilities of healthcare professionals and the introduction of accountabilities for healthcare institutions.

The current research primarily draws from Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory (1984), which explains how individuals cognitively appraise and respond to stressful experiences. The literature suggests that ethnic discrimination may serve as a significant source of stress for Indigenous people. The study explores how Indigenous people respond to stressors associated with ethnic discrimination through various coping strategies. Thus, coping strategies are defined as the responses Indigenous people use when dealing with experiences of ethnic discrimination. However, the present study explored coping descriptively and did not statistically test coping as a moderating factor. To operationalize the dependent variable, the study employs Ryff's Psychological Well-being Theory (1989), which defines well-being as a multidimensional construct that comprises self-acceptance, positive connections with others, purpose in life, personal progress, environmental mastery, and autonomy. Rather of competing with Lazarus and Folkman's paradigm, Ryff's framework provides structure for monitoring and assessing the well-being outcomes of dealing with discrimination. To combine the two frameworks, this study used Ryff's model gives criteria for evaluating psychological well-being, whereas Lazarus and Folkman's theory serves as the overall explanatory framework for understanding how individuals respond to discrimination through coping processes. This integration ensures theoretical coherence while stressing the study's unique focus on Indigenous peoples' experiences with discrimination, coping methods, and overall psychological health.

Considering these, coping strategies represent ways individuals respond to psychological stress and discriminatory experiences. However, despite the wide range of coping mechanisms used, people who experience racial and ethnic discrimination that jeopardizes their mental health frequently do not receive much assistance. This suggests that, even though Indigenous people report utilizing a variety of coping techniques, discrimination may still have a negative impact on their mental health. This highlights the research gap addressed in the current study. There is still a lack of empirical study on the relationship between Indigenous people's psychological health and coping strategies and ethnic discrimination.

Based on these theoretical frameworks, this study examines the relationship between ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being while descriptively exploring coping mechanisms used by Indigenous people (Figure 1).

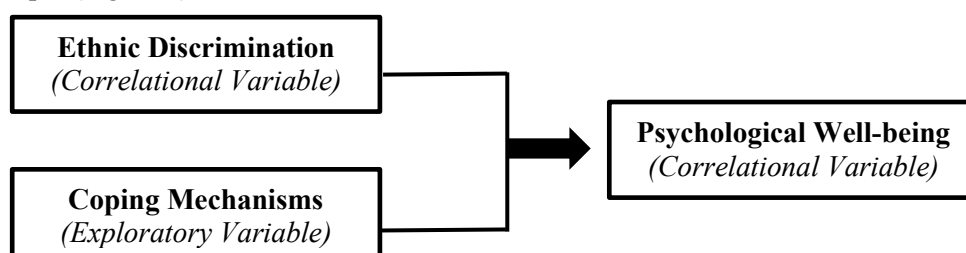


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

*Note: Coping mechanisms were explored descriptively and were not statistically tested as moderating or predictive variables.*

The study aims to examine the relationship between experiences of ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being of indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union. It also aims to identify and describe the coping mechanisms used by Indigenous people in response to ethnic discrimination. The study will focus on the following questions:

Problem 1: What are the everyday ethnic discrimination experiences faced by indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union?

*Alternative Hypothesis (H1):* There are identifiable everyday ethnic discrimination encountered by Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union such as stereotyping (e.g., assumptions of being uneducated) judgement based on speech, dress, or Indigenous Identity and unequal opportunities due to their ethnic background.

Problem 2: Is there a significant relationship between ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being among indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union?

*Null Hypothesis (H0):* There is no significant relationship between ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being among Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union.

Problem 3: What coping mechanisms do Indigenous individuals in San Gabriel, La Union, employ in response to racial discrimination?

*Alternative Hypothesis (H1):* Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union use specific coping techniques in response to ethnic discrimination, including emotion-focused strategies (such as seeking emotional support and managing feelings), problem-focused approaches (such as clarifying misconceptions and working to counter stereotypes), and community-based coping (such as seeking support from cultural community groups).

## METHODS

The methods and techniques employed to accomplish the objectives of the research paper are described in this chapter. To give a better understanding of the procedures followed, research design, sampling population, and data-gathering methods and tools are described.

### Research Design

To investigate the connection between Indigenous people's psychological well-being, coping strategies, and experiences of ethnic prejudice, this study used a descriptive correlational research approach. Spearman's rank-order correlation was selected as a conservative statistical approach because the study utilized Likert-type responses, which are ordinal in nature. Although composite Likert scales with larger sample sizes may sometimes approximate interval-level measurement and satisfy parametric assumptions, the present study did not conduct formal tests of normality or homoscedasticity, such as Shapiro–Wilk tests or visual distribution assessments. Therefore, the researcher opted to use a non-parametric correlation method that does not rely on strict distributional assumptions.

The use of Spearman's correlation should not be interpreted as evidence that Pearson's assumptions were violated, but rather as a cautious methodological decision appropriate for the exploratory and descriptive-correlational nature of the study. Future studies may employ normality testing and regression-based analyses to determine whether parametric approaches, such as Pearson's correlation or moderation analysis, are statistically appropriate.

The study did not employ regression analysis, moderation analysis, path analysis, or structural equation modeling. Therefore, coping mechanisms were analyzed descriptively rather than as moderating or predictive variables.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the connection between Indigenous people's psychological health and their experiences with ethnic discrimination in San Gabriel, La Union. It also sought to describe Indigenous people's coping techniques in the context of ethnic discrimination. Descriptive correlational research was specifically employed to characterize and ascertain the association among Indigenous People in San Gabriel between psychological well-being, coping strategies, and ethnic prejudice. The variables are described and the degree of relationships between and among the variables is measured using a descriptive correlational research design. Without altering the variables, this method is suitable for monitoring naturally occurring variables and figuring out the direction and strength of their interactions (Polit & Beck, 2017).

The approach allows for the description of coping mechanisms and an examination of the link between ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being. While coping is explored in this context, the design cannot prove causality or confirm specific directional effects in statistical terms. Future longitudinal or multivariate investigations are recommended to further examine whether coping strategies function as moderating variables in the relationship between ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being.

## Population

The study was conducted in San Gabriel, La Union. Participants were Indigenous residents of San Gabriel who met the following requirements: a) membership in the Cordilleran ethnicity b) being at least eighteen years old.

To ensure valid and reliable responses, the study excluded people who (a) had severe cognitive impairments or language barriers that made communication difficult, (b) were suffering from serious mental health or substance abuse disorders, or (c) had previously participated in similar studies. These criteria were used to help participants' well-being and prevent confounding variables that could jeopardize the data's accuracy.

Involving the community yields priceless insights into the historical background, cultural context, and complex experiences of Indigenous people. This presence guarantees that research methods continue to be courteous and culturally sensitive, which promotes greater community member engagement and trust. The study aimed to contribute to the understanding of Indigenous experiences within the local community. Community members were given the opportunity to share their firsthand knowledge and experience through active involvement in the research process, which kept the study relevant and culturally sensitive. This interaction improved the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the findings by fostering cooperation and trust between the community members and the researcher. Furthermore, community initiatives and programs targeted at promoting psychological well-being among Indigenous people may be informed by the coping strategies reported in the study. Ultimately, the research aimed to better understand the experiences of ethnic discrimination and coping among Indigenous populations in San Gabriel, La Union, and to contribute information that may support culturally sensitive community programs. To choose study participants and guarantee representation from a range of age groups, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds within the Indigenous population, random selection was used. Participants were drawn from various barangays in San Gabriel, La Union. With the required clearances from the relevant authorities and agencies, the study was carried out. As part of this clearance process, local government representatives, Indigenous community leaders, and pertinent research ethics committees had to give their assent. Additionally, government organizations in charge of Indigenous affairs, such the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), granted authority to conduct research within Indigenous communities. In asking permission, the researcher was accompanied by the chairman of the Indigenous Peoples in San Gabriel, La Union.

The study procedures were presented to ethical review boards for approval to guarantee the preservation of participants' rights, security, and welfare. Working with these offices and agencies promoted respect and collaboration with the Indigenous communities participating in the study, in addition to guaranteeing adherence to legal and ethical requirements. The researcher's dedication to carrying out the study in an ethical and responsible manner while respecting the rights and dignity of the Indigenous peoples of San Gabriel, La Union, was shown by this clearance procedure. To obtain a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, the researcher uses the Finite Population Correlation Factor and hopes to have at least 200 Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union as responders for data analysis.

To comprehend the characteristics of the sample, demographic information was collected from every participant. The age distribution within the group was determined by asking participants for information about their age. Additionally, they were asked to specify the year of their education, which revealed information about their educational histories and how they might have shaped their viewpoints and experiences. Although their experiences and cultural backgrounds may vary, ethnicity was used to identify the different Indigenous communities in the region. To take into consideration possible gender-related differences in experiences of psychological well-being and ethnic prejudice, gender identity was also gathered.

A thorough explanation of the confidentiality procedures and any restrictions (such as the requirement to report injury) was also given to participants during the informed consent process. This gave them the information they needed to decide whether to participate in the study, knowing that their privacy would be always protected.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings, withdrawal criteria were also developed. Participants were free to leave the study at any time without facing any consequences if they were extremely distressed or uncomfortable. Furthermore, individuals who showed a lack of engagement or who did not follow the study procedure were also given the option to withdraw. These standards were put in place to help the participants' health and preserve the accuracy of the study's findings.

Numerous sites with a range of infrastructure and amenities participated in the study. Indigenous Peoples frequently convened at these locations for a variety of reasons, including community centers, educational institutions, and places of worship. These sites served as venues for data collection and participant engagement. It was crucial that these websites offered a secure and culturally aware setting where participants could freely discuss their experiences with ethnic prejudice and coping strategies, considering the delicate nature of the study's subject. The infrastructure of these sites varied from simple

facilities to those with more sophisticated technological tools, depending on the resources available in each community. These participating sites' collaboration and support were essential to the study's success because they created an atmosphere that allowed for research and deep interaction with the Indigenous populations in San Gabriel, La Union.

Researching coping mechanisms in relation to Indigenous Peoples' psychological health and experiences of ethnic discrimination in San Gabriel, La Union, had both benefits and drawbacks. Re-traumatization, stigmatization, and ethical issues with confidentiality and cultural sensitivity were some of the possible hazards. Recalling previous experiences of discrimination may have caused emotional anguish for the participants. But the study also provided several noteworthy advantages. It gave participants a forum to express their opinions and possibly have an impact on culturally aware interventions. Furthermore, it provided insightful information about coping strategies unique to this Indigenous group. The results might potentially have wider policy ramifications, advancing Indigenous studies and encouraging more empathy and understanding within and outside the community. Careful preparation, commitment to ethical standards, and constant engagement with community leaders were necessary to strike a balance between these risks and advantages and guarantee that the research was carried out in a dignified and morally sound manner.

### **Data-gathering Tools**

Structured questionnaires were the main instrument used to gather quantitative data on the psychological health and discriminatory results among the indigenous people of San Gabriel, La Union. It will include a variety of questions intended to document the frequency and severity of experiences with racial discrimination, including instances of discrimination, the context in which they occurred, and the emotions they evoked.

Structured questionnaires were used to conduct surveys to study participants. Before starting the survey, participants were given a comprehensive informed consent form. Following their reading of the form, they received information regarding the goals of the study, the kinds of data that would be gathered, confidentiality, their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, and any possible dangers or advantages of taking part. Strict secrecy precautions were necessary to guarantee participant privacy and study confidence. Confidentiality was maintained during the research process in several ways. All data were anonymized by eliminating or substituting unique codes for personal identifiers to preserve participant privacy. No personally identifying information or data that could connect participants to their responses was shared during the results dissemination process.

The Perceived Discrimination Scale, the Discrimination Coping Strategies Scale (DCSS), and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) are three standardized questionnaires that were modified for this study. To guarantee cultural significance for the Indigenous Cordilleran community in San Gabriel, La Union, adjustments were made. For instance, to reflect the prevalent stereotype that the local community faces ("taga sidsidi" or "taga banbantay"), the original item on the Perceived Discrimination Scale, "People think I am not intelligent because of my background," was changed to "People think I am not educated just because I live in the mountain." To emphasize the value of peer support that is culturally comparable, the original item in the DCSS, "I ask friends for advice," was rephrased as "I speak with other Indigenous people who have similar experiences." To maintain content validity and ensure cultural appropriateness, these updates were examined by an Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) and two psychologists.

Despite these modifications, a pilot test revealed that all three instruments' Cronbach's alpha values were over 0.70, indicating good to exceptional internal consistency.

A modified Perceived Discrimination Scale was used to evaluate responses to discrimination. The initial version of this tool had 20 items that assessed the prevalence and type of discriminatory encounters in a variety of contexts, such as the workplace, educational institution, and larger community. Using a Likert-type scale, respondents were asked to score how much they have encountered discrimination. To maintain relevance to the lived realities of Indigenous people, the revised version kept its emphasis on different contexts.

The measure assesses frequent and routine experiences of unfair treatment (Essed, 1991). The following items are summarized to show how frequently the following events occur in respondents' daily lives: being treated less kindly and respectfully than others, receiving subpar service; being treated as less intelligent or superior by others in restaurants or businesses; being frightened of you and thinking you are dishonest; being called names or ridiculed; and being threatened or harassed. With Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .79, the pilot test findings demonstrated that the modified scale had good internal consistency, proving its suitability and reliability for the current investigation.

Data on how Indigenous people deal with racial discrimination was collected using a modified version of the Discrimination Coping Strategies Scale (DCSS), which was created by Umaña-Taylor et al. (2008). This tool was created to assess the coping mechanisms used mostly in reaction to racial or ethnic discrimination and insults. The DCSS evaluated two different aspects: (a) participants' opinions about the

best coping mechanisms for discrimination, and (b) how often they had used these mechanisms in their daily lives.

Ten elements made up the scale, which assessed how proactive teenagers were in handling ethnic discrimination. A 4-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "never" and 4 denoting "always," was used to grade responses to sample items, which included statements like "Talk to the person, clarify common misconceptions about ethnic groups." This allowed for the evaluation of the degree to which each coping method was used.

Because it provides a formal framework for assessing the coping strategies employed by indigenous people to deal with racial prejudice, the DCSS is an invaluable instrument for this research. The two parts of the measure give a complete picture of how often individuals employ and perceive successful coping techniques. This knowledge may help inform culturally sensitive programs and future studies concerning Indigenous well-being. With Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .80, the pilot test findings demonstrated that the modified scale had good internal consistency, suggesting that the instrument is dependable and appropriate for use in the current investigation.

The Discrimination Coping Strategies Scale (DCSS) was used in the McDermott et al. (2018) study to evaluate how adolescents cope with racial and ethnic discrimination. Adolescents used a 4-point Likert scale to indicate how often they used each coping mechanism, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 4 denoting "agree." The study used the five DCSS items as indicators in both the latent profile analysis (LPA) and the latent transition analysis (LTA), each of which reflected a unique coping method. With Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.83, 0.89, and 0.87 at Waves 1, 2, and 3, respectively, the scale showed sufficient internal consistency throughout all data collecting waves.

The current study assessed the psychological well-being of Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union, using the modified Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Scale. With a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .73, the pilot test results showed good internal consistency, indicating that the instrument is dependable and suitable for use in this situation.

The 18 items on the PWB Scale are intended to evaluate different aspects of psychological well-being. Using this measure, earlier research has shown a correlation between daily encounters of bias and lower psychological well-being (An and Cooney, 2016). Indigenous participants' psychological well-being was measured using a scale in this study, which shed light on the possible effects of ethnic discrimination on their mental health. This knowledge is essential for comprehending the wider effects of discrimination and for guiding culturally aware solutions meant to advance the welfare of local Indigenous groups.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings considering the research objectives and offers the outcomes of the statistical analyses carried out to address the research concerns of the study. The chapter presents descriptive analyses of coping mechanisms and examines the relationship between ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being among Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union. The findings are analyzed and discussed considering pertinent ideas and literature, emphasizing important trends, ramifications, and revelations from the data.

Table 1. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Educational Attainment (N=200)*

Highest Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
With some Elementary Education	9	4.5
Elementary Graduate	68	34.0
High School Graduate	71	35.5
With Vocational Courses	24	12.0
College Graduate	28	14.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents based on their greatest educational attainment. As demonstrated, most respondents were high school graduates (35.5%), followed by elementary grades (34.0%). A lesser proportion finished college (14.0%) or trade courses (12.0%), while only 4.5% had some elementary education.

This pattern indicates that most Indigenous respondents in San Gabriel, La Union, completed basic education, but only a small proportion were able to pursue higher levels of study. Such findings indicate Indigenous populations' persistent educational struggles, particularly those living in upland and rural areas. Most respondents had a rudimentary education, which is consistent with San Gabriel's historical and socioeconomic environment, where subsistence farming and community-based activities are the primary sources of income.

Furthermore, the relatively low percentage of college graduates highlights the structural challenges that Indigenous people face, such as geographic isolation, financial restraints, and cultural expectations, which frequently impede their educational mobility. These educational discrepancies are relevant since earlier research (Crengle et al., 2012; Benner et al., 2018) has demonstrated that educational attainment affects people's knowledge of prejudice and ability to cope with social problems.

In the context of this study, educational background is critical for understanding coping strategies and psychological health. Respondents with higher educational attainment may have more exposure to different social situations, resulting in more adaptable coping mechanisms, whereas those with lower education levels may rely more on community-based or traditional approaches. This background knowledge improves the interpretation of subsequent studies about how Indigenous people respond to ethnic discrimination.

### Everyday ethnic discrimination experiences faced by Indigenous People

Table 2 presents the summary of responses pertaining to the daily experiences of ethnic discrimination that Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union, encounter.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics of Everyday Ethnic Discrimination Experiences Among Indigenous People (N=200)*

Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
People think I am not educated just because I live in the mountain.	2.85	.648	Agree
I feel judged by the way I speak, dress, or live because I belong to an Indigenous group.	2.79	.722	Agree
Others assume that I don't know much because of where I come from.	2.77	.680	Agree
I am not given the same opportunities as others because of my ethnic background.	2.77	.670	Agree
Others assume I am poor or uneducated just because I am a "katutubo".	2.76	.676	Agree
My background has negatively affected my chances of being hired or promoted.	2.74	.630	Agree
I suspect that discrimination influenced the quality of service I received from a service provider.	2.73	.721	Agree
I have been treated rudely when I visit places outside my community.	2.73	.735	Agree
I feel that my culture is not valued by people from outside our community.	2.72	.811	Agree
People act as if they think I am not smart.	2.71	.700	Agree
I have been laughed at or looked down on because of my appearance or clothes.	2.71	.707	Agree
I have experienced disrespect or hostility from police based on my background.	2.71	.769	Agree
I have experienced prejudice when seeking education or training because of my heritage.	2.70	.695	Agree
I feel that people treat me differently because I am Indigenous.	2.69	.606	Agree
People have made negative comments about Indigenous people in front of me	2.69	.712	Agree
I am called by names or insulted.	2.68	.678	Agree
I am treated with less respect than other people.	2.65	.663	Agree
I feel uncomfortable when others stare at me because of my looks or clothes.	2.65	.763	Agree
I received poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.	2.63	.719	Agree
People act as if they are afraid of me.	2.60	.724	Agree

*Note:* Range for Ethnic Discrimination: 1.00-1.75= Strongly Disagree, 1.76-2.50= Disagree, 2.51-3.25= Agree, 3.26-4.00 = Strongly Agree

In general, respondents' perceptions of ethnic discrimination ranged from mild to high. Based to the 4-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree), the mean scores for all the items ranged from 2.63 to 2.85, which is within the range interpreted as "Agree." This suggests that the respondents typically perceive and encounter a moderate degree of ethnic discrimination in their daily lives.

Significantly, the item "People think I am not educated just because I live in the mountain" obtained the highest descriptive mean score among the listed items (M = 2.85, SD =.648), indicating a

strong perception of geographic origin-related stereotyping.

According to the item “I feel judged by the way I speak, dress, or live because I belong to an Indigenous group” (M = 2.79), appearance- and behavior-based bias—a prevalent kind of symbolic or cultural discrimination—remains prevalent. According to Ryff’s theory for psychological well-being, these kinds of assessments jeopardize positive relationships and self-acceptance since they make people feel under pressure to fit in with the majority in order to avoid stigma. According to Lazarus and Folkman’s Stress and Coping Theory, these interactions serve as “ambient stressors” subtle but enduring indicators of social devaluation that necessitate ongoing emotional control.

This interpretation is supported by earlier research: Beagan et al. (2020) discovered that speech and dress disparities frequently lead to microaggressions, and Bourabain and Verhaeghe (2021) observed that these biases build up over time, eroding confidence in one’s cultural identity. These findings emphasize the importance of activities that promote cultural pride, such as community festivals, inclusive media portrayal, and intercultural education in schools. These findings highlight the importance of initiatives that encourage cultural pride and intercultural understanding. Other high-scoring items, like “Others assume that I don’t know much because of where I come from” (M = 2.77) and “I am not given the same opportunities as others because of my ethnic background,” reflect perceived systemic barriers and deficit-based assumptions that limit the social and economic inclusion of Indigenous people. According to Ryff’s theory for psychological well-being, these experiences erode environmental mastery and life’s purpose since discrimination restricts both agency and the ability to achieve goals. These findings may provide useful information for community empowerment programs and policy discussions concerning Indigenous communities, particularly when opportunities are routinely passed up. These results are consistent with earlier studies that demonstrated that, because of discrimination presumptions about one’s ability, minority status frequently results in limited access to leadership positions, work opportunities, and education (Crengle et al., 2012; Benner et al., 2018). These issues are further exacerbated in San Gabriel by geographical remoteness, a lack of representation in the government, and historical traditions that equate highland heritage with inferiority. These findings may help to shape community empowerment programs and policy measures that promote Indigenous communities.

The mid-range ratings included “I am treated with less respect than other people” (M = 2.65, SD = .715) and “I received poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores” (M = 2.63, SD = .737). These descriptive findings suggest that discrimination may manifest itself in the form of unequal treatment in everyday encounters and public services. While not as widely accepted as cultural or regional stereotypes, such treatment reflects structural biases that Indigenous peoples frequently face.

Among the comparatively lower descriptive mean scores, “People act as if they are afraid of me” (M = 2.60, SD = .724), “People act as if they think I am dishonest” (M = 2.59, SD = .740), and “I am called names or insulted” (M = 2.59, SD = .730) indicate that overt hostility and fear-based prejudice are less commonly reported, but still exist. Even when they occur infrequently, these types of bias can have a significant impact on social trust and belonging.

With means grouped in the “Agree” range, the pattern shows that respondents frequently experience ethnic prejudice in their daily lives, especially when it comes to stereotypes based on geography (e.g., taga sidsidi “from the uplands” / taga banbantay “mountain dweller”). These results are consistent with those of Deitch et al. (2003), who discovered that minor, commonplace instances of discrimination, which are frequently interpreted as microaggressions, can have a substantial cumulative impact on psychological health. Items pertaining to limited possibilities, presumptions of ignorance, and discriminatory treatment were agreed with by respondents.

In the same way, Gill (2023) highlighted how Indigenous identity, which is influenced by unique cultural practices, frequently results in social marginalization. In primarily non-Indigenous institutions, Beagan et al. (2020) go on to explain how these microaggressions, despite their frequent subtlety, cause long-term psychological injury by fostering sentiments of undervaluation, tokenism, and isolation. The claim that ethnic discrimination is widespread and detrimental in the community under study is supported by this convergence with earlier studies (Benner et al., 2018; Urzua et al., 2021).

The highest-scoring item, “People think I am not educated just because I live in the mountain,” is isolated in Table 3 to further discuss the finding.

Table 3. *Frequency Distribution for the Item: “People think I am not educated just because I live in the mountain.”*

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	2.0	2.0	2.0
Disagree	51	25.5	25.5	27.5
Agree	122	61.0	61.0	88.5
Strongly Agree	23	11.5	11.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

This type of ethnic discrimination is prevalent, as evidenced by Table 3, where 61.0% of respondents agreed and 11.5% strongly agreed that people believe they are less educated just because they

reside in the mountains. Only 2.0%, however, firmly agreed. The cumulative proportion indicates that cultural presumptions based on geographic origin are widespread, as it indicates that 72.5% of respondents acknowledge this experience to some extent. This implies that the Indigenous participants in San Gabriel, La Union, share the experience described in this item.

These findings suggest the persistence of geographic origin-based stereotyping, which, according to Ryff's Psychological Well-being theory, directly undermines the domains of environmental mastery and self-esteem. According to Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory, these recurring, low-grade stressors necessitate ongoing appraisal and coping, which strains individuals' psychological resources. Based on the myth that rural or upland communities are innately less educated, this is a type of social and geographic marginalization. This bias, which is locally articulated as calling someone taga-sidsidi "from the uplands" or taga-banbantay "mountain dweller" has effects on social inclusion, self-esteem, and educational and career chances. By undervaluing Indigenous people's abilities and knowledge, such a stereotype associates to systemic inequalities and negatively affects their mental health.

These findings are consistent with those of Deitch et al. (2003) and Bourabain and Verhaeghe (2021), who discovered that subtle, everyday microaggressions can mount to severe mental health costs, as well as Huynh and Fuligni's (2010) observations on ethnic minority kids encountering assumptions of ineptitude. The agreement levels in this study are slightly greater than those in Benner et al. (2018), which may reflect the distinctive prominence of Indigenous cultural identity in San Gabriel. Stereotypes like taga sidsidi have their roots in migration patterns and socioeconomic differences between upland and lowland communities, which are maintained by a lack of infrastructure integration. This highlights the necessity for public awareness efforts and school-based anti-bias initiatives that contest these beliefs.

Table 4 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of responses to the question that, according to its lowest mean score, was found to be the least common instance of ethnic prejudice. The frequency with which Indigenous respondents in San Gabriel, La Union experience the discriminatory conduct mentioned is reflected in this item.

Table 4. *Frequency Distribution for the Item: "People act as they are afraid of me."*

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	9	4.5	4.5	4.5
Disagree	82	41.0	41.0	45.5
Agree	90	45.0	45.0	90.5
Strongly Agree	19	9.5	9.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

In contrast, Table 4 indicates that fear-based discrimination ("People act as if they are afraid of me") had the lowest mean, although being agreed upon by 55% of respondents. While less common, this type of bias is nevertheless relevant, since Gibbons et al. (2014) found that even occasional fear-related encounters can predict social retreat and anxiety. Beagan et al. (2020) discovered that comparable reactions were uncommon in other environments, implying that geographic and ethnic distinctions in San Gabriel may be more likely to elicit them. In Ryff's worldview, these occurrences, albeit transitory rather than chronic, continue to degrade beneficial interpersonal relationships. Historically, they may be the result of group unfamiliarity or lingering Indigenous resistance tales. Intergroup cultural exchange programs promote mutual understanding and trust.

Moreover, half of respondents supported fear-based reactions, even though they had the lowest mean of any item. According to earlier studies, anxiety, low affect, and social disengagement are all independently predicted by overt and covert prejudice (Gibbons et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2003). Such fear-based actions may reflect ingrained prejudice or cultural misunderstanding in the Indigenous environment (Gill, 2023). Therefore, less frequent contacts may not necessarily have insignificant consequences; in fact, they can have a significant impact on civic engagement, trust, and help-seeking (Beagan et al., 2020; Huynh & Fuligni, 2010).

### **Relationship between ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being among indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union**

A Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to assess if ethnic discrimination and psychological health among Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union, are significantly correlated. Because the study used ordinal Likert-scale responses and did not formally test parametric assumptions, Spearman's rank-order correlation was selected as a conservative non-parametric approach. The correlation study looks at how strongly and in which direction the participants perceived psychological well-being, and their experiences of ethnic discrimination are related.

Table 5. Correlation table for ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being among Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union (N=200)

	Ethnic Discrimination	Psychological Well-being
Ethnic Discrimination	1.000	-.644**
Psychological Well-being	-.644**	1.000
<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>		<b>.001</b>

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 shows a statistically significant inverse relationship between ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being, with a high negative correlation ( $p = -0.644$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as evaluated using Cohen's (1988) criterion. This suggests that the more frequently Indigenous people in San Gabriel face discrimination (e.g., being stereotyped, treated unfairly, or excluded), the worse their reported well-being (self-esteem, purpose in life, positive relationships, etc.). The negative link implies that discriminatory experiences reduce well-being by reducing self-acceptance, interpersonal trust, and a feeling of purpose.

The connection demonstrates how psychological well-being is extremely sensitive to the presence of ethnic prejudice. When Indigenous people are repeatedly subjected to racism, it can be associated with lower confidence, belongingness, and life satisfaction. Experiences of being criticized or excluded cause more than just temporary anguish; they have a cumulative effect that reduces emotional resilience and social closeness over time. Individuals who face fewer forms of discrimination, on the other hand, are more likely to sustain higher levels of self-acceptance, greater social bonds, and a clearer sense of purpose. Thus, the findings confirm that ethnic prejudice is not just a barrier to social inclusion, but it is also a significant predictor of mental and emotional health.

This is consistent with Stress and Coping Theory, which suggests that coping resources might influence responses to persistent stressors. According to Ryff, such discrimination undermines numerous dimensions simultaneously, including self-acceptance, life purpose, and meaningful relationships. The intensity of this link is comparable to Urzua et al. (2021), but greater than Chen and Mallory (2021), implying that the close-knit structure of Indigenous groups may exaggerate the personal relevance of discrimination. This stresses the need for mental health treatments in such situations to address the cultural foundations of discrimination, rather than merely individual coping mechanisms.

According to theory and previous research, there is a substantial inverse relationship between higher exposure to discrimination and worse psychological health ( $\rho = -.644$ ,  $p = .001$ ) (Benner et al., 2018; Urzua et al., 2021; Gibbons et al., 2014). According to the Stress and Coping paradigm (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), discriminatory incidents that are deemed threatening put a load on regulating capacity and increasing discomfort unless they are responded to by resources (such as social support). Although we refrain from making causation claims due to the cross-sectional methodology, the magnitude indicates that prejudice is a significant correlation that calls for intervention and long-term testing (Chen & Mallory, 2021; Deitch et al., 2003).

### Coping mechanisms employed by indigenous individuals in San Gabriel, La Union in response to racial discrimination

For SOP 3, to ascertain the typical coping strategies employed by Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union, in reaction to encounters of racial discrimination, descriptive statistics were calculated.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Coping mechanisms employed by indigenous individuals (N=200)

Item Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
I find comfort in talking to people who have similar experiences of discrimination.	2.88	.593	Agree
I talk to the person to clarify the misconception or stereotype.	2.84	.453	Agree
I work hard to prove discriminatory people are wrong.	2.84	.580	Agree
I will just think about all the positive things that I have to offer and being proud of who I am.	2.83	.541	Agree
I seek support from my community or cultural groups when I face discrimination.	2.80	.521	Agree
I try to stay calm and not let discrimination affect my emotions.	2.78	.522	Agree
I often avoid situations where I might be discriminated against.	2.78	.522	Agree
I focus on doing my work or other activities to distract myself from the discrimination.	2.75	.565	Agree
I used the strategy of dealing with discrimination by saying something rude right back to the person.	2.64	.611	Agree
I ignore the situation.	2.51	.618	Agree

Range for Ethnic Discrimination: 1.00-1.75= Strongly Disagree, 1.76-2.50= Disagree, 2.51-3.25= Agree, 3.26-4.00 = Strongly Agree

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics were computed to determine the common coping mechanisms used by Indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union, in response to experiences of racial discrimination.

The statement, "I find comfort in talking to people who have similar experiences of discrimination," had the highest mean score ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = .593$ ), indicating that social support from people who have gone through similar things is a common coping strategy among the respondents. This supports the idea that peer empathy and shared understanding can offer emotional support and affirmation.

Nearly the same percentage of respondents agreed with "I work hard to prove discriminatory people are wrong" ( $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = .580$ ) and "I talk to the person to clarify the misconception or stereotype" ( $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = .453$ ). These are examples of active coping mechanisms, in which people address the discrimination's origin directly or by proving their ability to dispel unfavorable opinions.

Next in order were "I seek support from my community or cultural groups when I face discrimination" ( $M = 2.80$ ,  $SD = .521$ ) and "I try to stay calm and not let discrimination affect my emotions" ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = .522$ ). These data show that respondents favor cultural unity and emotional management as anti-discrimination tools. Similarly, "I often avoid situations where I might be discriminated against" ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = .522$ ) and "I focus on doing my work or other activities to distract myself from the discrimination" ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $SD = .565$ ) were moderately endorsed, implying that avoidance and distraction strategies are used but not as strongly preferred as social support or direct confrontation.

On the low end, "I used the strategy of dealing with discrimination by saying something rude right back to the person" ( $M = 2.64$ ,  $SD = .611$ ) and "I ignore the situation" ( $M = 2.51$ ,  $SD = .618$ ) received the least agreement. These findings indicate that respondents are less likely to respond in a retaliatory or passive avoidance manner, which could be attributed to cultural norms that emphasize peace and resilience.

Table 6 suggests that respondents generally engaged adaptive coping techniques, with the greatest endorsement for "I find comfort in talking to people who have similar experiences of discrimination" ( $M = 2.88$ ). This demand for social assistance is consistent with Ryff's positive relations dimension and the problem-solving tactics suggested by Lazarus and Folkman. The lower acceptance of avoidance and retaliatory coping reflects cultural traditions that value harmony and community issue solutions, such as the Cordilleran *tongtong* tradition.

These trends are consistent with Yasui et al. (2015) and Forster et al. (2022), who discovered that social support serves as a coping response for the psychological impacts of discrimination, but they differ with McDermott et al. (2018), who found that avoidance was more common among adolescents. The findings indicate that community-based peer support systems are often used by respondents and may be culturally acceptable areas for future intervention. By connecting these coping behaviors to the inverse association revealed in Table 4, it is obvious that Adaptive approaches, particularly peer-based ones, were often cited by respondents, albeit further longitudinal research is needed to validate their mediating significance.

There is evidence that social support and problem-focused responses are helping factors, which is consistent with the prevalence of approach-oriented coping, which includes seeking culturally appropriate help, clearing up misconceptions, and displaying competence (Roohafza et al., 2014; Forster et al., 2022). Social support is linked to increased psychological flexibility and decreased suffering (Tindle et al., 2022) and functions both directly and as a stress coping response (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Thoits, 2011). Teenagers who support active coping report better adjustment (McDermott et al., 2018; Yasui et al., 2015) and coping and support partially mediate stress linkages in discrimination contexts (Goreis et al., 2020). Conversely, despite their existence, avoidance and retaliatory responses are typically associated with greater suffering (Brondolo et al., 2009; Ezzedine & Poyrazli, 2020).

Overall, the results suggest that avoidance and revenge are less widespread among indigenous people in San Gabriel, La Union, who instead mostly use healthy coping strategies like asking for social support, clearing up misunderstandings, and showcasing personal strengths. This points to a propensity for tactics that uphold dignity and foster comprehension as opposed to intensifying hostilities.

The findings show that Indigenous people in the study primarily adopted adaptive coping techniques such as seeking social support and directly confronting discrimination. The tendency to find comfort in conversing with peers who have had comparable experiences is consistent with the well-documented role of social support as a stress-reducing coping response (Akbar et al., 2021; Roohafza et al., 2014). Such tactics promote resilience and psychological flexibility, which are both helping factors against anxiety and depression. Maladaptive techniques, such as avoidance or revenge, were less frequently adopted, indicating more adaptive coping habits.

The findings indicate that respondents frequently adopted adaptive coping techniques in response to experiences of ethnic prejudice. However, the current study did not conduct a statistical analysis of

whether these coping techniques altered or lessened the association between discrimination and psychological well-being.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study offer compelling evidence that, for Indigenous people, ethnic discrimination is a persistent and complex reality. Respondents consistently agreed with statements describing both covert and overt discriminatory treatment. These experiences include being undervalued due to their place of origin, excluded from equal chances, judged based on their looks and cultural expression, and getting poor quality services in a variety of public and private contexts. These results imply that discrimination and stereotyping are still pervasive in the institutional frameworks and social interactions that Indigenous People experience.

The notion that discriminatory experiences have a quantifiable and damaging influence on Indigenous People's mental and emotional health is supported by the strong negative link found between psychological well-being and ethnic prejudice. Their feeling of self-worth, emotional stability, and overall satisfaction tend to decline as the amount of discrimination they encounter grows. Given that it compromises mental health resilience and general quality of life, this close association highlights the fact that ethnic prejudice is not only a social problem but also a serious public health issue.

The findings suggest that the respondents use a range of coping strategies to manage the psychological and emotional effects of discrimination in the face of these difficulties. Adaptive tactics were more common, including confronting preconceptions head-on, working hard to refute unfavorable perceptions, keeping emotional control, and asking for help from those who had gone through similar things. These approaches show respondents' efforts to manage experiences of discrimination while demonstrating agency and resilience. Social connection emerged as a commonly reported source of comfort and support among respondents. However, the existence of avoidance-based coping mechanisms, like avoiding situations or settings, suggests that some people deal by removing themselves from possible discrimination. This strategy may offer temporary respite but may eventually limit opportunities for engagement and development.

Another key takeaway from the research is the influence of migration in creating experiences of ethnic discrimination. Many Indigenous residents of San Gabriel can trace their ancestors back to various Cordilleran provinces, where they traveled decades ago in search of work and a place to live. This history of mobility frequently results in their persistent identification as "outsiders" in lowland communities, perpetuating prejudices, and social obstacles. Migrant status exacerbates the impact of ethnic discrimination by linking cultural identification to sentiments of difference and exclusion. Recognizing the junction of ethnicity and migration emphasizes the importance of inclusive local programs that encourage integration, intercultural understanding, and acknowledge the contributions of Indigenous migrants to the community's social and economic life.

All things considered, the study finds that although ethnic discrimination still has a negative impact on Indigenous people's psychological health in San Gabriel, La Union, regular use of adaptive coping mechanisms is essential for maintaining their mental health. To ensure that Indigenous communities may prosper despite societal problems, these findings emphasize the necessity of both targeted interventions to strengthen coping skills and institutional changes to address discrimination.

Certain constraints must be considered when interpreting these results. Because the study used a correlational methodology, the findings are limited to connections and do not demonstrate causal pathways or confirm moderation effects. Future research utilizing longitudinal or experimental approaches is thus encouraged to investigate these dynamics more thoroughly.

Furthermore, the exclusion of individuals with major mental disorders, cognitive impairments, or linguistic difficulties may have resulted in an underestimate of the impact of prejudice on psychological well-being. As a result, the findings may not be fully applicable to the larger Indigenous community in San Gabriel, La Union.

Another limitation of this study is the possibility of social desirability bias. Because the results were acquired through self-reported questionnaires, individuals may have been influenced by the need to produce socially acceptable answers. This may have resulted in an underreporting of discriminating encounters or an overreporting of adaptive coping methods.

Although the study did not use formal item-level inferential comparisons, ranked item means should be interpreted with caution. The observed differences in item means were often minor, and they were employed mostly for descriptive purposes rather than to establish statistically significant distinctions between items. Because the study did not conduct multiple hypothesis testing at the item level, no multiple comparison correction was used. As a result, item ranking should be viewed as an exploratory description of participant response patterns rather than proof of significant statistical disparities.

In addition, coping techniques were only investigated using descriptive statistics, specifically means and standard deviations. Although respondents reported frequently using adaptive coping

strategies, the study did not use inferential analyses like moderation, mediation, or regression to determine whether coping strategies had a significant impact on the relationship between ethnic discrimination and psychological well-being. Future research may use hierarchical regression or moderation analysis to delve deeper into these associations.

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