



## The Correlation of Perceived Discrimination and Psychological Well-Being Among the Manjo Ethnic Minority in Kaffa Zone, Ethiopia

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v5i6.465>

### **Abstract**

Purpose of this study was to examine the correlation between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being of Manjo ethnic minority in Kaffa zone, Ethiopia. One hundred and forty nine (149) study participants from the Manjo ethnic minority were randomly selected and filled out the perceived discrimination and psychological well-being questionnaire scales. Pearson Product moment correlation was computed to determine the strength and direction of relationship between their perception of discrimination by others and the psychological well-being report. Perceived discrimination is a variability of thought that results from an act of segregation and distancing of an individual or group of individuals mainly because of bias and prejudice. The psychological well-being variable was measured by six dimensions, which are named as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance of individuals. The result of the study showed the presence of a strong and significant negative correlation between the Manjos' perception of discrimination they experience from other ethnic groups and the corresponding psychological well-being state.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Minority; Perceived Discrimination; Psychological Well-Being

### **Introduction**

Previous studies show the presence of relationships between ethnic discrimination and diverse aspects of mental states such as psychological disorders, quality of life, and self-esteem. However, there are only limited studies, which show correlations of minority based perceived discrimination and psychological well-being of individuals. Discrimination is defined as an act of segregation and distancing of an individual or group of individuals due to mere bias and blind prejudice. Psychological well-being on the other hand describes engagement in life challenges and is described by assessment of purpose in life, personal growth, autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, and positive relations with others (Ryff., 2003). Despite the recognition of psychological implications of discriminatory acts, the attitude and behavioral responses of discrimination are not very well understood (Corning., 2002). Empirical researches however suggest the existence of a strong and negative relationship between perceived

discrimination and the resulting psychological wellness of an individual. For instance, in their study, William and his colleagues (2009) report the presence of high levels of psychological distress among individuals while experiencing discriminatory tendencies and actions from others. In fact, there are other studies, which suggest the relationship between discrimination and psychological well-being not to be straightforward. For example, Fischer and Shaw (1999) report the absence of direct relationship between perception of discrimination and psychological health status.

Ethnic-based discrimination is a wide-reaching and critical problem influencing the psychological well-being of many individuals in various parts of the globe. In Ethiopia, there are ethnic minorities who experience discriminatory situations and unpleasant treatments by majority groups, external actors, and also local governors. Minority groups want to exercise full human, political, and cultural rights to function as equal as other citizens particularly in the context of multi-ethnic federal states (Keller., 2002). If this is possible to happen, it supports in minimizing discriminatory perceptions, which may negatively influence the psychological well-being of individuals and groups. In a study conducted by Yoshida (2008), minority groups in Ethiopia tagged by the names “Fuga”, “Wayto” and “Wata” usually experience negative discrimination in many parts of Ethiopia where they live. Similarly, the Manjo minority groups who settled in the Kaffa Zone of Ethiopia are often victimized for negative discrimination because of their ethnic background and their everyday life styles.

The Manjo communities are often neglected and subject to discrimination by other ethnic groups such as the majority Gomeri because the Manjo cultural practices and life styles are considered to be contrary to other community’s culture, religion, life style and socially acceptable norms. Due to this, the neighboring Gomeri majority discriminate the Manjos in their social and cultural activities (Farm Africa., 2002). The total population of the Manjo minority living in southwest Ethiopia is estimated to be around 25,000 (Dagmawi., 2005). And from about 989,130 total population of the Kaffa zone, according to Yoshida (2008), the Manjos in the zone are estimated to be 10,000 to 12,000. Particularly this study site (Gimbo woreda), has 35 kebeles and is located 18 km from Bonga that is the city administration of the Kaffa Zone. Social discrimination against the Manjos is highly prevalent during the time of greeting (eg. No hand shaking), in mealtime, establishing marriage relations, in labor work that requires community involvement and in other activities (Lange & Gezahagn as cited in Yoshida., 2008). This in turn, exerts significant and yet negative influence on the psychological well-being of the Manjo minority in the area. Thus, this paper examines the extent of psychological health correlate of perceived ethnic-based discrimination among the Manjo minority who live in the Kaffa Zone of Ethiopia.

Discrimination induces an unpleasant and stressful feeling, and also reduced psychological well-being. As Geet and colleagues (2009) report, there is a growing body of research that indicates perception of a person towards ethnic based discrimination to be inversely related to psychological health measures. Most early studies were US-based but there is a considerable trend in the growing number of international studies, with recent studies finding discrimination as unfavorably related to psychological health among immigrants and in non-dominant racial groups in Australia and New Zealand (William & Mohammed., 2009). There is also a growing interest in the description of relationships between discrimination and psychological health in South Africa. Following the Black consciousness movement in South Africa, the term ‘Black’ was used to refer to all of the historically marginalized groups in that country (such as Africans., Colored., and also Indians). A study in South Africa report that all black groups experienced high levels of discrimination than the Whites, and both racial and non-racial discrimination were associated with psychiatric disorders and psychological distress and contributed to the elevated level of distress for Blacks compared to the White people (Williams et al., 2008). Nevertheless, there are still many mind pondering questions in the study of the association between perceived discrimination and the psychological well-being of ethnic minority.

Mental health status is the most studied health outcome in discrimination research. However, psychological well-being as operationally described by self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery and personal growth was not researched and documented in the Kaffa Zone of Ethiopia. Research suggests that one important pathway by which ethnic discrimination can adversely influence psychological health is by undermining a person's beliefs about self and the environment, which are reflected in lowered feelings of self-esteem and perceptions of mastery. For instance, a research by Graham, Bellmore and Mize (2006) shows individuals who are discriminated by others, victimized for harassment often experience internalizing problems, including low self-esteem, loneliness, social anxiety, and depression. Being the target of discrimination may keep individuals to be at risk for a number of adjustment difficulties in their lives. Some of those adjustment challenges relate to self-appraisal, whereas others can be linked to one's social status among peers (Graham et al., 2006). Even though, there exist affirmative actions in place by the government for the minority groups, still considerable number of the Manjo are victims of discrimination, feeling of inferiority and psychological harassment, which adversely influence their self-concept, mutual relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery and personal growth. Ahmed (2009) studied the educational challenges of Manjo children as it relates to their psychological status and reports experiences of psychological problems such as lack of self-esteem, self-confidence, frustration, mistrust, fear and feeling of inferiority. For instance, Demoz (2007) conducted a study on "socio-cultural factors influencing participation of Manjo clan children". The study revealed that, excessive involvement in family work, lack of appreciation and parental attention, inadequate support by the teachers, being treated differently and feeling of isolation are some factors, which negatively threaten Manjo children's education. In fact, the above mentioned studies lack coverage on the psychological situations and fully ignored the perception of children towards being discriminated.

Psychological well-being of individuals is related to their social and personal adjustment which in turn plays a determinant role in their living condition (Chamundeswari., 2014). An individual's psychological wellness is also influenced by social conditions such as discriminatory acts by others. Discrimination on Manjo ethnic group negatively influences their psychological well-being, in more specific terms, the Manjos are considered as having lack of self-confidence, anxious about their surrounding and as having immature intelligence (Mesfin., 2005). The discriminatory acts against the Manjo ethnic minorities are manifested by keeping them at distance, psychological inhibition, material deprivation, and communication restrictions. Most of these actions are known to prevail for more than half a century. In Kafa zone, the Manjo ethnic minority are often denied from simple hand shaking that is more of keeping physical distance to exchange of goods as economic functioning, denying co-utilization of services, freedom of movement and choice.

### ***Methodology and Instruments***

This study used the correlation research design to examine the relationship between perceived discrimination as an independent variable and the psychological well-being report of the Manjo minority as an outcome variable. In fact, it is important to note that correlation study design does not establish cause and effect relationship of variables. The study was conducted in Gimbo woreda that is located in the Kaffa Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region. Gimbo is one of the woredas found at the very nearest distance (18 km) from the main zonal town, Bonga. Three sample kebeles (Keyakella, Michiti & Sherakeja) which have the highest Manjo settlers were the specific locations for the current study. In the three Kebele's mentioned above, there are about 1183 total households. Among this, 348 households belong to the Manjo ethnic minority. Based on the above household data, a total of 149 (M= 74 & F =75) Manjo ethnic minority members were randomly selected and filled out a self-report questionnaire that measures a person's perception of discrimination by others and a corresponding report on thoughts of psychological well-being. By using sample size determination formula that was develop by

Yemane (1967), the sample size of this study was fixed to be 149 adult persons from the Manjo minority group living in Kaffa Zone, Ethiopia. Particularly stratified and systematic random sampling was used to determine the proportion of the participants from each kebele. Respondents in the study are included only when they are above the age of 18.

The research instruments used to collect data were a self-reported perceived discrimination questionnaire and an adopted psychological well-being scale that was developed by Ryff (1995). Perceived discrimination measure includes all positively stated self-report type which consists of 14 items. These items were adapted from discrimination stress scale (DSS) that is designed to measure discrimination in everyday life due to minority status (Williams, et al., 2008). The inventories were previously used by Flores et al., (2008) and the present study has obtained internal consistency reliability index of 0.86. After a careful content study on the perceived discrimination scale, the researchers adopted a questionnaire that consists 14 items. All questions are presented in question form and the response options range from 1 (never) to 4 (very often). Thus, the perceived discrimination score is a continuous data ranging from the lowest of fourteen (14) to the highest of fifty six (56) in which a highest score relatively designates the respondent's tendency to perceive high level of discrimination.

Psychological well-being was measured using a medium 54-item scale version of the psychological well-being scale developed by Ryff (1996). This psychological well-being scale measures a person's level of psychological wellness along six dimensions such as self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Respondents of the study indicate their agreement with a series of items using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Each sub-scale consists of 9 items. The test-retest reliability coefficients of the psychological well-being sub scales in previous studies ranges from 0.81 to 0.85 and the internal consistency reliability range from 0.87 to 0.90 (Ryff & Keyes., 1995). The score on Psychological Well-Being measure (PWB) is computed by adding all six constructs (Lyubomirsky & Dickerhoof., 2006). A high score indicates that a respondent has a mastery of the psychological trait in his/her everyday life. In contrast, a low score on psychological well-being traits shows that the respondent struggles to feel comfortable with that particular psychological trait (Srimathi & Kumar., 2010). Therefore, in the current study, one hundred and forty nine (149) randomly selected persons from Manjo community filled out the questionnaire scales for perceived discrimination and psychological well-being. After computing the raw scores for the two variables, Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient that assumes the continuous nature of both variables was estimated to determine the extent of correlation between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being scores of the Manjo minority.

## Results

This section of the paper presents the result and discussion of the study. The section presents the description of variables such as perceived discrimination and psychological well-being in terms of mean score and standard deviation, the correlation between perceived discrimination (PD) and psychological well-being (PWB), and the sub-components of psychological well-being. The section displays the result and discussion of the study as follows.

**Table 1** Mean score and SD for perceived discrimination

Variable	male (n=74)		female (n=75)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Perceived Discrimination	45.21	3.94	46.68	4.58

Table 1 shows the mean score and standard deviation of perceived discrimination variable among male and female Manjo respondents. As the table depicts, the mean scores for both male and female respondents of Manjos' are 45.21 and 46.68 respectively, whereas the same scale of perceived discrimination measures a mean not higher than 20 for non-Manjo ethnic group. Thus, with respect to perceived discrimination, the Manjos tend to report the experience of almost all the fourteen (14) discriminatory acts from non-Manjo group with female Manjo respondents getting slightly higher mean score when compared to the males. Over all, the scores show that the Manjo communities tend to report high level of perceived discrimination in their daily life.

**Table 2** Mean score of total psychological well-being, sub-scale means and SDs for male and female manjo minority groups

Variable	male (n=74)		female (n=75)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Psychological well-bein (Total)	128.3	6.53	124.21	6.10
Autonomy (AU)	21.08	3.90	20.48	3.20
• Environmental Mastery (EM)	21.74	2.84	20.60	3.00
• Personal Growth (PG)	21.80	2.75	20.70	3.08
• Positive Relation with Others (PR)	22.60	2.52	21.16	2.87
• Purpose in Life (PiL)	21.51	3.30	20.84	3.11
• Self-Acceptance (SA)	19.60	4.30	20.48	3.41

As Table 2 shows the lowest mean score across both gender were obtained for sub scales of self-acceptance (for males) and environmental mastery (for females) when compared to the other variables of psychological well-being. In the total psychological well-being measure, the mean scores for male Manjos is 128.31 with a standard deviation of 6.53 and for females it is 124.21 with a standard deviation of 6.10, which are by far lower than psychological well-being scores obtained by the non-Manjo community groups (male average =226.21 with a standard deviation of 10.18 and female average = 222.02 with a standard deviation of 9.26). Generally, the Manjo ethnic group tends to experience low levels of psychological well-being in their daily life events.

**Table 3** Correlation matrix between Perceived Discrimination (PD) and Psychological Well Being (PWB) measures for male and female Manjo minority respectively.

Variabl PD	(Males, n 74)	(Females, n= 75)
Perceived Discrimination (PD)	-	-
• Autonomy (AU)	-.23	-.23*
• Environmental Mastery (E)	.13	-.38**
• Personal Growth (PG)	-.29*	-.34**
• Positive Relation with Others (PR)	.21	-.39**
• Purpose in Life (PiL)	-.46**	-.18
• Self-Acceptance (SA)	-.36**	-.36**
• Psychological well-being (PWB)	-.75**	-.95**

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

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

As the main purpose of this study was to determine the degree and strength of correlation between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being among the Manjo minority group, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient results are shown in Table 3 above. That means, to describe the direction and the strength of correlation between the perceived discrimination (PD) and the corresponding psychological well-being, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. As it is shown in the table, the correlation analysis depicts the presence of a strong and negative relationship between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being ( $r = 0.75$ , sig.  $p = .01$  for males) and ( $r = 0.95$ , sig.  $p = .01$  for females), where there is a much stronger and negative relationship of the variables for female Manjo group. Moreover, there are strong negative correlations between perceived discrimination and the six sub-variables of the psychological well-being namely autonomy (AU), environmental mastery (EM), personal growth (PG), positive relation with others (PR), and self-acceptance (SA) among the female Manjo groups, which still show the highest negative association when compared to the male Manjo group that depicted strong negative correlation of perceived discrimination only to purpose in life (PiL) and self-acceptance (SA). This shows that female members of the Manjo ethnic group are more susceptible to experience psychological well-being difficulties as associated with their perception of discriminatory actions in everyday life. In addition, the strength and direction of correlation for the two variables are clearly indicated in the scatter plot shown in Fig 1.

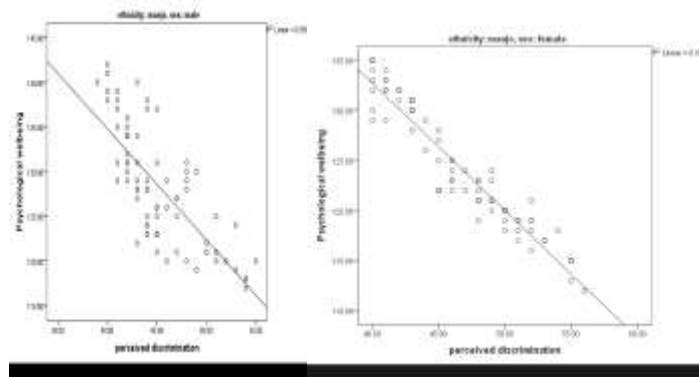


Fig. 1 Scatter plot on the association between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being for male ( $n=74$ ) and Female ( $n=75$ ) Manjo Communities

As shown in the scatter plot (right side of Fig. 1) the plots of perceived discrimination and psychological well-being for female Manjo group are highly clustered to the line of fit witnessing the presence of a strong and negative correlation between the two measured variables ( $r = -0.95$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) in contrast to the male Manjo individuals, in which the plots (left side) showing perceived discrimination and psychological well-being variables to somehow dispersed from the line of fit ( $r = -0.75$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). This further confirms that perceived discrimination of the female Manjo group has a strong and negative correlation to their psychological well-being when compared to the males.

## Discussion

The perception of discrimination influences the social status, psychological well-being, and physical health of victimized individuals or groups. Discrimination of a minority group can occur in the housing area, market place, workplace, educational settings, health care centers, and the criminal justice system. Several studies were conducted to describe the relationship between culture-related phenomena and mental health outcomes such as psychological well-being among different racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States and other western countries. As explained earlier, the present study

emphasized in examining the strength and direction of correlation between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being among Manjo ethnic minority in Kaffa Zone of Ethiopia. As the data analysis revealed, there is a considerably high mean score of the perceived discrimination measure among the Manjo minority in the zone with a mean score of 45.21 with a standard deviation of 3.94 for males and 46.68 with a standard deviation of 4.58 for females. These mean values are close to the maximum possible score of 52 in the 14 items standardized measure of perceived discrimination developed by Flourens and colleagues (2008). This result is consistent with the assumption forwarded by Crocker and Major (1998) in such a way that strong identification and being a member of a stigmatized group intensifies the perception of discrimination. The result of this study also agrees with the conceptualization of discrimination in a psycho-social context that is understood as an action that negatively influences the perception of a group and their psychological wellness, usually to the advantage of another group (Demoze., 2007).

The psychological well-being score, which was measured, based on the adopted psychological wellbeing scale with six dimensions ranging from autonomy to self-acceptance was very low for the Manjo ethnic minority. The data obtained by using Ryff's (1995) psychological well-being scale resulted in a mean score of 128.31 with a standard deviation of 6.53 for males and for females it was 124.21 with a standard deviation of 6.10, which are by far lower than psychological well-being scores obtained for the non-Manjo individuals. In a study by Williams and colleagues (2003) a conclusion was made on the presence of consistent findings that show considerably lower score of psychological wellness for minority and discriminated groups. In fact, perceptions of discrimination tend to be negatively associated with poorer psychological health across a broad range of outcomes and across socially disadvantaged groups in different societies. As the data analysis in the present study shows, the Manjo ethnic minority have high levels of perceived discrimination and also significantly lowers psychological well-being states. As pointed out by Major and O'Brien (2005, p.394), although psychologists have long been interested in the correlates of perceived discrimination, only recently they started to understand the influence on the psychological well-being of individuals. The low social status that results from discrimination may, in turn, engender further discrimination on minority group, which exerts considerable influence on their psychological wellness (Link & Phelan., 2001). These feelings and thoughts of psychological wellness include the awareness that minority group are devalued in the eyes of others, recognition to the dominant cultural stereotypes against their stigmatized identity, and obsessions of encountering discrimination by others (Crocker et al., 1998).

In the present study a strong and negative correlation was reported between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being of Manjo respondents. A close look at the Pearson correlation coefficients (shown in Table 3, p7) there is a statistically significant negative relationship between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being scores. A similar study by Liebkind and Jasinskaja (2000) report the psychological health of individuals to be negatively associated with perceived discrimination exhibited by such behaviors (depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, low self-esteem, life satisfaction and behavioral problems) in a Finnish study of immigrants and minority youth originating from a range of cultural backgrounds such as Turkey, Somalia and Vietnam. The result of the current study is also consistent with some previous studies on the topic. In line with this, an in-depth cross-national analysis of the association between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being in the USA compared with South Africa could be informative. Both countries share a history of legally enforced White supremacy and endogamy, and racial inequality that persisted into the twenty-first century (Williams et al., 2010). Based on this the data obtained in this comparative study indicates the presence of racial differences in psychological well-being (self-esteem and mastery) in South Africa, with Whites reporting higher levels of both of these psychological resources than non-Whites. On another study conducted by Pieterse and colleagues (2012), because of the ever-present nature of race, especially for racial minorities, there appears a strong but negative relationship between perceived discrimination of individuals and their psychological wellness. There is also a considerable number of research showing

perceived discrimination to have a strong negative correlation with psychological distress (Garcia, et al., 2014), especially among racial and ethnic minorities (Williams & Mohammed, 2009). The finding of the present study is also consistent with previous findings in the topic because of the fact that the study revealed the presence of a strong and negative correlation between perceived discrimination and psychological wellness of individuals from the Manjo minority group. This could possibly be linked to the fact that being socially discriminated and stigmatized might threaten the psychological well-being of individuals from the Manjo minority. Thus, living within such a social environment is likely to impede the fostering of positive psychological development.

The perception of being discriminated seems to have high correlation with psychological well-being for females when compared to that of males. Perez, Fortuna, and Alegria, (2008) studied some correlates of day to day discrimination among Latino adults in the United States and that those respondents who did report discrimination were more of men than women. However, the finding in the present study contradicts with this result because the level of perceived discrimination and its relationship with psychological well-being is higher for females than males. It is also totally inconsistent with the finding by Kessler, Mickelson and Williams (1999) who instead report the absence of significant gender difference in major lifetime perceived discrimination. However, they revealed that men are nearly twice as likely as women to report frequent day-to-day perceived discrimination.

### ***Conclusion and Recommendations***

The general purpose of this study was to determine the correlation of perceived discrimination to psychological well-being among Manjo ethnic minority group in Kaffa Zone of Ethiopia. The findings indicate the presence of significant and strong to very strong negative correlations between perceived discrimination and psychological well-being in female and also male Manjo group respectively. In fact, the correlation of perceived discrimination and psychological well-being appear to be higher for females than it is for males. Psychological wellness has considerable influence on the overall health status and productivity of a community. In several studies conducted on the topic including the present one, individual's perception of being discriminated found to negatively correlate with psychological well-being status. Thus, awareness increasing campaigns against the discriminatory actions towards a group of community may contribute in the alleviation of problems related to perceived discrimination and low status of psychological health among members of a community. Since discrimination and the perceptions towards it have considerable influence on the psychological well-being of the Manjo communities, efforts in minimizing this problem are needed. For instance, the local government administration provides a comprehensive affirmative action and awareness raising campaigns that targets the adverse psychological effects of discrimination. The provision of counseling service and the life skills training for the Manjo community have to be strengthened in diagnosing psycho-social and related problematic perceptions. Therefore, the currently existing intervention experiences by the non-governmental organizations such as Contribution of Voluntary Missionaries (CVM) and Action Aid Ethiopia can be expanded to lessen discrimination and improve the psychological health of Manjos'. More specifically, psychological care and service should be extended to minorities as that of other needs such as providing health care services. Community development workers and volunteers should receive awareness increasing training to understand emotional problems of minority groups. Hence, periodic workshops and seminars should be organized for community development workers to train them in problem identification and para-counseling service provisions. Finally, there is also a need to conduct future studies to gain detailed understanding on the psychological make-up of Manjo minorities in connection to discriminatory acts and perceptions.



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