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Cognitive and Psychological Impacts of Discrimination in Educational Settings : A Comparative Study between South Korea and Cameroon

RACHEL FUMENJEH AZEH, ATANGA D. FUNWIE AND FABIEN SUNDJO

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# Cognitive and Psychological Impacts of Discrimination in Educational Settings : a Comparative Study between South Korea and Cameroon

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**Abstract:**

Discrimination in educational settings is a global issue that can profoundly influence students' cognitive development and psychological well-being. This paper explores the experiences of students in two culturally distinct countries; South Korea and Cameroon by examining how race, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic factors contribute to discriminatory practices in schools. In South Korea, rising immigration has led to increased diversity, but students of biracial and immigrant backgrounds face significant racial and ethnic discrimination, resulting in stereotype threat, lowered academic performance, and emotional distress. In Cameroon, ethnic and linguistic discrimination, exacerbated by the ongoing Anglophone-Francophone conflict, manifests in unequal access to quality education and a hostile school environment, particularly for minority ethnic groups. This comparison reveals both commonalities and differences in how discrimination affects students in these contexts. While in both countries, discrimination negatively influences students' cognitive performance and psychological health, the specific forms and consequences of these discriminatory practices vary due to cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors. The findings highlight the critical need for context-specific interventions addressing the unique discrimination forms in each country's educational system. In South Korea, efforts to integrate multicultural education and provide mental health support are necessary, while in Cameroon, addressing structural inequalities and promoting linguistic inclusion are crucial steps toward mitigating the harmful effects of discrimination. Ultimately, this paper underscores the importance of developing policies that cater to the specific cultural and social dynamics of each region to foster inclusive and equitable educational environments.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is universally recognized as a key factor in shaping individuals' cognitive development and psychological well-being. However, educational environments are not immune to the societal inequalities and discriminatory practices that exist in the broader social context. Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, language, or socioeconomic status can severely hinder students' academic achievement and emotional development, creating barriers to success that affect their long-term life outcomes. Educational settings that are intended to be spaces of growth and learning often become environments where marginalized students experience exclusion, bias, and unequal treatment, leading to significant cognitive and psychological challenges (Banks, 2015).

This paper explores the impacts of discrimination in educational settings by comparing two culturally distinct nations: South Korea and Cameroon. South Korea is a country known for its relatively homogeneous population and strong emphasis on academic success. However, increased immigration over the past few decades has introduced a more ethnically diverse population into its educational system, which has led to new challenges in how schools address or fail to address issues of racial and ethnic discrimination (Seol, 2019). Immigrant students and children of biracial marriages often face exclusion, lower teacher expectations, and bullying, which negatively impact their academic performance and self-esteem (Lee & Koo, 2015).

On the other hand, Cameroon is a country with over 250 ethnic groups, two official languages (English and French), and deep historical divides rooted in its colonial past. The country's ethnic and linguistic diversity has led to complex forms of discrimination within the educational system, particularly in the context of the ongoing Anglophone-Francophone conflict. Students from marginalised ethnic or linguistic groups frequently face barriers such as inadequate resources, biased teacher perceptions, and language-related discrimination, all of which affect their cognitive and emotional development (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997). Moreover, ethnic tensions within the country exacerbate these challenges, leading to disparities in access to quality education and increased psychological distress for students from minority backgrounds (Nsamenang, 2005).

Given these contexts, the purpose of this paper is to examine how discrimination in educational settings affects the cognitive development and psychological well-being of students in South Korea and Cameroon. By comparing these two nations, the study aims to identify both the commonalities and differences in how discrimination manifests and influences students' experiences in their respective educational systems. Furthermore, the paper will propose strategies for educational policies and interventions that can help mitigate the cognitive and psychological effects of discrimination.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**How does discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and language affect students' cognitive development in South Korea and Cameroon?**

In South Korea, racial and ethnic discrimination predominantly affects students from immigrant and biracial backgrounds. These students often experience stereotype threat, a psychological phenomenon where fear of confirming negative stereotypes about their group leads to increased anxiety and reduced academic performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). South Korean schools, where academic success is highly prioritized, tend to view immigrant and biracial students as outsiders, leading to lowered academic expectations from teachers and peers. Studies suggest that minority students internalize these low expectations, which can hinder their cognitive development and negatively affect their educational performance. For instance, Park and Chang

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(2017) found that these students often underperform on standardized tests due to heightened stress and anxiety, limiting their ability to engage fully in classroom activities and cognitive tasks.

In Cameroon, ethnic and linguistic discrimination presents structural barriers to cognitive development. Ethnic minority students, particularly those from rural and economically disadvantaged areas, often have unequal access to quality educational resources. This inequality is particularly acute in conflict-affected regions where the ongoing Anglophone-Francophone crisis disrupts educational systems. Nsamenang (2005) notes that students from minority groups frequently face under-resourced schools, poorly trained teachers, and limited access to learning materials, all of which inhibit cognitive growth. Additionally, linguistic discrimination against Anglophone students in Francophone regions exacerbates these challenges, as students often struggle to comprehend and perform academically when taught in a language other than their mother tongue.

**What are the psychological impacts of discrimination on students' emotional well-being in these two countries?**

Discrimination in both South Korea and Cameroon has significant psychological impacts, leading to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. In South Korea, students from minority backgrounds especially those from immigrant and biracial families frequently face social isolation and bullying. As Lee and Koo (2015) highlight, biracial students in South Korean schools often experience exclusion from their peers, which heightens feelings of alienation and negatively impacts their emotional well-being. This social exclusion, coupled with the immense academic pressure that exists within the South Korean education system, can lead to long-term psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and even suicidal ideation in extreme cases.

In Cameroon, the psychological toll of discrimination is compounded by the Anglophone-Francophone conflict, which has created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, particularly in conflict-affected regions. Students in these areas are not only exposed to ethnic and linguistic discrimination but also the trauma associated with ongoing violence and political instability (Tebid, 2021). The psychological trauma experienced by students in these conflict zones includes symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), heightened anxiety, and chronic stress, which significantly impede their emotional well-being and academic success. Marginalized ethnic groups, in particular, face a sense of inferiority that is reinforced by societal and institutional biases, further exacerbating their mental health challenges.

**What are the commonalities and differences in how discrimination manifests in the educational systems of South Korea and Cameroon?**

While both countries exhibit forms of ethnic and racial discrimination in education, the manifestation of discrimination varies significantly due to differing historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts.

In South Korea, discrimination is primarily rooted in racial and ethnic biases against immigrant and biracial students. The country's largely homogeneous society views these students as outsiders, which leads to social exclusion and lower academic expectations. The lack of multicultural integration in South Korean schools contributes to a hostile environment for these minority students. Furthermore, language barriers add an additional layer of difficulty for immigrant students, particularly those from Southeast Asian countries, further contributing to their sense of marginalization and cognitive underperformance (Seol, 2019).

In Cameroon, discrimination is more deeply entrenched in ethnic and linguistic divisions. The country's colonial history has resulted in a persistent divide between its Anglophone and Francophone populations, which is

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reflected in the educational system. Anglophone students in Francophone-dominated regions often face linguistic discrimination, as they are forced to learn in French, which many do not speak fluently (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997). Additionally, ethnic minorities and students from rural areas face discrimination based on socioeconomic factors. These students are often excluded from educational opportunities, as schools in their regions tend to be underfunded and lack resources, further perpetuating educational disparities (Nsamenang, 2005). Unlike South Korea, where discrimination is largely racial and ethnic, Cameroon's educational challenges are rooted in complex intersections of ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status.

**How can educational policies address and mitigate the cognitive and psychological impacts of discrimination in both countries?**

To address and mitigate the impacts of discrimination in both countries, context-specific interventions are essential.

In South Korea, the implementation of multicultural education programs is crucial. These programs would help to reduce the bias and discrimination faced by immigrant and biracial students by fostering greater cultural understanding and acceptance in schools. Additionally, psychological support systems should be established to provide counseling and mental health services for students who are victims of bullying and social isolation. Teachers should also receive training to recognize and challenge their biases, ensuring that all students receive equal support and encouragement to succeed academically (Kim, 2019).

In Cameroon, the focus must be on addressing structural inequalities within the educational system. Policies that equalize the distribution of resources across regions, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, are critical for reducing the educational disparities faced by ethnic and linguistic minorities. Furthermore, linguistic

inclusivity should be promoted through bilingual education programs that ensure Anglophone students are not disadvantaged in Francophone regions. Given the ongoing conflict in the country, providing psychological support for students who have experienced trauma is also essential. Schools should establish trauma-informed practices that cater to the emotional and psychological needs of students in conflict zones (Nsamenang, 2005; Tebid, 2021).

By implementing these policy interventions, both South Korea and Cameroon can begin to address the deep-rooted issues of discrimination within their educational systems and create more inclusive, supportive environments for all students.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this comparative study lies in its potential to inform educational policy makers and stakeholders about the detrimental effects of discrimination on student outcomes, both cognitively and psychologically. By analyzing two countries with different social and cultural contexts, the findings will highlight the need for nuanced approaches to combating discrimination in schools, ensuring that interventions are tailored to the unique challenges faced by marginalized students in each educational system.

In South Korea, where the issue of multicultural integration is relatively new, policy solutions must focus on creating more inclusive environments for biracial and immigrant students. This includes improving teachers' cultural competence and providing resources to support the academic and emotional well-being of these students (Kim, 2019). In Cameroon, addressing the complex interplay of ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic discrimination requires more extensive reforms, such as equalizing educational resources across regions, promoting bilingual education, and supporting students affected by ongoing ethnic conflicts (Tebid, 2021).

In conclusion, understanding the cognitive and psychological impacts of discrimination in educational

settings is crucial for developing effective policies that promote equity and inclusion. By examining South Korea and Cameroon, this study seeks to provide insights into how different forms of discrimination shape students' experiences and outcomes in school, offering valuable lessons for educators and policy makers worldwide.

## Theoretical Framework

Understanding how discrimination affects students in educational settings requires a strong theoretical foundation, which can be provided by Social Identity Theory and Stereotype Threat Theory. These two frameworks explain the psychological mechanisms behind how discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and language can affect students' academic performance, cognitive development, and emotional well-being. Both theories have been widely applied to educational psychology to highlight the ways in which students from marginalized groups are impacted by social perceptions, biases, and institutional discrimination.

## Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)

Social Identity Theory posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept and self-esteem from their membership in social groups, such as those based on race, ethnicity, or language. When students experience discrimination because of their group membership, it can threaten their social identity, leading to negative outcomes in both their cognitive and psychological development.

In educational contexts, students from marginalized or minority groups often face social identity threats when their group is viewed negatively by the majority. For example, in South Korea, students from immigrant or biracial backgrounds may feel like outsiders in a predominantly homogeneous society. The perception that they do not belong to the "in-group" of ethnically Korean students can lead to feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, and alienation (Lee & Koo, 2015). These

students may disengage from classroom activities, have reduced motivation to excel academically, and internalize negative stereotypes about their group's intellectual abilities. The result is often poorer academic performance and reduced cognitive development.

In Cameroon, ethnic and linguistic identities play a major role in how discrimination manifests in schools. For instance, Anglophone students in Francophone-dominated regions may feel that their social identity as English speakers is devalued. This can lead to a lower sense of belonging, reduced self-esteem, and lack of motivation to participate in school activities that are conducted in French, thus negatively impacting their academic performance (Nsamenang, 2005). The ongoing ethnic tensions between different groups in Cameroon can exacerbate these social identity threats, further contributing to students' psychological distress and academic challenges (Tebid, 2021).

## Stereotype Threat Theory (Steele & Aronson, 1995)

Stereotype Threat Theory offers a complementary explanation of how discrimination can impact students' academic performance. According to this theory, individuals who are aware of negative stereotypes about their social group may experience anxiety about potentially confirming these stereotypes. This anxiety can lead to cognitive overload and reduced performance, particularly in high-pressure situations like tests or classroom assessments.

In South Korea, minority students such as those from immigrant backgrounds are often subjected to stereotypes that portray them as less academically capable than their Korean peers (Park & Chang, 2017). For example, biracial students or those from Southeast Asian families may be perceived as less intelligent or less likely to succeed in the highly competitive South Korean school system. These students, aware of these stereotypes, may experience stereotype threat, which leads to increased stress and anxiety during exams or

classroom participation. The result is poorer academic performance, not because of a lack of ability, but due to the psychological burden of trying to avoid confirming the stereotype.

In Cameroon, stereotype threat can similarly affect students from minority ethnic or linguistic groups. Anglophone students, who are often perceived as less competent than their Francophone counterparts in French-dominated regions, may experience linguistic-related stereotype threat. The pressure to perform well in a language they are not fluent in can cause anxiety and reduced cognitive functioning, leading to lower test scores and poorer classroom performance (Tebid, 2021). Moreover, students from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds may face stereotypes about their intelligence or ability to succeed academically, which can further hinder their performance and engagement in school (Nsamenang, 2005).

Application to South Korea and Cameroon
Both Social Identity Theory and Stereotype Threat Theory provide critical insights into how discrimination affects students' cognitive and psychological development in South Korea and Cameroon. In South Korea, the homogeneity of the society exacerbates the social identity threats faced by immigrant and biracial students. These students often feel like they do not belong, which affects their motivation to participate fully in academic life. Furthermore, the competitive nature of the South Korean school system intensifies the effects of stereotype threat, as students are constantly evaluated through exams and performance-based assessments (Kim, 2019).

In Cameroon, the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the country creates a different set of challenges. Here, discrimination is not based solely on race, but also on ethnic and linguistic divisions that have deep historical and political roots. Anglophone students, in particular, face significant social identity threats in Francophone regions, where their language and culture are devalued.

Additionally, stereotype threat related to language and socioeconomic status further exacerbates the cognitive and emotional challenges faced by these students (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997).

Both theories underscore the need for educational systems to be aware of the psychological toll of discrimination and to implement policies and practices that reduce these threats. In both South Korea and Cameroon, interventions that foster inclusive environments, support multicultural education, and provide psychological support services for students from marginalized groups are crucial for mitigating the negative impacts of social identity threats and stereotype threat (Seol, 2019).

**CONCLUSION**

Social Identity Theory and Stereotype Threat Theory provide robust frameworks for understanding the cognitive and psychological impacts of discrimination in educational settings. In South Korea, the homogeneous nature of the society and the pressure to succeed academically create environments where minority students face significant social identity threats and stereotype threat. In Cameroon, ethnic and linguistic divisions, compounded by structural inequalities, exacerbate these threats, particularly for students from Anglophone and marginalized ethnic communities. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions that recognize the psychological burdens that discrimination places on students and promote inclusive, supportive educational environments.

**Contextual Overview: South Korea and Cameroon**
**South Korea**
South Korea has historically been a homogeneous society, but rising immigration, particularly from Southeast Asia and China, has increased ethnic diversity in schools. With over 200,000 children of foreign or mixed backgrounds in South Korean schools, these

students face widespread racial and ethnic discrimination. Biracial children, particularly those born to Southeast Asian mothers and Korean fathers, are often socially ostracized, subjected to bullying, and perceived as academically inferior by teachers and peers (Lee & Koo, 2015). The intense academic pressure in South Korea, where success in education is paramount, exacerbates the stress and anxiety felt by immigrant and biracial students.

Research has shown that immigrant students in South Korea perform worse on standardized tests than their Korean peers, in part due to language barriers and discrimination that lowers teacher expectations (Park & Chang, 2017). For these students, the fear of being stigmatized as "outsiders" or "inferior" leads to stereotype threat, impeding cognitive development and academic success.

## Cameroon

Cameroon presents a different form of diversity, with over 250 ethnic groups and two official languages French and English. The country's colonial history and the ongoing conflict between Anglophone and Francophone regions have led to ethnic and linguistic discrimination in schools. Anglophone students in Francophone regions often face language barriers in their education, while students from minority ethnic groups and poorer backgrounds face discrimination from both teachers and peers (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 1997).

In Cameroon's Anglophone-Francophone conflict zones, schools often become battlegrounds for larger political struggles. Discrimination in these areas is particularly severe, as students from minority groups face additional challenges related to resource deprivation, underfunded schools, and ethnic marginalization (Tebid, 2021). The unequal access to quality education further disadvantages students from rural areas and ethnic minorities, reinforcing existing educational disparities.

## Cognitive Impacts of Discrimination
## South Korea

In South Korea, discrimination in schools presents a variety of cognitive challenges, particularly for immigrant and biracial students. These students face substantial cognitive burdens due to stereotype threat, a psychological phenomenon that occurs when individuals fear confirming negative stereotypes about their social group. In educational settings, stereotype threat increases anxiety, leading to decreased cognitive performance and reduced ability to perform under pressure (Steele & Aronson, 1995). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in South Korea's high-pressure educational system, where entrance exams largely determine students' academic futures. The competitive nature of South Korean schools amplifies the pressure minority students feel, as they are constantly striving to overcome societal expectations that cast them as academically inferior.

A study conducted by Park and Chang (2017) highlights how stereotype threat impacts minority students in South Korea. These students reported feeling intense pressure to outperform their ethnically Korean peers to dispel negative stereotypes about their ethnic or racial backgrounds. However, this heightened pressure often resulted in cognitive overload, a state in which students struggle to process information and solve problems effectively due to excessive mental strain. The need to counteract societal biases creates an added layer of cognitive stress, which negatively affects students' academic performance in crucial areas such as standardized tests and classroom participation.

Furthermore, language barriers add to the cognitive difficulties experienced by immigrant students in South Korea. Many immigrant students come from non-Korean-speaking households, which makes it difficult for them to fully engage with classroom material, particularly in academic settings that prioritize language proficiency (Seol, 2019). Immigrant students who are not

fluent in Korean are often unable to express their knowledge or grasp complex concepts, which further limits their cognitive development. This language barrier not only affects their academic performance but also contributes to their sense of alienation and isolation within the school environment. Research shows that students who face both language and racial discrimination experience a compounding effect on their cognitive outcomes, as they must navigate multiple obstacles to academic success (Kim, 2019).

South Korean schools, therefore, create environments where cognitive challenges are exacerbated for minority students. The intersection of stereotype threat and language barriers results in a cognitive burden that reduces these students' ability to perform optimally, particularly in the country's rigorous and high-stakes educational system.

**Cameroon**

In Cameroon, the cognitive impacts of discrimination are closely tied to structural inequalities within the educational system. Students from rural or economically disadvantaged areas face significant obstacles in accessing quality education, which hinders their cognitive development. Schools in these regions are often under-resourced, lacking qualified teachers, proper infrastructure, and adequate learning materials. As a result, students from these areas receive a lower quality of education compared to their peers in urban or more affluent regions (Nsamenang, 2005). The disparities in educational resources create significant cognitive challenges, as students must contend with a lack of instructional support and limited opportunities to develop critical thinking skills.

The unequal distribution of resources in Cameroon reflects broader patterns of socioeconomic discrimination that disadvantage students from marginalized backgrounds. These students are often overlooked by teachers who may have lower expectations for their

academic abilities based on stereotypes associated with their ethnic or socioeconomic status. The combination of inadequate resources and low teacher expectations leads to reduced cognitive engagement in the classroom, as students are not provided with the necessary support to succeed academically. This form of structural discrimination stifles the cognitive growth of students who are already marginalized, further entrenching educational inequalities.

Linguistic discrimination is another significant factor that impacts cognitive development in Cameroon, particularly for Anglophone students in predominantly Francophone regions. Due to the colonial history of Cameroon, the country is divided along linguistic lines, with French being the dominant language in most regions. Anglophone students, who come from English-speaking households, often struggle in schools where instruction is conducted primarily in French. The language barrier creates a cognitive challenge, as students are unable to fully comprehend lessons or express their knowledge in assessments conducted in French (Tebid, 2021).

For these students, the experience of learning in a second language reduces their ability to engage meaningfully with academic material. The cognitive load of processing information in an unfamiliar language detracts from their ability to develop higher-order thinking skills and engage in critical analysis. Over time, this cognitive disadvantage compounds, leading to lower academic performance and reduced cognitive development compared to their Francophone peers. This form of linguistic discrimination not only limits academic success but also reinforces social and political divides between Cameroon's Anglophone and Francophone populations, further entrenching inequality in the educational system.

In summary, the cognitive impacts of discrimination in Cameroon are driven by structural inequalities and linguistic barriers. Students from marginalized ethnic and

linguistic groups face significant obstacles in accessing quality education, which stifles their cognitive development and limits their opportunities for academic success. By addressing these structural barriers and promoting linguistic inclusivity, the Cameroonian educational system can begin to mitigate the cognitive challenges faced by marginalized students and create a more equitable learning environment.

## Psychological Impacts of Discrimination

### South Korea

The psychological impacts of discrimination in South Korea are profound, particularly for immigrant and biracial students, who frequently face social isolation, bullying, and exclusion in educational settings. These students often experience a sense of not belonging, which can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Lee & Koo, 2015). The homogeneous nature of South Korean society, coupled with the rigid cultural norms around ethnicity, places immigrant and biracial students in a position where they are viewed as outsiders. This social exclusion creates a hostile school environment where these students are more likely to experience social rejection, leading to long-term psychological distress.

Bullying is a significant issue in South Korean schools, especially for students who do not fit the normative ethnic profile. Immigrant and biracial students, particularly those of mixed Southeast Asian and Korean descent, are frequently subjected to bullying based on race or ethnicity. This form of bullying can have devastating effects on students' emotional well-being, often leading to withdrawal from social interactions and avoidance of school activities. Over time, these experiences of bullying can contribute to more severe mental health problems, including chronic anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. Studies have shown that students who face consistent bullying are more likely to suffer from long-term emotional and psychological

trauma, which can persist well into adulthood (Lee & Koo, 2015).

In addition to overt acts of bullying, microaggressions subtle, often unintentional acts of discrimination also play a critical role in shaping the psychological experiences of minority students in South Korean schools. Immigrant students often encounter racial microaggressions from teachers and peers, such as comments or behaviors that reinforce their status as "others" or "foreigners." For example, teachers may assume that immigrant students are less capable academically, or peers may make remarks that highlight cultural or linguistic differences in a derogatory manner. These microaggressions contribute to a negative school climate, where minority students feel alienated and unsupported (Kim, 2019).

Research has shown that students who experience microaggressions in the classroom are more likely to disengage from school. Disengagement manifests in various ways, including lower participation in class, increased absenteeism, and a lack of interest in academic activities. Over time, this disengagement can harm students' psychological health, as they internalize feelings of worthlessness and inferiority. The psychological burden of constantly navigating a hostile or unwelcoming school environment further diminishes their self-esteem, exacerbating mental health challenges. Consequently, many minority students in South Korea face both academic challenges and emotional struggles, as they are caught in a cycle of discrimination that limits their opportunities for success (Kim, 2019).

### Cameroon

In Cameroon, the psychological impacts of discrimination are deeply intertwined with the country's ethnic and socioeconomic divisions, particularly the Anglophone-Francophone divide. Students from minority ethnic groups, particularly those from rural and economically disadvantaged areas, often report feelings

of inferiority and hopelessness, exacerbated by the systemic inequalities present in the educational system. These students are frequently marginalized in classrooms, where teachers may have lower expectations for their academic potential based on their ethnic background or socioeconomic status. Over time, this marginalization contributes to emotional distress, as students internalize the belief that they are less capable or less deserving of educational opportunities (Nsamenang, 2005).

The psychological challenges faced by minority students in Cameroon are further compounded by the ongoing ethnic conflicts in the country, particularly the Anglophone-Francophone conflict. This conflict has created an environment of chronic instability and violence in many regions, particularly in the Anglophone areas where schools are frequently disrupted by the conflict. Students in these areas face not only discrimination based on their ethnicity or language but also the trauma of living in conflict zones. The constant threat of violence in and around schools adds to the stress of ethnic and linguistic discrimination, leaving students in a state of hypervigilance and fear (Tebid, 2021).

For students in conflict-affected areas, the psychological impacts are particularly severe, with many experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The trauma associated with exposure to violence, displacement, and the destruction of educational infrastructure creates long-lasting emotional scars. Students in these regions may experience nightmares, flashbacks, chronic anxiety, and depression as a result of the violence and instability they witness. These psychological effects are further compounded by the fact that many students in conflict zones are also cut off from psychological support services or counseling, leaving them to cope with their trauma on their own (Nsamenang, 2005).

The Anglophone-Francophone conflict also exacerbates feelings of linguistic marginalization among Anglophone students, who are often forced to attend schools where the primary language of instruction is French. This linguistic discrimination not only limits their academic success but also deepens their sense of alienation from the broader educational system. For many Anglophone students, the psychological toll of being perceived as inferior or second-class citizens within the national education system leads to low self-esteem, chronic stress, and a sense of powerlessness (Tebid, 2021). These feelings of alienation are further reinforced by the lack of support or resources available to help Anglophone students overcome the barriers they face in Francophone-dominated regions.

In conclusion, the psychological impacts of discrimination in Cameroon are multifaceted, shaped by ethnic divisions, socioeconomic inequality, and linguistic marginalization. Students who experience these forms of discrimination are at increased risk of emotional distress, depression, and trauma-related disorders, particularly in regions affected by conflict. Addressing these psychological impacts requires a concerted effort to reduce ethnic and linguistic discrimination within the educational system and provide students with access to mental health support and counseling services that can help them cope with the trauma they experience.

**DISCUSSION**

The cognitive and psychological impacts of discrimination in South Korea and Cameroon are deeply shaped by each country's unique social, cultural, and political contexts. However, despite the differing historical and societal backgrounds, there are notable similarities in how discrimination manifests and affects students. In both South Korea and Cameroon, students who belong to marginalized groups whether due to race, ethnicity, or language face significant barriers that hinder their cognitive development and psychological well-being.

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In both countries, stereotype threat plays a critical role in shaping the educational experiences of minority students. In South Korea, students from biracial or immigrant backgrounds often experience stereotype threat due to the perception that they are less academically capable than their Korean peers (Park & Chang, 2017). Similarly, in Cameroon, Anglophone students may experience stereotype threat in predominantly Francophone schools, where their linguistic identity is often devalued (Nsamenang, 2005). This fear of confirming negative stereotypes creates heightened anxiety, which diminishes students' cognitive performance and participation in academic activities (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Another common factor in both contexts is social exclusion, which leads to a range of cognitive and emotional challenges. In South Korea, immigrant and biracial students frequently report feeling isolated, which contributes to lower self-esteem, reduced motivation, and poor academic performance (Lee & Koo, 2015). In Cameroon, students from minority ethnic groups, particularly those from conflict-affected regions, also face social exclusion, exacerbated by systemic inequalities and ethnic tensions (Tebid, 2021). Social exclusion, whether due to racial or ethnic discrimination, undermines students' sense of belonging in school and diminishes their ability to engage with learning.

Moreover, in both countries, bullying and linguistic discrimination are key drivers of psychological distress. In South Korea, students from minority backgrounds frequently face bullying based on their race or ethnicity, which has long-term consequences for their mental health (Kim, 2019). In Cameroon, the linguistic divide between Anglophone and Francophone students often leads to marginalization of the former group in Francophone regions, contributing to feelings of inferiority and alienation (Nsamenang, 2005). These psychological impacts are compounded in Cameroon by the ongoing ethnic conflict, which creates additional trauma for students living in conflict-affected areas (Tebid, 2021).

In summary, while the forms of discrimination differ racial and ethnic discrimination in South Korea versus ethnic and linguistic discrimination in Cameroon the underlying mechanisms remain consistent. Marginalized students in both countries experience lower academic achievement, reduced cognitive functioning, and poorer mental health outcomes due to the pervasive effects of discrimination. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the social and cultural dynamics at play in each country.

## Recommendations for Policy and Practice
## South Korea
## Multicultural Education

South Korea must adopt more comprehensive multicultural education policies that foster an inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their ethnic or racial background. This would involve integrating culturally responsive teaching into the curriculum and training teachers to effectively address racial and ethnic diversity in the classroom. By fostering an environment of understanding and inclusivity, schools can reduce the prejudices and stereotypes that contribute to discrimination against immigrant and biracial students (Seol, 2019).

## Support Systems

Schools should establish psychological counseling and support services specifically for immigrant and biracial students who are victims of discrimination and bullying. These services should include mental health support, peer support groups, and anti-bullying initiatives aimed at helping students cope with the emotional and psychological toll of discrimination. Additionally, schools should provide training for teachers and counselors to identify and address the unique challenges faced by minority students (Kim, 2019)

## Cameroon

Addressing Structural Inequalities: The Cameroonian government must prioritize reducing structural inequalities in education by increasing funding for rural and under-resourced schools, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Ensuring that all schools have access to qualified teachers, adequate learning materials, and safe learning environments is essential for addressing the cognitive disparities caused by discrimination. This also involves improving teacher training programs to ensure that educators are equipped to work in diverse and marginalized communities (Nsamenang, 2005).

### Promoting Linguistic Inclusion

Policies that support bilingual education in Francophone regions are necessary to help Anglophone students better integrate into the school system. Inclusive teaching practices should be promoted, with teachers receiving training on how to account for linguistic diversity in the classroom. Bilingual education programs would ensure that Anglophone students are not disadvantaged due to language barriers, helping them engage more fully in their education and reducing the psychological impacts of linguistic discrimination (Tebid, 2021).

### Conflict Resolution and Trauma Support

The ongoing Anglophone-Francophone conflict necessitates a focus on trauma-informed care for students living in conflict-affected areas. Schools in these regions should provide access to mental health resources and trauma counseling for students who have experienced violence, displacement, or other forms of trauma related to the conflict. Teachers should be trained in trauma-sensitive educational practices to support students' emotional well-being and help them recover from the psychological impacts of violence (Tebid, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

Discrimination in educational settings whether based on race, ethnicity, language, or socioeconomic status has profound cognitive and psychological impacts on students in both South Korea and Cameroon. In both countries, marginalized students face significant challenges to their academic success and emotional well-being due to stereotype threat, social exclusion, and linguistic or ethnic discrimination. These issues not only limit students' academic performance but also contribute to long-term mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

While the specific forms of discrimination differ between South Korea and Cameroon, the underlying effects on students' self-esteem, cognitive functioning, and mental health are strikingly similar. Addressing these issues requires culturally specific interventions that not only reduce discrimination but also provide comprehensive support systems for marginalized students. By promoting multicultural education, addressing structural inequalities, and offering trauma support, both countries can create more inclusive and supportive educational environments that ensure all students have equal opportunities for success.

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