

## Acculturation stress and psychological well-being in Latin American immigrant schoolchildren in a district of Santiago de Chile

Estresse devido à aculturação e bem-estar psicológico em escolares imigrantes latino-americanos em uma comuna de Santiago do Chile

Estrés por aculturación y bienestar psicológico en escolares inmigrantes latinoamericanos en una comuna de Santiago de Chile


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### ABSTRACT

This study evaluated acculturation stress and psychological well-being in Latin American schoolchildren in a public school in Santiago de Chile. An acculturative stress scale and a psychological well-being scale were applied to 124 students between 8 and 15 years old ( $M = 13.09$ ;  $DS = 1.52$ ). The results indicate that the dimensions of the Acculturation Stress scale that report alteration are Longing with the country of origin and Adaptation to school, family and peers. In turn, psychological well-being is altered by the Positive Relationships and Domain of the environment dimensions. The most affected population are mainly men and that immigrant population that has been residing in the country for less than 6 months. This could be explained by the sociocultural differences between the country of origin and the host country and outgroup differences. It is concluded that stress due to acculturation and psychological well-being is influenced by the emotional distance that children and young people experience from their country of origin and adaptation to the new culture. Given that the school context is the gateway to the new culture, it is essential to emphasize its socializing role, where inclusion can allow building a common culture.

**Keywords:** Acculturation stress, psychological well-being, immigration, students.

### RESUMO

Esta pesquisa avaliou o estresse devido à aculturação e o bem-estar psicológico em escolares latino-americanos em uma escola pública de Santiago do Chile. Uma escala de estresse aculturativo e uma escala de bem-estar psicológico foram aplicadas a 124 alunos entre 8 e 15 anos de idade ( $M=13,09$ ;  $DS=1,52$ ). Os resultados indicam que as dimensões da escala Estresse devido à aculturação que relatam alteração são Saudade do país de origem e Adaptação à escola, família e pares. Por sua vez, o bem-estar psicológico é alterado pelas dimensões Relações positivas e Domínio do ambiente. A população mais afetada é majoritariamente masculina e a população imigrante que reside no país há menos de 6 meses. Isso pode ser explicado por diferenças socioculturais entre o país de origem e o país de acolhimento e diferenças de exogrupo. Conclui-se que o estresse devido à aculturação e ao bem-estar psicológico é influenciado pela distância emocional que as crianças e jovens vivenciam em relação ao seu país de origem e a adaptação à nova cultura. Sendo o contexto escolar a porta de entrada para a nova cultura, é fundamental realçar o seu papel socializador, onde a inclusão pode permitir a construção de uma cultura comum.

**Palavras-chave:** Estresse devido à aculturação, bem-estar psicológico, imigração, estudantes.

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The study measures variables associated with acculturative stress in immigrant students. In Chile, there are not enough studies on the child and adolescent population and the psychological processes of migration.

### RESUMEN

Esta investigación evaluó estrés por aculturación y bienestar psicológico en escolares latinoamericanos en una escuela pública de Santiago de Chile. Se aplicó una escala de estrés aculturativo y otra de bienestar psicológico a 124 estudiantes entre 8 y 15 años ( $M=13,09$ ;  $DS=1,52$ ). Los resultados indican que las dimensiones de la escala Estrés por aculturación que reportan alteración son Añoranza con el país de origen y Adaptación a la escuela, familia y pares. A su vez, el bienestar psicológico se ve alterado por las dimensiones Relaciones positivas y Dominio del entorno. La población más afectada son principalmente los hombres y aquella población inmigrante que lleva menos de 6 meses residiendo en el país. Esto se podría explicar a causa de las diferencias socioculturales entre el país de origen y el país de acogida y las diferencias exgrupales. Se concluye que el estrés por aculturación y bienestar psicológico está influenciado por la distancia emocional que experimentan los niños, niñas y jóvenes respecto de su país de origen y la adaptación a la nueva cultura. Dado que el contexto escolar es la puerta de entrada a la nueva cultura, resulta fundamental enfatizar su rol socializador, donde la inclusión pueda permitir construir una cultura común.

**Palabras clave:** Estrés por aculturación, bienestar psicológico, inmigración, estudiantes.

## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of migration in Chile is a topic of great relevance not only because of the sustained increase of Latin American immigrants who have arrived in the country in recent decades, but also because of the sociocultural changes that society has experienced and the (re)accommodation that the community has undergone due to the flow of people and the new social practices that have emerged. Under this scenario, an interesting dimension to study is the acculturation process of immigrant children and youth, particularly, acculturation stress and psychological well-being, since this population has distinctive characteristics that are explained by the life cycle they are going through. In turn, it is relevant given the increase in the underage immigrant population in the country. According to the 2017 census, 788,939 migrants are in the age bracket between 0-14 years and 121,958 are between 15 and 20 years of age (Segovia Lagos & Rendon Zapata, 2020).

Different authors agree that acculturation stress arises when the demands of adapting to the new culture exceed people's abilities to cope with them. (Williams & Berry, 1991). Likewise, relational models have been established between acculturation stress and psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction ((Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987) which indicates that when individuals find themselves in new and diverse situations and these are valued as threatening or problematic, acculturative stress will emerge. When stressors are unsuccessfully coped with, the stress reaction will take place in the form of problems or symptoms of physical and psychological health distress that, if they persist, will result in long-term psychological adjustment difficulties (Sam & Berry, 2010). In this line, it has been suggested that acculturation stress and the presence of symptoms associated with psychological problems in immigrants depends largely on the sociocultural characteristics of the host country, the way in which they are received by the society and the possibilities of developing support networks in the new contexts. However, these aspects may be possible causes of stress, to a greater or lesser degree, depending also on other variables such as age, sex, education, level of acculturation, command of the local language, individual abilities and potentialities of the immigrant, increased vulnerability to social exclusion or marginalization, among others (Fajardo, Patiño, & Patiño, 2008; Berry, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Berry J. , *Psychology of Acculturation and Adaptation*. Applied Psychology, 1990).

Studies on acculturation and coping in school children are scarce and have been characterized by the deepening of curricular aspects and the teaching-learning process (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-García, 2014; Caqueo-Urizar, et al.). Those who have placed interest in studying coping and acculturation have concluded significant differences in the perception of the intensity of stressful events as a function of age (Segovia-Lagos, 2021; Seiffge-krenke, Weidemann, Fenter, Aegenheister, & Poebblau, 2001).

In the infant-juvenile population, the acculturation process can be complex - and even more so than in the adult population - due to the combination of a series of variables that act critically. On the one hand, the migratory experience can lead to a mourning process, understood as the extraordinarily significant loss of ties with the land and with the people who saw them grow up, to which are added the problems inherent to the migratory process such as the conditions of displacement, precariousness or rejection in the country of origin (González Calvo, 2005; Achotegui, 2000). In addition to the above, the psychosocial changes associated with the life cycle, i.e., childhood, adolescence and the transition from one stage to another. Among these psychosocial changes are the sense of belonging, the development of social and personal identity, the configuration of the self and self-esteem, among other processes, which can significantly complicate the process. Such experiences would not be innocuous from a psychosocial point of view and, therefore, migratory mourning would be a significant milestone in the lives of those who experience it (Boss, 2001). Under this scenario, the deepening of studies in this population would allow to investigate the process of adaptation to educational contexts and psychological well-being.

The literature points out that migrants live with fear and uncertainty of the present and future in the area of settlement, as they must adapt to a new culture, lifestyles, languages, traditions, as well as cope with difficulties to survive, the presence of feelings of loneliness and nostalgia for the loss of their home, language, and culture (De la Revilla, De los Rios Alvarez, Gómez García, & López Torres, 2011). Thus, this process can be differentiated by the age of the person and by the cultural characteristics of the children and youth. In some cases, this can cause high acculturation stress (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

Moreover, the bonding and social aspects are decisive in the acculturation of a child or young person. Regarding peer interaction, the migrant child or young person may be willing to relate to his/her peers, but if they do not welcome him/her and do not respect his/her diversity, it will be difficult for them to feel part of a community, increase their emotional well-being and ensure adequate psychological adaptation. Research around the topic points out that those who integrate better are those who have positive experiences in the host country, i.e., they were well received by their peers, in addition to experiencing academic success (Graff, 2018; Kirberg, 2006). Therefore, negative perceptions, prejudices, stereotypes and discriminatory experiences would affect the acculturation process by promoting the appearance of stress indicators of the immigrant population and, ultimately, affecting their psychological well-being.

The purpose of this research was to measure acculturation stress in the school context of Latin American immigrant children and youth in public schools in Santiago de Chile and to establish the relationship with psychological well-being and thus be able to answer the following research questions: what dimensions generate acculturation stress in immigrant students enrolled in public schools, and what is the relationship between acculturation stress and psychological well-being? which, in turn, betray evidence for approximations on the understanding of the migratory reality of this population, to generate finished knowledge on these matters that have been little studied in the region and to highlight the work of the schools in the sociocultural inclusion and well-being of the educational community.

### **Indicators of acculturation in the educational context: findings**

The evidence found in previous research confirms the theoretical assumptions regarding the complexity of the acculturation process in immigrant children and youth and concludes some relevant distinctions to consider. For example, in the cases of school-age immigrants in which there is little language proficiency, there are some relevant distinctions to consider (Ferrer, Palacio, Hoyos, & Madariaga, 2011) and when there is a difference in the type of education between the country of origin and the country of arrival, the process of social and curricular adaptation is more complex than in those cases where there are no significant barriers to communication (Setefoni, Stang, & Riedemann, 2016). This evidence highlights the importance of linking and establishing social networks in these contexts, where language skills are indispensable. Likewise, in the research of Castillo et al. (2016) concluded that the risks of experiencing greater stress due to acculturation decrease in those educational establishments where the migrant population and cultural diversity is greater, as this allows naturalizing differences. In addition, the existence of horizontal intergroup relations decreases the presence of prejudices (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011).

In adolescents, the presence of acculturation stress has been linked to the development of symptomatology associated with mental health problems (Belhadj & Koglin, 2014; Belhadj & Koglin, 2005). In line with the above, adolescents between 16 and 17 years of age experience greater acculturative stress than boys or girls between 12 and 13 years of age (Vega, Villagrán, & Nava, 2012).. Due to the background described above, some authors highlight the importance of acculturation and the absence of stress related to this process, especially in adolescence, because an adequate adaptation process decreases the probability of drug use (Miller, 2011), decreases indicators of poor mental health, suicidal ideation, and has an impact on self-esteem (Zayas, Bright, & Alvarez-Sanchez, 2009) in better academic performance (Coatsworth, Maldonado-Molina, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2005) and better bonding skills to function in diverse social contexts (Opedal, 2006).

On the other hand, Escobar, Trianes, Fernández-Baena and Miranda (2010) analyzed the association of the *sociometric acceptance* variable (understood as interpersonal relationships with peers) with various indices of socioemotional maladjustment, daily stress and coping style in children aged 9 to 12 years. The results showed significant negative correlations of the *sociometric acceptance* variable with the indices of *socioemotional maladjustment* and *daily stress*; in addition, a significant positive correlation was found with coping in 'relationship with others'. That is, the use of coping strategies such as seeking social, professional, spiritual support, seeking belonging, social action, and investing in close friends is associated with good *sociometric acceptance* (Vega, Villagrán, & Nava, 2012; Lazarus, 2000).

Finally, a crucial element in the acculturation and psychological well-being of children and youth is the family factor, specifically, parental support, participation, communication, supervision and protection during the adaptation process. These aspects become relevant as acculturation is a process that the entire family nucleus goes through simultaneously and the tools they possess to deal with it adequately will have an impact, to a greater or lesser extent, on the sense of belonging that they develop in the new sociocultural context (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014) . Research shows that family cohesion is related to lower levels of depression, behavioral problems in children and adolescents, and greater satisfaction with the new life in the host country (Bamaca-Colbert & Gayles, 2010).

Under this scenario, this study gathers evidence from the literature and deepens the generation of knowledge about the reality of migration in Chile, specifically in students of Latin American origin enrolled in schools in one of the municipalities with the highest presence of migrants.

## **METHODS**

This was a quantitative research, with a non-experimental, descriptive and cross-sectional design. The quantitative and descriptive approach is characterized by the measurement of variables which, in turn, allows the analysis of the properties, traits and characteristics of a population of interest. At the same time, being descriptive, it seeks to establish trends in results in order to generate knowledge about the phenomena being studied (Hernández-Sampieri, Fernández Collado, & Baptista Lucio, 2010).

## Participants

Regarding the sample design, it is indicated that it was non-probabilistic by convenience, since the sample used was available for the study through a collaboration agreement between the Municipal Education Directorate and the research team. Likewise, it is relevant to specify some data that allowed establishing criteria of statistical and territorial representativeness. In the first place, it is indicated that *Estación Central*, the commune where this study was carried out, occupies the fourth place in the Metropolitan Region in number of Latin American immigrant inhabitants, estimated at 22935, which is equivalent to 4.71% of the total number of immigrants in Santiago (Mundaca, Fernandez, & Vicuña, 2017). Secondly, of the total immigrant population in the commune, 2497 are of school age (primary and secondary) which represents 29.7% of the student population of that commune. Thirdly, of the total number of school immigrants, 529 are between seventh, eighth and first middle school in municipal establishments of the commune (Fernández, 2018). In this sense, the sample was focused on these school levels as the objective was the measurement of acculturation stress and psychological well-being in boys and girls between 8 and 15 years of age. The sample consisted of 124 immigrant students born in different Latin American countries, which represents 23.4% of the total number of immigrant students in school at these levels. It is also noted that the survey was carried out in 6 of the 12 schools under municipal administration. Thus, the study allowed a focus on 20% of the target population and a territorial representativeness of 50%, since it worked with half of the available educational centers.

Finally, it is specified that for the calculation of the sample size it was considered as a variable that the immigrant students had not been residing in Chile for more than 18 months, since the time of arrival in the host country is a relevant factor for the measurement of acculturation stress. The average length of residence of the students was 11 months.

## Instruments

To evaluate acculturation stress, the Urzúa Acculturation Stress Scale was applied (Urzúa, Caqueo-Urizar, & Flores, 2019). This instrument consists of 13 Likert-type response items that evaluate 3 dimensions, which present adequate reliability indices: Homesickness and differences with the country of origin (.79), Adaptation in school, family and peer relationships (.89) and, Experiences of discrimination (.84). The global scale presents adequate goodness-of-fit indices (CFI=.98;TLI=.976;RMSEA=.052). We also applied Ryff's Well-Being Scale (1989) adapted by Van Dierendonck (2004) and translated into Spanish by Diaz, Rodríguez, Blanco, Moreno, Gallardo, Valle and Van Dierendonck (2006) which evaluates 6 dimensions that can be linked to the acculturation process, which have an adequate reliability index: Self-acceptance (.83), Positive Relationships (.81), Autonomy (.73), Mastery of the Environment (.71), Purpose in Life (.83) and Personal Growth (.68). The theoretical model of the global scale presents adequate goodness-of-fit indices (CFI=0.95;NNFI=.94; SRMR=.060). Table 1 shows a synthesis of the dimensions of the instruments used for this study.

**Table 1** Dimensions of the instruments for data collection

Acculturation Stress Scale	
Dimension	Features
Homesickness and differences with the country of origin	Composed of four items focused on establishing to what extent students miss their country of origin ("I miss the friends I had in my country") and find it different from the country where they currently reside ("I think this country is very different from mine").
Adjustment in school, family and peer relationships	The seven items consider those that focus on the adaptation that children and adolescents have to their school ("It is hard for me to adapt to school"), family ("My family fights more now than before [in my country]") and with their peers ("I do not get along well with the children in this country").
Experiences of discrimination	It comprises six items that address different experiences in which participants may feel discriminated against ("Sometimes they look at me badly because I am a foreigner").
Ryff Well-Being Scale	
Self-acceptance	Positive evaluation of oneself and one's life.
Positive relationships with other people	Developing and maintaining quality and trusting relationships with others.
Autonomy	Sense of personal self-determination.
Mastery of the environment	Ability to effectively direct one's own life and environment to satisfy needs and desires.
Purpose in life	Belief that one's life has purpose and meaning.
Personal growth	Sense of continuous growth and development as a person.

Note: own elaboration based on Urzúa et al., 2019; Ryff, 1989

## Procedures

The fieldwork began with the signing of a collaboration agreement between the research team and the *Estación Central* Municipal Education Office, the approval of the ethics committee of the Universidad Mayor Chile, the obtaining of

informed consent from parents and informed consent from the participants, and the application of the instruments. This work was carried out between May and November 2019.

### Analysis plan

The data collected were imported into Microsoft Excel for organization and debugging; it was subsequently analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version-24. An initial univariate analysis of all variables was carried out to evaluate the sample distribution and later reliability analyses and descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were performed to fulfill the objectives of this study. Specifically, nonparametric tests were used since atypical behavior was observed in the sample ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## RESULTS

First, a sociodemographic characterization of the sample was carried out and a profile of the immigrant population, the object of this research, was constructed. Secondly, descriptive analyses were performed on the variables of interest (mean and standard deviation): acculturation stress and psychological well-being. Third, statistical analyses were performed to establish the relationship between acculturation stress and psychological well-being. Non-parametric analyses were performed after checking the assumptions of normality, independence and homoscedasticity for each of the tests applied: for the comparison of means, the independent samples k test and Mann-whitney U test were used, while for the analysis of correlations, the Spearman statistic and a curvilinear regression model were used.

### Characterization of the sample

The sample consisted of 56 girls (45.2%) and 68 boys (54.8%), with a mean age of 13 years (SD 1.520). All the participants were enrolled in one of the six educational establishments under municipal administration and were studying between sixth grade (elementary school) and first middle school (high school) and are considered to be adolescents.

Regarding the country of origin, it is indicated that all participants are Latin American and that the proportion of students according to their country of origin is consistent with the communal statistics, which show that the immigrants residing in the commune of *Estación Central* are, in the first place, of Venezuelan origin, in second place, Colombians and, in third place, Peruvians. Table 2 shows the distribution of the sample according to country of origin.

**Table 2** Distribution of the sample by nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
Venezuelan	84	67.7%
Colombian	12	9.7%
Haitian	5	4%
Peruvian	12	9.7%
Dominican	6	4.8%
Ecuadorian	2	1.6%
Bolivian	1	0.8%
Paraguayan	1	0.8%
Brazil	1	0.8%
Total	124	100%

Note: Prepared by author with research data

It is important to point out that the sample is not heterogeneous in terms of origin. The sample is composed of 67.7% Venezuelan children and young people. However, the sample is specific with respect to the target population, in that it focuses the data collection on an immigrant child and youth population and is homogeneous in terms of gender distribution. These characteristics allow us to focus the analysis on a specific population and thus generate in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon in relation to the subjects of the study.

### Acculturation stress and psychological well-being

Regarding the measurement of **Acculturation Stress**, significant differences were identified between children and



adolescents ( $t=2.119$ ;  $p=.036$ ) who had been living in the country for less than 6 months ( $M=19.91$ ;  $SD=8.942$ ) and those who had been living in the country for more than 6 months ( $M=11.06$ ;  $SD=7.537$ ). This would indicate how critical the first stage of settlement in the host country is.

Likewise, it is found that the factor *Homesickness and differences with the country of origin* is the most affected ( $M=9.24$ ;  $SD=4.056$ ), in comparison with the factor *Adaptation in school, family and relationship with peers* ( $M=3.71$ ;  $SD=4.872$ ) and the factor *Experiences of discrimination* ( $M=3.45$ ,  $SD=4.689$ );  $SD=4.689$ ) so it can be deduced that the population of immigrant children and youth report stress indicators that are related to the feeling of missing the country of origin and, specifically the social networks they had there, as well as missing characteristics of the country of origin that probably differ from the characteristics of the host country. In descriptive terms, 50% of the population believes that Chile is very different from their country of origin, 58.9% say they miss their country of origin and 72.6% miss the friends they had there.

Likewise, when comparing the means in the factor *homesickness and differences with the country of origin*, significant differences were found by sex. Boys were more upset ( $M=10.57$ ;  $SD=4.137$ ) than girls ( $M=7.01$ ;  $SD=$ ), specifically in their perception of the differences between the host country and their country of origin ( $t = -3.027$ ;  $p = .020$ ).

On the other hand, a significant correlation was found between the factor *Experiences of discrimination* and the factor *Adaptation in school, family and relationship with peers* ( $r^2 = .878$ ;  $p = .002$ ) and an explained variance model of 76.8% ( $R^2=.768$ ;  $p=0.003$ ). This finding allows us to point out that the difficulty of some subgroups of the sample in adapting to their close environments would be mediated by experiences that could be configured as discriminatory.

Regarding the **Psychological Well-Being** scale, it is noted that the dimensions reporting the lowest scores are "*Mastery of the environment*" ( $M=16.97$ ;  $SD=3.992$ ) and "*positive relationships*" ( $M=19.28$ ;  $SD=2.872$ ). This means that students report difficulty in the personal ability to create favorable environments for themselves and difficulty in maintaining stable social relationships. In turn, the dimensions that present greater well-being are "*Autonomy*" ( $M=20.49$ ;  $SD=3.138$ ), "*Purposes in life*" ( $M=24.55$ ;  $SD=4.674$ ), "*Personal growth*" ( $M=23.26$ ;  $SD=2.911$ ) and "*Self-acceptance*" ( $M=22.48$ ;  $SD=3.933$ ), which would indicate that they possess an adequate perception of themselves and are capable of sustaining their own individuality.

In descriptive terms, well-being is affected in the social sphere and in the area of affective relationships. 45.2% of the sample perceives that most people have more friends than themselves and 39.7% indicate that they do not have people who want to listen to them. 43% indicate that they have not experienced many close and trusting relationships and 36.8% indicate that they feel lonely because of the lack of friends.

### **Correlation between acculturation stress and psychological well-being.**

Regarding the relationship between indicators of **Acculturation Stress and Psychological Well-being**, it is indicated that correlations were observed between some items of the *homesickness and differences with the country of origin* dimension (*I think that this country is very different from mine*) of the acculturation stress scale and the *positive relationships* dimension (*I often feel lonely because I have few close friends*) of the psychological well-being scale ( $r = .411$ ;  $p = .021$ ); likewise, the items of the *adaptation to school, family and peer relationship* dimension (*it is very difficult for me to make new friends*) of the acculturation stress scale and the *positive relationships* dimension (*I often feel lonely because I have few close friends*) of the psychological well-being scale correlate ( $r = .406$ ;  $p = .000$ ) and with *positive relationships* (*most people have more friends than I do*) of the same scale ( $r = .440$ ;  $p = .007$ ).

Finally, correlations were obtained between items of the *discrimination experiences* dimension (*I am sometimes looked down upon because I am a foreigner*) of the acculturation stress scale and the *positive relationships* dimension (*I often feel lonely because I have few close friends*) of the psychological well-being scale ( $r = .514$ ;  $p = .000$ ) and the item of the *positive relationships* dimension (*I do not have many people who want to listen to me*) of the same scale ( $r = .535$ ;  $p = .009$ ). These findings allow us to point out that the main barriers in the acculturative process are related to exogroup differences, which would lead to situations of discrimination and difficulties in establishing social relationships, which in turn has an impact on psychological well-being.

## **DISCUSSION**

The literature highlights the importance of studying the acculturation process of immigrant children and young people, since this population has particular characteristics that, if ignored, can generate negative effects on them and have repercussions on their process of adaptation to a new culture. (Kirberg, 2006; Sanchez Márquez & López Miguel, 2008; De la Revilla, De los Rios Alvarez, Gómez García, & López Torres, 2011; Urzua, Heredia, & Caqueo-Urizar, 2016). This study corroborates some findings found in previous research (Eyzaguirre, Aguirre, & Blanco, 2019; Caqueo-Urizar, et al., 2014; Miller, 2011; Belhadj & Koglin, 2005), specifically, it identifies specificities about the factors affected in acculturation stress and

psychological well-being in a population of immigrant students, as well as the particularities of the subpopulation in which greater negative effects on their psychosocial well-being are observed.

In turn, this research contributes with exploratory results regarding the reality of public schools in a commune of Santiago de Chile, which have undergone a dizzying transformation during the last decade in terms of cultural diversity and migrant presence. Particularly, on the well-being of immigrant students, considering that there is scarce Chilean evidence on these matters in the infant-juvenile population. Although this study does not allow generalizing its findings, the exploratory character of the research provides an approximation on the psychological well-being of immigrant students who are inserted into the socio-educational space of the country.

Firstly, the results indicate a difference in the indicators of Acculturation Stress according to the time of residence in the host country, with those children and young people who have been in the country for less than 6 months being the most affected. The evidence confirms this trend and highlights the importance of interventions in those socializing spaces where children and young people come into contact with the new culture, such as the school (Valtolina, 2019). Along these lines, the school context becomes fundamental in the processes of intercultural inclusion (Mera, Martínez de Taboada, & Costalat-Founeau, 2014).

Further, the most affected dimensions of acculturation stress are "Homesickness and differences with the country of origin" and "Adaptation in the school, family and relationship with peers". In turn, males present higher stress indicators than females. This could be explained by sociocultural differences between the country of origin and the host country. Evidence indicates that contact with a new culture is a complex process and exogroup differences increase the meaning of uprooting, the loss of daily support networks and distance from family and friends (Urzua, Heredia, & Caqueo-Urizar, 2016) and, therefore, may involve greater adaptive effort. Added to this, this study suggests that the dimensions of psychological well-being that are most affected are "Positive relationships" and "Mastery of the environment", which is consistent with the difficulty of adaptation and emotional distance with the country of origin.

It is precisely the sociocultural differences that could explain the difficulty in establishing support networks and intimate relationships and, in turn, adequate development in the immediate environment. Previous research indicates that the precariousness of support networks and the scarcity of social interactions with others would be linked to a greater level of acculturative stress (Ferrer, Palacio, Hoyos, & Madariaga, 2011; Taylor & Repetti, 1997).

As for the greater affection in males than females, although there is still not enough evidence to declare it, this could be explained by cultural and psychosocial characteristics of the life cycle that this infantile-juvenile population goes through (Boss, 2001). Future research should delve deeper into understanding the causes of this difference.

On the other hand, as noted in previous sections, *Estación Central* is the fourth commune of the Metropolitan Region of Santiago where the largest immigrant population resides, has the highest school enrollment of students from other countries and even in many educational centers, the immigrant population is equal or greater than the native population, so that this context could be facilitating the presence and naturalization of cultural diversity and, in turn, explains the low change in the factor "Experiences of discrimination" of the acculturation stress scale, contrary to what is shown by the scientific evidence (Urzua, Heredia, & Caqueo-Urizar, 2016).

Notwithstanding the above, it should be noted that despite the low alteration of the discrimination factor, a relationship was observed between this and the factor adaptation in school, family and peer relationship. The variance explained model allows us to conclude that, in some cases, discrimination experiences affect adaptation to the new culture. Some authors argue that episodes of discrimination and perceived rejection generate barriers to adaptation and the establishment of social networks, affect the psychosocial development of immigrants, and feed back into exogroup difference (Seiffge-Krenke, Weidemann, Fenter, Aegenheister, & Poebblau, 2001). This is even more important in the child and adolescent population where bullying is a complex phenomenon that has serious repercussions on the development of those who suffer it (Morales-Ramírez & Villalobos-Cordero, 2017).

It is likely that, as in previous studies, the surveyed adaptive demands experienced by the migrant minors in this sample in Chile are related to conflicts in the proximal context where they are currently developing (Ayón & Philbin, 2017). In this line of argument it becomes necessary to deepen the role of schools in intercultural inclusion since the degree of development in this matter could explain the alteration in the Positive Relationships factor of the Psychological Well-being scale and in the Homesickness factor and differences with the country of origin and the Adaptation factor in the school, family and relationship with peers of the Acculturation Stress scale.

For this reason, it is important to situate the school system as a socializing space, where inclusion can build a common culture. In this regard, future research should evaluate the degree of development of interculturality in those schools where there is a greater presence of immigrants and identify predictor variables for the construction of spaces of well-being and development of intercultural school communities. Table 3 shows a synthesis of the results obtained.

**Table 3** Summary of results

Factors associated with acculturation stress	Dimensions affected
Time of residence less than 6 months in host country	1. Homesickness and differences with the country of origin 2. Adjustment in school, family and peer relationships 3. Positive relationships
Male gender	4. Mastery of the environment 5. Experiences of discrimination

Note: Prepared by author with research data

In light of the results, this study allows us to answer the main research questions about the level of acculturation stress experienced by foreign students and the dimensions that are affected in this process.

## CONCLUSIONS

In light of the results of this study, it is concluded that acculturation stress and psychological well-being are mediated by the emotional distance experienced by children and young people with respect to their country of origin and the adaptation to the new culture and the establishment of intimate and positive relationships. This could be explained by sociocultural differences and exogroup differences with the host country. Schools are configured as a fundamental socializing space for the approach to inclusion and the construction of a common culture.

One limitation of this study is the low sample distribution by nationality, as heterogeneity is not achieved. This would have allowed us to evaluate differences in the acculturation process and psychological well-being and to approach possible sociocultural causes. Future research should consider this variable, as well as the age variable to achieve greater heterogeneity of age ranges and to deepen segmented analyses. In the same line, given the sample size, it is necessary to evaluate the findings from an exploratory perspective. At the same time, it invites the development of future research with a larger sample size in order to corroborate the data found in this study.

On the other hand, in light of the findings, it is necessary to delve deeper from a qualitative perspective into the main factors that explain acculturation stress and psychological well-being. In turn, this study does not consider some contextual variables such as the level of development of intercultural approaches in educational spaces, nor does it consider factors associated with the culture of socio-educational spaces. Attention to these variables would make it possible to develop lines of argument with respect to the results presented. Future research could focus on establishing the relationship between interculturality indexes in educational spaces and levels of acculturation stress in immigrant students.

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B. data research and statistical analysis:	70%	0%	30%
C. elaboration of figures and tables:	40%	40%	20%
D. drafting, reviewing and writing of the text:	40%	40%	20%
E. selection of bibliographical references	40%	40%	20%
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