Chapter-7

Summary and Conclusion

This study is grounded on the socio-psychological dynamics of caste based discrimination in Indian context. The novice attempt is made to know and explore the extent of association between discrimination appraisal and mental health problems among the students of higher education. The purpose behind conducting this research was to answer the questions like- Does discrimination of any kind contributes to the mental health problems? What are the contributing factors in the perception as well as experiences of discrimination during higher education? Do socio-demographic factors have a significant role in initiation of discrimination? And consequently, do they have an impact on the overall mental well-being of students pursuing higher education?

Considering our society which is completely characterized by the practice of caste and caste system and thereby on the basis of this social institution, the unequal distribution of economic, social, educational and political power have fascinated gamut of researchers to understand the basic phenomenon of Indian social reality. Stratification based on caste has given birth to the social categorisation of certain communities into the SC and OBC category which are socially, educationally, economically and politically backward. Since beginning it is noted that the population proportion of these communities constitute more than three quarter of the total population of India. However the representation of students of these communities is still abysmal in higher education besides several efforts and support mechanism provided by the government. Even if somehow they reach to the higher education; the retention rate among them at this level of education is highly vulnerable. In addition, studies reveal the practice of caste based discrimination in higher education that may lead to mental health related problems. Therefore it was proposed to undertake this study and to know the nature and forms of discrimination among students. At large; as it is known that caste based discrimination is prevalent in the society in general and in education in particular.

Also this research is conducted in continuation to the M. Phil. research whereby only OBC students were covered. The reported experiences of discrimination by the OBC
students provided so many incidents through which they have gone through severe mental and emotional disturbances which had debilitating impact on mental health. In absence of systematic studies, the findings of previous study demanded to add a mental health perspective to it and explore the relationship with perceived and experienced discrimination. Interaction with students of another category and especially the general category (non SC) during M. Phil. field work provided insights and astonishing experiences with glimpse that there are probabilities of discrimination experiences among these students too; which would give a different perspective and dimension to it. Therefore in this study the students from all categories are taken into consideration.

Discrimination refers to the harmful actions directed towards the person or groups who are the target of prejudice. Discrimination may take place on the basis of one’s belonging to a specific religion, denomination, particular tribe, caste, race etc. Thus in Indian context, discrimination implies holding prejudiced behaviour against any particular individual because of his/her caste location through upholding the regressive, unequal and undemocratic characteristics of caste.

Mental health is a central determinant of quality of life and is an expression of our emotions and signifies a successful adaptation to a range of demands. Mental health can be seen as a continuum, where an individual's mental health may have many different possible values. Mental wellness is generally viewed as a positive attribute, such that a person can reach enhanced levels of mental health, even if they do not have any diagnosable health problem. A holistic model of mental health generally includes concepts based upon anthropological, educational, psychological, religious and sociological angles, as well as theoretical perspectives from personality, social, clinical, health and developmental psychology. Multiple social, psychological, and biological factors determine the level of mental health of a person at any point of time. For example, persistent socio-economic pressures are recognized risks to mental health of individuals and the communities.

In international context, there are several studies based on the racial discrimination that have revealed that the discrimination is closely linked to stress and mental health. Discrimination of any kind includes bias, stereotyping, fear, embarrassment, anger, and
rejection or avoidance, violation of basic human rights and freedom, denial of opportunities for education and training, and denial of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights (Klonoff & Landrine 1995, 1996). Perceived discrimination or prejudices are recognised as stressors that are linked to lowered mental health for those who come across such kind of experiences (Clark, et al 1999). The impact of stress on health is mediated by numbers of important genetic, environmental, social and personality variables. Stress tolerance is strengthened by extending social support, sense of control, confidence level, attitude and outlook, strong capability to deal with emotions and knowledge.

It is also noticed that the relationship between stress and mental health is a complex one that involves all components of environmental, social, economic, emotional and cognitive factors. There is no one point at which someone goes from being “stressed out” to “mentally ill”. Stress interacts with mental health and contributes to several psychological disorders. A psychological disorder is characterized by inappropriate or maladaptive cognitive (thinking), emotional and behavioural functioning (Brannon & Feist 1992). Depression and Anxiety are the two most common examples of psychological disorders and also both are the major determinants of one’s overall mental health status.

In conclusion, the previous researches of reputed international realm, it is found that due to felt or experienced discrimination one may go into the hands of social stress, depression, emotional upheaval, race based traumatic stress, lower level of memory recall and poor concentration at work and personal life. It is also true that discrimination induces stress, and both have greater impact on mental as well as physical health. The impact of discrimination could be manifold and may overlap from the physical level to psychological level. There are number of impacts and consequences of discrimination such as- mental block, stress and tension, frustration and behavioural problems, lower self-esteem, lower creativity, feelings of humiliation, inferiority complex, escapism, ‘we’ and ‘they’ feelings, poor performance, crisis and conflict and distortions of self perceptions.
Human resource is a prominent asset among all other kinds of resources of a nation to determine the overall economy of that nation. Within the human resource of a nation, the energy, potential, power, capability, enthusiasm and endurance of youth are highly important. The youth energy or youth power can bring any instant revolution to any field, which is required for the development of a nation. Youth are the assets of the future for the development of nations. To channelize the youth energy in the right direction for the right cause and the welfare of the society by protecting the same from the existing social discrimination and other traditional dogmatic practices, the leaders of the nation are fully responsible to safeguard it. Social practices like discrimination based on race or colour in international context and practices of discrimination based on caste in Indian context; are very harmful for the well-being and mental health of youth in particular and human being in general.

The study has the sample of unique kind which consists of equal number of students from each community, i.e. SC, OBC and General. The sample was drawn from the four universities situated in different regions of Uttar Pradesh and well known as the hub of higher education in their region. Out of four universities, three are state universities and one is central university. In the sample, the representation of students from all caste/category and from each course is equal. Thus the total sample size is 720 because from each university 180 students have been selected inclusive of equal number of students from B.A. (120), B.Sc. (120), B. Com (120), M.A. (120), M.Sc. (120) and M. Com (120) courses. The multistage-stratified-systematic sampling technique was used in order to draw the sample from the universities. Some of these universities; besides general courses of Natural Sciences and Social Sciences also have Technical, Advanced and Applied courses like Agricultural Management, Business Management, Applied Clinical Psychology, Applied Economics and Finance and Applied courses in Home Sciences. It is interesting to note that the average age of respondents is 20 years and representation of male respondents are 75.6 percent (544) of total sample, which is extremely more than the female respondents who are only 24.4 percent (176). Further, the representation of students from urban background (53.8 percent [387]) is little higher than the representation of students (46.3 percent [333]) from rural background. The majority of students (95 percent) belong to Hindu religion and around 42.1 percent (303)
are residing with parents, 27.6 percent (199) in the hostel, 27.4 percent (197) in the rented rooms and rest of them 2.9 percent (27) live with their relatives to pursue higher education. It would be more interesting to note that personal interviews are taken from 35 students of a university. Out of them, 80 percent (28) are male and 20 percent (7) are female and caste wise distribution is 31.4 percent (11) belong to General category, 25.7 percent (9) are from OBC, 40 percent (14) are from SC community and one is from ST community. They are also studying into different courses and belong to different socio-economic backgrounds.

For data collection, survey method was adopted and with the help of predesigned questionnaire data was collected. The questionnaire contains standardized scales and inventories for seeking information about discrimination perception, stress, and anxiety and depression appraisal. For discrimination perception the ‘Perceived Discrimination Scale for Students, for anxiety and depression the ‘Beck Anxiety Inventory and Beck Depression Inventory’ and for stress appraisal the ‘The Stress Checklist’ have been used. All these tools are standardized and validated in the Indian context for the population of students studying in higher education. These tools have high reliability and strong validity for the attribute intending to measure.

The study design is a cross-sectional correlation in nature. However it also attempts to explore the dynamics and nature of discrimination in higher education by using the reported incidents of interviews as the qualitative data. Thus broadly in this research, it has been attempted to develop strong scientific understanding about stress and mental health related problems among the students while pursuing higher education and their correlation with discrimination prevalent at large in Indian society. Therefore, it is necessary to have a scientific exploration to understand the pattern of health and mental health status of students belonging to different communities while they are pursuing their higher education. The collected data is analysed with the help of SPSS software and thematic analysis is done for the qualitative data.
7.1. Socio-Demographic and Educational Background

For determination of socio-economic status of the family, the educational levels of parents as well as occupation and family monthly income have been considered for analysis. It is revealed that 30.7 percent (221) of the students are from the families; where the occupation of the father is agriculture and education of father ranges from illiteracy to the graduate level. A larger 37.6 percent (271) of students belongs to the families where father’s occupation is government service. Around 12.9 percent (93) fathers are in white collar jobs which is categorised as group-A and 24.7 percent (178) fathers are in government jobs categorised as group-B. Further, 7.1 percent (51) fathers are businessman and 8.2 percent (59) fathers are engaged in the traditional business. Fathers’ education level also ranges from High-School to Post-Graduation level. About 3.6 percent (26) fathers are illiterate, 8.2 percent (59) are educated till elementary, 13.9 percent (100) did High-school, 19.4 percent (140) did till intermediate, 32.1 percent (231) completed under-graduation, 18.8 percent (135) post-graduation and 1.5 percent (11) is educated till PhD. Level. In comparison to the occupation and education of fathers, the education of mothers is relatively less and it is found that majority of mothers 21 percent (151) are illiterate, 9 percent (65) are educated till primary, 10.1 percent (73) till elementary and 20 percent (144) did education till High-School. A good number of mothers around 14.4 percent (104) also reached to tertiary and 23.1 percent (166) achieved higher education (graduation and post-graduation) whereas only four mothers could reach to the PhD. Level. It is surprising to note that 92.8 percent (668) of mothers are engaged in the household works besides having achieved higher education. Only 5.4 percent (39) of mothers are working and of them most are teachers at the primary, junior or intermediate colleges. Therefore Indian society still needs to provide more space for women to come up in the education, occupation and other social pedestal to ensure holistic development of the society. Monthly income-wise distribution indicates that-21.8 percent (157) students are from the families where monthly income is up to ₹ 3000. Further 22.6 percent (163) belong to ₹ 3001- 8000, 27.5 percent (198) are from ₹ 8001-20000, 23.6 percent (170) are from ₹ 20000-40000 and only 4.4 percent (32) are from the families where monthly income is ₹ 40001 to ₹ 1,50,000. The monthly income of family members ranges from ₹ 1500 to ₹ 1,50,000 which means there is large income disparity.
However it is crucial to note that the majority (50 percent) of students comes from the families of middle income and lower income which ranges from ₹ 3000 to ₹ 20,000.

Educational performance in general is found to be good. Most of the respondents performed well and scored good percentage of marks at their high-school and intermediate levels. However, their performance at higher education level seems to be average. Till the intermediate level most of them received education in Hindi medium both from privately managed as well as government schools / colleges. On the other hand it is worthwhile to note that at graduation level all of them are studying in government colleges or universities with English as a medium of instruction which may have affected their performance. It is found that the migration towards the urban areas was increased as the progression of education was growing towards the higher level. Therefore all of them have taken their graduation and post-graduation education from the colleges or universities which are located in the cities and urban areas.

In order to ascertain the physiological health of the students some measures of height, weight and blood pressure are recorded with the help of a meter scale, weighing scale and electronic sphygmomanometer. It is found that the average height of students is about 165.68cm and average weight is 59.95 Kg which are near to optimal requirements. In general the blood pressure was found optimal among the students. The BMI is little lower than the ideal BMI for the Asian Population. However it is noticed that the mean arterial pressure among the students is normal and supporting the bodily maintenance.

7.2. Analytical Introspection: The Discrimination, Stress and Mental Health Problems

It is attempted to capture the analytical essence of discrimination perception, stress appraisal, anxiety and depression episodes as variables of research to establish the relationship among them. In this chapter the contributed variance of socio-demographic factors on each variable is analysed with the help of advanced and rigorous statistical tools. It is revealed that among the respondents the stress problems are highly prevalent and psychological stress problems are more frequent of which poor concentration, obsessive thoughts, self criticism, boredom, irritability, worries, and nervousness are on
Although there are some physiological and behavioral stresses problems but lower than the psychological stress problems.

It is estimated that more than 24 percent of students of the total sample fall in the category that has high level of stress appraisal. Similarly with regard to discrimination perception it is noted that about 25 percent of students of the total sample have high and extreme level of perceived discrimination. Almost all of them accepted that because of the English language they feel more discriminated during studies. In the case of anxiety appraisal, it is also explored that more than 21 percent of students of the total sample have moderate and high level of anxiety. Likewise is the case with depression feelings, where more than 8 percent of students fall into the category of severe and extreme depression appraisal. However it is also true in the case of depression appraisal that more than 21 percent of the total surveyed students have moderate to extreme level of depression. This prevalence of psychological problems reveals that there is poor mental health among the students which requires the immediate right and appropriate interventions.

From the regression analysis it is revealed that discrimination perception is strongly as well as significantly positively correlated with stress, anxiety and depression appraisal. It is found that socio-demographic factors altogether contribute 23.7 percent variance to the discrimination perception whereas degree of perceived discrimination explained greater variance on the stress, anxiety and depression level among the students during higher education along with other relevant socio-demographic variables. In regression analysis it is revealed that 20.7 percent variance on stress, 31.1 percent variance on anxiety and 28.2 percent variance on depression is explained by the perceived discrimination and socio-demographic factors. It is strongly revealed that Income and educational status of family emerged as the important factors to determine the level of discrimination and related mental health problems among students.
7.3. Perception and Experiences of Discrimination and the Mental Health

Here in this section of the thesis, the reported experiences as well as perceptions of discriminations are analyzed thematically which are full of insightful descriptions, thought provoking concerns and grounded realities of discrimination and its impact on the personal, social and academic spheres of students who are pursuing higher education. By analysing qualitative data it is broadly found that students from poor-socioeconomic background have problems in making decisions before joining particular course and the decisions are influenced by the general trend of other students, suggestions and advises from significant others in the families and relatives with prime role of financial concern. It is true that several hindrances like financial crisis, health conditions of family members, discrimination feelings, adjustment problems and personal physical and mental health problems are detrimental for the gaps in the study. It is found that experiences of discrimination occur because of caste favouritism in the education, discriminatory behaviour of teachers, administrators and fellow students, groupism in the hostel, regional dominance of students, lack of opportunity in the extra-curricular activities. In addition, caste laden comments, subtle practice of untouchability, status of living standard in the class and in the hostel and somewhat degree of discriminatory behaviour of authorities are responsible for discrimination feelings in higher education. Reasonably most of them accepted that English language problem is the basis behind everyone’s feelings of discrimination and this lacuna of knowledge plays dual roles- firstly as a contributing factor in the experiences of discrimination and secondly as the factor for poor performance in the academics and drawing a line of segregation and demarcation.

Reservation in admission and other social welfare schemes have proved to be the promoter of discrimination feelings among the students. Those who are the beneficiaries of it are being commented, demarcated, disregarded and degraded on the ground of utilizing these facilities leisurely whereas non-beneficiaries felt discriminated by thinking that certain groups of students are being promoted, supported and uplifted by the government intentionally though all of them are equal. This is significant and the core finding of the present study.
To be associated with the students of own community gives security feelings, emotional bondage, courage for retention in higher education and protection from external threats like dominance of others and to be discriminated. This is core essence of study and is brought out very significantly from the thematic analysis. It is also found that almost everyone has some sense of either perceptions or experiences of discrimination. The respondents reported that discrimination feelings are obnoxious, bitter, abominable, shuttering, loathe and disgusting. These feelings are contributing more on poor concentration, inferior feelings, feelings of ‘we’ and ‘they’, ‘I’ and ’Me’, doubts, confusions, obsessive recurring thoughts, nostalgic feelings, distortions of self-esteem, self concepts and self efficacies with frequent mood disturbances and mental health problems. These feelings are threatening the well being at personal and psychological levels and affecting achievement at personal, social and academic levels while pursuing higher education.

7.4. Major Findings

Based on the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data certain patterns have emerged which are valid and significant for mentioning here. These are the major findings of the research and the specific findings are given below-

1- In the process of attainment of high school and intermediate education certain insightful patterns have emerged that majority of SC and OBC students pursued their education from rural based schools, primarily managed by government and in Hindi medium whereas from the beginning the majority of general category students completed their education from urban based schools managed by private entrepreneurs and through English medium. This is a clear disparity of caste and accessibility to the quality education.

2- There is a specific pattern between academic performance and caste. It is found that in the academic performance from primary to graduation level, the students of SC and OBC community scored lower percentage of marks at every examination whereas general category students scored good and higher marks. Average academic performance is associated with majority of SC and OBC students while
high and good performance is associated with general category students. Therefore this pattern suggests that in general, at every level, the poor performance in academic is associated with the lower caste students whereas higher performance is associated with the upper caste students.

3- The monthly income of the family is significantly negatively correlated with the perception of discrimination which suggests that lower the income of the family, the higher the perception of discrimination during higher education and vice-versa. However a greater amount of variance in the discrimination perception is explained by the monthly income of the family, caste, affiliation to rural background and specific occupation of father. In other words these factors are more responsible for the discrimination perception among the students while pursuing higher education. In addition it has been found that it is the discrimination perception which is significantly responsible for the appraisal of anxiety, stress and depression because explained variance of discrimination perception is always true and significant for predicting these mental health related problems. Hence it is proved that there are mental health related problems among the students due to discrimination during higher education.

4- It is also revealed that English language problems have emerged as the key factor in the perception of discrimination as well as experiences of discrimination. It has a dual role to play in the discrimination- first the individual does not know it properly and therefore feel inferior to others, and secondly, individual believes that because of English language one is performing poorly in education. It also appears from the analysis that coming from the rural and the Hindi medium background, majority of the students have some personality drawback. These drawbacks are seen in terms of poor English language, poor communication skills, low level of confidence, low level of awareness and rustic mannerisms which make them, feel discriminated in the educational settings and prevent them from taking part in academic and extra-curricular activities and force them to be isolated.

5- Reservation and other welfare schemes are found as the source of discrimination among the beneficiaries and also among the non-beneficiaries of it. Beneficiaries
are intentionally targeted and are being victimized by passing sarcastic caste laden comments because of availing these benefits. Non-beneficiaries feel discriminated because of deprived feelings of unavailability and jealousy from intentional support of government targeted to educationally and socially backward students.

6- In educational situations, the interactions between students and teachers are very relevant. It is the teacher’s behaviour, which can facilitate or inhibit the learning process of students. In this study majority of respondents experienced both subtle and open discrimination by teachers especially by upper caste teachers. Majority of lower caste students have experienced discrimination by teachers in the forms of biased grading, sarcastic caste based comments, partiality in good opportunities and biased behaviour towards them. It is true that the trivial to intentional discrimination by teachers pushed students to realize the caste based stigma attached to them along with mental pressure, future anxiety and distrust towards the teachers, which in turn lowered down the educational performance and achievements.

7- It appears that in the educational settings, the behaviour of fellow students and peers give the strength and social support. However, most of the times discriminatory attitude or behaviour shown towards the category students, in terms of sarcastic comments, living style and domination in class and hostels are the most frequent incidences, which make lower caste students feel discriminated. Further, those who have experienced discrimination have also experienced tension, frustration, depression, nostalgic feelings, obsessive recurring thoughts, anxiety, distortion of self-esteem and self-identity with a higher threat to mental health problems.

In the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, the whole world is changing rapidly due to globalization, modernization and privatization. It is also established that globalization and privatization have brought structural changes in western societies in general and Indian society in particular. No doubt, this globalization brought technological advancements, which brought changes in culture, traditional occupations, education, economy and political sphere of Indian society but made no change in the ‘Caste’, the prominent feature of
Indian society. Caste and caste system exist till today and paves the path to
discrimination in social, economical, educational and political arena. It is the caste which
plays the vital role in the distribution of economic surplus. In this study, it is found that
because of caste or communities, students are being discriminated in educational set up.
Due to that, they face lots of hurdles in their educational attainments. Though open
discrimination is legal offence, it generally takes place more in subtle forms. In this
study, most of the experiences of discrimination are in the subtle forms.

Thus, independent India has several provisions to protect all kinds of discriminations, but
these caste based subtle forms of discrimination are prevalent till today and endangering
the principles of social justice and equality.

7.5. Scope for Future Study

The present study was based on the stress and mental health related problems among
students due to discrimination based on caste during higher education and analysis has
provided insightful, relevant and valid results. Henceforth this study also provides the
potential probability to conduct similar kind of research on the similar types of sample of
another state of India where the prevalence of caste based discrimination is more or less
same. This kind of study would yield further dimensions of the findings and revalidation
of the current study.

In the present study four universities have been covered with the students of general
(non-technical) courses like- B.A., B.Sc. B.Com and M.A., M.Sc., and M.Com whereas it
would be relevant and unique for further study on the students of professional and
technical courses where course work is itself demanding and providing greater
probabilities for discriminatory practices with its consequences on mental health. The
similar kind of study would be more relevant and revealing other dimensions of the
concerned issue if the study is conducted at the technical universities and on the elite
institutions of higher education like- IITs, IIMs and IISERs where the representation of
lower communities is quite less and students feel isolated in general. It would be relevant
and insightful to have gender as an independent variable in future research. The intra-
community comparison based on the socio-demographic factors would yield new patterns of discrimination perceptions and its consequences on stress and mental health.

Self efficacy of an individual at large extent; determines the physical and mental health status. Therefore an independent study would be more relevant to know the role of self efficacy on the discrimination appraisal and mental health related problems among the students. Some new insights and inferences of better understanding about the concern issue would be drawn if an independent study will be conducted by taking the concerns of human rights awareness with the other variables of the present study. This may reveal some applicable, pragmatic and innovative results. Somewhere preventive, augmentative, supportive and protective role will be proved significant played by Human Rights Awareness in the lesser appraisal of discrimination, stress and mental health related problems during higher education.