# The Effects of Social Status and Cultural Difference on Integration and Psychological Adaptation through Meta-Stereotyping

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study was to examine the relation between perceived cultural difference and

perceived social status with meta-stereotyping, psychological adaptation and integration of

immigrants in India. We conducted a correlational online survey among 214 immigrants in India.

We expected immigrants who perceive their country of origin to be lower in status or culturally

different than India to experience lower psychological adaptation and integration and negative

meta-stereotyping to mediate these relationships. Social status and cultural difference did not

predict psychological adaptation and integration, though lower social status predicted

meta-stereotyping. Contrary to our hypothesis, cultural difference predicted positive

meta-stereotyping. There was no interaction effect of cultural difference and social status with

integration. However, there was an indirect relation between social status and psychological

adaptation through negative meta-stereotyping. These findings suggest that perceived social

status of one's country may have an adverse effect on meta-stereotyping, which further has a

negative impact on psychological adaptation.

*Keywords:* cultural difference, status, meta-stereotyping, psychological adaptation,

integration

**The Effects of Social Status and Cultural Difference on Integration and Psychological**

**Adaptation through Meta-stereotyping**

Often we hear about refugees coming from developing countries for asylum but we hardly hear about developing countries like India being a place of refuge. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR; 2020), there are over 244,094 recognized refugees and asylum seekers in India. Most of them are from neighbouring countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Tibet. India does not only receive refugees. It is also home for expatriates from Germany, Japan, South Korea, and the United States; to name a few. Overall there are about 5.2 million immigrants in India. People leave their home country either by choice to join their family, look for a job, or receive better education; or are forced to leave because of war, political unrest, religious persecution, and others.

Relocating to a different place, regardless of the circumstance, is different for every individual and adjusting to a new place and culture can take either a positive or negative form. Migrants often try to integrate into the new society. However, they are likely to believe that the host country has certain expectations about them, which may influence their adjustment to the host country. These assumed expectations about people similar to them are called meta-stereotypes (Vorauer et al., 1998). Wendel (2021) found that migrants in Germany who migrated from a lower status country were more likely to have negative meta-stereotypes, that is, they expected to be seen more negatively by the German host country. Such negative meta-stereotyping may negatively influence whether people adapt to their new country and integrate into society. Indeed, research has shown that negative meta-stereotyping is related to less psychological well-being (Gordijn et al., 2017). Not only status but also cultural differences may be related to negative meta-stereotyping. That is, if one comes from a country that is very

different from India, quite likely one is also aware of how one is perceived, and this may

influence one's well-being and adjustment.

The goal of this research was to investigate the relationship of perceived social status

with meta-stereotyping, integration and psychological adaptation of immigrants in India. In

addition, we aimed to study whether perceived cultural differences also play a role.

**Integration and Psychological Adaptation**

When immigrants move from their home country to a new country, they have to start

their lives anew as they are in a foreign land with which they are unfamiliar. Immigrants are

faced with a wide range of unfamiliar circumstances that may require adaptive responses in the

form of maintaining their values and beliefs from their home culture and coming across a new

culture. Acculturation, which is often explained as "the process of coping with a new and largely

unfamiliar culture" (Taft, 1977), has been further studied by Berry (1997), who provided a

framework for understanding acculturation. The tendency of acculturation implies two distinct

groups: a dominant group that has greater influence and authority and an acculturating group that

experiences diverse methods of adaptation (Berry, 1992).

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Acculturation involves immigrants coming in contact with people from the host country (Berry et al., 1992), and it also proposes that immigrants either maintain their home culture and identity or seek contact and participation in the host culture. Berry and colleagues also propose that minorities may use four strategies to cope with acculturation depending on their attitudes towards preserving their culture and the new culture: integration is when immigrants incline towards both cultural maintenance and intergroup contact; assimilation is when immigrants acknowledge intergroup contact over cultural maintenance; separation is when immigrants prefer to preserve their culture and do not seek intergroup contact; marginalisation is when there is neither cultural maintenance nor intergroup contact (Berry, 1997; 1998). Immigrants interested in propagating both their home cultural identity and looking for contacts in the host country, are thought to have an integrated acculturation attitude and are closely affiliated to social and cultural identities (Berry, 1998; Bhatia, 2011).

Social connection is an important aspect in steering the process of integration in the host country (Ager & Strang, 2008) and integration of people into the society is important as contact between the people from the host country and the immigrants can help improve intergroup relations which will help lower prejudice and conflict (Allport, 1954). Hence, integration is an integral part for an immigrant to feel a sense of belongingness to the host country.

When immigrants move to a different country they are sometimes faced with numerous obstacles while trying to integrate into the host society. When faced with such adverse social situations, a person will often feel vulnerable and may also feel helpless with situations and changes happening around them. Therefore, Berry (2001) proposed that it is essential for

immigrants to successfully adapt to the host culture of the new environment while preserving the main aspects of their home cultural identity, which is referred to as integration. Integration is a continuous cycle where individuals are re-socialised into the host culture to help them fit into the host society (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Despite the various reasons for immigration (e.g., work, study, asylum-seeking, reunification) encountering a new and/or different culture is faced with inevitable psychological changes when contact with different members in the host society (Taft, 1977). Further, when a person finds it difficult to integrate into the host country regardless of the reason, they have a higher chance of seeing a decline in their psychological well-being (Roccas et al., 2000). This refers to psychological changes and outcomes people may encounter as a consequence of different cultural group encounters and integration processes (Berry, 1997).

Integration has also been found to be associated with better psychological well-being in various studies, where the other forms of acculturation, mainly marginalisation and separation, are affiliated with adverse acculturation stress and may disturb psychological well-being (Berry et al., 1987; Dow, 2011; Glass & Bieber., 1997). Additionally, integrated attitudes encounter the least amount of barriers in adaptation as they are most prone to view adaptation as an important aspect in moving to a foreign country (Glass & Bieber, 1997). Further, integration can be noted as a better acculturation approach as it implements immigrants not only to safeguard their heritage while embracing the new culture of the host society, thereupon additionally improving psychological well-being. Hence, a question arises on integration and the factors that improve the process and if there are consequences on how immigrants may think they are perceived by the members of the host country.

When immigrants move from their home country to a new country, they have to start their lives anew as they are in a foreign land with which they are unfamiliar. Immigrants are

faced with a wide range of unfamiliar circumstances that may require adaptive responses in the form of maintaining their values and beliefs from their home culture and coming across a new culture. Acculturation, which is often explained as "the process of coping with a new and largely unfamiliar culture" (Taft, 1977), has been further studied by Berry (1997), who provided a framework for understanding acculturation. The tendency of acculturation implies two distinct groups: a dominant group that has greater influence and authority and an acculturating group that experiences diverse methods of adaptation (Berry, 1992).

**Meta-stereotyping and its effect on psychological adaptation and integration**

When a person moves away from their home country and into a foreign land, they often tend to perceive themselves as an outgroup when compared to the citizens of the host country and their perceptions may be rooted in language, social norms, environment or culture which may be different and their identity as an immigrant will probably be noticeable. The move to a new country makes immigrants part of a minority group, and when the host culture holds certain expectations on the immigrants, they may have difficulties integrating into the host society (Taft, 1986). Quite likely, immigrants have thoughts or expectations about how they are perceived by the host society. That is, they are likely to be meta-stereotyped (Vorauer et al., 1998).

Meta-stereotypes implicate the beliefs that one has regarding the stereotypes a member of an outgroup holds of their ingroup (Vorauer et al., 1998), and generally stem from concerns that one would be judged along these lines during an intergroup contact (Vorauer et al., 2000). They are usually negative in composition (Vorauer et al., 1998), and they are often used as a tool to predict how one is perceived and to understand others (Vorauer et al., 2000). Studies conducted on social interaction imply that people are conscious of what others believe and are receptive to the effect they have on others (Crocker & Major 1989). Further, members of low power groups

are more focused on how they are seen by others than members of dominant groups would be
(Lammers et al., 2008).

With regard to immigration, the prominence of one's social identity as an immigrant is
inescapable, especially when one looks or sounds different from the majority of the people
residing in a country. Hence, immigrants are expected to see a higher probability for a dominant
group member to regard them in a stereotypical form and will have a higher tendency to use
meta-stereotypes. Hence, studies suggest that when members of an ingroup assume that the
dominant group see them as negatively, it has an adverse impact on their self-esteem and
emotions (Gordijn, 2010). Further, a study conducted on police officers found that when they
assume citizens of their community to have negative perceptions of them it has an adverse effect
on their well-being (Gordijn et al., 2017). A study conducted on HIV patients who assumed that
they are negatively viewed by members of their communities showed to have a higher risk of
experiencing loneliness (Gordijn & Boven, 2009).

The integration process implies intergroup contact and is highly dependent on the
immigrant's intentions to either come in contact or avoid contact with the host country. This can
further be influenced by how an immigrant perceived the host nationals to be, which is mostly
negative in nature. Hence this may be influenced by negative meta-stereotyping. A study on
Asian Americans states that the occurrence of meta-stereotypes may cause social anxiety and
avoidance. This may lead to declining psychological well-being and avoidance of intergroup
contact, which would further result in poor integration (Chu & Kwan, 2007).

Additionally, social connection is a basic psychological need for an individual, they need
a minimum amount of contact to be stable and pleasant. A study by Marinucci and Riva (2020)
suggests that when immigrants do not seek contact with members of the host country but instead

focus on other immigrants, there is a high risk of experiencing negative effects on their

psychological health. Another study suggests that when an immigrant moves to a new country,

they have difficulty adapting to the new environment. This sometimes might lead to avoidance of

any intergroup contact with the host society, which may be influenced by the assumptions they

perceive the host country holds towards them. This could not only negatively affect their

well-being but also disrupt the integration process (Yzerbyt et al., 2005; Marinucci & Riva,

2021). Therefore, these studies suggest that negative meta-stereotypes can predict poor

psychological adaptation and integration among immigrants.

**Influences of perceived social status and perceived cultural difference**

As stated earlier meta-stereotyping is usually negative in content (Vorauer et al., 1998).

This is problematic as people are intrinsically motivated to be affiliated to groups that provide a

positive social identity for them (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Higher social status might provide

people with a positive identity (Oldmeadow & Fiske,  2010). The widely known key factors to

determine an individual's social status are the level of education, occupation and income and it

can be assumed that these factors can be assessed from the quality of the countries' education

system, labour market, and political power concerning the host country. For example, Nepalese

and Tibetans might identify themselves as coming from lower-status countries in comparison to

India, while migrants coming from the Netherlands, Germany or France may see themselves as

coming from higher status countries than India.

An immigrant may be aware of how they are perceived by the members of the host

society and it can be assumed that their home country and its status along with their association

with a group will probably be the reason for their meta-perceptions regarding their associated

social status in India. A study conducted on power decreasing meta-stereotyping, indicated

power to be related to the emergence of meta-stereotyping, as it found people from groups with

low power were more prone to engaging in negative meta-stereotyping (Lammers et al., 2008).

Hence, it can be assumed that migrants coming from the lower status will have a higher

probability of engaging in negative meta-stereotyping than migrants from a higher status country.

However, given that people with lower status tend to have more negative meta-stereotypes, this

is likely to predict, as argued before, low levels of integration and poor psychological well-being

(Gordijn, 2010; Gordijn et al., 2017).

      Not only status, but also cultural differences may play a role in meta-stereotyping and,

hence, integration and well-being. When one's language, norms, and culture, in general, are very

different from the host society's, immigrants may tend to assume that the host country will notice

this and judge this. Immigrants may negatively meta-stereotype as they may see themselves to be

different because of the way they look or the language they speak (example: a Dutch person will

stand out in India because of their skin tone, height, or inability to speak local Indian languages)

which are undeniable differences. Due to this an immigrant's fears may be heightened, which

will likely prevent them from coming in association with members of the host country. Further,

this will make intergroup contact undesirable as the immigrants may fear members of the host

country to have prejudices towards them (Finchilescu, 2005).

      Previous research suggests that contact with members of a dominant group plays a

significant role in an international student's adjustment to a new cultural environment (Hotta &

Ting-Toomey, 2013). Hence, it is important for immigrants to have social contact with members

of the host society as avoidance of contact leads to disadvantage for immigrants integration

which is defined by continuous contact with the dominant group (Berry, 1997; MacInnis, 2009).

Additionally, previous research suggests that culture maintenance and an immigrant's status are likely to interact. Studies found immigrants' generational status to influence the host members' attitudes towards them and, additionally, second-generation immigrants seem to be maintaining their culture appreciated. Immigrants who adopt a different preference to cultural maintenance experience are not appreciated as the host members assume themselves to be judged more negatively by others because of the immigrants' take on cultural maintenance. Hence, this created a conflict of cultural maintenance to interact with an immigrant's status (Matera et al., 2011, 2015). Through the above reasoning, it can be further assumed that immigrants originating from high-status countries but belonging to a very different culture will assume the members of the host society to perceive them negatively, which would further result in immigrants negatively meta-stereotyping themselves.

**Hypotheses**

Based on the theoretical framework outlined above, it can be hypothesised that immigrants from lower-status countries are more likely to have negative meta-stereotypes (*Hypothesis 1a*), and hence lower well-being and adapt less well than migrants from more equal or higher status countries (*Hypothesis 1b*). However, not only status may influence whether people adjust to their new country. For people who migrate from relatively similar cultures, it might be easier to adapt to the host country than for those who come from more different cultures (Nesdale & Mak, 2000). In the case of a more different culture, it is likely that people are more likely to expect to be negatively stereotyped (even if they have a relatively high status). Hence, I expect migrants coming from a different cultural background to engage in more negative meta-stereotypes (*Hypothesis 2a*), and hence lower well-being and adapt less well than migrants

who have a more similar cultural background (Hypothesis 2b), even if they have a relatively high

status (*Hypothesis 2c*). See figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Cultural difference as a function of social status*
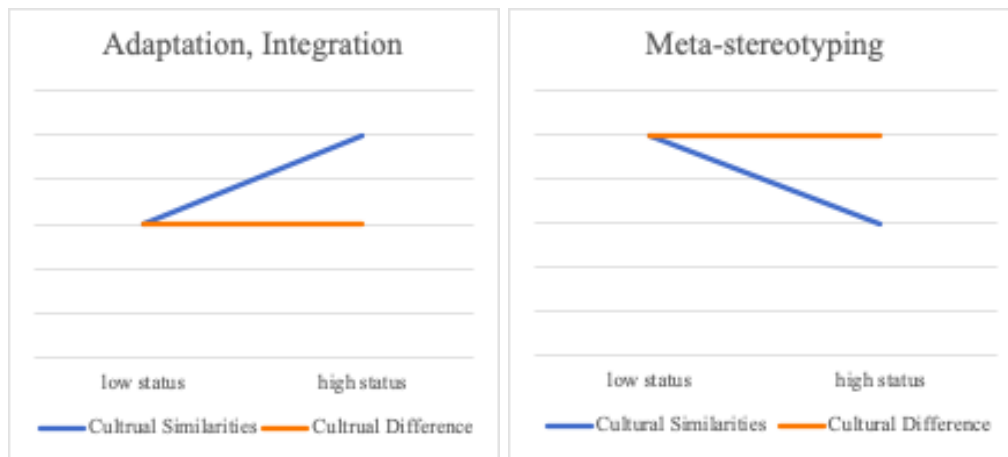


**Methods**

**Participants and Research Design**

For the study, the participants were recruited through one of the researchers, refugee

organisations, and social media platforms. The sample of participants consisted of immigrants

from various backgrounds, such as asylum seekers, refugees, expats, or economic immigrants.

All the participants were first-generation immigrants and were able to participate in the study

only if they understood either English or Hindi. Additionally, participants had to be at the age of

12 or older when they relocated to India and had been living in India for at least a year or were

planning to.

According to the power analysis performed, we needed at least 195 participants.

However, based on our exclusion criteria we aimed for at least 250 participants. In line with

pre-registration inclusion criteria (https://aspredicted.org/see_one.php), we excluded 97

participants. We excluded 52 participants who did not complete all measures or answered more

than one attention check question incorrectly. The participants did not receive any compensation

for taking part in the study.

The final sample consisted of 214 participants, of which  27.6% were male and 72.4%

were female, and a majority of 43.9% were between 25 and 34 years old. Participants came from

49 different countries, 12.1% were from the United States, 7.9% from the Netherlands, 6.1%

from the UK, 5.1% from Syria; 45.8% moved to India for the job and 16.8% for studies, 13.1%

for reunification with family and 3.7% for asylum-seeking.

**Procedure**

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences of the University

of Groningen approved this study prior to data collection. We created our survey using Qualtrics

(https://www.qualtrics.com). The website link of the questionnaire with information about the

research and an invitation to participate in the study was sent (in Hindi and English languages) to

different NGOs working with refugees and various embassies with a request to forward the

invitation to respective individuals with migration backgrounds. Furthermore, the survey was

published on LinkedIn and various Facebook groups for expatriates and migrants. The study was

presented as a survey about living in India to get insight into migrants' life and experiences.

Prior to filling in the questionnaire participants were presented with the information about

the study and informed consent, which they had to sign. Participants who fulfilled the inclusion

criteria filled in the demographical data (e.g., age range, gender, country of origin, the duration

of their stay in India and the reasons for relocation) and the main measures[1]. The measures

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[1] The questionnaire included other variables such as 'status loss', 'perceived acceptance' and 'stereotyping' which
was used for another Master's student thesis and 'contact with other people' as an exploratory variable. Hence, they
will not be discussed in this paper.

consisted of 'perceived cultural difference' and 'perceived social status' as predictor variables,

'meta-stereotyping' as a mediator, 'psychological adaptation' and 'integration' as dependent

variables (see Appendix for the questionnaire). To ensure high data quality three attention check

questions were randomly integrated into the questionnaire. Finally, participants were thanked and

debriefed.

**Measures**

*Perceived Cultural Difference*

We used a scale, adapted from Demes and Geeraert (2014), consisting of 8 items, in

which participants were asked to state to what extent their home country and India were similar

or different (e.g., " in my opinion social norms in my country and India are very different,

Cronbach's α  = 0.86). The items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = *very similar*

to, 7 = *very different*).

*Perceived Social Status*

We used a scale, created by Wendel (2021), consisting of 4 items that measured to what

extent participants believed their country scored higher or lower than India in terms of

prosperity, quality of education, quality of life and economic development. For example, "How

do you estimate India on the following factors in comparison to your home country?";

Cronbach's α = 0.81. Participants rated their country scores on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = India

*much lower than my country* to 5 = India *a lot higher than my country*).

*Meta-Stereotyping*

Meta-stereotyping was measured with a scale consisting of 8 (stereotypical) traits that are

based on competence, warmth, morality, wealth and education. The traits were taken from Fiske

and colleagues (2002) and two added traits by Wendel (wealth and education, 2021). There were

asked for each to answer the following question: "In general, I think that people from India think

that people from my country are *honest, competent, warm, educated, kind, trustworthy, wealthy,*

*intelligent*"; Cronbach's α = 0.76 ). They could give their answers on a 7-point Likert scale

which were recoded (1 = *strongly agree*, 7 = *strongly disagree*). A lower rating is indicating

more negative meta-stereotyping.

### Psychological Adaptation

The scale for psychological adaptation, was adapted from Demes and Geeraert (2014),

and consisted of 10 items (e.g., "I feel happy with day-to-day life in India", Cronbach's α =

0.82). Answers were given on a 5-point Likert scale (1= *not at all* to 5 = *very strong*). Six

negative items were recoded (e.g., "I feel frustrated by difficulties adapting to India"). A higher

rating is indicating a higher level of psychological adaptation.

### Integration

We measured host orientation as an indicator of integration by asking participants to state

to what extent they agreed with statements concerning their relationship with people from the

host country[2]. The scale was adapted from Demes and Geeraert (2014) and included 4 items (

e.g., "I have Indian friends", Cronbach's α = 0.82). All items were measured with 5-point Likert

scales (1= *not at all* to 5 = *very strong*). A higher rating on each scale indicates a higher level of

orientation towards the host country.

## Results

**Descriptive Statistics**

The mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's correlation (*r*) of all measured variables are

presented below in Table 1. The correlation analysis indicates that a higher perceived social

status was significantly associated with less negative meta-stereotyping (*r* = -.34). This is in line

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[2] We also measured 'home country orientation' but we did not analyse these findings for the current thesis.

with *hypothesis 1a*, as this hypothesis states that the lower one's perceived status, the more one

expects to be stereotyped negatively. Perceived cultural difference shows a negative significant

association with meta-stereotyping ($r = -.23$). This is the opposite of *hypothesis 2a*, as it states

that the more different one's perceived cultural difference, the more one expects to be

stereotyped negatively. Further, status was not related to host orientation and adaptation.

Moreover, negative meta-stereotyping did not significantly relate to host orientation ($r = -.03$).

However, it did relate to psychological adaptation ($r = -.15$), suggesting that negative

meta-stereotyping is related to less psychological adaptation.

Moreover, there was no significant association between perceived cultural difference and

host orientation ($r = -.08$),  and psychological adaptation ($r = .06$). However, host orientation had

a positive significant association with psychological adaptation (.34), suggesting that integration

and adaptation are related.

It should be noted that cultural difference and social status are not independent, as a

higher status was related to more perceived cultural differences ($r = .46$), probably reflecting the

fact that the sample contained a relatively high number of expats from Western countries.

**Table 1**
*Intercorrelations of Study Variables, Means and Standard Deviations*

| | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Perceived cultural difference | 5.42 | 1.16 | 1 | .46** | -.23** | -.08 | .06 |
| 2. Perceived social status | 3.45 | 0.95 | | 1 | -.34** | -.13 | -.05 |
| 3. Meta-stereotyping | 2.77 | 0.83 | | | 1 | -.03 | -.15* |
| 4. Host orientation | 4.87 | 1.23 | | | | 1 | .34** |
| 5. Psychological Adaptation | 4.59 | 1.11 | | | | | 1 |

*Note N=214. *p < .05. **p < .01*

**Testing the hypotheses**

We used SPSS simple linear regression for the analysis. With regard to

meta-stereotyping, we hypothesised that individuals who come from lower-status countries will

have a higher probability to engage in negative meta-stereotype (*Hypothesis 1a*). In line with

Hypothesis 1a, we found that perceived social status predicted meta-stereotyping ($b = -.30$, $t =$

$-5.26$, $p < .001$), suggesting that individuals who experience a lower status engage in more

negative meta-stereotyping. A higher social status also predicted a lower host orientation

although this relation was only approaching significance ($b = -.16$, $t = -1.84$, $p = .07$). However,

there was no significant effect with respect to psychological adaptation ($b = -.06$, $t = -.75$, $p =$

$.45$).

Further, it was hypothesised that individuals coming from different cultural backgrounds

will engage in negative meta-stereotypes than individuals coming from a similar cultural

background (*Hypothesis 2a*). We found that the effect of perceived cultural difference on

meta-stereotyping was significant ($b = -.23$, $t = -3.38$, $p = .001$), indicating that individuals who

come from a different background will engage in less negative meta-stereotyping, which is the

opposite of what we predicted.  However, there was no significant effect of cultural differences

on host orientation ($b = -.08$, $t = -1.11$, $p = .27$) or on psychological adaptation ($b = .05$, $t = .79$,

$p = .43$).

According to Hypothesis 1b, we expected that both the relation between status and

psychological well-being and with lower integration are mediated by meta-stereotyping

*(Hypothesis 1b)*. To test the mediation effect of perceived social status of one's country and

psychological adaptation and host orientation through meta-stereotype, we used a bootstrapping

procedure to establish a 95% percentile bootstrap confidence interval around the estimate of the

indirect effect (with SPSS macros PROCESS for testing indirect effect analysis by Hayes, 2018;

model 4) for Hypothesis 1b. No evidence was found for mediation by meta-stereotyping of the

relation between social status and integration, as there was no indirect effect between perceived

social status and host orientation (*effect* = -.04, LLCI = -.03, ULCI =  .13) which is not in line

with *Hypothesis 1b*. However, we found evidence for an indirect effect of perceived social status

on adaptation through less negative meta-stereotyping (*effect* = .08, LLCI = .02, ULCI = .16)

which supports part of *Hypothesis 1b*.

To test Hypothesis 2b (both the relation between perceived cultural difference and host

orientation and with adaptation is mediated through negative meta-stereotyping) a bootstrapping

procedure (with SPSS macros PROCESS for testing indirect effect analysis by Hayes, 2018;

model 4) was used to test mediation. It was found that meta-stereotyping did not significantly

predict host orientation  (*b* = -.08, *t* = .76, *p* = .45). Moreover, no direct effect between perceived

cultural difference and host orientation was found (*effect* = -.096, LLCI = -.25, ULCI =  .05).

Finally, there was also no indirect effect of perceived cultural difference on host orientation

(*effect* = .01, LLCI = -.027, ULCI = .06) through meta-stereotyping.

With respect to the relation between perceived cultural difference and adaptation through

negative meta-stereotyping, we found that, negative meta-stereotyping significantly predicted

less adaptation (*b* = -.19, *t* = -2.01, *p* = .05). However, there was no direct effect of perceived

cultural difference on adaptation (*effect* = .02, LLCI =  -.11, ULCI =  .15)  and no indirect effect

of perceived cultural difference on adaptation  (*effect* = .03, LLCI = -.002, ULCI = .07). In other

words, no support was found for Hypothesis 2b.

In order to test Hypothesis 2c, which concerns the interactions between status and

cultural differences on meta-stereotyping, adaptation and integration, we used the SPSS macro

PROCESS for performing moderated analysis (Hayes, 2018; model 1). For each variable, we

examined the interaction between perceived social status and perceived cultural differences.

There was a no significant interaction effect of perceived social status and perceived cultural

difference on meta-stereotyping ($b = -.014$, $t = -.32$, $p = .75$) or on host orientation ($b = -.11$, $t =$

$-1.45$, $p = .15$). This offers no support for Hypothesis 2c with respect to meta-stereotyping and

integration.

However, there was a significant interaction effect between perceived social status and

perceived cultural difference on adaptation  ($b = -.14$, $t = -2.21$, $p = .03$). The interaction was

probed by testing the conditional effects of perceived cultural difference on perceived social

status at two levels of adaptation, one standard deviation below the mean, and one standard

deviation above the mean. At low perceived cultural difference, status did not predict adaptation

($b = .04$, 95% C.I. $(-.19, .27)$, $p > .73$), but when perceived cultural differences were high, a

higher status did predicted less adaptation, ($b = -.29$, 95% C.I. $( -.52, -.05)$, $p < .01$). These results

identify perceived cultural difference as a moderator of the relationship between status and

adaptation. This indicated that in the case of very different cultures, individuals with high status

adapt less than people with low status. (See Figure 2). This pattern is not in line with Hypothesis

2c, as it suggests that status has no effect in the case of cultural similarity. However, in the case

of cultural differences, a higher status relates to lower well-being, while we expected status has

no effect in case of cultural differences, but in the case of cultural similarity a higher status

relates to higher well-being.

**Figure 2**

*Cultural Difference in The relation between Status and Adaptation is moderated by*

*cultural differences*
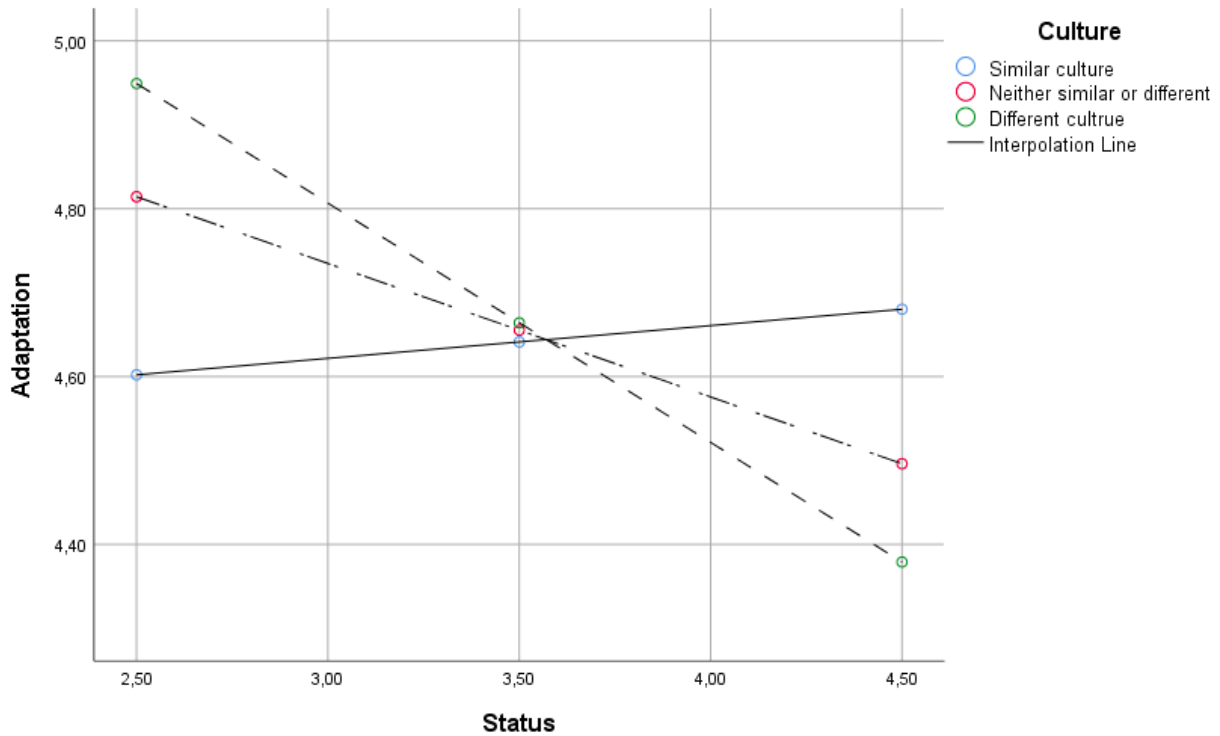


**Discussion**

In the current study, we aimed to study to which extent immigrants in India integrate and

psychologically adapt to the host country, as a function of their perceived social status and

cultural differences, and the role of meta-stereotyping in the process. Our cross-sectional study

consisted of 214 participants from 49 different countries who relocated to India for various

reasons, such as work, reunification with family or partner, education, or asylum-seeking. We

found support for Hypothesis 1a, as people who perceive their country of origin to belong to a

lower status engage in more negative meta-stereotyping (i.e., they expect the members of the

host country to perceive them less positively) than people coming from an equal or higher status

country. Additionally, we examined whether the perceived social status of one's country was associated with host orientation (as an indicator of integration) and psychological adaptation. However, we did not find that perceived social status was related to host orientation and psychological adaptation of immigrants. Further, even though there was no direct relation between status and adaptation, there was an indirect relation between these variables through less negative meta-stereotyping. This relation is in line with what we expected as we predicted that migrants with a higher status have less negative meta-stereotypes and hence adapt better.

We further expected that people from a different cultural background would engage in more negative meta-stereotyping when compared to immigrants coming from a more similar cultural background. To our surprise, we found immigrants from a more different cultural background engaging in less negative meta-stereotyping. Further, cultural differences did not predict adaptation nor integration. Further, we explored the relation between perceived cultural difference with integration and adaptation with mediation by negative meta-stereotyping. We did not find any support for this.

Finally, we examined whether the relation between perceived social status and our measures were moderated by perceived cultural difference. We did not find that the relationship between perceived social status and meta-stereotyping was influenced by perceived cultural differences. Neither did we find this for integration. However, perceived cultural differences moderated the relation between status and adaptation. That is, when the perceived cultural difference was low, perceived social status did not predict adaptation but when perceived cultural differences were high, status was related to less adaptation. This suggests, when there is a large difference in cultures, immigrants belonging to high status will adapt less than immigrants who belong to low status.

**Theoretical Implications**

The current findings reveal that the perceived social status and perceived cultural difference of one's home country are related to how immigrants expect to be perceived by members of the host society.

The finding that status is related to meta-stereotyping can be linked to previous research which found that people belonging to low power groups engage in more negative meta-stereotyping (Lammers et al., 2008). As mentioned earlier, meta-stereotypes are usually negative in composition hence, when an immigrant belongs to lower status, they may expect the host country to perceive them more negatively. The reason for inclining more towards negative meta-stereotypes may be due to low-status or powerless people's dependence on high-status people's view on them (Keltner et al., 2003). The study further showed that power was associated with perceiving people as a means to achieving goals and networking with people based on their worth (Keltner et al., 2003). Since meta-stereotyping tends to be more negative, belonging to the lower status group may make an individual believe they are perceived negatively by others (Vorauer et al., 1998).

For Hypothesis 1b, we expected immigrants from low-status countries to engage in lower psychological adaptation and integration through meta-stereotyping. We did not find any support for status and integration through meta-stereotyping as there was no association found. However, we found as expected that immigrants from low status perceive themselves more negatively, thus, resulting in lower psychological adaptation. Indeed, previous studies have found negative meta-stereotyping to be associated with poor psychological well-being, negative emotions, and low self-esteem (Gordijn, 2010; Gordijn et al., 2017).  This is in line with our findings as this

provides an indication of how immigrants with lower status are psychologically affected by

negative meta-stereotyping and thus limiting or lessening their psychological adaptation.

Opposite to Hypothesis 2a, we found that when immigrants originated from a country with a

culture very different to India, they expected the members of the host country to view them more

positively than immigrants coming from a country with similar cultural background. Previous

research conducted found expats to be highly motivated to move to India as they are offered jobs

that increase their personal wealth. This is likely to boost their status and would possibly be one

reason for immigrants from high-status countries to expect themselves to be seen more positively

by the members of the host society (Farquhar, 2009).

        We did not find support for Hypothesis 2b that stated that the relation between cultural

differences and integration would be mediated by meta-stereotyping and neither did we find that

perceived cultural differences were directly related to integration. According to previous

research, immigrants and the members of the host country can be easily differentiated, as the

immigrant's identity is likely to be prominent. The immigrants may fear being judged by the

dominant culture which makes intergroup contact undesirable (Finchilescu, 2005). However, our

results found no support. Since each region of India is enriched with distinctive culture and

physical appearance, this is likely to have no impact on differences between the host and home

culture. Another reason could be due to most immigrants residing in more progressive regions of

the country.

        We also found no support for our final Hypothesis 2c. According to which we expected

that immigrants coming from a different cultural background to engage in negative

meta-stereotyping and hence poorly integrate and psychologically adapt even if they belong to a

high-status group. Cultural difference did not moderate a relationship between status and

meta-stereotyping and between status and integration. We only found a relation between status and meta-stereotyping, immigrants from developed countries assume members of the host country to be inferior to them as they see the host country as backwards, this is especially prominent when the immigrants from developed countries who are highly skilled move to developing countries (Heizmann et al.,, 2018; Nadler & Halabi, 2006). Further previous studies found that members of the host country perceive themselves as inferior when compared to immigrants (specifically expats) from Western countries (Heizmann et a., 2018).

Further, we also did not find cultural difference to moderate the relation between status and integration. We only found high status to predict more negative meta-stereotyping. One reason for this could be immigrants' high expectations set before moving to the host country which are unmet once they migrate (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). Even though personal wealth of an immigrant may grow in India, the quality of life is still very low (Farquhar, 2009). Given that India is a middle-income country, its infrastructure and general environment are very different to developed countries such as the Netherlands or The United Kingdom as they often offer cultural integration programs. These unmet expectations will likely have an adverse impact on the immigrant's integration process.

The relation between status and adaptation was moderated by cultural difference. However, a different pattern emerged than what we expected. That is, when immigrants came from a similar culture there was no relation between status and psychological adaptation. However, we found that immigrants coming from a high-status country but a very different culture did not psychologically adapt well to the host country. A study conducted has shown to link negative meta-stereotypes with cultural difference and psychological adaptation (Marinucci & Riva, 2020). When a person from a western country moves to a country like India, they may

experience culture shock due to various reasons, some of the reasons could be due to language,

environment and social norms. These are some differences that will be very prominent from the

start and an immigrant in India may draw an undesirable margin, which may lead one to loathe

intergroup contact with fears of being viewed negatively by the member of the host country

(Finchilescu, 2005). Though India has one of the fastest-growing economies, the standard of

living is still not high when compared to other developed countries. Hence, immigrants

originating from perceived high-status countries may not be satisfied with the standard of living

in India further affecting their psychological well-being (Ritsner et al., 2000). Additionally, we

found psychological adaptation and integration to have a strong association, future research

could delve into its effect and cultural difference.

**Limitations and suggestions for future research**

The current study has several limitations. The first limitation is concerning the

correlational nature of our data which prevents us from making any causal interpretations, we

can only describe associations. Our study was based on predictions of the direction of the

relationship between the variables from previous research. Future research can examine and

verify the causality through longitudinal and experimental studies. We suggest the use of these

studies to examine the variables, their interactions and the process over time in social

environments and in scientific settings.

The second limitation concerns the fact that most participants came from high-status

countries. During the analysis, we found the majority of our participants perceived themselves to

either belong to the higher-status or equal status group. We received only a handful of

participants coming from a lower status country. One reason may be because India is a middle

income developing country with an extremely high human population and immigrants from the

lower status groups may not have proper access to technological facilities such as computers, smartphones and the internet. Hence, this may not attract immigrants from lower-status countries but rather people who have the means to access these facilities.

Another limitation may be the language the survey was available in. Since we had researchers fluent in only two languages, i.e., English and Hindi we could not recruit participants who spoke different languages (although we did not have any participants in the Hindi survey). India is a very large country that borders several countries, it also has around twenty-two scheduled languages and depending on the region the neighbouring countries use the same language or similar language. Hence, if the questionnaire was available in the most common languages, we might have received a different group of participants which is not represented well in our current data. For example, more immigrants from Bangladesh could have been recruited if the questionnaire was available in Bangla and respectively for Sri Lankan immigrants and Tamil.

Lastly, to specify differences between each subgroup more participants are required from the different subgroups (e.g., Europeans vs. Asians). Hence, future research can dive into this limitation by putting more focus on the sub-groups. As research into this could provide fruitful information about interaction and dynamics between different combinations of sub-groups on both international or national level as India is a large country filled with various sub-groups.

**Conclusions**

Our research aimed to examine the relations between the perceived social status and perceived cultural difference of one's home country with meta-stereotyping and its possible relation to psychological adaptation and integration. The findings suggest that individuals who perceive themselves to come from lower-status countries or as coming from very different

cultural backgrounds engage more in negative meta-stereotyping. Further, there was no direct

relation between social status or cultural difference and psychological adaptation and integration.

However, there was an indirect relation between social status and psychological adaptation

through negative meta-stereotyping.

Additionally, immigrants coming from a very different culture seem to psychologically

adapt less well when they come from a high-status country than when they come from a

low-status country. These findings can help understand the main aspects that perform a role in

the process of psychological adaptation and integration of the immigrants into the host country.

Host countries should consider these factors to help immigrants settle well into the host society.

Hence, these findings may help in developing and designing future integration policies.

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**Appendix A**

Cultural Difference scale

"Now please think about your home country and India. Think about the differences and

similarities between these countries. Rate for each of the factors the extent to which your home

country is similar or different from India and use the answer scale to rate this" (from 1 = *very*

*similar* to, 7 = *very different*).


In your opinion, how different or similar are these two countries in terms of:

- Social environment (e.g., size of the community, pace of life, noise)

- Living (e.g., hygiene, sleeping practices, how safe you feel)

- Food and eating (e.g., what food is eaten, how food is eaten, time of meals)

- Family life (e.g., how close family members are, how much time family spend together)

- Social norms (e.g., how to behave in public, style of clothes, what people think is funny)

- Values and beliefs (e.g., what people think about religion and politics, what people think
  is right or wrong)

- Please choose 'somewhat different' as an answer (this is an attention check)

- People (e.g., how friendly people are, how stressed or relaxed people are, attitudes toward
  foreigners)

- Language (e.g., learning the language, understanding people, making yourself
  understood)

**Appendix B**

Social Status scale

"Now, think about both your home country and India in relation to each other. Does India in your

perception score lower or higher on these factors than your country? Estimate for each of the

factors the extent to which India in your opinion scores lower or higher than your country" (from

1 = *India much lower than my country* to, 5 = *India much higher than my country*)


How do you estimate India on the following factors in comparison to your home country?

- Prosperity

- Quality of education

- Quality of life

- Economic development

**Appendix C**

Meta-stereotyping scale

"Now, please think about people from your home country. Further think about how you think

they are perceived by people in India. How do you think that people in India see people from

your home country? Please answer to what extent you agree with the following statements (from

1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

In general, I think that people in India think that people from my country are…

-   Honest

-   Competent

-   Warm

-   Educated

-   Kind

-   Trustworthy

-   Wealthy

-   Intelligent

**Appendix D**

Psychological adaptation scale

"Please think about how you are feeling since you moved to India. Think about your experiences in India, and also think back to your home country. Rate these experiences and feelings on how often you have felt them" (from 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*).


In the last 2 weeks, how often have you felt... (please give an answer to each statement):

- Excited about being in India

- Out of place, like you don't fit into Indian culture

- A sense of freedom being away from your home country

- Sad to be away from home country

- Nervous about how to behave in certain situations

- Lonely without your home country family and friends around you

- Curious about things that are different in India

- Homesick when you think of your home country

- Please choose 'never' as an answer (this is an attention check)

- Frustrated by difficulties adapting to India

- Happy with your day-to-day life in India

## Appendix E

Integration scale

**Home country orientation**

"Now, please think about your home country and rate the following statements" (from 1 =

*strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).


To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

- I have home country friends

- I take part in home country traditions

- I hold on to my home country characteristics

- I do things the way home country people do


**Host country orientation**

"Now, please think about India and rate the following statements" (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to

7 = *strongly agree*).


To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

- I have Indian friends

- I take part in Indian traditions

- I develop my Indian characteristics

- I do things the way Indian people do