

# International Student’s Perception of Mental Health and Well-being

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### Bachelor of Social and Community Development Capstone Project

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#### Background

Research Question: How do international students (I.S) perceive mental health and well-being?

This study aims to explore the perspectives of international students regarding mental health and well-being. It investigates their knowledge and awareness of available support systems, resources, and services. With mental health-related issues on the rise, it is crucial to understand how international students perceive mental health. Previous studies by Alqudayri & Gounko (2018) and De Moissac et al. (2020) have highlighted the lack of awareness among I.S regarding the resources available to them, which is a significant concern.

Despite efforts to reduce mental health stigma in Canada, international students still feel hesitant to seek help due to the stigma and stereotypes surrounding mental health services, as found in a study by Beks et al. (2018).

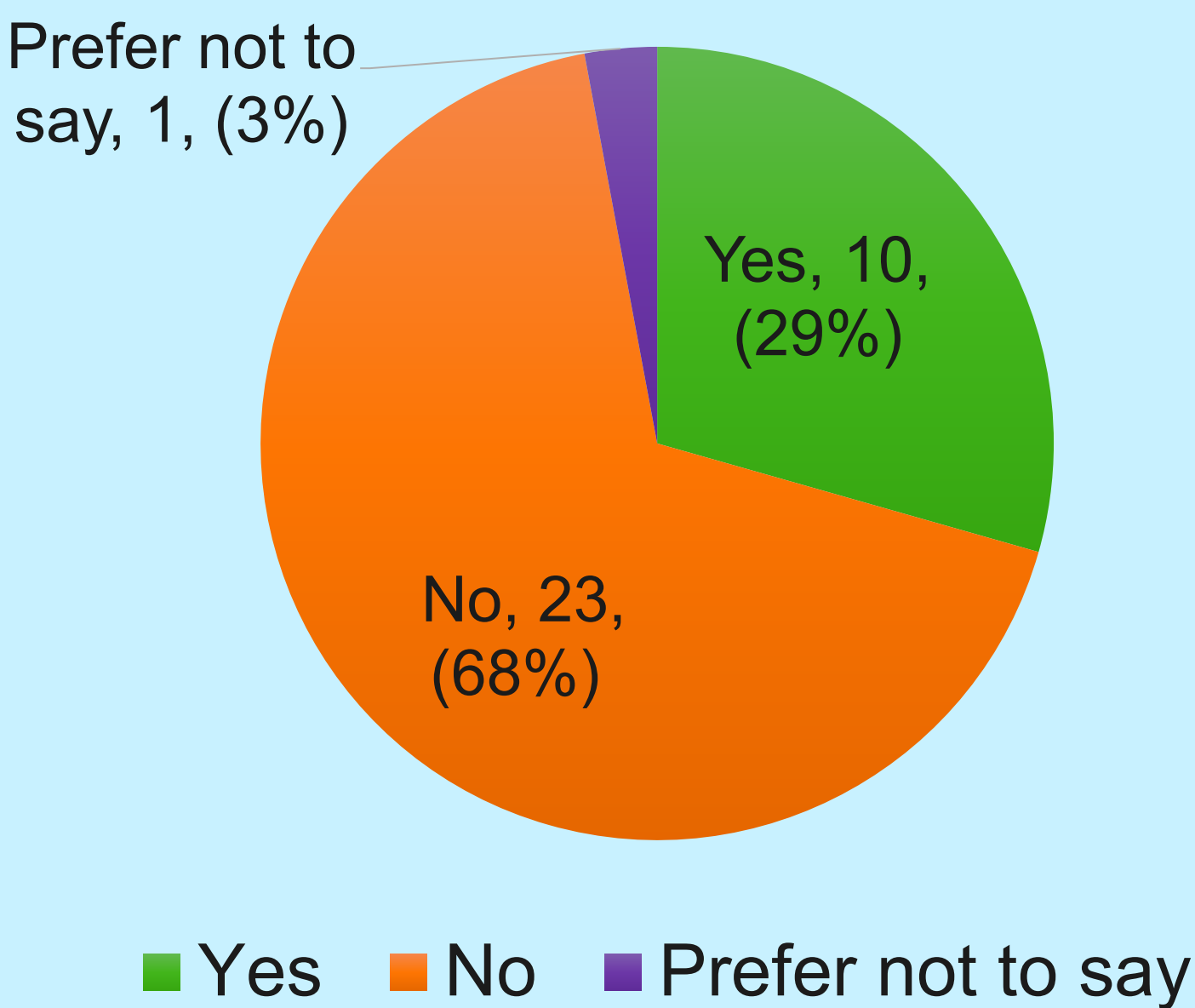
#### Methods

- A quantitative research method was employed during this study by using anonymous online surveys to gather data on international students.
- This study utilized a purposive sampling method to recruit participants, with a focus on post-secondary international students who are currently residing in Canada.
- The survey was created using Microsoft Forms, and the data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel.
- I.S studying at post-secondary institutions in Canada were the participants for this study. Social media marketing and community partnerships were used to recruit participants.
- To uphold confidentiality, a voluntary consent form was provided to all participants before participating in the survey.
- All data collected was kept confidential and stored in the One Drive folder that only the student researcher and researcher supervisor had access to. At the conclusion of the research, the student researcher will no longer have access to the One Drive folder. The School of Community Studies will keep the data stored in the One Drive folder for a period of two years, after which all the data will be deleted.

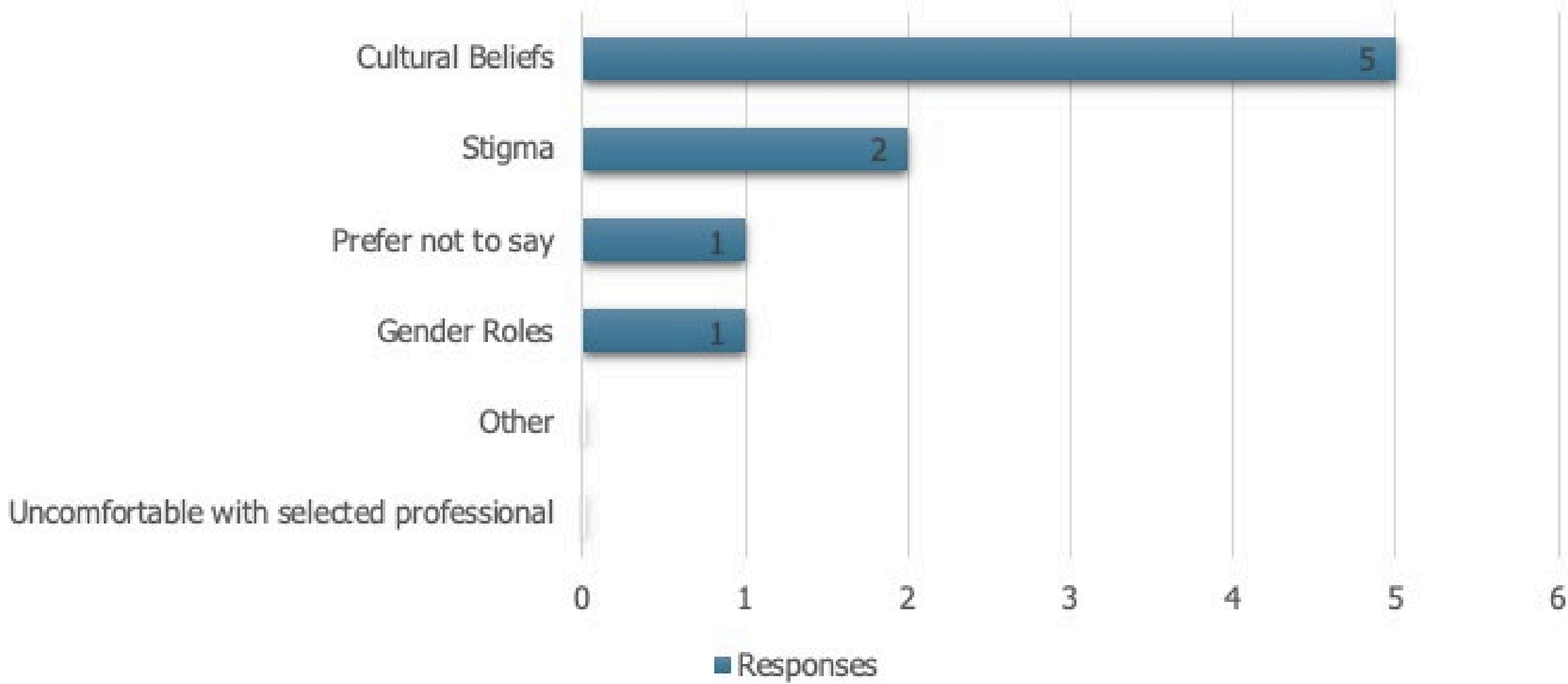
#### Key Findings

The research involved 34 international students, out of which 76% (n=26) identified as women and 24% (n=8) as men. All the participants were of legal age in their respective provinces, with a minimum age of 18 in Ontario. The age range varied from 18 to 50. Most of the participants identified themselves as being of South Asian, Black, African, or Caribbean descent, Asian, or Latino/Latina. A small number of respondents identified themselves as being of Middle Eastern, mixed-race, or Punjabi descent.

Whether accessed mental health resources while living in Canada



Reasons for feeling uncomfortable when accessing mental health resources



The study revealed that 73% (n= 25) of the participants have experienced emotional issues, but only 29% (10) have accessed mental health resources while living in Canada.

The study also discovered that 26.5% (n=9) of the participants feel uncomfortable seeking help due to cultural beliefs, gender roles, and societal stigma surrounding mental health.

Although 59% (n=20) were aware of the mental health services and resources provided by their educational institutions, 41% (n=14) stated they were unaware of these services, indicating a need for educational institutions to increase awareness.

#### Discussion

This study revealed that many international students avoid seeking mental health services due to the stigma surrounding mental health, cultural beliefs and gender roles. This finding is consistent with previous studies conducted by Alqudayri & Gounko (2018) and De Moissac et al. (2020). The study also reveals that international students are not aware of the available mental health resources, which is a common issue as found in previous studies as well.

However, unlike previous studies, this study found that international students were willing to make use of mental health services if needed in the future.

#### Implications for policy and/or practice

- This study suggests that mental health professionals and postsecondary institutions collaborate with international students to design culturally sensitive services that better support them with mental health concerns.
- Additionally, it is crucial for post-secondary institutions to develop strategies that promote and normalize seeking mental health and well-being services among international students while also addressing potential barriers.

#### References

Alqudayri, B., & Gounko, T. (2018). Studying in Canada: Experiences of Female Graduate Students from Saudi Arabia. *Journal of International Students*, 8(4), 1736–1747. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1468078>

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