

New research highlights importance of equity in education

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A new study looks at the impact of learning environments on the academic success of racialized students. Compared to their peers, these students feel they have less control in their academic environment, less

confidence and self-efficacy in their academic abilities, and weaker connections to other students and professors.

The University of Ottawa study underscores that [higher education](#) institutions must recognize and address the specific needs of their racialized student communities and create inclusive learning environments that better meet these needs. Failing to do so could affect the overall psychological well-being and [academic performance](#) of racialized students.

This research was conducted by Professor Rylee Oram of the School of Psychology at uOttawa's Faculty of Social Sciences, in collaboration with her colleague Professor Rebecca Sullivan and Maria Rogers, an associate professor of psychology at Carleton University. The study explored how students, both those from racialized backgrounds and those from non-racialized backgrounds, perceive their levels of [satisfaction](#) and [frustration](#) in terms of their learning environments.

The [work](#), titled "A Comparison of the Perceptions of Need Satisfaction and Need Frustration Between Racialized and Non-Racialized Undergraduate Students," was published in *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*.

A total of 712 students from the University of Ottawa participated in the study; they completed a survey designed to measure their perceptions and levels of satisfaction in terms of autonomy, competence, and feeling connected to others.

"The purpose of our study was to examine whether racialized students perceive a lower sense of control, of receiving less support, and of feeling less connected within their post-secondary learning environments, including classrooms and campus life," said Professor Oram.

The data, collected between 2018 and 2020, revealed that racialized students perceived lower autonomy satisfaction, lower competence satisfaction, and higher relatedness frustration in their learning environment, but also high levels of frustration in terms of their sense of connectedness to the learning environment. These findings suggest that higher education institutions should consider the needs of their student population and work to create supportive learning environments that better prioritize student well-being and [academic success](#).

"Previous research examining needs satisfaction and frustration has focused predominantly on the general student population, often overlooking the unique experiences of racialized [students](#) and how they view their [learning environment](#)," explained Professor Oram. "The purpose of this study was to shed light on these unique perceptions in order to gain a deeper understanding of how to improve supports for our diverse student population in higher education."

More information: Rylee Oram et al, [A Comparison of the Perceptions of Need Satisfaction and Need Frustration Between Racialized and Non-Racialized Undergraduate Students](#), *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* (2023).

Provided by University of Ottawa

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