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Asymmetry in Israeli academia: Attitudes of Bedouin female students about their relationship with Jewish female students

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the attitudes of Bedouin female students towards their Jewish peers in multicultural courses at teaching colleges in Israel. Based on a sample of 30 participants, findings reveal mixed emotions. While Bedouin students value cultural diversity and opportunities for cross-cultural engagement, they face challenges stemming from the broader social dynamics in the country. Multicultural groups aim to foster dialogue and shared perspectives, but Jewish students often maintain a dominant position, avoiding deeper engagement with intergroup relations. In contrast, Bedouin students emphasize their minority identity, which is shaped by religious, social, and cultural factors, framing themselves in relation to their socio-national background. Despite these challenges, both groups collaborate and support one another in achieving academic success, demonstrating the potential of multicultural settings to promote cooperation amidst diversity.

Keywords: Multicultural interaction, Arab-Bedouin female students, Jewish students, Socio-national background, Intergroup dynamics

INTRODUCTION

Arab students in Israel face significant asymmetric challenges in academia rooted in language barriers, campus attitudes, and cultural differences (Abu-Saad, 2022; Ben-Asher, 2022; Abu-Gweder, 2024-A). These challenges reflect the sharp contrast between the modern, progressive characteristics of Jewish society and the traditional values of Arab society (Abu-Gweder, 2023; Abu-Saad, 2013). However, academic campuses also present opportunities for meaningful interactions between Jewish and Arab-Bedouin students. This

dynamic creates a dilemma: while there is a pronounced cultural and educational divide between these groups, Arab-Bedouin female students simultaneously express a strong need for connection and interaction with their Jewish peers. Campus life, therefore, holds the potential to foster these relationships and bridge the gaps between the populations (Abu-Gweder, 2023; Ben-Asher, 2022).

The role of higher education in the lives of Arab-Bedouin female students, their adaptation to campus environments, and the cultural values they bring with them diverge significantly from those of their Jewish counterparts. These differences shape their interactions with Jewish students, particularly in joint and multicultural courses (Lev-Ari & Mula, 2017; Lev-Ari & Laron, 2014). The integration of Arab-Bedouin female students into academia and the workforce is closely tied to the broader transformations occurring within traditional Arab society. Their academic and professional participation provides the Arab-Bedouin community with a unique opportunity to engage with Israel's higher education institutions (Ali & Da'as, 2017; Aburabia-Queder & Weiner-Levy, 2013). This integration paves the way for greater autonomy, the development of meaningful relationships, and exposure to social and cultural realities that differ from those of their native communities. Through such interactions, Arab-Bedouin female students can strengthen their identities and expand their social networks, particularly through engagement with male peers (Ali & Da'as, 2017; Aburabia-Queder & Weiner-Levy, 2013; Abu-Saad, 2013; Abu-Gweder, 2022).

The inclusion of Arab-Bedouin women in academia is profoundly important, as their educational journey serves as a vital platform for examining and understanding minority groups within academic spaces. This research amplifies the voices of Arab-Bedouin female students, providing them with an opportunity to share their experiences, choices, and values. Furthermore, it offers a comparative perspective on the values of modern Jewish culture versus those of traditional Arab-Bedouin society, with a focus on identity, norms, and coping strategies (Ben-Asher, 2022; Allasad-Alhuzail, 2018).

The primary aim of this study is to explore the challenges Arab-Bedouin female students face in academic settings, particularly in multicultural courses and their interactions with Jewish peers. The research highlights their experiences, including encounters with Jewish students, within the broader context of complex political and social dynamics.

The practical significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the ongoing transformations in Bedouin society, especially regarding the evolving roles of women. These changes are examined both at a personal level and within the broader societal framework. Additionally, the study addresses the personal, social, and familial challenges these students face and underscores the critical role their parents play in supporting their academic success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education: Theoretical Perspectives

Multiculturalism is a multidimensional concept encompassing demographic, structural, and ideological aspects. Demographically, it refers to the presence of multiple subcultures within a society; structurally, it highlights power relations; and ideologically, it advocates for dialogue between different ethnic groups founded on equality and mutual respect (Mostafa& Lim, 2020; Chun, Christopher & Gumpert, 2013). An additional dimension emphasizes an attitude towards "others," rooted in recognition and respect for differences rather than paternalism or negation (Mautner et al., 1998).

In recent years, the integration of multiculturalism into teacher training programs has gained global attention, particularly in regions characterized by social and political tension. In Israel, initiatives such as multicultural farms within academic institutions have shown promising results, providing platforms for meaningful interactions between diverse cultural groups. These settings foster shared emotional experiences, promoting understanding and bridging social divides (Hayak, Nahon Crystal & Segev, 2024).

The concept of multicultural education emerged predominantly in Western immigrant nations, grounded in the ideology of multiculturalism and addressing demands for social equality among minorities. Multicultural education comprises three key components: the concept, the change in educational thinking, and the process. Its primary goal is to ensure that all students—regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, or cultural background—have equal opportunities to succeed in school (Lawless & Chen, 2017). By creating systemic changes, multicultural education policies aim to provide equitable opportunities for all groups within the education system (Banks & McGee Banks, 2001). Moreover, multicultural education enhances intergroup relationships. For instance, Reingold (2005) demonstrated that multicultural education encourages discussions about different cultures, fostering tolerance among ethnic groups. Additionally, it strengthens feelings of equality and empowers minority groups to lead societal changes towards civil equality (Lev-Ari & Mula, 2017).

In the Israeli context, pluralistic experiences that acknowledge cultural group differences and promote equality are scarce, despite shared commonalities like Hebrew language use and Israeli citizenship (Smootha, 2024). Often, intergroup relations are characterized by a lack of mutual openness (Greenberg & Bar-Ilan, 2014). For example, Jewish students learn about Islamic history superficially and are not introduced to Palestinians' historical ties to the land, nor are they educated to see Arabs as equal partners in the state (Shafir & Peled, 2002; Ali & Da'as, 2019).

One significant barrier to multicultural education in Israel is residential segregation. Communities are geographically and ethnically separated, with distinct educational systems for Arabs and Jews, limiting early opportunities for intergroup interaction. Higher education is one of the few spaces where Jews and Arabs engage socially and intellectually (Halabi, 2018). Outside academia, daily

interactions between Jews and Arabs occur in workplaces, recreation sites, hospitals, public transportation, and government offices.

The absence of multicultural education perpetuates negative perceptions between ethnic groups. Ethnic identity in Israel is often constructed in opposition to the other group's narrative, resulting in limited empathy and mutual resentment. For instance, the events of 1948 are celebrated by Jewish Israelis as a defining moment but are mourned by Israeli Arabs as a national disaster (Al-Haj, 2005). Negative intergroup attitudes further exacerbate the conflict, as each group views itself as moral and just while perceiving the other as hostile and unjust (Ma'oz, 2010; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998).

The dynamic between "us" (ingroup) and "others" (outgroup) plays a critical role in these conflicts. Ingroup loyalty and appreciation often coincide with hostility towards the outgroup (Brown & Pehrson, 2019). The boundaries defining "others" are influenced by majority group dynamics, often labeling minority groups as inferior (Antabi-Yamini, 2012). For example, the Zionist ideology underpinning the establishment of Israel aimed to unify Jewish immigrants through a "melting pot" approach, sidelining Arab citizens and positioning them as "ultimate others" (Shumsky, 2018; Khazzoom, 2003).

The Arab-Jewish conflict exemplifies Realistic Conflict Theory, which posits that competition for limited resources, such as land, underpins intergroup conflicts. Since 1948, resource control in Israel has been disproportionately in favor of the Jewish majority, reinforcing power imbalances and group tensions (Sherif et al., 1961; Dowty, 1998; Martins & Pagliaro, 2020).

Efforts to improve intergroup relations often focus on shared goals, cooperation, and meaningful contact (Allport, 1954). However, these activities have shown limited success in altering deep-seated beliefs and attitudes (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). Drawing parallels with racial dynamics in the United States, researchers argue that mutual recognition of group identities is crucial for fostering reconciliation. According to Helms (1990), understanding minority group experiences can lead to empathy and psychological change. Such change is vital for transforming collective memories and promoting moderate, peaceful attitudes towards former adversaries (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2016; Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009; Lev-Ari & Mula, 2017; Auerbach, 2009).

Multiculturalism in higher education

Since institutions of higher education are open to all, their campuses become an arena for interactions between individuals from diverse backgrounds. Often, these are the first interactions between young men and women from different ethnic populations (Rothman et al., 2003). Academic schooling thus offers new experiences and exposes students to unfamiliar people and ideas, which affect their behavior, values, and perceptions, especially among undergraduates.

The multicultural setting of academic learning has a variety of effects on individuals, as they experience the different climates in higher education versus that of their communities of origin (Whitla et al., 2003). In fact, the literature on the topic shows that minority students may be subject to both positive and

negative effects, as universities around the world become international, admitting students of diverse religious, cultural, or racial backgrounds.

Research has shown that positive attitudes towards multiculturalism strengthen as a result of campus interactions; that is, students begin to perceive the culture of the other group as equal and legitimate. However, despite improved attitudes in the second year of college compared to the first year, most students, especially among the majority group, still do not hold positive attitudes towards multiculturalism (Lev-Ari & Mola, 2017).

For the most part, Arab-Bedouin students do not meet Jewish students outside the campus, but when such interaction happens, the Arab-Bedouin students participate in it, because they see higher education as an opportunity for social mobility and personal development. Research has indicated that Arab-Bedouin students appreciate the academic climate and the opportunity to get to know Jewish students (Lev-Ari & Laron, 2014). According to the Arab-Bedouin students, their interactions with their Jewish counterparts in colleges are positive (Halabi, 2016, 2022). Lev-Ari and Laron (2014) found that in-service teachers in the Israeli education system who are studying for a master's degree in teaching colleges experience the multicultural encounter to a great extent. According to these authors, the shared educational experience causes students from both groups to minimize prejudices, remove negative stereotypes, and create closeness and friendships while finding personal and group similarities. However, the joint learning is not enough to create a change in the educational process, and therefore the students believed that the multicultural interaction on campus did not break the ethnic boundaries (Steele, 2021). A possible explanation for the generally positive attitudes toward multiculturalism education among Arab students is that multicultural policies benefit minorities and reduce their sense of discrimination (Lev-Ari & Laron, 2014).

Lev-Ari and Mola (2017), found that multicultural encounters in Israel are infrequent and mostly stem from necessity. Even on academic campuses, such interactions are too few, despite numerous opportunities to create them. It was found that the more students are exposed to interactions with other students outside the campus, the more they understand the practical aspects of multicultural education. Arab students who interacted with Jewish neighbors or co-workers were more open to multicultural experiences than Arab students who did not have such interactions (Redlich, 2020). In a study conducted at the University of Haifa, it was found that both Jewish and Arab students believed that the atmosphere at the university was positive (Zelniker et al., 2009). Even though the Arab students, especially the Muslim ones, expressed more negative attitudes when asked about the university as a place that enabled academic empowerment, democratic experience, interrelationships between different groups, and living in a multicultural space, they were still interested in integration with the majority group (Hertz-Lazarowitz et al., 2008).

Challenges of Arab-Bedouin Female Students in Higher Education

Arab-Bedouin female students in higher education face significant academic, social, cultural, and physical challenges, demonstrating resilience amid complex realities. According to Abu-Ajjaj (2017), young Arab-Bedouin women are motivated to acquire academic education for personal and professional interests, but also because they aspire to lead a social change in their society and encourage more women to follow in their footsteps. The research literature points to find that Arab-Bedouin women in academia are subject to two forces. The first requires them to apply personal and professional effort to face the academic challenge, as they experience personal growth and self-learning, tackle reading and writing assignments, collaborate with their study peers, and develop relationships with academic and administrative staff (Abu-Gweder, 2023). The second force requires them to invest personal-social effort to maintain the honor of the family, especially that of their parents, who support them (Abu-Gweder, 2022).

The literature indicates four challenges that Arab-Bedouin female students face. First is the academic challenge. This challenge begins in the preparation for the psychometric test, which is in itself a huge barrier for these young women (Ali & Da'as, 2017; Abu-gweder, 2024-B). The difficulties involved in this admission test influence the professional choices of the female Bedouin applicants, directing them towards study tracks with lower admission requirements. In other words, many female students give up the field of study that is close to their heart. Furthermore, the early encounter with the university is a difficult adjustment experience (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). In the first year, the students must close academic gaps deriving from their deficient elementary and high school education (for example, underdeveloped skills of critical thinking, research, and scientific writing), and they also have to adapt to an academic environment where they must speak, read, and write in Hebrew and often in English as well (Abu-Saad, 2016; Abu-Saad et al., 2007; Abu-Gweder, 2022; Aburabia-Queder, 2011).

The second challenge is to achieve academic success. Arab-Bedouin female students are subject to great social pressure to succeed. Their family and tribe expect high academic achievements, among other reasons because the family invests significant resources in their studies (Abu-Ajjaj, 2017; Kaplan, 2018; Arar, 2020).

The Bedouin students also struggle to adjust to the campus, which feels like a foreign environment where the surrounding Jewish student population is culturally different (Al-Krenawi & Al-Krenawi, 2022). The Jewish students often do not understand the culture and language of the Arab-Bedouin students, at times even expressing themselves in a racist manner. The academic institution itself often ignores the Arab culture, for example by not using Arabic signage or excluding Arab holidays and anniversaries from the academic calendar. For many Bedouin women, the campus life offers the first interaction with men and women from a different culture, one that embraces individualism, and they find themselves between these two cultures: the Bedouin one and the Israeli-Jewish one. In the Bedouin culture, women and men from the same tribe rarely interact,

while no contact at all occurs between men and women from different tribes. The academic setting, however, is mixed in many respects: gender, culture, religion, and nationality, imposing an unfamiliar reality on the Arab-Bedouin students (Aburabia-Queder & Weiner-Levy, 2013; Al-Krenawi, et al., 2021). Notably, Arab-Bedouin female students succeed in combining two contradicting cultures: on the one hand, they enjoy the personal and professional growth that academic education offers; on the other hand, they continue to faithfully represent their social and traditional values on the campus (e.g., by maintaining a modest dress code and adhering to the family honor) (Abu-Ajaj, 2017; Arar & Masry-Herzalah, 2014).

The fourth challenge is the physical one, mostly affecting students from unrecognized villages. These students are served by poor public transportation, making their commute to the campus arduous. Furthermore, electricity and internet infrastructures in their homes are fragile, limiting their ability to study outside the campus. This difficulty intensifies in times of crisis, such as during security unrest or the Covid pandemic (Abu-Gweder, 2023).

In conclusion, Arab-Bedouin female students face multifaceted challenges in higher education, including bridging academic gaps, adapting to a culturally unfamiliar campus environment, and balancing societal expectations with academic demands. Despite limited infrastructure and societal pressures, these students demonstrate resilience, integrating professional growth with traditional values while navigating a complex reality shaped by cultural, physical, and institutional barriers.

METHOD

Methodological Aspects

This study employs a qualitative research method using semi-structured interviews analyzed through qualitative content analysis. This approach enables an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, including their thoughts, feelings, opinions, attitudes, and knowledge (Flick, 2017). Scholars such as Patton (2002) and Creswell (2008) highlight the importance of authentically interpreting participants' realities and perspectives, aiming to closely reflect their unique interpretations.

Participants

The study involved 30 participants aged 19-25, all students at teaching training institutions in southern Israel. The sample was evenly split between students from recognized and unrecognized villages. Recruitment was facilitated through education department faculty via institutional inquiries and lecturer recommendations. A snowball sampling method was then utilized, with participants referring additional respondents (Chase, 2005).

Research Process

The research utilized in-depth interviews to explore the personal and social challenges faced by Arab-Bedouin students in academia and the impact of the academic environment. Interviews lasted 45-60 minutes and included a combination of predetermined and spontaneous questions, structured based on prior literature. The interviews covered a spectrum of themes, ranging from theoretical discussions to points of conflict.

The study aimed to address three primary research questions. The first focused on the influence of asymmetric power relations on interactions and learning outcomes within multicultural courses. The second examined how identity and cultural exchange shape student experiences in these educational settings. Lastly, the study explored the key challenges and opportunities in bridging the gaps between Jewish and Arab students in multicultural courses, seeking to uncover potential pathways for fostering mutual understanding and collaboration.

Data Collection and Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed. The recordings were repeatedly reviewed to refine and identify central themes. The content analysis captured the nuanced realities described by the participants, adhering to the principles of qualitative research methodology.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were assured of confidentiality, and no identifying information was disclosed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews, and they agreed to the publication of the study's findings. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of a recognized academic institution, ensuring adherence to ethical standards throughout the process.

FINDINGS

Asymmetric Power Relations in Multicultural Courses

From the findings, give me three results according to the text: The asymmetric power relations between the Jewish and Arab groups emerged from a series of studies conducted in Israel. Many of them found that the encounters between the two groups is characterized by complex and highly charged dynamics, especially when national issues are concerned, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and especially the occupation, the contrasting narratives of the Israeli and Palestinian sides, and racism toward the Arab minority in Israel .

The present study shows that the asymmetrical relationship between the two groups, with the Jews perceived as the dominant majority and the Arabs as an oppressed minority, is brought to the surface in multicultural course. The rift between the groups is manifested in many forms, one of them being discriminatory treatment of the Arab-Bedouin students.

"Obviously there is an attitude of discrimination. We wanted to talk about the situation. The Jewish group talked a lot about the Arabs and Arab society, the conflict, and we talked about the difficulties that we have in reality" (Sabha) .

As the study shows, the Jewish students did not feel the need to express their point of view because it is obvious and widely expressed in the media. The Arab students, however, felt a strong need to communicate their view on the State and its institutions, which receives almost no public coverage .

The study indicates that the choice of topics and their discussion was dominated by the Jewish students. The defining characteristic of a dominant majority group is that it dictates the agenda and controls what happens. The classroom discussions were usually started by one of the Jewish participants, demonstrating a typical dynamic between a dominant and a marginal group .

"The truth is that the Jewish students are the initiators and raise issues because they belong to the majority group. I think the very fact that they are fluent in Hebrew helps them dictate the order in the discussion" (Islam) .

In classroom discussions, the Jewish students sought a connection and an interpersonal experience, while the Arab-Bedouin students were interested in discussing the inter-group conflict, a topic they feel strongly about as members of Israel's Arab society. They thus emphasized the alienation and discrimination that their society suffers from in the State of Israel because of unequal distribution of budgets, discrimination in the labor market, etc .

"There was a unique opportunity to describe to the Jewish society our suffering not only as a minority but as an Arab group" (Nwal) .

"The occupation is the most politically serious thing, and even more so that we are treated as a fifth column because we identify with our Palestinian brethren" (Rana) .

The asymmetry between the groups was evident in the multicultural courses, when discussions, which took place in Hebrew, were led and dominated by the Jewish students, who felt more confident and had the advantage of speaking Hebrew natively .

"It is clear that the Jewish group dominates for two reasons: the command of Hebrew and the confidence of the students as belonging to the majority group" (Mriam) .

Identity and Cultural Exchange in Multicultural Courses

Discussions in mixed courses brought up political, social, and cultural issues. A clear difference could be seen in how members of each group defined their identity. For the Arab-Bedouin students, the national motif stood out sharply throughout the sessions. While the Jewish students identified themselves in various terms in addition to their national identity—such as student, family

member, religious-Zionist, secular, etc.—the Arab students only identified in national terms, such as: Palestinian, Arab, Bedouin .

"We were divided into small groups, and each student told a little about themselves and later defined their identity. The Jewish identities were many, like student, family member, religious-Zionist, secular. And we used Arab, Bedouin, Palestinian identities" (Majda) .

Getting to know the other culture was a meaningful experience. According to the interviewees, the Jewish students sought to learn about the Arab society on a personal level, ignoring past hostility and the Jewish-Arab conflict, whereas the Arab students focused on their pain as Arabs in Israel .

"At the beginning of the meeting, each participant was asked to state why he came to the meetings and what his views were after the meetings. There were many voices in the Jewish group that spoke of the need to know the Arabs on a personal level, beyond the political conflict" (Nihad) .

"It is crucial that we talk about the Arabs in Israel and why we feel less than the Jews" (Badeah) .

The encounters in multicultural courses were highly meaningful for the students in our study, providing an opportunity to explain their needs to the Israeli side. The study shows that the Arab-Bedouin students found it important to explain themselves on issues such as the problems they face as minority or their economic hurdles, especially in the unrecognized villages, which suffer from scant resources .

"It is important that you know our lives. Personally, I live in an unrecognized village and the State to this day demolishes houses on the grounds that they are illegal, and does not even address our needs in terms of basic services like water and electricity" (Samira) .

Bridging Gaps: Proposals and Disparities in Jewish-Arab Relations

Students proposed ways to improve the relationship between them and Jewish students. One of them discussed the idea of visits by Jewish students to Bedouin towns, especially to unrecognized villages .

"If there are visits to the unrecognized villages, many Jews will understand the growing distress in those villages, not only with regard to education but in the disgraceful lack of resources, budgets, electricity, and even water" (Dlal) .

According to the interviewees, their participation in these meetings amounted to responding to claims or questions directed at them from by Jewish students. They saw themselves as "supporting actresses" who determined when to

participate. After a few meetings, there were even claims against the Jewish students that their many questions felt like an inquiry, illustrating how much the power between the two groups is imbalanced .

"This pattern of inquiry and setting the agenda of the discussions in multicultural courses was maintained throughout the discussions and there was not even an attempt by our group to change the asymmetrical relations" (Njwa) .

Being open to compromise your position can occur when both groups discuss conflict resolution as well as compromise options. However, while the Jewish group discussed the various solutions in an internal debate among its members, the Arab-Bedouin group believed that there was no room for compromise and that the Jewish society should recognize that the State of Israel was solely responsible for the occupation, so for the Arab group, the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be based on the 1967 borders .

"From a political point of view, an Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories is the only compromise proposal that can please us. From a civil point of view, equality must be given in everything, regardless of military or national service" (Fathiah) .

"The only solution that would be acceptable to us was to reverse the power balance and return Palestine to the 1967 borders" (Miriam) .

The findings indicate big disparities between the two groups. The Arab group exhibits a uniform front, with its members feeling alienation, discrimination, and unequal opportunities. In addition, they believe that the State must act to improve the conditions of the Arab society, both civically (improving the economic and social status of Israeli Arabs) and politically (territorial compromise based on the 1967 borders).

DISCUSSION

The study addresses the dynamics of Arab-Bedouin female students' experiences in multicultural courses, examining the influence of asymmetric power relations, cultural identity, and the challenges and opportunities in bridging gaps between Jewish and Arab students. These interactions reveal mixed emotions and highlight the complexities of navigating socio-cultural diversity on campus. While these courses offer opportunities for fostering understanding, they also expose the structural and cultural asymmetries that define the interactions between minority and majority groups.

The research illustrates the significant impact of asymmetry on Arab-Bedouin female students' integration. On one hand, their encounters with Jewish peers provide opportunities for cultural exchange, fostering friendships and academic collaboration. "Help is mobilized from both sides in order to lead academic success on campus," one participant noted, reflecting the potential for

mutual support in overcoming academic challenges. On the other hand, these interactions underscore the difficulty of navigating cultural differences and societal expectations. For Arab-Bedouin students, these experiences are deeply tied to their sense of identity and their dual struggle—both as members of a minority group in Israel and as women within a traditional society (Abu-Saad, 2022; Ben-Asher, 2022; Abu-Gweder, 2024-A).

The dual challenge faced by Arab-Bedouin society—exclusion and socio-economic struggles on the Israeli front, and the weakening of traditional structures within their own communities—adds layers of complexity to these students' experiences. As Yahel and Abu-Ajaj (2021) argue, this situation creates a sense of "double social closure" for Bedouin women, limiting their sense of belonging both within Israeli society and their traditional cultural framework. This dynamic highlights the need for educational settings to address both the external pressures of systemic inequality and the internal challenges of cultural transformation.

Cultural awareness emerges as a key factor in fostering understanding and collaboration on campus. By appreciating each group's traditions, values, and historical narratives, students can develop mutual respect and avoid cultural misunderstandings. As one participant noted, "Understanding the culture of each side can help individuals build stronger and more respectful relationships." This awareness is especially critical for Bedouin students, who often perceive their cultural and linguistic identity as alienated from mainstream Israeli society. Gribiea et al. (2017) observed that the Arab-Bedouin identity has increasingly aligned with broader Palestinian culture and narrative, further complicating their integration into Israeli academic spaces.

In the present study, Arab-Bedouin female students emphasized the Arab cultural space as a source of connection, stating they feel more aligned with Palestinian identity than with Israeli culture. This disconnection underscores the importance of strengthening communication and interaction in multicultural courses (Lev-Ari & Mula, 2017; Lev-Ari & Laron, 2014). By fostering open dialogue and creating inclusive learning environments, these courses can help bridge cultural divides and improve Arab-Bedouin students' perceptions of Israeli society (Abu-Gweder, 2023; Ben-Asher, 2022).

Ultimately, the academic environment holds significant potential to promote democratic processes and enhance cultural understanding. Multicultural courses serve as a microcosm for broader societal interactions, offering a platform for minority students to assert their identities while engaging with the majority culture. Strengthening these courses and their impact can pave the way for greater openness, mutual respect, and social integration in both academic and societal contexts.

Research contribution

The present study examined the changes in attitudes of Arab-Bedouin female students towards multicultural encounters on the college campus. The assumption is that these changes will lead to more positive attitudes towards academic studies and career opportunities, as well as greater openness and positive attitudes towards social and cultural aspects, thereby increasing their

desire to integrate socially on campus. Furthermore, Arab-Bedouin female students who feel more supported by their community are better able to cope with the pressures and challenges of academic studies and multicultural encounters. The results of this study can contribute to the findings of other studies that have examined the degree of academic and social integration of minority groups, such as new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, young Ethiopian immigrants, and Israeli Arab students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance the academic and social integration of Arab-Bedouin female students in multicultural college campuses. First, institutions should develop targeted support programs that address both academic and cultural challenges faced by minority students. These programs could include mentorship opportunities, language assistance, and peer support groups to foster a sense of belonging.

Second, initiatives to raise awareness among Jewish students about the unique struggles of Arab-Bedouin female students should be implemented. Workshops and cultural exchange programs can promote mutual understanding and reduce stereotypes, creating a more inclusive campus environment.

Third, community engagement initiatives can be strengthened to ensure that Arab-Bedouin students feel supported both within their communities and on campus. Collaboration with local leaders to emphasize the importance of higher education and social integration can further reinforce students' resilience and motivation.

Lastly, further research should be conducted to examine long-term outcomes of multicultural encounters and their effects on minority students' career prospects and social integration. Comparative studies with other minority groups, such as Ethiopian-Israeli students and recent immigrants, can provide broader insights into effective strategies for supporting marginalized communities in higher education.

Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample is limited to Arab-Bedouin female students in specific academic institutions, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other minority groups or regions. Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or participants' subjective interpretations. Additionally, the research focuses primarily on multicultural encounters and does not account for other factors that might impact academic and social integration, such as institutional policies or external socio-political influences. Finally, the study does not include a longitudinal perspective, limiting its ability to assess long-term changes in attitudes and integration outcomes.

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