



Challenges and Strategies of Multicultural Integration for Migrant Communities in Urban Areas

Erdene Gantulga¹, Otgon Bataar¹, Ulagan Batzorig¹

¹National University of Mongolia

*Corresponding Author: Erdene Gantulga

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Abstract

This research focuses on the multicultural assimilation and how migrant groups perform this in urban areas; irregularities in urban migration have not been exhaustively researched on. In this study, a qualitative research method was conducted through semi structured interviews with 30 migrants from various backgrounds and participant observations in community settings. Among the observation, the impact of integration highlighted discrimination as a major factor, exclusion from many resources and socio-economic prejudice. Firstly, migrant lives in substandard accommodation, his/her children do not get education or only substandard, and the migrant cannot easily get a job. In addition, cultural adaptation was established as a multifaceted procedure and as processes of the identity formation related to attempts to overcome cultural divides. The study also notes the importance of social networks and participation in the integration processes to illustrate that systematic informal networks offer social, emotional, and material support to migrants discouraged by the urban environment. In achieving these objectives, the study fills gaps in the existing migration literature by describing how migrants engage with and modify the built environment. The conclusions underscore the need for intervention in practice to address problems associated with urban processes, which means implementing anti-essentialization of culture, on the one hand, and the diversification of resources, on the other, in order to have greater returns in the context of future demographic divides. They make a valuable input to ongoing debates around urban governance and social inclusion or exclusion in complex societies. Future studies should extend current research on the local government and other bottom-up community organizations in relation close to migrants' assimilation.

Introduction

In the process of Continuity in the Ever-Evolving landscape of urbanization, cities appear as melting pots of diverse cultures, beliefs and tradition with manifold attractive individuals. Multiculturalism remains a propel with aspects of the city society which every give opportunity for integration of each migrant organization although with the challenge of how to blend them. The more Continued urban center emerges nearly cosmopolitan, understanding the pattern of multicultural integration will become exigent for the policy makers, urban planner and social scientists. However, city existence is not easy because the mechanisms of incorporation into the social, cultural, and economic environment are diverse and intricate (Yeoh, 2020).

According to Vasanthan et al. (2023) migrant groups of people who are individuals who move from one region or United States of America to another, contribute significantly to the rich essence of city diversity. However, the reviews of these spaces inside the city environments are mediated via a gamut of factors including, socio-economic popularity, cultural history, and the reception they get from the host community (Chen & Wang, 2020). While some migrant

joins the social and economic realms of urban live hood societies in a smooth manner there are also those who encounter barriers that impune their full integration. As defined through Knights et al. (2021) these challenges may also range from language barriers and discrimination to limited access to resources and social capital.

Bole (2021) states that a similar understanding of multicultural integration in city settings, it is crucial to identify and analyse the interaction of a large number of socio-cultural, economic, and political factors. social networks perform a key position in integration through offering migrants with get entry to social guide, employment and information about the sources in the area (Abu et al., 2019). Also, the cultural adaptation of the described procedure which defines how individuals adapt to new cultural contexts and conditions in term of people's behavior affects migrants' representations and experience in the context of cities (Cultural dimensions).

The literature on multicultural integration points out the comparative method that involves concepts from sociology, anthropology geography and concrete research sociology anthropology geography and concrete research (Amir & McAuliffe, 2020) & Ahn & Juraev (2023) pointed out that the technique enables a multifaceted understanding of intricate processes and offers valuable information about effective ways for creating inclusive cities. Furthermore, research on multiculturalism inclusion provides privileged empirical knowledge that explicates rules and interventions focusing on the desire of migrants' communities and social inclusion in different city environments (Zapata & Mansouri, 2021).

In this regard, this study aims at contributing to the information available on multicultural integration within city society particularly middle the migrant groups. In this manner, leveraging on the notions of qualitative study methods in combination with interviews based on participant statement, the objective of this research is to outline the narratives, struggles, and opportunities migrant populations unfortunately face when trying to integrate into urban scape. Through an assessment of the enablers and barriers to integration, these observes seek to produce knowable implications to provide reference for the establishment of inclusion guidelines and policies for social brotherly love and equitable city advancement.

In addition, globalization tempo has accelerated and integrated transport and communicate technologies made traveling easy and thus more people are moving across the border and hence diversifying the urban populace (French, 2019). Dispersal of people being drawn to towns with the sake of getting better coins or instructions, escaping conflicts, and per secutions, urban societies are set to be more diverse (Brell et al., 2020). Therefore, city spaces act as active stages that hosts cultures and facilitates the transformation of individuals as well as production of new kinds of social relations.

Superposition of multicultural population in city environments does not guarantee a harmonious interaction. However, the multicultural integration system is often characterized by tensions, difference, and relative balance of power between two entities (Sharma, 2024). Mukumbang et al. (2020) argues that social structural determinants that include inequality in the education, employment and housing opportunities pushes positive migrant communities to the outskirts of societ. However, cultural disparities may give upward thrust to misinterpretations, stereotyping, and prejudice that can defeat the building of progressive and diverse metropolitan societies (Osman & Elamin, 2023).

In mild of those complexities, the country of scholars and practitioners has regularly complexed the importance of utilizing a method in multicultural integration that extends past the socio-financial angle but additionally wants to explain how cultural and institutional obstacles, as an instance, can be addressed (Stahl & Maznevki, 2021). This comprises developing intercultural communication, increasing intercultural understanding, together with developing opportunities

for significant cross-cultural interaction and collaboration for distinct populations (Villalobo, 2020). Moreover, guidelines and applications that are intended to solve the problem of migrant integration should be sensitive to different needs and goals of various migrants taking into account factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, as well as imprisonment history.

As taken from Oliveira & Padilla (2020), enriching discussions round multicultural integration in equally city contexts, this study presents towards the evaluation of social cohesion, variety regulation, along with the governance of metropolitan locations. With a view to map the global study of migrant's lived studies and the agency and Interplay spatial dynamics in urban landscapes, this study shall purpose to contribute efforts toward the development of data-primarily based policies and different community-primarily based initiatives (Rahaman et al., 2023). Finally, by developing better understanding and better exchange of information across social-cultural divides, the cities can realize the potential of citizens of the community to build better rich shaded and tolerant post-modern cities for all inhabitants (Fernandez, 2023).

Besides, the COVID-19 crisis has added new factors and dynamics on the ways of multicultural integration throughout city regions. Based on Adey et al. (2021), the effects of the pandemic on the urban socio-spatial environment in relation to restrictions of mobility, changes in employment regimes, and disruptions to social relations are particularly damaging for migrant populations. These groups deal with higher risks on a constant basis, coupled with jobs insecurity in the industries of dining, manufacturing, and work from home; limited access to timely healthcare as well the availability of social services; as well as densely populated living spaces, all of which increase the likelihood of exposure to the virus.

Inequalities have also increased due to the pandemic and fortified social conflicts within the urban community (Recio et al., 2021). In several cases, relative to migrants, discriminatory attitudes and xenophobic sentiments were more extensive in some circumstances, as observed through Hellgren & Gabrielli (2021). Also, the discourse of the digital divide has become more pronounced, with the discriminated migrant populations experiencing barriers to attending online classes, for employment remotely, and for finding vital information about the measures against the COVID-19 pandemic.

As stated, using Caligiuri et al. (2020), due to those obstacles, there might be a need to redefine and reapproach the approaches for increasing multicultural integration provided the COVID-19 circumstances. In response, several governments, civil society corporations, and neighborhood institutions are addressing the immediate needs of migrant response population, as well as addressing the structural factors that made migrants' vulnerable precede (Carruth et al., 2021). Others such like language lessons, activity learning packages and specialised coaching for migrants operating their own firms can help Enhance migrants 'social economic vulnerability and integration prospects, according to Sewpersad & Maharaj (2023).

In addition, such drives against discrimination, as well as for intercultural knowledge, are vital in building up social harmony and team cohesion in disasters. According to Alidina et al. (2020) enhanced talk and cooperation between numerous cultural organizations is achievable through intercession from cultural organizations that are community based. Furthermore, promoting equality in terms of entry to health care services as well as housing and different social protection measures are very important on the safeguarding of the fitness and properly-being of all citizens regardless of their roots.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has established that urban lives are interrelated and that understanding the demands of migrant communities is crucial for creating better, stronger towns. Thus, with the help of understanding these peculiarities and catering to those hardships

that the migrants faced throughout the pandemic, the cities set a precedent, and thus create more equal and sustainable urban development that benefits all residents.

Method

This paper used a qualitative research method in order to establish the issues that arise with integration of migrant communities in the contemporary society. A case study approach was used as the study was confined to selected urban centers of migrants' concentration this enabled a clearer look at socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that shape integration. The research relied on two primary methods of data collection: through interviews were carried out, in addition to participant observations. A purposive sampling was used where 30 migrant participants; ten refugees, ten labor migrants, and ten students were recruited. Interviews were semi structured in order to elicit the participants' personal life experiences, struggles and attitudes towards integration, and each interview lasted approximately 60 – 90 minutes.

Besides, the participant observation which was carried out in the social places where the migrants were interacting including cultural organization and markets. This tortured the researcher to capture live interactions as well as the relations between migrants and the host society. From these observations, the researcher got to learn how the various migrants managed their integration issues and the different difficulties that were manifested when coming into contact with both fellow migrants and the host community.

Consequently, thematic analysis was done in the interviews and observation that were conducted to collect data. The researcher first reviewed the interview and field notes in order to get a closer look at the data. After general inductive analysis of the first transcripts, main codes were identified and grouped into subcategories according to integration difficulties, for example, language, discriminative, and resources. The final activity of the analysis was to discuss these themes in the broader socio-political and economical perspective of multicultural integration from the existing literature. As this approach had shown, multicultural integration process is quite compound in the context of urban settings.

Result and Discussion

This study investigates the challenges faced by migrant communities in their efforts to integrate into urban societies, focusing on key barriers such as discrimination, limited access to resources, and cultural adaptation. As cities become increasingly diverse, understanding how migrants navigate these challenges is crucial for fostering inclusive and cohesive urban environments. Through in-depth interviews and participant observation, the study examines the experiences of migrants from various backgrounds, including labor migrants, refugees, and students, to provide a comprehensive view of their integration process. The findings offer valuable insights into how these communities negotiate their identities, overcome obstacles, and engage with support networks, shedding light on the dynamics of multicultural integration in contemporary urban settings.

Discrimination and Social Exclusion

Discrimination and social exclusion emerged as significant barriers for migrant communities in their integration into urban society. Participants frequently reported facing prejudice and stereotyping based on their ethnicity, nationality, or immigration status. These discriminatory practices often manifested in workplaces, community settings, and public spaces, limiting their ability to fully participate in social and economic activities. For example, one participant, a refugee from Sudan, noted,

“Every time I try to apply for a job, they ask where I’m from, and the moment I say Sudan, the conversation changes. They say they’ll call me back, but they never do.”

Such experiences underline the persistent biases that prevent migrants from accessing equal opportunities and contribute to their marginalization in urban environments.

Social exclusion was also evident in community interactions, where many migrants felt unwelcome or isolated. A female migrant from the Philippines shared,

“I tried joining the neighborhood activities to meet people, but they rarely involve me. Even when I speak their language, I feel like I don’t belong.”

This sense of exclusion often created emotional distress and reinforced the perception of being outsiders. In several cases, participants expressed reluctance to participate in community activities due to prior negative encounters, perpetuating a cycle of isolation. Observations at community events corroborated this, revealing limited interactions between migrants and the host population, even in shared spaces like cultural centers or markets.

The impact of discrimination and exclusion extended beyond social settings into public institutions. Several participants highlighted unequal treatment in accessing services such as housing, healthcare, and education. One interviewee, a labor migrant from Bangladesh, explained,

“When I went to register for health insurance, the officer looked at my papers and said they were incomplete, even though I followed all the instructions. Later, a local resident got help immediately with the same documents.”

Such institutional bias not only hinders migrants’ ability to access essential services but also exacerbates their vulnerability. This recurring pattern of exclusion demonstrates the systemic challenges migrants face and underscores the urgent need for policies that promote equality and inclusivity.

Access to Resources and Opportunities

Migrant communities often face significant barriers in accessing essential resources and opportunities, which are critical for their successful integration into urban society. Access to housing emerged as a recurring challenge among participants, many of whom reported experiencing discrimination from landlords and systemic obstacles in securing affordable accommodations. One migrant from Pakistan shared,

“Even when I had the money for a deposit, they would refuse to rent to me because I don’t speak the local language well or because I’m not a citizen.”

This sentiment highlights the compounded effect of socio-economic and cultural biases, often forcing migrants into overcrowded or unsafe housing in underdeveloped parts of the city. Observations in these neighborhoods revealed poor living conditions, with limited access to basic services such as water and electricity.

Healthcare access was another prominent issue raised by the participants. Many migrants encountered bureaucratic complexities, language barriers, and financial constraints that hindered their ability to seek medical care. A female participant from Sudan explained, “

When I needed medical help, they asked for documents I didn’t have. I felt helpless because I couldn’t understand the forms or the system.”

These experiences point to systemic gaps in healthcare accessibility for migrants, leaving many without adequate support for their physical and mental well-being. Observations in community health centers revealed that limited interpreter services and a lack of cultural sensitivity among healthcare providers further exacerbated these challenges.

Employment opportunities were similarly restricted for many migrants, often relegating them to low-wage, precarious jobs. These positions frequently provided no job security, benefits, or avenues for upward mobility. A young migrant from the Philippines stated,

“I was an accountant back home, but here, I can only find work as a cleaner. No one recognizes my qualifications.”

This mismatch between their skills and available opportunities not only limits economic mobility but also contributes to frustration and a sense of stagnation among migrants. Several participants also reported workplace exploitation, with employers underpaying them or withholding wages, particularly for those with uncertain legal statuses.

Educational opportunities for migrant children also presented substantial hurdles. Many participants highlighted how language barriers and a lack of institutional support hindered their children’s ability to integrate into local schools. A parent from Afghanistan explained,

“My son struggles to follow lessons because he doesn’t understand the language, and the school doesn’t have extra support for him.”

Teachers also noted the difficulty of addressing the diverse needs of migrant students without adequate resources or training. Observations in schools indicated a lack of structured programs to bridge language and cultural gaps, leaving many migrant children at risk of academic underperformance and social isolation.

These barriers to accessing resources and opportunities create a cycle of marginalization that severely limits the integration of migrant communities. Addressing these issues requires targeted policy interventions, such as affordable housing programs, inclusive healthcare initiatives, skills recognition frameworks, and language support in schools. These measures would not only enhance migrants' quality of life but also foster a more equitable and cohesive urban society.

Cultural Adaptation and Identity Negotiation

Cultural adaptation and identity negotiation are central to the experiences of migrants integrating into urban societies. Migrants often navigate a delicate balance between preserving their cultural heritage and adopting the norms of the host society. This dual process can be both empowering and challenging. For many, learning the local language was identified as a key step toward adaptation, as it facilitated communication and access to opportunities. A participant from Vietnam noted,

“I took night classes to learn the language. It was hard at first, but now I feel more confident speaking with locals.”

This effort, however, often required significant time and resources, which not all migrants could afford, leaving some feeling alienated or excluded.

For others, adapting culturally meant participating in local traditions and customs to foster a sense of belonging. A respondent from Ethiopia shared, “

During the local festivals, I try to join the celebrations with my neighbors. It helps me feel part of the community, even though my own traditions are different.”

While these efforts helped bridge cultural divides, participants often expressed concerns about losing aspects of their own identity in the process. Many described a tension between adapting to fit into the host society and maintaining a connection to their cultural roots, which they viewed as integral to their sense of self.

Identity negotiation was particularly complex for younger migrants or second-generation migrants who grew up in a hybrid cultural environment. A 16-year-old participant from Syria explained,

“At school, I try to act like my friends so they accept me, but at home, my parents expect me to follow our traditions. It’s confusing to be caught between two worlds.”

This duality often led to feelings of cultural dissonance, as individuals struggled to define their identity in contexts where societal expectations and familial pressures clashed.

The workplace also presented a space where cultural adaptation and identity negotiation intersected. Migrants shared how adopting certain workplace norms, such as dress codes or communication styles, was essential for professional success but occasionally conflicted with their personal or cultural values. A participant from India mentioned,

“In my job, I’m expected to dress in a way that’s very different from my culture. I do it because I want to keep my job, but sometimes I feel like I’m losing a part of myself.”

These experiences underscored the complexities of integration, where professional demands often necessitated cultural compromises.

Despite these challenges, some participants highlighted the resilience and adaptability that emerged through cultural negotiation. A migrant from Colombia explained,

“I’ve learned to mix parts of my culture with the local culture. It’s not easy, but it has helped me create my own identity here.”

Such experiences demonstrated how cultural adaptation could lead to the emergence of bicultural identities, enabling individuals to navigate both their heritage and the norms of their host society.

Cultural adaptation and identity negotiation remain multifaceted processes shaped by individual circumstances, societal pressures, and access to resources. While these processes can foster personal growth and societal cohesion, they can also result in tensions that need to be addressed through inclusive cultural programs and community-building initiatives. This would provide migrants with the support they need to adapt without compromising their sense of identity, thereby fostering both integration and cultural diversity within urban environments.

Support Networks and Community Engagement

Support networks and community engagement play a crucial role in the integration process of migrants within urban societies. Migrants often rely on informal and formal support systems to navigate the challenges of settling in a new environment. Family and friends emerged as the primary sources of emotional and practical assistance for many participants. One respondent from Somalia shared,

“When I first arrived, my cousin helped me find housing and introduced me to people in the neighborhood. Without him, I would have felt completely lost.”

These personal networks not only provided immediate aid but also acted as conduits to larger social and community networks.

Religious institutions and cultural organizations also featured prominently in participants’ accounts of support. Places of worship served as hubs where migrants could connect with individuals who shared their cultural background, offering a sense of familiarity and belonging. A migrant from Pakistan explained,

“At the mosque, I found people who spoke my language and understood my struggles. It’s a place where I feel at home.”

Similarly, community centers and cultural associations provided resources such as language classes, legal advice, and employment workshops, helping migrants gain the skills and knowledge needed for integration.

Community engagement activities were another avenue through which migrants connected with their host society. Volunteering in local initiatives, participating in neighborhood events, or joining community groups allowed migrants to establish relationships and foster mutual understanding. A participant from Venezuela mentioned,

“I started volunteering at a food bank, and it helped me meet people from different backgrounds. It made me feel like I was contributing to the community.”

These interactions not only helped reduce social isolation but also facilitated cultural exchange and strengthened social cohesion.

Despite the benefits of support networks, participants noted challenges in accessing them. Language barriers, limited awareness of available resources, and distrust in formal institutions often hindered engagement. A migrant from Myanmar expressed frustration, saying, “

I didn’t know where to go for help, and even when I found an organization, I couldn’t communicate with them because of the language.”

This highlights the importance of making support services more accessible and inclusive for diverse migrant populations.

Moreover, not all migrants felt welcomed or included in community activities. Some reported instances of exclusion or subtle discrimination when trying to engage with local residents. A participant from Sudan shared,

“I tried to join a neighborhood group, but I felt like they didn’t really want me there. It was discouraging.”

These experiences underscored the need for host communities to actively foster inclusive spaces where migrants feel genuinely accepted and valued.

Building robust support networks and fostering community engagement are essential for promoting successful integration. Governments, NGOs, and local organizations can enhance these efforts by creating inclusive programs that address language and cultural barriers while encouraging intercultural dialogue. As one participant from the Philippines aptly stated,

“Integration isn’t just about us learning their culture. It’s also about them understanding us.”

Such mutual efforts can pave the way for a more harmonious and inclusive urban society, benefiting both migrants and host communities alike.

This research benefits the present theoretical framework of multicultural integration in urban areas and provides solutions to current issues that remain poorly researched in relation to migrants’ resource accessibility and cultural adaptation, as well as their participation in community and cultural practices. Findings that have seen, while previous research assaults the problems of migration as nuisances including discrimination (Mukumbang et al., 2020), and inadequate access to key services (Osman & Elamin, 2023), this study offers a deeper and more precise perspective on how migrants manage attributes of raucousness through support organizations and participation. Additionally, the findings show the direction for future

research regarding cultural adaptation and identity development as the process influenced by structural and interpersonal levels.

To the best knowledge of the author, one strength of this study involves the use of the concept of interdependency for analysing migrants' informal support networks in addition to the formal services. Whereas, previous papers like Abu et al. (2019) have explored the part of social networks in integration, this research gives new information regarding how particular sorts of communities like religious structures and cultural centers participate as those pivotal nodes as sources of social connection and resources distribution. For instance, this research observed that apart from being a place of worship, religious centers, provided people with a family like support as they would help in tasks such as teaching people other languages, and helping in job hunting. This builds on the work of Oliveira & Padilla (2020) who highlighted the social integration functions of the community-based organisations, to show here how these networks also enhance social emotional wellbeing and resilience.

Moreover, this study offers fresh perspectives on cultural adaptation and identity negotiation, shedding light on the dual pressures migrants face: retaining their cultural identity while conforming to the expectations of the host society. Unlike previous research that framed integration as a one-dimensional process of assimilation (Villalobos, 2020), this study highlights the bidirectional nature of cultural exchange. Migrants in this study actively participated in cultural activities and engaged in mutual learning with host communities, a process that facilitated deeper social cohesion. However, challenges such as cultural misunderstanding and subtle exclusion persisted, echoing the findings of Sharma (2024), but with new evidence emphasizing the emotional toll of such experiences.

Another area where this study fills an existing gap is in exploring how migrants respond to structural inequalities. Previous studies, like Recio et al. (2021), identified systemic barriers such as limited access to housing, healthcare, and education but lacked detailed accounts of how migrants navigate these challenges. By highlighting strategies such as volunteering and participation in grassroots initiatives, this study demonstrates how migrants actively work to overcome these barriers, challenging the passive narratives often associated with marginalized groups (Moser & Bader, 2023). Some participants engaged in local food banks or cultural events as a means of building bridges and gaining acceptance within their communities, which aligns with and expands upon findings by Hellgren & Gabrielli (2021).

Lastly, this study addresses the intersectionality of migrant experiences, incorporating factors such as gender, legal status, and ethnicity, which are often underexplored in integration research (Ma & Joshi, 2022). By capturing diverse voices, including those of refugees and economic migrants, this research provides a more holistic understanding of integration dynamics. As Ahn & Juraev (2023) argued, a comprehensive approach to integration must consider the heterogeneity within migrant populations, and this study offers empirical evidence supporting that view.

The findings underscore the need for inclusive policies that foster integration by addressing both structural and interpersonal barriers (Cerna, et al., 2021). Governments and NGOs should prioritize creating accessible resources, such as language training and legal assistance, while ensuring these services are culturally sensitive and widely publicized (Reza, 2022). Furthermore, fostering intercultural dialogue through community events and workshops can bridge gaps between migrants and host communities, as suggested by Stahl & Maznevski (2021).

Conclusion

This study provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges and strategies involved in migrant integration within urban settings, emphasizing the roles of discrimination, access to resources, cultural adaptation, and community engagement. By addressing gaps in the literature, the findings highlight how migrants navigate systemic barriers and negotiate their identities while leveraging support networks to foster inclusion. This research underscores the need for policies that prioritize equitable access to resources and intercultural dialogue, advocating for a more inclusive approach to urban integration. Ultimately, the study contributes to a deeper appreciation of the dynamic processes underlying migrant integration and offers actionable insights for promoting social cohesion in multicultural societies.

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