

# **Groupism, Inclusion, and Exclusion in College Social Circles: A Psychological Study**

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**Abstract:** College life is often marked by the formation of social circles, which serve as significant contexts for psychological development, identity formation, and social learning among students. These social groups, however, are not always inclusive. Patterns of groupism, inclusion, and exclusion shape students' experiences, influencing their academic performance, mental health, and social well-being. This study explores the psychological underpinnings of group dynamics in Indian colleges, examining how groupism affects peer interactions, social inclusion, and social exclusion. By analysing secondary data from research articles, surveys, and reports on Indian higher education, this paper identifies patterns of social behaviour, the factors that drive inclusion and exclusion, and their psychological impacts. The study highlights the importance of fostering inclusive social environments in colleges to support students' mental health, social integration, and overall development.

**Keywords:** Groupism, Social Inclusion, Social Exclusion, College Students, Peer Relationships, Indian Higher Education, Mental Health, Psychological Well-being.

## **INTRODUCTION**

College is a critical stage in human development, serving as a bridge between adolescence and adulthood. During this period, students experience heightened social engagement, identity exploration, and emotional growth. Social circles in colleges often provide a sense of belonging, emotional support, and opportunities for collaboration. However, the social environment is not always equitable. Groupism—the tendency to form exclusive groups based on interests, backgrounds, or identities—can lead to the exclusion of certain students, creating social hierarchies and affecting psychological well-being.

In India, where higher education campuses are diverse in terms of culture, religion, socioeconomic status, and language, groupism is a prevalent phenomenon. Understanding how inclusion and exclusion operate in these settings is crucial for educators, policymakers, and counsellors to design interventions that foster positive social environments. This paper aims to investigate the dynamics of groupism, inclusion, and exclusion among Indian college students, drawing insights from secondary sources.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Understanding Groupism** - Groupism refers to the practice of forming exclusive social units that may foster loyalty and cooperation among members but can also result in prejudice or discrimination against non-members. According to Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory (1979), individuals derive a part of their identity from group membership, leading to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination.

In Indian colleges, groupism often manifests along lines of:

- **Cultural and Regional Identities:** Students may form groups based on regional backgrounds, leading to linguistic or cultural segregation.
- **Socioeconomic Status:** Students from similar economic backgrounds tend to cluster together, influencing access to social resources and support networks.
- **Academic Performance and Interests:** Peer groups often form based on academic achievement or shared interests, such as sports, arts, or technology.

**Social Inclusion and Exclusion** - Social inclusion is the process through which individuals feel accepted, supported, and valued in a group. Conversely, social exclusion occurs when individuals are marginalized, ignored, or discriminated against. Research by Williams (2007) emphasizes that social exclusion can lead to feelings of loneliness, reduced self-esteem, and mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression.

In India, studies suggest that students from marginalized social backgrounds, lower economic strata, or linguistic minorities may experience higher levels of exclusion in college social circles. Factors contributing to inclusion and exclusion include interpersonal skills, cultural familiarity, social status, and peer perceptions.

**Psychological Implications** - The psychological impacts of groupism, inclusion, and exclusion are significant:

- **Mental Health:** Excluded students may face stress, anxiety, and depression.
- **Academic Performance:** Social exclusion can negatively affect concentration, engagement, and performance.

- **Identity Formation:** Inclusion supports self-esteem, social confidence, and identity consolidation.

Secondary studies in Indian colleges indicate that students who are socially integrated report higher satisfaction, better mental health, and stronger academic motivation (Chakraborty & Sengupta, 2019).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study relies entirely on secondary data, sourced from:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles focusing on social psychology, higher education, and Indian student populations.
- Government and NGO reports on college demographics, social behaviour, and student welfare.
- Online surveys and educational reports highlighting inclusion and exclusion trends in Indian colleges.

The collected data were analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns in group formation, inclusion, exclusion, and their psychological consequences.

## **GROUPISM IN INDIAN COLLEGES**

### **Forms of Groupism**

Groupism in Indian colleges can be categorized into several forms:

**Cultural and Regional Grouping:** A study by Kumar (2020) shows that students from the same state or linguistic background often cluster together, forming informal communities. For example, North Indian students may gravitate toward peers from their region in South Indian colleges and vice versa.

**Caste and Socioeconomic Grouping:** Despite affirmative action policies, caste and economic backgrounds still influence social networks. Students from higher-income families often dominate social activities, whereas lower-income students may feel marginalized.

**Interest-based Grouping:** Academic excellence, sports teams, and extracurricular clubs also serve as bases for social circles, promoting collaboration but sometimes excluding less skilled or less confident students.

### **Factors Promoting Groupism**

- **Shared Experiences:** Students bond over common cultural or linguistic backgrounds.
- **Peer Influence:** The desire to fit in motivates students to align with established groups.
- **Institutional Practices:** Seating arrangements, hostel allocations, and club memberships can inadvertently reinforce group boundaries.

**Social Inclusion in College Circles -** Social inclusion involves actively welcoming diverse individuals into a community, ensuring equal opportunities for participation and recognition. In colleges, inclusion improves peer support, mental health, and academic engagement.

### **Mechanisms of Inclusion**

- **Peer Mentoring:** Senior students guiding juniors can reduce feelings of isolation.
- **Cultural and Festive Events:** Celebrating diverse traditions encourages interaction across groups.
- **Inclusive Clubs and Societies:** Organizations that encourage participation regardless of background foster inclusion.

### **Evidence from Indian Colleges**

According to Sharma and Gupta (2018), students participating in inclusive clubs and festivals report higher satisfaction and lower stress levels. Inclusive practices are particularly effective in urban colleges with diverse student populations.

## **SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN COLLEGE CIRCLES**

### **Forms of Exclusion**

Exclusion can manifest in subtle and overt ways:

- **Physical Isolation:** Students may be ignored in group activities or social events.

- **Social Ostracism:** Peers may exclude certain students from friendship circles.
- **Academic Marginalization:** Group-based project allocations may favor certain students.

### **Causes of Exclusion**

- **Cultural Differences:** Students from minority linguistic or regional backgrounds may feel isolated.
- **Socioeconomic Factors:** Limited financial resources can prevent participation in social activities.
- **Personality Traits:** Introverted or shy students often face higher risks of exclusion.

### **Psychological Effects**

Exclusion has severe consequences, including:

- **Emotional Distress:** Feelings of loneliness, rejection, and anxiety.
- **Reduced Academic Engagement:** Excluded students may avoid group projects or class participation.
- **Identity Challenges:** Persistent exclusion can weaken self-esteem and social confidence.

### **Interplay Between Groupism, Inclusion, and Exclusion**

Groupism inherently creates boundaries that determine who is included and who is excluded. Psychological theories such as Tajfel's Social Identity Theory and Festinger's Social Comparison Theory explain these dynamics:

- **In-group Favouritism:** Students often prioritize their group's members for friendship, collaboration, and support.
- **Out-group Discrimination:** Non-members may experience marginalization, negative stereotyping, and social exclusion.
- **Peer Pressure and Conformity:** Students may modify behaviour to conform to in-group norms, affecting authenticity and self-expression.

## **STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE INCLUSION AND REDUCE EXCLUSION**

### **Institutional Interventions**

- **Diversity-Oriented Policies:** Admission processes, hostel allocations, and club memberships should promote heterogeneous group formation.
- **Counselling and Peer Support Programs:** Colleges can provide mentoring and psychological support for isolated students.
- **Workshops and Awareness Campaigns:** Programs focusing on empathy, collaboration, and cultural sensitivity can reduce prejudices.

### **Student-Led Initiatives**

- **Inclusive Clubs and Societies:** Encouraging diverse participation in cultural, academic, and sports clubs.
- **Buddy Systems:** Pairing new students with seniors to facilitate social integration.
- **Collaborative Projects:** Mixed-group projects promote interaction across social boundaries.

### **Implications for Mental Health and Academic Performance**

Social inclusion positively correlates with better mental health outcomes, higher self-esteem, and improved academic performance. Conversely, exclusion leads to increased stress, anxiety, and disengagement from academic activities. Secondary studies from Indian colleges suggest that fostering inclusive environments can significantly reduce dropout rates and improve overall student satisfaction (Rao, 2021).

### **Limitations of Secondary Research**

While secondary data provides valuable insights, limitations include:

- **Contextual Variability:** Findings from one region may not generalize to all Indian colleges.
- **Data Gaps:** Limited studies focus specifically on psychological impacts of groupism.

- **Time Sensitivity:** Social dynamics evolve, and older studies may not capture recent trends.

## CONCLUSION

Groupism, inclusion, and exclusion are central to understanding social dynamics in Indian colleges. While groupism is a natural human tendency, it can result in social exclusion with adverse psychological and academic consequences. Promoting social inclusion through institutional policies, student initiatives, and awareness campaigns is essential for fostering equitable, supportive, and mentally healthy learning environments. Colleges that prioritize inclusion are likely to see improved student well-being, stronger peer relationships, and enhanced academic outcomes.

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