Prejudice and Racism: A Study on the Discriminatory Experiences of Foreign Residents of Japan

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Abstract- Prejudice and racism are complex issues that require careful consideration and sensitivity. Japan, a developed nation, is not immune to these discussions. Despite its homogeneity, Japan has seen a rise in foreign nationals and immigrants due to labour shortages and other measures. This situation has led to a growing multicultural society with diverse backgrounds. Many foreign residents have reported uncomfortable situations, suggesting racial biases may be the cause. This study aims to identify the factors contributing to racially motivated discriminatory encounters and gain insight into the true prevalence of prejudice and racism in Japan.

Keywords Prejudice, Racism, Racial discrimination, Foreign residents, Japan

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1.   Introduction

Japan, a predominantly homogeneous society, is not immune to prejudice, discrimination, and racism. The nation's historical trajectory has shown an inclination towards isolationism, with the concept of *Nihonjiron* indicating a collective identity rooted in cultural homogeneity. This situation has led to feelings of exclusion for individuals without visual characteristics typically associated with Japanese ethnicity. Ethnic minorities, immigrants, and foreigners may face discrimination across various domains, including housing, education, employment, and social interactions.

Ethnic minority groups, such as the Ainus and Burakumins, have often faced discriminatory treatment from the Japanese populace due to their divergence from the conventional Japanese ethnic composition. Discrimination can manifest in various ways, including limited access to housing and employment opportunities, reduced compensation, exclusionary social behaviours, and incidents of racial profiling. Japanese culture challenges foreigners due to different values and norms, necessitating significant effort to comprehend and adapt. The language barrier poses a substantial challenge in communicating with local communities, as the prevalence of English speakers is limited. Discriminatory attitudes towards foreigners exist among the Japanese population, with discrimination or prejudice reported in diverse manners, including constrained employment prospects, challenges securing adequate housing, and social exclusion.

In contemporary times, Japan has experienced a significant rise in the arrival of foreign labourers due to demographic challenges. The government has implemented initiatives to address labour shortages in specific industries, and numerous organisations and support networks are dedicated to assisting foreign residents. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all Japanese individuals hold discriminatory attitudes towards foreigners. Various groups, activists, and individuals in Japan strive to promote equality, address discriminatory practices, and enhance public consciousness regarding these issues. While the Japanese government has taken measures to eliminate racial discrimination, more comprehensive solutions and broader social change are required to address these issues successfully.

1.1. Definitions

Prejudice is a subjective evaluation of a group characterised by positive or negative sentiments. It consists of three components: cognitive, affective, and conative. Prejudice can lead to discriminatory behaviour and stereotypes, as individuals associate negative emotions with specific groups. Stereotypical beliefs often accompany it and can result in discriminatory conduct. Defining prejudice is

challenging due to its multiple interpretations.

Discrimination targets specific social groups, causing significant consequences for individuals' well-being. Racial discrimination manifests prejudice, often based on stereotypes and prejudices. For example, African descent individuals may face employment discrimination due to negative racial stereotypes, leading to exclusion from job opportunities.

Racism is an ideological framework that promotes racial superiority based on biological or cultural factors. It rationalises unequal treatment or marginalised social status for certain racial groups. Race is a social construct influenced by shared physical attributes and shared lineage, historical background, and cultural customs. Racism is separate from racial discrimination and inequality, which are differential treatment based on racial background.

1.2. Prejudice, Discrimination, Racism- the context of Japan

Racism in Japan is a complex and deeply ingrained social issue characterised by various dimensions and conflicting perspectives, as a significant portion of the population tends to deny its existence. There exists a prevailing notion that racism primarily involves instances of discrimination perpetrated by individuals of white ethnicity against individuals of colour, thereby implying that a non-white nation such as Japan is exempt from the obligation to address this issue. Furthermore, the widely held belief that Japan is an exceptionally homogeneous society characterised by racial purity and a scarcity of external influences perpetuates the perception that "racism" is inconsequential (Aiyar, 2018). The severity of racism in Japan is generally less pronounced than in Western societies. In general, the safety concerns of foreign residents are minimal. The Justice Ministry of Japan has initiated a survey by sending inquiries to many foreign residents. This survey aims to obtain valuable insights into their encounters with racism in a nation that has witnessed a significant increase in international tourists. The government distributed the survey to 18,500 foreign residents nationwide in the latter part of the previous year. Out of this sample, a total of 4,252 individuals provided their responses. Approximately 30% of the participants indicated that they had been subjected to discriminatory comments on a frequent or occasional basis. According to a report by the Jiji news agency, it is probable that individuals unfamiliar with the situation would be making such remarks. However, it is worth noting that many individuals also attributed blame to their superiors, co-workers, or subordinates (The Guardian, 2017).

Japanese racism frequently stems from a belief in Japanese exceptionalism, which posits that individuals who are not native to Japan are incapable of comprehending or assimilating into the cultural fabric of the country. This phenomenon manifests

itself in manners that may not always be deliberately malevolent yet can still yield repercussions for individuals who are not of Japanese descent. As a homogenous society, Japan presents distinctive challenges that necessitate deliberate strategies when addressing race matters. Various internationalisation programs and initiatives have contributed to substantial advancements. The level of awareness regarding racism in Japan may not be commensurate with that observed in other nations; however, it is acknowledged by specific segments of the Japanese population as a significant concern. Japan exhibits various forms of discrimination, some of which can be severe. However, a considerable portion of the racism observed in this country can also be attributed to a lack of exposure and preconceived notions regarding cultural disparities. These attitudes will likely take some time to shift (Lee, 2020).

As the Japanese population becomes increasingly accustomed to foreign residents within their local communities and professional environments, there is potential for a reduction in the tendency to judge individuals based solely on their cultural heritage. In the interim, it is imperative to augment societal endeavours to enhance consciousness and combat racism (Lee, 2020).

The word "Gaijin" can be a simple example of the subtle and unconscious racism in Japan. Gaijin is a Japanese word meaning "Foreigner". The word derives from the word "Gaikokujin" (外国人), which means "A person from a foreign country. It seems to be a typical Japanese word. So, what is the problem with the word gaijin (外人)? The kanji in the middle of the word gaikokujin (外国人) stands for "country" (国); when this kanji gets removed, the word gaijin (外人) derives. These two Kanji characters connote the meaning of "Stranger" or "Outsider", which holds a xenophobic sentiment. Even though most Japanese people do not use it intentionally as a derogatory term, the word "Gaijin" carries a negative impression, and foreigners resent this word (Kotomi, 2020). The linguistic analysis of the term "gaijin" as a potential abbreviation of "gaikokujin" can be considered plausible, disregarding the emotional perspective of the proponents of the term. To substantiate this claim, at the very least, it is essential to satisfy the three specified criteria. Initially, the gaikokujin made their initial appearance (Kotomi, 2020).

Moreover, a necessity arose to create a more concise term for gaikokujin, resulting in the term gaijin. It can be observed that the terms "gaijin" and "gaikokujin" continue to possess a similar connotation and semantic significance (Kotomi, 2020). Furthermore, if it were the case that numerous other instances of abbreviations akin to "gaikokujin" and "gaijin" existed, this would bolster the linguistic substantiation for the assertion. Nevertheless, despite the unwavering stance of proponents of abbreviation theory, there is a lack of textual evidence to

substantiate the initial or subsequent criteria. Regarding the fourth criterion, it proves challenging to identify numerous instances of three-character terms abbreviated by omitting the middle character. However, one such example does exist, namely the abbreviation "gaikokusha" (外国人), meaning "foreign car," to "gaisha" (外車) with the same connotation. This exemplification aligns with the aforementioned third criterion. Regrettably, within present-day discourse, the terms "gaijin" and "gaikokujin" possess distinct connotations (Kotomi, 2020).

The term "gaikokujin" refers to individuals who do not possess Japanese citizenship, whereas "gaijin" describes individuals whose physical characteristics, such as skin colour and facial features, indicate that they are not of pure Japanese descent. The first individual's evaluation is based solely on their possession of citizenship, whereas the evaluation of the second individual encompasses factors such as race, ancestry, and physical appearance. Individuals from other countries, such as China and Korea, who resemble Japanese individuals and are, therefore, difficult to distinguish, are infrequently called "gaijin." In contrast, an individual of South Asian descent who acquires Japanese citizenship will cease to be classified as a gaikokujin. Nevertheless, they will probably continue to be called gaijin. Even though gaijin does not qualify as a racial slur, its usage tends to carry predominantly negative connotations when directed towards foreigners in Japan (Japan Today, 2011). In conjunction with Japan's gradual yet steady progression towards broader internationalisation, there has been a notable rise in international relationships and marriages, consequently leading to an increase in hafu individuals born to mixed-Japanese parentage. Due to the absence of an official ethnicity census in Japan, accurately determining the size of the hafu population is challenging. It gets further complicated because naturalised citizens and individuals of mixed ethnicity are officially recognised as Japanese in official data.

Nonetheless, there is a discernible and unequivocal pattern of offspring being born to couples of different nationalities. In 1987, 10,022 offspring were born to couples consisting of one parent of Japanese descent and one of non-Japanese descent. Nevertheless, by 2009, the figure had experienced a significant increase, thereby highlighting the observable pattern of Japan's gradual yet definite progression towards internationalisation (Saragai, 2022).

In Japan, the term "Hafu" (ハーフ) is commonly used to denote an individual of mixed heritage, specifically having one parent of Japanese descent and the other of a different ethnic background. The term's etymology remains ambiguous, as there are divergent perspectives regarding its origins. Some assert that it derives from the pejorative English expression 'half-caste', while others contend it is a direct adoption of 'half' (Saragai, 2022). As mentioned earlier, a faction of individuals opposes using the term. Instead, they advocate for the adoption of the term

"daburu" (derived from the English word "double") as a more suitable alternative. Daburu symbolises the diverse cultures and ethnic heritages that contribute to their identities. Upon encountering the term "hafu," individuals may associate it with perceiving themselves as incomplete or lacking as a complete person (Wilders, 2022). The rationale behind many individuals adopting the term "double" is rooted in their desire to express a sense of pride in their dual heritage, acknowledging that they possess two distinct ancestral backgrounds due to their birth circumstances. The term's etymology remains ambiguous, as there are divergent perspectives regarding its origins. Some assert that it derives from the pejorative English expression 'half-caste', while others contend it is a direct adoption of 'half' (Saragai, 2022). Japan is a nation that values conformity, as exemplified by the traditional Japanese proverb "der kuiwa uterus", which means that the nail that sticks out gets hammered down. It is hard to stand out as an individual in Japanese society. Parents of hafu children from visibly mixed households frequently express significant concerns regarding their children's bullying experiences and difficulties assimilating into social groups. However, due to the growing prominence of individuals of mixed Japanese heritage in the music industry and television, a reduced level of societal expectation to conform has been observed among many of us. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that additional underlying issues may not yet be addressed (Izanau, 2020).

Racial profiling is an unjust practice by law enforcement agencies targeting individuals based on race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin. This practice perpetuates racist ideologies and stereotypes, violating constitutional principles and prohibiting law. In Japan, the U.S. Embassy issued a cautionary notice in 2021, highlighting the rise in reported incidents of suspected racial profiling. A comprehensive examination of 40 cases revealed six instances of racial profiling or inappropriate methodologies. A recent study by a group of lawyers in Tokyo found that individuals of foreign origin residing in Japan have encountered cases of racial profiling by law enforcement authorities, primarily due to their physical appearance. A survey conducted among 2,094 participants revealed that the police had stopped 63% of respondents within the last five years, 73% had been subjected to multiple interrogations and over three-quarters of these individuals had no objective justification for being arrested.

1.3. Conceptual Framework

The fundamental concepts of Social Identity Theory (SIT) are widely recognised for their utility in comprehending intergroup dynamics and elucidating phenomena in intergroup interactions. The social identity theory was first proposed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979, and later, in 1986, they proposed that,

"There is a conceptual differentiation between personal and social identity,

asserting that this distinction serves as the foundation for distinguishing between interpersonal situations, where behavior is primarily influenced by individual characteristics, and group situations, where behavior is predominantly shaped by categorical processes. Social Identity Theory focuses on the latter aspect of behavior and operates under the premise that social identity primarily arises from an individual's affiliations with various groups." (Brown, 2000)

Individuals strive to maintain a positive social identity, boosting self-esteem through comparisons between in-groups and out-groups. Unsatisfactory identities may lead to disassociation or behaviours for distinctiveness. Strategies for intergroup differentiation vary depending on conditions. Tajfel and Turner identified three variables: subjective identification, context for evaluative comparisons, and out-group comparability. Pressures for distinctiveness intensify as comparability increases.

This study explores the determinants of racially motivated discriminatory encounters in Japan, focusing on intergroup dynamics and in-group/out-group biases, as per Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory, as clarified by Rupert Brown (2000).

This study investigates the various factors contributing to discriminatory attitudes towards foreign residents in Japan. This study also examines the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes towards foreign residents within Japanese society. The present study employs the social identity theory as a theoretical framework to delineate a conceptual framework.

This study employs the social identity theory to address the discriminatory attitudes encountered by foreign residents rooted in their racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. The study's conceptual framework provides the foundation for addressing the research questions by establishing the underlying concepts. The key concepts that have been underpinned to outline the conceptual framework of this study are as follows.

• Socio-demographic factors

• Integration Experiences

• Cultural Competence and Intercultural Communication Skills

• Perception of Racial Prejudice and Discrimination of Foreign Residents

• Societal and Institutional Factors

• Foreign Residents Experiencing Racial Prejudice and Discriminatory Behavior in Japan.

Table 1: Rupert Brown's SIT Framework

Focus Areas	Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Clarifies In-group Bias	1. Implications in a variety of disciplines	1. Does not consider situational or contextual factors
2. Recognising Responses to Status Inequality		
3. Perceptions of Group Homogeneity and Stereotyping	2. Explains prejudice and discrimination concerning intergroup relationships.	2. Understanding intragroup dynamics is limited.
4. Altering intergroup attitudes through contact		
	3. Emphasises the relevance of social factors (values and norms) in forming and developing both individual and group identities	

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of this Study
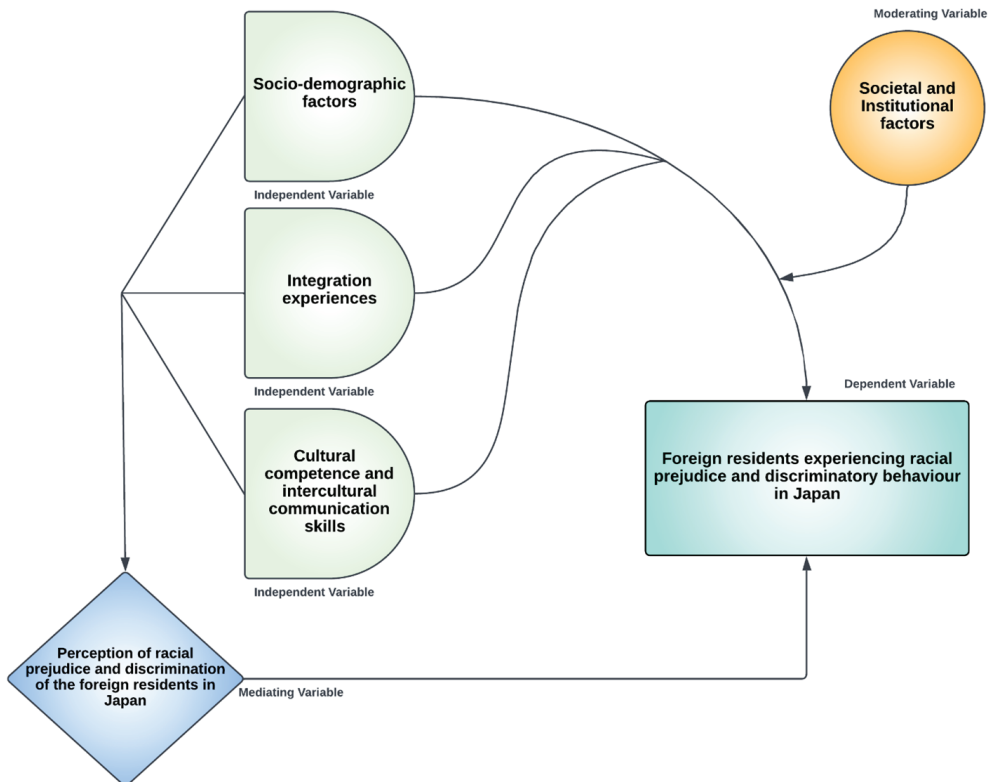
1.4. Aims and Objectives

Japan faces demographic challenges due to a declining population and an ageing society. To address this, the government is boosting immigration rates, leading to

an increase in cultural diversity. However, there is a need for more research on the perception of foreign residents in Japan. Existing studies focus on language acquisition, employment prospects, and cultural assimilation, overlooking foreigners' unique difficulties due to their perceived "otherness." Existing literature mainly focuses on ethnic minorities, neglecting the diverse racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. This study aims to explore Japanese people's discriminatory attitudes towards foreign residents and their impact on them. Using a qualitative research design, it examines racial, cultural, and ethnic discrimination in Japan and aims to understand the extent of such attitudes in Japanese society. The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What factors interplay with the discriminatory experiences encountered by foreign residents in Japanese society?

2. What is the extent of discriminatory attitudes towards foreign residents in Japanese society?

II. Research Methodology

This study examines racial discrimination in Japan and its factors, aiming to understand the determinants affecting foreign residents. It uses a qualitative framework combining Interpretivism and epistemology, acknowledging that no single perspective can provide a complete picture and that multiple realities may exist. This study uses an abductive methodology to analyse the discriminatory experiences of foreign residents in Japan. It combines traditional archival research with modern internet-based methods.

The study collects data from primary and secondary sources, including interviews, study materials, and websites. The aim is to identify critical factors influencing discrimination in Japanese society, aligning with interpretivism principles. Abductive reasoning is employed to analyse data collection and theoretical framework. This study aimed to assess the comprehension of racial prejudice and bias towards foreigners within Japanese society and the perceptions of foreign residents in Japan regarding this issue. The preceding provides evidence that this study is qualitative. Based on examining pertinent factors and collecting empirical data, this study aligns with the philosophical framework of Interpretivism. The abductive method is capable of generating testable hypotheses through the process of drawing inferences from existing knowledge and collecting data. This study employed an abductive framework to ascertain the factors contributing to the racially discriminatory encounters faced by foreign residents in Japan, thus shedding light on the prevalence of discriminatory conduct towards foreign residents within Japanese society. Data are gathered by conducting interviews and analysing documents. The data was collected using a semi-structured

questionnaire for interview.

The present study employed qualitative research methodology and utilised semi-structured interviews as the chosen method for data collection. This approach entailed using a questionnaire comprising open-ended inquiries, thereby granting participants the autonomy to shape the course and trajectory of the dialogue. Interviews and the use of secondary materials already in existence, such as books, articles, reports, websites, and academic journals, were the primary methods for collecting the data utilised in this investigation. As a strategy for gathering information, this study uses only semi-structured interviews. Formulating central questions or overarching themes intended to answer the research topics is the first step in this methodology. Pseudonyms are used to attribute participant quotes, ensuring anonymity in data collection and allowing respondents to provide information they might have been hesitant to disclose without assurance. This study uses interviews, documentation, cross-referencing, abductive and thematic analysis techniques, and illustrations and diagrams to ensure accuracy, internal validity, and clarity of qualitative data. Developing research questions establishes the precise individuals who will be selected for interviews in a study.

The research inquiries for this study involve implementing discussions with foreign residents currently living in Japan. A cohort of twenty-five people was surveyed in its entirety. In light of ethical considerations, the specific details of the interviews are maintained confidentially.

III. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Factors that Interplay with the Discriminatory Experiences Encountered by Foreign Residents in Japanese Society

Japan's rapidly ageing population and decreasing birth rate have led to a significant labour shortage in the workforce, with the worker supply expected to shrink by 12% in 2040. To address these challenges, Japan implemented immigration reforms in April 2019, broadening visa programs to facilitate increased immigration. The post-pandemic period has seen a surge in foreign workers and international students, with the number of foreign residents reaching a record high of 3,075,213 individuals by the end of 2022. This growth rate is attributed to the ease of COVID-19 border restrictions. Japan's growing multiculturalism and diverse population also present opportunities for understanding potential unfamiliarity when encountering individuals from different cultural backgrounds. To progress towards a more multicultural society, it is crucial to cultivate an environment that fosters inclusivity and embraces individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. It requires upholding the rule of law and safeguarding the human rights of all residents.

Despite Japan's increasing multiculturalism, discrimination against foreign individuals remains a significant concern. The Racial Discrimination Investigation Study Group surveyed in 2016 revealed that 63 investigations on discrimination against foreigners and racial discrimination were initiated at the local government level between 1984 and 2014. The study aims to assess the primary determinants contributing to discriminatory encounters faced by foreign residents within Japanese society, providing valuable insights into the current state of discriminatory attitudes towards individuals from foreign countries.

This study presents the factors that impact the experiences of foreign residents in Japan concerning discriminatory attitudes. It demonstrates that the nationality of a foreign resident plays a pivotal role in shaping their overall experience. The results additionally indicate that individuals of a racial background classified as "non-white" may encounter a higher prevalence of discriminatory conduct than those classified as "white," substantiating the notion that skin colour constitutes a noteworthy racial bias within Japanese society.

3.1.1. Discriminatory Behaviour Faced by Foreign Residents in Japan

• One of the most crucial problems that still exists is the housing issue for foreign residents in Japan. Japanese people tend to refuse to rent to foreigners, and it's hard for foreign residents to find a place to stay (Interviewees 11, 14 & 25).

• Avoiding or refusing to communicate with a foreigner or sitting next to a foreigner on public transportation are typical examples of discriminatory behaviour directed at foreign residents (Interviewees 5, 7, 9, 19 & 24).

• Japanese people occasionally ridicule foreigners in their presence by utilising the Japanese language, under the assumption that the foreign individuals lack comprehension of said language. As mentioned earlier, the perspective possesses racially discriminatory implications, likely to be disapproved by most individuals (Interviewees 12 & 21).

• At times, Japanese individuals exhibit curiosity towards individuals from foreign backgrounds, as evidenced by their tendency to stare at them or express astonishment upon witnessing their proficiency in handling chopsticks or conversing fluently in Japanese (Interviewees 9 & 15).

The research found that individuals with physical characteristics significantly different from the Japanese population, excluding Caucasians, may be more susceptible to experiencing racial bias and discrimination within Japanese society.

i. Socio-demographic Factors

Socio-demographics refer to the fundamental attributes and traits that define a

given population. In various survey contexts, socio-demographic factors, including but not limited to age, gender, ethnicity, education level, income, type of client, years of experience, and location, are typically included as formal inquiries. Organisations and researchers commonly employ diverse data collection methodologies, such as interviews, surveys, and observation techniques, to acquire socio-demographic data from a pre-determined sample (Formplus, 2023). The results obtained from the conducted interview indicate a discernible correlation between the socio-demographic characteristics of foreign residents and their encounters with discrimination within Japanese society.

The demographic factor that significantly contributes to discriminatory bias in society is the nationality of a non-native resident. Individuals from various nations exhibit noticeable physical distinctions, particularly within a culturally uniform society such as Japan. The visual differentiation of individuals based on melanin content, including in Japanese society, renders skin colour a significant determinant of one's perceived Japanese appearance. According to extensive research, a skin tone highly regarded in Japanese society is characterised by its whiteness (Arudou, 2015). According to Ashikari's (2005) research on the material culture of the cosmetics industry in Japan, the author posits that the concept of skin serves as a means of expressing and representing "Japaneseness" among the middle class. This is due to the belief held by Japan's middle class that individuals of Japanese descent share a typical skin tone, thus making Japanese skin an effective medium for conveying a sense of national identity. The concept of "whiteness" often serves as a prevalent representation of culturally esteemed attributes such as "purity" and "cleanliness."

Consequently, lighter skin is generally regarded as more desirable than darker skin due to its association with a perceived sense of cleanliness. Individuals with darker skin may be considered less representative of the Japanese identity. As Kowner and Demel (2013) assert, the preference for fair skin, which is closely intertwined with consumer culture, can be understood as being influenced by both notions of beauty and race.

Table 2: Countries of the Participants who faced discriminatory behaviour in Japan

Countries	Percentage
Bangladesh	17
India	17
Pakistan	17
Srilanka	17
Philippines	8
Vietnam	8
Indonesia	8
Fiji	8

All individuals who have been interviewed for this study are enrolled as students. The university lacked documentation regarding the participants' responses to instances of discriminatory bias they encountered. Discriminatory attitudes may be more apparent in the workplace than in educational institutions (Interviewee 1).

Another key socio-demographic factor is the length of stay or how long the foreign residents have lived in Japan. This is another crucial aspect of understanding how discriminatory bias works in Japanese society. All twelve interviewees who faced discriminatory attitudes almost lived in Japan for over three months.

Table 3: Foreign residents' length of stay in Japan

Residents' length of stay	Percentage
0-6 months	22
6-12 months	22
More than one year	43
More than two years	13

ii. Integration Experiences

This concept pertains to how people can actively engage with new experiences and effectively participate in them. This study's findings can be linked to various factors in integrated experiences, such as language proficiency and social connections. All participants in the interview conducted for this study responded that living in Japan without knowing any Japanese as a foreigner would be hard. The presence of language poses a significant obstacle in the daily lives of foreigners residing in Japan. Most respondents reported having Japanese acquaintances, regardless of nationality or duration of stay, suggesting that establishing social connections in Japan was comparatively effortless. The language barrier may impede effective communication and hinder meaningful engagement with local communities, potentially leading to feelings of exclusion or marginalisation as individuals perceive themselves as "others".

iii. Cultural Competence and Intercultural Communication Skills

Intercultural communication skills encompass effectively communicating and exchanging information with individuals from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Although language proficiency is crucial for effective intercultural communication, it is not a prerequisite. Intercultural communication necessitates the recognition of cultural diversity, encompassing distinct customs, norms, social conventions, and cognitive frameworks across various societies. Cultivating practical intercultural communication skills necessitates genuine openness to embracing and accommodating divergences.

Japanese society possesses a distinct cultural identity that can elicit a sense of disorientation among individuals from divergent cultural contexts. Japanese society places a high value on adherence to rules and anticipates that all individuals, regardless of nationality, will comply. Foreign residents may encounter challenges adapting to a culture that strongly emphasises following rules, such as Japan. Nevertheless, if an individual from another country demonstrates a willingness to acknowledge and honour cultural differences, it could result in a satisfactory experience.

3.1.2. Perception of Racial Prejudice and Discrimination of the Foreign Residents

The topics of racial discrimination and racism are multifaceted. Misinterpretation of behaviour can result in the perception of a racially discriminatory attitude. It is imperative to comprehend the distinctions between behaviours that possess a racist connotation and those that lack such connotations. To comprehend a given situation, it is necessary to consider two distinct perspectives. For specific individuals from other countries, observing them intently, expressing astonishment at their proficiency in the Japanese language, or displaying curiosity regarding their racial and cultural heritage may not necessarily be considered racist.

Nevertheless, specific individuals may interpret it as exhibiting racist conduct. The perception of racist behaviour among foreigners is contingent upon their perspectives. Socio-demographic factors may also influence the perception of racially discriminatory behaviour.

3.2. Extent of Discriminatory Attitudes towards Foreign Residents in Japanese Society

Racism is a complex phenomenon prevalent in various societies, including Japan. While many non-native inhabitants experience contentment and effectiveness in their daily existence within this locale, a subset encounters heightened prejudice and bias in their personal and occupational spheres. In Western societies, racism is commonly perceived as exhibiting aggressive or violent tendencies. The United States has a lamentable historical record characterised by the severe mistreatment of African Americans and other marginalised communities. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this is not an isolated occurrence. Like many different countries, Japan exhibits tangible manifestations of racism within its society. Many individuals persistently believe that racial discrimination does not exist in Japan despite the abundance of compelling evidence (Lee, 2020). This article connotes the factors contributing to racially motivated behaviour, how it works, and how it exists in Japanese society. Societal and Institutional factors are the two major focuses of this article to understand the lengths of discrimination

against foreign residents in Japan. This study analyses the prevailing discriminatory attitudes within Japanese society towards its foreign residents. This analysis aims to shed light on the societal factors that contribute to the perpetuation of discriminatory behaviour, thereby providing insight into the persistence of racial discrimination against foreigners in Japan. These factors influence foreign residents' discriminatory encounters during their residency in Japan.

3.2.1. The Subtleness of Japanese Society

The challenge of assessing discriminatory attitudes among Japanese individuals may be attributed to subtle societal biases. The utilisation of implicit bias (unconscious and subtle) was initially introduced by psychologists Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald in their seminal research paper published in 1995. The authors posited that imperceptible and automatic evaluations impact our interpersonal conduct. Topics like workplace bias, ranging from employees presenting black colleagues with nooses to wage disparities within soccer and supervisors cautioning women about the necessity of harmonising with their male counterparts, get frequently highlighted, and these conspicuous, provocative, and objectionable behaviours warrant a thorough examination. However, it is essential to note that while focusing on the apparent manifestations of bias is crucial, it is equally important not to overlook its more nuanced expressions. According to social science data, individuals are significantly more likely to encounter subtle manifestations of bias than overt ones. The gradual transition of discrimination from overt expressions to more nuanced forms can indicate societal advancement. Regrettably, research findings suggest that unconscious forms of bias can exhibit greater severity than conscious ones (King & Jones, 2016).

Many enriching aspects, including distinctive norms and values, characterise the Japanese people's culture. As individuals, they exhibit a high degree of politeness and respect towards their fellow human beings. This demonstrates their ability to engage in polite social interactions, including greetings, apologies, and the expression of refusal, while maintaining a respectful demeanour. The Japanese possess a cultural inclination towards implicit communication and employ a manner of speech that avoids overtly impolite terms. When addressing sensitive matters such as racially motivated discrimination, it can be challenging to ascertain whether a Japanese individual is genuinely exhibiting racist behaviour. In Western societies, there is a notable prevalence of racially motivated discriminatory behaviours characterised by their aggressive nature. However, it is essential to note that such a phenomenon is observed differently in Japan. A comprehensive examination of Japanese society through behavioural analysis may enhance our ability to discern instances where an individual of Japanese origin is exhibiting racially motivated behaviour (Interviewees 3, 5, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22 &

24). The potential presence of discriminatory practices towards individuals from other countries could influence their inclination to remain in Japan for an extended time. The results of this study indicate that a substantial proportion of the interviewees, approximately 50%, expressed a lack of intention to remain in Japan for an extended period or establish permanent residency. Although some individuals responded that they want to return to their home country to make a more significant contribution (Interviewees 20 & 24), most participants expressed a need for more confidence in adapting to Japanese society. Several individuals said difficulties adjusting to Japanese culture and lifestyle (Interviewees 10, 15 & 22). In contrast, others conveyed perceptions of Japanese people as unwelcoming, and they may consistently remain as individuals not part of the mainstream or accepted by the Japanese people (Interviewees 5, 9, 12 & 25).

The findings of this study indicate that individuals of Japanese descent exhibit a high degree of subtlety in their responses, making it challenging for individuals from other cultural backgrounds to discern whether a particular behaviour is motivated by racial factors. This ambiguity is a characteristic trait commonly observed among Japanese individuals.

3.2.2. Racial Discrimination and the Japanese Government

Institutional racism can be characterised as a complex interplay of processes, attitudes, and behaviours that result in discriminatory outcomes for minority ethnic individuals. These outcomes are often unintentionally perpetuated through prejudiced beliefs, a lack of awareness, inconsiderate actions, and the reinforcement of racial stereotypes. According to Sir William Macpherson, the persistence of institutional racism can be attributed to the failure to acknowledge and tackle its presence and underlying factors through the implementation of appropriate policies, leading by example, and effective leadership (Lander, 2021).

Japan appears to exhibit the attributes of an institutionally racist nation. What aspects contribute to this observation? The official stance of the Japanese government refutes the existence of racial discrimination. Despite the recommendations by the United Nations and various nations to implement sufficient measures to combat racial discrimination, the Japanese government has expressed its position of not acknowledging the current state of Japan as one where the existing legal framework cannot effectively curtail discriminatory actions. Furthermore, the government asserts that explicit acts of racial discrimination, which necessitate legislative interventions, are not being perpetrated. Hence, imposing penalties for these actions is deemed unnecessary (NEUT, 2022). Despite efforts by local governments to acknowledge the presence of discrimination within their municipalities, the prevailing stance of the federal government, which steadfastly denies its existence, significantly shapes societal

perceptions regarding the prevalence or absence of racism in Japan. The existence of these issues notwithstanding, the denial of racism by the Japanese government serves to undermine their actuality (NEUT, 2022). There are also issues regarding the census methods employed by the Japanese government. In both the United States and the United Kingdom, census data captures information regarding nationality and includes data on ethnic and racial heritage. This is because nationality is not synonymous with ethnicity or race.

Nonetheless, the current Japanese population statistics solely rely on nationality as a determining factor, thereby neglecting to examine the racial diversity within the Japanese national population. Hence, this statistical data serves to support the notion that the designation "Japanese" pertains to a singular ethnic group, thereby implying that Japan's populace exclusively comprises individuals of a single culture and excludes those who are non-Japanese. However, upon closer examination of the demographic composition of the Japanese population in terms of race and ethnicity, it becomes evident that the situation is considerably more intricate. The utilisation of demographic statistics may obscure the true racial diversity within Japan, potentially fostering the perception that Japan lacks racial diversity and consequently precluding the recognition of racism as a prevailing issue (NEUT, 2022). Furthermore, Japanese politicians have been actively promoting the notion of the "single ethnicity myth." Individuals occupying positions of political authority have consistently maintained the idea that the Japanese populace constitutes a monoethnic entity.

Nevertheless, Japan has always exhibited many cultural practices and traditions that differ among its regions, alongside a notable linguistic heterogeneity encompassing Ainu, Uchinaguchi (Okinawan), and Japanese Sign Language. Additionally, Japan boasts a lengthy history characterised by migratory patterns and nomadic lifestyles. Nevertheless, the perpetuation of the single ethnicity myth is reinforced when influential politicians consistently contradict the actuality by asserting that Japan is a monoethnic society with a singular language and culture that has endured for two millennia. Racial and ethnic homogeneity is often invoked to support the assertion that Japan has never experienced racism (NEUT, 2022).

4. Conclusion

Prejudice, discrimination, and racism are sensitive topics in academic debates worldwide, with Japan being a notable context for such discussions. Despite being a predominantly homogeneous society, Japan has consistently maintained a societal structure marked by a discernible inclination towards isolationism. The concept of Nihonjiron highlights the country's cultural homogeneity, which has resulted in individuals without visual characteristics typically associated with

Japanese ethnicity experiencing feelings of exclusion. This discrimination can manifest in various ways, including limited access to housing and employment opportunities, reduced compensation, exclusionary social behaviours, and incidents of racial profiling. Japan's unique cultural heritage challenges foreigners due to different values and norms, necessitating significant effort to comprehend and adapt. The language barrier poses a substantial challenge in communicating with local communities in Japan, as the prevalence of English speakers is limited. Discriminatory attitudes towards foreigners exist among the Japanese population, and incidents of discrimination or prejudice against foreign residents have been reported.

In contemporary times, Japan has experienced a significant rise in the arrival of foreign labourers due to its prevailing demographic challenges. The government has implemented initiatives to address labour shortages in specific industries, and numerous organisations and support networks are dedicated to assisting foreign residents residing in Japan. Acknowledging that not all Japanese individuals hold discriminatory attitudes towards foreign residents, as opinions vary based on geographical location, age, demographics, and personal convictions, is crucial. Despite Japan's efforts to address discriminatory bias against foreigners, foreign workers face challenging situations and are susceptible to exploitation, perpetuating and strengthening biases and prejudices among the wider population. Various groups, activists, and individuals strive to promote equality, address discriminatory practices, and enhance public consciousness regarding these issues. The present study examines the phenomenon of racial bias within the Japanese population. It investigates potential factors that may impact the experiences of foreigners residing in Japan concerning racially motivated discrimination. The socio-demographic indicators (such as nationality and so on) indicate that there may be a racial bias in Japanese society towards persons of South Asian, South East Asian, and African heritage more so than Caucasian or East Asian people. Because Japan has been seeing a surge in the number of people arriving from other countries and as immigrants in recent years, social and institutional issues are making the situation even more difficult. This study tries to conclude that Japanese people and the government must take these steps to eradicate this complexity from their society-

- Embrace the racial diversity within Japan.
- Acknowledge the discriminatory attitudes of Japanese individuals towards foreigners to advance beyond the present circumstances.
- Comprehensive legislative and regulatory frameworks should be implemented to combat racial discrimination effectively.

A. Limitation of the Study

This study involves a sample of twenty-five non-native residents of Japan. The participants of this study are all students, which is a limitation in focusing on Japanese foreign residents. Also, expanding the participant pool beyond this number would have been time-consuming, arduous, and costly. The primary objective of this study was to examine the experiences of non-native individuals residing in Japan, which focused on Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka prefectures in Japan. Obtaining the necessary data to conduct this study throughout Japan would require significant time and financial resources.

B. Future Scope of the Study

Japan faces demographic challenges due to a declining population and an ageing society. To address this, the government is boosting immigration rates, leading to an increase in cultural diversity. However, the pre-existing literature lacks a look at the racially discriminatory attitude in Japanese society through the lens of foreigners residing in Japan. In the future, researchers should aim to address the gap in the existing literature by conducting empirical studies.

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Appendix-1
[List of Interviewees of this Article]

Interviewee no.	Occupation	Native Country
Interviewee 1	Student	Bangladesh
Interviewee 2	Student	U.A.E.
Interviewee 3	Student	Philippines
Interviewee 4	Student	Polish
Interviewee 5	Student	Bangladesh
Interviewee 6	Student	Bangladesh
Interviewee 7	Student	Vietnam
Interviewee 8	Student	Kazakhstan
Interviewee 9	Student	Fiji
Interviewee 10	Student	USA
Interviewee 11	Student	Indonesia
Interviewee 12	Student	Sri Lanka
Interviewee 13	Student	Sri Lanka
Interviewee 14	Student	Bangladesh
Interviewee 15	Student	Pakistan
Interviewee 16	Student	Bangladesh
Interviewee 17	Student	Bangladesh
Interviewee 18	Student	Bangladesh
Interviewee 19	Student	India
Interviewee 20	Student	Indonesia
Interviewee 21	Student	Philippines
Interviewee 22	Student	Sweden
Interviewee 23	Student	Indonesia
Interviewee 24	Student	India
Interviewee 25	Student	Pakistan