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The Effects of Perceived Discrimination and Acculturative Stress on Ethnic Minority Young Adult Self-Esteem and Anxiety

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Introduction

- Minority college students are at increased risk for negative mental health outcomes and self-esteem issues considering acculturative stress and perceived discrimination (Gomez et al., 2011).
- How discrimination is viewed by the individual and how they adjust to dominant culture plays an important role in self-esteem (Hall et al., 2015).
- Studies following the relationship between perceived discrimination and acculturative stress rarely look into mental health outcomes along with self-esteem (Paukert et al., 2006; Wei et al., 2013).
- This research may provide insight into the mechanisms which affect psychological distress (Tonsing et al., 2016).

Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1**: Minority students with higher levels of perceived discrimination will be more likely to experience anxious symptoms and low self-esteem than minority individuals with lower levels of perceived discrimination (PD).

**Hypothesis 2**: Minority student with higher acculturative stress levels will be more likely to experience anxious symptoms and low self-esteem than minority students with lower levels of acculturative stress (AS).

**Hypothesis 3**: Overall Black and Hispanic/Latinx students will report higher levels of perceived discrimination and acculturative stress than Asian students.

Methodology

**Measures**

**Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Scale**

The Perceived Ethnic Discrimination Questionnaire–Community Version (Brondolo et al., 2005). The PEDQ-CV was utilized to capture the levels of perceived discrimination experienced by a participant throughout their lifetime on a 5-point Likert scale.

**Self-Esteem Scale**

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The RSES was used to assess self-esteem of the participant on a 4-point scale.

**Anxiety Measure**

The Beck Anxiety Inventory (Beck, 1965). The BAI was used to assess anxiety levels for each participant, based on symptomology in the past week on a 4-point scale.

**Acculturative Stress Measure**

The Social, Attitudinal, Familiar, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale-Short Version (Mena et al., 1987). The SAFE scale was used to assess acculturative stress levels in each participant on a 5-point Likert scale.

Results

**Perceived Discrimination and Mental Health**

Positive Correlation between perceived discrimination and self-esteem ($r(60) = .264, p < .05$).

**Acculturative Stress and Mental Health**

Positive Correlation between acculturative stress and self-esteem ($r(60) = .360, p < .01$).

**Outcomes across Racial Groups**

No significant difference found in acculturative stress levels ($t(57) = 2.246, p > .05$).

No significant difference found in acculturative stress levels ($t(57) = 2.246, p > .05$).

Discussion & Conclusion

**Discussion**

- Previous research has found that increased levels of perceived discrimination is positively correlated to anxiety and lower self-esteem. Findings in this study were consistent with previous research.
- Research conducted on acculturative stress has found that the stress has positive correlations to anxiety and self-esteem in minority individuals. This was confirmed within this study.
- Prior studies rarely compared perceived discrimination and acculturative stress levels between racial groups. This study found a marginally significant difference between groups on perceived discrimination which is slightly different than the previous findings.

**Limitations**

- Recruitment relied heavily on a snowball sample from social media.
- Questions were all retrospective, relying on the memory of the participant for responses.

Future Directions

- There should be more research done to view the long-term effects of these negative mental health issues related to PD & AS.
- Future research should compare across groups besides Asian, Black, and Hispanic groups.
- More research should go into looking at multiple ethnic groups within one racial group. No racial group is a monolith and looking into difference within the group can also be helpful to finding solutions to prevalent issues.