



How Racial Discrimination and Colorism Impact Depressive Symptoms and Self-Esteem Among African American and Latino College Students

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Introduction

- Research has shown that underrepresented students are more likely to face stressors that have a negative impact on their ability to become socially integrated and achieve academic success (Billingsley et. al. 2019).
- Previous research suggests that there is a negative relationship between colorism and mental health outcomes. (Landor et. al 2019).
- Studies have revealed that colorism is a salient issue in African American communities and that intervention and prevention is necessary. (Landor et. al 2013).
- When minorities perceive discrimination, they are more likely to have negative mental health outcomes; for instance, more depressive symptoms. (Brondolo et. al 2018)
- Moreover, previous research allows us to focus on the fact that racial discrimination and colorism have detrimental impacts on the mental health outcomes of African Americans and Latinos.

The Current Study

- The current study replicates past research and focuses on the impact of racial discrimination and colorism on depressive symptoms and self-esteem in African American and Latino college students.
- As we expand this research, we can have a better understanding of how students cope with the depression and colorism.

Method

- This study analyzes the data of 145 African American and Latino college students. (62.8% African American, 36.6% Latino; $M_{age} = 20.7$ years).
- Participants were given a variety of scales to report the appropriate measures.

Racial Discrimination: (5 items: e.g.: “Have you been treated unfairly by teachers or administrators at Mizzou because of your race/ethnicity?”).

Skin Tone: (5 point scale, ranked *Light* to *Dark*)

Depressive Symptoms: (9 items; e.g., “I was bothered by things that usually don’t bother me”).

Self-esteem: (10 items: “I certainly feel useless at times”).

Analytic Plan: Multiple Regressions and Correlations

Regressions

- Several multiple regression analyses were conducted.
- A regression analysis was conducted to determine if racial discrimination and skin tone would predict depressive symptoms.
- A regression analysis was conducted to determine if racial discrimination and skin tone would predict self-esteem.

Correlations

- The associations between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms and self-esteem were investigated using the Pearson correlation coefficient.
- The means, standards deviations, and correlations are depicted in Table 1.

Results: Depressive Symptoms

Table 1. Results of Multiple Regression Predicting Depressive Symptoms

	Model 1	
	b(β)	S.E.
<i>Control Variables</i>		
Racial Discrimination	0.40(.44)***	0.07
Skin tone	-0.05(-.10)**	0.04
R ²	.18	

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. (2-tailed)

- The overall model was significant [F(2,142)= 15.93, p<.001] and explained 18% of the variation in depressive symptoms ($r^2 = .18$).
- There was a significant association between racial discrimination and depressive symptoms, such that as racial discrimination increases, the likelihood of depressive symptoms also increases [$\beta = .44$, $t = 5.6$, $p < .001$].
- There was also a significant association between skin tone and depressive symptoms, such that students with darker skin reported fewer depressive symptoms [$\beta = -.10$, $t = -1.34$, $p > .05$] (see Table 1).

Results: Self-Esteem

- The overall model was significant [F(2, 142)= 5.02, p<.01] and explained 6% of the variance in self-esteem.
- There was a significant association between racial discrimination and self-esteem, such that as students experienced increased racial discrimination, they were more likely to report lower self-esteem [$\beta = -.24$, $t = 2.2$, $p < .05$].
- Additionally, there was a significant association between skin tone and self-esteem. Specifically, students with darker skin reported having higher levels of self-esteem [$\beta = .18$, $t = -2.7$, $p < .05$] (see Table 2).

Table 2: Results of Multiple Regression Predicting Self-Esteem

	Model 2	
	b(β)	S.E.
<i>Control Variables</i>		
Racial Discrimination	-.20(-.24)**	0.07
Skin tone	.09(.18)**..	0.04
R ²	0.6	

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001. (2-tailed)

Results: Descriptive Statistics

Table 3: Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Racial Discrimination	1.6	.60	-	.30***	.42***
2. Skin tone	2	1	.30***	-	.02
3. Depressive Symptoms	.81	.53	.42***	.02	-
4. Self-esteem	3.1	0.51	-.20**	0.12	-

Discussion

- The initial hypotheses were that African American and Latino college students who experience racial discrimination would report having more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem. In addition, we predicted that students with darker skin would report having more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem.
- Some hypotheses were supported; students who experienced racial discrimination reported having more depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem. However, students with darker skin tone reported having higher self-esteem. Skin tone did not have a direct impact on the prevalence of depressive symptoms.

Conclusions: The prevalence of racial discrimination in a college setting impacts the mental health outcomes of students who face it. Specifically, African American and Latino college students who experience racial discrimination are likely to have more depressive symptoms. In addition, students who experience racial discrimination have lower self-esteem. Skin tone does impact students’ self-esteem levels. Specifically, darker skin students are more likely to report having high self-esteem.

Limitations and Further Research: The current study only focuses on African American and Latino college students as a whole, but gender may play a role. Specifically, racial discrimination and colorism might impact male college students in a different way than it would for female students. Further research can expand upon the current study and determine if gender plays a role. With this, we’ll have a better understanding the specific stressors that African American and Latino college students face that impact their mental health outcomes.

References

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