Ethnic Minority Status Stress, Parental Connection and Life Satisfaction Among Racial/Ethnic Diverse College Students: A Moderation Analysis

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Introduction

Background and Rationale

•Racial/ethnic minority (REM) populations in the U.S. face higher rates of mental health challenges and lower access (Cook et al.[1]; Cabral & Smith[2]) to care compared to more privileged groups.
•These disparities extend across education, employment, and health.
•REM college students experience general academic stress plus identity-based stressors like racism, marginalization, and belonging uncertainty.
•These unique stressors are known as **Minority Status Stress (MSS)** and are linked to psychological distress and academic difficulties.

MSS & Mental Health

•**Minority Status Stress** is grounded in Minority Stress Theory, which explains how chronic, identity-based stressors—like discrimination and marginalization—impact mental health.
•MSS includes both **distal (external)** and **proximal (internalized)** stressors that are layered onto general academic stress.
•These stressors contribute to **elevated depression, anxiety, and emotional strain (Bravo et al.[4]; Wei et al.[5])**, especially among racial/ethnic minority students.
•MSS can undermine academic success, emotional well-being, and sense of belonging on campus.

MSS and Life Satisfaction

•**Life Satisfaction (LS)** reflects an individual's evaluation of their quality of life.
•Higher MSS is associated with lower LS, particularly in students facing discrimination or isolation.
•LS is closely tied to academic success and overall well-being.
•Identifying protective factors that can weaken the impact of MSS on LS is essential.

MSS and Parental Connectedness

•**Parental connectedness** is the emotional closeness and support between parent and child.
•It plays a key role in REM populations, where family support is highly valued.
•Strong parental bonds (Causey et al.[8]; Ong et al.[9]) are linked to better mental health and higher LS.
•It remains unclear whether this connectedness can buffer the negative effects of MSS.
•This study explores parental connectedness as a potential moderator between MSS and LS among REM college students.

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Purposes & Hypotheses

- This study examines Minority Status Stress (MSS)—stressors unique to racial/ethnic minority college students—and its impact on life satisfaction, while accounting for the role of parental connectedness (see Figure 1).
- In line with Minority Status Stress Theory (Meyer[3]), this study tests whether parental connectedness moderates the relationship between MSS and life satisfaction.
- **Hypotheses**
  - **H1:** Higher levels of MSS will be related to a **decrease in life satisfaction.**
  - **H2:** Higher levels of parental connectedness will be associated with **higher life satisfaction.**
  - **H3:** Parental connectedness will moderate the relationship between MSS and life satisfaction, such that **higher parental connectedness** will weaken the negative impact of MSS.

Figure 1

Methods

PARTICIPANTS

•**N = 356** undergraduate students identifying as racial/ethnic minorities
•Recruited through the university's SONA research participation system

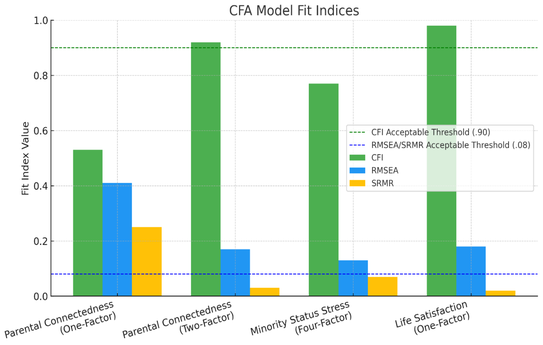
PROCEDURES

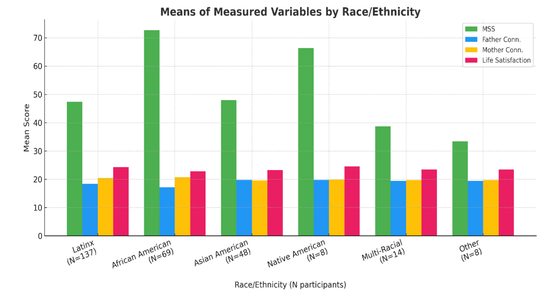
•Completed an anonymous, self-paced Qualtrics survey for course credit
•**Ages:** 18–25 (*M* = 19.3, *SD* = 1.4)
•**Gender:** 70% women
•**Ethnicity:** Latinx (52%), Black (21%), Asian (15%), Multiracial (10%), Other (2%)

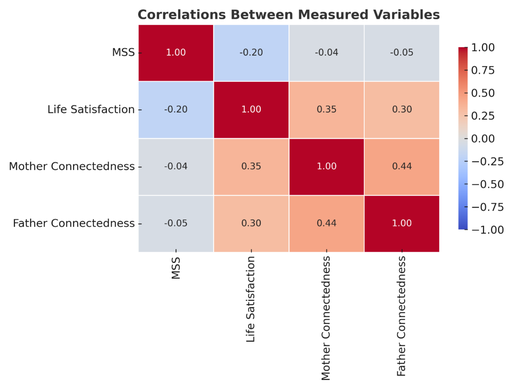
INSTRUMENTS

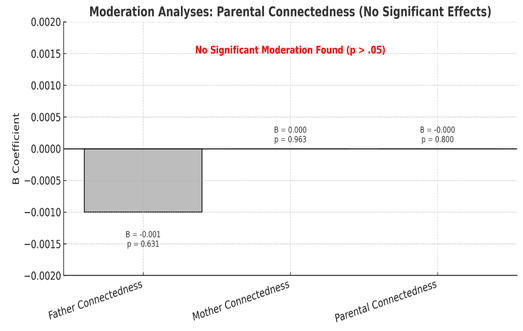
- **Minority Status Stress Scale (33 items)** Assesses stressors related to racial/ethnic identity (e.g., discrimination, belonging uncertainty) α = .97
- **Parental Connectedness Scales** (**10 items each for mother and father)** Measures perceived emotional closeness, warmth, and support from caregivers Mother α = .96 | Father α = .96
- **Satisfaction with Life Scale (5 items)** Measures global life satisfaction as a component of subjective well-being α = .91

Data Analysis & Results









Conclusions

GENERAL FINDINGS

- Higher Minority Status Stress (MSS) was significantly associated with lower life satisfaction.
- Greater parental connectedness was significantly associated with higher life satisfaction.
- Parental connectedness did not moderate the relationship between MSS and life satisfaction.
- Results suggest systemic stressors may require broader interventions beyond family support.

IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Universities should address MSS through culturally responsive services and campus belonging initiatives.
- Future research should explore additional moderators (e.g., peer support) and use longitudinal designs.
- Family support remains important but may need to be paired with broader systemic interventions (Castillo et al.[10]).

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