School Connectedness as a Moderator between Racial Microaggressions and Academic Performance for African American High School Students

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Abstract
Racial microaggressions are subtle, often unconscious, words or actions that demean African Americans (Sue et al., 2007). The impact of racial microaggressions may not be seen, and so it is important to study potential long-term consequences such as academic performance. This study addressed an identified gap in the literature on the relationship between racial microaggressions and academic performance among African American high school students. A quantitative design was used to study the relationship between racial microaggressions and academic performance, and school connectedness as a moderating variable of this relationship. There were 417 high school students who completed the surveys. Of those students, 81 were used for the data analysis in this study because they identified as African American or Black. Results indicated that experience of racial microaggressions (from peers or from school staff) did not correlate with academic performance (GPA). Additionally, school connectedness was not found to moderate this relationship. Female students indicated more experiences with racial microaggressions than male students. Also, school connectedness was correlated with racial microaggressions such that the more racial microaggressions that students reported, the less connected they felt to the school. Furthermore, perceived racial microaggressions by school personnel were correlated with microaggressions by peers, indicating the more experiences students had of microaggressions by adults, the more they had by their peers. These results illustrated the importance of understanding students’ experiences and their environment in the school setting. Counseling implications and areas for future research are addressed and discussed.

Keywords: Racial microaggressions, academic performance, school connectedness, high school

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