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Keywords
academic achievement; ethnic-minority students; mental health; MSI; multicultural distress

Cover Page Footnote

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between multicultural distress and general stress symptoms and the academic achievement of college students attending a Minority-Serving Institution (MSI). Research suggests that students who identify as being from a racial or ethnic minority background are likely to experience multicultural distress. Such students are believed to be at greater risk of experiencing mental health and academic challenges. Many contend that being in a diverse learning setting serves as a protective factor, shielding racial/ethnic minority students from some degree of distress and thereby promoting mental health and academic well-being. In contrast, other research findings suggest that multicultural distress threatens mental health and academic well-being even within diverse minority-serving institutions. This paper seeks to understand better how multicultural distress relates to mental health and academic achievement among students from racial/ethnic minority backgrounds attending an MSI.

Keywords: academic achievement; ethnic-minority students; mental health; MSI; multicultural distress

Introduction

Recent demographic trends indicate a steady increase in minority students attending higher education. Between 2000 and 2016, it was reported that Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black, and Asian/Pacific Islander students enrolled in higher education significantly more than in previous years ("Undergraduate Enrollment," 2018). This increased diversity in higher education has been augmented by the growing number of students from diverse backgrounds attending college, mainly due to a rise in Hispanic and Asian populations (Sims et al., 2020). The U.S. Census Bureau predicts these demographic changes will continue,

with the United States becoming a "majority-minority" nation by 2043, if not before (Maxwell, 2014). The increasing diversity belies the need for stakeholders to understand better how to support diverse student learners within higher education and promote more equitable outcomes.

Despite increasing diversity within higher education, extensive work is still required to improve academic outcomes among diverse students, who disproportionately come from underserved, lower-income, first-generation, or English language learner (ELL) backgrounds. A study examining minority student performance found that students from ethnic-minority backgrounds tend to be disadvantaged in their general education before enrolling in college, predisposing them to academic risk when entering college (Jalomo, 2000). Ethnic-minority students also tend to belong to families with lesser economic stability, which further predisposes such students to academic challenges despite intrinsic motivation and academic ability (Guiffrida, 2008). Ethnic minority students indicated more outstanding at-home obligations and a higher need to work while in college when compared to their White student colleagues, which is believed to contribute to problematic academic performance and higher levels of college attrition (Guiffrida, 2008; Hamrick, 2002; Sanchez et al.,1992).

Increasing diversity is leading to demographic changes within higher education. Overall, data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2019) confirms that the expansion of students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds in post-secondary education is contributing to a growing number of universities designated as Minority Serving Institutions (Hoxworth, 2018). Currently, there are approximately 700 two and four-year universities, of which 25% or greater of their annual enrollment consists of students from ethnic-minority backgrounds. Such colleges and universities are designated as MSI and currently produce approximately 28% of all college graduates (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Minority-serving institutions enroll and graduate many ethnic-minority students (Espinose et al., 2018). Furthermore, this designation is critical because it qualifies identified schools to receive additional federal funding under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

Many contend that such institutions, similar to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), hold a potentially influential role overall in that they can support the academic attainment of ethnic minority students. Such colleges are believed to promote social

justice and raise racial awareness by emphasizing minoritized cultures, ensuring that ethnic minority students do not feel like an outsider or ashamed of their differences among peers (Mobley, 2017), and promoting connectedness with the college among students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds (Densen & Chang, 2015; Jayakumar, 2015). Similarly, research suggests that such universities can lessen multicultural distress and promote mental health and academic outcomes among diverse students (Gasman & Conrad, 2013; Gurin et al., 2002).

Multicultural Distress

Culturalism transpires on three levels: (a) institutional, (b) personally mediated, and (c) internalized. Institutional, in which an institution's policies, traditions, and practices are based on biased or culturally superior ideology. Personally mediated culturalism is the prejudice and discrimination based on assumptions of abilities, motives, and intentions of people from marginalized cultures and being treated differently because of these assumptions. Internalized culturalism is the acceptance of stereotypes perpetuated and reinforced by members of majority cultures on members of a marginalized culture related to abilities and self-worth (Turner, 2021). At Predominantly White Institutions (PWI), marginalized students are exposed to all three levels concurrently, producing a hostile environment. Marginalized students frequently experience feeling isolated, anxiety over their academic capabilities, and struggle with adapting to campus life, which can negatively impact academic performance (Reynolds et al., 2010) and the emotional well-being of students, especially Black students. Most of the faculty is White Culture at the PWI where this data were collected. Most of the undergraduate students that attend this university are of color. An example of a culturally distressful situation a Black student could experience is a White faculty member stereotyping if they wear clothes and accessories associated with Black urban culture. The professor may associate Black urban culture with violence, crime, and poor academic performance. The faculty members may consciously and unconsciously begin to treat Black students negatively. The Black students could start to disengage from class and become less motivated to perform well in the class because of the conduct of the White professor.

Multicultural distress is described as the experience of physiological distress when an individual is exposed to an uncomfortable amount of disharmony, confusion, conflict, or discord due to the change in a culturally different environment. Multicultural distress results from

interactions between individuals or cultural groups and the environment that may threaten the individual's well-being. Turner (2021) proposes that when marginalized people are exposed to dominant cultures, they will be negatively impacted because their minority culture does not allow access to the dominant culture. Multicultural distress accounts for many emotional stressors that result from an individual's difficulty adjusting to an environment without significantly altering a sense of identity. These adverse experiences directly impact individuals both psychologically and physiologically. The cumulative negative effects result from exposure to a non-diverse environment as a marginalized group member, which researchers have found to correlate with experiencing increased levels of distress among ethnic/racial minority individuals (Turner, 2021).

Racism-Related Stress

Race-related stress is a term used to describe the discomfort experienced by ethnic minority groups who observe or directly experience racial discrimination in their daily lives at the individual, cultural, or institutional level (Reynolds et al., 2010). A study by Byrd and McKinney (2012) revealed that individual and institutional-level factors accounted for nearly half of the variance in mental health after accounting for background and demographic information. However, they state that individual-level characteristics are more strongly correlated with mental health, such as coping skills, suicidal tendencies, confidence in communication skills, and spiritual identity. The authors found that students with more negative experiences within the campus were more likely to experience general stress. Furthermore, the authors report research showing that students exposed to racial stressors related to their racial identity are more likely to report diminished mental health overall. Researchers have identified a sense of belonging as a protective factor that promotes emotional well-being and the healthy development of individuals from minority multicultural groups (Kia-Keating et al., 2011). Lastly, these findings support previous research outlining that specific academic environments are particularly stressful for ethnic-minority students, especially at PWIs.

Race-related stress has been linked to various psychological and health-related outcomes such as negative self-esteem, concentration difficulties, intrusive thoughts, and increased risk for mental and physical illnesses such as stress, anxiety, and depression (Reynolds et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2014). This added stress on ethnic-minority students is a result of coping with and addressing the ambiguous, stressful, and racially threatening situations that directly threaten

one's sense of self and their relationships with others (Sue et al., 2007; Torres-Harding et al., 2020; Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015).

Mental Health in College Students

Epidemiological findings indicate that 12-50 percent of college students meet the criteria for multiple mental health disorders (Bruffaerts et al., 2018), while other findings suggest that mental disorders account for almost half of the diagnoses for young adults in the United States (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). The incidence has likely increased during the COVID-19 pandemic (Browning et al., 2021). Racial and ethnic minority students experience a variety of stressors that impact their mental health, including "poverty, limited educational opportunities, discrimination, exposure to violence, and language and cultural adjustment challenges" (Tummala-Narra, 2014, p.24). Despite this, ethnic minority students are more likely to underutilize mental health services than White peers (Cummings & Druss, 2011).

Multicultural distress is increasingly recognized within research as a threat to mental health and well-being. Anderson (2018) has identified stigma related to ethnic-minority students' underutilization of mental health services. Furthermore, they described stigma as linked with a fear of being judged and mislabeled, leading to ethnic-minority students being reluctant to seek available mental health services. The lack of cultural diversity among mental health clinicians also impacts the students' motivation to seek mental health services due to cultural mistrust and fear of continuous racism and discrimination (Anderson, 2018). Well-adjusted individuals tend to have the highest GPAs. In contrast, distressed students have lower GPAs, and those within the at-risk group have a GPA in the mid-range, suggesting a correlation between distress levels and academic performance among students (Antaramian, 2015). Recent research suggests that having a diverse student body, faculty, staff, and administration may positively support the academic performance of racial-ethnic minority students on college campuses (Turner, 2021).

Academic Performance

The achievement gap in the United States is a critical issue of concern in education. Students from Black and Hispanic racial and ethnic minority backgrounds tend to perform substantially below their White or Asian peers (Worrell, 2014). Educational disparities are linked to policies that marginalize ethnic minority populations given limited access to quality secondary education (Sims et al., 2020). Research increasingly highlights the relationship between stress

and academic performance in college (Bruffaerts et al., 2018). Poor mental health is common among university students and has been associated with academic underperformance due to pressure and irregular sleep patterns, negatively impacting academic outcomes (Tembo et al., 2017).

Moreover, Tembo and colleagues (2017) found a significant relationship between increased levels of psychological distress and lower GPA. This arguably puts ethnic-minority students at an even greater risk for various adverse outcomes and provides evidence for comprehensive prevention to address mental health among higher education students. Given that psychological well-being is directly correlated with more robust academic performance, universities must work towards providing a sense of belonging for all students, especially those who are from ethnic-minority backgrounds.

While college enrollment rates for ethnic minority students have substantially increased over the last few years, retention rates remain a concern for many stakeholders within higher education. The national drop-out rate for ethnic minority students is consistently 20-25 percent greater than White peers (Parsons, 2017). Reynolds and colleagues (2010) found that ethnic minority students perceived their respective college campuses to be more racist and less accepting than their White peers and determined that a commitment to diversity on college campuses has demonstrated positive effects on minority student retention. Researchers have found that MSIs have been successful with the underserved and often underprepared population of students because their mission is to support students who struggle not because of a lack of capabilities but because of a lack of opportunity (Gasman & Conrad, 2013). Student success is believed to result from their participation in campus life, persistence in their academic progression, and academic achievement, which is not as inviting for ethnic minority students when most students and faculty are unlike them. It is argued that proper support within the higher education setting - as increasingly appears to be the case within MSIs - can promote academic outcomes among racial/ethnic minority students (Espinosa et al., 2017; Santiago et al., 2016; Sue et al., 2007).

Minority-serving Institutions

Growing evidence shows that specific environments can alleviate stress and promote subsequent well-being. Research shows that connectedness often shapes stress within a specific

setting (Lee et al., 2002). However, there is limited research on how MSIs may benefit students from racial-ethnic minority backgrounds. Research suggests that MSIs support racial and ethnic-minority student outcomes by making them feel comfortable on campus, minimizing discrimination, increasing academic performance, and increasing awareness. Wang and Carlson (2001) found that when students are socially and academically integrated into their college environment, their ability to handle stressors and related college demands increases as a student. A study by Parsons (2017) found that microaggressions experienced by racial and ethnic minority students within predominantly White institutions adversely affect academic performance. Negative interactions with faculty members and their peers also appear to increase students' self-doubt, which may cause ethnic minority students to lower expectations for themselves. Reynolds, Sneva, and Beehler (2010) found that when ethnic minority students perceive greater social support from their family and connectedness to their peers at school, they are more likely to succeed.

MSIs hold potential benefits for diverse ethnic-minority students. HBCUs have been known to promote ethnic-minority students' well-being and academic success, which is believed to be the case for MSIs. Such settings are anticipated to shield racial/ethnic minority students from some degree of distress, which can result in decreased levels of general stress and tremendous academic success (Smokowski et al., 2004). Previous studies have demonstrated that students who attend HBCUs have increased levels of engagement, more interactions with faculty, greater involvement in research projects, and are more likely to graduate than ethnic-minority students enrolled in predominantly white institutions (PWIs) (Chen et al., 2014). This study aims to understand better potential protective factors that MSIs may provide for students from under-represented racial/ethnic minority backgrounds.

The Present Study

Given the increasing diversity rate on college campuses nationwide, researchers must know how multicultural distress can impact learning. Understanding is a necessary first step in exploring what systems or practices best support students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. The current study aims to understand better how multicultural distress may relate to academic performance and mental health well-being among minority-identifying students at an MSI. This study will be exploratory and seek to advance understanding regarding the

potential elements within an MSI that support ethnic-minority student outcomes. As this is an exploratory study, the role that key demographic variables (racial/ethnic) hold on the relationship between multicultural distress, general stress as identified by the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress-Stress Scale (DASS-S), and academic performance (GPA) will be explored. From there, mediation and moderation analysis will examine the relationship between multicultural distress and academic and mental health well-being among students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. Therefore, this study investigated the following hypotheses:

1a. Does multicultural distress function as a moderator, affecting the relationship between racial/ethnic minority status and GPA?

1b. Does multicultural distress function as a mediator, in which racial/ethnic minority status predicts multicultural distress, which predicts GPA?

2a. Does multicultural distress function as a moderator, affecting the relationship between racial/ethnic minority status and general stress?

2b. Does multicultural distress function as a mediator, in which racial/ethnic minority status predicts multicultural distress, which predicts general stress?

Method

Participants

The participants of this study included 271 undergraduate students who were enrolled at an MSI in New Jersey. The sample was diverse in terms of gender and ethnicity. In this study, female students accounted for 59% of the participants, and male students accounted for the remaining 41%. Regarding the ethnicity of the undergraduates who participated, 34 were Asian, 73 were Black, 81 were Latinx, and 83 were White. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 45, with a mean age of 21.85. The participants were first-year, second-year, junior, and senior undergraduate students from various majors. The university's overall undergraduate enrollment by race/ethnicity is 5% Asian, 21% Black, 30% Latinx, and 31% White. Female students account for 59% of the student population. The university is considered a Hispanic-serving institution. The university has an overall graduation rate of 49% within 6-years of enrollment. Regarding a breakdown by demographic group, Asian students graduate at 63%, Black students at 37%, Latinx students at 42%, and White students at 55%. The undergraduate students in this

study were enrolled in an introductory psychology course with a research participation requirement. The data were collected from students who gave their consent virtually.

Measures

Multicultural Distress Scale-Race

The Multicultural Distress Scale-Race (MCDS-R; Turner, 2021) is a self-report scale designed to assess the negative emotional state associated with exposure to a majority culture in professional, educational, and social settings in which a person of a disadvantaged culture can be exposed. The MCDS-Race contains 12 items inquiring about an individual's experiences with a majority culture. Participants use a 5-point Likert scale (0 to 4) ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree to rate the extent to which they have generally experienced multicultural distress. However, they can be adapted for a specific timeframe or location. The scale yields the total level of multicultural distress. The MCDS-Race was highly reliable (12 items = .91). The scale has shown validity evidence (Turner & Jimenez, 2021).

Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale - Stress Subscale

The Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) is a scale designed to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress. It is a 42-item instrument measuring current (over the past week) symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. Each DASS scale (depression, anxiety, and stress) contains 14 items divided into subscales of 2-5 items with similar content. These scales are responded to using a 0-3 scale, where 0 did not apply to me, and 3 applied to me very much, or most of the time. The range of possible scores for each scale is 0-42. It has been shown to demonstrate convergent and discriminant validity while also having high internal consistencies for all three scales in previous studies. In this study, the only scale utilized was the stress subscale. The stress subscale on the DASS was reliable (.78).

Demographic Form

Participants were asked to fill out a form providing demographic information, which examines participants' customary demographic data, in addition to more in-depth questions regarding the makeup of their high school, race/ethnicity, gender, age, GPA, year in college, major, religion, and annual income. Information regarding GPA was obtained through a self-

report. Participants were asked to provide their cumulative GPA, measured on a traditional 4-point scale at this university.

Design

This study used a multiple linear regression model to test the effects of the predictor variables and moderators on the dependent variables. The independent variables were race/ethnicity and the student's grade point average. This study examined the Multicultural Distress Scale (MCDS-Race) as a moderator and mediator. Lastly, the criterion variables are general distress (measured by the DASS) and academic performance (measured by grade point average). Moderation analysis was performed to test the moderating effect between race/ethnicity and academic performance and between race/ethnicity and general stress. A mediation analysis was performed to study the relationship between race/ethnicity and the criterion variables of academic performance and general stress.

Procedure

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the data for this study to be reanalyzed. The data used were archival and initially collected following IRB approval in 2017.

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Results

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Preliminary Analyses

All analyses were conducted using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20. The outcome variables analyzed included the MCDS (a measure of multicultural distress), DASS (a measure of general stress), and grade point average. Multiple regression assumptions were explored before hypotheses testing, and all assumptions were met. Results suggested that there were significant correlations between the study variables. However, the association between these variables indicated a weak correlation, and these values were controlled within the regression models.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1A

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to evaluate if multicultural distress moderates the relationship between race/ethnicity and general stress. At step 1 of the analysis, race/ethnicity was entered into the regression equation and was significantly related to grade point average (GPA), $F (1,259) = 5.18$, $p = .024$. The multiple correlation coefficient was .14,

indicating that approximately 2% of the variance of the GPA could be accounted for by race/ethnicity. In Step 2 of the analysis, multicultural distress scores were entered into the regression equation and significantly moderated the relationship between race/ethnicity to GPA, F (2,258) = 3.751, p = .025. The multiple correlation coefficient was .168, indicating that multicultural distress could account for approximately 3% of the variance of the GPA.

Hypothesis 1B

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to evaluate if multicultural distress mediates the relationship between race/ethnicity and GPA. At step 1 of the analysis, race/ethnicity was entered into the regression equation and was significantly related to GPA, F (1,259) = 5.183, p = .024. The multiple correlation coefficient was .10, indicating that approximately 1% of the variance of general stress could be accounted for by race/ethnicity. Multicultural distress scores were entered into the equation at step 2, and Multicultural Distress did not mediate the relationship between race/ethnicity concerning GPA (t=1.515, p>.05). *See Figure 1.*

Hypothesis 2A

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to evaluate if multicultural distress moderates the relationship between race/ethnicity and general stress. At step 1 of the analysis, race/ethnicity entered the regression equation and was not significantly related to general stress. F (1,259) = 2.64, p > .05. The multiple correlation coefficient was .10, indicating approximately 1% of the variance of the general stress could be accounted for by race/ethnicity. At Step 2 of the analysis, multicultural distress scores were entered into the regression equation and significantly moderated the relationship between race/ethnicity to general stress F (2,258) = 6.80, p < .05. The multiple correlation coefficient was .22, indicating approximately 5% of the variance of the general stress could be accounted for by multicultural distress.

Hypothesis 2B

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to evaluate if multicultural distress mediates the relationship between race/ethnicity and general stress. At step 1 of the analysis, race/ethnicity was entered into the regression equation and was not significantly related to general stress. F (1,259) = 2.64, p > .05. The multiple correlation coefficient was .10, indicating approximately 1% of the variance of general stress could be accounted for by race/ethnicity.

Multicultural distress scores did not enter the equation at step 2 because there was no significant finding in step 1. *See Figure 2.*

Discussion

The present study sought to understand how multicultural distress affects the relationship between academic performance and the general stress of college students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds attending an MSI. Furthermore, it was explored whether multicultural distress was a potential moderator and mediator in the relationships mentioned above between race/ethnicity and academic performance and general stress. The results in the present study show that (i) multicultural distress moderated the relationship between racial/ethnic backgrounds of students and their academic performance, (ii) multicultural distress moderated the relationship between racial/ethnic background and general stress, and (iii) that there was a significant relationship between racial/ethnic background and academic performance.

The current study theorized that multicultural distress would moderate the relationship between academic performance and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Findings from this study supported this hypothesis and indicated that multicultural distress was a significant moderator influencing the relationship between racial/ethnic background and academic achievement. A secondary hypothesis was created to account for the potential of multicultural distress mediating the relationship between academic performance and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Given that the mediation analysis was insignificant, the results suggest that multicultural distress does not mediate the relationship between race/ethnicity and academic performance.

However, our results depicted that multicultural distress functioned as a moderator by impacting the association between race and academic performance, such that those with higher levels of multicultural distress and those who identify as originating from ethnic minority backgrounds may have lower academic performance. Functioning as a moderator, multicultural distress strengthened race's impact on academic performance. Our results supported the previous findings that even though ethnic minority student's enrollment has increased, they tend to perform substantially lower than White students. This finding may be due to increased levels of psychological distress (Tembo et al., 2017; Parsons, 2017; Worrell, 2014), though further research in this area is needed.

The current study theorized that multicultural distress would moderate the relationship between racial/ethnic backgrounds and general stress. The mediation analysis was insignificant; the results suggest that multicultural distress does not mediate the relationship between race/ethnicity and general stress. However, our results depicted that multicultural distress functioned as a moderator by impacting the association between race/ethnicity and general stress, such that those with higher levels of multicultural distress and those who identify as originating from ethnic minority backgrounds experienced increased general stress. Race/ethnicity and general stress were not correlated. However, when multicultural distress was introduced as a moderator, it strengthened the impact that race/ethnicity has on general stress. Our results were aligned with Turner (2021), which found no correlation between general stress and the race/ethnicity of college students. Overall, in brief, one can state that everyone experiences stress; however, multicultural distress, which is solely experienced by those of racial/ethnic minority backgrounds, appears to intensify the experience of general stress and appears related to decreased academic performance. Previous studies have found that when individuals experience more negative experiences on campus, they are more likely to experience stress, which tends to disproportionately happen to students of racial/ethnic minority backgrounds (Byrd & McKinney, 2012). Therefore, it appears that students of racial/ethnic minority backgrounds would experience different levels of stress in comparison to their White peers, which could be accounted for by multicultural distress.

Supplementary analyses that were conducted indicated significant correlations between general stress and multicultural distress, as well as with academic performance and race/ethnicity. Despite various studies indicating that MSIs mitigate against the potential distress of racial/ethnic minority students (Turner, 2021), the present study suggests that minority students are not accruing the perceived benefits (e.g., decreased multicultural distress) from an MSI, as has been theorized. To put it succinctly, minority students appear impacted by multicultural distress despite being enrolled at an MSI. Turner (2021) posited that minority students are not likely to benefit from a diverse campus until a critical mass of ethnic minority students is reached. Furthermore, they posited that the faculty and staff must also resemble this diverse student body if students are to benefit. While more research is needed, colleges and universities must continue to strive to retain and recruit faculty and staff that resemble the

students they mentor and teach (Milem, 2003). These students attend an MSI, but this institution still has oppressive structures. MSIs must create measurable Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) goals and a strategic plan to achieve these objectives. These goals need to be assessed annually and based on the data collected. The plan needs to be adjusted. MSIs need a fully staffed DEIB that reports directly to the President or Provost. Other actions that need to occur are exit interviews with faculty and administrators from marginalized groups, e.g., Black Americans and Black Latinx, to find out why they are leaving the institution. When prejudice and discrimination occur, the institutions must conduct thorough investigations, and the corrective actions must be fully supported and enforced. MSIs must be committed to creating pipelines to bring more faculty and administrators from marginalized groups to their campus while simultaneously working to create a climate on their campus that will allow these new employees to feel a strong sense of belonging.

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Limitations and Future Directions

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As with all research studies, several limitations of this study are important to note. One limitation was not including a scale examining racism. This limits the generalizability of the findings since it only accounted for multicultural distress and not necessarily the contributions of racism experienced on campus to stress. Culture would not be expected to impact race; however, racism is thought to have a relationship with racial experience. Culture tends to be celebrated and accepted by other racial groups, which may minimize distress associated with such. This is especially important as most participants in this study come from similar socio-economic statuses. Thus, their experience of racism would have been different.

Additionally, the sample used for this study was that of convenience, and the results may be different from a generalized sample of college students and only include one MSI. Inquiring about an individual's sense of connectedness with the university would have been helpful. This would have provided more in-depth information to understand experiences and recognize differences and similarities among the sample. Lastly, another limitation was that GPA was self-reported, and researchers could not verify the reported GPAs.

Future research should seek to understand the risk and protective factors offered by MSIs and similar institutions. Furthermore, it would be interesting to develop a campus climate survey to help assess the experiences of students and faculty and their perceptions of connectedness. It

would benefit diversifying plans, policies, and protocols to provide strategic direction. More importantly, future research should seek to identify and apply strategies to decrease multicultural distress and set clear outcome measures that would monitor efficacy and efficiency. Conducting this research with other MSIs (preferably nationwide) to access a more significant portion of university campuses would provide more generalizable findings. Surveying the campus climate regarding multicultural distress at predominantly White institutions would provide a control sample useful for comparative purposes with an MSI. Future research may also benefit from including the anxiety and depression sub-scales of the DASS and the stress sub-scale to fully account for the student's overall mental and emotional well-being.

Conclusions

This study found that perceptions of multicultural distress may negatively impact minority student's academic performance and experience of general stress. Although this could be attributed to the mismatch regarding the cultural differences between faculty, staff, administration, and the student body, overall findings from this study do not indicate that students accrued notable benefits (e.g., reduction in multicultural distress) through enrollment in an MSI. Nonetheless, the findings from this study are significant as it was found that stress related to race was found to hold a relationship with student achievement. Overall findings suggest that multicultural distress can impact mental health stress and academic achievement. Further inquiry is needed regarding the benefits of MSIs as protective factors for students of color.

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Appendices

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Race/Ethnicity	n	%
Asian	34	12
Black	73	27
Latinx	81	30
White	83	31

Table 2

Participant Gender

Gender	n	%
Female	160	59%
Male	111	41%

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Study Variables

Variables	M	SD
GPA	3.3177	.39921
MCDS	14.99	8.958
DASS-S	6.59	4.550

Note. GPA = Grade Point Average; MCDS = Multicultural Distress Scale; DASS-S = Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale – Stress Subscale.

Table 4

Model Summary and ANOVA Output

Models	df	F	Sig	R	R-Square
Regression 1*	Regression = 1 Residual = 259	5.183	.024*	.140	.020
Regression 2*	Regression = 2 Residual = 259	3.751	.025*	.168	.028

Regression 1: DV= GPA; Predictors= Race/Ethnicity
Regression 2: DV= GPA; Predictors= Race/Ethnicity & MCDS, interaction
* p<.05

Table 5

Model Summary and ANOVA Output

Models	df	F	Sig	R	R-Square
Regression 1*	Regression = 1 Residual = 259	2.635	.106	.100	.010
Regression 2*	Regression = 2 Residual = 259	6.795	.001**	.224	.050

Regression 1: DV=DASS-S (General Stress Measure); Predictors= Race/Ethnicity
Regression 2: DV= DASS-S (General Stress Measure); Predictors= Race/Ethnicity & MCDS, interaction
** p<.01

Figure 1

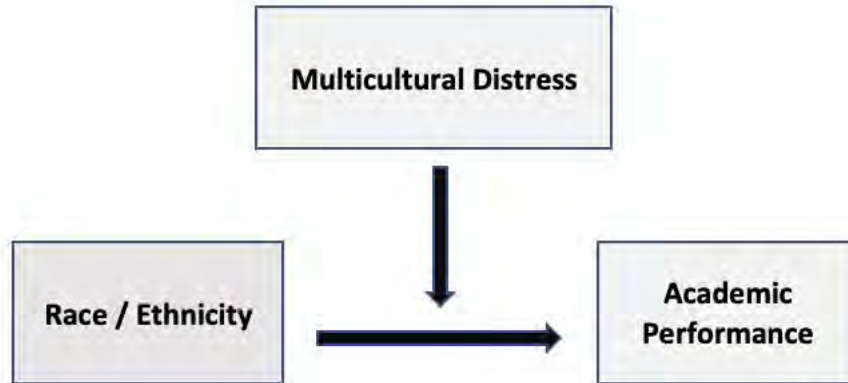*Model of Relationship Between Race/Ethnicity and GPA as Moderated by Multicultural Distress*

Figure 2

Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Relationship Between Race/Ethnicity and GPA as Mediated by Multicultural Distress
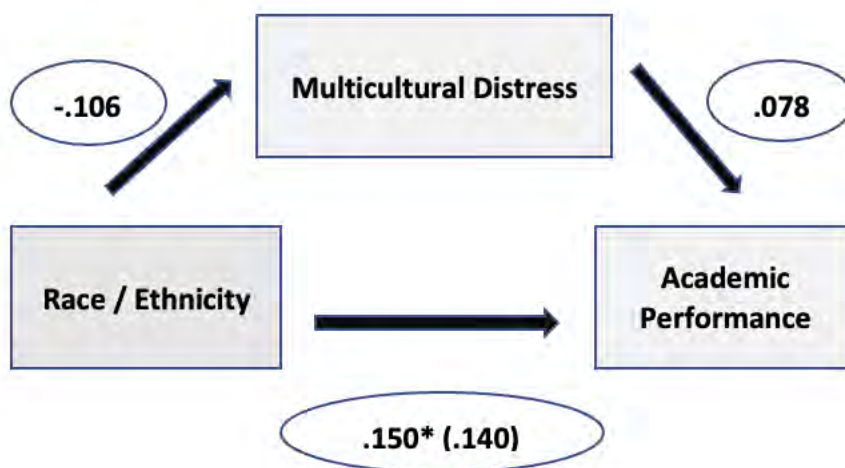
Figure 3

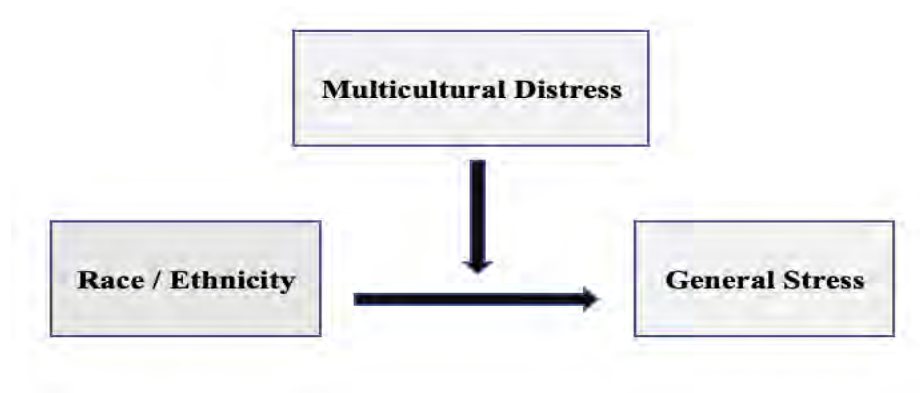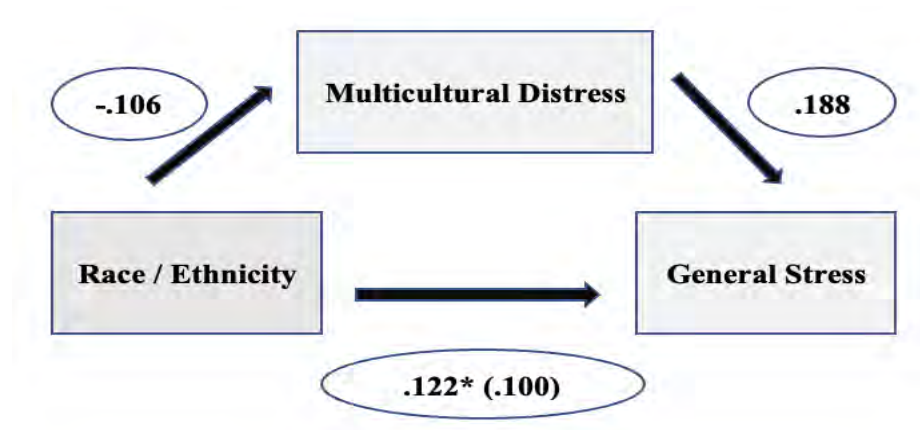*Model of Race/Ethnicity and General Stress as Moderated by Multicultural Distress*

Figure 4

Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Relationship Between Race/Ethnicity and General Stress as Mediated by Multicultural Distress

MCSS-R

Please read each statement and write in the number 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 that indicates how much each statement applies to you.

The rating scale is as follows:

0 Strongly Disagree

1 Disagree

2 Neither Disagree nor Agree

3 Agree

4 Strongly Agree

_____ 1. When I am in a setting where I am the only individual or one of a few
            individuals of my race/ethnicity, I tend to feel people would prefer that I not be
            around.

_____ 2. I feel uncomfortable when I am the only individual or one of a few
            individuals of my race/ethnicity in a social, public, or professional setting.

_____ 3. In situations where I am the only person or one of a few people of my race/ethnicity,
            I feel I have to change the way that I talk.

_____ 4. I feel I cannot totally be myself when I am around people who are mostly of a
            different race/ethnicity than me.

_____ 5. If I find myself in a situation where I am the only person or one of a few people of
            my race/ethnicity, I tend to feel alone.

_____ 6. Sometimes I tend to feel marginalized (made to seem unimportant) if I am in a place
            where I am the only individual or one of a few individuals of my race/ethnicity.

_____ 7. It can be difficult at times for me to fit in or relate to people of the majority culture
            because, in my culture, we have very different life experiences.

_____ 8. In situations where I am the only individual or one of a few individuals of my
            race/ethnicity, I tend to feel that I have to represent my entire race/ethnicity.

_____ 9. When I am around people of different race/ethnicity than me, I tend to behave
            differently than I would around people of my own race/ethnicity.

_____10. In a social, public, or professional situation where I am the only person or one of a few people of my race/ethnicity, I tend to not feel welcomed.

_____11. People tend to say inappropriate things when I am in a place where I am the only person or one of a few people of my race/ethnicity.

_____12. It can be difficult at times for me to fit in or relate to the majority culture because my culture is different.