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Shanya Chandel

Ashlynn Bell

Chelsie Dunn

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The Role of Gendered Racial Microaggressions on African American Women's Sleep Quality

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Shanya Chandel, BSc, Ashlynn Bell, BS, Chelsie Dunn, MA, MPH, & Kristina Hood, PhD Virginia Commonwealth University

Introduction

- African American women are often subjected to oppressive and marginalizing commentary directed toward various facet of their being. This subtle yet harmful oppressive commentary is commonly referred to as silencing and marginalizing gendered racial microaggressions (Lewis & Neville, 2015).
- While the negative effects (e.g., mental health, sleep quality) of more overt workplace and academic discrimination have been previously established; little is known about the subtle, pervasive forms of discrimination (Whitaker, 2019).
- Little to no research has examined the potential effects of silencing and marginalizing experiences on African American women, who experience a unique combination of racism and sexism in the workplace, school, or other professional settings.

Purpose of Study

- The present study sought to examine the role of silencing and marginalizing gendered racial microaggressions (GRM) on the link between GRM stress appraisal and sleep quality due to discriminatory events after controlling for gendered racial socialization, sleep patterns, silencing behaviors, ethnic identity, and self-worth contingencies.

Method

- Participants consisted of 229 Black/African American women between the ages of 18 and 55 ($M=33.30$, $SD=8.49$)
- Majority of the sample was employed (87%) and about 27% were enrolled in a two- or four-year university.
- Participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk & a large, southeastern university's SONA systems.

Measures

- Demographics (i.e., age, employment status)
- Ford Insomnia Response to Stress Test (adapted; Drake et al., 2004)
- Gendered Racial Microaggressions (Lewis & Neville, 2015)

Results

- A moderation model was assessed via the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) within SPSS v.26 using 5,000 bootstrapped samples.
- Moderation analysis revealed a statistically significant interaction between GRM frequency and stress appraisal on sleep quality due to discrimination, $b = .05$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI [.00, .10], $p = .05$.
- To interpret the statistically significant moderation effect, we used Hayes's PROCESS v.3 (2017) Johnson-Neyman and bootstrap analysis.
- Findings revealed that GRM frequency is a significant moderator of the link between GRM stress appraisal and sleep quality due to discrimination at both higher ($b = .25$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI [.14, .36], $p = .00$) and lower ($b = .12$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI [.02, .23], $p < .02$) frequencies.



Discussion

- This study aimed to better understand the impact of frequent experiences of gendered racial microaggressions on the relationship between stress appraised from GRM and sleep quality.
- Frequent experiences of gendered racial microaggressions exacerbated the relationship between GRM stress appraisal and sleep quality due to discrimination.
- Among participants with higher frequency of silencing and marginalizing gendered racial microaggression, those who reported greater stress associated with such events experienced poorer sleep quality due to discriminatory events.

Limitations

- A cross-sectional study design was used. Therefore, we are unable to make causal or directional inferences.
- A smaller portion of the sample was currently enrolled at a university, compared to those who were employed. This could affect the generalizability of findings to academic discrimination.

Conclusion

- Findings could potentially enhance existing mental health interventions by increasing awareness of how silencing and marginalizing experiences at work or school impact sleep quality among African American women.
- Health professionals should work with employers to evaluate how these experiences are affecting the employees' sleep quality and, in turn, how it's affecting employee performance and efficiency at the workplace.

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