

ETHNIC IDENTITY, STRESS, AND PERSONAL RECOVERY OUTCOMES AMONG YOUNG ADULTS WITH SERIOUS MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

Kiara Moore, PhD, MSW
New York University
New York, NY

Background: Serious mental health conditions frequently emerge during early adulthood, while young people are engaged in important aspects of identity development that influence their recovery. Personal mental health recovery for young people represents individual processes that support coping and leading a meaningful life. Components of personal recovery align with several qualities associated with positive ethnic identity development. However, little is known about how individual perceptions of ethnic identity influence stress coping and personal recovery among young adults with serious mental illnesses (SMI).

Objectives: We examined associations between ethnic identity (i.e., the quality of belonging and attachment to one's ethnic group), perceived stress, and personal recovery among an ethnically and racially diverse sample of young adults with SMI in order to build knowledge in this promising area of research.

Methods: Young adults (aged 18-34; 95% identified as ethnic/racial minorities) were recruited from outpatient psychiatric rehabilitation programs in New York (N = 84). Multivariate regressions were used to examine relationships between predictors (demographics, psychiatric symptomatology, ethnic identity) and the dependent variables (perceived stress and personal recovery).

Results: A stronger, more developed ethnic identity and fewer depressive symptoms were associated with higher ratings of personal recovery. Increases in psychiatric symptoms predicted increased perceived stress. Post hoc analyses showed that Black, Latino/a, and multiracial study participants' ethnic identity ratings were similar to those of same ethnic/racial group young adults without SMI.

Implications: Ethnic identity development could be a significant psychosocial factor shaping mental health recovery among minority young people living with SMI. Several factors associated with psychological well-being among ethnic and racial minority youth may account for this, including self-esteem, optimism, and social support. Our findings support assessing and developing a young person's ethnic identity-related strengths and resources as a means for improving the personalization of recovery services and enhancing the quality of care.

Full List of Authors

Kiara Moore, Michelle Munson, Rei Shimizu, Aaron Rodwin

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Determine 3 ways that ethnic identity could be influencing mental health recovery in youth.
2. Identify 3 sources of psychosocial resilience for minority youth with serious mental health conditions.