

DISCRIMINATION AND SUICIDE RISK: THE INTERSECTIONAL ROLE OF GENDER AMONG LATINX YOUTH

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Introduction: Gender and ethnic differences exist in suicidal ideation, plan, and attempt among adolescents in the U.S. However, limited research has used theoretically-informed approaches to integrate how cultural and classic risk factors together account for suicide-related pathways among vulnerable populations. Informed by the interpersonal theory of suicide, the present cross-sectional study examined gender differences in the association between a cultural (i.e., discrimination) and classic (i.e., depressive symptomatology) risk factor, and suicidality among youth of Latin American heritage.

Methods: A total of 390 Latinx adolescents (ages 13-18; 50% female) attending a high school in Southern California, U.S.A. completed a series of questionnaires that included measures of depressive symptoms, suicidality (including ideation, past attempts, and likelihood of future behavior), perceived discrimination, and demographics.

Results: We found that discrimination was associated with increased suicidality among Latinx adolescents. The discrimination-suicidality association was stronger for girls versus boys, such that girls who experienced greater discrimination demonstrated the highest levels of suicidality. Although depression was also significantly associated with suicidality, the discrimination x gender interaction was found above and beyond the main effect of depressive symptomatology and covariates. Additional analyses revealed significant gender and moderation effects only for suicidal ideation and not for attempts.

Conclusions: These findings indicate that the relationship between discrimination and suicidality (particularly ideation) is more pronounced for Latinx girls than boys. This study also highlights the importance of drawing on theory-driven and culturally informed work that incorporates classic and cultural correlates of suicidality among diverse subpopulations.

Full List of Authors

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Learning Objectives

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

1. Understand how intersectional discrimination can impact mental health outcomes like suicide risk
2. Apply the interpersonal theory of suicide towards disparities among marginalized groups