Latinx College Persistence and Major Satisfaction: Examining Psychological Functioning as a Mediator in Minority Status Stress and Academic Outcomes Relationships
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Introduction

ACADEMICS OUTCOMES
• College students of Latinx background have been steadily growing in college enrollment and are expected to continue their growth into the future (Flores, 2017).
• Despite high enrollment, research has shown that there is decreased retention for Latinx college students. For example, 33% of White students who begin their college career at a four-year college will not earn a bachelor’s degree within six years. That same figure is over 50% Latinx students (Berkner, He, & Cataldi, 2002).
• Also, injustices in the academic setting such as discrimination, stereotypes, and microaggressions may influence ethnic minority students to be less likely satisfied with their major (Wei, Ku, & Liao, 2011).

MINORITY STRESS THEORY
• One potential explanation for these poor academic outcomes is the minority stress theory that many Latinx students may experience and the mental health effects it often engenders.
• Studies show that minority stress is distinctly different from general college stress for Latinx college students (Wei et al., 2010) and is related to poorer academic outcomes (Fry, 2004).
• Higher levels of minority stress are related to a variety of poorer academic outcomes, but it is imperative to better understand possible mechanisms through which this occurs.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING
• Minority stress impacts mental health for ethnic minority college students (Cokley, McClain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013).
• It is possible that experiencing decreased psychological functioning as a result of minority stress poses a threat to the students’ academic functioning.

Method

PURPOSE
The present study examines the relations between minority stress and academic outcomes, specifically college persistence and major satisfaction for Latinx college students. We also explore anxiety and quality of life as potential mediating mechanisms for these relationships.

MEASURES
• Minority Stress Status Scale (MSSS, Smelley et al., 1993)
• Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (Spitzer, 2006).
• WHO’s Quality of Life scale (World Health Organization, 1998)
• Major Satisfaction Scale (Nauta, 2007)
• The College Persistence Scale (Davidson, Beck & Milligan, 2009)

PROCEDURE
• Students completed study online and received course credit through SONA at Texas Tech University.

Analysis & Results

ANALYSIS
• Mplus Version 7.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) was used to test the direct hypothesized relations among variables.
• Mediations were tested for various paths and after these the significant direct paths were determined in the model, indirect paths were tested through bootstrapping (Muthén & Muthén, 2012; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

RESULTS
• Hypothesis were fully supported.
• The final model indicated that psychological functioning was a mediator between minority status stress and academic outcomes due to significant direct and indirect relationships through psychological functioning.
• In other words, anxiety and quality of life significantly mediated the relationship between minority stress and, both, college persistence and major satisfaction.

Conclusions

• Study contributes to the existing psychological literature of Latinx students by highlighting that minority stress status is indeed related to academic outcomes and takes this a step further to investigate the mechanisms that may explain these relationship, namely psychological functioning.
• Recent research finds that minority status stress has been further aggravated and may be more probable due to the current sociopolitical climate which has enabled certain behaviors against marginalized minority communities (Gonzalez, Ramirez, & Galupo, 2018).
• Thus, it is important to understand how minority stress may unexpectedly impede ethnic minority college students’ functioning on both psychological and academic levels.

References