

Racial Discrimination and How Psychological Wellbeing and Social Engagement Impacts: A Review of the Literature on Identity, Stigma, and Coping Strategies in Multicultural Societies

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ABSTRACT

Racial discrimination is a social phenomenon that has a wide-ranging impact on the psychological well-being of individuals, especially in multicultural societies. This study aims to analyze the influence of racial discrimination on individuals' social psychology by highlighting aspects of stigma, stress, identity, social engagement, and feelings of alienation. A literature study approach was used in this research to examine the various psychological mechanisms used by individuals to respond to and cope with the impact of racial discrimination. The results show that individuals who experience discrimination tend to experience increased psychological stress, identity disturbance, and limitations in social interaction. Feelings of alienation arising from discrimination also result in low social engagement, which further deteriorates individual integration in society. Coping strategies such as group identification, social support, and involvement in collective action can help individuals to manage the negative impact of racial discrimination. Social policies and interventions that focus on inclusivity and equality can play a role in reducing discrimination and improving individuals' psychological well-being. This research emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts between the government, educational institutions and societies to create a more equitable social environment free from racial discrimination. Further research is needed to explore effective strategies to enhance individuals' psychological resilience and strengthen their social engagement in a diverse society.

INTRODUCTION

Racial discrimination is a social phenomenon that has long been a problem in various countries, both in everyday life and in various social institutions such as education, the world of work, and the legal system. It refers to the unfair treatment of individuals or groups based on their race or ethnicity, often based on prejudice and negative stereotypes (Verkuyten et al., 2019). According to research conducted by Williams et al. (2019), racial discrimination impacts the economic and social aspects of affected individuals, and has significant consequences on their psychological well-being and mental health. Various forms of discrimination, whether direct such as hate speech and unfair treatment, or systemic such as limited access to education and health services, can create prolonged psychological distress (Giuliani et al., 2018).

Racial discrimination contributes to increased stress and anxiety in individuals who experience it. The Stress from Discrimination theory proposed by Pascoe and Richman (2009) states that the experience of discrimination can trigger physiological and emotional stress responses, which in the long term contribute to mental health disorders such as depression and social anxiety disorder. This stress is exacerbated by social stigma that causes individuals to feel isolated and lack social support. The study by Carter et al. (2020) also showed that individuals who experience racial discrimination repeatedly tend to experience internalization of stigma, which can reduce their self-esteem and confidence in social interactions. Racial discrimination directly affects individuals and disrupts their psychological mechanisms in social interactions, worsening stress and anxiety disorders.

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Racial discrimination affects the formation of social identity and individual psychology. Tajfel and Turner's (1986) Social Identity Theory explains that individuals tend to categorize themselves based on certain social groups, and discriminatory treatment can affect how they perceive themselves and their groups. The study by Branscombe et al. (2018) found that discrimination can strengthen group identification in some cases, but can cause identity dissonance and feelings of helplessness in individuals who feel alienated from their social environment. This uncertainty to form an identity can have a negative impact on mental health, especially if individuals feel that they are not accepted by the wider society. These feelings of marginalization can increase psychological stress and anxiety, as individuals feel caught between their group identity and the demands of society to adapt. Long-term impacts can include anxiety disorders, depression, and decreased self-esteem and confidence.

One of the main problems arising from racial discrimination is its impact on the psychological well-being of individuals who experience discriminatory treatment. Racial discrimination is often associated with increased psychological stress, anxiety and depression (Paradies et al., 2015). Individuals who experience discrimination on a recurring basis may experience prolonged psychological distress, which may ultimately contribute to more serious mental health disorders (Giuliani et al., 2018). Research conducted by Priest et al. (2013) shows that discrimination that occurs from an early age can form a negative mindset towards oneself and one's social group, increasing the risk of psychological disorders in later life stages. Experiences of discrimination can also reduce an individual's ability to develop adaptive coping strategies, making them more vulnerable to the negative impact of social pressure (Wang et al., 2018).

Another issue that arises is how racial discrimination affects social relationships and the integration of individuals in society. The study by Schmitt et al. (2014) revealed that individuals who experience discrimination often feel alienated from their social environment, which in turn can exacerbate distrust of other social groups and strengthen boundaries between groups. This can lead to social avoidance, lack of participation in the society, and low engagement in social and economic activities. Experiences of discrimination can lead to feelings of powerlessness and loss of control over the environment, contributing to individuals' low motivation to achieve their personal and professional goals (Benner et al., 2018). This accumulation of discriminatory experiences impacts individuals personally, and can exacerbate social inequalities more broadly.

Research on the influence of racial discrimination on individual social psychology is very important because racial discrimination is still a global phenomenon that has a broad impact on the well-being of individuals and society. Race-based discrimination leads to social and economic inequality, and has profound psychological impacts, such as increased stress, anxiety, and feelings of inferiority in individuals who experience it (Paradies et al., 2015). Prolonged experiences of discrimination can trigger long-term mental health problems, including depression and anxiety disorders, which can hinder individuals' social and professional functioning (Benner et al., 2018). Studies on the psychological mechanisms involved in the experience of racial discrimination are crucial to understanding how individuals cope and manage its impact on their lives.

The urgency of this research is also increasing along with the social dynamics that continue to develop in a multicultural society. Greater global mobility leads to more complex interactions between ethnicities and races, which further increases the potential for racial discrimination in various aspects of life, such as education, employment, and health services (Schmitt et al., 2014). Racial discrimination that occurs in everyday interactions can create inequality and hinder the participation of minority groups in society (Burt et al., 2012). The psychological impact of racial discrimination that is not properly addressed can exacerbate social mistrust, increase inter-group polarization, and hamper efforts to create an inclusive and harmonious society. More effective and evidence-based policies can be developed by understanding how racial discrimination affects the social psychology of individuals to mitigate its impact and promote equality and social justice in various sectors of life. This will not only improve the psychological state of affected individuals, but also contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and harmonious society.

This study aims to analyze the effect of racial discrimination on the psychological well-being of individuals in relation to modern society. This research also explores how individuals respond to and cope with experiences of discrimination, especially in relation to their identity formation and social interactions. This research seeks to uncover the extent to which racial discrimination affects social engagement as well as individuals' feelings of alienation in a multicultural environment. The results of this study are expected to provide insight into the dynamics of social psychology to deal with racial discrimination and its implications for individual well-being and social harmony by identifying the impact of racial discrimination.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses the literature study method to analyze the effect of racial discrimination on individual social psychology. This approach is carried out by reviewing various relevant previous studies, including scientific journals, academic books, and research reports that have been published in reputable databases. The literature review allows researchers to understand the concept of racial discrimination and its impact on individuals' psychological well-being based on previously reviewed empirical evidence (Snyder, 2019). This research focuses on synthesizing existing findings to provide a more comprehensive perspective on the relationship between racial discrimination and aspects of individual social psychology.

This research adheres to the systematic principle of selecting credible and relevant sources. The literature used came from indexed international journals such as Scopus and Web of Science, to ensure the validity and reliability of the data analyzed (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). We applied a thematic approach to identify key patterns in previous research, such as the relationship between racial discrimination and psychological stress, social stigma, and individual identity formation (Williams et al., 2019). This technique allowed the research to develop a conceptual framework that could be used to understand the psychological mechanisms that arise from the experience of racial discrimination.

The analysis in this study was conducted using a qualitative approach through the narrative synthesis method. This approach was used to interpret and link published research to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of racial discrimination on individuals (Tranfield et al., 2003). The research sought to uncover trends and differences in published findings, as well as explore research gaps that could form the basis for further study. This research contributes to providing an understanding of how racial discrimination shapes individuals' psychological well-being from multiple social perspectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Effects of Racial Discrimination on Individual Psychological Well-Being in a Modern Social Perspective

Racial discrimination is a social issue that continues to affect the psychological well-being of individuals in modern society. Research has shown that experiences of racial discrimination are strongly correlated with increased depression, anxiety and psychological stress. Schmitt et al. (2014) in their meta-analysis found that perceptions of discrimination have a significant negative impact on individuals' mental health.

Racial discrimination can trigger identity and self-esteem disorders. Individuals who constantly face discriminatory treatment may begin to doubt their self-worth, which can further lead to social isolation and a reduced quality of life (Bourguignon et al., 2006). This impaired identity and self-esteem can in the long-term lead to decreased motivation to participate in social or professional activities, ultimately affecting psychological well-being and overall quality of life. Williams and Mohammed (2009) indicated that racial discrimination contributes to mental health disparities among ethnic minority groups.

In modern social dynamics, racial discrimination also impacts access to mental health services. Stigma and distrust of the health system can deter individuals from minority groups from seeking professional help. Breslau et al. (2005) found that although the prevalence of mental disorders was similar across ethnic groups, individuals from minority groups were less likely to receive necessary treatment. Lack of access to or inability to obtain appropriate care can worsen individuals' mental health conditions, prolong their suffering, and increase health inequalities among ethnic groups.

Racial discrimination can worsen physical health conditions through the mechanism of chronic stress resulting from repeated experiences of discrimination. Prolonged stress from discrimination impacts mental well-being, and triggers adverse physiological responses in the body. When individuals experience discrimination, their bodies respond by producing stress hormones, such as cortisol, which can lead to increased blood pressure, faster heartbeat and inflammation. If this response persists over a long period of time, it can result in a range of health problems, including an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and immune system disorders. Research by Lewis et al. (2015) emphasizes that the experience of discrimination has serious implications for an individual's physical and mental health, suggesting that the impact of discrimination is both psychological, and physiological. Individuals who experience persistent discrimination may also have difficulty accessing adequate health care, whether due to stigma, distrust of the health system, or limited resources. This can worsen their health condition, creating a cycle that is difficult to break. It is important to understand that racial discrimination harms individuals emotionally, and has far-reaching consequences for their physical health. Giuliani et al. (2018) emphasized that efforts to address discrimination should include an appropriate approach, focusing on social and psychological aspects, and on physical health, to ensure the overall well-being of affected individuals.

Effective coping strategies are crucial to deal with the negative impact of racial discrimination (Wang et al., 2018). Social support, both from family and society, can act as a buffer against the detrimental effects of discrimination. This support provides a sense of security and emotional reinforcement that helps individuals to maintain their self-esteem and identity despite facing unfair treatment. Roberts et al. (2004) stated that social support can reduce the negative impact of discrimination on mental health in the work environment. Creating a supportive and inclusive environment, both in the workplace and in everyday life, is critical to strengthening individuals' resilience to racial discrimination.

Structural interventions are also needed to address the root causes of racial discrimination. Policies that promote inclusivity and equality can help reduce the incidence of discrimination and improve the psychological well-being of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds (Verkuyten et al., 2019). Paradies et al. (2006) recommend a systematic approach to addressing racism to improve health outcomes in affected societies. Addressing racism by structural interventions is an important step towards creating a healthier and fairer society.

Racial discrimination has a multidimensional impact on an individual's psychological well-being, which can include aspects such as stress, anxiety, depression and decreased self-esteem. When individuals experience discrimination, they face both the immediate impact of unfair treatment, and the long-term effects that can damage their mental and emotional health. Experiences of discrimination can lead to feelings of alienation, helplessness and dissatisfaction with life, all of which contribute to a reduced quality of life. Collaborative efforts between individuals, societies and institutions are needed to create a social environment that is supportive and free from discrimination. This includes education and awareness at the society level to address stereotypes and prejudice, as well as policies that support social justice and the protection of human rights.

Institutions, such as schools and workplaces, should implement inclusive practices that promote diversity and respect differences, and provide psychological support for individuals affected by discrimination. Creating a safe and supportive environment where all members of the society feel valued and accepted is a must-do to ensure optimal mental health for all individuals. This approach will help reduce the negative impact of racial discrimination, and contribute to the building of a more just and harmonious society, where everyone has the opportunity to develop and reach their full potential.

Individual Psychological Mechanisms for Responding to and Coping with the Impact of Racial Discrimination on Identity and Social Interaction

Racial discrimination has a profound impact on individuals' identities and their social interactions, often causing significant psychological stress (Sellers et al., 2003). When individuals experience discrimination, they tend to develop negative emotional responses such as anger, anxiety, and feelings of inferiority (Brondolo et al., 2009). These emotional responses can develop into more serious psychological conditions, including depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), especially if individuals experience discrimination repeatedly (Williams et al., 2018).

Individuals often use adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies in an attempt to maintain psychological balance (Wang et al., 2018). Adaptive coping strategies, such as seeking social support and increasing psychological resilience, can help individuals cope more effectively with the impact of racial discrimination (Pascoe & Richman, 2009). Maladaptive strategies such as social withdrawal or substance use can worsen an individual's mental state and hinder the development of a healthy identity (Neblett et al., 2016).

Racial identity also plays an important role in an individual's response mechanism to discrimination. According to social identity theory, individuals who have a strong racial identity tend to be more resistant to the psychological impact of discrimination because they can find meaning and support within their own group (Phinney, 1992). Individuals who experience identity conflict or feel alienated from their own group are more vulnerable to the negative effects of discrimination (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

Individuals may adopt proactive strategies to deal with discrimination, such as engagement in social activism or building society support networks, as expressed by Hope et al. (2018). Involvement in social activism gives individuals the opportunity to contribute to positive change in society, as well as fight for the rights of themselves and discriminated groups. Through participation in social movements, individuals gain a sense of voice and influence in stressful situations, enhancing their sense of control over their lives. This can boost self-esteem and self-confidence, as they see themselves as active agents of change rather than mere victims of discrimination. Involvement in social activism often brings individuals into a strong society support network, where they can share experiences, get emotional support, and build mutually supportive relationships. These networks can serve as important resources for coping with the negative impacts of discrimination, as individuals feel more connected and supported by people who have similar experiences.

Research by Oyserman et al. (2001) showed that when individuals feel they have social control and support, the negative impact of discrimination on their mental health can be significantly reduced. Proactive strategies such as social activism and building society support networks help individuals to cope with discrimination, and contribute to improving their psychological well-being (Giuliani et al., 2018). This approach highlights the importance of collective action and solidarity to address the challenges faced by discriminated individuals, and create a more inclusive and equitable environment for all members of society.

Social interactions also undergo changes as a result of racial discrimination. Individuals who experience discrimination may develop a wary attitude towards the majority group and become more introverted in social interactions (Richeson & Shelton, 2007). Some individuals strengthen their social relationships with members of the same group, which may serve as a protective mechanism against psychological stress (Schmitt et al., 2014).

Racial discrimination can shape individuals' mindsets and attitudes towards their social environment. Some individuals may develop strong resilient mechanisms, allowing them to better cope with the challenges of discrimination (Carter, 2007). For individuals who do not have access to adequate social and psychological resources, discrimination can lead to feelings of helplessness and increase the risk of mental disorders (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002).

Individuals' psychological mechanisms for responding to racial discrimination involve a complex combination of emotional factors, social identity, coping strategies and social interactions. When individuals face discrimination, they often experience a range of negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, and frustration, which can affect their mental health. Social identity also plays an important role; individuals who have a discriminated group identity may feel more distressed if they do not have adequate support from their group. The coping strategies that individuals use to deal with discrimination, such as avoiding potentially conflictual situations or seeking support from friends and family, can influence the extent to which they are able to overcome these negative impacts. Resilience, or an individual's ability to bounce back from difficult experiences, is a key factor in this process. Individuals who have high levels of resilience tend to be better able to manage stress and find ways to adapt to challenging situations. Strong social support from friends, family and the society can provide a sense of security and validation, which is critical to reducing the psychological impact of discrimination.

Involvement in the society can also provide individuals with a stronger sense of purpose and identity, as well as the opportunity to contribute to positive social change. Understanding these mechanisms is critical to the development of more effective psychological interventions that can help individuals who experience racial discrimination. Such interventions may include resilience training programs, support groups, and initiatives that encourage society engagement so that individuals can overcome the negative impact of discrimination, and thrive and find strength. This approach can create a more supportive environment for individuals affected by racial discrimination, as well as contribute to broader efforts to address social injustice.

The Effects of Racial Discrimination on Social Engagement and Feelings of Alienation in a Multicultural Environment

Racial discrimination is a major factor that can inhibit individuals' social engagement and reinforce feelings of alienation, especially in multicultural settings (Harrell, 2000). Individuals who experience racial discrimination are likely to face barriers to building healthy interpersonal relationships with members of other groups. This can occur due to the stigma attached to certain racial groups, which leads to social exclusion and marginalization in various aspects of social life (Pakpahan et al., 2021). Uncontrollable negative feelings can interfere with daily life and social interactions, creating emotional tension that is difficult to overcome.

Multicultural environments should be a platform for diversity and inclusiveness, but racial discrimination often creates invisible social segregation (Dovidio et al., 2010). Individuals from minority groups who experience discriminatory treatment tend to withdraw from social interactions to avoid further negative experiences (Schmitt et al., 2014). As a result, they experience limitations in building social networks that can enhance economic opportunities, education and overall well-being (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Repeated discriminatory experiences can cause individuals to internalize the negative stigma directed at them, reducing their self-confidence and motivation to participate in the wider social society (Major et al., 2002). Studies show that individuals who feel discriminated against are more likely to avoid certain social situations, especially those involving majority groups, as they anticipate unfair treatment (Richman & Leary, 2009). This creates a cycle of alienation that is difficult to break, where individuals who feel isolated find it increasingly difficult to adapt to a more inclusive multicultural environment.

Racial discrimination affects individuals' relationships with other groups, and alters individuals' perceptions of the broader social structure (Branscombe et al., 1999). Individuals who experience discrimination tend to feel that the social system is unfair, thus fostering distrust of prevailing social institutions and norms (Shelton et al., 2005). This distrust can reduce participation in society activities, exacerbate feelings of alienation, and ultimately hinder social integration in multicultural environments (Amri & Khayru, 2021).

Feelings of alienation arising from racial discrimination can drive individuals to seek recognition and acceptance within their own racial group, which often results in deeper social segregation (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). While this can provide emotional support and a sense of society for individuals experiencing discrimination, it can also reinforce social boundaries between different racial groups, hindering assimilation and wider social interaction (Morrison & Bearden, 2007).

The impact of racial discrimination on social engagement is not always negative. Some individuals use their discriminatory experiences as motivation to fight for social justice and build stronger cross-cultural relationships (Hope et al., 2018). These proactive strategies can increase individuals' social engagement in multicultural societies and help reduce feelings of alienation through solidarity and advocacy (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009).

Racial discrimination has a complex impact on social engagement and individuals' feelings of alienation in a multicultural environment. For many individuals who experience discrimination, significant barriers can arise to building healthy and productive social relationships. They may feel marginalized or unwelcome in their society, which can lead to feelings of alienation, depression and anxiety. The inability to connect with others can worsen their mental and emotional state, creating a negative cycle that is difficult to break. Some individuals may find a way to overcome this isolation by building a more inclusive society, where they feel valued and accepted. Through support from peer groups or diversity-focused organizations, individuals can find a strong sense of identity and solidarity, which helps them overcome the negative impact of discrimination. It is important for societies and institutions to implement policies that support diversity and promote a more equitable and inclusive social environment for all individuals. These policies can include educational programs that raise awareness of the importance of diversity, training to reduce bias, and initiatives that encourage intercultural interaction.

Creating spaces where all individuals feel safe and valued is necessary so as to reduce feelings of isolation and increase social engagement, which will further strengthen social cohesion and create a more harmonious society. This approach is beneficial for individuals who are discriminated against, and for society as a whole, as valued diversity can enrich social and cultural experiences, and encourage innovation and creativity in various aspects of life. Valued diversity enriches social and cultural experiences, provides a broader perspective on life, and allows society to develop in various aspects.

CONCLUSION

Racial discrimination has a significant impact on an individual's social psychology, especially in terms of psychological well-being, identity, and social engagement. Individuals who experience discrimination are likely to face prolonged stress, feelings of helplessness, and identity disorders that can hinder their development in the wider social environment. In multicultural environments, racial discrimination exacerbates social alienation and reduces individual participation in intercultural interactions. This results in social segregation, which further reinforces intergroup boundaries and hinders harmonious integration in society. The psychological mechanisms that individuals use to deal with discrimination are diverse, ranging from identity-based coping strategies to engagement in collective action to fight injustice. Not all individuals have access or capacity to cope with discrimination in a healthy way, increasing the risk of psychological distress and social isolation.

Based on these findings, it is important for various parties, including governments, educational institutions and social organizations, to take concrete steps to reduce racial discrimination and its impact on individuals. Building a more inclusive environment through anti-discrimination policies, racial awareness education programs, and psychosocial support for victims of discrimination can help reduce the negative impacts. It takes an active role from society to create a more just and equal social space, where every individual can be accepted regardless of their race or ethnic background. Further research also needs to be conducted to understand the best strategies to strengthen the psychological resilience of individuals who experience discrimination, as well as identify factors that can enhance social integration in a multicultural environment. With collaborative efforts from various parties, it is hoped that racial discrimination can be minimized and a more inclusive and harmonious society can be realized. This will lead to better social harmony.

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