

How School Microaggressions Impact Black Youth Resilience After Trauma

A quick guide for educators on understanding how racism in schools shapes student well-being.

Introduction

Who Is This For?



Teachers, school leaders, guidance counsellors and other mental-health staff.

The Problem



African American adolescents face higher rates of trauma. School microaggressions add extra stress that makes coping even harder.

The Study



PARTICIPANTS

189 African American adolescents (age 13-18) completed surveys about ACEs, experiences of school-based racial microaggressions, and their resilience after violence exposure.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - Stressful or traumatic childhood events.



TYPES OF SCHOOL-BASED MICROAGGRESIONS.

Academic Inferiority - Teachers ignoring contributions, discouraging academic ability

Expectations of Aggression - Adults assuming students will be aggressive or dangerous

Stereotypical Misrepresentations - Comments and actions that treat all Black students as the same or reinforce stereotypes



KEY FINDINGS

Finding 1: More ACEs led to lower resilience

Finding 2: Microaggressions made the negative impact of trauma on resilience even stronger, especially:

- Academic inferiority microaggressions
- Stereotypical misrepresentation microaggressions



Implications

Why This Matters

- Trauma informed practices are incomplete if they ignore racism
- Teacher-student relationships impact school belonging, a protective factor



What Schools Can Do

1. Acknowledge racial trauma openly
2. Train staff to recognize microaggressions
3. Increase culturally responsive practices
4. Promote school belonging

