

Impact of Perceived Racial Discrimination on Health Risk Behaviors and Experiences of BIPOC Adolescents

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Abstract : Purpose: BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) adolescents face racism and discrimination at a young age. These early experiences have short- and long-term impacts on their health and overall well-being. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationships between perceived racial discrimination at school and health risk behaviors and experiences of BIPOC adolescents. Methods: Data from the 2021 Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey (ABES) were analyzed. All demographic data were summarized using frequencies and chi-squared tests. A univariate and multivariate logistic regression model was used to test the relationship between perceived racial discrimination and selected health risk factors. All analyses were conducted using STATA SE 18. Results: A total of 42.2% of the BIPOC adolescents in the study indicated being treated unfairly at school due to their race. The majority of those who reported being discriminated against were Black/African American or Multiple Race-Hispanic. Asian adolescents were almost 5 times more likely to face racial discrimination at school compared to their American Indian/Alaska Native counterparts (OR = 4.86, 95% CI [2.69-8.77], $p < 0.001$). Other risk predictors of racial discrimination included being female (OR = 1.38, 95% CI [1.13-1.68], $p = 0.002$) and feeling disconnected at school (OR = 1.76, 95% CI [1.30-2.38], $p < 0.001$). After adjustment for health risk behaviors and experiences, BIPOC adolescents were still more likely to face racial discrimination with even higher odds. Conclusions: The results of this study highlight the depth of racial discrimination faced by BIPOC adolescents at school. Greater attention should be placed on racial discrimination as a social determinant of health and a public health crisis.

Keywords : racial discrimination, adolescents, health risk factors, BIPOC

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