Having a strong ethnic identity was linked with a lower risk of suicidal behaviors among Black college students in a recent study published in the Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development.

The study examined the influence of cultural orientation (ethnic identity, Afrocentric worldview, and religiosity) and personal resources (resiliency and optimism) on suicidal behaviors among Black college students.

The investigators noted that for Black college students, especially as members of a racial/ethnic minority within the society, having a strong ethnic identity may be a stronger protective factor against suicidality as compared with religiosity and Afrocentric worldview.

Also, resilience and a sense of empowerment seemed to matter more than optimism in terms of decreasing suicidal behaviors. Black college students who endorsed a higher level of Afrocentric worldview, ethnic identity, or religiosity were more resilient, which in turn protected against suicidality.

"Most often, the uniqueness of Black persons' identity is viewed from a negative perspective. With increasing calls to respect and uphold Blacks' lives, our study sheds light to the positive role of Black ethnic identity in enhancing their psychological welfare," said co-author Pius N. Nyutu, Ph.D., of Fayetteville State University.


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