



MT. HOPE FAMILY CENTER

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Background Information:

In recent years, there has been an increase in rates of suicidal thoughts and behaviors (STBs) among Black youth. A task force by the Congressional Black Caucus has called for more information on risk and protective factors among Black youth. Risk and protective factors may be individual characteristics or aspects of a youths' environment, like school. This study looked at a special subpopulation of Black youth who also had arrest histories, given the overrepresentation of Black youth in the juvenile justice.

To answer our research questions, we used a secondary data sample, the **National Study on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)**. NSDUH is a federally funded, nationally representative study to understand health risk behaviors and general health information in the U.S. population. This survey asks about suicidal thoughts and behaviors, and consequently is an ideal dataset to study risk and protective factors for Black youth suicide.

Here's a quick summary of what we found:

We found several risk factors that were associated with an increase in suicidal thoughts, suicide plans, and suicide attempts in the NSDUH sample of Black youth. Youth who had higher severity of depression, and girls, were more likely to report thinking about, planning for, and attempting suicide.

There were also several protective factors identified. Notably, positive parenting (ex. Giving praise to children) reduced the chances of youth STBs, even when controlling for all other risk and protective factors (sex, depression severity, socioeconomic risk, substance use, school engagement, religiosity, and participation in activities). School engagement (ex. How interested youth were in their classes; how important they thought their schoolwork was) also helped reduce the risk of suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts.

Why does this research matter??

Knowledge that we gain about risk and protective factors for Black youth suicide can contribute to informing the development of suicide prevention programs for this population. It is especially important to learn more about Black youth who are involved in the youth punishment system. Involvement in this system can be traumatic for youth and has been associated with elevations in STBs.

This study specifically highlighted the significance of school engagement and positive parenting as protective factors for this population of youth. Policymakers and practitioners should support programs and policies that support positive parenting and school engagement. Mental health services should be accessible and targeted to Black youth who have involvement in the youth punishment system.

Clinicians can help prevent STBs in this population by working with parents to teach developmentally-appropriate positive parenting skills. School-based mental health practitioners should focus on promoting school engagement and connectedness.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? READ:

Individual and Contextual Risk and Protective Factors for Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors among Black Adolescents with Arrest Histories by Camille R. Quinn, Erinn B. Duprey, Donte T. Boyd, Raven Lynch, Micah Mitchell, Andrew Ross, Elizabeth D. Handley, and Catherine Cerulli