

The Cycle of Microaggression Among the Buginese Adolescent: Examining the Influence of Experiences as a Victim, Observing, Listening to Microaggression Behavior Moderated by Understanding Microaggression

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to examine the direct and indirect relationships between experiences as a victim, observation, and microaggressive statements with Bugis regional microaggression behavior, moderated by the understanding of microaggressions in South Sulawesi. The study population consisted of Bugis students in South Sulawesi enrolled in the 2019/2020 academic year at both public and private universities. A purposive sampling method was used to select 207 students who met the inclusion criteria. The instruments used included adaptations of the Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS) and the Bugis-South Sulawesi Regional Microaggression Scale. The reliability scores of these instruments were confirmed as satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.7 for all scales. Data analysis was conducted using path analysis. The results revealed that experiences as a victim of microaggression had a significant direct influence on Bugis regional microaggression behavior ($\beta = 0.483$, $p < 0.05$). Observation of microaggressions also significantly reinforced microaggression behavior ($\beta = 0.784$, $p < 0.001$). However, microaggressive statements did not have a significant direct influence ($\beta = 0.324$, $p > 0.05$). The understanding of microaggressions did not significantly moderate the relationship between exogenous variables and microaggression behavior. These findings illustrate the complexity of microaggressive behavior, suggesting a cycle of microaggression similar to bullying, involving perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. Despite differing in forms, microaggression and bullying share common negative impacts on victims, reinforcing the cycle of microaggressive behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Microaggression is one form of subtle bullying behavior that is sometimes perceived as jokes or jests (Burleigh & Wilson, 2021; Grimard et al., 2023). Due to its subtle and less overt nature, many individuals regard it as harmless banter or not very significant. However, not everyone is aware that such behavior also negatively impacts individuals, particularly their emotional well-being (Beaulieu

& Jimenez-Gomez, 2022; Henden & Gümüşeli, 2023). *Microaggression* is defined as actions, remarks, or attitudes that are unpleasant and demeaning towards groups or individuals based on attributes such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or cultural background (Williams et al., 2021). Having detrimental effects on the mental and emotional health of victims, experiencing continuous demeaning treatment can create severe emotional tension and pressure on the targeted individuals, affecting their quality of life and well-being (N. N. Johnson & Johnson, 2022). Microaggression shares similarities with bullying behavior, although differing in purpose, where microaggression tends to be more subtle and concealed, less overt, and often disguised as humor. On the other hand, bullying tends to be more overt and aims to dominate, hurt, or directly demean the victim. These differences make it challenging to recognize microaggression behavior (Prieto-Gutiérrez & Colmenero-Ruiz, 2023).

Unlike bullying behavior, which tends to be overt, such as verbal language that tends to hurt, relational behavior that tends to discriminate, threaten, and avoid others, as well as physical behavior that tends to harm others physically (Umar et al., 2022; Van Fleet & Van Fleet, 2022; Wadesango, 2022). microaggression behavior tends to appear friendly but emotionally attacking (Rini, 2020). For example, when someone with dark skin has a fair-skinned sibling, they receive jokes containing microaggression elements like "the prettiest," even though the depiction of beauty in Indonesia is someone with fair skin. The phrase "the prettiest" linguistically means a compliment, but emotionally, it carries a condescending tone, resulting in discomfort for the individual. Sometimes, they respond to this situation casually with laughter, but emotionally, they feel a sense of inferiority that cannot be expressed because it would be considered too sensitive to respond according to their true feelings (Batool & Kashif, 2023).

Microaggression behavior not only occurs in the general community environment but is most prevalent within cultural and tribal internals (Lindner & Krasnow, 2022). It aligns with research (Harris, 2023) indicating that microaggression behavior is seen as cultural jokes that do not require serious attention. Thus, microaggression behavior is considered unimportant, yet almost everyone has experienced or been a victim of such behavior (Williams, 2021). For example, a man who enjoys cooking sometimes receives expressions like "*Na puji jama-jamang calabai*," meaning "liking the job of a transgender." Such expressions are wrapped in a joking situation but hurt others regarding their cooking hobby. Another example is someone with dark skin is often called "*la pettang*," meaning "the dark one," or given expressions like "*yanatu fa' nalariko mappasajang di tengga esoe, au' mapettang no, isinu bawang macillo*," meaning "that's because you like to fly kites in the daytime, so you end up with dark skin, only your teeth shine." These expressions are always a source of laughter in Bugis culture (Agus, 2013), but they constitute microaggression behavior for someone receiving such expressions.

Microaggression behavior in Bugis society is not only perpetrated by adults towards teenagers and children. It indicates that microaggression can occur in various social interactions, including among peers (Firmin et al., 2019; Fitri et al., 2018). Microaggression behavior can emotionally impact teenagers, leading them to experience feelings of insecurity (Adedeji et al., 2022; Balagna et al., 2013). The adverse effects of microaggression behavior on Bugis teenagers can extend to affecting their levels of self-confidence and causing social isolation. They may feel uncomfortable interacting with environments outside their culture due to the microaggression experiences they face (Davis & Mirick, 2022). Bugis teenagers also experience issues of insecurity and lack of confidence as a result of being victims of microaggressive behavior (Manejwala & Abu-Ras, 2019).

Based on research findings (Campbell & Manning, 2018), the issue of microaggression bears similarities to the bullying cycle, where individuals who have been victims of microaggression have a significant potential to become perpetrators of similar behavior later on (Gentry & Whitley, 2014). Microaggression behavior persists due to bystander support, which refers to individuals in the surrounding environment who either do not intervene or even support such behavior (Haynes-

[Baratz et al., 2022](#)). Various research results indicate that within the bullying cycle, individuals who have experienced bullying tend to seek revenge by engaging in bullying behavior towards others in their surroundings ([Falla et al., 2022](#); [Wadesango, 2022](#); [Wójcik & Flak, 2021](#)) and this includes microaggression behavior ([Friedlaender & Ivy, 2020](#)). However, further data is still needed to confirm whether the experience of being a victim of microaggression has the same impact in causing someone to become a perpetrator of microaggression in the future, as observed in the bullying cycle. Therefore, there is a need for measurement to ascertain the influence of victim experiences on an individual's microaggression behavior.

Furthermore, there is a second factor considered to influence microaggression behavior, which is the experience as a bystander ([Hackworth et al., 2021](#)). In bullying cases, bystanders play a crucial role in the perpetuation of bullying incidents ([Rigby, 2022](#); [Zhao et al., 2023](#)). Bystanders, although understanding the discomfort of the victim, tend to remain silent and sometimes even laugh along with the situation despite having the ability to stop such behavior ([Iñiguez-Berrozpe et al., 2021](#)). Research findings ([Ng et al., 2020](#)) indicate that individuals who frequently observe bullying behavior in their surroundings tend to have a greater tolerance for bullying behavior and engage in bullying themselves. However, more specific data is needed to determine whether the role of bystanders in bullying cases is the same as in microaggression cases. Therefore, the second research question in this study is: How does an individual's experience in observing microaggression influence microaggression behavior?

The third factor influencing an individual's microaggression behavior is the experience of listening to microaggressive statements ([Okorie-Awé et al., 2021](#)). In bullying cases, the experience as a bystander in listening to verbal bullying also affects tolerance toward future verbal bullying, including the issuance of microaggressive statements ([Palomera et al., 2021](#); [Stewart, 2020](#)). However, are the impacts of microaggressive statements the same as the impacts of bullying statements on bullying behavior? Therefore, the third research question is: How does an individual's experience in listening to microaggressive statements influence microaggression behavior?

Based on research findings ([Fattoracci & King, 2023](#)), understanding microaggression also influences microaggression behavior. Individuals with a negative understanding of microaggression tend to exacerbate microaggression behavior, whether acting as victims or bystanders ([V. E. Johnson et al., 2021](#)). Conversely, individuals with a positive understanding of microaggression tend to avoid microaggression behavior, whether acting as perpetrators or bystanders ([Abdelaziz et al., 2021a](#)). Therefore, perception variables of microaggression are used as moderator variables in this study. Thus, there are three exogenous variables in this study: 1) experience as a victim, 2) observation of microaggression, and 3) statements regarding microaggression. The endogenous variable in this study is regional microaggression behavior, and the moderator variable is the perception of microaggression. This study tests three direct effects of exogenous variables on the endogenous and three indirect effects of exogenous variables on the endogenous through the moderator variable.

Rationale of Study

Microaggression has been widely acknowledged as a harmful behavior with subtle, yet significant consequences for individuals' emotional and psychological well-being. However, little research has specifically focused on the dynamics of microaggression within specific cultural contexts, such as the Bugis society in South Sulawesi. Understanding how microaggressions manifest and affect the Bugis adolescent population is crucial, given the potential long-term consequences on their self-esteem, social interaction, and mental health. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the complex relationships between victimization, observation, and microaggression statements, as well as their impact on Bugis adolescents' microaggression behavior. Additionally, exploring how an individual's understanding of microaggression may

moderate these effects is essential for developing strategies to mitigate the impact of microaggression behaviors.

Aim and Hypotheses

The primary aim of this study is to explore the direct and indirect relationships between experiences as a victim, observing microaggressions, and hearing microaggressive statements with the microaggression behavior of Bugis adolescents in South Sulawesi. Furthermore, this study aims to examine whether understanding microaggression moderates the relationship between these experiences and microaggression behavior. Based on the literature, the hypotheses for this study are as follows:

- H1: Experience as a victim of microaggression has a significant direct effect on microaggression behavior among Bugis adolescents.
- H2: Observation of microaggressions has a significant direct effect on microaggression behavior among Bugis adolescents.
- H3: Hearing microaggressive statements has a significant direct effect on microaggression behavior among Bugis adolescents.
- H4: Understanding microaggressions moderates the relationship between experiences as a victim, observing microaggressions, and microaggressive statements on Bugis regional microaggression behavior.

METHODS

Design

This research utilizes a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationships between exogenous variables (X1: experiential aspect, X2: observational aspect, X3: microaggression statement aspect) and the endogenous variables (Y1: understanding aspect of microaggression and serving as a moderator variable, Y2: regional microaggression in South Sulawesi Bugis). This study aims to investigate the direct and indirect effects of each variable on the other variables in the constructed model while considering the moderating role of the perception of microaggression on the relationships between these variables.

Participants

The population involved in this study comprises all students in South Sulawesi registered for the academic year 2019/2020, distributed across various universities, both public and private. The sampling technique employed in this research is purposive sampling, allowing the researcher to select samples based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Using this technique, the researcher aims to obtain the most relevant and representative samples for the research topic under investigation: 1) The researcher established three inclusion criteria as the focus of sample selection; 2) Students ranging from semesters 1 to 7 were chosen to ensure variation in their levels of experience and academic backgrounds; 3) The study focuses on adolescents from the Bugis ethnic group. Thus, students of Bugis descent are the primary target in the sample. To obtain relevant representation from the target population, the researcher selected students from the Bugis region in South Sulawesi. After setting the inclusion criteria, the researcher intentionally selected samples based on clear considerations aligned with the research objectives, resulting in a sample size of 207 students who met the criteria.

Instruments

Instrument Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS)

In this research, instruments consisting of an adapted version of the Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS) developed by [\(Torres-Harding et al., 2012b\)](#). This instrument is an extension of the

Table 1. Goodness Fit Indices and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Experience Aspects

Instrument Racial Microaggression Scale-Aspect Experience	Cut-off Value	Measurement Model	Model
Validity Test			
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.000	Fit
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	428.742/170	Fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.998	Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	1.000	Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	1.000	Fit
Reliability Test			
Mc Donald's	> 0.60	0.938	Valid
Cronbach's	> 0.60	0.938	Valid

Table 2. Goodness Fit Indices and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Observation Aspects

Instrument Racial Microaggression Scale- Aspect Observation	Cut-off Value	Measurement Model	Model
Validity Test			
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.058	Fit
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	175.086/104	Fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.996	Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.998	Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.998	Fit
Reliability Test			
Mc Donald's	> 0.60	0.998	Valid
Cronbach's	> 0.60	0.938	Valid

concept of microaggression in everyday life proposed by (Sue, 2010). A Likert model was used with 5 response options, but in the adapted Indonesian version, the response options were modified to 4 choices. This modification was considered because there is a tendency in Indonesian society to choose neutral options. Therefore, the response options in this instrument consist of "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." The results of the validity and reliability analysis can be seen in the following table.

The Bugis-South Sulawesi Regional Microaggression Scale

The instrument utilized in this study is the Bugis-South Sulawesi Regional Microaggression Scale, which was developed based on the concept of microaggression in everyday life proposed by (Sue, 2010). It consists of 30 statement items measuring various aspects of microaggression behavior within the Bugis regional context, including negative stereotypes, discrimination, behaviors indicating unfair treatment or inequality, negative attitudes, and prejudice. These statements are measured using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree, to disagree strongly. Furthermore, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the factorial structure of this microaggression scale. In testing the model's adequacy, the researcher conducted goodness-of-fit index tests and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Thus, Table 2 presents that the proposed model fits the observed data, and the CFA values are adequate, indicating that the model validates the factorial structure of the developed microaggression scale.

Table 3. Goodness Fit Indices and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Statements Aspects

Instrument Racial Microaggression Scale- Aspect Statement	Cut-off Value	Measurement Model	Model
Validity Test			
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.000	Fit
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	722.221/14	Fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.866	Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.799	Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.698	Fit
Reliability Test			
Mc Donald's	> 0.60	0.506	Valid
Cronbach's	> 0.60	0.749	Valid

Table 4. Goodness Fit Indices and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Microagresive understanding Aspects

Instrument Racial Microaggression Scale- Aspect Statement	Cut-off Value	Measurement Model	Model
Validity Test			
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.073	Fit
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	84.797/35	Fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.993	Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.994	Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.993	Fit
Reliability Test			
Mc Donald's	> 0.60	0.914	Valid
Cronbach's	> 0.60	0.912	Valid

Table 5. Goodness Fit Indices and Confirmatory Factor Analysis the Bugis-South Sulawesi Regional Microaggression Scale

Microaggression Bugis	Cut-off Value	Measurement Model	Model
Validity Test			
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.061	Fit
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	616.239/350	Fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.997	Fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.859	Fit
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.884	Fit
Reliability Test			
Mc Donald's	> 0.60	0.929	Valid
Cronbach's	> 0.60	0.929	Valid

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study utilizes path analysis, a statistical method used to test direct and indirect relationships between variables within a model. This model illustrates the hypothesized causal relationships between these variables. In this study, several variables are utilized, namely, experience as a victim of microaggression, observation of microaggression, microaggression

statements, understanding of microaggression, and Bugis regional microaggression behavior, thereby obtaining path coefficient estimates that depict the strength and direction of relationships among variables in this research model.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

How do Experience as a Victim, Observation of Microaggression Behavior, and Microaggression Statements directly influence Regional Microaggression Behavior in Bugis adolescents

Based on the data analysis results in Table 6, it was found that the aspect of experiencing microaggression towards Bugis regional microaggression has a value (sig.) of 0.003 where $P < 0.05$. This indicates that there is a direct influence of the aspect of experience or individuals who experience microaggression as victims on Bugis regional microaggression behavior in South Sulawesi. Furthermore, the aspect of observing microaggression towards Bugis regional microaggression has a value (sig.) $< .001$ where $p < 0.05$. This indicates that there is a direct influence of the observation aspect or individuals who frequently witness microaggression behavior as observers on Bugis regional microaggression behavior in South Sulawesi. However, in terms of the aspect of microaggression statements towards Bugis regional microaggression, it has a value (sig.) of 0.229 where $p > 0.05$. This indicates that there is no direct influence of the statement aspect on Bugis regional microaggression behavior in South Sulawesi.

How do Experience as a Victim, Observation of Microaggression Behavior, and Microaggression Statements directly influence Bugis Regional Microaggression Behavior in Bugis adolescents moderated by perception of microaggression?

Based on the results of the indirect effects analysis in Table 4, it was found that the aspect of experience does not have an indirect influence on Bugis regional microaggression through the

Table 6. Direct Effects

			95% Confidence Interval					
			Estimate	SE	z-value	p	Lower	Upper
Experience as a victim	→	Bugis regional microaggression	0.483	0.161	3.003	0.003	0.063	0.934
Observation	→	Bugis regional microaggression"	0.784	0.137	5.731	$< .001$	0.378	1.085
Statement	→	Bugis regional microaggression"	0.324	0.269	1.203	0.229	-0.164	0.863

Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator.

Table 7. Indirect Effects

			95% Confidence Interval					
			Estimate	SE	z-value	p	Lower	Upper
Experience as a victim	→ understanding microaggressions	→ Bugis regional microaggression	-0.002	0.006	0.269	0.788	-0.040	0.011
Observation	→ understanding microaggressions	→ Bugis regional microaggression	0.007	0.022	0.332	0.740	-0.025	0.055
Statement	→ understanding microaggressions	→ Bugis regional microaggression	0.018	0.055	0.333	0.739	-0.072	0.145

Note. Delta method standard errors, normal theory confidence intervals, ML estimator.

aspect of understanding microaggression, with a value (sig.) of 0.778 where $p > 0.05$. Furthermore, the observation aspect also does not have an indirect influence on Bugis regional microaggression behavior through individuals' understanding of microaggression, with a value (sig.) of 0.740 where $p > 0.05$. Additionally, the aspect of microaggression statements does not have an indirect influence on Bugis regional microaggression behavior through individuals' understanding of microaggression, with a value (sig.) of 0.739 where $p > 0.05$.

Based on the results of the path analysis on 3 exogenous variables, namely X1: experience aspect, X2: observation aspect, X3: statement aspect, and the endogenous variables Y1: perception aspect of microaggression and also serving as the moderator variable, and Y2: Bugis regional microaggression behavior in South Sulawesi, can be clearly seen in Figure 2, the model plot of the path analysis.

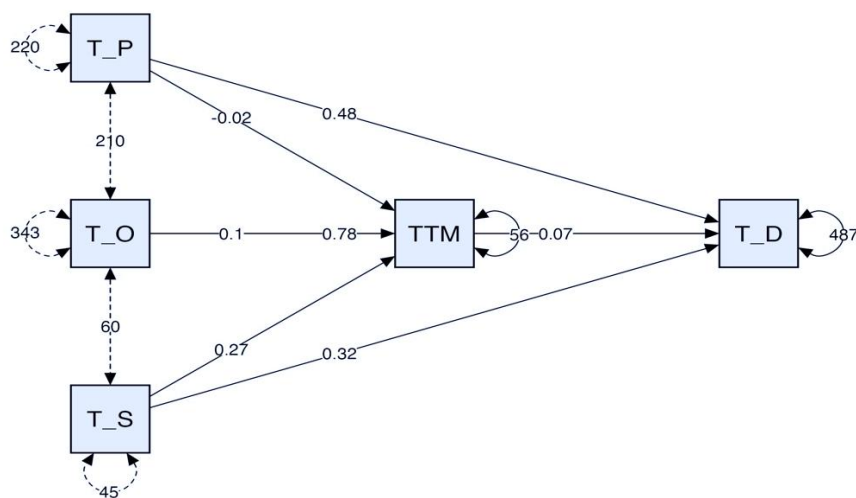


Figure 1. Model Plot

Discussion

The results of this study indicate a direct influence of experiencing microaggressions as a victim on Bugis regional microaggression behavior. In the interaction between individuals and groups with Bugis regional backgrounds, there is a complex dynamic at play (Rahmawati, 2023). These findings suggest that the higher someone's level of experience as a victim of microaggressions, the greater their potential involvement in Bugis regional microaggression behavior among Bugis youth. In other words, experiencing microaggressions as a victim can influence individuals to exhibit microaggression behavior towards other groups or individuals (Banks et al., 2022). These findings align with previous research indicating that individuals who frequently experience demeaning and discriminatory treatment as victims of microaggressions may respond with similar behaviors towards specific groups or individuals (Coalson et al., 2022; N. N. Johnson & Johnson, 2022).

Several factors that can contribute to the relationship between the experience of being a victim of microaggressions and the microaggressive behavior towards others include how individuals respond to social situations. For example, individuals who frequently experience demeaning and discriminatory treatment may learn that such behavior is an acceptable way to handle conflicts or express dissatisfaction (Smith & Griffiths, 2022). This also aligns with social learning theory, which states that individuals learn through observation and social interaction (De Felice et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the experience of being a victim of microaggressions can also lead to high levels of frustration due to feeling unappreciated or unfairly treated. This frustration can drive individuals

to respond with aggressive behavior, including engaging in microaggressions towards others (Tadros & McCaskill, 2023). Additionally, being a victim of microaggressions can trigger the use of psychological defense mechanisms, such as projection and displacement, where individuals blame others or other groups for the discomfort or negative feelings they experience (Williams, 2020). Research findings (V. E. Johnson et al., 2021), suggest that some victims of microaggressions engage in microaggressions towards others as a way to regain a sense of power and control over situations that previously demeaned them. Finally, if individuals experience microaggressions continuously within their social environment, such behavior can become normalized within the group (Costa et al., 2023; Strand & Cohen, 2022).

The observation variable or individuals acting as observers of Bugis-regional microaggression behavior have a significant direct influence. It means that those who frequently witness microaggression behavior as observers are directly associated with the occurrence of Bugis-regional microaggression behavior among Bugis adolescents. Consistent with research findings (Abdelaziz et al., 2021a), individuals engaged in repeated observation and vulnerability to microaggression behavior can reinforce or perpetuate this behavioral cycle. Studies explain that adolescents who frequently observe microaggressions from peers or adults around them may perceive such behavior as normal or acceptable ways to interact with others (Awad & Connors, 2023; Harris, 2023).

Furthermore, individuals who act as bystanders to microaggression behavior may also play a role in perpetuating such behavior. Bystanders' responses to microaggression behavior can provide unconscious support for that behavior (Rubenstein et al., 2023). Research findings by (Griffith et al., 2022) also explain that bystanders who fail to take action to stop microaggression behavior or even laugh along or respond casually may signal to the perpetrator that such behavior is acceptable without negative consequences. Based on research results (Banks et al., 2023), a lack of empathy also influences observer behavior. Individuals acting as observers may lack high levels of empathy towards microaggression victims. Consequently, they may not fully understand how victims experience microaggression behavior and tend to perceive such behavior as less harmful or significant (Coalson et al., 2022).

Then, the variable of statements or expressions containing microaggression elements does not have a direct influence on Bugis regional microaggression behavior. It means that the aspect of microaggression statements does not directly contribute to supporting or influencing the occurrence of Bugis regional microaggression behavior. However, this does not imply that statements containing microaggressions do not have adverse effects on the victim or their surrounding environment (Beltran et al., 2023). Microaggression statements can still cause discomfort, humiliation, or hurt the feelings of those who receive them (Adedeji et al., 2022). However, in the context of a direct relationship with Bugis regional microaggression behavior, research indicates that the aspect of microaggression statements does not have a significant influence. *Microaggression behavior* is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors. Other factors, such as the experience as a victim, observation, and social and cultural environmental factors, have a more dominant influence (Umar, Rafli, Mentari, et al., 2023a; Wells, 2022). Social norms, speech habits, and cultural values can influence how individuals interact and communicate in ways that contain microaggressions (Beaulieu & Jimenez-Gomez, 2022). Furthermore, the influence of microaggression statement aspects on microaggression behavior may also vary depending on specific contexts and situations. Some situations or social groups may be more accepting or even appreciative of statements containing microaggressions, while in other places and groups, it may be deemed inappropriate (Strand & Cohen, 2022). Thus, environmental and cultural factors can be strong influences in encouraging or inhibiting microaggression behavior in the Bugis community in South Sulawesi.

The research findings indicate that experiences, observations, and microaggression statements do not have an indirect influence on Bugis regional microaggression behavior through

individuals' understanding of microaggressions. It means that individual experiences of microaggressions do not play a significant moderating role in explaining the relationship between experience, observation, and microaggression statements with Bugis regional microaggression behavior. It is due to the complexity and multifactorial causes of microaggression behavior. Based on research findings (Abdelaziz et al., 2021b; Umar, Rafli, & Latif, 2023), each individual has diverse experiences and backgrounds that influence their understanding of microaggressions. For example, an individual's understanding of microaggression behavior may vary depending on cultural context and social environment. Suppose the social environment supports or reinforces microaggression behavior. In that case, the aspect of understanding does not play a role in changing individuals' attitudes toward that behavior, as they tend to adopt the views of their surrounding environment (Burleigh & Wilson, 2021; Liebow, 2021). Additionally, cultural norms and values can also influence individuals' understanding of microaggressions. If microaggression behavior is considered normal and acceptable in a particular culture, individuals will not avoid such behavior even if they understand that it can harm others (Coalson et al., 2022; Domínguez & Embrick, 2020). Microaggression behavior is more related to individuals' feelings and emotions, as its impact can cause discomfort, low self-esteem, or even trauma to the victims (Turner et al., 2021; Wesselmann et al., 2022). On the other hand, the aspect of understanding microaggressions involves how individuals process information and understand the concept of microaggressions as well as their attitudes toward such behavior (Rini, 2020; Smith & Griffiths, 2022). This difference indicates that although individuals have a high level of understanding of microaggressions, it does not automatically change their behavior towards others (Nadal et al., 2021). This is because microaggression behavior is more influenced by emotional, psychological, and social factors that are more complex, apart from the level of understanding of the microaggression concept itself (Adedeji et al., 2022; Khalid, 2023).

Based on research findings on microaggression behavior, it is evident that this phenomenon exhibits cyclical patterns similar to bullying, although they both have different forms and expressions of behavior (Morrow II, 2020). However, these differences do not detract from the fact that they share similarities in interaction patterns and impacts on victims (Fu et al., 2022; Grimard et al., 2023). First, both microaggressions and bullying can lead to demeaning, harming, or discriminating against victims. Despite being different in form, both can cause discomfort, low self-esteem, or even trauma for the victims (Eisenberg et al., 2022; Ruan, 2019). Second, both microaggression and bullying behaviors often occur directly and consistently toward the victim. This repetitive pattern can further influence and reinforce the cycle of such behavior (Friedlaender & Ivy, 2020). Third, the role of bystanders or witnesses is also crucial, as in the case of bullying. If bystanders fail to take action to stop or oppose microaggression behavior, the cycle continues (Haynes-Baratz et al., 2022). Fourth, victims of microaggression or bullying have the potential to become perpetrators in the future. If they continue to experience demeaning behavior, they may feel compelled to redirect this discomfort onto others, even by engaging in microaggressive behavior (Lee, 2022). The cycle of microaggression can occur in various social environments (Nordell, 2021), including within the Bugis community in South Sulawesi. Apart from sharing cyclical patterns and impacts with bullying, microaggression behavior can also serve as a tool to maintain and reinforce power hierarchies and dominance of certain groups over others (Foste & Ng, 2022). In the context of Bugis society or other cultural groups, microaggressions can become mechanisms used to uphold existing social norms, including those related to race, gender, and other attributes (Strand & Cohen, 2022; Umar, Rafli, Mentari, et al., 2023b). However, one of the impacts of microaggression behavior is that it can cause others to become indifferent and lose empathy. This occurs because microaggressions often occur subtly and inconspicuously, causing others to overlook them or even regard them as ordinary jokes without realizing the emotional consequences experienced by the victim (Nadal et al., 2021; Nishi, 2019).

Implication

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the dynamics of microaggression within Bugis adolescent communities in South Sulawesi. The significant influence of victimization and observation of microaggressions on regional microaggression behavior emphasizes the need for intervention strategies aimed at addressing these experiences in academic and social settings. Educational institutions and community leaders should focus on raising awareness about the harmful effects of microaggressions and promoting empathetic responses to prevent perpetuation of such behavior. The lack of a significant moderating role of understanding microaggressions suggests that more focused efforts are needed to improve individuals' comprehension of microaggressions and their consequences. These insights can inform future counseling and intervention programs, aiming to break the cycle of microaggressions and mitigate its detrimental impact on mental health and social integration among adolescents.

Limitation

Despite providing important insights, this study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional nature of the research restricts the ability to infer causal relationships. Longitudinal studies would be needed to better understand the long-term effects of microaggressions. Second, the focus on Bugis adolescents in South Sulawesi may limit the generalizability of the findings to other ethnic or regional groups in Indonesia or globally. Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported data, which could be subject to social desirability bias. Future research should aim to incorporate multiple sources of data, including observational and qualitative approaches, to deepen understanding. Lastly, the study did not explore other potential moderating factors, such as cultural values or social support, which could influence the relationship between microaggressions and individual behavior.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that Bugis regional microaggression behavior in South Sulawesi is shaped by a complex interplay of factors. Victimization experiences significantly influence individuals' involvement in microaggressions, with higher levels of victimization increasing the likelihood of engaging in such behavior. Observational behavior also plays a crucial role, as those who frequently witness microaggressions are more likely to perpetuate them. Bystanders, through their responses, can either reinforce or disrupt the cycle of microaggression. Although microaggression statements themselves do not directly influence regional microaggression behavior, they still cause discomfort and harm to the recipients. Furthermore, individual understanding of microaggressions does not significantly moderate the relationship between victimization, observation, and microaggressive statements with behavior. Instead, emotional, psychological, and social factors appear to have a greater influence. The study also highlights that the cycle of microaggressions bears similarities to the bullying cycle, though they differ in expression, both resulting in harm and discrimination. These findings underscore the importance of raising awareness and promoting education on microaggressions within the Bugis community to reduce such behavior and foster a safer, more tolerant environment. Moreover, involving bystanders in addressing microaggressions and exploring further research on cultural differences and interventions can help mitigate and prevent microaggressive behaviors in the future.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

SP and CHS agree to the final version of this article.

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