

# Enhancing Academic Motivation and Ethno Racial Identity Development Through Ethnic and Racial Coalition in Minority Serving Institutions

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## Abstract

This study examines how ethnic and racial coalitions can encourage academic motivation and the growth of ethno-racial identities in Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). It makes the case that coalitions can foster conditions that encourage academic engagement and identity affirmation by drawing on empirical data and theoretical viewpoints. The need to pay maximum attention to education at higher level especially in Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) cannot be over emphasized. The study aimed at ascertaining the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation and ethnoracial identity development amongst students in Minority Serving Institutions. This study makes a persuasive case for the use of such coalitions as an effective means of reducing educational inequities by evaluating quantitative and qualitative data from a sample of these institutions. Two research questions were raised and answered and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. The sample consisted of 22 African students and 15 Non-African students. The instrument used for data collection is a structured questionnaire. The reliability indices of the instrument were found to be .90 and .91. The data collected was analyzed using mean to answer the research questions and Analysis of Variance to test the null hypotheses. The findings illuminate the potential of ethnic and racial coalitions to foster positive academic outcomes, cultural affirmation, and increased self-identification among ethnic and racial minority students. Findings also revealed among others that provision of adequate career orientation, and encouraging belief in the value of education are roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation as well as holding cultural celebrations, providing support for group identification and cohesion are roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethnoracial identity development amongst students in MSIs. The study recommended among others that the management of the Minority Serving Institutions should provide administrative support for ethnic and racial coalition on MSI campuses for enhancing the academic motivation and ethno racial identity development amongst students.

**Keywords:** Academic Motivation, Ethno Racial Identity Development & Ethnic and Racial Coalition

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## Introduction

Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) have gained importance in American higher education, acting as a hub of academic opportunities for many ethnic and racial minority students. However, academic motivation and identity development in these students are frequently understudied. This research aims to shed light on these characteristics by investigating how ethnic and racial coalitions might be used as a tool to improve these components. The inequality responsible for substantially lowering the access to education at higher level amongst the minority people at the majority institutions in the United States (US) led to the emergence of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). For many students who identify as ethnic or racial minorities, MSIs play an increasingly important role in American higher education by connecting them to opportunities in the classroom. However, these students' academic motivation and identity formation frequently lack adequate research. By examining how ethnic and racial coalitions might be used as a tool for increasing these components, this research aims to shed light on these features. The MSIs refers to higher institutions of learning including Universities and Colleges that largely enroll and serve a substantial number of students from minority groups. According to the American Council on Education (2022), the MSIs are vital part of higher education system in the US that provide access to college for millions of students of color (minority), majority of whom are from low-income backgrounds. These institutions just like any other higher institutions of learning play vital roles for the growth of national economy, especially in the aspect of enhancing the employability prospects of disadvantaged populations and reducing the under representation of minorities and disadvantaged people in graduate and professional schools. Sharareh and Elnaz (2017) disclosed that low level academic achievements amongst students in MSIs is still considered as serious threat to the nation. However, numerous researchers

especially, those with interest in education of the minority groups associated the challenge of low level academic achievements of these students to many factors among which are inequality opportunities and allocation of resources and lack of academic motivation.

### **Ethnic and Racial Coalitions and Academic Motivation**

Several studies have found a link between academic motivation and ethnic and racial coalitions in MSIs. Cultural collectivism has been shown in studies to promote academic achievement by fostering a sense of belonging and shared academic responsibility (Steele & Aronson, 2005; Museus & Neville, 2012). Similarly, ethno-racial coalitions have been shown to improve academic motivation and achievement (Villalpando & Bernal, 2002). Academic motivation is a major construct in determining the academic achievements of students. Kevin (2008) described academic motivation as the desire of students (as reflected in his or her approach, persistence, and level of interest) regarding academic subject. It refers to the cause of behaviors associated with the academic functioning and success. These behavior may reflect the degree of effort students invest in studying, the effectiveness in regulating their studies, which endeavors they choose to pursue, and how persistent they are in pursuing the chosen endeavors. According to Usher and Morris (2012), academic motivation has positive correlation with learning and academic achievements of students. This implied that students that lacks academic motivation exhibit the least desirable academic achievements. In relation to this, Fogliati and Bussey (2013) stated that students' academic motivation and achievement can be negatively influenced by several factors among which are stereotype threat and poor ethno racial identity development.

The term ethnoracial identity is a multifaceted construct consisting of how people develop and experience a sense of belonging to their culture. Ethnoracial identities are important for students, especially those who belong to minority groups simply because they experience the contrasting and dominant culture of the majority ethnic group (Cokley, 2018). However, researchers have revealed relationships between ethno racial identity and academic achievement among students. Zamli et al. (2020) revealed that there is a significant relationship between students' ethnoracial identity and academic achievement. In essence, it implies that students with a high level of self-identity are more likely to have better academic achievements. Therefore, in order to enhance students' academic achievement, there is need for ethnic and racial coalitions in MSIs to play certain roles towards developing the ethnoracial identity of students. Hence, there is need to better comprehend how students especially those in MSIs develop a sense of ethnic and racial identity through ethnic and racial coalitions.

Ethnic and racial coalition represents a group with strategy for combating racism and for acting on other issues relevant to achieving social justice and social change. According to Benjamin and Raymond (2022), ethnic and racial coalition provides leadership and guidance on eliminating barriers to racial equity and supporting the advancement of all minority students in the MSIs. Despite these respective roles, there is lack of empirical evidence on how ethnic and racial coalition can enhance academic motivation and ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs (Deepak & Ranju 2019). This entailed that less attention has been given to the roles and functions of racial and ethnic coalition in enhancing academic motivation and ethno racial identity. Thus, there is need to better understand the roles of racial and ethnic coalition in enhancing the academic motivation and ethno racial identity development in order to address the low level academic achievement of students in MSIs.

### **Theoretical Framework: Ethnic and Racial Coalition in MSIs**

Ethnic and racial coalitions are alliances formed by people of different races and ethnicities to promote common interests and ideals. Such alliances can be useful in establishing a supportive and inclusive academic climate in the context of MSIs. These coalitions' theoretical framework is based on intersectionality, coalition theory, critical race theory, racial formation theory social identity theory, and self-determination theory, all of which emphasize the impact of socio-cultural context on people's identity development and motivation. Crenshaw's (1989) Intersectionality theory offers a crucial perspective for comprehending the multiple identities that MSI students experience. The idea enables us to investigate how various people and groups interact in these institutions because it acknowledges the interconnectedness of race, class, and gender. It emphasizes how experiences of students are not uniform but rather a synthesis of their various identities (Crenshaw, 1989). According to Omi and Winant's Racial Formation Theory from 1994, racial categories are created through social and political processes. Understanding these procedures is essential in MSIs for fostering the formation of alliances between racial and ethnic groups. This theory paves the way for fostering ethnic and racial unity by challenging preexisting racial hierarchies and comprehending the dynamic nature of race (Omi & Winant, 1994). Critical Race Theory (CRT) proposes that racism is ingrained in the fabric and system of the American society, influencing the education sector as well (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The theory stresses the importance of viewing educational policies, practices, and discourses from a racialized lens. It provides the basis for engaging in critical dialogues about race in MSIs and for developing strategies to foster racial coalition (Yosso, 2005). According to the Coalition theory, alliances develop when groups struggle to achieve their shared objectives on

their own (Gamble & Weil, 1995). Students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds can unite in MSIs to form coalitions, allowing them to work together to oppose discriminatory practices and advance a more welcoming learning environment.

Theoretical perspectives like those mentioned above offer a comprehensive framework for comprehending racial and ethnic coalitions in MSIs. To understand how race, ethnicity, and coalition-building processes in MSIs work, they promote intersectional and critical approaches. In order for these theories to continue to develop and be useful, more study is required to test and improve them in the particular context of MSIs.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

The quality of education that is offered at higher level of education particularly in Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) plays a crucial role to shape the future of the US. The MSIs are designed to prepare a diverse workforce and also prepare underrepresented students for graduate and professional school. Unfortunately, students in these institutions are faced with numerous challenges among which is low academic achievement. Sharareh and Elnaz (2017) confirmed that that students in MSIs experience low level academic achievements which is considered a serious threat to the nation. The low level academic achievement among students in MSIs could be attributed to the lack of academic motivation. Fogliati and Bussey (2013) confirmed that lack of academic motivation among students in MSIs is mainly caused by low ethno racial identity. In order to address the challenges of low level academic achievements of students in MSIs, there is need to understand how ethnic and racial coalition is capable of enhancing ethnoracial identity development and academic motivation. Hence, this study sought to identify the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation and ethnoracial identity development amongst students in MSIs in order to address the challenge of low academic achievement

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed at enhancing academic motivation and ethno racial identity development through ethnic and racial coalition in minority serving institutions. In specific terms, the objectives of the study are to ascertain the:

1. Roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation amongst students in MSIs
2. Roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs

### **Research Questions**

To achieve the stated objectives of the study, the following research questions were raised and answered:

1. What are the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation amongst students in MSIs?
2. What are the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs?

### **Hypotheses**

To provide reliable answers to the research questions raised, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 significant level.

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa related students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation in MSIs.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa related students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development in MSIs.

### **Methodology**

A quantitative study using cross-sectional type of descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The cross-sectional research design is the type that involves the collection of data from a population at one specific point in time (Maninder, 2016). The research design is suitable for this study considering the fact that it enabled the researcher to identify the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation and ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs at the same time. The sample consisted of 22 African related students and 15 Non-African related students between the ages of 18–45 (mean age 31.5 years) in Morgan State University. A structured questionnaire with two parts (A & B) was developed by the researcher on five points rating scale that connote Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Neutral with numerical values of 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 respectively. The part A of the questionnaire solicited information on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation while the part B collected information on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development. The reliability indices of the instrument were found to be .90 and .91 with over all reliability index of .91 respectively using Cronbach Alpha statistic. The quantitative data was collected for the study using hand delivery. The data collected was analyzed

using mean to answer the research questions and Analysis of Variance to test the null hypotheses using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The real limit of numbers was used in taking decision on the research questions while comparing the generated p-value and the stated level of significance (.05) was used as basis for decision making regarding the null hypotheses.

**Results:**

**Research One**

What are the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation amongst students in MSIs? Table 1 presents data for answering research question one.

**Table 1: Mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa related students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation in MSIs**

S/N	Items	N1=22, N2=15			Remark
		$\bar{X}_1$	$\bar{X}_2$	$\bar{X}_A$	
1	Provision of adequate career orientation	4.15	4.46	4.28	Agreed
2	Encouraging belief in the value of education	3.95	4.29	4.08	Agreed
3	Create activities that foster positive relationship among students	4.05	4.49	4.23	Agreed
4	Campaign on positive teacher–student relationships	3.93	4.33	4.10	Agreed
5	Presents actions that will help build confidence in the educational system	4.12	4.41	4.24	Agreed
6	Plan events where people can share academic success experience	4.19	4.48	4.31	Agreed
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>4.44</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

**Keys:** N<sub>1</sub> = Number of African related students, N<sub>2</sub> = Number of Non-African related students,  $\bar{X}_1$  = Mean response of African related students,  $\bar{X}_2$  = Mean response of Non-African related students,  $\bar{X}_A$  = Average mean response of African and Non-African related students.

Table 1 revealed that, all the 6 items had average mean values between 4.04 and 4.31. This indicated that, the respondents agreed that all the 6 items were the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation amongst students in MSIs.

**Research Two**

What are the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs? Table 2 presents data for answering research question two.

**Table 1: Mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa related students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development in MSIs**

S/N	Items	N1=22, N2=15			Remark
		$\bar{X}_1$	$\bar{X}_2$	$\bar{X}_A$	
1	Establish boundaries of acceptable behavior	4.13	4.33	4.21	Agreed
2	Share personal experiences with representatives from other racial and ethnic groups	3.88	4.33	4.07	Agreed
3	Hold cultural celebrations	4.13	4.42	4.25	Agreed
4	Provide support for group identification and cohesion	3.94	4.25	4.07	Agreed
5	Respond appropriately to cultural and language differences	4.13	4.17	4.14	Agreed
6	Take time to discuss issues of race and ethnicity	4.19	4.33	4.25	Agreed
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>4.33</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Table 2 revealed that, all the 6 items had average mean values between 4.07 and 4.25. This indicated that, the respondents agreed that all the 6 items were the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs.

**Hypothesis One**

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation in MSIs.

**Table 3: One-Way ANOVA for the test of significant difference between the mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation in MSIs**

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.741	1	4.741	87.981	.076
Within Groups	8.192	35	.054		
Total	12.933	36			

Table 3 revealed that Significant (P) value is .076 which is greater than .05. This implied that, there is no significant difference between the mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation in MSIs. Hence, hypothesis one was retained.

### Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development in MSIs.

**Table 4: One-Way ANOVA for the test of significant difference between the mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development in MSIs**

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.481	1	.481	13.012	.061
Within Groups	.961	35	.037		
Total	1.442	36			

Table 4 revealed that Significant (P) value is .061 which is greater than .05. This implied that, there is no significant difference between the mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development in MSIs. Hence, hypothesis two is retained.

### Findings and Discussion

Findings on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation amongst students in MSIs revealed provision of adequate career orientation, encouraging belief in the value of education, creating activities that foster positive relationship among students, campaigning on positive teacher–student relationships, presents actions that will help build confidence in the educational system and planning events where people can share academic success experience. This entailed that ethnic and racial coalition in MSIs can play a significant role in enhancing the academic motivation of students. The finding is related to the findings of Tran (2013) that revealed encouraging belief in the value of education and creating activities that foster positive relationship among students are factors capable of improving educational motivation among ethnic minority students in Vietnam. This implied that adopting the identified roles, ethnic and racial coalition can contribute to enhancing academic motivation and thereby enhancing academic achievement of students in MSIs.

Furthermore, finding on the test for significant difference between the mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa related students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation in MSIs revealed there is no significant difference. The finding indicated that both Africa and Non-Africa related students shared similar opinion on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation in MSIs. The finding shares similarity with the finding of Deepak and Ranju (2019) that revealed no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female member on the role of ethnic groups in social development. The finding provide basis for believing that the identified roles of ethnic and racial coalition are capable of enhancing academic motivation in MSIs.

The findings on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs revealed to establish boundaries of acceptable behavior, share personal experiences with representatives from other racial and ethnic groups, hold cultural celebrations, provide support for group identification and cohesion, respond appropriately to cultural and language differences and take time to discuss issues of race and ethnicity. This clearly shows that ethnic and racial coalition have a role to play in enhancing ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs. The finding is in concordance with the postulation of Summit Health Institute for Research and Education (2018) that revealed to provide support for group identification and cohesion and to take time to discuss issues of race and ethnicity as multicultural approach of building coalitions among communities of color. The implication of this findings is that ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs can be achieved through the identified roles of ethnic and racial coalition.

In addition to the aforementioned, finding on the test for significant difference between the mean responses of Africa and Non-Africa related students on the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development in MSIs revealed there is no significant difference. This is an indication that Africa and Non-Africa related students expressed similar views regarding the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development in MSIs. The finding supports the finding of Deepak and Ranju (2019) of no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female member on the role of ethnic

groups in social development. Hence, there is good reason for accepting the identified roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings from the study, insight into the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation and ethno racial identity development amongst students in MSIs is provided. The study revealed that, both Africa and Non-Africa related students expressed similar views regarding the roles of ethnic and racial coalition in enhancing academic motivation and ethno racial identity development in MSIs. The study is considered to have contributed to the literature on the strategies for enhancing academic motivation and ethno racial identity development. The findings of this study are particularly important for the development of effective measures for addressing the issue of low level academic achievement among students in MSIs. The study concluded that the academic achievement of students in MSIs could be enhanced if the identified role are practiced by ethnic and racial coalition.

### Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. The management of the Minority Serving Institutions should provide administrative support to ethnic and racial coalition in order to practice their identified roles capable of enhancing the academic motivation and ethno racial identity development amongst students.
2. The ethnic and racial coalition should endeavor to organize activities aimed at enhancing the academic motivation and ethno racial identity development amongst students in Minority Serving Institutions
3. Policies that encourage diversity and inclusion within the institution should be designed and implemented. This will foster the growth of ethnic and racial coalitions, strengthening their positive impact on academic motivation and ethno-racial identity formation.
4. The study's conclusions should be shared with students, instructors, and staff. Everyone participating in education should be aware of the favorable effects of ethnic and racial coalitions on academic motivation and identity development.

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