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Perceived microaggressions and quality of life: the mediating role of personal resources and social support among people with African migration background in Germany

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary discourse, microaggressions are not mere fleeting occurrences but pervasive daily experiences that significantly influence individual and collective well-being. This current study delves into the role of personal resources and social support as mediators in the relationship between microaggressions and quality of life. The study analyses cross-sectional data from 604 African migrants in Germany, employing Structural Equation Modelling techniques. Five direct associations were examined alongside three separate mediation analyses to evaluate the predictive effect of microaggressions on quality of life through personal resources, social support, and the combined influence of both. The results indicate a negative association between microaggressions, personal resources, social support, and quality of life. Microaggressions constrain personal resources and social support, thereby compromising quality of life, as evidenced by the attenuating effects observed in the mediation analyses. Furthermore, the serial mediation model highlights the distinct contributions of personal resources and social capital. The findings underscore the serialised nature of microaggression's impact on quality of life, suggesting that neither personal resources nor social support can fully mitigate its effects. This study posits that microaggressions manifest through migrants' social interactions and exchanges, undermining personal resources and social support networks essential for enhancing their quality of life.

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Background

Empirical investigations exploring microaggressions as predictors have illuminated their significant and far-reaching adverse effects on the life outcomes of minoritised groups (Adedeji et al., 2023; Hall & Fields, 2015; Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). Microaggressions, as conceptualised in contemporary discourse, are not merely fleeting instances but rather pervasive, daily occurrences that wield substantial influence on individual and collective well-being. Defined as brief, commonplace verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, microaggressions communicate hostile, derogatory, or harmful racial slights and insults to the target person or group (Sue et al., 2007). These subtle manifestations of bias are deeply embedded within social interactions, permeating through body language, conversation, social exchange, and social exclusion (Adedeji et al., 2023).

The African population in Germany has seen significant growth in recent years. As of 2021, approximately 800,000 people of African descent resided in Germany, a substantial increase compared to previous decades (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), 2021). This migration trend is driven by various factors, such as education, employment opportunities, family reunification, as well as, asylum due to political instability or conflict in their countries of origin. Despite their increasing numbers, African

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migrants in Germany often face unique challenges, including pervasive experiences of microaggressions (IOM, 2013). These experiences are evident through derogatory remarks, stereotypical assumptions, stigmatisation (Byrd & Austin, 2020), as well as a systemic environment characterised by anti-immigrant sentiment and exclusionary behaviours, which undermine their sense of belonging and erode their self-esteem (Esses, 2021; Zick et al., 2008). These experiences are compounded by structural inequalities, limiting access to education, employment, and healthcare, further marginalising this population. The cumulative effect of microaggressions may contribute to heightened psychological distress, hindering social, economic, and cultural participation (Dorsey, 2023; Helm, 2013) and diminishing the quality of life of persons with African migration backgrounds (Adediji & Bullinger, 2019).

Furthermore, African migrants in Germany may experience specific types of microaggressions that intersect with their racial identity and immigration status. Drawing on frameworks from other contexts, such as the U.S., these microaggressions often manifest through colourism, xenophobia, and nativism (Barrita et al., 2023; Huber et al., 2021; Pérez Huber et al., 2023). For instance, racial microaggressions can range from those based solely on perceived foreignness (e.g. 'Where are you from?') to more severe forms that question and criminalise migrant status, such as inquiries about documentation (e.g. 'Are you legal?'), as outlined by (Barrita et al., 2023). Additionally, African migrants may face microaggressions rooted in stereotypes about their socioeconomic status, language proficiency, or cultural practices. Research in other European countries offers more profound insights into the experiences of African migrants. In the United Kingdom, studies highlight microaggressions in workplaces and educational settings, where African and Caribbean migrants face stereotyping and exclusion (Opara, 2022). Similarly, in France, African migrants report discrimination in housing, employment, and public spaces (Ware, 2014), while in the Netherlands, microaggressions contribute to social isolation and psychological distress (Lai, 2024). These findings reveal consistent patterns of subtle racial discrimination across Europe, affecting migrants' social integration and well-being, and provide a valuable comparative context for understanding similar issues in Germany.

Quality of life as a holistic concept encompasses various aspects of an individual's well-being and satisfaction with life. It reflects not only material wealth or physical health but also the subjective experiences, social-emotional interactions, and personal values that contribute to an individual's overall sense of fulfilment and happiness (Emerson et al., 2004; Phillips, 2006). At its core, quality of life is deeply intertwined with social interaction and individual experiences. Findings from previous research have highlighted the role of social interactions in shaping one's quality of life by providing opportunities for meaningful connections, emotional support, and a sense of belonging and participation within communities (Adediji et al., 2021). Conversely, social isolation, exclusion or negative social experiences can pose detrimental effects on the quality of life, possibly leading to seclusion, depression, and decreased life satisfaction or social withdrawal (Moreno-Tamayo et al., 2020; Nelson & Millett, 2021).

The overreaching impact of microaggressions beyond the momentary encounter, infiltrating various aspects of an individual's life, has been found to contribute to profound psychological and emotional distress (Sue et al., 2007). These negative social experiences have also influenced the qualitative conceptualisation of well-being and may lead to social exclusion (Adediji et al., 2023; Hall & Fields, 2015). However, there is a notable gap in comprehensive examinations of the manifestations of microaggressions on the quality of life and the mechanisms through which these subtle forms of discrimination manifest and accumulate over time. The understanding of these processes is crucial for comprehensively grasping how microaggressions shape marginalised individuals' experiences and trajectories and developing tailored preventive and intervention measures.

Recent literature on perceived microaggressions consistently linked the perception of microaggression to elevated stress levels, anxiety, and depression, particularly among individuals from marginalised or minoritised groups. For example, Lui and Quezada (2019) identified the pervasive nature of microaggressions and their potential to erode self-esteem and a sense of belonging over time. Subsequent research by Zoubaa et al. (2022) emphasised the cumulative impact of microaggressions, which can contribute to chronic stress and impaired mental health. Other studies have explored the moderating effects of cultural identity, coping strategies, and social support, revealing that these elements may mitigate or exacerbate the psychological consequences of perceived microaggressions (Lui & Quezada, 2019; Zoubaa et al., 2022).

For this study, we conjecture that the impact of microaggressions on an individual's quality of life can be understood through the lens of personal resources and social support. This assumption is supported by the biopsychosocial health model – which highlights patterns of risk and protective factors as predictors of health and life outcomes (Rose-Clarke & Fellmeth, 2023) – and previous findings also emphasise these factors as psychosocial qualities capable of influencing the effects of stressors on quality of life (Erving et al., 2022). Personal resources are individual adaptability characteristics such as coherence, optimism, and the confidence that life experiences will develop positively (Erhart et al., 2007). This construct emphasises individuals' internal strengths and capabilities to cope with environmental stressors and challenges. On the other hand, social support involves the network of relationships and assistance individuals receive from others, including emotional support, practical assistance, and social companionship. It summarises the availability of intimate networks and support in the sociocultural environment (Nettles et al., 2011).

Theoretical developments in social interactions and exchanges acknowledge the reciprocal relationship of personal and interpersonal exchange to the larger social or network structure in which they occur (Tornblom & Kazemi, 2012; Uehara, 1990). Microaggressions manifest within social interactions involving hostile exchanges that could be a catalyst in disrupting the reciprocity expectations of individuals that are beneficial to the quality of life. Moreover, the transactional and reciprocal nature of social exchange processes illustrates how personal resources may enhance social support through a mutual exchange process whereby people engage in social interaction to improve their personal resources, including emotional energy, optimism, and coherence, and exchange them for social rewards (Uehara, 1990). Understanding social interactions and exchange dynamics is particularly promising because they explicitly link variation in social exchange forms to differences in social solidarity that can help individuals navigate environmental stressors like microaggression (Erving et al., 2022; Tornblom & Kazemi, 2012).

Microaggression is an enervating psychosocial experience in social interaction that may threaten the interplay of personal resources and social support systems available to African migrants. African migrants confronted with microaggression in social interactions may evaluate their socioenvironmental situation negatively (Hall & Fields, 2015). For instance, African migrants may continually evaluate their social relationships based on the microaggression they encounter versus the psychosocial resources they could access in society. It is well-acknowledged that microaggressions have limited psychosocial rewards and may reduce the development of personal resources (Adedeji et al., 2023; Estacio & Saidy-Khan, 2014; Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). This is arguable because microaggressions include invalidations that streamline a section of society from personal development that limits personal resources and social support (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions that compromise personal resources may cause African migrants to have fewer expectations of positive social benefits, such as social support, which may negatively impact their life outcomes.

Furthermore, since microaggressions are not isolated events but are deeply embedded in existing social dynamics, reflecting and reinforcing systemic inequalities (Adedeji et al., 2021), they often manifest the entrenched social hierarchies, where majority groups perpetuate subtle, daily forms of discrimination that remind marginalised groups, such as African migrants, of their perceived inferiority and exclusion (Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015; Williams, 2020). Microaggressions, therefore, reinforce these disparities by continuously signalling to marginalised African migrants that they do not belong, further excluding them and undermining their sense of self-worth. In this way, microaggressions perpetuate inequality, deepening the social and psychological costs of racial discrimination and impairing their overall quality of life (Adedeji et al., 2023).

The current study

Hypothetically, the reciprocal relationships between personal resources and social support could cushion the adverse effects of microaggressions on quality of life (Tornblom & Kazemi, 2012; Uehara, 1990). This assertion is based on the protective elements inherent in social exchanges, such as adaptation and resource investments of individuals (Uehara, 1990). While microaggression may be detrimental to immigrants' quality of life, they may be capable of initiating relationships that are promotional to personal resources, helping them bond with people who are readily available to support them in times of difficulty (Adedeji et al., 2021). The mutuality and interdependence elements in social exchange and

relationships provide reliability and the willingness to support one another (Törnblom & Kazemi, 2011; Uehara, 1990), foundational for a sturdy and enduring social support system for a better quality of life.

No research has investigated these interrelationships of personal resources and social support in discussing microaggression and immigrants' quality of life in Germany. This study seeks to remedy the research limitations by examining the following hypothesised:

- i. direct effects of microaggression on personal resources, social support, and quality of life
- ii. examine the indirect effects of microaggression on quality of life through personal resources
- iii. examine the indirect effects of microaggression on quality of life through social support,
- iv. and the serial effects of personal resources and social support in the association between microaggression and quality of life.

Methods

Study design

The present analysis examined the structural pathways connecting perceived microaggressions to the quality of life among individuals with an African migration background in Germany. This study explores these relationships through the mediating influences of personal resources and social support. Cross-sectional data from a sample of 604 persons with African migration backgrounds collected across all 16 German federal states were analysed. The participants were adults aged 18 and above with first- or second-generation migration backgrounds with formal residence status (temporary residence permit, permanent residence permit, citizen of a European Union state, or asylum applicants) in Germany. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences. All procedures were performed following relevant guidelines and ethical standards. A preprint version of this article is available on www.researchsquare.com (Adedeji et al., 2024).

Data were collected between January and March 2023 using online survey questionnaires in German, English, or French, accessible via LimeSurvey, to accommodate the linguistic diversity of the target population. The target sample size was determined following Monte Carlòs simulated power analysis for latent variable models proposed by Wolf et al. (2013). A sample size within the range of 390–460 participants is recommended to ensure high statistical power (ranging from 0.80 to 0.95) and detect small effects of .25. These guidelines are based on Wolf et al.'s recommendations specifically tailored for Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs) and latent mediation analyses (Wolf et al., 2013).

Participants were recruited following the 5-wave approach – a sampling method developed to randomise the Sudman and Kalton snowball sampling technique (Sudman & Kalton, 1986). This approach breaks down the discriminative referral system into distinct components, systematically increasing the probability of selection for all members of the sample frame, as described in (Adedeji, 2019). This method aims to enhance the overall representativeness of the study findings. As a token of appreciation for completing the study questionnaire, each participant received a 5-Euro Amazon gift card.

Measures

The items were marked as mandatory in the online portal, requiring participants to complete each question before proceeding to the next, thereby preventing missing data. Some items were reverse-coded to assess participant attention, and the data showed no indication of attention-related issues, suggesting reliable responses.

Predictor variables

Perceived microaggression was measured using the frequency sub-scale of the Beliv Microaggression Scale (BMS-27) (Adedeji et al., 2024). This subscale captures how often individuals perceive microaggression in their daily lives. Respondents use a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 0 to 4 to rate nine questions

on how frequently they experience microaggressions across the three different categories (microinsults, microassaults, and invalidation) and manifestations (verbal, behavioural, and structural) of microaggression. Consequently, the nine items were grouped into three categories: (1) frequency of microinsults, example item: How often do you experience the following because of your African migration background: Statements, comments or questions from people that unintentionally stigmatise or hurt you. (2) frequency of microassaults, example item: How often do you experience the following because of your African migration background: Statements, comments, or questions from people that communicate that you are of lesser worth and (3) frequency of invalidation example item: How often do you experience the following because of your African migration background: Verbal statements that belittle, trivialise, or deny your experiences. Each of these categories is measured with three items. An aggregate subscale score for the 9-item ranged between 0 and 36. Higher scores suggest a higher frequency of perceived microaggressions. The Perceived microaggression scale presented good reliability for the current sample with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.84.

Mediating variables

Personal resources

Personal resources were measured as individual characteristics such as a sense of coherence, optimism, and the general confidence that things will develop positively using the adapted personal resources scale from the *Kinder- und Jugendgesundheitssurvey* (KiGGS) (Erhart et al., 2007). Participants were required to rate five items using a 4-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Not true) to 4 (Accurately true). The items are: To what extent do you agree with the statement, (1) [Whatever happens, I'll be fine.] (2) [I can find a solution for every problem.] (3) [When a problem arises, I can cope with it on my own.] (4) [I am optimistic about the future.] (5) [The things I do every day bring me joy and are fun.]. The aggregate score ranged from 5 to 20. A higher score suggests higher personal resources (Erhart et al., 2007). A Cronbach's alpha of 0.65 for the personal resource scale indicates low internal consistency, suggesting the items may not reliably measure personal resources. This may stem from cultural differences, as the scale may not adequately reflect how African migrants conceptualise personal resources. We recommend refining items or adapting the scale for cultural relevance in future studies.

Social support

Social support focuses on the availability of intimate networks and support in the context of the socio-cultural environment (Campbell et al., 1986; Murray Nettles et al., 2000). The level of available social support was measured using the short version of the Social Support Scale (SSS) by Donald and Ware (1984). The brief questionnaire consists of four items tested among samples with diverse backgrounds (Heitzmann & Kaplan, 1988; Kaman et al., 2021). Each item is introduced by the sentence: 'How often is there someone who...' followed by items (1) [...who listens to you when you feel the need to talk?], (2) [...who gives you information to help you understand a situation?], (3) [...with whom you can do something to distract yourself?], (4) [...who loves you and who makes you feel loved and needed?]. Each question is rated using a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 'never' to 'always'. The social support scale presented good reliability for the current sample with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7.

Outcome variables

Participants' quality of life was assessed using the Bref version of the World Health Organization Quality of Life measure (WHOQOL-BREF), developed by The WHOQOL Group in 1998. This 26-item scale comprises two main components: two items gauge the overall quality of life, and the other two assess subjective health (The WHOQOL Group, 1998). The remaining 24 items are further divided into four domains: physical (7 items), psychological (6 items), social relationships (3 items), and environment (8 items). Following the WHOQOL user manual guidelines, domain scores were computed and standardised positively. These scores reflect an individual's perception of their quality of life within each domain. The WHOQOL-BREF is a reliable measure tested and validated across culturally diverse populations (Ohaeri &

Awadalla, 2009) and within the African migrants' group in Germany (Adedjei & Bullinger, 2019). The WHOQOL-BREF quality of life scale presented good reliability for the current sample with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.85.

Covariates

The current analysis incorporated sociodemographic and socioeconomic variables as covariates to ensure a comprehensive analysis. These covariates were selected due to their potential influence on the study outcomes and their relevance in understanding variations in health and social factors across diverse populations (Molina et al., 2019). Participant age was quantified in years and treated as a continuous variable. Gender was categorised as male, female, divers, or others. The duration of participants' stay in Germany was also measured as a continuous variable. Moreover, educational attainment was assessed using a categorical scale that covers the German Educational system. This was then converted into the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCE), with six categories ranging from 1 (less than lower secondary education) to 6 (higher tertiary education, including a master's degree or higher) (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). This approach allows for a nuanced examination of the influence of these factors on our study outcomes.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics of sample demographic and socioeconomic characteristics were reported as means (M), standard deviations (SD), frequencies (n), and percentages (%).

The structural model was estimated using data from 604 persons with African migration backgrounds living in Germany (collected in 2023). Assumption testing for the structural equation modelling analysis confirmed that the data met key assumptions. Normality was largely satisfied, with skewness and kurtosis values within acceptable ranges, and linear relationships between variables were evident from scatterplots. Multicollinearity was not an issue, as variance inflation factors (VIF) were low, and the sample size of 604 participants was sufficient. The estimation method was the maximum likelihood, and model fit was assessed based on the comparative fit index (CFI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardised root mean squared residual (SRMR). A model was considered to have a good fit when the CFI ≥ 0.95 , the RMSEA ≤ 0.06 ($p > .05$), and the SRMR ≤ 0.08 . An acceptable fit was defined by a CFI ≥ 0.90 and an RMSEA ≤ 0.10 (Browne & Cudeck, 1992; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

First, three separate mediation analyses were performed. The first model tested the indirect effect of perceived microaggression on quality of life through personal resources. The second model tested the indirect effect of perceived microaggression on quality of life through social support. The third mediation model assessed perceived microaggression's indirect effect on quality of life through personal resources and social support. Finally, a full mediation model indicated the direct and indirect paths in predicting quality of life through perceived microaggression, personal resources, and social support with standardised estimates. Gender, age, education, and length of stay were included in the model as control variables. Structural Equation Modelling was performed with an Analysis of Moment Structures 29 (AMOS Development Corporation, Meadville, PA). The three separate mediation models complemented the serial mediation model by isolating the individual effects of personal resources and social support. This approach clarified how each mediator independently contributes to the relationship between racial microaggressions and quality of life, while the serial model captured their sequential interplay. Together, these analyses provided a more nuanced and robust interpretation of the data.

Results

Sample sociodemographic and economic characteristics

As reported in Table 1 below, descriptive statistics project an average age of 32.25 (SD = 7.68) for the participants. About 40% of the participants were female. The average length of stay in Germany was about nine years (SD = 8.2). Data on education suggest less than one percent reported less than lower

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of participants' sociodemographic and education attainment. (n=604).

	M	SD
Age	32.3	7.7
Length of stay in Germany (years)	9.4	8.2
	n	%
Gender		
Male	351	58.1
Female	245	40.6
No Answer (System missing)	8	1.3
Educational Attainments		
ES-ISCED I, less than lower secondary	2	0.3
ES-ISCED II, lower secondary	88	14.6
ES-ISCED III upper secondary	143	23.7
ES-ISCED IV, advanced vocational, sub-degree	99	16.4
ES-ISCED V1, lower tertiary education, BA level	182	30.1
ES-ISCED V2, higher tertiary education, >= MA level	84	13.9
Other	6	1.0
Participant Region of birth		
Northern Africa	20	3.3
Western Africa	292	48.3
Central Africa	58	9.6
Eastern Africa	130	21.5
Southern Africa	52	8.6
Europe	40	6.6
Asia	3	0.5
North America	9	1.5
Mothers' Region of Origin		
Northern Africa	24	4.0
Western Africa	304	50.3
Central Africa	60	9.9
Eastern Africa	145	24.0
Southern Africa	48	7.9
Europe	16	2.6
Asia	2	0.3
North America	2	0.3
Fathers' Region of Origin		
Northern Africa	24	4.0
Western Africa	319	52.8
Central Africa	61	10.1
Eastern Africa	110	18.2
Southern Africa	56	9.3
Europe	19	3.1
Asia	2	0.3
North America	10	1.7
South America	3	0.5

secondary education. In comparison, roughly 44 percent had completed a university degree. Close to one-fourth of the participants had educational attainment categorised as upper secondary.

Data on participants' region of origin shows that approximately 48% were from West Africa, 21.5% from East Africa, 3.3% from North Africa, 9% from Southern Africa, and 8.6% were born outside of Africa. Regarding the country of birth of their mothers, 3.7% reported that their mother was born outside of Africa, 4% were born in North Africa, and over 90% were born in Sub-Saharan Africa. A similar trend was observed for the country of birth of the participants' fathers, with 7% born outside of Africa, 4% born in North Africa and about 90% born in Sub-Sahara Africa.

Measurement model

As presented in [Figure 1](#) below, the measurement model consists of four latent constructs (social support, personal resources, perceived microaggression, and quality of life) derived from fourteen observed variables. The initial model produced a poor fit, with all five items capturing personal resources and all four items capturing social support. An acceptable fit was achieved after item 1 [To what extent do you agree with the following statements: Whatever happens, I'll be fine.] from personal resources and item 1 [How often is there someone who listens to you when you feel the need to talk?] from social support

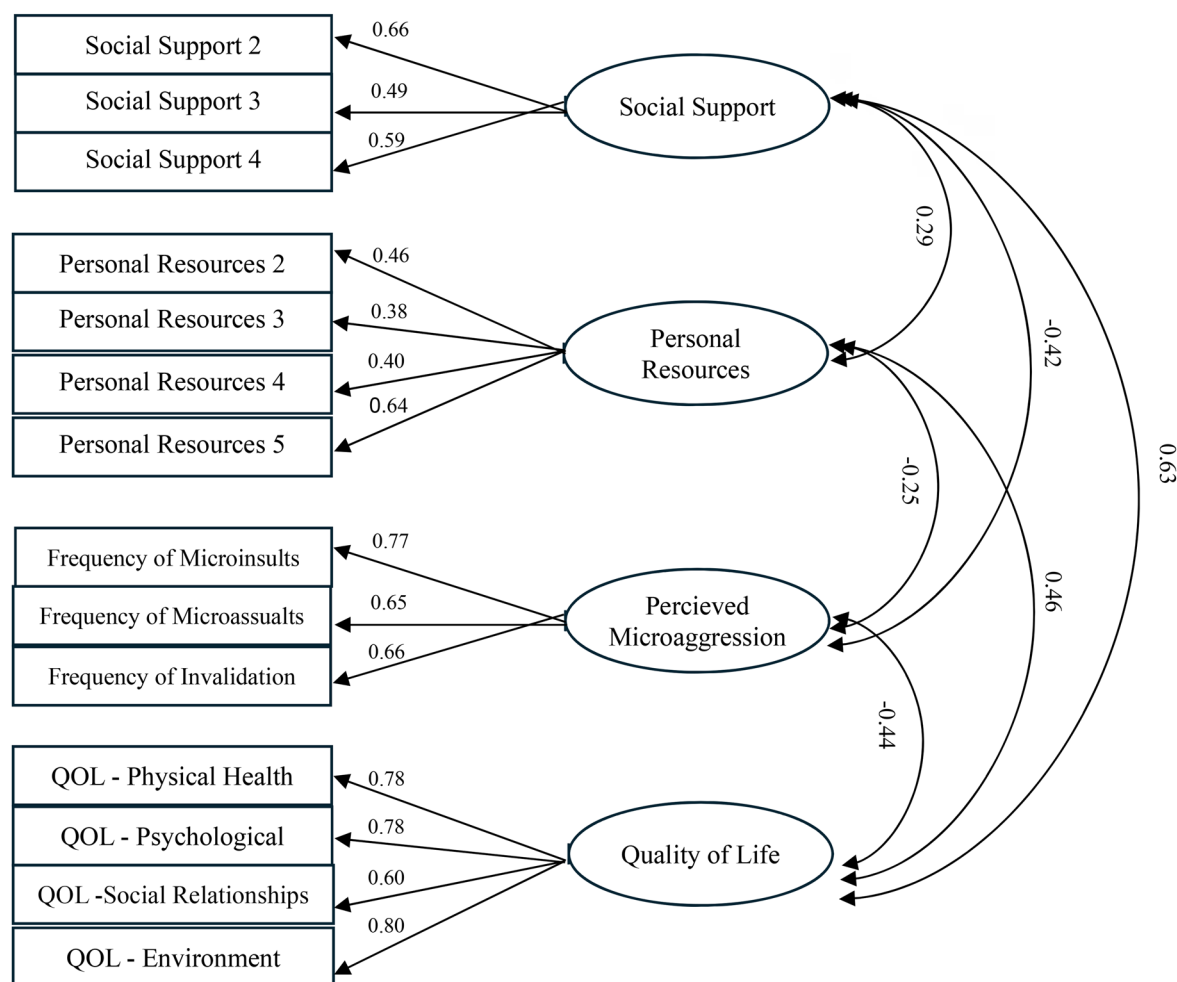


Figure 1. Measurement model social support, personal resources, perceived microaggression and quality of life.

were removed from the model. An assessment of the fit indices for the adjusted model showed that the measurement model achieved a satisfactory fit: $\chi^2(71) = 190.97$, $p < .001$; $PCMIN/DF = 2.69$; $SRMR = .04$; $CFI = .94$; $TLI = .92$ and $RMSEA = .05$ [90% CI = (.04, .06)]. All the indicators loaded significantly at $p < .001$ on their respective latent constructs.

Correlation matrix

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient matrix was computed to examine the association between perceived microaggression, personal resources, social support, quality of life, and sample demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. As presented in Table 2, the results show a weak to moderate inverse correlation between perceived microaggression and all quality of life domains. The aggregate perceived microaggression has the strongest negative association with the environmental domain of quality of life ($r = -0.34$, $p < 0.01$) and the weakest association with the social domain ($r = -0.16$, $p < 0.01$). Data on the different categories of microaggression further project that invalidation has the strongest association with the environmental domain of quality of life ($r = -0.33$, $p < 0.01$), while microassault has the weakest effect on the social relationship domain ($r = -0.10$, $p < 0.01$).

Similarly, social support (r ranged between $-.16$ and $-.28$, $p < .01$) and personal resources (r ranged between $-.14$ and $-.19$, $p < .01$) had a weak to moderate inverse relationship with perceived microaggression and its different categories. Furthermore, social support had moderate positive associations with all domains of quality of life (r ranged between $.33$ and $.43$, $p < .01$), while personal resources had a weak association (r ranged between $-.15$ and $-.31$, $p < .01$).

Table 2. Pearson correlation matrix of participants' sociodemographic factors, social support, personal resources, microaggression and quality of life domains.

		Correlations												
		Pearson Correlation												
		1	2	3	4	5	6	6.1	6.2	6.3	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4
1	Age	--												
2	Length of stay in Germany	.304**	--											
3	Highest educational level	-.034	.042	--										
4	Social Support	.044	.104*	.069	--									
5	Personal Resources	.115**	.054	-.101*	.178**	--								
6	Perceived Microaggression	.046	.111**	.037	-.280**	-.185**	--							
6.1	Perceived Invalidation	.030	.132**	.026	-.271**	-.137**	.790**	--						
6.2	Perceived Microinsults	.076	.076	.092*	-.246**	-.151**	.834**	.492**	--					
6.3	Perceived Microassaults	.006	.061	-.029	-.158**	-.161**	.795**	.409**	.524**	--				
7.1	Physical Health Domain	.153**	.082*	-.002	.370**	.307**	-.291**	-.310**	-.222**	-.171**	--			
7.2	Psychological Domain	.088*	.049	.054	.366**	.277**	-.309**	-.307**	-.213**	-.226**	.638**	--		
7.3	Social Relationships Domain	.037	.088*	.041	.332**	.152**	-.162**	-.151**	-.143**	-.095*	.417**	.469**	--	
7.4	Environmental Domain	.110**	.125**	.017	.429**	.246**	-.342**	-.332**	-.293**	-.200**	.610**	.600**	.527**	--

**p < 0.01.

*p < .05 level (2-tailed).

In contrast, analysis of sociodemographic variables shows that age returned a significant association with all quality of life domains except social relationships but had no significant association with microaggression. Similarly, age had a positive association with personal resources ($r = .12$, $p < .01$) but no significant association with social support. Length of stay was significantly associated with social support ($r = -.10$, $p < .05$) but no association with personal resources. Similarly, the length of stay in Germany had a significant positive association with aggregate perceived microaggression ($r = .11$, $p < .01$) and only the sub-category invalidation ($r = .13$, $p < .01$). Regarding the quality of life, the length of stay in Germany shows a weak positive correlation with all domains except for psychological health. Education attainment had a significant negative association with personal resources ($r = -.10$, $p < .05$) but a positive association with the perceived microinsult category of microaggressions ($r = .09$, $p < .01$).

Structural model

An examination of the direct relationship between study variables showed that perceived microaggression was inversely related to quality of life ($\beta = -.16$, $p < .001$), personal resources ($\beta = -.25$, $p < .001$), and social support ($\beta = -.38$, $p < .001$). In addition, personal resources were positively associated with social resources ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$) and quality of life ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$). The direct relationship between quality of life and social support was positive ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$) (see Figure 2).

The mediation model indicating the indirect paths with standardised estimates is depicted in Table 3 above. For the first indirect path, there is a significant negative relationship between perceived microaggression and quality of life when mediated through personal resources. The standardised estimate (β) of -0.07 suggests a moderate effect. Similarly, the second indirect path indicates a significant negative relationship between perceived microaggression and quality of life when mediated through social support, with a larger effect ($\beta = -0.17$). The third model considers both personal resources and social support as mediators. The significant result ($\beta = -0.02$) suggests that the combined indirect path is also negatively associated with quality of life. Overall, these findings indicate that perceived microaggression has a negative impact on quality of life, and this effect is partially explained by the mediating factors of personal resources and social support. The third model indicates that these two mediators contribute uniquely to the overall indirect effect.

Discussion

The study examines the impact of microaggression on African migrants' quality of life in Germany while also assessing whether personal resources and social support independently and sequentially influence

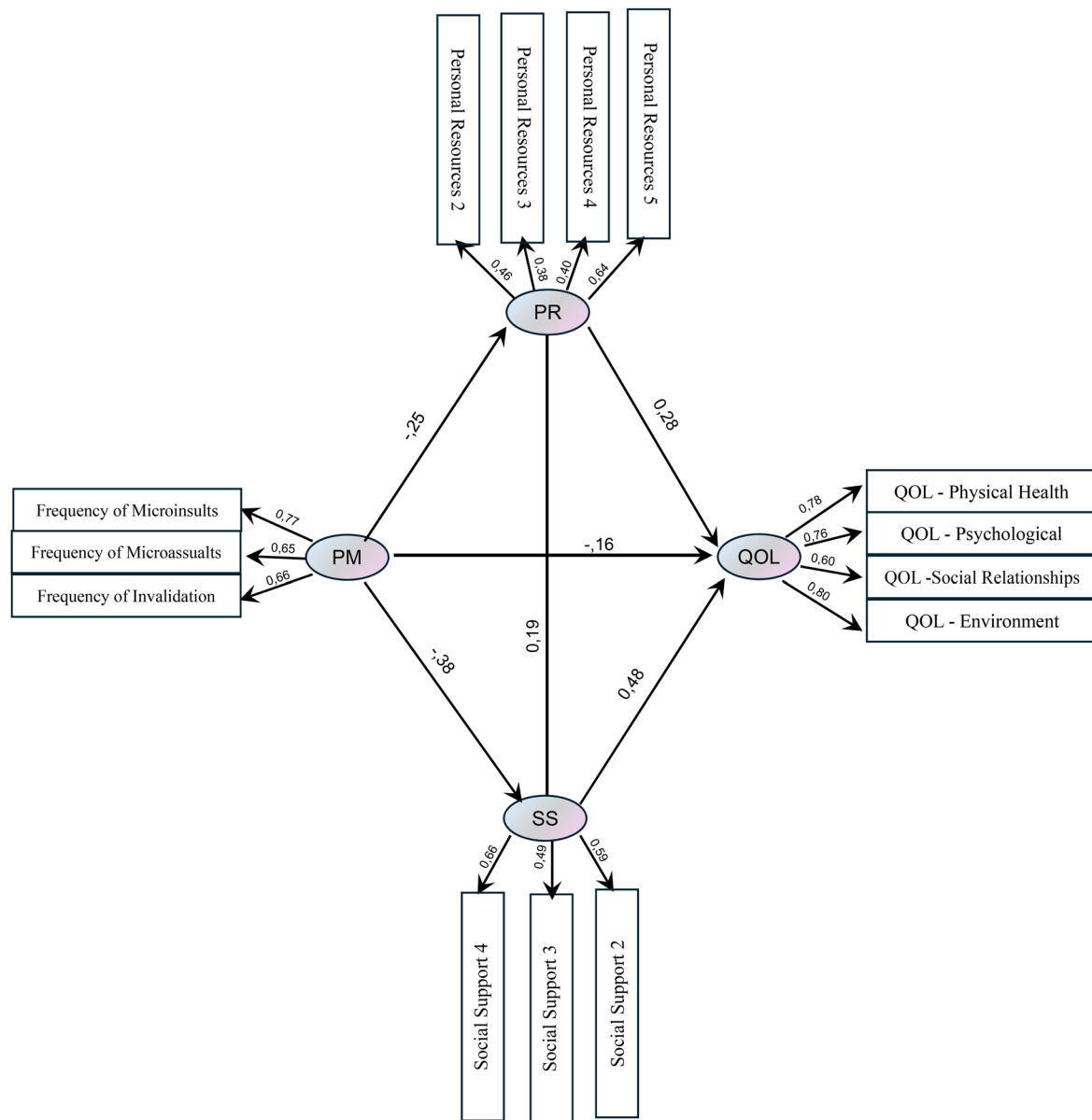


Figure 2. Structural model: serial mediating effect of social support and personal resources on the association between perceived microaggression and quality of life.

PM Perceived microaggression QOL Quality of Life
 SS Social Support PR Personal Resources

Table 3. Mediating effects of personal resources and social support.

	1,000-sample bootstrapping			
	β	Lower	Upper	p
PM $\rightarrow$ PR $\rightarrow$ QOL	-.065	-.136	-.026	.001
PM $\rightarrow$ SS $\rightarrow$ QOL	-.167	-.256	-.105	.001
PM $\rightarrow$ PR $\rightarrow$ SS $\rightarrow$ QOL	-.021	-.060	-.007	.005

PM=Perceived Microaggression.

PR=Personal Resources.

SS=Social Support.

QOL=Quality of Life.

this relationship. The findings indicate a direct inverse relationship between microaggression and quality of life, aligning with results from previous studies that project negative social experiences as a predictor of well-being (Adedeji et al., 2023; Estacio & Saidy-Khan, 2014). These findings underscore the adverse

effects of microaggression as socio-environmental biases, including environmental injustices, racially derogatory remarks, and insults, on immigrants' subjective quality of life (Adedeji et al., 2023). Additionally, further exploration highlights perceived microaggression's negative direct association with personal resources and social support. His results suggest that exposure to microaggressions diminishes immigrant optimism and positive outlook on life and limits social support.

These findings can be further interpreted through the lens of the biopsychosocial framework (Rose-Clarke & Fellmeth, 2023), which emphasises the mediating roles of personal resources and social support in the relationship between racial microaggressions and the quality of life of African migrants in Germany. Within this framework, microaggressions function as psychosocial stressors that erode personal resources such as optimism, self-esteem, and resilience—key factors for managing life's challenges. This depletion reduces access to and benefits from social support, a critical factor for maintaining quality of life (Huber et al., 2021; Pérez Huber et al., 2023). The study confirms that microaggressions disrupt this dynamic, creating a cycle in which weakened personal resources and diminished social support collectively undermine overall well-being.

Based on the indirect effects of microaggression on quality of life via personal resources, the study highlights microaggression as stressful experiences that limit immigrants' personal resources and consequently compromise their quality of life. In agreement with other research, the current analysis emphasises that the brief, commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, communicating hostility, derogatory, or harm to African migrants is detrimental to developing a sense of coherence, optimism, and general confidence necessary to lead a successful life (Cobb et al., 2019; Hashemi et al., 2021). Microaggressions in social interactions have been documented as hindering individuals' functional capabilities to develop as individuals (Firmen et al., 2019). Therefore, when microaggressions impede the development of personal resources, they lower their coping resources, which, in turn, may affect the overall quality of life.

In contrast with recent empirical evidence that finds social support to have a mediating effect on negative influences of microaggression on life outcomes of racial groups (Erving et al., 2022), we found that the mediating effect of social support was significant, with a dampening mediating effect. The findings support the notion that microaggression compromises the quality of life indirectly by first reducing social support for immigrants. We argue that many African migrants withdraw from social space as a protective measure against microaggression. Furthermore, in the process of social networking and exchanges, microaggression may create a sense of exclusion for immigrants, limiting their interpersonal interactions by cutting ties with those they look up to for support, eliminating the availability of intimate networks and support in the context of the sociocultural environment (Marinucci & Riva, 2021; National Academies of Sciences et al., 2017; Nettles et al., 2011). These dynamics of microaggression and reduced social support explain immigrants' decreased quality of life.

Furthermore, the current findings highlight that microaggression indirectly influences the quality of life through personal resources and social support. That is, immigrants who experience microaggression tend to have lower personal resources regardless of perceived social support, which consequently negates their quality of life. Psychosocial attributes such as personal resources and social support have been shown to influence stressors' impact on quality of life (Erving et al., 2022). However, this interaction could be undermined by microaggressions experienced during interpersonal exchanges in relationships and networks (Tornblom & Kazemi, 2012; Uehara, 1990). Consequently, microaggression is an enervating psychosocial experience that threatens the reciprocal exchange process in which emotional energy, optimism, and social rewards become insufficient to improve immigrants' quality of life (Sue et al., 2007; Uehara, 1990). Microaggressions are associated with socioenvironmental inequalities, as the dominant party has more resources, including social status, and this results in a reduction in immigrants' psychosocial resources, thus resulting in a decrease in their quality of life (Hall & Fields, 2015; Torres-Harding & Turner, 2015). This study provides compelling evidence that protective psychosocial resources, such as personal resources and social support, cannot effectively reduce the adverse effects of microaggressions on immigrants' quality of life.

Theoretical and practical implication

It is important to highlight that the intersectionality of African migrants—encompassing racism, colourism, nativism, and immigration status—likely amplifies the impact of microaggressions on their quality of life

and mediating variables, distinguishing their experiences from those of non-migrant racial minority groups. Unlike non-migrant groups, African migrants may navigate the compounded challenges of racial discrimination alongside biases tied to their perceived foreignness, such as questions about their origin or legal status (Barrita et al., 2023). Colourism may further stratify their experiences within racial hierarchies, while nativism perpetuates exclusion through stereotypes about their cultural and economic contributions (Huber et al., 2021; Lui & Quezada, 2019). Immigration status, including uncertainty around residency or legal barriers, adds a layer of vulnerability, intensifying stress and limiting access to supportive networks. This complex interplay of systemic and interpersonal biases may contribute to this study's heightened decline of personal resources and social support.

Based on the integration of social exchange theories, results from this study provide evidence regarding the sequential effects of personal resources and social support on microaggression and quality of life. We argue that microaggression occurs within the socioenvironmental context of immigrants, resulting from social interactions and exchanges. Immigrants require these interactions to promote their quality of life by first ensuring they have sufficient personal resources to harness the available social support within the social environment. Because of these expectations, the effects of microaggression may be more pronounced, significantly limiting their interpersonal and individual capabilities and making social interaction less rewarding. Consequently, microaggressions could disrupt the positive social exchange process that benefits immigrants by limiting personal and interpersonal social functionalities. As a result, quality of life decreases considerably when microaggressions curtail these functionalities.

This evidence suggests that supporting immigrants requires understanding psychosocial factors in their social exchange process to curb environmental stressors such as microaggressions. Microaggressions hurt immigrants' life outcomes, and they face social and environmental limitations as a result. For immigrants to flourish in their host country, optimism, social competence, and self-confidence are essential. Providing immigrants with a safe and microaggression-free environment becomes paramount in policy and interventions to enhance their quality of life. By engendering their personal resources and social support and further negating their quality of life, microaggressions targeting immigrants will continue to disrupt their migration experiences.

Limitation

Despite this study's theoretical and practical contributions, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. The findings are based on a cross-sectional research approach and self-report measures, which may restrict the generalisability of the results. Longitudinal and comparative studies are necessary to explore changes in quality of life over time due to microaggression experiences. Similarly, comparative studies will provide insights into how different cultural contexts or societal norms may influence the impact of microaggressions on quality of life.

Furthermore, expanding the model to include other social determinants of quality of life will offer a clearer understanding of the pathways from microaggression experiences to subjective quality of life among minority groups. Factors such as socioeconomic status, acculturation, social integration, and access to resources may interact with microaggressions in complex ways, shaping individuals' overall well-being. Another limitation of this study is the personal resource scale's low internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.65$), suggesting it may not reliably capture this construct among African migrants. This may reflect cultural differences in how personal resources are conceptualised. Future studies should refine or adapt the scale to improve cultural relevance and measurement reliability. Addressing these limitations through more robust research designs and comprehensive theoretical frameworks will enhance our understanding of the nuanced effects of microaggressions on quality of life and inform more effective interventions to support marginalised communities.

While our conceptualisation of the social support scale is rooted in the idea that external emotional, informational, or instrumental support may serve as a crucial factor in mitigating the negative effects of microaggressions on positive life outcomes, there is substantial evidence on the role of peer contact as a coping mechanism after discriminatory incidents. We acknowledge that the directionality of this relationship could be examined further. A reverse exploration, where lower social support may lead to greater vulnerability to perceiving microaggressions, is also theoretically plausible.

Conclusion

This study extends empirical discussions on microaggressions, quality of life, and the serial influences of personal resources and social support in a population of African migrants in Germany. Immigrants' daily interactions, social exchanges, and networks are instrumental to their exposure to microaggressions, which adversely affect their quality of life. Furthermore, these direct associations are not isolated, as microaggressions can indirectly reduce their quality of life by decreasing their available resources and social support. Based on these findings, it is essential to adapt social and socioemotional support for immigrant populations to help them build personal resources to receive positive social rewards that could improve their quality of life.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethical approval

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences. All procedures were performed in accordance with relevant guidelines and ethical standards of the institutional and national research committees, as well as comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

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Data availability statement

Data included in this report are available on request to the corresponding author AA.

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