



English-speaking Hispanic adults’ perspectives of culture and self-care during the COVID-19 pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

Taking care of oneself is always important as the benefits of self-care include improved well-being and lower morbidity, mortality, and healthcare costs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, self-care also played an important role in maintaining personal well-being, however, little is known about the role self-care and culture played among English-speaking Hispanic adults living in the United States.

According to the WHO (n.d.) “Self-care is the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health worker.” In this study, the interplay of self-care and culture was explored.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this retrospective research was to explore self-care and culture among English-speaking Hispanic adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODS

A qualitative study using The Self-care During COVID-19 Questionnaire was conducted online via Qualtrics between from September 2022-January 2023. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended and demographic questions including the following, which is the focus of this poster:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, what role did your culture play in taking care of yourself? Please explain.

Data from 135 respondents were exported from Qualtrics to Excel. Incomplete responses were removed resulting in 92 complete responses with 63 participants identifying as Hispanic. Data were analyzed using in vivo coding, which were then organized into categories.

FINDINGS

Gender

F (51) M (12)

Age

20-29 (7); 30-39 (20); 40-49 (16); 50-59 (9); 60+ (11)

Participants provided a variety of responses about the role culture played in self-care during the COVID-19 pandemic. The categories shown are the most frequently mentioned topics represented by the numbers in parenthesis. However, there were additional categories that were not included due to space constraints. Participant quotes are used below to illustrate the categories.

Family and friends (20)

My kids and husband are immunocompromised. As a Latina, I felt a strong obligation to make sure my household and kids were healthy and safe. I was very mindful of how easily they could get sick. My focus was my family rather than myself. Looking back, my health took a toll, I experienced weight gain and high blood pressure due to the stress. Because my job required me to work in person I was the one person in my home that had the highest exposure to contracting COVID. I was very stressed about getting sick, and eventually did contract COVID. I was hospitalized and on oxygen for three months.

I am very social and I like to get together with family and friends and it is very difficult during this pandemic to isolate from the people I love. Celebrating events together is a very important part of my culture and it has been difficult when we couldn’t be together.

Food and cooking (7)

We are family oriented. Our social life is fuller too. We care with food. We are able to care for others by cooking when it was needed or to show affection. So having contact (via zoom, facetime or meeting with safe distancing) kept me mentally healthy.

During the pandemic I would listen to music in Spanish and spent time dancing at home. I also started cooking more at home and focusing on Mexican and other Latino food.

Negative and stress (5)

Actually negatively impacted us. We had to reduce our sugar intake and sweets especially being stuck at home. We tended to binge on sweets at the beginning of the pandemic due to stress and boredom

Music and dancing (4)

I still listened to music and some exercise I did included Zumba to Spanish music. I do believe prioritizing family is important in our culture as well, so maintaining relationships with my family in this time is another example. Otherwise, the other ways I take care of myself I do not believe are related to my culture. Therapy, for instance, is something I took upon myself to pursue and is not something widely talked about or supported in our culture.

Home remedies and traditional healing (3)

I relied heavily on the indigenous and ancestral knowledge of plant medicines to boost my immunity and protect myself from illness and disease. Recipes and instructions for these medicines and practices within our culture have been and are the reason we have survived the past few hundred years of European colonization, so it was very important to put that knowledge to use during quarantine and the pandemic

No role (10)

I don’t believe culture has an impact on how I take care of myself.

DISCUSSION

As the post-peak era of the COVID-19 pandemic continues and the potential for future public health emergencies exist, the findings from this study provide a foundational understanding of self-care and culture among English-speaking Hispanic adults in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings from this study provide insight about self-care and culture during emergency situations. The most frequently mentioned positive comments about self-care and Latino culture were about family and friends, food and cooking, music and dancing, and home remedies. Participants also mentioned the negative aspects of self-care and culture in terms of stress. Ten participants shared that culture did not play a role in self-care.

In this study, the experiences of participants varied based on personal/family situations and professional responsibilities and future research could explore the role demographic factors played in self-care. Hispanic people living in the United States have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, public health messaging and health promotion efforts could be informed by self-care and Latino culture to create more effective interventions especially during time of emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic.

REFERENCES

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