The Influence of Family Environment and Cultural Factors on Self-Esteem and Depression in Latino Children

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ABSTRACT

Mexican-Americans are the fastest growing population in the U.S., and the population with the highest rates of depression among other minority groups. Many continue to go through life despite struggles with mental health problems such as low self-esteem or depression. This research study aims to examine relationships between ethnic identity and family factors (familism and family cohesion) and mental health (self-esteem and depression) among children with Mexican heritage. The secondary data analysis was conducted using the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study data. The results showed that higher family cohesion was significantly associated with higher self-esteem and lower depression. Familism was negatively related to self-esteem. The relationship between ethnic identity and mental health was not significant. Finding ways to help the Mexican-American children in the United States is crucial as services will help them thrive and grow.

INTRODUCTION

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between individual and family factors and self-esteem among Latino children?
2. What is the relationship between individual and family factors and depression among Latino children?

Hypotheses

- Levels of self-esteem and depression are associated with familism and family cohesion.
- Levels of self-esteem and depression are associated with ethnic identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-Esteem in Latino Children

- Many children make up their identity by their environment. They base their identity on who lives around them at times, too—having high self-esteem results from being content on all areas of one's ethnic identity (Gupta et al., 2014).
- Studies found that when children had higher self-esteem, they found lower levels of depression or anxiety (Gupta et al., 2014).

Depression in Latino Children

- According to Arizaga et al. (2018), "higher familism has been linked to lower depression symptoms among Latino youth across both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies" (p.3).
- Studies conducted show that Latino children who experience poverty, discrimination, acculturation, or stress may lead them to have depression (Concepcion et al., 2019). Familism and family cohesion is important for a child to feel that they feel supported at home.

Social Identity Theory

- A child's self-esteem can impact their behaviors because it gives them a source of pride and belonging in this social world.
- Family factors or culture has a lot to do with how a child feels.
- According to Gupta et al. (2014), a "based on social identity theory, and arising out of work on the self-esteem of stigmatized minority groups, conceptualized collective self-esteem as consisting of four domains: membership esteem, private collective self-esteem, public collective self-esteem, and importance to identity."

Gaps and Limitations

- The number of Latino children is increasing in the United States, therefore information and society norms are constantly changing. There is not enough information or studies examining how youth's self-esteem is related to mental health outcomes.

METHODS

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

- The current study is a secondary analysis of the data from The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), San Diego, California, Ft. Lauderdale and Miami, Florida, 1991-2006 (ICPSR 20520).
- This study surveyed 5,262 eighth and ninth graders in public and private schools in Miami, Florida, and San Diego, California.
- The surveys were conducted in three waves, 1991, 1995, and 2001. The original study aims to find the evolution on adaption outcomes of language preference, self-esteem, ethnic identity, academic attainment over the adolescent years. Study was conducted by face-to-face interviews, or paper and pencil interviews.

Sampling and Sampling Methods

The current cross-sectional study utilizes a sub sample (n=775).

Measures

- The Familism Scale is a 15-item measure of familism under three constructs: familial obligations, support from the family, and family as referents.
- Family Cohesion Scale or FACES (Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale) was used to measure cultural factors.
- Ethnic identity was measured by two single items, importance of ethnic self-ethnic identity and American way preference.
- Self-esteem was measured using a 10-item Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale to see an adolescent's confidence in one's own worth and ability.
- Depression was measured using a 20-item Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) to measure depression.

Table 1

Sample Characteristics (N=775)

Characteristic	f	%
Gender		
Male	302	50.4
Female	297	49.6
Grade in School		
Ninth Grade	4	.5
Tenth Grade	14	1.9
Eleventh Grade	318	42.1
Twelfth Grade	249	33.0
College Freshman	5	.7
College Sophomore	4	.5
Other	2	.3
Language Respondent Uses W/Parent		
English	110	14.6
Spanish	460	60.9
Respondent U.S. Citizen		
Yes	410	54.3
No	156	20.7
Parent Citizenship		
Foreign	249	33.0
United States	92	12.2

RESULTS

Spearman's Rho

- The results indicated a negative and statistically significant association between Family Cohesion and Depression, $r_s(594) = -.159$, $p < .001$. The strength of the correlation was weak. Higher Family Cohesion was related to lower Depression. See Figure 1.
- The results indicated a positive and statistically significant association between Family Cohesion Total and Self-Esteem Total, $r_s(594) = .240$, $p < .001$. The strength of the correlation was weak. Higher "Family Cohesion Total" was related to higher "Self-Esteem Total."
- The results indicated a negative and statistically significant association between Familism and Self-Esteem, $r_s(594) = -.112$, $p = .006$. The strength of the correlation was weak. Higher Familism was related to lower Self-Esteem.
- The results indicated no statistical significance association between Familism Total and Depression Total, $r_s(594) = -.056$, $p = .169$.

The correlation between family cohesion, familism, self-esteem and depression are presented in Table 2.

Kruskal-Wallis H-Test

- A Kruskal-Wallis H–test was conducted comparing depression scores among study participants from Ethnic Self-Identity Importance. There was no significance result found (H(2) = 2.29 , p = .319).
- A Kruskal-Wallis H-test was conducted comparing depression scores among study participants from Respondent American way preference. There was no significance result found (H(3) = 2.440 , p = .486).
- A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted comparing self-esteem scores among study participants from various Respondent American way preference. There was no significance result found (H(3) = 3.352 , p = .340).
- A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted comparing self-esteem scores among study participants from various Ethnic self-identity importance. There was no significance result found H(2) = 5.27 , p = .072).
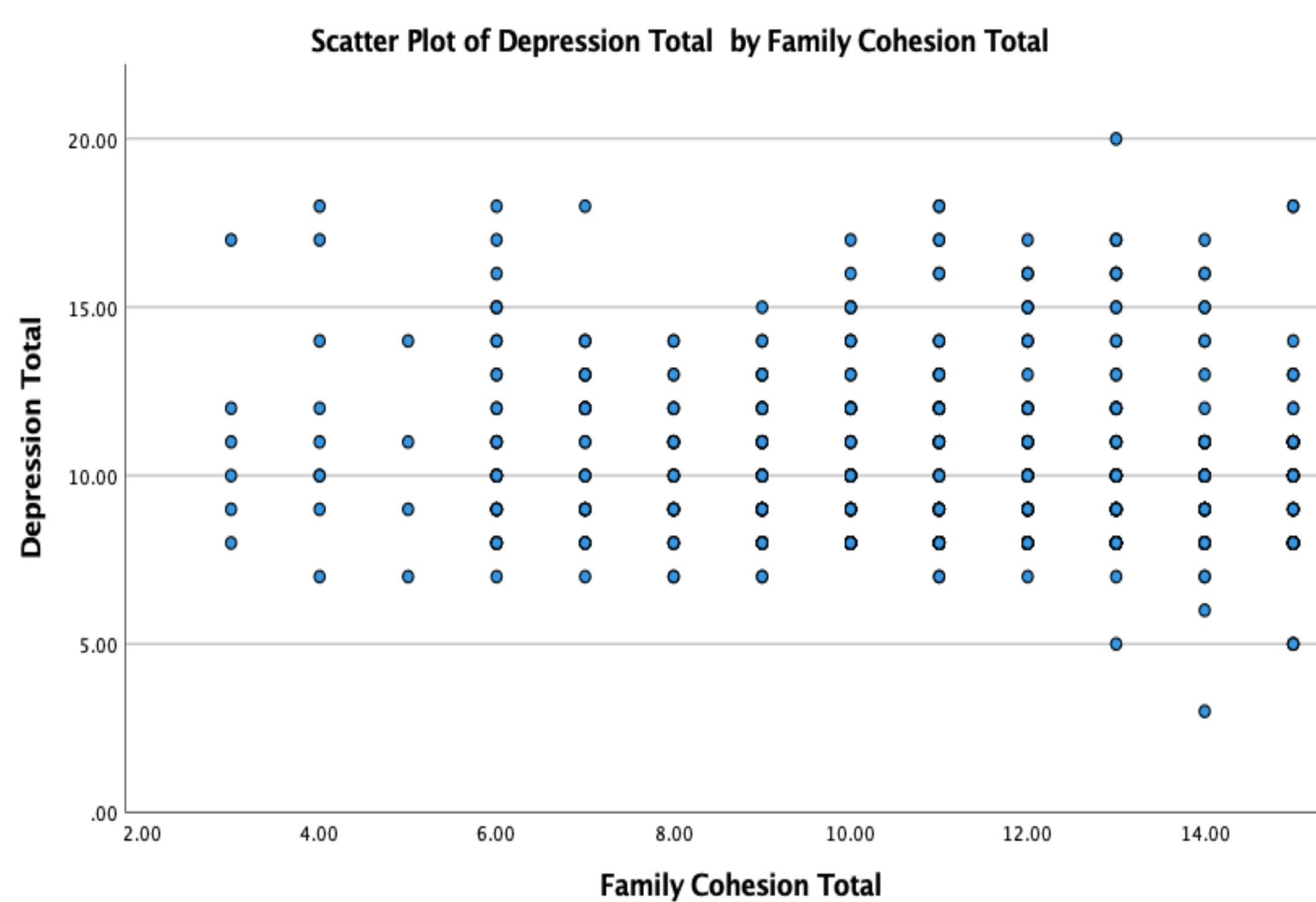

Scatter Plot of Depression Total by Family Cohesion Total

Table 2

Correlations Analysis of Family Cohesion and Familism and Mental Health Problems

Independent and Dependent Variables	r	df	p
Family Cohesion and Depression	-.159	594	.000
Family Cohesion and Self-Esteem	.240	594	.000
Familism and Depression	-.056	593	.169
Familism and Self-Esteem	-.112	593	.006

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

- It was found that a higher self-esteem was associated with a low familism. Familism is a risk factor for self-esteem for Latino children.
- It was also found that a higher self-esteem was associated with a higher family cohesion. Family cohesion may act as a protective factor.
- Encouraging family cohesion is important because it can provide children with a safe space in order to thrive in other areas of their life.
- Studies showed that when a Latino child expressed depressive symptoms, it also showered that they had lower levels of family cohesion, and reported higher levels of rumination (Young, 2016).

Strengths and Limitations

- Used validated measures. Both scales have been used for years and have been continued to be utilized by other studies. Another strength would be that the response rate of participants was high.
- One limitation of this method however is that it only studied one group (cross-sectional) over a matter of time when there are many Latino children all over the United States.
- Conducting the same study in Southern California could help find different results since there is a large percentage of Latino children in this region, not large enough sample size.
- The researchers for the original data contained a possible chance for selection bias due to the location. In the original finding, the researchers did not have a large selection of participation, and their ability to produce a bigger finding could have been attempted for.

Implication for Research and Practice

- Looking at levels of self-esteem and depression in Latino children is important due to the rising percentages of Latinos in the United States.
- Although having a conversation about mental health in a Latino household is still taboo, it would aid families help down future generations by learning healthy communication and coping skills when dealing life stressors.
- It would help to look at results after families are offered different types of services in order to find the best solution to help many Latino children succeed.
- It would be beneficial to conduct a similar study to this and previous research studies in different states and find differences in age, gender, and socioeconomic status.

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