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The Effects of Loneliness, Depression, Activities of Daily Living, and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living Among Hispanic Older Adults

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ABSTRACT

As the elderly population gradually increases, Hispanic elders are estimated to be the six largest group in the population. Research suggest that individuals who have restrictions in their economic means, experience an increase in impairment's, and the death of peers in the same generation can cause higher risk for loneliness. The objective of the study is to explore the effects loneliness has on depression, activities of daily living, and instrumental activities of daily living. The current study is a secondary analysis of the data from Project Hispanic Established Populations for the Epidemiologic Study of the Elderly (HEPESE). Participants completed face to face interviews and questionnaire surveys. The current study's sample size was 586 (215 males and 371 females). The average age of participants in the current study estimated to be 87 years of age. The results of the study showed negative and statistically significant associated between loneliness, depression, activities of daily living, and instrumental activities of daily living. Future research in older Hispanic older adults will help social work practice by implanting loneliness as a chronic illness and provide the right interventions.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study
- In the United States, nearly 1 in 3 older adults report loneliness (Gerst-Emerson & Jayawardhana, 2015).
- Roughly 20-30% of adults between the ages of 65 and 76 years report recurrent feelings of loneliness (Hawkley & Kocherginsky, 2018).
- It is projected that the oldest-old, individuals 85 and older are the fasting growing segment of the elderly population (Cantu et al., 2017).

Purpose of Research
- The purpose of this study is to identify the effects of loneliness, depression, and daily functioning among Hispanic older adults.

Research Questions
1. What is the relationship between loneliness and depression among older adults?
2. What is the relationship between loneliness and Activities of Daily Living?
3. What is the relationship between loneliness and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living?

Hypotheses
- Among older adults, there is a positive relationship between loneliness and depression.
- Among older adults there is a negative relationship between loneliness and everyday functioning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Impact of Loneliness
- Researchers have found that older adults that have been widowed, have lack of family support, and functional limitation identified as persistently lonely; decreasing social activity has been associated with increased loneliness (Hawkley, Thisted, & Cacioppo, 2009).

The Impact of Depression
- Among older adults those who are less likely to report depressive symptoms are individuals who have better health, income, and education level (Hooker et al., 2018).

The Impact of Everyday Functioning (ADLs & IADLs)
- Mexican-origin elders found Hispanic elders report greater rates of ADL disability than any other subgroup (Howrey et al., 2016).

Gaps
- Lack of research looking at loneliness, depression, and everyday functioning among the Hispanic origin.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Data Collection Procedures
- This study utilized secondary analysis of the data from Project Hispanic Established Populations for the Epidemiologic Study of the Elderly (HEPESE).The scope of the original longitudinal study was to understand risk factors for mortality and morbidity in Mexican Americans comparing how these factors operate differently in non-Hispanic White American, African American, and other major ethnic groups. The original study baseline conducted from 1993-2013, and had a total of 8 Waves.
- Data for all waves were collected through face-to-face interviews, in respondents' homes by Harris Interactive, Incorporated.
- The current study was based on Wave 8.

Sampling and Sampling Method
- Gender of the respondents during the Wave 8 comprised of Male (n=265) and Female (n=479). This sample was 100% Mexican American. For the purpose of this study, as 158 surveys were answered by proxy (e.g., family members, relatives, friends, paid employees), they were not eligible for this study.
- Final sample size is 586.

Measures
- The independent variable was loneliness. Loneliness was measured by a brief three-item version of UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996).
- The first dependent variable was depression. Depression is measured by utilizing the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression scale, twenty questions were administered.
- The second dependent variable was Activities of Daily Living. Activities of daily living of older adults were measured by Katz Index of Independence in Activities of Daily Living, six questions were administered (ADL; Kats, 1983).
- The last dependent variable was Instrumental Activities of Daily Living. Independent living skills of older adults were measured by Lawton Instrumental Activities of Daily Living Scale, eight questions were administered.

Table 1

Sample Characteristics (N=586)

Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	215	36.7
Female	371	63.3
Age at time of interview	M= 87.65	SD= 3.45
Born in the U.S.		
Yes	325	55.5
No	261	44.5
Material Status		
Married	172	29.7
Common law/Just living together	1	.2
Separated	12	2.1
Divorced	13	2.2
Widowed	361	62.2
Never married	21	3.6
Length of marital status	M=29.15	SD= 22.91
Lives alone		
Yes	185	31.7
No	398	68.3
Over all health		
Excellent	29	5.0
Good	175	29.9
Fair	284	48.5
Poor	97	16.6

RESULTS

Spearman's rho Correlation
- The results indicated negative and statistically significant associated between loneliness and depression, rs, (586) = -.416**, p<.01. The strength of the correlation was weak. Higher depression is related to higher loneliness among Hispanic older adults. Figure 1 represents the relationship between the two variables in this analysis.
- The results indicated a negative and statistically significant associated between loneliness and activities of daily living, rs (586) = -.103*, p<.01. The strength of the correlation was weak. Loneliness was related to activities of daily living. Indicating the higher loneliness is related to lower levels of ADLs. Figure 2 represents the relationship between loneliness and activities of daily living (ADL).
- The results indicated a negative and statistically significant associated between loneliness and IADLs, rs, (586) = -.108**, p<.01. The strength of the correlation was weak. Higher loneliness is associated with lower levels of IADLs. Figure 3 represents the relationship between the two variables in this analysis.

Table 2

Correlations Analysis of Loneliness, Depression, ADL, and IADLs.

Independent and Dependent Variables	rs	df	p
Loneliness and Depression	-.416**	562	.000
Loneliness and ALD	-.103*	570	.013
Loneliness and IADL	-.108**	570	.010

(for Spearman's rho, use "r_s" instead of "r")

Figure 1: Simple scatterplot showing relationship between loneliness and depression total
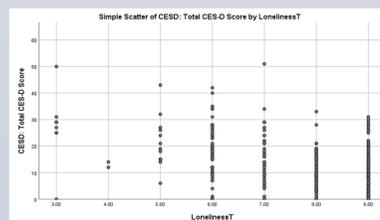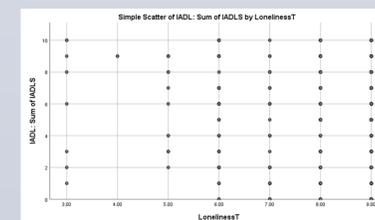

Figure 2: Simple scatterplot showing the relationship between loneliness total and ADL sum.

Figure 3. Simple scatterplot showing the relationship between loneliness total and IADLs sum

DISCUSSION

Summary of Major Findings
- Results showed negative and statistically significant associated between loneliness and depression. This is consistent with the current study's hypothesis which suggested a positive relationship between loneliness and depression. Meaning the Hispanic elderly individual who experiences higher levels of loneliness will consist of higher levels of depression. Previous research indicates that older adults who have strong family relationships are less likely to have depressive symptoms (Chipperfield & Bailis, 2014).
- Results showed a negative and statistically significant associated between loneliness and activities of daily living. The results contradicted the current study's hypothesis which suggested higher levels of loneliness is related to lower everyday functioning. In recent study's it was concluded that in the Mexican-origin found Hispanic elders report higher rates of ADLs disability than other subgroups (Howrey et al., 2016).
- Third, the results if the current study showed that there is a negative and statistically significant associated between loneliness and IADLs. This is inconsistent with the current study's hypothesis which indicated no relationship between loneliness and instrumental activities of daily living.

Practice and Policy Implications
- The current findings suggest future research to address the unique and specific needs of Hispanic older adults.
- Future research on treating loneliness as a chronic illness can help impact older adults.
- The current findings can be utilized to educate older adults on the impact loneliness has and association to other factors.

Strengths and Limitations

Limitations
- Original study has multiple waves, causing new participants to enter by Wave 8
- Much of the original data was lost, participants voluntary withdrew, causing original data from original to be disregarded
- Only utilizing face-to-face interview as a form of gathering data
- Current study was unable to use proxy

Strengths
- Large sample size
- No significance between genders
- All participants were of Hispanic decent
- All participants had the ability to answer all questions
- All measuring tools are standard level