

Traumatic Events, Coping and Mental Health Risk in Latina Immigrant Farmworkers.

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BACKGROUND

- In the early 2000's, published research on the mental health of immigrant Latina farmworkers (FWs) was almost non-existent. Since then, research has found that immigrant Latina FWs experience elevated rates of anxiety and depression and that these mental health difficulties are associated with hopelessness, family dysfunction, ineffective social support outside the family, low self-efficacy, low self-esteem, a sense of learned helplessness, and stressors associated with a migratory farmworker lifestyle (Hovey & Seligman, 2006).
- The Esperanza United Foundation (2023) reports that over 20% of immigrant Latina FWs experience intimate partner and domestic violence, but do not report the relationship between these traumas and mental health.
- In a sample of non-FW Latina immigrants, Abarca et al. (2022) found that traumatic life events were associated with symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. However, to our knowledge, no published work has examined traumatic experiences in immigrant Latina FWs and assessed how these experiences are directly associated with mental health factors.

METHODS CONTINUED

- Measures**
- Demographic Form:** Included questions on gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, family SES, and language use.
 - General Functioning Subscale of the Family Assessment Device:** Measured family functioning.
 - Personal Resource Questionnaire- Part Two:** Measured social support
 - Adult Self-Perception Scale:** Measured self-esteem.
 - SAFE Scale:** Measured acculturative stress.
 - Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale:** Measured depression
 - Beck Hopelessness Scale:** Measured hopelessness.
 - Adult Suicide Ideation Behavior Questionnaire:** Measured suicide ideation.
 - Psychosocial Coping Variable:** Variable created through qualitative analysis, which represents protective psychosocial reserve capacity resources including religion/God, satisfaction with social support, feeling supported by romantic partner, having somebody to confide in, having friends in the US., showing hope toward the future, having an end goal (e.g. saving for a house in Mexico), feeling a sense of control over her life, showing pride in the ability to support family through farmwork, and showing endurance(Dueweke et al., 2015).

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

- 25% of Latina farmworkers reported having experienced at least 1 traumatic event.
- To our knowledge, this is the first study that evaluated the relationship between traumatic events and mental health difficulties in Latina farmworkers.
- As expected, Latina farmworkers who experienced a traumatic event were more likely to report symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression.
- Latina farmworkers who experienced traumatic events reported lower levels of coping, self-esteem and social support.
- Latina farmworkers who experienced traumatic events reported higher acculturative stress and suicidal ideation.
- Our findings are pertinent given their topical nature and the lasting impact that trauma can have on one's mental health.
- Future research should continue exploring trauma in farmworkers of other ethnicities and the longitudinal effects trauma has on mental health.

PURPOSES AND HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this study is to examine how the experiences of traumatic events impact the mental health of female migrant farmworkers. To our knowledge, no published work has examined traumatic experiences in immigrant Latina farmworkers and assessed how these experiences are directly associated with mental health factors.

Specifically, we expected that:

- Latina migrant farmworkers who experience traumatic events will likely experience lower levels of coping.
- Latina migrant farmworkers who experience traumatic events will experience greater suicidal ideation
- Latina migrant farmworkers who experience traumatic events will have lower self-esteem.
- Latina migrant farmworkers who experience traumatic events will report higher acculturative stress.
- Latina migrant farmworkers who experience traumatic events will report lower social support.

Correlation Table

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Traumatic Events	--	-.30	.28	-.24	.44*	-.13
2. Coping	-.30	--	-.23	.30	.05	.39*
3. Suicidal Ideation	.28	-.23	--	-.49*	.65**	.64**
4. Self-Esteem	-.24	.30	-.49*	--	-.23	.49*
5. Acculturative Stress	.44*	.05	.65**	-.23	--	-.39*
6. Social Support	-.13	.39*	.64**	.49*	-.39*	--

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

METHODS

Participants

- 20 female migrant farmworkers ($M = 34.3$, $SD = 11.61$) born in Mexico.
- Age range was 20 to 59 years old
- 45% of participants were married, 20% were widowed, 15% had common law marriages/lived with their partners, 10% were divorced, 5% were separated, 5% were never married.

Procedure

- Data were collected from migrant farmworker camps in the southeast Michigan/northwest Ohio. All women participated in an interview assessing stressors associated with their migratory lifestyle, future expectations, psychosocial coping resources, and their histories of migrating and working as a farmworker. Participants also completed standardized measures. We analyzed qualitative data from the database that produced Hovey & Magana (2003) and Dueweke, Hurtado, & Hovey (2015). We coded for whether participants reported experiencing a traumatic event according to the following definition.
- Operational Definition of Traumatic Event:** A deeply distressing experience that can have a significant and lasting impact on an individual's mental, physical, and social well-being.

Trauma Examples

“To be honest, I did not have a childhood. Since the age of 8, I would baby-sit or go wash dishes for pay. My mother and older brother would hit me when I did things wrong.”

“When we migrated, I had heard in the news that 18 people had suffocated in the train and since we were in the train I was afraid of that. When we were coming from Mexico, I had no idea that we would cross over in the train. But when we were waiting for the train, I thought about the people that had died and worried that it could happen to us.”

“The people inside shot one bullet supposedly to scare the burglar, but it was my husband, and the bullet went through the window and hit my husband in the heart. Since then, I have been working.”