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# Demographic Factors and Attitudes towards Mental Health Medication Treatments among Latinxs

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## Research Questions

- What factors contribute to positive perceptions towards psychopharmacology?
- What factors contribute to negative perceptions towards psychopharmacology?
- What demographic factors contribute to these perceptions

## Intro

- Although attitudes towards mental health medications vary within the Latinx community, negative perceptions are often born from normative cultural values, stigma, and religious fatalism,<sup>1,3,5</sup> as well as overall demographic characteristics such as gender, nativity, and primary language.<sup>8,10</sup>
- Further research suggests many Latinx adults fear negative outcomes, such as dependence and side effects, from adhering to medication for mental health treatment and instead would prefer psychotherapy over psychopharmacology.<sup>3,5</sup>
- Lastly, a lack of health literacy,<sup>4</sup> culturally appropriated treatments and information,<sup>2</sup> as well as barriers to care also have been shown to impact attitudes towards mental health medication treatments among Latinxs.<sup>9</sup>

## Methods

- This qualitative study explores the demographic factors and attitudes towards mental health medication treatment among 20 adult Latinxs (45% Puerto Rico, 20% El Salvador, 10% Guatemala, 10% Honduras, 15% other).
- The data was collected through semi structured interviews from a study focusing on participants' migration experiences, religious constructs, stress responses, and background information among Latinx individuals.
- The interview transcripts were coded for negative and positive perceptions on the use of medications as a treatment for mental health problems.
- Themes regarding views on medications that were not positive or negative but were shared between participants were also included in the coding.

## Results

### Positive Perceptions

- Participants that were open to the idea of taking medications expressed more trust in doctors
- Participants often were open to taking medication if they had to but said that they would prefer therapy
- Participants expressed that they would take medications to treat a mental health condition because it was faster and simpler than therapy
- It was easier to ask a doctor who is a stranger and get a prescription compared to talking to someone in their community for help.

### Negative Perceptions

- Participants that disliked the idea of taking medications expressed a lack of trust in medical professionals overall and that the pills doctors give do not work.
- Contradictory to receive MH treatment and also trust in God. Supported by a belief that mental illness can be cured through faith.
- Would rather rely on themselves to treat mental illness by changing their behaviors.
- Medications were viewed as a treatment for physical ailments and mental illness could only be treated by changing behavior and therapy.

### Other Significant Themes

Interestingly, some participants were open to treatment or open to taking medication if:

- They felt like it was their only option.
- Their medical doctor recommended it.
- Their religious leader recommended it.
- They didn't know enough about the topic to say.

## Discussion

- Positive attitudes towards medication treatment were split between beliefs that it is easier to take medication than talk to someone about one's problems, or that it is easier to talk to a stranger than to someone who is close and trusted. Positive attitudes were supported through trust in medical professionals.
- Negative attitudes towards receiving mental health medication treatment had cultural roots; individuals suffering from mental illness believed they should be strong enough to get through it on their own, or that they should trust in God's ability to heal them. The participants who held negative attitudes reported more mistrust in medical professionals, including mental health providers and psychological treatment methodology.
- There was a pattern of attitudes for those who identified with a religion. Of those who identified with either Catholicism or Christianity, 60% held negative attitudes. The participants who identified with no religion ( $n=4$ ) all held positive attitudes towards medication for mental health treatment.
- Interviews exploring the connection between religious views and negative perceptions more directly could provide more information on how mental health professionals can better serve religious communities.
- Research among other Latinx groups is an important next step since cultures between central and south American countries can vary significantly, leading to different perceptions.

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