

Presenter: Vanessa Morales

Session & Time: Poster I

Room/Time: GLH / 1:00-2:00

Discipline: Psychology

Faculty Mentor: Veronica Fruit

Digital Portfolio URL:

Title: Acculturative Stress, Anxiety, Immigration, and Immune Function: A Lifelong Link

Abstract:

Emerging research has suggested a link between psychological stressors, particularly stress and anxiety and negative effects on the immune system. The â€œanxiety-diseaseâ€ model suggests that anxiety negatively affects immune functioning resulting in the later development of a disease (Breeze, 2024). Immigrant populations have been known to face significant challenges that induce more stress and anxiety than in other populations. Therefore, it is hypothesized that among immigrant populations, increased levels of acculturative stress and anxiety are positively correlated with the development of chronic disease and decline of immune system functioning in later life. A sample of 35 immigrant participants were recruited from the United States. Participants were foreign born but now live in the US and were over the age of 35. The survey, on the Qualtrics platform was available in English and Spanish, designed to assess acculturation stress and migration factors including age of migration, most

common chronic conditions, and anxiety levels. The measures used in this study were the GAD-7 (Spitzer, 1999) to assess general anxiety levels, the Immune system questionnaire (Versprille, 2019) to assess participants immune system functioning in the past year, and the Acculturative Stress Index (Savage et al, 2014). Results are expected to demonstrate positive correlations between acculturative stress levels and anxiety levels as well as likelihood of developing a chronic disease and a negative correlation between acculturative stress levels and immune functioning. My research aims to provide a more profound understanding of health and its connections to mental health. Ultimately, the present study aims to shed light on disparities within communities that are prone to higher levels of stress and anxiety in order to raise awareness about their effects. This, in turn, will allow us to target and minimize its effects on suffering communities.