

# A Preliminary Exploration of Psychological Adjustment Factors Among Latinx Students who Relocate and Do Not Relocate for College

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## BACKGROUND:

Studies have shown that first-year college students who relocated for college reported higher levels of depression, anxiety, and loneliness than students who did not relocate (e.g., Brooks & Dubois, 1995; King et al., 2011; and Stroebe et al., 2002).

- Latinx college students are less likely to feel that they belong on their campus (Johnson et al., 2007) and more likely to feel lonely (Oliver et al., 1985) than their White counterparts. Latinx college students experience additional stressors (e.g., acculturative stress) that may impact their educational success (Castillo et al., 2008).
- Reyes-Rodriguez et al., (2012) found that Latinx college students who moved for college were more likely to have moderate to severe levels of depression than students who did not move; however, only college students in enrolled in universities in Puerto Rico were sampled.
- Students with mental health concerns may be more likely to experience decreased academic performance (e.g., Arbona et al., 2018) and drop out of college (Boyraz et al., 2016) than students without mental health concerns.

## RESEARCH QUESTION:

Will Latinx college students who relocate experience more mental health and psychosocial challenges and less social support while adjusting to college than their peers who do not relocate for college?

## METHODOLOGY

**PARTICIPANTS.** RGV residents in their first and second year of college were recruited to participate in this study. A total of 114 students were recruited from the RGV (non-relocated) and 39 were recruited from outside RGV universities (relocated).

**PROCEDURES.** Students completed a short online survey that asked questions related to their demographics, perceptions of college, mental health, psychosocial stressors, protective factors, and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students who successfully completed the survey were entered in a raffle to win gift cards.

**ANALYTIC PLAN.** To compare group means, ANOVAs were conducted on data that met all assumptions, while Kruskal-Wallis' were conducted for data that was non-parametric. All tests were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

## RESULTS

- Anxiety, depression, loneliness, sense of belong to campus, and perceived social support were analyzed with Kruskal-Wallis.
  - Among the five variables, there was a statistically significant difference between non-relocators and relocators for **sense of belonging to campus** ( $H(1) = 16.07, p = <0.001$ ) and **perceived social support** ( $H(1) = 3.93, p = 0.047$ ).
- Acculturative stress and perceived stress were analyzed with ANOVAs.
  - Neither variable was statistically significant nor demonstrated any effect from relocation.



Early findings show that first and second-year Rio Grande Valley (RGV) college students who have moved away are reporting a stronger sense of belonging to their campus and higher levels of social support than students who remained in the RGV for college.

## RESULTS CONT.

Variable	Location for College	N	Mean Rank / Mean	P-Value
<b>Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA on Ranks</b>				
Anxiety	Non-relocated	114	78.67	0.424
	Relocated	39	72.12	
Depression	Non-relocated	109	76.94	0.156
	Relocated	38	65.58	
Loneliness	Non-relocated	113	78.55	0.327
	Relocated	39	70.55	
Sense of Belonging	Non-relocated	114	68.25	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
	Relocated	38	101.24	
Social Support	Non-relocated	112	71.84	<b>0.047</b>
	Relocated	39	87.95	
<b>ANOVA</b>				
Acculturative Stress	Non-relocated	114	41.70	0.273
	Relocated	39	45.55	
Perceived Stress	Non-relocated	112	20.22	0.192
	Relocated	39	18.38	

Table 1. Comparison of the mean rank scores and means.

## CONCLUSIONS

Ultimately, these findings may suggest that relocated Latinx college students may be more connected to their campus and believe that their social networks (i.e., family, friends, or significant others) are providing superior support compared to non-relocated students. Results also demonstrated that there were no significant differences in acculturative stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and stress between non-relocated and relocated students.

## LIMITATIONS

This study utilized a cross-section design which does not allow us to track student mental health, psychosocial stressors, or social support before and after enrolling in college and how these variables may relate to student attrition or persistence.

The study also did not measure variables, such as, resiliency or self-efficacy, that could be related to the current findings in the relocated group.

To recruit students for both groups, different recruitment methods needed to be implemented to find eligible students which may limit the generalizability of this study.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should use a longitudinal design to track college-bound high school Latinx students, which would allow researchers to examine risk and protective factors. Moreover, subsequent data analyses may control for potentially pertinent covariates, such as, high school GPA, income, and first-generation status which may or may not play a vital role in the challenges Latinx college students are encountering during the college transition.

## REFERENCES

