

A Correlational Analysis of the Psychological Factors of Self-Efficacy and Coping Behavior
and Latino Male College Persistence

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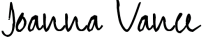
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and Latino Male College Persistence

By

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Abstract

This study was a correlational analysis of the psychological factors of self-efficacy and coping behavior and Latino male college persistence. The problem addressed was the low rate of persistence for Latino male college students in bachelor's degree programs. This lack of degree completion among Latino males often results in unemployment, underemployment, and incarceration. The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between the psychological factors of self-efficacy and coping behavior and Latino male persistence in a bachelor's degree program. The psychological model of student retention as a guiding theoretical framework was employed and the study population included 116 U.S. Latino males between 18-35 who had graduated from or dropped out of a four-year college prior to the 2018-2019 school year. Two bivariate correlations tested the relationships among persistence and self-efficacy, as well as 16 bivariate correlations to determine which coping behavior strategies were related to persistence. Results indicated that a significant positive correlation exists between self-efficacy and Latino male persistence in a bachelor's degree program. On the other hand, neither of the coping behavior strategies had a statistically significant correlation with Latino male persistence. Findings suggest that the cultural appropriations *familismo* and *caballerismo* are foundational to self-efficacy and coping behavior that precedes persistence. It is recommended that higher education practitioners create opportunities and spaces where *familismo* and *caballerismo* can be affirmed and facilitated via Latino Greek-letter organizations, peer mentoring, faculty-student research, academic skills training, cultural counseling, emotional expression, mindfulness training, and prayer. It is recommended that research further examine generational status; predictive nature of self-efficacy and coping behavior; impact of prayer, religion, and spirituality; effect of self-efficacy and coping behavior at different institutional

types; influence of roommate interaction; consequences of meditation/mindfulness, anger, and crying; and how culturally specific theoretical frameworks influence the persistence outcomes of Latino college males.

PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

Chapter 1: Introduction

Latino males are disappearing from postsecondary education at alarming rates in the United States (Pérez, 2014; Sáenz, Ponjuán, & Figueroa, 2016). Latino males are less likely to attend a baccalaureate institution or obtain a bachelor's degree in contrast to most racial/ethnic groups (Perez, 2014). Only 37% of Latino males are matriculating through baccalaureate colleges as compared to 44% of White males and 63% of Latino females (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a). Not only are the baccalaureate matriculation rates of Latino males low, so are their college graduation rates. For instance, merely 9.9% of Latino males 25 years or older have attained a bachelor degree whereas 20.4% of White males, 12.1% of African American, and 29.1% of Asian males in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018). These negative trends among Latino males are concerning because they tend to result in unemployment, lower paying jobs, and incarceration (Sáenz et al., 2016).

Sparks and Nuñez (2014) emphasized academic and social engagement as key factors that influence whether or not students complete their degree program. Also, other researchers have suggested additional factors that contribute to Latino males completing their college degree programs, including environmental, organizational, personal concerns, validation, sense of belonging, enculturation, acculturation, and dominant-group marginalization (Ojeda, Castillo, Meza, & Piña-Watson, 2014; Salas, Aragon, Alandejani, & Timpson, 2014). Perhaps one of the most important predictors of persistence is the student's psychological state of being (Chun, Marin, Schwartz, Pham, & Castro-Olivo, 2016). In fact, Saunders-Scott, Braley, and Stennes-Spidahl (2018) argued that psychological factors largely influenced retention decisions. College retention at baccalaureate institutions is one of the most complex and studied phenomena by higher education scholars (Aguinaga & Gloria, 2015; Musoba & Krichevskiy, 2014). While

many college retention models describe the interactions between students and their college as the basis for college departure decisions (Ojeda et al., 2014), the majority of higher education research has almost exclusively emphasized Tinto's student integration model of retention (SIMR) as discussed by French (2017).

The SIMR as a singular research focus has not enhanced the condition of college retention over the last 20 years; 79% of first-year college students return for a second year, and 58% of students graduate from four-year institutions in six years (NCES, 2016). In addition, the changing demographics of the U.S. population has now been reflected in a diverse student population comprised of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer (LGBTQ), veterans, single parents, commuters, online, first generation, low-income students, and students of color (Sáenz et al., 2016); all of which have implications for student persistence decisions. It is critical that higher education researchers and educators look at different persistence models to broaden the collective understanding concerning the circumstances that inform college persistence decisions (Dewberry & Jackson, 2018). A number of persistence models have revised or extended Tinto's SIRM to consider the cultural, economic, organizational, and psychological dimensions of students' experiences and the college campus context (French, 2017). There have been many such models that have evolved theoretically, but not empirically. However, these studies have paved the way for scholarly testing, retesting, and refining of persistence approaches beyond Tinto's SIRM (Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2014).

The psychological model of student retention (PMSR) is a model an example of a retention model that examines the effect of college students' psychological processes as a basis for persistence decisions (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Coping behavior, self-efficacy, and attribution (locus of control) are the psychological factors that are included in the PMSR. Bean and Eaton's

PMSR theorized that these psychological processes were indicative of students' responses to the college milieu and had implications for their persistence decisions. In an effort to validate their research, Bean and Eaton (2001) called for other researchers to test, retest, and refine their PMSR. However, it garnered limited scholarly scrutiny, with the more recent exception of Johnson et al.'s (2014) enhancement of the PMSR, which examined the effects of stress and campus climate on the persistence of students of color and White students.

While sociological models of retention have dealt primarily with the social system in which a student functions, the psychological models of retention place primary emphasis on student factors e.g., beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors that manifest within the context of the social system (Johnson et al., 2014). PMSR describes the psychological factors that influence a student's intent to depart a given institution. This model was based upon attitude-behavior theory (ABT), which held that beliefs influence attitudes, attitudes influence intentions, and intentions influence behaviors (Ajzen, 2014). In the context of ABT, PMSR also employs coping behavior, self-efficacy, and attribution as a means for understanding college departure decisions.

There exists an enormous achievement gap between Latino males and their White and female counterparts. Attention has mostly been given to understanding how White males succeed in college (Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016). Accordingly, researchers discovered that standardized test scores (SAT and ACT) do not predict Latino student achievement and that the greatest predictors for GPA are self-efficacy and motivation (Musoba & Krichevskiy, 2014). In cases when Latino college males do persist, it is critical to understand and delineate which psychological factors facilitated their persistence outcomes (Perez, 2014). This new information

may be useful to higher education professionals in their quest to ameliorate the low rate of Latino college male persistence in the baccalaureate setting (Chun et al., 2016).

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study was the low rate of persistence for Latino male college students; evidence suggests that the psychological factors of self-efficacy and coping behavior may affect persistence (Chun et al., 2016; Perez, 2014). However, the relationship between these psychological factors and persistence is currently poorly understood for Latino male college students (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2015). College degree completion eludes many Latino males although it is crucial for job security and economic stability (Tovar, 2015). These negative trends among Latino males often result in unemployment, underemployment, and incarceration (Sáenz et al., 2016). According to Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), the unemployment rate for Latino males not attending college was 7%, and Latino male worker median full-time wage was \$27,490, compared with \$42,210 for all males. While Latino males comprise 17% of the U.S. population, they make up 22% of U.S. prisons and are four times more likely than Whites males to become imprisoned (Malavé & Giordani, 2015). These negative trends underscore the importance of educational attainment.

Accordingly, higher education researchers (Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016; Ojeda et al., 2014) have attempted to understand the barriers to and reasons for Latino male persistence. Furthermore, self-efficacy and coping behavior have been found to predict student persistence (Crisp et al., 2015). More specifically, the research of Chun et al. (2016) and Sáenz et al. (2016) indicate that the psychological factors of self-efficacy and coping behavior predicted Latino college male persistence. Consequently, many researchers urged further research into this problem (Chun et al., 2016; Crisp, et al., 2015; Ojeda et al., 2014; Sáenz et al., 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the relationship between the psychological factors of self-efficacy and coping behavior and Latino male persistence in a bachelor's degree program. A correlational analysis design was adopted to examine the relationship between the independent variables (self-efficacy and coping behavior) and the dependent variable (persistence). College retention theory was utilized as a theoretical framework for examining the impact of psychological factors on Latino college male persistence (French, 2017; Johnson et al., 2014; Paulsen, 2014). College retention theory takes an in depth look at the causes and reasons why students decide to stay or depart from college, offering empirical solutions for greater college retention theory and practice. The population for this study consisted of 914,035 Latino males who attended U.S. baccalaureate institutions between the 2016-2017 school year (NCES, 2018). According to G*Power 3.1 software application, a minimum sample size of 107 students was necessary to guarantee an adequate number of participants to achieve reliability using a power analysis for correlation ($\alpha = .05$; effect size = .15; power = .95). A purposive sample of 116 U.S. Latino male students between 18 and 35 years of age was engaged via the online survey development cloud-based software company, Qualtrics (Qualtrics, n.d.). Only students with one or more years of study will be targeted as Latino males often drop out of school within the first two years of college. Three variables (self-efficacy, coping behavior, and persistence) were used to profile participants responding to the survey. Each variable was discussed using descriptive statistics in text and displayed via a table. SPSS software was utilized to analyze data employing bivariate correlational analyses to determine the relationship between persistence (dependent variable) and self-efficacy and coping behavior (independent variables) (Chatterjee & Hadi, 2015). The results of this study may inform higher

education leaders on the correlative validity of coping behavior as measured by the Coping Stress Inventory (CSI; Luke, Diambra, & Gibbons, 2014), self-efficacy as measured by the College Self-Efficacy Scale (CSEI; Chun et al., 2016), and persistence as measured by the Persistence Voluntary Dropout Decision Scale (P/VDDS; Whiteman, Barry, Mroczek, & Wadsworth, 2013), for assessing persistence of Latino college males.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in college retention theory (French, 2017; Johnson et al., 2014). Vincent Tinto (1975) created the first widely validated retention model in higher education (Aljohani, 2016). This student integration model of retention (SIMR) claimed that student dropout was linked to academic and social engagement and proposed an integrationist model of college retention, which has become a widely used theory over the last four decades (Price & Tovar, 2014). Tinto's (1975) seminal work significantly impacted how higher education practitioners and researchers have approached the issue of college retention, and has served as the foundation for several research studies, making college retention one of the most extensively researched aspects of higher education today (French, 2017; Stuart, Rios, Aguilar & Deil-Amen 2014).

Using the student integration model of retention (SIMR), Tinto found that social integration was established through a student's interaction with peers, faculty, and administrators, which frequently resulted in stronger institutional affiliation (French, 2017). Furthermore, he indicated students were less committed to college and drop out when they were incapable of detaching themselves from their pre-college lives, unsuccessful at coping with significant transitions, and unwilling to assent and embrace the new cultural values of the college environment (Johnson et al., 2014). Moreover, Tinto proposed that unique and individual

personality characteristics may impact a student's capacity to persist at a postsecondary institution (French, 2017). Among these personality characteristics, commitment and intention were the most effective; these two traits significantly influenced the extent to which a student was prepared to disregard the differences between individual expectations and the cultural milieu of the college setting (French, 2017). Even if the college experience does not meet a student's personal expectations, the intent to persist or attain a specific career objective may overshadow emotional disappointment, thus, enhancing the likelihood of persistence (French, 2017). Similarly, a student's commitment to a college education may reduce the likelihood of dropping out, just as a commitment to a specific college may reduce the likelihood of transferring and dropping out (Paulsen, 2014).

College retention theory, as set forth by Bean and Eaton (2001), may shed light on the psychological processes (e.g., attitude-behavior) employed by Latino college males, why bachelor degree completion continues to elude many Latino males, and what remedies might exist for this disturbing trend (Aguinaga & Gloria, 2015; Pérez, 2014). Furthermore, the theoretical lens of retention theory may aid in the examination of the psychological factors of self-efficacy and coping behavior as correlates of Latino college male persistence as hypothesized in this proposed study.

Nature of the Study

This quantitative correlational study utilized a survey design for data collection. A purposive sample was comprised of 116 Latino males between 18 and 35 years of age having completed at least one year of college were targeted. The survey was disseminated through the online survey development cloud-based software company Qualtrics to collect data from Latino males that attend, graduated from, and dropped out of a four-year college. Correlation analysis

research is used “whenever a quantitative variable [dependent variable] is to be examined as a function of, or in relationship to, any factors of interest [independent variables]” (Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2014, p. 3).

Quantitative methodologies are employed to undergird theory and are considered to be a deductive reasoning technique while qualitative research studies are inductive by nature (Vogt Gardner, Haeffele, and Vogt, 2014). Deductive reasoning reaches a particular conclusion established by generalizations while inductive reasoning extrapolates generalizations based upon observable events (Cohen, et al., 2014). Given that the hypotheses were formulated based on theory, a deductive or quantitative methodology was most appropriate for this research study. Further, three validated scales (coping behavior, self-efficacy, and persistence) were employed to collect data from participants. The scales have a Likert-type scaling strategy; this means that participants’ coping behavior, self-efficacy, and persistence had numerical values and were analyzed. The instruments that were employed to measure the three variable constructs were taken from three surveys posted in the public domain PsychTest and Mental Measures Yearbook and has been used with each author’s consent.

A purposive sampling technique was used to extract the sample from the population. There are several types of purposive sampling to include chain and network, convenience, maximum variation, snowball, typical, and unique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). However, Purposive sampling incorporates data that is readily accessible to be researched and analyzed, and that meets particular inclusion criteria. More precisely, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) asserted that this type of sampling technique is typically employed in instances where the restrictions of time, money, location, and availability of participants exist.

Purposive sampling is frequently utilized in research data collection that is characteristic of the population being studied. This approach is frequently employed in contexts where researchers desire to establish an estimate of results, without sustaining the time and/or cost necessary to conduct a random sample (StatPac, 2014). This sampling technique permits the researcher to collect data and conduct a research study given the above-mentioned constraints. However, purposive sampling has an inherent limitation in that it surrenders some degree of generalizability and consequently, may not offer adequate representation of the target population. Meaning, that those participants designated for the study may only partly represent the population being examined. Therefore, replication may be necessary to effusively validate the research outcomes (Vogt et al., 2014). Notwithstanding its inherent limitations, purposive sampling is the best technique for obtaining the sample of a population when time and circumstances prescribe random sampling (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Research Questions

To gain insight into the problem of postsecondary persistence among Latino males, the current study examined self-efficacy, coping behavior, and persistence based upon the CSI (Luke et al., 2014), CSEI (Chun et al., 2016), and P/VDDS (Whiteman et al., 2013) scores to ascertain if the occurrence of self-efficacy and coping behavior were related to persistence. Scholars have found that self-efficacy and coping behavior predict student persistence (Gloria et al., 2017; Liao, Edlin, & Ferdenzi, 2014), and students with high levels of psychological well-being were more likely to persist (Chun et al., 2016; Crisp et al., 2015). Accordingly, Latino college male psychological well-being has been correlated with persistence (Chun et al., 2016; Gonzalez & Morrison, 2016). Therefore, the following questions guided the study:

Q1. To what extent, if any, does a statistically significant correlation exist between self-efficacy and Latino male persistence in a bachelor's degree program?

Q2. Which coping behavior strategies have statistically significant correlations with Latino male persistence in a bachelor's degree program?

Hypotheses

H1₀. No significant relationship will exist between self-efficacy and Latino male persistence in a bachelor's degree program.

H1_a. A significant positive correlation will exist between self-efficacy and Latino male persistence in a bachelor's degree program.

H2₀. No significant correlation will exist between coping behavior strategies and Latino male persistence in a bachelor's degree program.

H2_a. A significant positive correlation will exist between coping behavior strategies and Latino male persistence in a bachelor's degree program.

Significance of the Study

The researcher examined the relationships between the psychological factors of self-efficacy and coping behavior, on the one hand, and persistence of Latino males, on the other, from a baccalaureate college. This correlational research analysis design examined the independent variables (self-efficacy and coping behavior) and the dependent variable (persistence) to determine the relationship, and the extent to which they are related.

Furthermore, college retention theory was employed to examine the impact of self-efficacy and coping behavior on Latino college male persistence. Thus, this study provided further information as to why Latino college male students decide to stay or depart from college, offering empirical solutions for greater retention theory and practice. The results of this study

are useful in informing higher education professionals about the relationship between self-efficacy and coping behavior for the improved persistence of Latino college males.

This study supplied information that higher education professionals will use to better assist Latino males in college completion so that they will have a better opportunity to secure promising careers and economic stability (Pérez, 2014). This new information will equip higher education professionals in their quests to close the baccalaureate persistence gap between Latino males and their ethnic and gender counterparts (NCES, 2015a). The findings from this study will help to reverse negative trends among Latino males that tend to result in unemployment, lower paying jobs, and incarceration (Sáenz et al., 2016).

Lastly, the results of this study may help education researchers better understand the barriers to and reasons for Latino male persistence (Johnson et al., 2014; Pérez, 2014). The research determined if self-efficacy influences the persistence for Latino college males (Liao et al., 2014). Furthermore, this study showed how coping behavior can impact Latino college male persistence (Gloria et al., 2017). The results from this study are especially important as no prior study has specifically focused on the impact of both self-efficacy and coping behavior as correlates for Latino male college persistence; this is vital because psychological well-being has been associated with Latino male persistence (Chun et al., 2016; Crisp et al., 2015). Consequently, researchers have urged further research into this problem (Chun et al., 2016; Crisp et al., 2015; Gloria et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2014; Liao et al., 2014; Pérez, 2014; Saenz et al., 2016).

Definitions of Key Terms

Caballerismo. *Caballerismo* is a dimension of Latino masculinity (machismo) that is family centered, socially connected, and honorable (Estrada & Jimenez, 2018).

Coping behavior. Coping behavior is the assemblage of actions (behaviors) a person utilizes to adapt and adjust (Johnson et al., 2014).

Familismo. *Familismo* is a dimension of Latino culture that emphasizes family attachment, allegiance, mutuality, and support (Paredes, Hernandez, Herrera, & Tonyan, 2018).

Graduation. Graduation is the attainment of a baccalaureate undergraduate degree (Tuttle & Musoba, 2013).

Latino. Latino is the diverse group of migrants from Mexico, Central and South America, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, as well as their next generation (Roca, Ellen, & Steil, 2018).

Machismo. *Machismo* is a Latino male archetype that is typified by aggression, heavy drinking, hypermasculinity, sexism, and stoicism (Estrada & Jimenez, 2018).

Persistence. Persistence is the desire and action of a student to remain at a given college or university from the point of admission through graduation (Westrick, Le, Robbins, Randunzel, & Schmidt, 2015).

Retention. Retention is the capacity of a higher education institution to retain a student from enrollment through degree completion (York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015).

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to produce given attainments (Talsma, Schütz, Schwarzer, & Norris, 2018).

Summary

Many Latino males have been unable to access college and enjoy the benefits of a four-year college degree. Therefore, this study employed the retention theories SIMR and PMSR to examine the relationship between the psychological factors of self-efficacy, coping behavior, and Latino college male persistent at a baccalaureate institution. The conclusion reached as of result of this correlational study will provide higher education scholars and practitioners with new and