

Psychological Wellbeing and Cognitive Resilience in Foreign-born Adults

A Multi-level Health Disparities Framework Analysis

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KEY TAKEAWAY: A “paradox of positive affect”: in 185 undocumented Hispanic/Latino adults, higher positive affect was associated with LOWER global cognition ($\beta = -0.005$, $p = 0.041$) — an effect driven entirely by those who migrated at a younger age. Life satisfaction showed no association.

INTRODUCTION	METHODS	RESULTS	CONCLUSIONS	REFERENCES															
The framework The NIA Health Disparities Research Framework highlights the urgent need to identify individual-level behavioral and psychological factors that promote cognitive resilience in populations facing significant adversity. The gap Psychological well-being (PWB) remains critically understudied in high-risk groups such as undocumented Hispanic/Latino immigrants, who experience chronic sociocultural and environmental stressors linked to dementia risk. Objective Examine cross-sectional associations of positive affect (PA) and general life satisfaction (GLS) with cognitive performance, and test whether they are moderated by age of migration.	Sample 185 undocumented, foreign-born Hispanic/Latino adults enrolled in a longitudinal study. Mean age 48.3 ± 8.9 years; 53% female. Measures Global cognition: composite z-score of standardized tests of episodic memory, working memory, and language. PA, GLS, and perceived stress: NIH Toolbox Emotion Battery. Analysis Multiple linear regression tested the independent associations of PA and GLS with global cognition, controlling for age at migration, sex, years of education, and perceived stress. Moderation analyses tested whether associations differed by age of migration.	Figure 1. Effect modification by age of migration. The negative PA–cognition association is significant only among early and mid-life migrants. Contrary to hypothesis, higher positive affect was significantly associated with LOWER global cognition ($\beta = -0.005$, $SE = 0.003$, $p = 0.041$). Stratified analyses showed this unexpected negative association was driven by participants who migrated at a younger age ($p = 0.012$); It was not significant for those who migrated later in life. There was no significant association between general life satisfaction and cognition ($p = 0.599$).	<table><tr><th>Association (adjusted)</th><th>Estimate</th><th>Significance</th></tr><tr><td>Positive affect (PA) → global cogniti</td><td>$\beta = -0.005$ (SE 0.003)</td><td>p = 0.041 *</td></tr><tr><td>Life satisfaction (GLS) → global co</td><td>not significant</td><td>p = 0.599</td></tr><tr><td>PA effect: migrated at younger ag</td><td>significant</td><td>p = 0.012 *</td></tr><tr><td>PA effect: migrated later in life</td><td>not significant</td><td>—</td></tr></table> Table 1. Adjusted associations of psychological well-being with global cognition. * p < 0.05. Findings reveal a potential “paradox of positive affect” in a population experiencing extreme, chronic adversity. Rather than being protective, high PA was linked to poorer cognitive performance — maintaining a positive outlook under such conditions may incur a high cognitive cost, possibly reflecting maladaptive coping strategies such as emotional suppression. Understanding the context-dependent role of individual-level psychological factors is essential for developing effective, culturally tailored interventions to promote cognitive health and mitigate dementia risk in vulnerable immigrant communities.	Association (adjusted)	Estimate	Significance	Positive affect (PA) → global cogniti	$\beta = -0.005$ (SE 0.003)	p = 0.041 *	Life satisfaction (GLS) → global co	not significant	p = 0.599	PA effect: migrated at younger ag	significant	p = 0.012 *	PA effect: migrated later in life	not significant	—	- Hill CV, et al. The NIA Health Disparities Research Framework. <i>Ethn Dis.</i> 2015;25:245-254. - Hittner EF, et al. Positive affect is associated with less memory decline. <i>Psychol Sci.</i> 2020;31:1386-1395. - Brody GH, et al. Is resilience only skin deep? <i>Psychol Sci.</i> 2013;24:1285-1293. - Trudel-Fitzgerald C, et al. Psychological well-being and the public health debate. <i>BMC Public Health.</i> 2019;19:1712. - Salsman JM, et al. Emotion assessment using the NIH Toolbox. <i>Neurology.</i> 2013;80(Suppl 3):S76-S86. CONTACT Erica D Diminich, MS, PhD Assistant Professor Psychology, Public Health CSU Dominguez Hills ediminich@csudh.edu Funding: AACSF-20-682140
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