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Moin Vahora
Northeastern Illinois University

Amanda Dykema-Engblade
Northeastern Illinois University

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COVID-19 Related Healthcare Disparities: The Impact on Student Populations at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)

Moin Vahora & Dr. Amanda Dykema-Engblade

Department of Psychology, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL 60625

Introduction. The current study has two primary purposes: 1) determine the accessibility to healthcare services and 2) explore the impact of healthcare accessibility of college student populations during COVID-19. The research will evaluate access to healthcare in relations to various social determinants of health (SDOH), and how these variables may serve as barriers to healthcare for students enrolled in a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Previous literature is mainly focused on the effects of novel sars-cov-2 on older adults or populations with chronic illnesses (Rodriguez-Lonebear et al., 2020). Although these populations are important, there is evidence of racial and ethnic disparities in accessing healthcare (Koh et al., 2021). More specifically, there is very little research that examines health disparities in minority populations and/or with a focus on urban college students.

Method. Participants will be presented with a 40-item questionnaire/survey that is intended to understand the accessibility/barriers to healthcare services for college student populations (at HSI) and their families. The survey was constructed based on barriers outlined by the CDC (CDC, 2019). The survey uses a 5-point scale to rate the responses from 1 being (*not likely at all*) to 5 (*Most likely/ Completely*). An example question includes “If you or your family ever tested positive for COVID, but did not go to a healthcare facility, how much was each of these factors a barrier?.” Then participants will be presented with several statements, such as, how much was food insecurity a barrier? Which they would rate using the 5-point scale.

Results. The data will be analyzed using one-way ANOVAs and correlational analyses. It is predicted that minority students will face disproportionate barriers to access to healthcare due to SDOH.

Implications. The survey will help future researchers determine necessary steps to implement programs to help underserved communities during the current pandemic and can be used as a model in similar pandemic outbreaks and suggest the more extensive intervention that needs to be developed in order to combat the disparities.