A Literature Review to Contextualize Stress in Latin America

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RESEARCH QUESTION

- How do people perceive stress in Latin America?
- Studying terms of stress in various regions can reveal themes across cultures.

METHOD

1. Searched literature in Google Scholar and Columbia Libraries Catalog to identify studies on common terms of stress in Latin America.
   - Search terms included: "cross cultural" or "cultural" or "psychology/psychological" and "stress" and "Latin America" or "[country]"
2. Chose studies where native Latin Americans had identified terms in their native dialects that are used to describe the experience of stress.
   - For example, the Haitian term *kè fè mal* translates to "heart hurts" and is a term used to describe the feeling of stress.

RESULTS

- Pulled 48 terms from 9 studies.
- Top 10 most frequent words as found in local terminology to describe experiences of stress:

Rank	Term	Rank	Term
1	head	5	pain
2	worry	5	sadness
3	heart	5	rumination
4	nerves	5	forgetfulness
4	nervous	5	lose control

DISCUSSION

- Research on stress in Latin America is still limited.
- Understanding stress in different cultural contexts requires identifying vernacular differences in the ways that local residents describe the experience of stress.

Stress in Latin America is usually conceptualized as a **physical** and/or **mental affliction.**

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CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES OF STRESS IN THE LITERATURE

- *Familismo* **("familism")** is one of the central tenets of LatAm culture.
  - Familism is protective against stress because it encourages an extensive social support network.
  - Familism also predicts stress because of pressure to meet high familial expectations and support the family.
- Youth conflict with older generations on **traditional gender roles** of *machismo* ("masculinity") and *marianismo* ("femininity").
- **Religion** and spirituality are strong influences.
  - Stress is sometimes conceptualized as an "evil spirit".
  - People are encouraged to see priests or *santeros* for spiritual healing and guidance.
  - **Fatalism** may be protective of stress.
- Deteriorating **mental health** due to the economic crisis, social pressure, and education/job competition is associated with higher drug use and homicide.

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