**Title**: Using the Ecological Validity Model to Understand Family Satisfaction in Autism Services Among Transborder Latinx Caregivers

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**Introduction**: Characterizing cultural factors and lived experiences of Latinx families is crucial for informing culturally adapted evidence-based interventions that address the unique needs of this community (Castro et al., 2023). Although research highlights the need for more bilingual materials, diverse service providers, and use of parent empowerment strategies to address Latinx service disparities in ASD (Agurto et al., 2022; Lopez et al., 2020; Rios et al., 2021), less is known about the role of family satisfaction with ASD services for Latinx families. This gap in knowledge is particularly evident among transborder families who navigate services both in the U.S. and Mexico. This study uses the Ecological Validity Model (EVM; Martinez-Torres, 2021; Pickard, 2023) to investigate 7 ecological system dimensions (content and concepts, context, goals, language, metaphors, methods, persons) contributing to family satisfaction in autism services among transborder Latinx caregivers.

**Method**: Participants (N = 13 Latina mothers, Mean Age = 32, SD = 5.84) were recruited for a qualitative study to explore the experiences of transborder caregivers of autistic children living along the U.S.-Mexico border, with the study goal of informing culturally appropriate adaptations. Purposeful and snowball sampling methods were used through community partnerships. Inclusion criteria included caregivers who 1) have an autistic child or child with likelihood of autism between the ages of 2-7 years, 2) cross the US/Mexico border weekly to obtain autism-related services, 3) relocated from Mexico to the U.S. to access autism services, and continue to cross the border weekly to receive services in Mexico and/or 4) reside in the U.S., seek autism-related services in Mexico and cross the border weekly for family or social support. Qualified participants completed a consent form, demographic form, and a 1.5-hour semi-structured interview. Thematic analysis of seven EVM-derived themes was conducted using Dedoose software.

**Results**: Qualitative coding for the study is ongoing, with 3 out 13 interviews coded to date. Preliminary results suggest that caregivers receive a range of services between the U.S. and Mexico, including applied behavior analysis (ABA), Head Start, speech, and public school education services. Six of seven potential EVM themes were coded. For *Content and Concepts*, caregivers report dissatisfaction with services when psychoeducation was lacking, including little to no explanations of ASD and intervention techniques. Satisfaction was reported when in-depth psychoeducation and clear guidance on applying intervention strategies were provided. For *Context*, caregivers expressed dissatisfaction with service delivery method (e.g., changing therapy team, hour reduction), long wait list times, and services not accepting insurance. Satisfaction was reported when services offered flexible hours that fit the family’s schedule, and when therapy costs were covered by insurance, making it affordable for parents who would otherwise not be able to afford services. For *Goals,* dissatisfaction was reported when family was not involved in creating goals for their child. Satisfaction was reported when the goals were tailored to the family’s needs and services adjusted them to support the child’s progress. For *Methods*, satisfaction was reported when services used methods such as visuals to achieve treatment goals. For *Persons*, dissatisfaction was reported with service providers lack of experience (e.g., no experience working with children) and work ethic (e.g., cancelling sessions last minute, no communication). Satisfaction was reported when service providers supported caregivers with child behaviors in school and early intervention sessions. For *Language,* satisfaction was expressed when providers skills were more important than whether or not they spoke Spanish. Caregivers did not express content related to the EVM theme of *Metaphors.*

**Discussion:** Findings suggest a need to understand transborder families’ experiences and the factors influencing their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with services in the U.S. and Mexico. Caregivers may seek services in both countries to meet their family’s specific needs, despite border-crossing challenges. Future research should investigate similarities and differences between the U.S. and Mexico services to better address the needs of transborder Latinx families.

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