

# Resilience Factors and Cardiovascular Health: A Promising Link

Yamnia I. Cortés, PhD, MPH, RN;<sup>1</sup> Peter J. Abad, MS;<sup>1</sup> Maria Hein, MSW;<sup>1</sup>

Yelena Perkhounkova, PhD;<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Thurston, PhD;<sup>2</sup> Krista M. Perreira, PhD;<sup>3</sup> Michelle Meyer, PhD;<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Iowa College of Nursing; <sup>2</sup>Department of Psychiatry, University of Pittsburgh; <sup>3</sup>Department of Social Medicine, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; <sup>4</sup>Department of Emergency Medicine, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## Background

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death among women in the U.S.
- Vascular risk increases during the menopause transition (MT).
- Midlife Latinas have a high burden of CVD risk factors, with over one-third having metabolic syndrome.
- Studies focus on risk, but what about a strength-based approach?
- Psychosocial resilience factors such as self-compassion and religiosity/ spirituality have been associated with lower subclinical CVD.
- Studies have not included midlife Latinas or culturally-specific resilience measures.
- Need to identify resilience factors to develop psychosocial interventions.

## Objective

To examine associations between psychosocial resilience factors and cardiovascular health as measured by the American Heart Association Life's Essential 8 (LE8) in midlife Latinas.

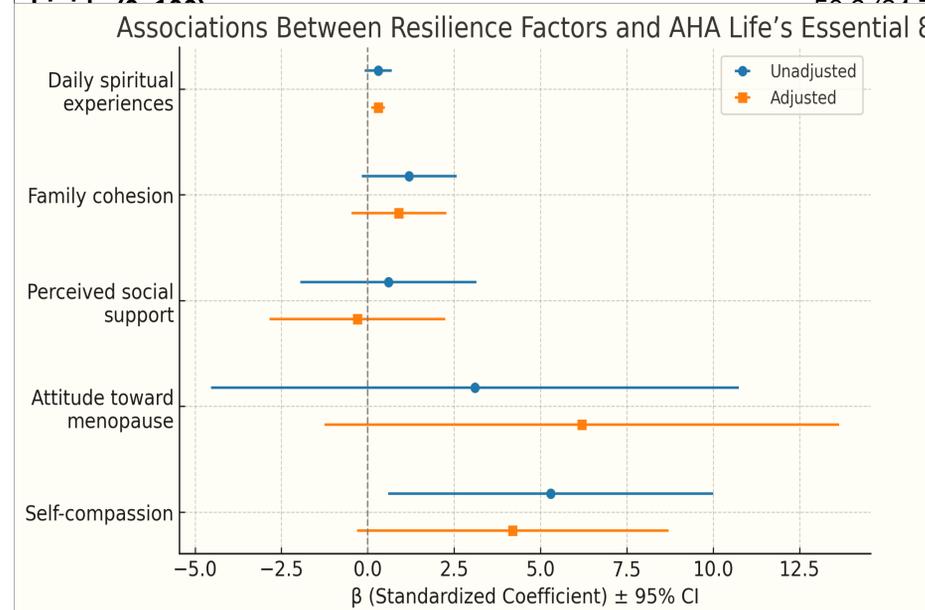
## Methods

- Design:** Pilot cross-sectional study.
- Sample:** 54 perimenopausal Latinas aged 40 to 60 years living in Iowa without a history of psychiatric disorder or CVD events.
- Recruitment Strategy:** Convenience and snowball sampling from community sites, mass campus e-mail, and patient registry.
- Dependent Variable:** LE8, a composite score of overall cardiovascular health (0-100):
  - Health behaviors: nicotine, diet, physical activity, sleep, body mass index.
  - Health indicators: blood pressure, cholesterol, fasting blood glucose.
  - Higher values = better cardiovascular health.
- Independent Variables:**
  - Self-compassion
  - Perceived social support
  - Religiosity/spirituality
  - Family cohesion
  - Positive attitudes towards menopause

## Results

**Table 1. Participant Characteristics (n=54)**

Variable	n (%) or mean (SD)
Age	46.8 (3.9)
High school education or greater	41 (75.9)
Somewhat/Very hard paying for basics	22 (40.7)
Partnered	42 (77.8)
Latino background	
Mexican	30 (55.6)
Central American	12 (22.2)
South American	5 (9.3)
Caribbean	2 (3.7)
Other (e.g., more than one heritage)	5 (9.3)
Born in mainland U.S.	15 (28.9)
Completed informed consent in English	29 (53.7)
Psychosocial resilience factors	
Self-compassion (1–5)	3.4 (0.7)
Positive attitudes towards menopause (1–3)	2.2 (0.4)
Perceived social support (1–7)	5.3 (1.4)
Family cohesion (0–9)	6.9 (2.5)
Daily spiritual experiences (0–48)	34.2 (10.6)
American Heart Association Life's Essential 8	
Total (0–100)	62.8 (12.3)
Diet (0–100)	18.5 (28.8)
Physical Activity (0–100)	78.5 (39.5)
Nicotine (0–100)	84.3 (30.4)
Sleep (0–100)	76.3 (23.8)
BMI (0–100)	50.2 (34.7)



**Note.** Linear regression models adjusted for age, education, and language

## Summary

- Mean LE8 and self-compassion were similar, though slightly lower, than prior research.
- None of the associations between resilience factors and cardiovascular health (LE8) reached statistical significance after adjustment (all  $p > .05$ ).
- However, the direction and magnitude of several associations suggested potentially protective patterns.
  - Higher self-compassion and daily spiritual experiences were related to better LE8.
  - Stronger family cohesion and social support showed smaller, positive trends.
- Findings consistent with research on self-compassion and positive psychological traits like optimism.

## Limitations & Next Steps

- Given modest sample size and variability, these findings should be interpreted cautiously but suggest promising directions for future, adequately powered studies.
- To further explore these patterns, we conducted qualitative interviews to uncover culturally specific dimensions of resilience that may not be captured in quantitative measures.
- Development of culturally responsive, strengths-based interventions to promote cardiovascular health among midlife Latinas.

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