



# Father-Daughter Relationships Among Latina Teens Whom Attempted Suicide: A Dyadic Analysis

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## Introduction

### GROWING LATINX POPULATION & SUICIDE PREVALENCE

- In the U.S. the Latinx population from ages 5-17 encompasses 23% of the Latinx population in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>
- Given that the Latinx adolescent population is growing, it is important to be aware of the mental health disparities they face.
- The second leading cause of death for people in between the ages of 10-34 in the U.S. is suicide.<sup>2</sup>
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported higher suicide attempts among females when compared to males, as well as higher suicide attempts among the Latinx population when compared to the White population.<sup>3</sup>
- As illustrated over the past decades, Latina adolescents have been at a greater risk for suicide.

### FATHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS

- There has been a lack of attention given to father-daughter relationships in the Latina suicide literature.<sup>4</sup>
- Latinx adolescents who feel closer to their male caregivers had lower levels of suicide risk.<sup>5</sup>
- There is lower suicidal ideation among Latinas when they see their fathers as supportive.<sup>4</sup>
- Given the literature, more research has been done regarding mother-daughter relationships, and less attention has been given to the father-daughter relationships. This current study focused on addressing this research gap.

## Method

### RESEARCH AIMS

- Describe father-daughter relationships among girls whom have attempted suicide.
- Describe fathers’ responses to their daughters’ suicide attempts.

### PARTICIPANTS

- Latina teen daughters who have attempted suicide, and their fathers (*N* = 20)
- Father-daughter dyads (*n* = 10)

### DATA COLLECTION

- In-depth, open-ended interviews in Spanish or English.
- Participants (teens and fathers) were asked questions about their relationships with family members; conflict and conflict resolution, including an example of a recent event; distribution of household responsibilities, rules, and discipline; and life outside the household, such as school activities and dating.
- Interviewers elicited a retrospective narrative of the suicide attempt from the perspective of the adolescent and her father.

### DATA ANALYSIS

- Interviews audiotaped and transcribed
- Dyad approach entailed to levels of analysis: 1) Individual; and 2) Dyadic
- Individual Analysis
  - Inductive thematic approach
  - Comprehensive reading of the interviews
  - Codebook development and revisions
  - Coding and audit trail
- Dyadic Analysis
  - Composite summaries developed for each dyad
  - Analytic memos written about each dyad
  - Within and across case analysis conducted to identify major themes

## Results

### Dynamic Relationships

- Emotional Distance
- Physical Distance
- Emotional Closeness

### Father As Protector

- Creating a Good Life
- Teenage Resistance
- Failure to Protect

### Responses to Suicide Attempt

- Active Responses
- Apathetic Responses
- Contradictory Responses

THEMES		
<b>Dynamic Relationships</b>		
This describes how distanced and close the father and daughter are to one another		
Sub-theme	Description	Quotes
Emotional Distance	When there is a lack of understanding of how the other person feels	• “Y eso, yo traté de tener confianza con él, pero cosas así... me da cosa hablarlas con él... me da... o vergüenza o me da miedo a la reacción que él pueda tener.”
Physical Distance	When the daughter and father do not live together or spent extended time away	• “you know, make sure that everything’s perfect, so that whenever my mom comes downstairs she’ll be happy. Whenever my dad comes home, he’ll wanna stay.”
Emotional Closeness	When there is mutual understanding of feelings among father and daughter	• “He expresses his feelings...he understands where I am coming from all the time, he takes my side.”
<b>Father as Protector</b>		
This explains how the father perceived himself in relation to what he would do for his daughter		
Sub-theme	Description	Quotes
Creating a Good Life	When fathers’ goal is to protect their daughters’ potential futures	• “I mean, teach her right from wrong, and just protect her. I, uh, again, I really think she’s the most special child on the face of the earth. She’s just got everything going for her.”
Teenage Resistance	When fathers were concerned about their daughters they employed parting approaches that their daughters resisted.	• “I know that he wants me to do well... I hate living like this and stuff like that so it’s just like it’s just so much pressure for me to do so much and you know, it’s a lot of pressure because they want me to be a role model for my sister”
Failure to Protect	When fathers expressed disregard for their daughter	• “my stepfather did hit me and I went to school that the next day with a bruise on my face so they called the ECS and everything and it took pictures of the side of my face and I told them what has been going on.”
<b>Responses to Suicide Attempt</b>		
This encompasses the variety of ways fathers responded to their daughter’s suicide attempt		
Sub-theme	Description	Quotes
Active Responses	When the father takes action to help daughter	• “We thought that we could solve it ourselves. We should have immediately moved on it. Uh, she’s been seeing counseling for the last six months”
Apathetic Responses	When fathers perceived SA as more of a call for attention	• “Como ella... para mí yo creo que ella lo que está buscando es como atención.”
Contradictory Responses	Some fathers responded in invalidating ways but did not want them to harm themselves	• “Y después me dijo que se iba a tirar del rufo y yo le dije a ella que ella no era loca para tirarse del rufo, que cuando una gente se va a tirar de un rufo no le dice nada a nadie, va y se tira”

## Conclusions

### SUMMARY

- In general, daughters tended to limit how much they discussed their relationship with their father.
- Dynamic relationships are complex and influenced by the father’s role in daughter’s life and his reaction to daughter’s suicide attempt.
- Typically Latino fathers are labeled as being unemotional and strict.<sup>6</sup>
- Some fathers in this study demonstrated fitting into the label yet others displayed warmth and affection towards daughters.
- Fathers’ desire to protect their daughters through their behaviors were exhibited by gendered ideas.
- Fathers’ responses to daughter’s suicide attempt varied, with many not knowing how to react and demonstrated a lack of understanding.

### IMPLICATIONS

- More research is needed to better understand the complex multi-faceted father-daughter relationship among Latinas who have attempted suicide.
- It is important to consider interventions for family’s affected by suicide, interventions may vary due to the uniqueness of each situation.

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