Perceptions of Familism on Kinship Adoption in South Texas

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INTRODUCTION

- Although kinship care/adoption has been supported by child welfare workers and practitioners, the particulars within kinship care policies and implementation have oppressed a variety of ethnic groups. African American communities are an overrepresented ethnic group in kinship care and overall child welfare involvement due to harmful case working intervention. In addition, the current literature points out an increasing number of kinship care observed in the state of Texas with the highest population of kinship care within the African American and Hispanic populations.
- Familism is a cultural value that has been apparent in kinship care motivators. For example, maintaining family legacy, loyalty, responsibility, etc. These are consistent with familism sub-values: Family supports, family obligation, and family referents. For that reason, it is important to understand how Familism might or might not influence kinship adoption attitudes and beliefs.
- This mixed-methods study will address perceptions of kinship adoption and familism in a South Texas university using a convergent mixed-methods design.

PURPOSE

The present exploratory study seeks to understand the overall knowledge of kinship dynamics and familism within the culture/society of South Texas, an area where kinship care and adoption has not been researched in depth. The research question focusing this investigation is: What is the perception of familism on kinship adoption?

METHODS

Participant Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria. After receiving IRB approval from Research Compliance at Texas A&M University- Kingsville, 18 and older males and females from a South Texas University (Students, Faculty, and Staff) were recruited to complete an online questionnaire.

Mixed-Methods Approach. The study used a convergent mixed-methods design. For the quantitative portion of the study, the researcher used a Familism Scale and an Adoption Perception Scale. For the qualitative portion of the study, the researcher asked in total 3 open-ended questions.

Methods. The questionnaire contained 3 sections. 1st section: Questions regarding sociodemographic characteristics (ethnicity, gender, and age). 2nd section: Familism scale appropriated from Knight et al.'s Mexican American cultural values scales (2010). More specifically, the questionnaire used subscales: familism support, familism obligations, and familism referent (12 questions in total). 3rd section: the study modified a Hispanic's Adoptions questionnaire by Ventura-Ramirez (2009). The questionnaire used a total of 7 statements and modified them to questions. The study recruited participants through convenience sampling and snow-ball sampling in a South Texas university.

Data Analysis. The researcher used descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages to describe the data. The qualitative section of the questionnaire was analyzed through thematic analysis and a table is also displayed for the themes that the researcher discovered. Both data samples were merged by addressing divergence and convergence.

RESULTS

The study had a sample of N=50 respondents. The sample was composed of 76% (38) students and 24% (12) faculty/staff from a South Texas university. In the sample, 74% (37) were female, 22% (11) were male, and 4% (2) identified as 'other.' Most respondents were between the ages of 18-30 years old (74%, 37) with 14% (7) were 31–45-year-olds and lastly, 12% (6) were 46+ year-olds. Regarding ethnicity, the sample was composed of 80% (40) Hispanic or Latino, 14% (7) White or Caucasian, 4% (2) Black or African American and 2% (1) American Indian or Alaska Native.
The Familism Scale and Adoption Perception Scale had N=50 participants. Open-ended questions had n= 45 responses.
Results demonstrated medium levels of familism across participants and low awareness of kinship adoption cases, however, participants placed less importance on biological relationships during the raising of a child.

Mixed-Methods Design.

Table 1

Convergence within data	Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data
Unfamiliarity with Kinship Adoption and what it means	Of the sample, 4% (2) of respondents stated they knew someone who was kinship adopted.	3 respondents described personal and family experiences with kinship adoption.
Parents' job to ensure their child's well-being	Of the sample, 44% of respondents said they 'Very much' believe that family provides a sense of security, 40% of respondents said they 'Very much' believe that it is important to be 'United as a family,' and 54% of respondents said they completely believe that 'Parents' job is to ensure their children have a better-quality life.	34 respondents conveyed that it is the parents' responsibility to provide a safe and loving home to adoptees. All depending on their capabilities and intentions of providing it. Overall, respondents shared opinions that family as a unit must be a safe haven for children.
No major concerns for biological relationships when raising children	Of the sample, 44% of respondents stated that they 'Somewhat disagree' that a 'Biological relationship impacts the day-to-day raising of a child.'	N=52 respondents expressed a desire, admiration, or openness to adoption, with no concern for biological relationships. Only 2 respondents expressed major concern for a lack of biological relationship and were uncertain of adoption.

Quotes from Open-ended questions:
Parents' Commitment to Child. "I think that if a person is ready (mentally or financially) to adopt, has the means, and has accessibility to healthcare, shelter, food, etc. then one should be able to adopt."

Positive Outlook on Adoption- (Society/Morality and Personal/Family Level.

"Adoption is very necessary especially on today's days as there are a lot of

individuals who are in need of adoption"

RESULTS CONT.

Quotes from Open-ended questions
Neutral opinion on Adoption/ Lack of Information: "I have no clue what my family thinks of adoption. Moreover, I do not know of anyone in my family that is adopted"

Comments about childcare system: "Since I am adopted I would like to adopt and foster when I am ready for it. I believe that there is so many children in the foster care system and are not receiving quality care. If I could help save at least one then I am content. Also, I will look for siblings because unfortunately, the foster care system enjoys tearing us apart even though they are all about family reconnecting!"
Kinship adoption is preferred or equal to non-kinship: "My immediate family has adopted, though he is biologically my cousin. My family has been interested in adopting (not a relative) before though"

CONCLUSIONS

- The purpose of this study was to understand kinship dynamics within the culture and society of South Texas. The study's findings revealed that regardless of kinship or non-kinship adoption, participants described parental commitment to their child's well-being is of utmost importance. From their commitment and strong bonds, any negative outcomes can be overcome.
- Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the researcher inquired on 2 variables: familism and kinship adoption. However, in both quantitative and qualitative data samples, participants did not place much emphasis on familism or kinship adoption specifically. Interestingly, participants placed more importance on the societal need for adoption and humanistic/altruistic traits that can be or should be found within it. There were also comments about flaws within the current child welfare system.
- The study's limitations are insufficient validity in the content of the questionnaire. I.e., insufficient kinship adoption questions (3 questions in total in the quantitative portion) and open-ended questions (qualitative) did not address kinship adoption. However, although qualitative questions did not address kinship adoption specifically, n=7 participants expressed a preference or equal interest for kinship adoption and/or personal experiences with kinship adoption.
- Results of this study can improve our insight into the complexity of kinship and non-kinship adoption and understanding people's overall perceptions. Additionally, what might motivate or discourage someone from adopting. The information collected from this study can be used as a foundation toward further inquiry about what people see more valuable in terms of their family's well-being and the raising of an adoptee. Lastly, it is also beneficial in the sense that it sheds light into stigma or misconceptions that child welfare workers can address.
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