



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY  
School of Behavioral Health

# PROPOSED STUDY: “Discovering the Psychological Odyssey: Post-Pandemic Stresses of Undocumented Chinese Immigrants in New York City”

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## Abstract

This prospective study investigates the key stresses faced by undocumented Chinese immigrants (UCI) who arrived in the United States after the pandemic, with a focus on their hardships and ongoing difficulties in New York City. By thoroughly examining this often-overlooked group, the research uses quantitative methods to analyze connections between factors such as age, gender, length of stay in New York, language proficiency, educational attainment, spirituality, stress levels, anxiety, depression, and overall quality of life. Furthermore, the study aims to explore a well-rounded understanding of their stressors and adaptability in adjusting to life in the United States.

## Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated socio-economic disparities worldwide, disproportionately impacting vulnerable populations, including undocumented Chinese immigrants (UCI) in New York City.
- The rapid increase in Chinese migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, nearly tenfold from 2022 to 2023, underscores the urgency of addressing their post-pandemic psychological distress.
- UCI in New York City face numerous stressors in the post-COVID-19 era, including financial insecurity, fear of deportation, racism, isolation, language barriers, and limited access to healthcare and social support. These stressors contribute to heightened anxiety, depression, and reduced quality of life, yet little research has examined their post-pandemic mental health outcomes.
- Recognizing the urgent need to understand the psychological impact of the post-pandemic environment on UCI, it is essential to develop tailored interventions and support systems that effectively address their unique needs.



## Statement of the Problem

- Some existing research has explored the experiences of immigrants during the pandemic; however, there is a lack of literature specifically focusing on the post-pandemic psychological well-being of UCI in New York City.
- Understanding how this population navigates and copes with post-pandemic stresses is crucial to informing policies and interventions aimed at mitigating their psychological distress and promoting resilience.

## Research Question

What are the relationships between undocumented Chinese immigrants' length of stay in the USA, language proficiency, educational background, stress, anxiety, depression, and quality of life?

## Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Stress, anxiety, and depression will be positively related to each other.

Hypothesis 2: Quality of life will be inversely related to stress, anxiety, and depression.

Hypothesis 3: The length of time in the USA will be positively related to their quality of life.

Hypothesis 4: The length of time in the USA will be inversely related to their stress, anxiety, and depression.

Hypothesis 5: Language proficiency will be inversely related to their stress, anxiety, and depression.

Hypothesis 6: Educational background will be positively related to their stress, anxiety, and depression. Because those with higher education backgrounds are supposed to have higher expectations for themselves.

## Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in an integrated theoretical framework that combines Acculturation Theory, Stress and Coping Theory, and Structural Theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by UCI in post-pandemic New York City.

Together, these three theories offer a holistic perspective that captures the complex interplay of cultural identity, coping strategies, and structural constraints, providing essential insights for the development of policies and interventions aimed at promoting the well-being and integration of immigrant communities.

## Methods

### Recruitment and Participants

This study will focus on finding 150 UCI who moved to New York Metropolitan Area during or after the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants will be recruited from community outreach centers, referral networks, social media, and word-of-mouth.

- UCI that has relocated to New York City after March 2020 (post COVID-19 pandemic).
- Age range: 18 years and above.

### Measures

This cross-sectional quantitative study investigates post-pandemic psychological stress among 150 UCI in NYC. Participants were recruited from churches, community centers, social media, and personal networks.

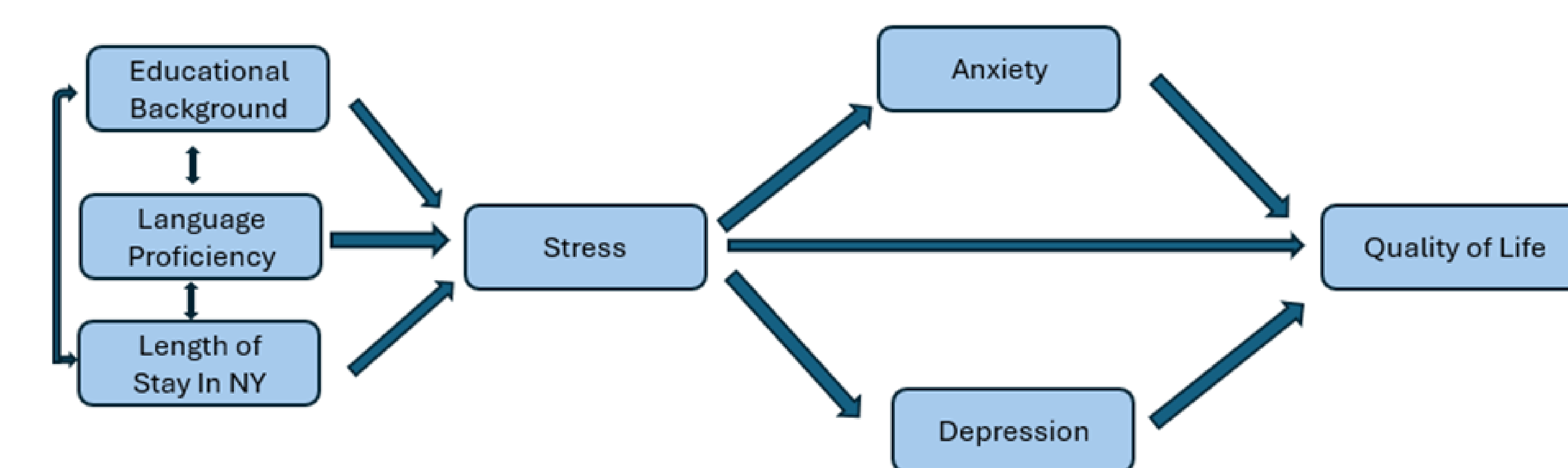
- Data was collected using validated instruments: DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety, Stress), DSES (Daily Spiritual Experience), Acculturation Scale, and WHOQOL-BREF (Quality of Life).
- Statistical analysis will include correlations and path analysis, in order to examine how demographics, acculturative stress, and coping mechanisms relate to mental health.

## Data Collection

Announcements and flyers will be distributed within local Chinese communities and nonprofit organizations including Chinese Churches. QR codes and links to online surveys will also be posted on the SBH Facebook page and hard copy announcements in Chinese and English will be printed and posted.

Qualtrics will be used to input the demographic form and four assessment tools for the online surveys. Surveys will be conducted anonymously to ensure the privacy and safety of undocumented immigrants

Path analysis looking at Stress (DASS-21), Anxiety (DASS-21), Depression (DASS-21), and pertinent subscales of Quality of Life (WHOQOL-BREF).



## Potential Results

We hope the data gathered will show the relationships between undocumented UCIs' length of stay in the USA, language proficiency, educational background, stress, anxiety, depression, and quality of life. Those with lower English proficiency, recent migration, and financial struggles report worse mental health outcomes. Acculturative stress mediates the relationship between demographic factors and mental health. Interestingly, higher-educated UCI report greater stress due to unmet expectations. However, individuals with longer residency and stronger English skills demonstrate greater psychological resilience.

## Conclusion

UCI in NYC face significant post-pandemic mental health disparities. This study highlights the importance of culturally attuned interventions, improved healthcare access, and enhanced community support. Findings offer critical insight for policymakers and practitioners to address psychological distress and bolster resilience in this underserved population.

