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Structural equation modeling of male/female hand washing behaviors during the A (H1N1) pandemic influenza in 2009-2010

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In 2009, health authorities identified a rapid augment in the number of an acute respiratory infection combined with pneumonia in Mexico. This unexpected increase was recognized as a new type of influenza: A (H1N1). This study was aimed to develop structural equation modeling of Costa Rican male and female handwashing behaviors during the 2009-2010 A (H1N1) pandemic influenza. Study was part of the CARE Project, a broader research on A (H1N1) influenza led by the University of Konstanz, in Germany and with the collaboration of the Distance State University of Costa Rica. Data collection coincided with the first and the second wave of the “swine-flu” pandemic in Costa Rica. In 2009, N=428 respondents (65% females, 35% males; Mage=33 years) fully completed the questionnaires. In 2010, a randomized sample of n=97 (75% females, 25% males; Mage=36 years) filled out the questionnaires at the second measurement point. A set of structural equation models, implemented with LISREL, revealed that a different social cognitive pattern in reaction to A (H1N1) pandemic emerged from analyses between males and females. While the effects of risk perception/self-efficacy on handwashing behaviors were fully mediated by hand washing intentions in females in the male group, self-efficacy influenced both directly and indirectly on hand washing behaviors and risk perceptions showed no significant effect on handwashing behaviors. As for long-term effects, it was found that handwashing behaviors at Time 1 (2009) had a significant effect on handwashing behavior at Time 2 (2010). However, 2009 risk perception, self-efficacy and handwashing intentions did not yield significant effects on 2010 handwashing behavior. Results are discussed in light of new advances of the Health Action Process Approach (HAPA-model) developed by Ralf Schwarzer. Applications of HAPA-model in the adoption and maintenance of precautionary actions facing both A (H1N1) and seasonal influenza are also discussed.

Biography

Benicio Gutiérrez-Doña received his PhD in Health Psychology (Behavioral Medicine equivalently) from the Freie Universitaet Berlin, in Germany. He has also conducted Post-doctoral research studies at the Freie Universitaet Berlin and Konstanz University, both in Germany. His Doctoral and Post-Doctoral research studies were fully sponsored by The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). He currently works as full time research Professor of Psychological Sciences at The Distance State University of Costa Rica. His main research interests are health psychology and behavioral medicine.

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