

DEPRESSION, SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AND HEALTH IN LATER LIFE: USING STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING APPROACH

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Purpose: Depression is a common mental illness that can affect the life of older people. Depressive symptoms are often associated with poor functioning (e.g., cognitive functioning and activities of daily living), poor health perception, and a low sense of well-being in old age. A number of studies found that having no or rare social engagements and activities were associated with deeper depression, leading to a poor quality of life. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between social engagements and health and depression among older people using the Structural Equation Modeling approach. Method: A random sample of non-institutionalized individuals aged 65 and older from Taipei (76 males, 88 females) completed questions including the Center for Epidemiologic Studies of Depression Scale (CES-D), the Barthel Index, the IADL scale, self-rated health, self-morale, participating in any organization, and pursuing any leisure activity. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to validate the fitness of the conceptual framework and observed data. Results: The final model was considered meaningful. The statistical goodness-of-fit of the model and its empirical outcome was very good; the chi-square value (5.177) was low, CFI, NFI, GFI, and AGFI values were greater than 0.9, and RMSEA value was .000. Results indicated that older people with more social engagements and activities had significantly eased the depression and increased morale. Conclusions: These results suggest that enhancing and/or maintaining social engagements and carrying out activities of daily living can have considerable benefits for improving depression and increasing morale among older people.