

ROLE OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIP IN ASSOCIATION BETWEEN LOWER EXTREMITY MOBILITY LIMITATION AND DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AMONG CHINESE ELDERLY

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Abstract. Lower extremity mobility limitation, a common mild physical impairment among the elderly, is commonly associated with depressive symptoms. The present study used a stress-buffering model to explore the extent to which family relationships buffer effects of physical impairments on older adults' mental health. Both univariate and multivariate analyses were performed to examine gender difference in the buffering role of family relationships obtained from the 2015 China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS) of respondents ≥ 60 years of age. Among elderly married women, spousal relationship satisfaction had significant buffering effect on depressive symptoms; however, children relationship satisfaction aggravated the detrimental effects of physical limitation on psychological health. No buffering effect of family relation was found among elderly married men. In conclusion, gender difference is evident in the buffering effect of family relationship among older married couples. Thus, it is important for health care professionals to consider the dynamics of family relationship and gender-specific features to develop effective strategies to promote health of physically impaired elderly men and women.

Keywords: buffering effect, depressive symptom, family relationship, lower extremity mobility limitation

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