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Abstract

**Social Support and Psychological Well-being among
Older Adults in Singapore**

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This paper examines the relationship between social support and psychological well-being among a representative sample of older Singaporeans aged 60 and above. Older adults who are married, have children, and who live with children are typically expected to have better psychological well-being in Asian societies. As a result Asian governments continue to implement policies promoting multigenerational living arrangements and filial piety. Recent research has found, however, that co-residence is not necessarily linked to better psychological well-being of older adults. Rather older adult psychological well-being is better predicted by how much help older parents give to their children (Chen and Silverstein 2000). This underscores the importance of two-way transfer flows and the active role that older parents play. Research exists for Japan, China, and Taiwan (Chen and Silverstein 2000; Yang, Silverstein, and Chang 2001; Takagi and Silverstein 2004), however, the results vary across cultural settings. Singapore provides a unique opportunity to test the relationship between social support and psychological well-being for three main ethnic groups, the Chinese, Malays and Indians. The data are from a nationally-representative sample of older Singaporeans (60+) who participated in a largely self-administered national mental health survey in 2002. Approximately 15% of older adults in Singapore report poor psychological health. Preliminary results suggest significant ethnic differences in psychological well-being with minorities reporting poorer psychological well-being compared to the Chinese majority. Living arrangements do not appear to be significantly linked to a higher probability of psychological well-being contrary to policy expectations.