TITLE: SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, LONELINESS, AND DEPRESSION AMONG OLDER ADULTS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY IN SPAIN.

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BACKGROUND.

Depression is a key issue during ageing. In Europe, depression is more prevalent among people aged over 64 years than among other age groups (Arias-de la Torre et al., 2021). Depression decreases quality of life for older adults (Wels, 2020) and increases the risk of deterioration of health and functionality (Curran et al., 2020). The existing literature has confirmed the significance of socioeconomic status (SES) for mental health among older adults.

The association between socioeconomic status and depression is weaker in older adults than in younger populations. Loneliness may play a significant role in this relationship, explaining (at least partially) the attenuation of the social gradient in depression. The current study examined the relationship between socioeconomic status and depression and whether the association was affected by loneliness.

METHODS.

This poster was conducted within the framework of an R&D + I research project (Ref. PID2020-115993RB-I00) entitled "Loneliness and well-being of older people in Spain: COVID 19 and social support networks in times of uncertainty". A cross-sectional design involving dwelling and nursing homes residents was used. A total of 887 Spanish residents aged over 64 years took part in the study. Measures of Depression (GDS-5 Scale), Loneliness (De Jong-Gierveld Loneliness Scale), Socioeconomic Status (Education and Economic Hardship), and sociodemographic parameters were used. The study employed bivariate association tests (chi-square and Pearson's r) and logistic regression analyses..

RESULTS.

The percentage of participants at risk of suffering depression was significantly higher among those who had not completed primary education (45.5%) and significantly lower among those with university qualifications (16.4%) (X^2=40.25;p<.001), and respondents who could not make ends meet in financial terms faced a higher risk of depression (X^2=23.62;p<.001). In terms of the respondents who experienced loneliness, 57.5% were at risk of depression, compared to 19% of those who did not report loneliness (X^2=120.04;p<.001). The logistic regression analyses showed that having university qualifications meant a 47% reduction in the risk of depression. This risk was 86% higher among respondents experiencing financial difficulties. However, when scores for the loneliness measure were incorporated, the coefficients relating to education and economic hardships ceased to be significant or were significantly reduced.

	Model 1. Control variables		Model 2. Socioeconomic Status (SES)		Model 3. Loneliness		Model 4. Interaction SES and Loneliness (Education)		Model 5. Interaction SES and Loneliness (Economic Harships)	
	B (DE)	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**	**B (SE)**	**Exp(B)**
Sex (Female)	.29(.18)	1.335	.09(.19)	1.101	.21(.19)	1.238	.20(.20)	1.230	.20(.20)	1.231
Age	.01(.01)	1.015	-.006(.01)	.994	.001(.01)	1.001	.001(.01)	1.001	.001(.01)	1.001
No children	.45(.21)*	1.568	.20(.23)	1.225	.01(.24)	1.015	-.001(.24)	.999	-.004(.24)	.996
Limitation on ADL (reference: not limited)										
Limited	1.35(.19)***	3.865	1.26(.19)***	3.526	1.14(.20)***	3.142	1.17(.20)***	3.244	1.17(.20)***	3.239
Strongly limited	2.16(.27)***	8.689	1.97(.28)***	7.168	1.81(.29)***	6.154	1.87(.30)***	6.515	1.87(.30)***	6.517
Education (reference: incomplete primary)										
Primary			-.33(.21)	.719	-.28(.22)	.754	.07(.28)	1.075	.06(.29)	1.072
Secondary			-.27(.30)	.759	-.14(.31)	.864	.18(.38)	1.200	.17(.39)	1.188
University			-.65(.32)**	.522	-.45(.33)	.634	-.25(.40)	.778	-.26(.40)	.769
Economic harships			.62(.19)***	1.861	.41(.20)*	1.511	.42(.21)*	1.523	.39(.26)	1.478
Living arrangement (reference: living alone)										
Living with partner			-.57(.20)**	.565	-.38(.21)†	.679	-.40(.21)†	.667	-.40(.21)†	.668
Nursing home			.71(.24)**	2.035	.61(.25)*	1.843	.62(.25)*	1.860	.62(.25)*	1.862
Loneliness					1.40(.20)***	4.083	2.02(.37)***	7.584	1.98(.42)***	7.310
Interactions Education (reference: primary incomplete)										
Primary*Loneliness							-.95(.47)*	.386	-.94(.47)*	.389
Secondary*Loneliness							-.90(.65)	.404	-.89(.65)	.409
University *Loneliness							-.48(.69)	.616	-.45(.71)	.636
Economic harship* Loneliness									.07(.42)	1.081
Constant	-3.24 (.80)***	.039	-1.16(.98)	.313	-2.19 (1.05)*	.111	-2.39 (.1.06)*	.091	2.38(1.06)†	.092
Cox & Snell R^2	.132***		.174***		.224***		.228		.228	
Nagelkerke R^2	.190***		.251***		.323***		.329		.330	

***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05; †p<.10; Exp(B)=Odds Ratio; SE=Standard Error

CONCLUSION.

Loneliness can contribute to explaining the role played by socioeconomic inequalities in depression among older adults. Social intervention in the field of loneliness is one of the great challenges for Gerontological Social Work and this study shows that its approach has to contemplate socio-demographic, relational and community aspects (Gallardo-Peralta et al., 2023).

References

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