

Peer Review Report

Review Report on Determinants of mental health inequalities among people with selected citizenships in Germany

Original Article, Int J Public Health

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EVALUATION

Q 1 Please summarize the main findings of the study.

The results underscored the sociodemographic, psychosocial, and migration-related determinants associated with an increase in depression and anxiety. The findings showed that depression and anxiety were more prevalent among females, younger participants, individuals living in single-person households, those experiencing lower social support, individuals with low or medium income, and those who had experienced discrimination.

Moreover, individuals who have lived in Germany since birth exhibited a higher prevalence of depressive symptoms, whereas those with a residence duration of up to 10 years showed a higher prevalence of anxious symptoms compared to individuals with other durations of stay.

Q 2 Please highlight the limitations and strengths.

Strengths:

- Identification of various sociodemographic psychosocial, and migration-related determinants
- Examination of the associations between these determinants and mental health outcomes

Limitations:

- Sample composition
- Overlapping of the concepts assessed by GAD-7 and PHQ-9
- Cross-sectional study
- Sample recruitment based on citizenship
- Interviewer bias

Q 3 Please provide your detailed review report to the authors. The editors prefer to receive your review structured in major and minor comments. Please consider in your review the methods (statistical methods valid and correctly applied (e.g. sample size, choice of test), is the study replicable based on the method description?), results, data interpretation and references. If there are any objective errors, or if the conclusions are not supported, you should detail your concerns.

Overall comment:

The paper addresses a very interesting topic and is well-structured and well-written. However, the introduction lacks clarity in presenting the hypotheses, and the identification of the knowledge gap(s) is not sufficiently described. Here are some suggestions to improve the paper.

Minor revisions:

The methods are clear and well-structured too. However, the categorization of specific occurrences of interpersonal discrimination under 'psychosocial determinants' is questionable, it makes more sense to include them under the 'migration-related determinants' to me.

Major revisions:

Introduction:

- The preliminary assumptions are not described in the introduction. What were the specific expectations? For instance, were you anticipating a negative association between being a woman and mental health disorders? Additionally, the association between younger age and mental health disorders is well-documented in previous research. It is important to clearly articulate how this study contributes to the existing literature. Has there been prior research conducted on this topic in Germany? If so, what distinguishes this study and what novel insights does it offer?

Results:

- The results are well-described.
- Figure 1 is very clear.
- The table layout could be improved by removing vertical border lines. Also, as the subtotal changes for each variable, it is a bit too much information and hard to read. Have you considered conducting a complete case analysis, focusing on participants with information on the dependent variable (GAD-7 and PHQ-9) only? If so, did the results change significantly? Additionally, are the dropout rates randomly distributed? It may be beneficial to clean the dataset and maintain a consistent total N for all variables.

Discussion:

- 'The prevalence of depressive symptoms was found to be lower in a representative sample of the general population in Germany in 2020 (7.6%) compared to our results'. It would be valuable to discuss why your sample showed a higher prevalence. How were depressive symptoms assessed in the study you compared with? Similarly, for symptoms of anxiety disorder, an explanation or hypothesis is needed to address the inconsistency with your results.

- 'Furthermore, our analyses revealed a positive connection between living alone and mental disorders.': To clarify, specify the nature of this relationship. It seems counterintuitive that living alone would have a positive connection with mental disorders, so it's important to be more specific.

- 'Our participants most often reported discrimination based on their origin, accent, language, appearance, or name (data not shown), which is in line with research on racial discrimination and its association with mental health (35).':

Regarding discrimination, it's important not to introduce new results in the discussion. Additionally, the term 'racial discrimination' may not be appropriate when discussing discrimination based on language, accent, origin, and name. This concept does not align with the definition of 'Race' which is mainly defined by the physical characteristics of people. Therefore, the literature chosen may be not the most suitable. It might be more accurate to refer to 'ethnic' or 'racial and ethnic' discrimination. In any case, consider defining these terms clearly in the introduction and perhaps moving this paragraph under 'Migration-related determinants of mental disorders' section for coherence, as it addresses racial/ethnic discrimination related to the migration background of the participants. Furthermore, since this paragraph discusses the impact of discrimination on migrant health, it would be more appropriate under the aforementioned section.

- The statement 'The relationship between social support and mental health is well known' lacks references to support this claim.

- 'Further analyses are therefore necessary to examine the observed effects and differences in the present sample in relation to the co-factors described here.': Specify the types of analyses and propose future research directions to better understand these associations.

Strengths and limitations:

- The emphasis on the strengths of the research is insufficient. There is a lack of connection between the identified knowledge gap in the literature in the introduction and how this research aims to address it.

- 'Furthermore, GEDA Fokus was a cross-sectional study, therefore no causal explanations on the interrelationship between mental health outcomes and the determinants investigated are possible.': Can you discuss the implications of this limitation.

- 'Hence generalizability of our results is restricted. Also, due to our mixed-mode design, interviewer bias was possible, in particular with sensitive topics like mental health experiences of discrimination.' Can you elaborate on how interviewer bias might have impacted your results and what would have been expected without this bias?

Conclusion:

- 'To reduce mental health inequalities, social inequities and everyday discrimination need to be addressed because they can hinder participation, for instance, in health care or the labour market, which can have a great impact on symptoms of depression and anxiety disorder.' : Can you add references to support this statement and expand on the impact of discrimination on social integration, education, income, etc. that are even more relevant among the migrant population, I guess. Additionally, this finding is one of the main outcomes of your study, and in my opinion, it warrants more thorough discussion. It should be a central focus in your discussion section rather than solely in the conclusion.

- 'Hence, it is necessary that these services are multilingual, available close to home, and that they are sufficiently known about.': Can you provide references for this?

- 'In addition, promoting protective factors, such as social support, can help to reduce the risk of mental disorders.': Can you provide references for this?

- 'One group that should be considered in particular are people living in single-person households, who reported more symptoms of depression and anxiety disorder in our sample.' : Can you provide examples of recommendations for interventions targeting individuals in single-person households, along with some references to previous research or programs, would offer practical insights for addressing mental health challenges in this vulnerable group of people.

PLEASE COMMENT

Q 4 Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?

Yes, the title is good.

Q 5 Are the keywords appropriate?

Keywords are appropriate. additionally, I would include 'Migrants' and 'Ethnic minorities' to ensure the inclusion of specific audiences interested in these results.

Q 6 Is the English language of sufficient quality?

The English language used was of sufficient quality.

Q 7 Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?

Yes.

Q 8 Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?)

The reference list seems to cover the relevant literature, although some suggestions have been made to add references (see the review report)

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Q 9 Originality

Q 10 Rigor

Q 11 Significance to the field

Q 12 Interest to a general audience

Q 13 Quality of the writing

Q 14 Overall scientific quality of the study

REVISION LEVEL

Q 15 Please make a recommendation based on your comments:

Minor revisions.