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AGEING AND DEPRESSION: SENSE OF PURPOSE, SELF-EFFICACY, VALUES AND SELF-ESTEEM AS PROTECTIVE FACTORS

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One of the greatest social and economic challenges of the twenty-first century is the projected cost of looking after the increased numbers of elderly people. By 2056 Australia's population is projected to increase to between 31 - 43 million people, with around 23% to 25% being 65 years or older (Attorney-General's Department, 2010). Old age can present many challenges; the most obvious and documented is the decline in physical health. The aim of this study was investigate the role of; a sense of purpose, self-efficacy, sense of value and self-worth in predicting symptoms of depression in older adults. It was hypothesised that after 55 years of age, an increase in meaning in life would be dependent on having a sense of purpose, self-efficacy, sense of value, self-esteem and how these factors affect self-reported symptoms of depression. The participants were 114 Australian men and women over 55 years of age who were recruited from an older adult's education group, S.A.G.E (Successful Ageing for Growth and Enjoyment). The participant's mental health and depressive symptomatology were assessed using the following questionnaires; Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MILQ), Causal Uncertainty Scale (CUS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES), Purpose in Life Scale (PIL), Geriatric Depression Scale-Short Form (GDS-SF), and the Short Schwartz's Value Survey (SSVS). The results showed that high levels of self-reported depressive symptomatology were associated significantly with a lack of meaning in participant's lives. The results also illustrated the significant negative association between depressive symptomatology and levels of a sense of purpose, self-efficacy, worth and a sense of value. The study provides strong evidence for building meaning, a sense of purpose, self-efficacy, a sense of one's values and self-esteem in older adults as a prevention or treatment for depression.

Biography

Julijana Chochovski is a Clinical Psychologist Registrar and is the head of research programs and Development for the Cairnmillar Institute. Educated at Monash University and the Cairnmillar Institute, she has many years of experience in working with psychological disorders in adults. Julijana's broad research experience ranges from understanding the neurological impact of depression and moods, coupled with her current clinical research projects focusing on the therapeutic treatment and needs of older adults.

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