

The Relationship Between Age and People's Attitudes and Understanding of Depression

Zhan Su

*Beijing Huijia Private School, Beijing, China
3124831428@qq.com*

Abstract: In today's society, depression has become a psychological issue that cannot be ignored. According to the "2023 Blue Book on Mental Health in China", the number of depression patients in China has reached 95 million, of which over 28 million are under the age of 18, accounting for 30.28% of the total. However, many parents lack sufficient awareness of depression. In order to explore the relationship between people's age and their understanding and attitude towards depression, this study analyzed questionnaire data from 280 participants of different age groups and found that with advancing age, elderly individuals tend to view depression patients as posing a higher risk, while society places greater value on them. The results of this study are applicable to the varying social preferences observed in mental health education among individuals of diverse age groups. Additionally, these conclusions can function as supplementary information in the context of clinical psychotherapy.

Keywords: depression, age difference, social influence

1. Introduction

In today's society, depression has become a psychological issue that cannot be ignored. In accordance with the "2023 Blue Book of Mental Health in China", the quantity of individuals with depression in China has attained 95 million. Among them, more than 28 million are under the age of 18, constituting 30.28 percent of the overall sum. However, many parents lack sufficient awareness of depression. In order to explore the relationship between people's age and their understanding and attitude towards depression, this study analyzed questionnaire data from 280 participants of different age groups and found that with an increase in age, they think people with depression are more dangerous and think society values them more.

2. Literature review

Depression has emerged as a prominent global public health concern. Comprehending the public's perspectives and comprehension regarding depression is essential for enhancing mental health services and diminishing stigma. Multiple studies have delved into diverse aspects associated with this subject, with age constituting a significant variable of interest. Connery and Davidson [1] endeavored to examine the public's stances towards depression. The outcomes manifested notable disparities in attitudes between the young and the elderly, as well as between genders. Their research employed a Bayesian questionnaire and factor analysis to ascertain three principal themes linked to

depressive attitudes. Jang et al. [2] probed the attitudes of Korean Americans of varying ages towards mental health services. By utilizing Andersen's behavioral model, they determined that both young and old individuals possess comparable levels of favorable attitudes towards mental health services. The study also implies that specific beliefs about depression correlate with more adverse attitudes among the older population. Phillips et al. [3] carried out an epidemiological survey in four Chinese provinces, disclosing the prevalence, treatment, and associated disabilities of mental disorders, inclusive of depression. Their research data can assist in comparing the circumstances in different regions and grasping the backdrop of age-related attitudes towards depression. Nordt et al. [4] compared public attitudes toward people with schizophrenia and major depression without professional training. They found similarities and differences in these attitudes. The experiment by Brown and Barlow [5] offers a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between depression and other related psychological disorders. This framework can facilitate the analysis of how age affects the understanding of depression within a broader mental health context. It permits a more comprehensive examination of whether age-related attitude differences are exclusive to depression or part of a more prevalent pattern associated with psychological disorders. These studies assist us in understanding the multifarious attitudes of social groups and their understanding of depression. The present work aims to investigate the relationship between age and people's attitudes and understanding of depression, and formulate more targeted intervention and treatment strategies for different social groups.

3. Method

We designed a questionnaire which was divided into four parts, including: background information of the subjects, sources and frequency of the information about depression, subjects' understanding of depression and subjects' attitude towards depression. And most of them are presented in the form of scales, which is convenient for subjects to answer and subsequent data statistics. We found people online, distributed questionnaires through social media, and told them that this was a study of popular perceptions of depression. Using software that allows us to receive anonymous answers after subjects submit them, we collected answers from 280 subjects over three days.

4. Result

Table 1: ANOVA test for correlation between age and attitude

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
12. To what extent do you think people with depression are dangerous?	Between Groups	5.708	2	2.854	5.145	0.006
	Within Groups	153.663	277	0.555		
	Groups Total	159.371	279			
	Total	159.371	279			
13. To what extent do you think society values people with depression?	Between Groups	11.758	2	5.879	10.262	0
	Within Groups	158.685	277	0.573		
	Groups Total	170.443	279			
	Total	170.443	279			

Table 2: ANOVA test for correlation between age and attitude

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
12. To what extent do you think people with depression are dangerous?	1	2	-.279	0.124	0.025	-0.52	-0.03
		3	-.356	0.112	0.002	-0.58	-0.14
	2	1	.279	0.124	0.025	0.03	0.52
		3	-0.078	0.105	0.461	-0.28	0.13
	3	1	.356	0.112	0.002	0.14	0.58
		2	0.078	0.105	0.461	-0.13	0.28
13. To what extent do you think society values people with depression?	1	2	-.365	0.126	0.004	-0.61	-0.12
		3	-.515	0.114	0	-0.74	-0.29
	2	1	.365	0.126	0.004	0.12	0.61
		3	-0.15	0.107	0.162	-0.36	0.06
	3	1	.515	0.114	0	0.29	0.74
		2	0.15	0.107	0.162	-0.06	0.36

With an increase in age, they think people with depression are more dangerous and think society values them more.

Table 3: T-test for correlation between frequency and attitude

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
12. To what extent do you think people with depression are dangerous?	1	2	-.279	0.124	0.025	-0.52	-0.03
		3	-.356	0.112	0.002	-0.58	-0.14
	2	1	.279	0.124	0.025	0.03	0.52
		3	-0.078	0.105	0.461	-0.28	0.13
	3	1	.356	0.112	0.002	0.14	0.58
		2	0.078	0.105	0.461	-0.13	0.28
13. To what extent do you think society values people with depression?	1	2	-.365	0.126	0.004	-0.61	-0.12
		3	-.515	0.114	0	-0.74	-0.29
	2	1	.365	0.126	0.004	0.12	0.61
		3	-0.15	0.107	0.162	-0.36	0.06
	3	1	.515	0.114	0	0.29	0.74
		2	0.15	0.107	0.162	-0.06	0.36

With an increase in the frequency of topics on depression every day, they think society values them more and are more willing to help.

5. Discussion

5.1. Implications

The findings of this experiment have significant implications for understanding society's view of depression. The older people think that depression is more dangerous and more valued by the society, which can reflect the real social phenomenon, so as to better help the society to improve the overall behavior and help the older group to change their incorrect views and attitudes towards depression.

5.2. Limitations

The limitations of the experiment is the bias of the subjects. Most of the participants were from Beijing, all Chinese, and their degrees were mostly below university level, with more women (79%) than men (21%). This will lead to bias in the results of the experiment, because the region is single, so the results of the experiment cannot be generalized to all people. Since 27% of the subjects graduated from junior high school, 49% graduated from senior high school, and 24% graduated from college or above, the results cannot represent the average level of most people in the society, so it is difficult to extend the results to people with college education or above. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited by these factors.

5.3. Future direction

For future replication, we should avoid the deviation of the subject data and measure more subjects from different regions, countries and educational backgrounds. And it could improve the way people measure their attitudes toward depression, because some people may not fill out questionnaires carefully, or they may not know exactly what they're thinking.

6. Conclusion

The objective of this research was to investigate the correlation between age and individuals' perspectives on, as well as their comprehension of, depression. By examining questionnaire responses from 280 participants, the study revealed that as age increases, people are more likely to perceive depression patients as posing a higher risk and believe that society holds them in greater esteem. Furthermore, frequent daily exposure to depression-related subjects was linked to an enhanced perception of society's valuation of depression patients and an increased inclination to offer assistance. A notable contribution of this study is that its findings facilitate the provision of tailored mental health education and support for depression patients across various age groups. The primary emphasis of this work lies in examining the societal perceptions and attitudes towards depression among individuals of diverse age brackets. Future research should delve deeper into the intricate relationship between age and attitudes towards depression.

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