

World Congress on

Health and Medical Sociology

September 19-20, 2016 Las Vegas, USA

MECHANISM UNDERLYING PATHWAYS AMONG SOCIAL SUPPORT MESSAGE QUALITY, SOCIAL SUPPORT SATISFACTION, AND DEPRESSION WITH ACCULTURATION AS A MEDIATOR

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Social support is recognized as essential for mental health, offering effective assistance to buffer negative effects of life stress. This study examines the relationships among social support message quality, support satisfaction, and depression in college students in the U.S. The demographic profiles of US universities have undergone a rapid change with a large increasing number of international students with the heightened risk of depression. International students who are low acculturated may be marginalized from the mainstream and receive limited support while facing academic, social, and financial difficulties. Thus the study further examines the above relationships amongst them and tests the mediating effect of acculturation on the relationship between support quality and depression. Participants were 631 undergraduate students in a Midwest university. Data was analyzed using structural equation modeling. In the overall sample, the study showed that (1) more helpful and sensitive support messages contributed to a higher level of support satisfaction, in turn, (2) more satisfaction led to fewer depressive symptoms; in the meantime, (3) higher quality of support messages (helpful and sensitive) reduced depressive symptoms. In international students, (4) more helpful and sensitive support messages were related to more satisfaction with social support and (5) associated with a lower level of depression; and (6) acculturation mediated the effect of support quality on depression. Intervention programs focusing on improving quality of the supportive networks and increasing support satisfaction would strengthen the protective effect of social support on reducing depression. The results call for culturally adapted interventions that would help international students negotiate depression.

Biography

Lan Jin has been graduated from the Master's program in the Department of Consumer Science at Purdue University. Currently she is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Consumer Science at Purdue University and an MPH student in the Public Health Program at Purdue University. Her research focuses on the mental health promotion, social support, and health-related behavior change, particularly on mental health of minorities and health disparities.

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