

Explaining the Impact of Poverty Risk on Frailty Trajectories in Old Age Using Growth Curve Models

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Abstract : Research has often found poverty associated with adverse health outcomes, but it is unclear which (interplay of) mechanisms actually translate low economic resources into poor physical health. The goal of this study was to assess the impact of educational, material, psychosocial and behavioural factors in explaining the poverty-health association in old age. We analysed 28,360 observations from 11,390 community-dwelling respondents (65+) from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE, 2004-2013, 10 countries). We used multilevel growth curve models to assess the impact of combined income- and asset poverty risk on old age frailty index levels and trajectories. In total, 61.8% of the variation of poverty risk on frailty levels could be explained by direct and indirect effects, thereby highlighting the role of material and particularly psychosocial factors, such as perceived control and social isolation. We suggest strengthening social policy and public health efforts in order to fight poverty and its deleterious effects from early age on and to broaden the scope of interventions with regard to psychosocial factors.

Keywords : frailty, health inequality, old age, poverty

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