

The influence of early life socioeconomic factors and health status on disease risk and morbidity in adulthood: Findings from the Cloister Study

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Short Abstract

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the role of early life characteristics for health in adulthood. We add to the research in this field by investigating the long-term influences of childhood conditions on health decades later in the subpopulation of Catholic order members. They are special as they have different childhood experiences, but a close similarity of adult lives (quasi-experimental design). The monastery population is more homogenous than the general population regarding many health-relevant factors, for instance lifestyles, daily routines, and living conditions. Thus, the impact of the variation in environmental, socioeconomic and behavioral factors in adulthood on health —we would usually find in a population—is reduced to a minimum by means of the setting. For minor individual differences we control for by including corresponding variables into the analyses. The data stems from the first wave of the Health Survey of German-Austrian Cloister Study in 2012 (n=1.158) and a series of multivariate regression models will be applied. To take into account the multidimensionality of health, different measures ranging from rather global (e.g. items of the Minimum European Health Module) to more specific indicators, e.g. for cardiometabolic health (BMI, blood pressure, diabetes etc.) and certain diseases (respiratory diseases, cancer, osteoporosis etc.) will be considered. The results are expected to provide further insights into the independent and rather ‘direct’ effects of adverse conditions in childhood on adult health.

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