Reciprocal Relations Between Stress, Socio-Economic Risk Factors and Psychological Well-Being in the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP)

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Abstract

**Objective:** This study examines the reciprocal relations between socio-economic variables and perceived stress with psychological well-being in the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), a large community sample representative for an adult population in a rich western country. **Methods:** Using 63,839 participants (33,155 females) from the SOEP, hybrid regression analysis is implemented to distinguish the impact of within- and between-subject variation in perceived stress and socio-economic factors on psychological well-being, assessed with the Short Form 12 Health Survey (SF12). Fixed effects regression is used to account for the analysis of potential reciprocal effects of psychological well-being on stress and socio-economic variables. Linear regression is used to emphasize the reciprocity of the relationship between stress and psychological well-being by testing time delayed effects on each other. **Results:** Primarily subjective stress and particular potential socio-economic risk factors significantly affect psychological well-being in both men and women. Men are susceptible to overall health, unemployment, relationship status, separation and death of a close relative. Women are susceptible to age and the number of children additionally. Years of education and income have no significant effect on psychological well-being, but individuals with higher equivalent income show better psychological well-being. Psychological well-being, in turn, causes a decline in perceived stress and a rise in socio-economic status for both men and women. **Conclusions:** This longitudinal study is the first to demonstrate and confirm the reciprocal and causal characteristics of frequently investigated relationships between psychological well-being and stress as well as socio-economic variables. Prospects for future interdisciplinary research are presented.

**Key words:** psychological well-being, stress, socio-economic variables, SOEP