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PREVENTIVE HEALTH IN A CHANGING WORLD

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND HEALTH COMMUNICATION IN SINGAPORE

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Background

Social capital is a collective characteristic of communities that determines the health and well-being of populations. Social capital theorists have argued that these resources make people healthier and provide support in difficult times. There is ample evidence supporting the link between social capital and health; however, little is known about the relationship between social capital and health information/communication behaviours. Our study aimed to investigate the relationships between multiple components of social capital and health communication in Singaporean adults aged 21 years and above.

Methods

Cross-sectional data ($N = 1,012$) were collected from the Singapore Population Health Studies (SPHS) Online Panel. Three main outcome variables assessing health communication behaviours in the past 12 months were: 1) health information seeking and interpersonal communication about health and medical topics 2) with family members and 3) with friends and co-workers. Two dimensions of social capital were assessed: structural dimension (community participation) and cognitive dimension (community cohesion). Multivariate regression analyses were performed to assess the association between social capital and health communication behaviours.

Results

The regression analyses identified that community participation and community cohesion were significant predictors of health information seeking. The analyses also indicated that community cohesion and trust in health information from family members were significantly associated with interpersonal communication with family members. However, there were no significant relationships between the two dimensions of social capital and interpersonal communication with friends and co-workers.

Conclusion

The findings have important implications for community-based health interventions and social policies to strengthen community participation and cohesion.