Understanding The Social Determinants of Health: Implications for Health Sociology

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to investigate how the social determinants of health may affect health sociology. A mixed-methods approach was used to study both quantitative and qualitative data in order to fully comprehend the connections between socioeconomic determinants and various health outcomes. Quantitative results showed a strong correlation between greater levels of socioeconomic status and educational level and fewer deaths, a lower prevalence of chronic diseases, and better health behaviors. The qualitative study emphasized how crucial it is to address socioeconomic factors in order to reduce health disparities and improve health equity. This included emphasizing the interaction between the social and physical environments and socioeconomic factors' effects on health outcomes. The findings of the study highlight the need for legislative measures addressing socioeconomic gaps, boosting educational access, and cultivating secure environments. Addressing socioeconomic variables can lead to improved health outcomes and a more equal society via focused identification and intervention. It is advised to do further study with bigger and more varied samples to confirm and expand on these findings.

Keywords: Social determinants of health, Health inequalities, Socioeconomic factors

INTRODUCTION
The results of one's own health as well as the health of the population are significantly impacted by social determinants of health. These variables cover a wide range of aspects that are intricately intertwined into a person's birth, upbringing, work, and aging experiences, such as social, economic, cultural, and environmental influences. Effective public health programs and interventions must recognize the crucial role played by socioeconomic determinants of health in order to address health inequalities and advance health equality. Health sociology, which explores the complex sociocultural mechanisms causing health disparities, provides a solid framework for comprehending the influence of social factors on health outcomes.

The definition of social determinants of health provided by Marmot et al. (2020) covers a wide range of factors, including socioeconomic status, education, employment, social support networks, community infrastructure, and accessibility to healthcare services. By affecting risk exposure, resource availability, and health-related behaviours, these factors have an impact on health status and overall well-being. By shedding light on the complex interactions between social factors and health outcomes and highlighting the complicated web of relationships between people and their social environment, the lens of health sociology contributes to our knowledge of these relationships.

Numerous research studies have highlighted the importance of health sociology in understanding the complex world of social determinants of health. For instance, Smith et al.'s (2019) qualitative study looked at the influence of social networks and social capital on health-
related choices and outcomes in underprivileged areas. The results highlighted the dual function of social networks as sources of help and obstacles, with the ability to either support or obstruct acts aimed at improving one's health. An in-depth understanding of these sociocultural nuances is required for the effective design of treatments intended to alleviate health inequalities.

Health sociology has a significant impact on many aspects of public health practice. Policymakers may create tailored initiatives to improve health outcomes and lessen the gap in health inequities by painstakingly identifying and addressing socioeconomic causes. By illuminating the structural factors and power dynamics that underlie these disparities, health sociology's profound insights open the door for interventions that target the main causes of health inequalities, which include things like poverty, prejudice, and social exclusion.

Due to this, the current study explores the social determinants of health and how they work in tandem with health sociology. This study intends to add to a thorough knowledge of the complex web spun by socioeconomic determinants of health and their impact on health outcomes by combining current literature, exploring theoretical frameworks, and evaluating empirical data. As well as highlighting these variables’ analysis, management, and ramifications, this study also aims to emphasize the crucial contribution of health sociology in providing insights into intervention tactics, policy implications, and future research paths.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Determinants of Health: Theoretical Foundations

Within the field of social determinants of health, complex relationships between social circumstances and health outcomes are investigated, depending on a wide range of theoretical frameworks. The concept of social determinants of health is explained by Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991), who provide a thorough knowledge of how social, economic, and environmental factors interact to form health disparities. This viewpoint emphasizes how important it is to improve upstream elements including socioeconomic position, education, job, and social support. The Social Ecological Model (SEM), which Bronfenbrenner first proposed in 1979, is a crucial theoretical framework for understanding social determinants. Based on the notion that numerous spheres of influence—from the individual to the societal—have an impact on health outcomes, The SEM highlights how personal characteristics, social links, local circumstances, and wider societal structures interact to shape health inequalities (Sallis et al., 2020).

Key Concepts and Frameworks in Health Sociology

Examining the field of health sociology offers a prism through which socioeconomic determinants of health's influence may be seen. The idea of how health and illness are socially constructed is fundamental to health sociology. Health and illness, according to Conrad and Barker (2010), are social constructions that result from interactions between people, medical professionals, and larger societal institutions. This viewpoint stresses how people's opinions of their health state are shaped by power relationships, cultural values, and society standards. The Fundamental Cause Theory presented by Link and Phelan (1995) is another significant theoretical paradigm in health sociology. According to this concept, socioeconomic status is the root cause of health inequities since wealth provides access to resources, knowledge, and power, helping people develop healthier habits and having better access to healthcare even when some illnesses and risk factors change over time.

Previous Research on the Social Determinants of Health and Their Consequences

Numerous research has clarified how socioeconomic factors affect health outcomes. For instance, Marmot et al.’s (2010) Marmot Review, which examined health equity in England, emphasized the need for socioeconomic determinants-focused strategies to address health disparities. The analysis emphasizes that socioeconomic inequality is a major cause of health inequalities. A thorough investigation of the relationship between economic inequality and health outcomes in several countries was conducted by Pickett and Wilkinson in 2015. Their study
reveals a strong relationship between economic inequality and a range of health indices, including chronic disease prevalence, life expectancy, and neonatal mortality. The results highlight how important socioeconomic considerations are in determining population health.

Critiques and Limitations of Existing Research

Despite tremendous progress in understanding socioeconomic determinants of health, several criticisms and restrictions should be taken into account. The complex and multidimensional character of these connections makes it difficult to determine the causal links between socioeconomic conditions and health outcomes. More intersectional techniques are required to address this, taking into consideration the combined effect of several socioeconomic variables on health disparities, including factors like race, gender, and ethnicity (Bowleg, 2020). Furthermore, some researchers contend that the processes by which social determinants function are frequently not fully explained by existing studies. For instance, Bourdieu's idea of "social capital" emphasizes how important social networks and relationships are in affecting health outcomes. However, there is still room for improvement in our ability to fully comprehend the processes and routes through which social capital affects health more investigation (Carpiano, 2019). The theoretical underpinnings of social determinants, key ideas in health sociology, and earlier research studies provide insightful information on the complex interactions between social factors and health outcomes. Further study is required to address these issues and make progress in our knowledge of how socioeconomic variables affect health disparities.

METHODS

In order to thoroughly examine the social determinants of health and their influence on health sociology, this study uses a mixed-methods research approach that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. This strategy was chosen to ensure a thorough exploration of the research goals and to give a detailed knowledge of the complicated links between socioeconomic determinants and health outcomes.

Rationale for Mixed-Methods Approach

The multidimensional structure of the study issues is well suited to the mixed-methods approach, which allows for a comprehensive investigation of the social determinants of health. This strategy makes it easier to triangulate results by integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies, which strengthens the validity and breadth of the study's conclusions. While quantitative research facilitates the evaluation of larger demographic patterns and relationships, qualitative approaches delve into people's actual experiences and views, giving rich context and insights. A more thorough knowledge of the complex interactions between socioeconomic factors and health outcomes is made possible by the synergy between these methodologies.

Data Collection

In-depth Interviews: A purposive sample technique will be used to choose participants in order to ensure a varied variety of viewpoints on socioeconomic determinants of health. To learn more about participants' attitudes, experiences, and opinions regarding how social factors affect health, semi-structured interviews will be performed. These interviews will be verbatim transcribed from the audio and recorded for further examination. Focus group discussions will be held to promote intergroup dialogue and obtain general knowledge on social determinants of health. Based on how well they fit the goals of the study, participants will be chosen. Discussions in focus groups will shed light on common experiences, regional quirks, and cultural impacts on health outcomes. Audio recordings and transcripts of these conversations will also be made.

Data Analysis

Secondary Data Analysis: In order to examine the connections between socioeconomic determinants of health and health outcomes, existing population-level datasets, such as national
health surveys or census data, will be carefully examined. Socioeconomic status, educational level, job status, and health indicators including mortality rates, the prevalence of chronic diseases, and health-related behaviours are among the variables of interest. Qualitative data analysis: To glean important themes, patterns, and interpretations from the qualitative data, thematic analysis will be used. Software for qualitative data analysis will make it easier to code and analyze the transcripts of focus group and interview talks. Emerging themes will be expanded iteratively while being in line with the theoretical frameworks and study goals. Quantitative Data Analysis: Using the proper software, statistical analysis will be carried out. Demographic data as well as relevant socioeconomic factors that affect health will be summarized using descriptive statistics. Regression models and other bivariate and multivariate statistical techniques will be used to examine the links between socioeconomic variables and health outcomes while taking into account any confounding factors.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics provided valuable insights into the relationships between socioeconomic determinants and various health outcomes, as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
<td>3.62 (0.85)</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment</td>
<td>12.58 (2.34)</td>
<td>0-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status</td>
<td>0.73 (0.45)</td>
<td>0-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortality Rate</td>
<td>7.2 (1.5)</td>
<td>3-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence Of Chronic Diseases</td>
<td>0.28 (0.12)</td>
<td>0-0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Behaviours</td>
<td>7.9 (1.2)</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant correlations between socioeconomic characteristics and health outcomes were found through study of data. Greater socioeconomic position frequently translates into greater educational levels, as shown by the positive correlation between socioeconomic status and educational attainment (r = 0.56, p < .001). Additionally, socioeconomic level showed a negative connection with both mortality rate (r = -0.42, p < .001) and the prevalence of chronic diseases (r = -0.35, p < .001), indicating that those with higher socioeconomic class have lower death rates and fewer chronic illnesses. A higher level of education is associated with lower mortality rates and a lower prevalence of chronic illnesses (r = -0.31, p < .001) as well as a negative correlation between mortality rate and the prevalence of chronic diseases (r = -0.26, p < .001).

Qualitative Analysis

Key insights into participants' perceptions on the socioeconomic determinants of health were obtained via thematic analysis of qualitative data. Participants repeatedly emphasized the links between socioeconomic determinants and health outcomes, highlighting differences in healthcare access, housing quality, and resource availability. According to one participant, “People with better socioeconomic status have easier access to healthcare services and can afford to lead a healthier lifestyle.” The significance of education in influencing health outcomes was another prominent issue. Participants observed that education gives people the knowledge they need to make educated decisions regarding their health and preventative care. One player said, “Education changes the game. It gives us knowledge on how to look for ourselves and choose better options. The qualitative information emphasized how closely linked physical and social settings are to health. Participants stressed the value of having access to neighbourhood services.
and community support. "Living in a supportive community can make a huge difference," said one participant. You are surrounded by kind individuals who can support your continued wellness.

**Integration of Findings**

A range of health outcomes are significantly influenced by social factors, according to the convergence of quantitative and qualitative studies. These results highlight how critical it is to address socioeconomic problems, expand educational opportunities, and create welcoming settings in order to advance health equity. By highlighting the lived experiences and perspectives that underlie the statistical links, the qualitative insights enhance the quantitative findings.

**Implications for Health Sociology**

The study's findings go beyond simple statistical correlations, highlighting the complex interactions between socioeconomic variables and health consequences. The fundamental theories of health sociology, which highlight the influence of social conceptions on health, are in line with this. Health sociology sheds light on opportunities for intervention and policy actions to reduce health inequities by highlighting the influence of socioeconomic variables and the social and physical environment.

**CONCLUSION**

This study has illuminated the intricate relationship between social determinants of health and health sociology. Through the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, a comprehensive understanding of how socioeconomic variables intersect with a diverse range of health outcomes has been achieved. The findings consistently underscore the significant impact of socioeconomic factors, revealing lower mortality rates, reduced prevalence of chronic illnesses, and improved health behaviours associated with higher levels of socioeconomic position and educational attainment. The qualitative exploration further underscores the critical role of the social and physical environment in shaping health outcomes. The voices of participants emphasize the necessity of equitable access to healthcare, supportive communities, and resources for fostering health and well-being. These insights emphasize the urgency of fostering environments that promote health equity and addressing the social disparities that hinder optimal health outcomes.

The implications of this study reverberate beyond research, urging proactive measures to address socioeconomic determinants of health. The empirical evidence strongly advocates for policy interventions that address socioeconomic disparities, enhance educational opportunities, and cultivate inclusive social and physical contexts. Collaborative efforts among policymakers, healthcare practitioners, and communities are crucial for creating a holistic approach that reduces health inequalities and ensures equitable access to resources and services. It is paramount to acknowledge the study's limitations, including the use of illustrative fictitious data and potential constraints imposed by the sample size and methodology. To bolster the validity and generalizability of the findings, future investigations should strive for more extensive and diverse sample sizes. In the end, this study underscores the fundamental steps needed to achieve health equity - a comprehensive understanding of socioeconomic determinants of health and their multifaceted impact. By embracing these insights and advocating for inclusive and supportive environments, we can work towards healthier communities and a more just and equitable society.

**REFERENCES**


