

## INTRODUCTION

### Ageing Population

**By 2051:** Australians >65 years = 30%.

In the past 5 years : 21 % increase in demands on Home and Community Care Services.

**Psychology as a science;** has focused on illness & weakness. Humanistic psychologists → study of human strengths → how characteristics act as buffers to mental and physical health.

**Ranzijn, Harford and Andrews (2002):**

- encourage reduction negative stereotypes of the older person,
- broadcast strengths & value of the older individual

**Constructs of the positive psychology movement;**

- protect against health decline
- enhance perceived quality of life

**Explanatory Style**

Pessimistic explanatory style = poor immune system function, higher mortality rates, & reduced recovery time → e.g. surgery. Optimism = ↑ quality of life & better health.

**Dispositional Optimism**

Differs from explanatory style in that it is about more generalised positive expectancies. Positive dispositional optimism is associated with faster recovery rates from illness and surgery and less anxiety, stress and depression.

**Resilience**

People -high levels of resilience = better adaptive coping, +↑ likelihood of engaging in health-promoting behaviours.

## AIM OF THE STUDY

To determine if the positive psychological constructs of explanatory style, dispositional optimism, & resilience have an impact on health status in older Australians.

## PROJECT DESIGN

- **Phase 1** - Qualitative analysis of 10 face-to-face interviews to identify strengths used to maintain health & quality of life.
- **Phase 2** - Quantitative study - mail out surveys based on analysis of Phase 1.

## PHASE 1 RESULTS

Emerging themes from analysis of the 10 interviews

- Good health
- Social network
- Positive outlook
- Adaptability
- Spirituality
- Being valued



## PHASE 2

**PARTICIPANTS:** 630 older adults recruited through major service providers in Eastern Australia.

**MATERIALS – Mailed Surveys**

**Outcome Variables**

**Health** - Short-Form 36 (SF-36 V2)

**Predictor Variables**

**Explanatory Style** - Older Adults Attributional Style Questionnaire (OAASQ)

**Dispositional Optimism** – Life Orientation Test – Revised (LOT-R)

**Resilience**- Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD – RISC)

## PHASE 2 RESULTS

**Return rate** - 25.5 %:

**156 useable surveys**

**Age** : 65 – 85 years 65.4 %

85 and over 32%

**Accommodation:**

74% lived in own home

19.9 % lived in retirement unit

**Marital Status:**

41% married, 2 % single, 5 % divorced, 52 % widowed

**Living arrangements:** 53% lived alone, 42.9% with others

**Area or residence:** 68 % city, 20 % inner regional, 8 % outer regional

31 % did **volunteer work**

**Impact of Community Support on Health**

91 % positive/ very positive

5.1 % negative

## REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Explanatory style, Dispositional Optimism & Resilience explain 9.5 % of variance in **Physical Health Component scores** . Statistically significant contribution by Explanatory style Negative events (5%) & Resilience (3%)

Explanatory style, Dispositional Optimism & Resilience explain 22% of variance in **Mental Health Component scores** . Statistically significant contribution by Dispositional Optimism(10%) & Resilience (3%)