Coping Appraisal Mediates the Impact of Social Support on Depression among Older Adults in Singapore

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I. Introduction
As depression becomes one of the most common mental disorders with high prevalence among aging population around the world, more and more research interests were paid on the psychosocial causes of geriatric depression. Despite that social support has been widely considered to be key influencing factor in reducing depression, the underlying mechanisms through how it impacts depressive psychopathology are far less known. In light of evidence suggesting the interrelationships of social support and appraisal, the current study aimed to apply an integrated view to investigate how these two psychosocial contexts are related together in predicting depression, particularly in the Asian elderly group which was less discussed in previous empirical findings.

II. Methods
A total of 162 community-dwelling older adults (mean age = 72.19, SD = 6.23) were recruited from three community areas located in different part of Singapore. They completed an interview-based structured survey which consisted of questions in basic demographic information, followed by the measures of geriatric depression (Geriatric Depression Scale), appraisal (Resilience Appraisal Scale), and social support (Duke Social Support Index). We adopted the approach described by Preacher and Hayes (2004) for testing significance of the indirect effect of social support on geriatric depression via simple mediation models, by controlling age and gender. We further ran two individual mediation models to test the potential difference in the mediating roles of two subtypes of appraisal – problem-solving and emotion regulation appraisals – in the relation of social support and geriatric depression.

III. Results
Strong negative zero-order correlations were identified between geriatric depression and its main psychosocial predictors, i.e. appraisal (r = -.46, p < .01) and social support (r = -.48, p < .01). The findings of the mediating effect of appraisal revealed a significant negative indirect effect of social support on geriatric depression (B = -.10; Sobel z = -3.36, p < .001). Bootstrap results (N = 5,000) confirmed the significant effect with a bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect not containing zero (-.17, -.05). Thus, the mediation model of appraisal, social support and geriatric depression were fully supported by the above findings. Furthermore, the results from the two individual mediation models showed an identical pattern of mediation roles of problem-solving appraisal and emotion regulation appraisal.

IV. Implications
The study was one of the first few attempts to examine appraisal as a mediator in the link between social support and depression, using a non-Western sample of older adults. The key findings expand the role of social support from the only direct influence on depression, to the potential indirect effect on depression by affecting the appraisal of coping abilities. In addition, the mediation model also implies future studies to have an integrated view of social support and coping appraisal when designing or evaluating the psychosocial interventions for geriatric depression: they need to bring the consideration of coping appraisal in evaluation of the social support interventions, or consider social support issues in designing the appraisal interventions.