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Exploring the Relationship between Housing Satisfaction, Neighbourhood Social Cohesion, Accessibility, Safety and Well-Being among Older Adults

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Housing can have a major impact on mental and physical health; this is particularly true for older adults who spend more time at home as they age. Housing satisfaction is an important environmental determinant of health for older adults and an area of public interest as people are living longer worldwide. The present study examines whether specific neighbourhood characteristics such as neighbourhood social cohesion, accessibility and safety can moderate the relationship between housing satisfaction and well-being and if these characteristics can improve well-being (measured as quality of life, life satisfaction, mental health, depression, and physical health). **Method:** Survey of older adults (aged 55+) living in New Zealand. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and hierarchical regression analysis for hypothesis testing in IBM SPSS Statistics 25. **Sample:** Participants for the current study were selected from the 2016 New Zealand Health, Work and Retirement Study and resulted in a sample of *n* = 4028. **Results**: The present study showed that greater housing satisfaction was related to better well-being for older adults. The study also demonstrated that neighbourhood social cohesion significantly and positively impacted mental health, depression, quality of life and life satisfaction. Neighbourhood accessibility had a significant positive effect on mental health, depression, quality of life and life satisfaction. Neighbourhood safety significantly and positively influenced mental health. There were no significant results for these neighbourhood characteristics enhancing physical health. One significant interaction effect was found for depression demonstrating that housing satisfaction can be a protective factor against depression especially when living in an unsafe neighbourhood.
Discussion: This study confirms previous research that housing satisfaction and neighbourhood characteristics are significant contributing factors to well-being for older adults. The study also examines one unique finding around neighbourhood characteristics moderating the relationship between housing satisfaction and depression. These findings have important implications for policy, planning and improving the well-being of older adults.

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