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MINOR STRESSORS AND UPLIFTS, AFFECT INTENSITY,
AND OPTIMISM AS INFLUENCES ON HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY.

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ABSTRACT

An investigation was undertaken to examine the influence of minor stressors, uplifts, affect intensity, and dispositional optimism on the health of the elderly. The function of affect intensity and dispositional optimism as possible moderators of the relationships between minor stressors and uplifts to objective and subjective health was examined. In addition, the relationships between stressors and uplifts to somatic symptoms and subjective health were explored for causal effects. A sample of 114 elderly individuals, drawn from Fielding and Palmerston North, completed two questionnaires which included measures of hassles, uplifts, dispositional optimism, affect intensity, subjective health, somatic symptoms, functional limitation, and chronic ill-health. Uplifts were unexpectedly found to be related to subjective health. Neither dispositional optimism nor affect intensity were found to moderate the stressor-health or uplift-health relationships. Stressors were not found to cause ill-health. Our findings add further weight to the view that subjective health is a useful and valuable measure of health in the elderly. The tenuous nature of the moderating effects of dispositional characteristics on the stressor-health and uplift-health relationships are discussed. Reasons for stressors not being causative of ill-health in this sample are considered. Finally, our study provides evidence for constancy and stability in the lives of elderly people.

To the memory of my late mother Doreen Hazel Laird.

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