

Ethnicity and Disability and Functional Limitations among the Elderly in Taiwan

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Abstract

This study presents a secondary analysis of the data drawn from two waves of a longitudinal survey (N=2480). Specifically, this study compares two major ethnic groups of elders, the native Taiwanese and Mainlanders, in order to understand the role of ethnicity in relation to their disability and functional status among the elderly in Taiwan. The ethnic division between the two groups of elders is considered a salient dimension of social stratification, shaping the elders' pathways through life. The results show that disparities between Taiwanese and Mainlander elders are found in their disabilities and functional limitations, in which Mainlanders are better off. More important, Mainlanders' advantages over Taiwanese are mostly due to their higher socio-economic status. This study concludes that the identified health disparities between Taiwanese and Mainlander elders may not be resolved by short-term public health interventions only. It requires public health workers and policy makers to understand how ethnicity reflects the nature, opportunities, and limitations in health chance that are embedded in our social life.

Key Words : Taiwan, Ethnicity, Disability, Functional Limitations, Health Disparity