

Community-based interventions are sometimes good vehicles for mental health promotion among seniors

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Community-based social capital interventions appear to be an interesting tool for mental health promotion. This is what Dr. Annahita Ehsan, researcher at the LIVES Center, wanted to investigate in her doctoral thesis, defended on June 29, 2020. Based on the local action-research project Les Quartiers Solidaires (Neighborhoods in Solidarity), the young researcher examines how these interventions can promote mental health.

For her [doctoral thesis](#) entitled "Community-based [social capital](#) interventions and mental health promotion for older adults," Dr. Annahita Ehsan investigated the impact of the community-based social capital interventions of Neighborhoods in Solidarity on the [mental health](#) promotion of [older adults](#) in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland. This research, conducted over four studies, shows to what extent the collaborative skills of individuals, the geographic context, and sociodemographic factors are influential when designing a community intervention of this type.

Indeed, Dr. Ehsan observed that the sense of belonging to a specific neighborhood in the city had an influence on the perception of Neighborhoods in Solidarity approaches. This intervention made it possible to build bridges between the northern and southern residents of this municipality, which in turn influenced the residents' sense of belonging. Finally, it is likely that people who have less social capital, and are therefore less inclined to forge ties, did not benefit from this measure, even though they could benefit the most. Dr. Ehsan recommends continuing research on interventions that promote social capital, a field that is still underdeveloped.

Dr. Ehsan also finds that a real knowledge exchange between researchers and professionals in the field could lead to quick and concrete results. In the case of the commune where the studies were conducted, collaboration with the researchers enabled Neighborhoods in Solidarity

to add an English-speaking discussion group, thus integrating a large part of the commune's population, which felt excluded from these interventions.

Dr. Ehsan's work, integrates three empirical approaches at three scales:

- A meta-systematic review
- A cross-sectional study of several Neighborhoods in Solidarity projects
- A mixed-method longitudinal case study

An article based on this thesis will be published soon in Elsevier's journal *Health and Place*.

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