

**Exploring socioeconomic inequalities in pharmaceutical use in Germany.
To what extent is the effect mediated by subjective health?**

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Abstract

Background: This study evaluates mediational effects through subjective physical and mental health status on the pathway from socioeconomic status (SES) to the use of analgesics and sedatives/hypnotics. We hypothesize that more privileged people have a lower pharmaceutical use, as compared to the deprived, due to their better health status.

Methods: Data were taken from the 2012 German Epidemiological Survey of Substance Abuse. The study sample comprised n=9084 individuals of the general population aged 18–64 years. Educational level (three groups based on International Standard Classification of Education) was used as proxy for SES. Direct and indirect effects of SES on weekly use of analgesics and sedatives/hypnotics were examined by applying generalized structural equation modeling (GSEM). Potential mediators were poor subjective physical and mental health status, respectively.

Results: Among males, strong mediational effects through both poor subjective physical and mental health were observed both for the path between SES and analgesics use as well as for the path between SES and sedatives/hypnotics use. Among females, the only mediational effect was found for poor subjective physical health mediating the path from SES to analgesics use.

Conclusion: Results of the study substantially contribute to our understanding of socioeconomic inequalities in pharmaceutical use.

Keywords: Germany; socioeconomic status; inequalities; self-rated health; pharmaceuticals