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Predictors of Depressive Symptoms: What Are the Roles of Geography and Informal Social Support?

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ABSTRACT

Using data from the 2004 wave of the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), three central research questions were examined. First, are there variations in depressive symptoms by geographic region? Second, are variations in depressive symptoms related to informal social support? Third, are there interactions between geography and informal social support in regard to predicting depressive symptoms? Results from this study found a small, but significant difference in depressive symptoms by geography region. Also, informal social support from children and friends were predictive of lower levels of depression. Furthermore, informal social support interacted with region to explain additional variation in depressive symptoms. Participants' perceptions that they could rely on their adult children to meet their needs was more salient in regard to reducing depressive symptoms for exurban than non-exurban participants, and increased limitations in mobility, strength, and fine motor skills were more influential in explaining depressive symptoms in exurban than other persons.

KEYWORDS

Depression; Aging; Rurality; Social Support; Older Adults

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