

The Association between Perceived Locus of Control and Self-Reported Depression in Older African American Men

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Masculinity is as a social construction dependent on a specific time, culture, and location. Hegemonic masculinity is further defined as the normative form of masculinity, and in the United States, fitting into this normative idea of what it means to be masculine depends on race, socioeconomic status, and traits such as locus of control. Studies have shown that individuals subscribing to hegemonic masculinity are more likely to experience depression. The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between locus of control and depression among a sample of older African American men. It was hypothesized that lower internal locus of control would be related to higher depression in this sample. To test this hypothesis, data from the Baltimore Study of Black Aging Patterns of Cognitive Aging (BSBA-PCA) was used. The BSBA-PCA collected a sample of community-dwelling, middle-aged and older African Americans and measured cognition, health, and psychosocial function at baseline and follow-up approximately 3 years (33 months) later. The current secondary data analysis focused on a subsample of 106 men (mean age = 66.78, SD = 8.96) from the baseline assessment. Bivariate correlations showed there was an inverse relationship between self-reported locus of control and depression symptoms ($r = -.469$; $p < .001$). Further, a linear regression analysis indicated that men with lower internal locus of control had higher self-reported depression ($\beta = -.469$; SE = .080; $p < .001$). These correlational findings suggest that older African American men with lower internal locus of control may be more likely to experience depression. Future research should continue to examine locus of control and depression and test for the conformity to masculine ideals. Future studies also should examine how men who deviate from an “ideal” concept of masculinity cope with depression and/or isolation. Such research can further the understanding of psychological influences on men's health and theoretical conceptions of masculinity.

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