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Grandmother Kinship Care Providers: Predictors of Elevated Psychological Distress

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Methods
Participants
- 516 African American grandmothers raising one or more grandchildren
- Mean age: 56.5 years (range 35 to 83)
- Less than high school education: 41.7%
- Currently married: 19.7%
- Raising an average of 2.4 children

Measures
- Brief Symptom Index
- Child Behavior Checklist
- Family Resource Scale
- Family Support Scale
- Short Form General Health Survey

Analyses
- Descriptive statistics
- Hierarchical multiple regression

Results
Psychological Distress Scores
- 26% scored in clinical range (T ≥ 63) based on General Severity Index (GSI)
- 38.8% scored in clinical range based on two or more subscales (T ≥ 63)

Predictors of Psychological Distress
- Externalizing child behaviors
- Internalizing child behaviors
- Physical health
- Family resources

Nonpredictors
- Family social support

Regression Summary Statistics:
- Model predicted 33% of total variance
- $R^2 = .33, F(11,503) = 22.46, p < .001$

Discussion
Summary and Implications
- Almost 40% of kinship caregivers scored in clinical range for psychological distress
- Child behavior problems, diminished health, and lack of family resources were strongest predictors of caregiver distress
- Behavioral interventions are needed for both the grandchildren and grandmothers
- Caregivers need strategies for coping with traumatized children
- Physical health problems of kinship care providers need to be addressed
- Public policy should address the myriad needs of kinship care providers

Limitations
- Heterogeneity of sample in regard to race-ethnicity and urban setting
- Lack of comparison group
- Reliance on a single informant

Introduction
- Most children in kinship care with grandmothers in the U.S. have been abandoned or maltreated
- The challenges these caregivers encounter often include poverty, social isolation, and diminished health
- These factors may hinder the grandmother’s ability to provide a supportive family environment

Purpose and Hypothesis
The purpose of the present study was to:
- Determine levels of psychological distress in African American caregiving grandmothers
- Identify predictors of increased distress in African American custodial grandmothers

We hypothesized that:
- Diminished grandmother health, family resources and support, as well as increased child behavior problems, will predict psychological distress