Relation Between Social Support and Disability among China's Older Adults: Evidence from 2020 CHARLS

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Abstract

Economic growth and advancements in healthcare have led to a significant demographic shift towards ageing in China, posing considerable challenges in the care of disabled older adults. Amidst this backdrop, social support has been reliably linked to health outcomes, providing both physical and mental benefits. This study, therefore, explores the relationship between social support and disability within China's older adult population. This study aimed to identify how social support influences the prevalence of disability and to determine the key factors associated with disability among China's older adult population. In this study, 6,142 participants aged 45 and over were selected from the 2020 China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study (CHARLS). Disability status was evaluated using the Physical Self-Maintenance Scale (PSMS). The data collected were analysed using logistic regression to identify the key influencing factors. The analysis reveals that a history of falls, gender, and marital status are robust predictors of disability. Individuals with a history of falls, females, and those without cohabiting spouses were positively associated with higher vulnerability to disability, with coefficients of about 22.8% (P < 0.001, 95% CI: 0.203-0.253), 9.6% (P < 0.001, 95% CI: 0.076-0.115), and 2.6% (P < 0.001, 95% CI: 0.018-0.034), respectively. In contrast, social activities and solitary time did not emerge as significant factors in the analysis. The model had a modest fit, explaining 8.4% of the disability variation (Adj R^2 = 0.0832), and a significant F-statistic of 112.47 with a p-value < 0.001 confirmed the impact of at least one independent variable on disability. The study underscores the imperative for strategic social interventions to address and manage disability among older adults, emphasizing the pivotal role of social support. recommendations include development of policies tailored to the care of disabled older adults, the introduction of property management-based care models, the enhancement of community service support systems, and the optimisation of family support networks. Further studies are needed to improve model fit and to elucidate the nonlinear relationship between solitary time and disability, which was not examined in this study. This research highlights the need for continued investigation to fully understand the complex interplay between social support and disability

in this demographic.

Keywords: disabled older adults, rural revitalization, digital intelligence technology, mutual-aid older adult care in rural areas, time banking

How to Cite

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