

The Effects of Spending Time With Friends on Mental Health Among Young Men and Women

Research Questions

- How does actively spending time with friends relate to good mental health?
- Does this relationship vary by biological sex?

Significance

- Friendship is an integral part of life that shapes who we are as people.
- There is a growing concern that young people tend to isolate themselves, which may negatively impact mental health (Lempinen et al., 2018).
- Mental health is becoming a greater concern in the United States (Miller & Rice).

Background

- When friends get together and/or talk, they tend to share positive experiences with each other. This is proven to improve psychological wellbeing (Demir, Dogan, & Procsal, 2013).
- Same-sex friendship is shown to affect men's mental health more than women's (Robinson et al., 2018).

Hypotheses

- There is a positive relationship between the weekly number of days spent with friends and enjoyment of life.
- Men are more likely to be affected than women.

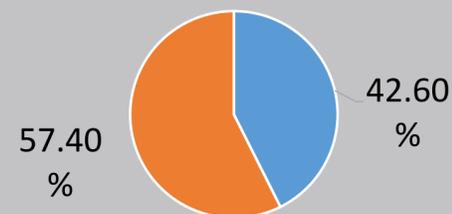
Data and Sample

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)
- Wave 3 (2001-2002)
- Ages 18-26

Dependent Variable

Figure 1. Enjoyment of Life in the Past 7 Days

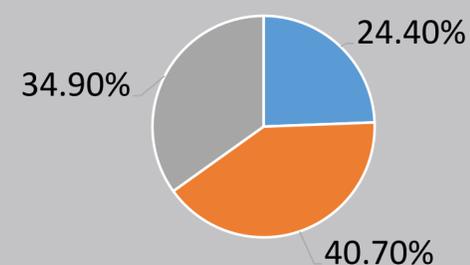
- Less than most of the time
- Most of the time



Independent Variable

Figure 2. Number of Days Spent Hanging Out and/or Talking With Friends in the Past 7 Days

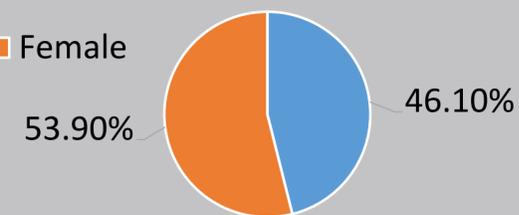
- 0-2 Days
- 3-6 Days
- 7 Days



Control Variable

Figure 3. Gender

- Male
- Female



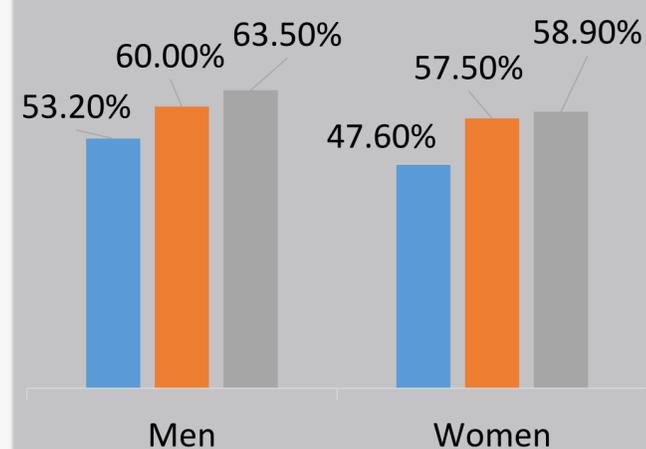
Analytical Plan

- Cross-tabulations and Chi-square tests using SPSS

Results

Figure 4. % Young Adults Enjoying Life Most of the Time by Number of Days Spent with Friends in the Past 7 Days

- 0-2 Days
- 3-6 Days
- 7 Days



Chi-square tests were significant at $p < .001$ for both men and women.

Summary of the Findings

- Friendship has a significant effect on mental health for the better. The more one spends time with his/her friends, the more one will find themselves enjoying life.
- While males are more likely than females to report enjoying life, the effects of friendship on enjoyment are similar for both males and females.

Implications

- Spending time and/or talking to friends has the potential to deter mental illness.

References

- Demir, M., Doğan, A., & Procsal, A. D. (2013). I am so happy 'cause my friend is happy for me: Capitalization, friendship, and happiness among U.S. and Turkish college students. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 153*(2), 250 - 255.
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- Robinson, S., Anderson, E., & White, A. (2017). The bromance: Undergraduate male friendships and the expansion of contemporary homosocial boundaries. *Sex Roles, 78*(1-2), 94 - 106.
- Rice, D. P., & Miller, L. S. (1998). Health economics and cost implications of anxiety and other mental disorders in the United States. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 173*(S34), 4 - 9.