

The Effects of Child Neglect on Early Adulthood Depressive Symptoms

Research Questions

- Does experiencing neglect as a child increase the chance of individuals experiencing depressive symptoms as young adults?
- Are men and women affected differently by childhood neglect?

Significance

- The rates of child neglect grew dramatically between the years of 1976 and 1992 (Finkelhor, n.d.).
- Depression is an epidemic: The rate of depression among young adults had increased greatly from 1998 to 2017 (“Young Adult Depression,” 2018).

Background

- Childhood neglect strongly predicts poor psychiatric and physical health outcomes in adulthood, including depression (Arnow, 2004).
- Child neglect may be a marker of other family problems; it often co-occurs within the context of other family dysfunction, social deprivation, and other environmental stressors (Norman, 2012).
- Families with lower socioeconomic status have higher rates of child neglect, including care neglect due to inadequate food or medical provision (McLeigh, 2018).

Hypothesis

- Those who experienced child neglect have more depressive symptoms than those who were not neglected.
- Both males and females who were neglected as children have significantly more depressive symptoms than those who were not.

Data and Sample

- The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health
- Research began: 1994-95; respondents were 12 to 17 years old
- Wave 3 in 2001-02; respondents were between 18 and 26 years old
- Public access (N=4,882)

Dependent Measures

Depressive Symptoms: Experienced by 12.5%

- The sum of 7 questions: In the past week, how often respondents (a) were bothered by things; (b) could not shake the blues; (c) had trouble focusing; (d) were depressed; (e) were too tired to do things; (f) were sad; (g) felt that people disliked them. (0 = never or rarely, 1 = sometimes, 2 = a lot of the time, 3 = most of the time or all of the time)
- Dichotomized: total score of 0 – 6 = No depressive symptoms; 7 or more = Depressive symptoms

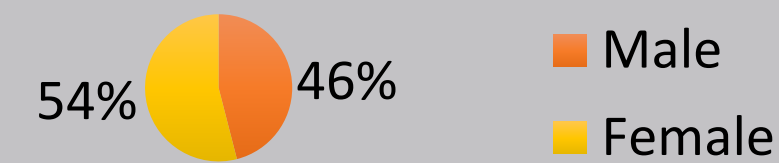
Independent Measure

Child Neglect: Experienced by 10.5%

- “How often had your parents or other adult care-givers not taken care of your basic needs, such as keeping you clean or providing food or clothing?” (1 - one time, 2 - two times, 3 - three to five times, 4 - six to ten times, 5 - more than ten times, 6 - never happened)
- Dichotomized: 1 – 5 = Neglected, 6 = Not Neglected

Control Measure

Gender of Participants:

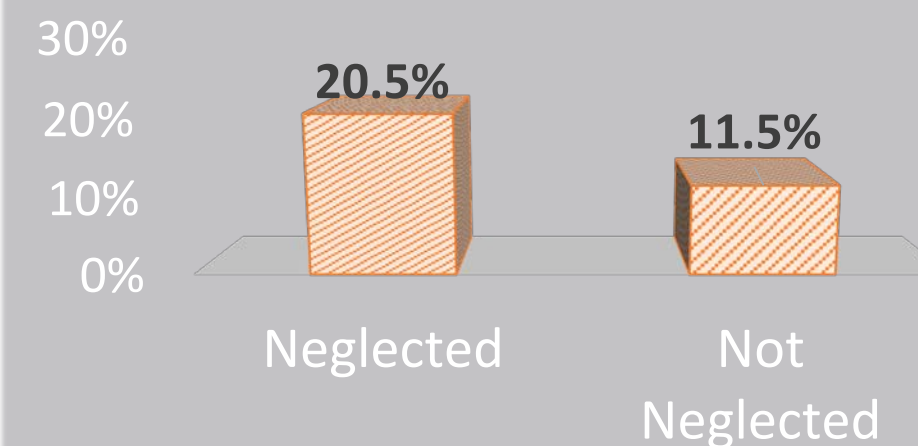


Analytical Plan

Cross tabulation and Chi-square test on SPSS was used to analyze my data

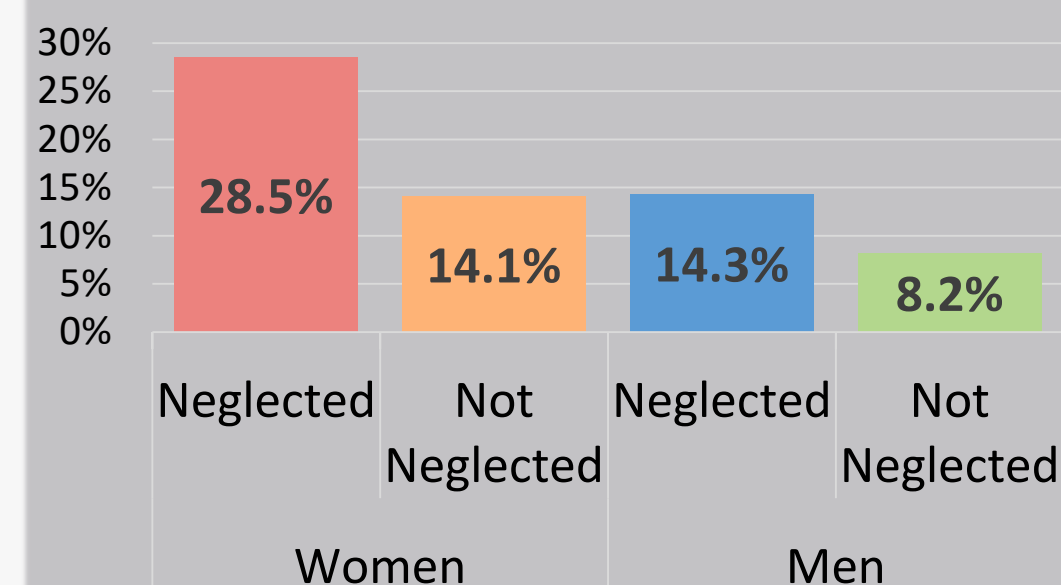
Results

FIGURE 1. % DISTRIBUTION OF DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS OF ALL RESPONDENTS BY NEGLECT



Note: Statistically Significant $p = .000$

FIGURE 2. % DISTRIBUTION OF DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AMONG MEN AND WOMEN BY NEGLECT



Note: The differences by neglect are significant at $p < .001$ for women and at $p = .001$ for men.

Summary of Findings

- Both men and women who were neglected as children had more depressive symptoms than those who were not neglected.
- These results suggest that experiencing neglect as a child is positively related to one’s depressive symptoms into early adulthood.
- My hypothesis was supported.

Implications

- Child neglect is an important risk factor for depression in adulthood; strategies for preventing child maltreatment are needed.
- Research that examines the individual, family, community, and social factors that influence neglect improve understanding of the causes and should be supported.

References

1. Arnow, B. A. (2004). Relationships Between Childhood Maltreatment, Adult Health and Psychiatric Outcomes, and Medical Utilization. *The Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 65, 10-15.
2. Finkelhor, D. (n.d.). Child Neglect. Retrieved from http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/neglect/factsheet_neglect.html
3. McLeigh, J. D., et. al.. (2018). Neighborhood poverty and child abuse and neglect: The mediating role of social cohesion. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 93, 154-160. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.07.018
4. Norman, R. E., Byambaa, M., De, R., Butchart, A., Scott, J., & Vos, T. (2012). The long-term health consequences of child physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS medicine*, 9(11), e1001349.
5. Young Adult Depression. (2018, December 28). Retrieved from <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/young-adult-depression>