

Parent's Marital Status and Mental Health in Young Adulthood

Research Questions

- What is the association between parent's marital status and mental health in young adulthood?
- Does gender moderate the association between parent's marital status and depression?

Significance

- Growing concerns about depression in the U.S.
- Parental depression can negatively impact a child's well-being and growth.

Background

- Adults who come from broken homes are almost twice as likely to attempt suicide than those who do not come from broken homes (Parker, 2019).
- Today, only about 60% of children in the United States live with their married, biological parents (D'Onofrio & Emery, 2019).
- According to the Mayo Clinic, depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest, which includes how you think, feel, and behave.

Hypothesis

- If the child's parents are divorced/separated, then they will have higher depression levels.
- Females will be more depressed and most affected by parent's marital status.

Data and Sample

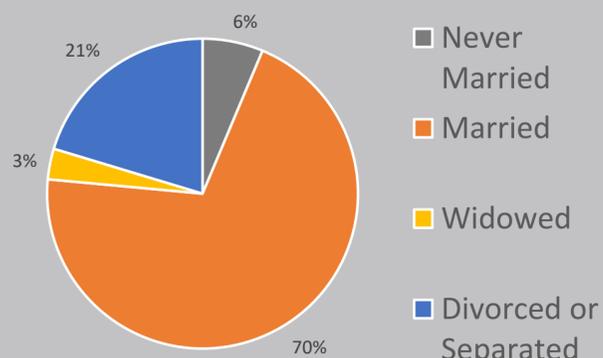
- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)
- Public data files
- Wave I (1994-1995): adolescents in grades 7-12 in the United States
- Wave III (2001-2002): young adults ages 18-26 in the United States

Dependent Measure

- Depression in Young Adulthood:**
Mean of 7 questions: During the past 7 days, how often did you feel?
- bothered
 - could not shake off the blues
 - had trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing
 - depressed
 - too tired to do things
 - sad
 - disliked

Independent Measure

Parent's Marital Status

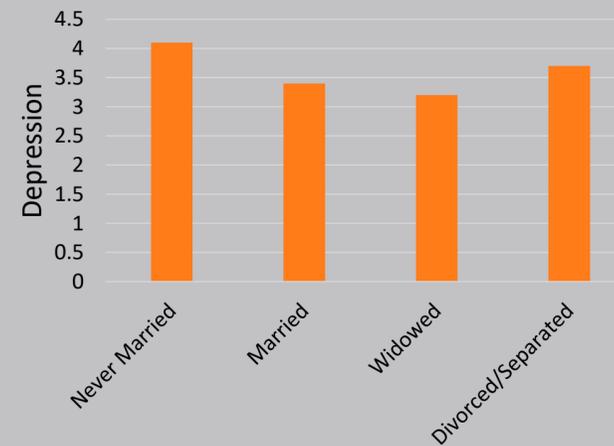


Control Measure

- Respondent's Gender
Male: 48%
Female: 52%

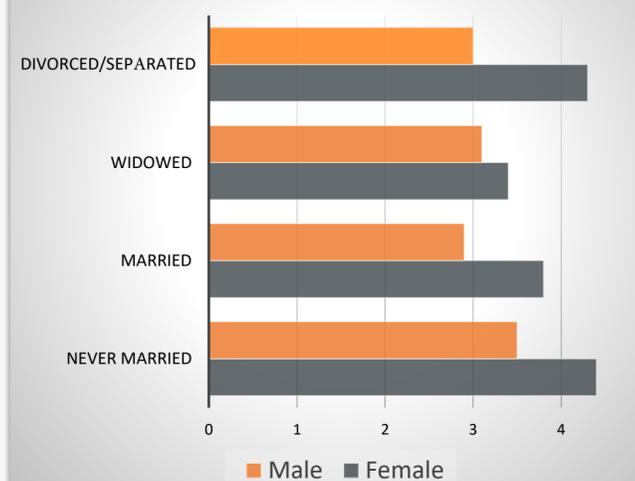
Results

Mean Depression by Parents Marital Status



* t-test is statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Mean Depression by Parents Marital Status by Gender



Summary of Findings

- There are higher depression levels for female children that have parents who are never married or divorced.
- Females whose parents were never married have the highest overall depression, whereas married men have the least depression.
- Females are more depressed overall than men.

Limitations & Future Directions

- Limitations include age of data; social media has grown since the time the data was collected.
- Directions for future research would be to provide resources to children with divorced parents.
- Guidance counselors should pay more attention to academic performance and social habits with peers.
- End the stigma of depression.

References

- D'Onofrio, B., & Emery, R. (2019). Parental divorce or separation and children's mental health. *World psychiatry: Official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)*, 18(1), 100-101. doi:10.1002/wps.20590
- Depression (major depressive disorder). (2018, February 3).
- Parker, W. (2019, August 7). Statistics About Divorce and the Impact It Can Have on Children.