

One's Own Worst Enemy: Self-Measured Mental Health's Effect on Perceived Social Stigma, Moderated by Gender

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Research Questions

- What is the link between respondent's self-reported mental health and their perception of others' attitudes about mental health?
- Is this association moderated by gender?

Significance

- There are many people who struggle with mental illness and the negative stereotypes associated with them in the United States.
- This stigma against mental illness still exists despite efforts geared to increase awareness to help foster acceptance (Salerno, 2016).
- Self-stigma and perceived stigma can have a negative impact on the outcomes of those who have received a diagnosis for a mental illness (Patten, 2016).

Background

- Some people with mental illness tend to internalize negative cultural stereotypes that people with mental illness are incompetent, dangerous, and/or are responsible for their illness (Watson et al., 2007).
- These internalized stereotypes can create a self-inflicted stigma (Corrigan et al., 2013).
- Men diagnosed with depression are less likely than their female counterparts to seek treatment (Cheng et al., 2018).

Hypotheses

- Respondents with poorer mental health will be more likely than those with better mental health to perceive that other people's perception of mental illness is negative.
- Male respondents with poor mental health will perceive other people perception of mental illness more negatively than their female counterparts.

Data and Sample

- The 2018 General Social Survey (GSS)
- Conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago
- 18 years and older living in non-institutionalized households in the conterminous United States who speak English or Spanish
- N = 2348

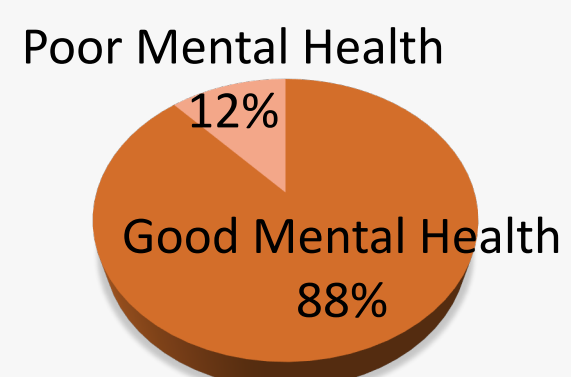
Dependent Measure

- Perception of others' attitudes towards mental illness
- The average of two questions: "Thinking about (1) your family or (2) other people you know personally outside of your family, to what extent do they hold negative attitudes about people with mental health problems?"
 - 1 = not at all to 4 = very much negative views
 - Mean = 1.99, SD = 2.23

Independent Measure

- Self-reported mental health
- "How would you rate your mental health, including your mood and your ability to think?"
 - Good Mental Health: Excellent, very good, or good
 - Poor Mental Health: Fair, poor

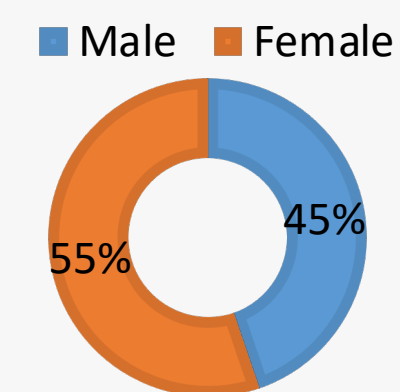
Figure 1. Distribution for Self-Reported Mental Health



Moderator Measure

- Gender of the respondents

Figure 2. Distribution for Gender

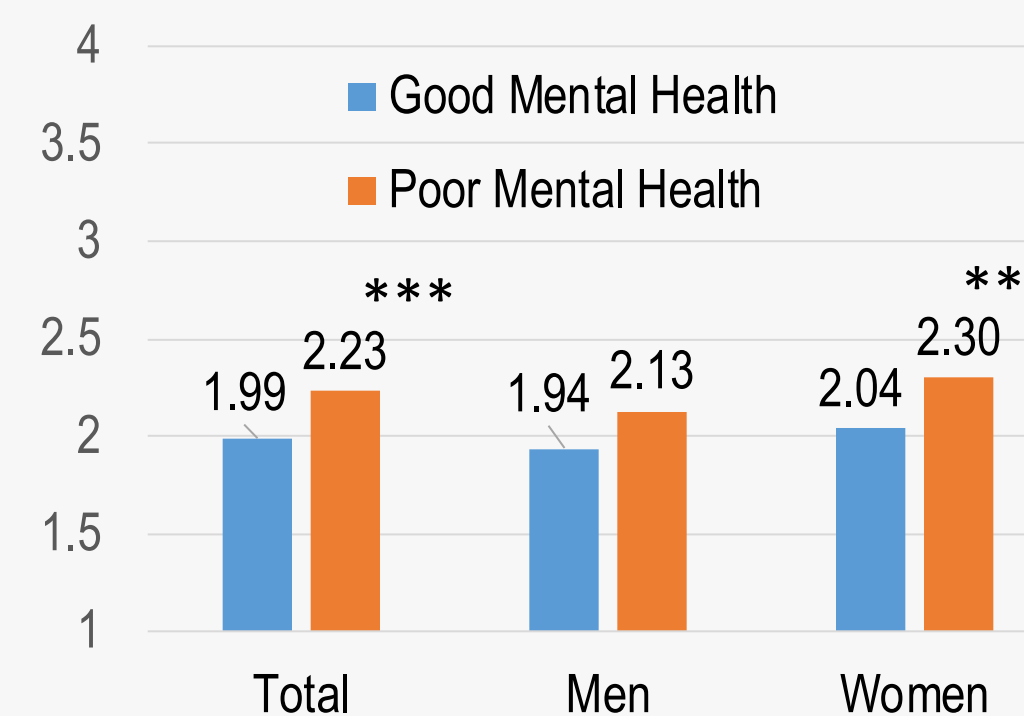


Analysis

- Independent Samples T-test

Results

Figure 3. Mean Scores for Perception of Others' Negative Views of Mental Illness for the Total Sample, Men, and Women



Differences between good and poor mental health are significant at ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Summary of Findings

- Only significant results were found in female group.
- Female respondents with poor self-reported mental health report their perception of other people's attitudes towards mental illness to be significantly more negative than their male counterparts.
- Males showed no significant difference regarding their self-reported mental health and their perception of other's attitudes towards mental illness.

Policy Implications & Thoughts

- Additional public educational campaigns could begin to focus on unique problems faced by women who may be internalizing stigmatization from others.
- Further qualitative research may yield more in terms of what is being internalized.
- Possible that male participants with poor mental health did not report their poor mental health, leading to insignificant results.

References

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