



The Relationship Between Economic Insecurity and Depression among Adolescents

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Introduction

- Economic inequality plagues our country resulting in lower-income populations at a higher risk of depression than their counterparts (American Psychological Association, 2022).
- From poor housing to homelessness, low-income children are at a more significant risk for mental (emotional and cognitive) and physical health problems (American Psychological Association, 2022), which can hinder them for the entirety of their adult lives (Hodgkinson, et al., 2017).
- The stability wealth provides to alleviate economic stressors adds to the overall well-being of people (Ettman et al., 2020).
- This study will identify if multiple economic stressors have a relationship with higher levels of depression more than just one type of economic stressor.

Research Questions

- Is there a relationship between the number of economic stressors and depression in adolescents?
- Does biological sex have a relationship with either/or depression or poverty scores?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n= 6,504) were drawn from the first wave of The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health in the 1994-1995 school year.

Measures

- Depression was measured with responses 0-4 to one question about how often one has felt depressed. Scores were collapsed into two variables 0 (have not felt depression, and 1 (have felt depression).
- Poverty level was measured similarly with a series of six questions about receiving economic aid. Participants were asked to rate each statement from 0 (no) to 1 (yes). Responses were summed to create a quantitative variable of a respondent's Poverty Score.
- Depression and Poverty Score were coded dichotomously.

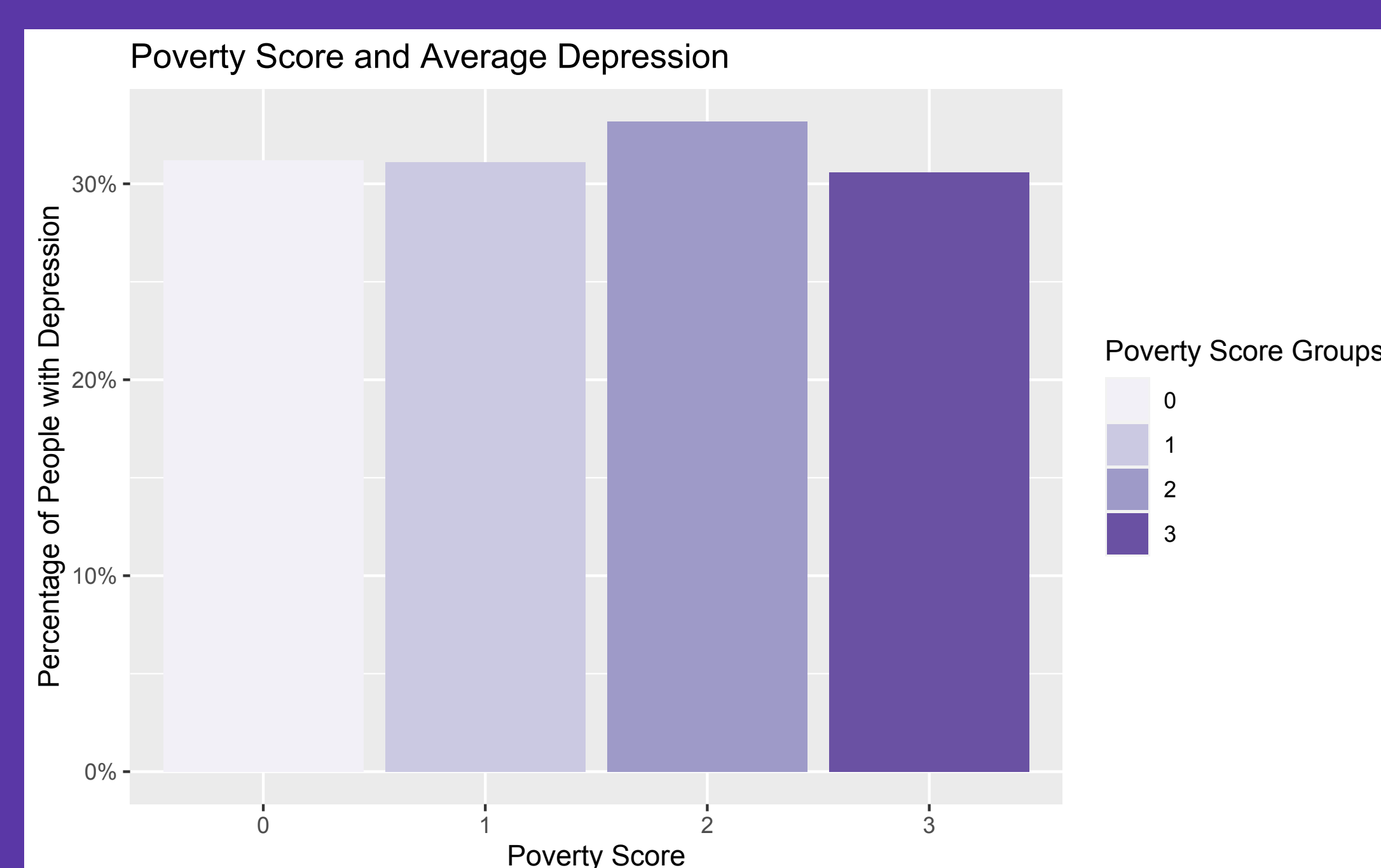
Univariate

- 20.45% of respondents have felt depressed
- 13.16% of respondents have a poverty score of 1
- 5.98% have a poverty score of 2
- 3.68% have a poverty score of 3

Bivariate

- A Chi-Square test of Independence showed that respondents' **Poverty Scores** were not significantly related with **Depression** (X-squared = 0.38, $p > 0.001$).

Figure 1. The relationship between people with Depression and their Poverty Scores

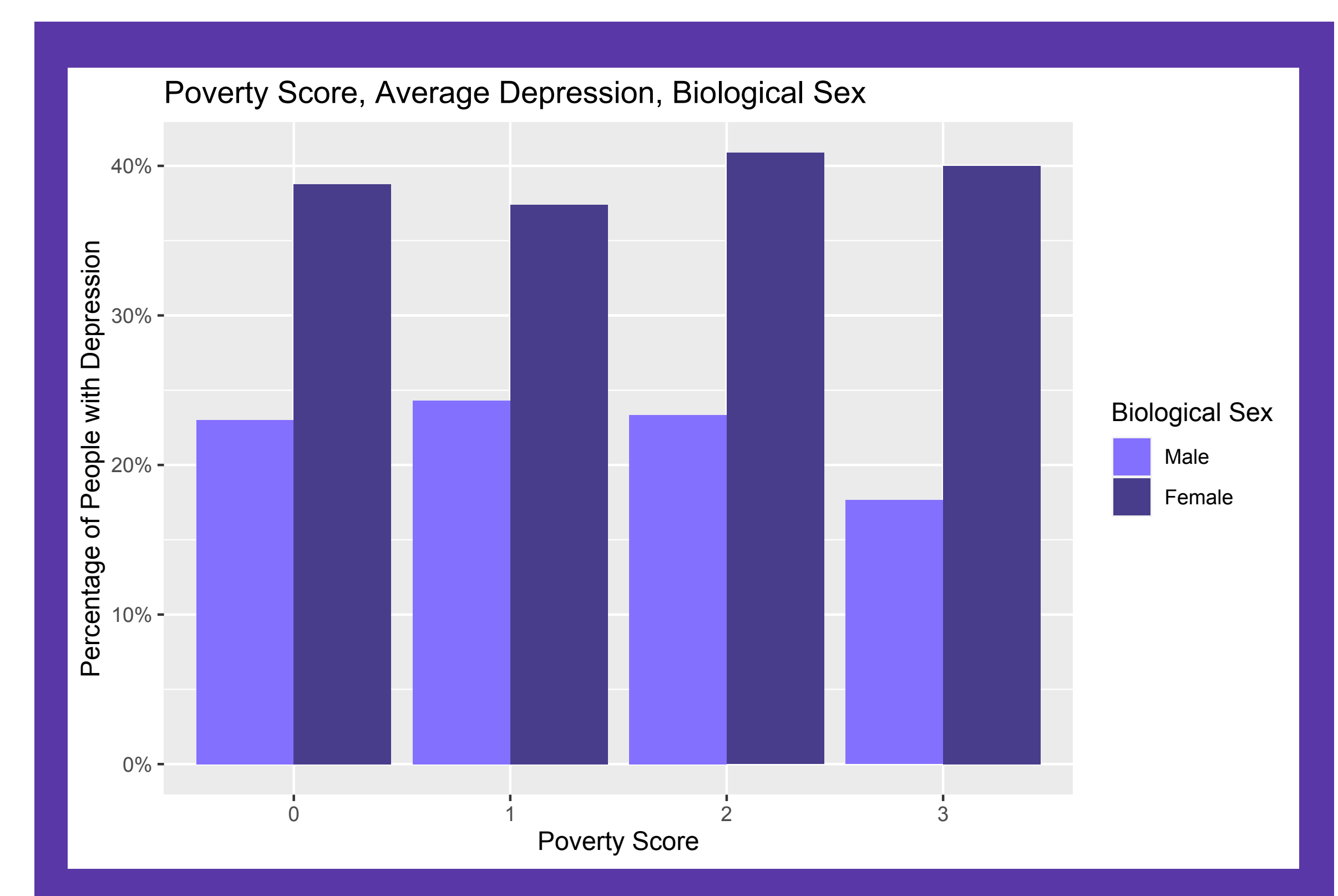


- Different Poverty Scores **do not** have increasing or decreasing percentages of respondents with depression compared to those who do not have depression.

Multivariate

- Biological sex is not a moderator nor a confounding variable because it has no relationship to poverty score. (Figure 2).
- Biological sex is significantly related to depression per each poverty score group ($B=0.75$, $p < 0.001$).
- Logistic Regression shows that when controlling for poverty, females are more likely to be depressed than males. Biological sex (O.R. 2.11, CI 1.83-2.44).

Figure 2. The relationship between Depression, Poverty Score, and Biological Sex



Discussion

- The mentioned economic stressors may not have an association with being depressed in adolescents.
- There are possible lurking variables that may confound the relationship between biological sex and depression: Boys may feel less comfortable reporting their emotions.
- Policy makers and social workers can use this information when analyzing adolescent levels of depression and implementing changes to minimize depression.
- Further research is needed to determine why females result in higher depression and which methods of intervention would be most effective in limiting depression in adolescents.