



Prospective Longitudinal Links between Unemployment and Depressive Symptoms in Young Adults

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Introduction

- Since 2006, the national unemployment rate has steadily increased, from 4% to nearly 10% in 2009 (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2010)
- Meta-analytic data suggest there is inverse correlation between unemployment and concurrent depression symptoms (Lorant et al., 2003)
- However, only a few studies have examined the longitudinal links between employment status and depression (Dooley, Prause, & Ham-Rowbottom, 2000)
- Presence of a romantic partner has been shown to buffer the negative consequences of unemployment (Dooley et al., 2000)

Research Question 1

Question 1a: Does earlier employment status predict changes in depressive symptoms controlling for concurrent employment status?

Question 1b: Do changes in employment status relate to changes in depressive symptoms?

Method

Participants

• N= 149 (N= 71 Females) young adults who are involved in the Minnesota Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005), a study of adaptation in “at-risk” children and their families (68% White, 10% Black, and 22% other).

Analysis 1

• **At both age 23 and age 26:**

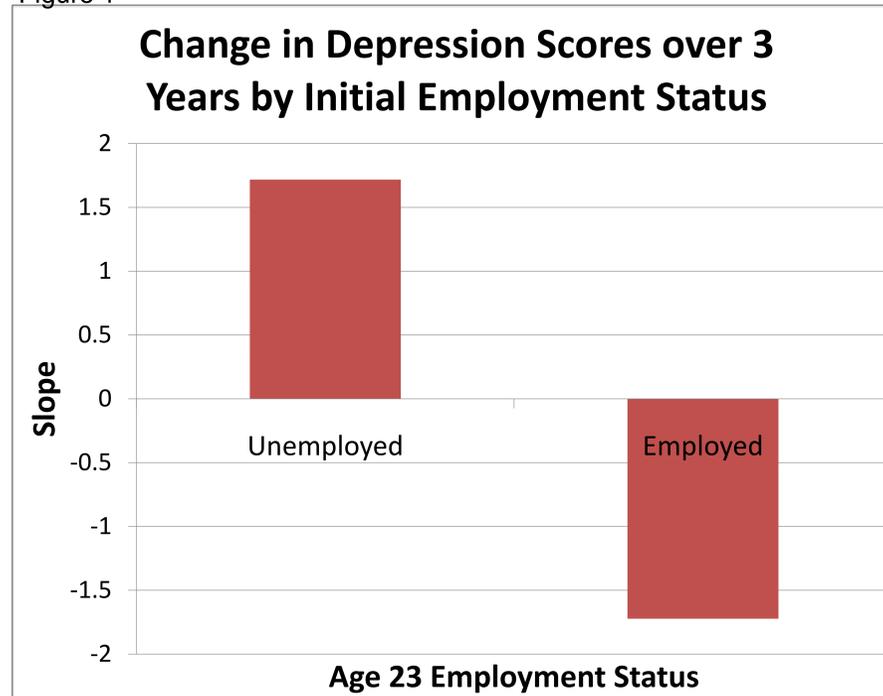
Employment Status Participant-endorsed dichotomous classification (0= Not employed, 1 = Employed).

Depressive Symptoms subset of 119-item self report measure asking participant to “describe” him/herself in last 6 months (Young Adult Self-Report; Achenbach, 1997). On a 3 point scale: 0= not true, 1= somewhat or sometimes true, 3= very or often true.

Results 1

• Depressive symptoms of individuals unemployed at age 23 increased over time relative to their employed counterparts (see figure 1), controlling for sex and concurrent (age 26) employment status, $B(143) = -.267, p = .0173$.

Figure 1



Research Question 2

Question 2: Does involvement in a romantic relationship at age 26 moderate the relation between changes in employment status and depressive symptoms?

Analysis 2

Materials

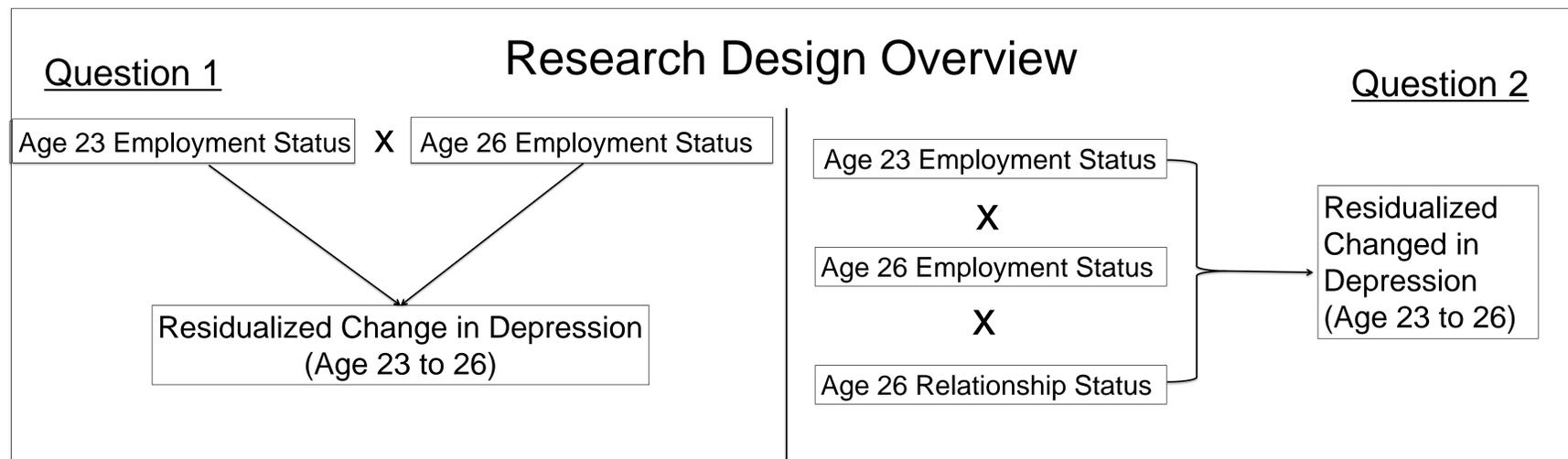
- **Age 23:** Employment Status & Depressive Symptoms
- **Age 26:** Employment & Depressive Symptoms
Relationship Status Participant-endorsed dichotomous classification (0= Not in relationship, 1= In a relationship)

Results 2

• Relationship status did not buffer the negative consequences of unemployment, $B(139) = -.282, p = .844, ns$.

Discussion

- Using a poverty sample, the data replicate findings of longitudinal links between employment status and depression symptoms.
- Employment early on in the transition to the adulthood more closely linked to mid-20s depression symptoms than concurrent employment. Suggests that failure to effectively enter the workforce early on interferes with subsequent mental health.
- Relationship status had no effect on employment-depression link. Relationship quality was not assessed. However, poor quality relationships may contribute to both employment status and depression symptoms.



Acknowledgements: This research was sponsored by the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program.