

COVID-19 Related Financial Hardship Is Associated with Depression and Anxiety in Substance Use Treatment Across Gender and Racial Groups



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1 Introduction



Populations with substance use disorders faced challenges¹⁻² in the COVID-19 pandemic because:



They often struggled with depression and anxiety alongside drug use



Access to care became difficult due to shortage in providers or changes in format

Moreover, there were several common COVID-19 related negative events that may lead to poor mental health³, such as:



Friends and/or family members had COVID



Financial hardship



Unemployment in the household

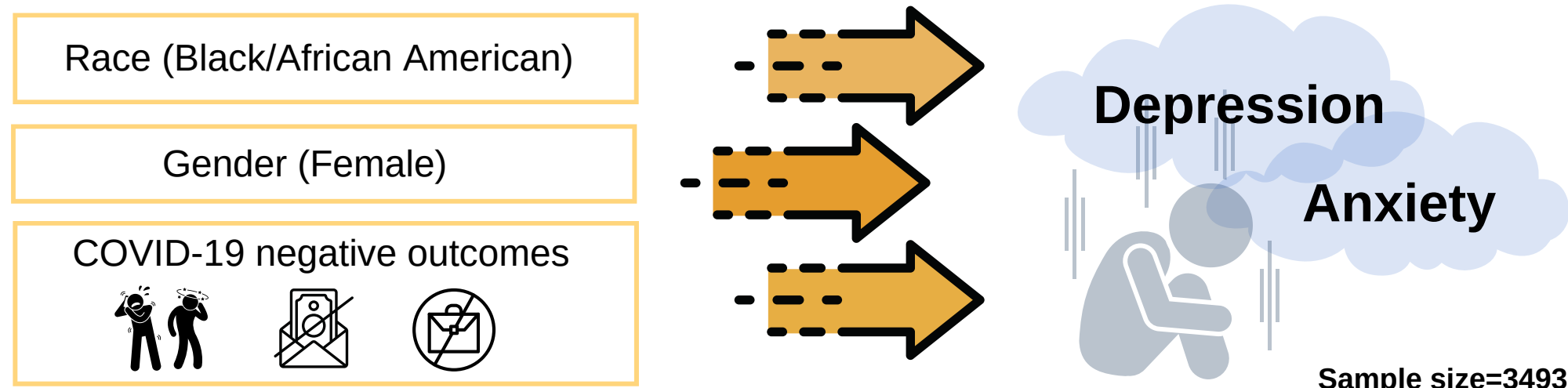
Healthcare disparity may even worsen the mental health struggle among marginalized groups, such as Black/African Americans and women.⁴⁻⁵ However, limited empirical research address this question.

What is the relationship between COVID-19 related negative events and depression and anxiety symptoms in people with substance use disorders? Would racial and gender identity impact symptoms as well? Would those factors interact?

2 Materials and Method

Respondents (N=3493) were drawn from a larger dataset of individuals who entered substance use treatment in the United States in March-October of 2020, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since we had ordinal outcome variables (i.e., the severity of depression/anxiety symptoms based on established cutoffs),⁶⁻⁷ we conducted a series of ordinal logistic regressions to explore the association.



We explored the main effects and also examined interactions between female gender or Black/African American race and each COVID-19 related outcome on depression and anxiety symptoms.

3 Results

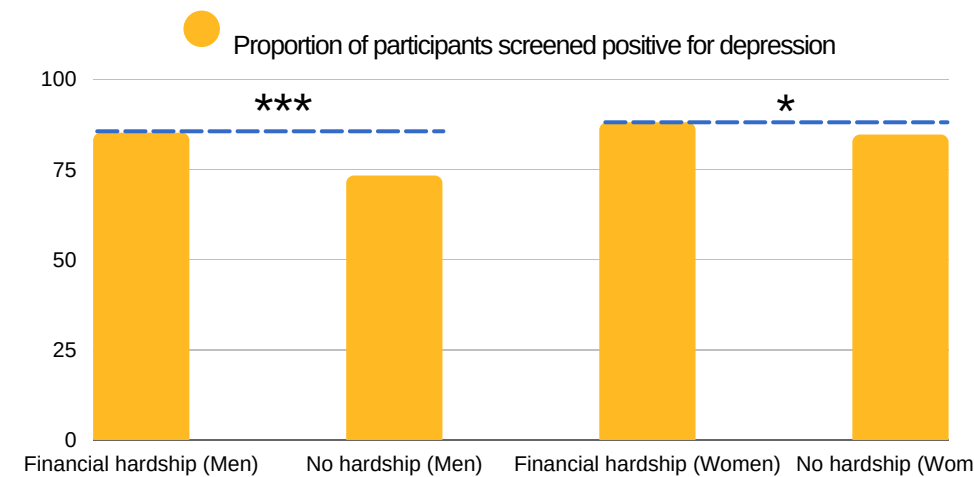


Figure 1. Percentage of reported depression in participants with or without COVID-19 related financial hardship

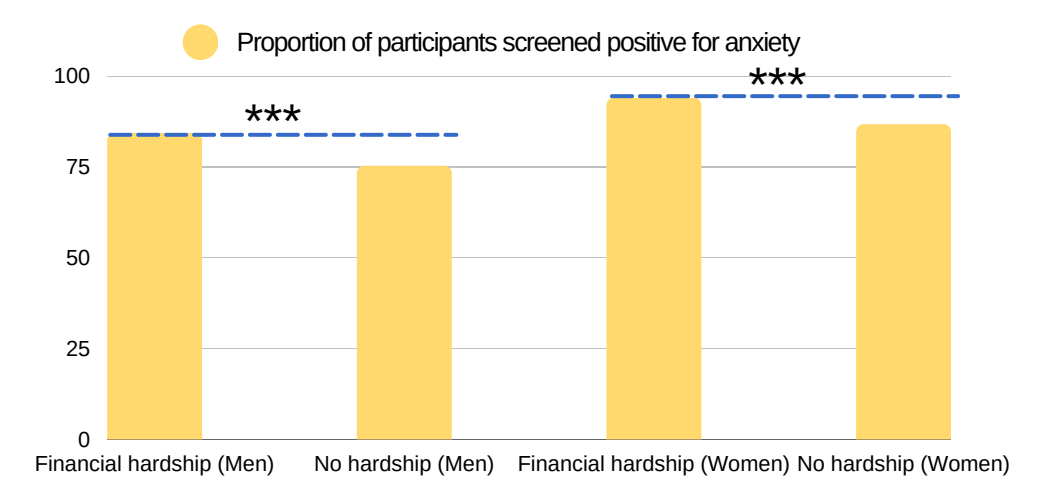


Figure 2. Percentage of reported anxiety in participants with or without COVID-19 related financial hardship

- Female gender was associated with more depressive symptoms ($Bs > .60$, $ps < .001$) and anxiety symptoms ($Bs > .59$, $ps < .001$) in each regression.
- Individuals who experienced financial hardship due to COVID-19 endorsed greater depressive symptoms ($B = 0.66$, $p < .001$) and anxiety symptoms ($B = 0.65$, $p < .001$).
- Individuals who experienced a COVID-19 related job loss in their household reported greater depressive symptoms ($B = 0.27$, $p < .025$) and anxiety symptoms ($B = 0.31$, $p = .013$).
- Individuals who reported that a friend or family member had COVID-19 did not differ with regard to depression or anxiety symptoms ($p = .079$).
- Interactions were nonsignificant ($ps > .234$).

4 Conclusion and Take-aways



Financial hardship and unemployment as a result of COVID-19 were associated with more severe depression and anxiety among people in substance use treatment.



Females reported more severe depressive and anxiety symptoms and a higher rate of having a friend/family member who had COVID-19 compared to their male counterparts.



Black/African American individuals reported less severe anxiety symptoms but a higher rate of having a friend/family member who had COVID-19 compared to other racial groups.

We need policies and interventions that address, prevent, and intervene in financial hardship and unemployment as a part of the mental health treatment plan. Also, treatments should be tailored to the unique challenges that minoritized groups are facing.

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