

When Money and Mental Health Problems Pile Up: The reciprocal relationship between income and psychological distress

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Our Methods

Data: New York City Longitudinal Study on Wellbeing (Poverty Tracker)

- 2015-2019 cohort: 5-wave with yearly measure for key outcomes
- 18-64 year old New Yorkers (N=3,103)

Measures:

1. **Individual earnings in past 12 months (percentiles)**
2. **Psychological distress over the last 30 days:** Kessler-6 for distress (e.g., felt nervous, hopeless, depressed)

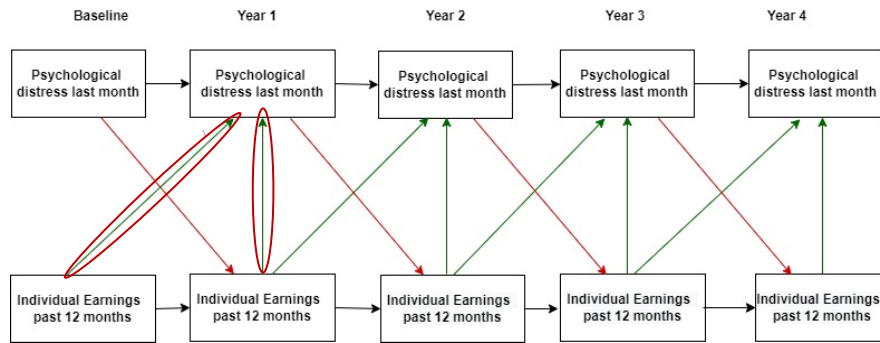
Control variables: gender, age, race/ethnicity, education level, immigrant status, partnership status, number of children

Analytical approach: cross-lagged panel model with fixed effects

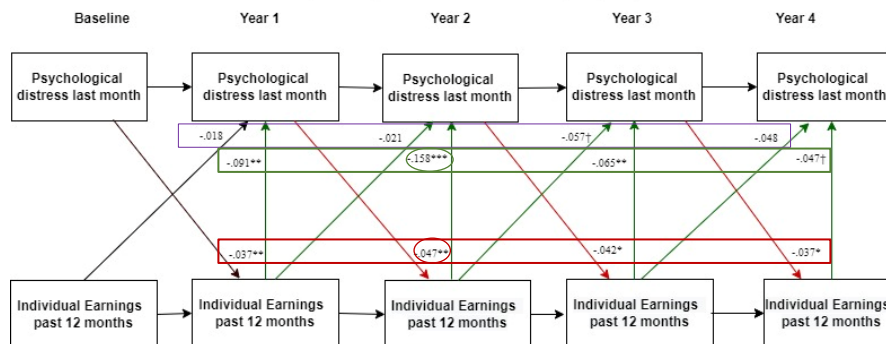
- all relationships in the same model
- controlling for unobserved differences between individuals



Effect of individual earnings → psychological distress in last month



Reciprocal effects of individual earnings and psychological distress among working age adults (n=3,103)



Fit statistics: RMSEA = .026; CFI = .999; TLI = .980; SMR = .013
Control variables: SEM model adjusted for gender, age, race/ethnicity, educational level, immigration status, number of children, and partnership status at baseline

† p < .1 * p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .001; *** p ≤ .000

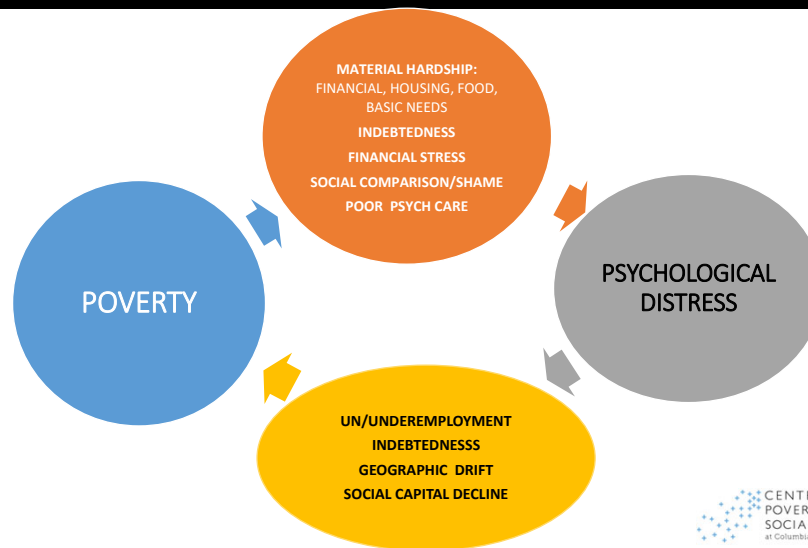
Conclusions

Money & mental health problems pile up!

Individual earnings ↔ psychological distress:

- Individual earnings → psychological distress
- Psychological distress → individual earnings

The Reciprocal Relationship Theory



Conclusions

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Individual earnings ↔ psychological distress:

- Individual earnings → psychological distress
 - Psychological distress → individual earnings
- Recent earnings (last 12 months): stronger impact on psychological distress than income further back in time (13-24 months prior)
 - Family income (last 12 months): stronger impact than income 13-24 months prior
 - Need to integrate economic policies (e.g., cash, unemployment supports) and mental health services
 - Future research:
 - Replicate with other Poverty Tracker cohorts
 - Other measures of poverty (e.g., material hardship)
 - Different/shorter time lags
 - Longer observation periods to examine cumulative effects



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