

**PARENTS' ANNUAL INCOME/MARITAL STATUS AND THEIR COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY.**

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**CONTEXT:** Research supports the observation that individuals who are more “embedded” socially in their communities enjoy better health compared to more isolated individuals

**STUDY OBJECTIVE:** To examine the relation between families’ annual income, parents’ marital status and their personal social support networks (e.g., family/friends) as well as their perception of support from the community (e.g., health system, service agencies).

**STUDY DESIGN:** Participants completed a written survey that included validated instruments that assess community support (Social Capital Scale-SCS), personal social support (Maternal Social Support Index-MSSI) and depressive symptoms (Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale-CES-D). Survey data were collected between January 2006 and 2009.

**SETTING:** A convenience sample of parents from practices of clinicians within the Southwestern Ohio Ambulatory Research Network (SOAR-Net).

**PARTICIPANTS:** 861 parents were recruited, 136 refused and 26 surveys were incomplete. There were 699 completed surveys. Almost 90% of surveys were completed by birth mothers, two thirds were Euro-American, 66% were married or had a live-in-partner (MP), 85% had a least a high school education. Median annual income was \$27, 500 and one quarter had a positive score (>15) on the CES-D (PCESD).

**STUDY INTERVENTION:** None

**OUTCOME MEASURE:** None

**RESULTS:** Unmarried parents (UP) were much more likely to report a PCESD compared to MP (44.8% vs 19.9%,  $p=0.0001$ ). UP who were also in the below median income subgroup had much higher mean scores on the CESD and lower mean scores on the MSSI compared to MP who were in the above median income subgroup (16.0+/-11.2 vs 9.1+/-7.7,  $p=0.0001$ ), (18.6+/-5.7 vs 25.6+/-5.2,  $p=0.0001$ ). However, mean SCS scores were similar between the same two subgroups (70.1+/-9.4 vs 71.5+/-9.4,  $p>0.2$ ).

**CONCLUSIONS:** Families’ income and parents’ marital status are strongly associated with self-reported depressive symptoms and personal social support. However, community connectedness as assessed by the SCS appears to be a different construct that is stable across income/marital status subgroups in this sample.