

Evidence-based decision-making on research ethics

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tl;dr

**We want to minimize costs,
maximize benefits of research to
participants and society**

But it's hard to predict them!

→ **Use randomized experiments**

Ethical goals

- 1. Respect for persons**
- 2. Beneficence**

Need to know:

**Harms, costs, benefits
to participants, community,**

How do we know?

- 1. Ask our colleagues**
- 2. Ask local experts**
- 3. Ask participants**

Prediction is hard

Academics can't predict how participants respond to research

Psychologists can't predict patient mental states

Development professionals can't predict responses of people living in poverty

We are bad at predicting how we will feel in future — and especially how others feel



Reactions to Research Participation Questionnaire

1. Participation

I like the idea that I contributed to science.

I was glad to be asked to participate.

Include in future testing: I felt I could stop participating at any time.

Recommended new item: Participation was a choice I freely made.

2. Personal Benefits

I gained insight about my experiences through research participation.

I gained something positive from participating.

I found participating beneficial to me.

I found participating in this study personally meaningful.

3. Emotional Reactions

The research raised emotional issues for me that I had not expected.

I experienced intense emotions during the research session.

I was emotional during the research session.

The research made me think about things I didn't want to think about.

4. Perceived Drawbacks

The study procedures took too long.

Participating in this study was inconvenient for me.

I found participating boring.

I found the questions too personal.

Include in future testing: Knowing what I know now, I would participate in this study again if given the opportunity. (Reverse score)

Include in future testing: Had I known in advance what participating would be like I still would have agreed to participate.. (Reverse score)

5. Global evaluation

I think this research is for a good cause.

I believe this study's results will be useful to others.

I was treated with respect and dignity

I trust that my replies will be kept private.

Include in future testing: I understood the consent form.

Our proposal

**Estimate causal effects of
research on participants using
randomized experiments**



Application
Asking about
violent victimization

Are participants willing to reveal sensitive answers?

Can armed actors obtain responses to harm participants?

Does asking about trauma retraumatize?

Experimental design

Group	Block 1	Block 2
Treatment	Violence	Mental health
Control	Mental health	Violence

Overall main effects from random effects meta-analysis

Anxiety



Depression



PTSD index

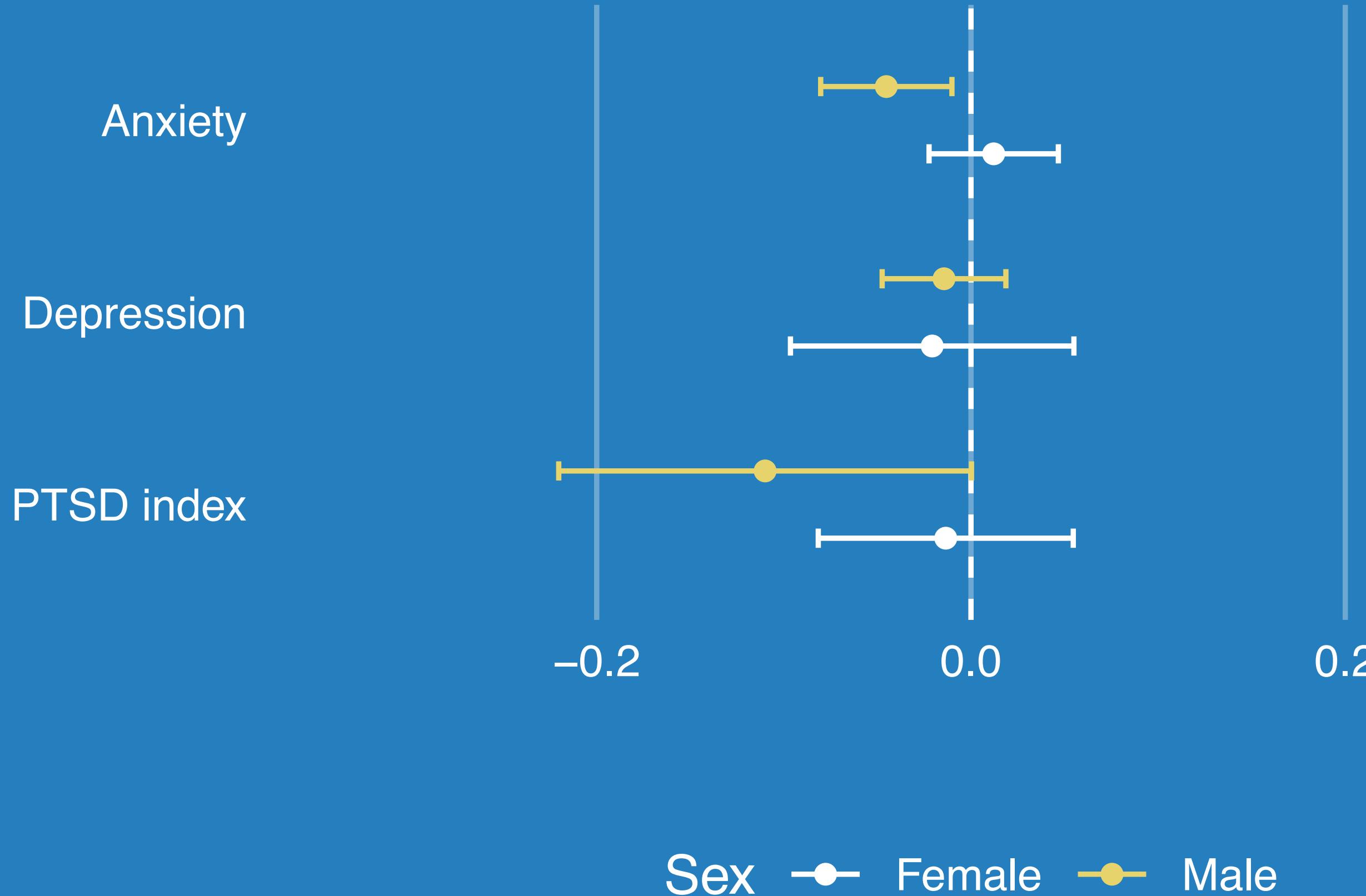


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Subgroup effects by sex from random effects meta-analysis



Learning about ethics at each research stage

Sampling: Inclusion in the study

Protocols: Intensity of consent procedures

Assignment: Costs to being excluded

Treatments: Researcher involvement

Measurement: Being asked questions

Dissemination: Sharing the evidence

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Next steps for us

Systematic review

Coordinated experiments

Enumerator experiment

Next steps for you

Use evidence to inform decisions

Ask participants before, after

Add experiments to your studies