

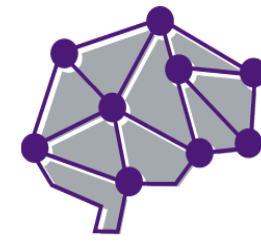
Public Perceptions of Law enforcements Ability to Intervene in an Opioid Overdose:

A Study of Tarrant County

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STUDENT OVERVIEW OF
APPLIED RESEARCH



Background

- ❖ Since 1999, more than one million Americans have died of an overdose, reaching a record high of more than 106,000 in 2021 [1].
- ❖ Overdoses associated with opioids have become the leading cause of death for Americans aged 18–45 [2], with rates rising across all age groups [3].
- ❖ Law enforcement is increasingly tasked with maintaining social order, handling responsibilities such as responding to drug-related situations [4] and public health emergencies.
- ❖ There is a gap in research exploring public perceptions of law enforcement's ability to intervene in such situations.
- ❖ The current study aimed to assess public perceptions of law enforcement's ability to effectively respond to opioid overdoses in Tarrant County. Specifically, we sought to gauge residents' confidence in law enforcement's capacity to handle these public health emergencies.
- ❖ We hypothesize that public perceptions of law enforcement's ability to effectively intervene during an opioid overdose will vary based on sex and education level, with females having higher trust than males, and lower education levels resulting in less confidence.

Method

- ❖ Participants were recruited in-person from various public locations around Tarrant County ($N = 72$).
- ❖ Participants completed a paper copy of the survey.
- ❖ A t -test was conducted to examine how sex of the participant influenced confidence in policing abilities.
- ❖ A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to compare confidence levels between different education levels.

Measures

- ❖ **Sex:** Male and female
- ❖ **Education:** Less than high school, high school degree or GED, some college, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, graduate degree or higher
- ❖ **Confidence:** 9-question survey using 7-point Likert Scale measuring confidence in police responses to opioid overdoses

Demographics

Demographic	Total (n)	Percent (%)
Sex		
Female	35	48.6
Male	37	51.4
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Native American	2	1.4
Asian	2	2.8
Black/African American	23	32.3
White	35	49.3
Native Hawaiian or another Pacific Islander	1	1.4
Bi-racial or Multiracial	5	7.0
Other	4	5.6

Results

Independent Samples t -test (see Figure 1)

- ❖ Females ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.01$) had similar confidence levels as males ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 1.08$), $t(70) = 0.33$, $p = .714$. There was no significant difference in scores.

ANOVA (see Figure 2)

- ❖ Participants' confidence levels, where higher scores indicate greater confidence, varied across education levels but did not reach statistical significance. Those with an Associate's Degree reported the highest scores ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 2.04$), followed by those with a High School Diploma or GED ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.02$), less than high school ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.39$), and some college ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.01$). Participants with a Bachelor's Degree showed lower scores, ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.84$), while those with a graduate degree or higher reported the lowest scores ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.21$). The ANOVA revealed no significant differences across these groups, $ps \geq .35$, suggesting that confidence levels were relatively consistent regardless of educational attainment.

Figure 1. Confidence Levels by Sex

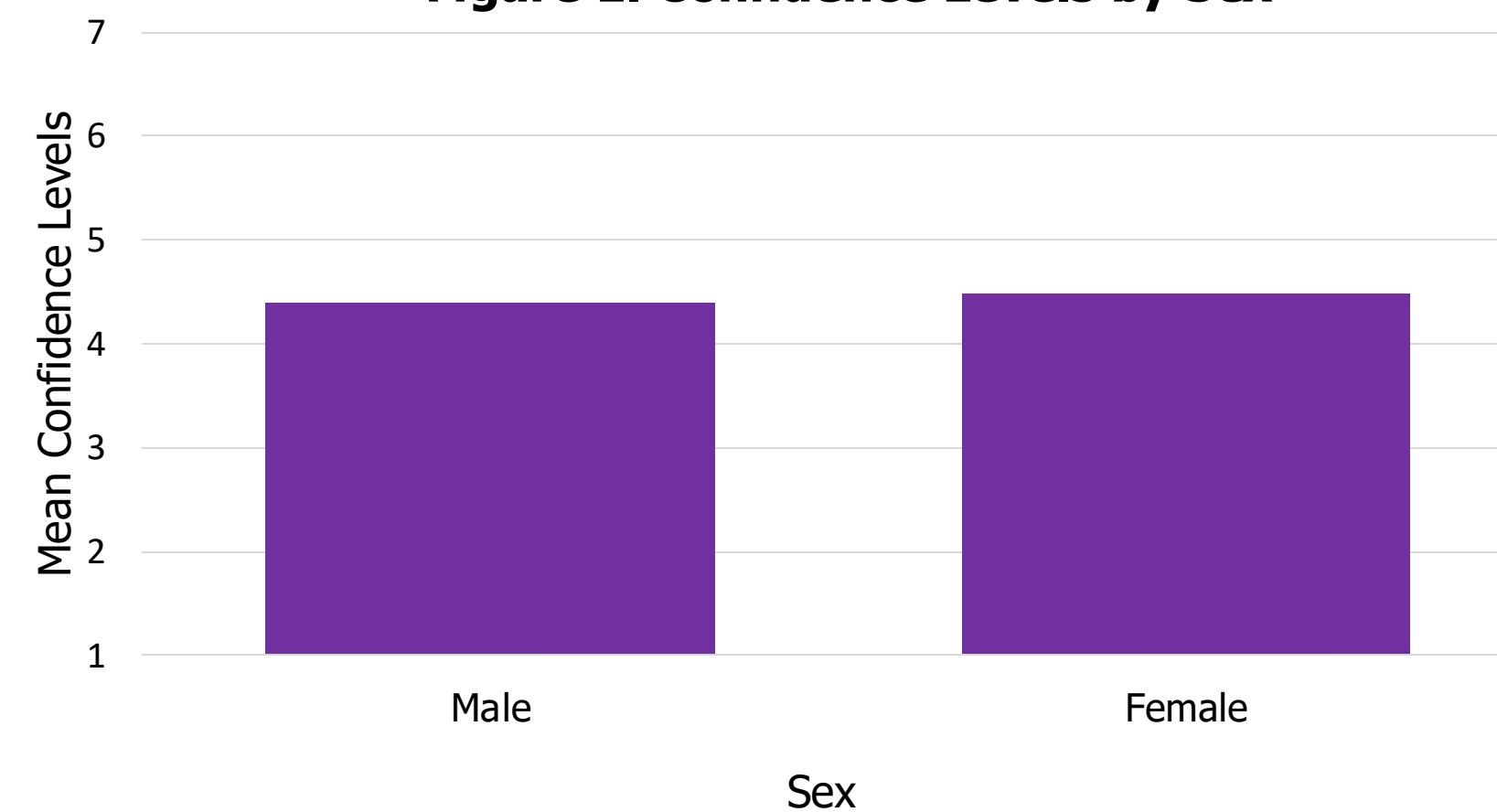
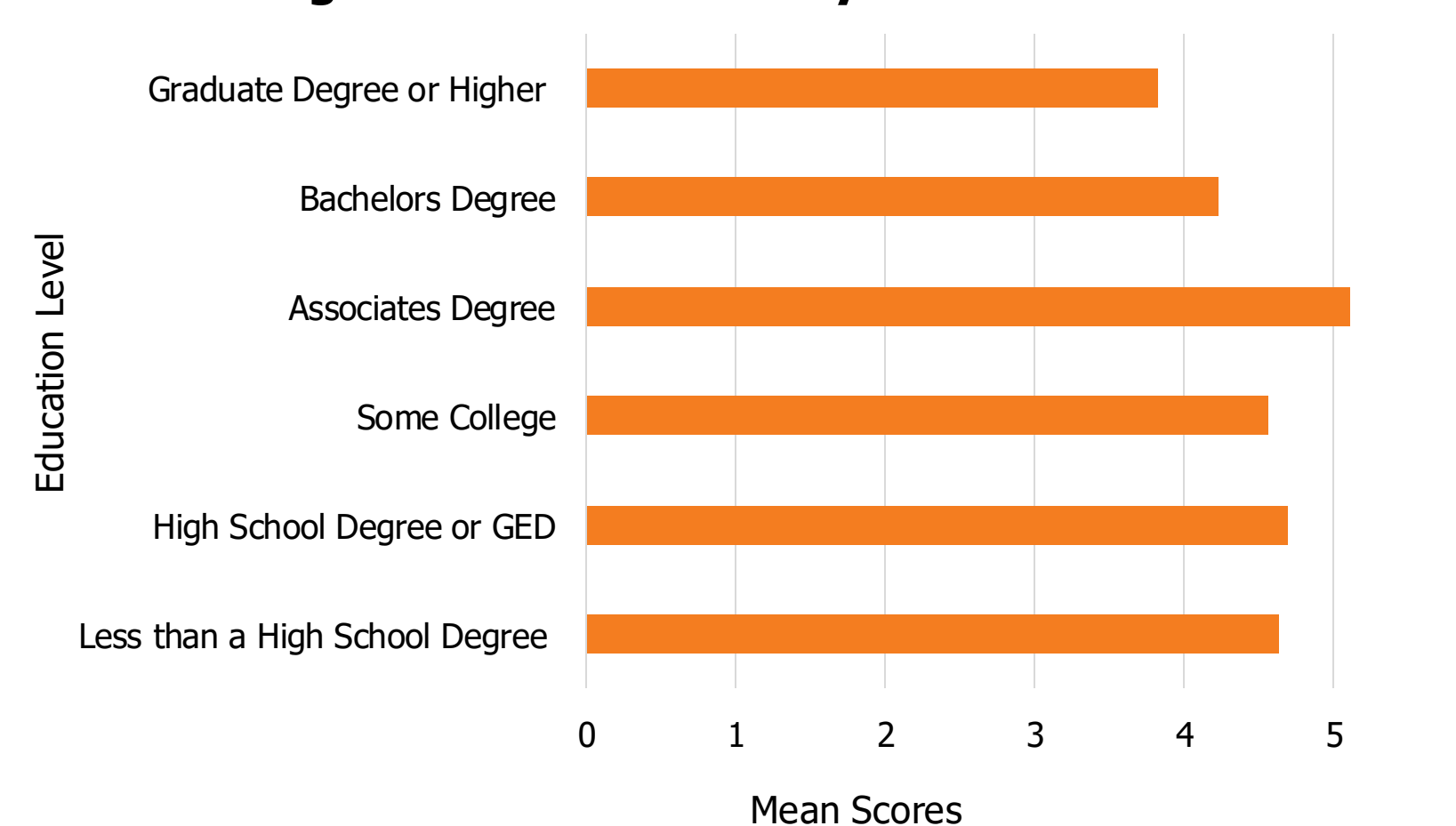


Figure 2. Mean Scores by Education Level



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Agree Strongly
Officer(s) will have a poor perception of the person who is overdosing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Officer(s) will show sympathy for the person that is overdosing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Officer(s) will be knowledgeable about the effects of naloxone, a medication used to reverse opioid overdoses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Officer(s) will know how to properly administer naloxone.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Officer(s) will use the proper dosage of naloxone to reverse the overdose.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Officer(s) will be reluctant to administer naloxone.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Officer(s) will go out of their way to help the person overdosing.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Officer(s) will monitor the person after naloxone is administered.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Officer(s) will call emergency medical services after naloxone administration.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Discussion/Limitations

- ❖ The study suggests that sex and education do not significantly predict confidence in policing abilities to intervene in an opioid overdose.
- ❖ A key limitation of this study is the reliance on self-report survey data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or recall bias.
- ❖ Additionally, this survey was the third in a series of three questionnaires, which may have led to response fatigue. It is recommended that this survey be deployed again separately or with the inclusion of attention checks to ensure that participants are carefully considering the questions.
- ❖ Findings indicate a moderate level of confidence among Tarrant County residents in law enforcement's ability to effectively respond to opioid overdoses.
- ❖ Future research should focus on better understanding the factors that influence confidence levels and work towards advancing interventions that could cultivate greater trust and collaboration between residents and law enforcement. Such research has the potential to inform policies that promote transparency, accountability, and mutual respect, ultimately contributing to healthier and more cohesive communities.

References

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