



Caregivers' Family and Non-Family Role Trajectories and Health Outcomes

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Abstract

Guided by life course theory, the current study explored the gendered relationship between family and non-family role trajectories and health outcomes among adult children providing care to aging parents. Eight waves (1992-2006) of the Health and Retirement study were utilized to examine what role trajectories exist among daughter and son caregivers (N = 1300) and whether these role trajectories were related to caregivers' health outcomes. Results indicate that a myriad of family and non-family role trajectories exist among adult child caregivers and these trajectories are related to health outcomes in different ways for daughter versus son caregivers.

Purpose

The current study explores the gendered phenomena of adult child caregivers' family and non-family role trajectories and health through a theoretical lens of life course theory (George, 2009). Two pertinent research questions regarding adult child caregivers are answered:

- What family and non-family role trajectories exist among daughter and son caregivers?
- Are daughter and son caregivers' family and non-family role trajectories associated with caregivers' psychological and physical health?

Data and Sample

- Health and Retirement Study (HRS) is a nationally representative, longitudinal, and publicly available study of health, retirement, and aging sponsored by the National Institute on Aging.
- Waves 1992 through 2006 for the 1931-1941 HRS cohort.
- 1,300 adult child caregivers measured by asking, "Did you spend a total of 100 or more hours in the past 12 months helping your parent(s)/stepparent(s) with basic personal activities like dressing, eating, and bathing?"

Analysis

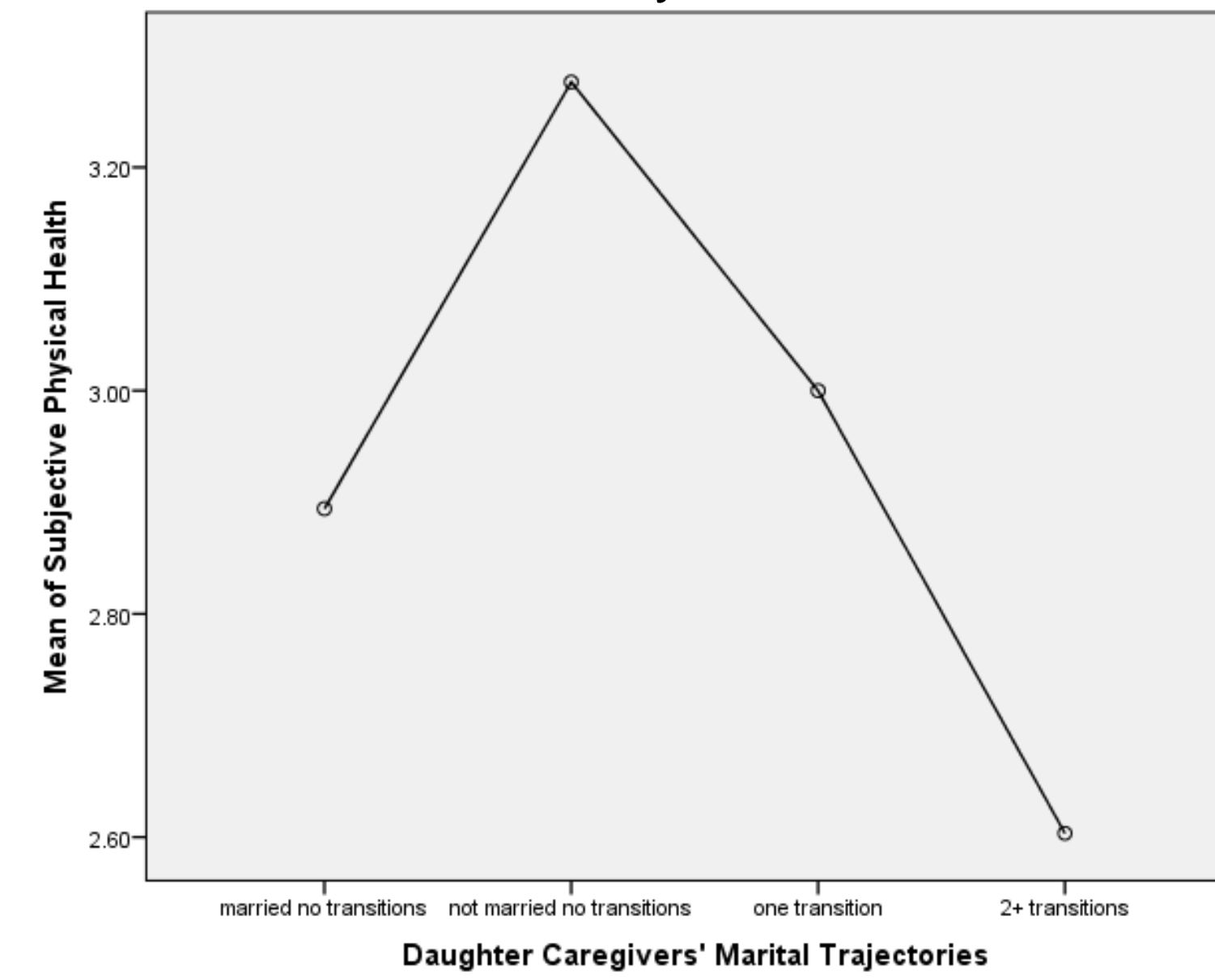
- RQ1: Creating observed categorical variables from role frequencies
- RQ2: Analysis of variances (ANOVAs) by gender

Table 1
Adult Child Caregiver Sample Characteristics (N = 1300)

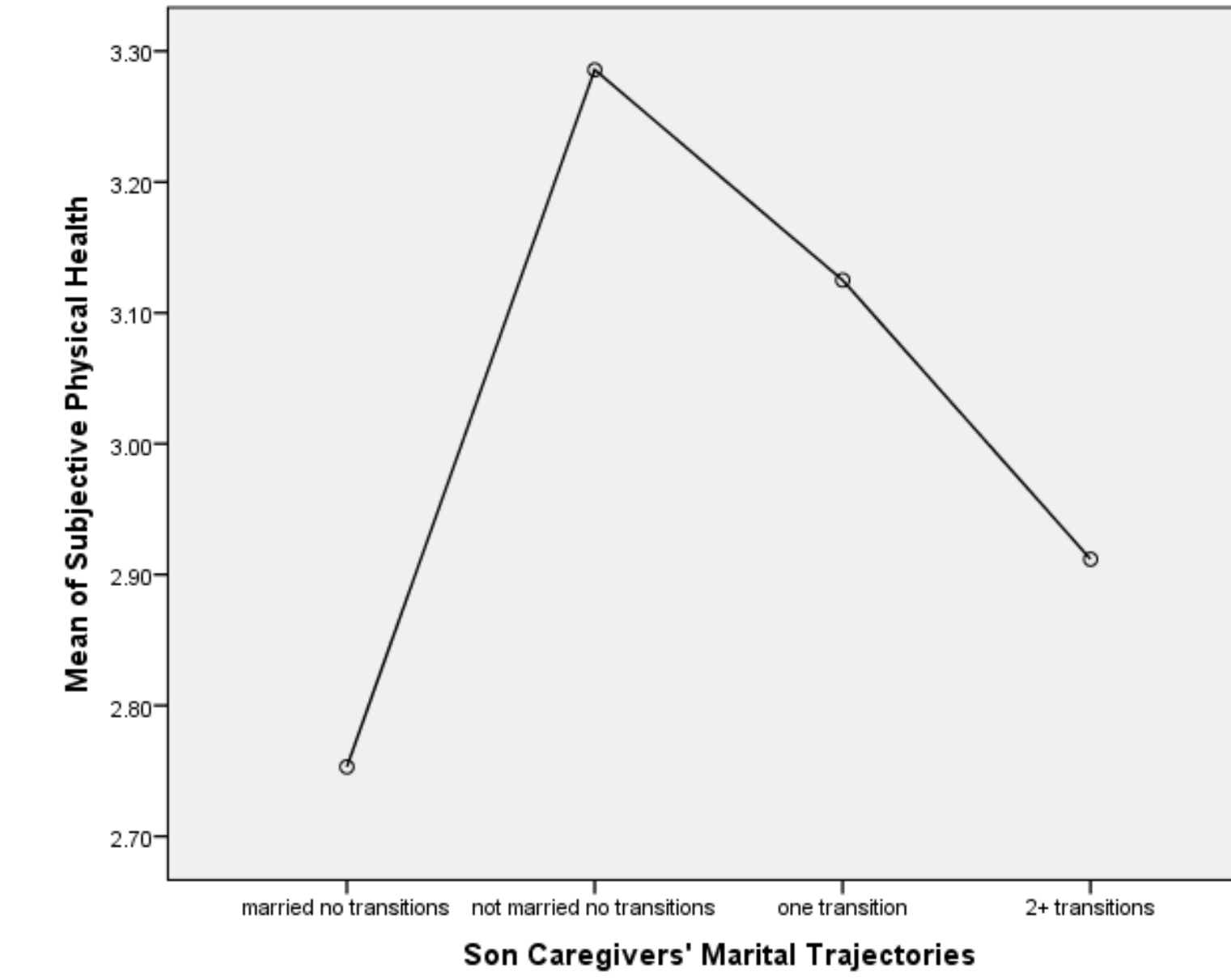
Variables	Daughter Caregivers (n = 1,024)			Son Caregivers (n = 276)		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Sociodemographic Characteristics						
Race/ethnicity ^a	.77	.42	0-1	.80	.40	0-1
Age in years	54.67	3.09	50-61	54.65	3.16	50-61
Education ^b	.38	.48	0-1	.50	.50	0-1
Caregiving trajectories^c						
Marital trajectories ^d	2.24	.88	1-4	2.17	.81	1-4
Parenting trajectories ^e	1.72	.90	1-4	1.75	1.05	1-4
Employment trajectories ^f	1.66	.94	1-5	1.71	1.04	1-5
Psychological health	2.83	.99	1-5	2.84	1.01	1-5
Physical health	1.55	1.93	0-8	1.11	1.50	0-8
	3.00	1.07	1-5	2.91	1.08	1-5

^aRace/ethnicity: 0 = non-White, 1 = White. ^bEducation: 0 = ≤ hs, 1 = >hs. ^cCaregiving trajectories: 1 = one transition, 2 = two transitions, 3 = three transitions, 4 = 4+ transitions. ^dMarital trajectories: 1 = married, no transitions; 2 = not married, no transitions; 3 = one transition; 4 = 2+ transitions. ^eParenting trajectories: 1 = no transitions, 2 = one transition, 3 = two transitions, 4 = three transitions, 5 = 4+ transitions. ^fEmployment trajectories: 1 = work, no transitions; 2 = no work, no transitions; 3 = one transition; 4 = two transitions; 5 = 3+ transitions.

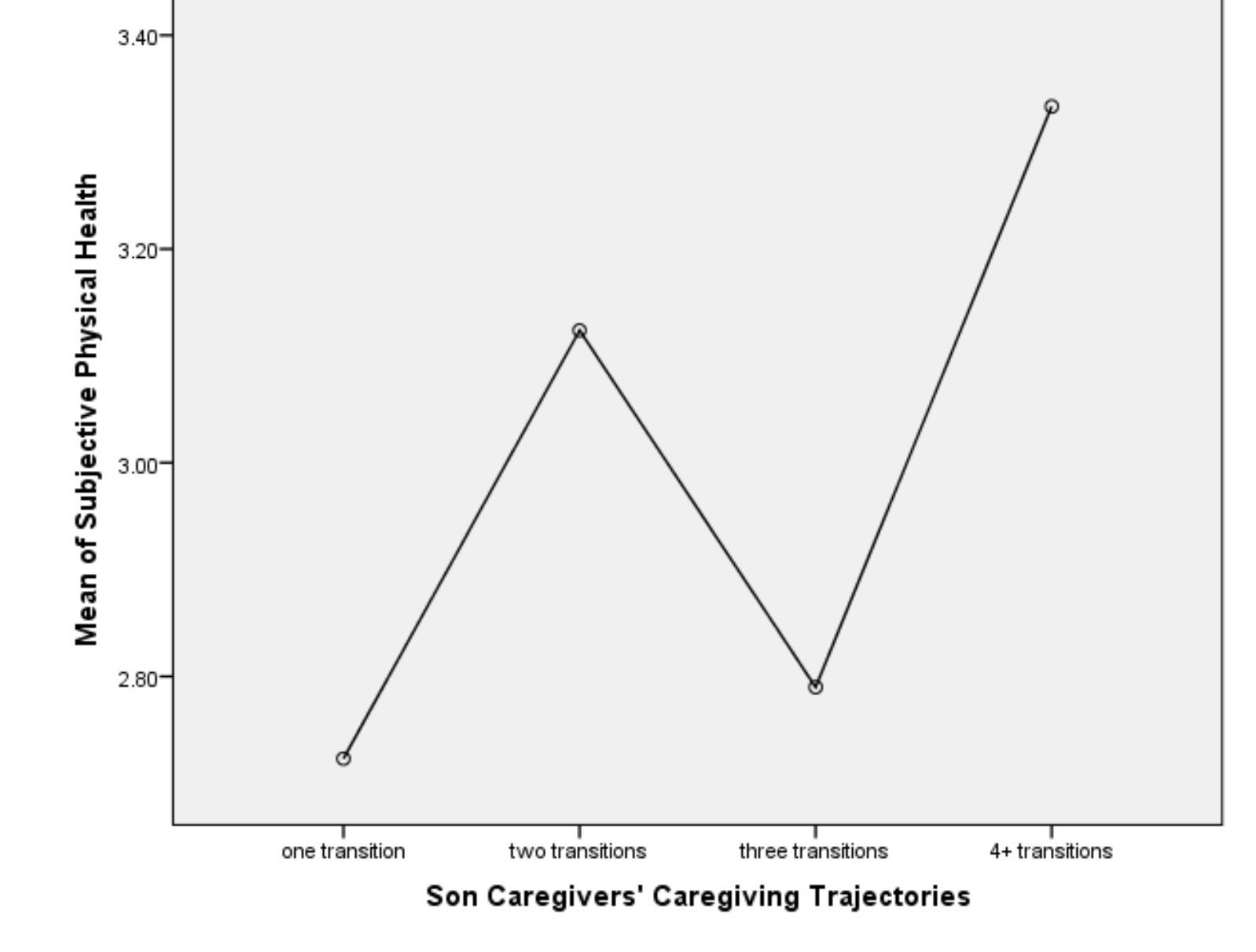
Daughter Marital Trajectories and Physical Health



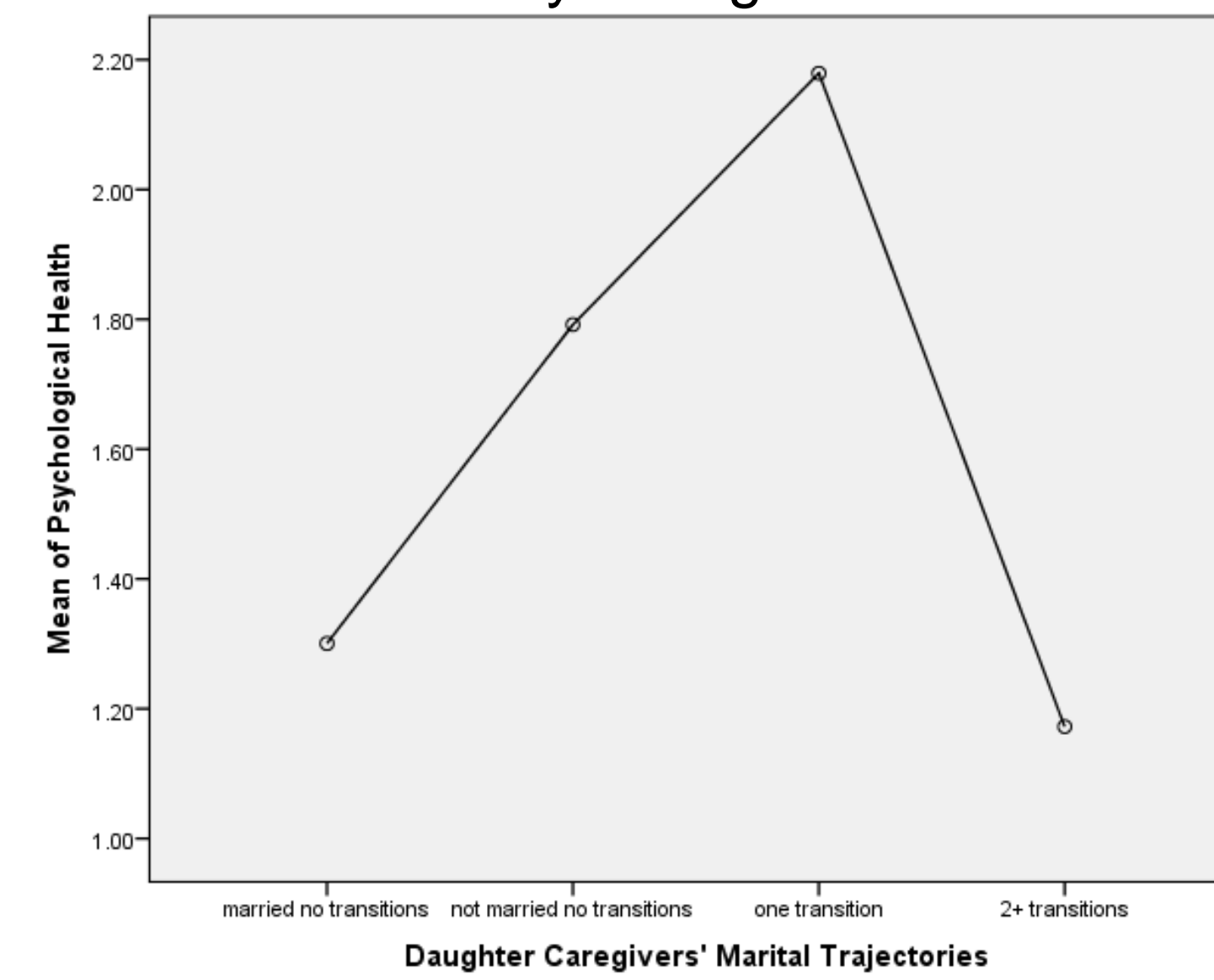
Son Marital Trajectories and Physical Health



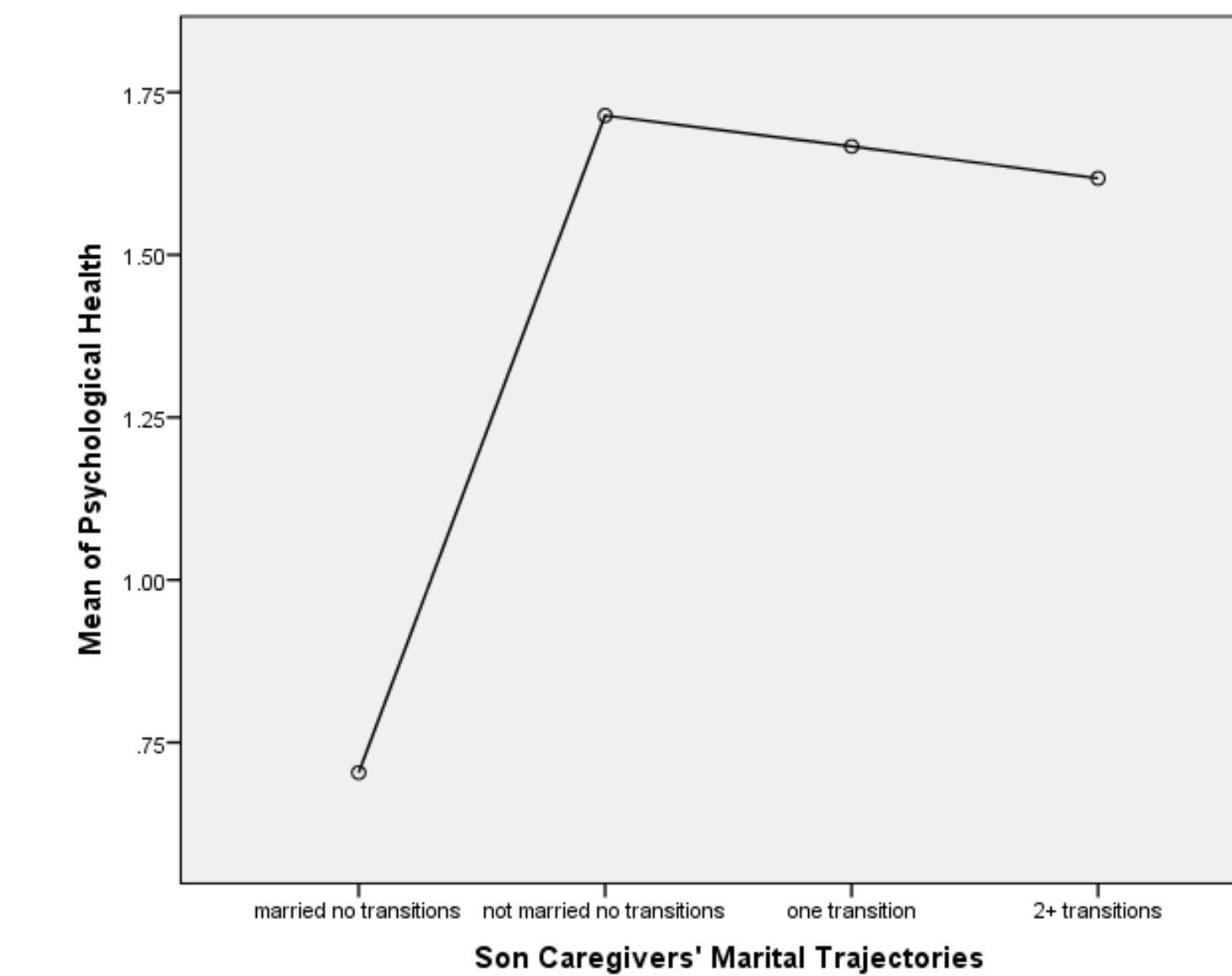
Son Caregiving Trajectories and Physical Health



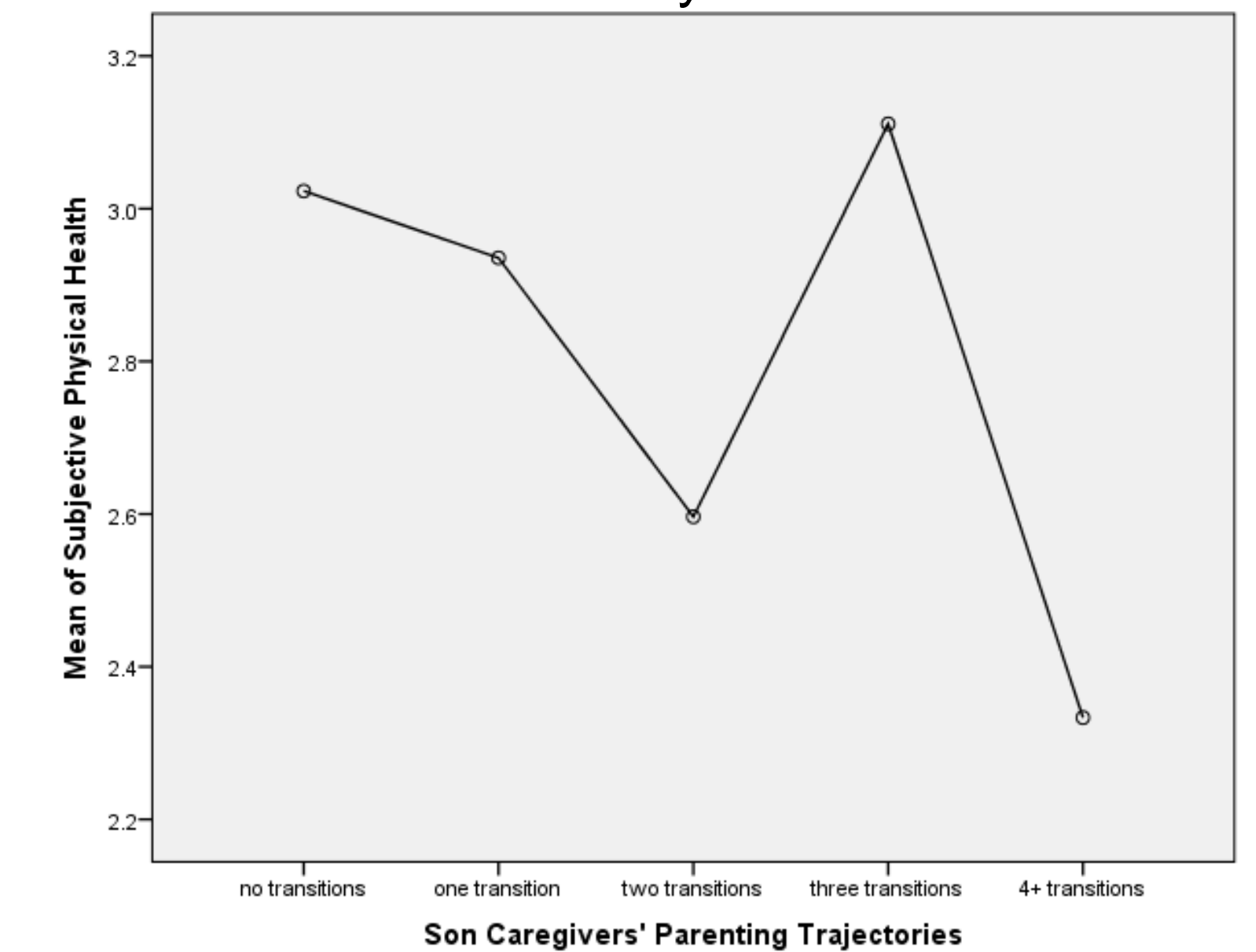
Daughter Marital Trajectories and Psychological Health



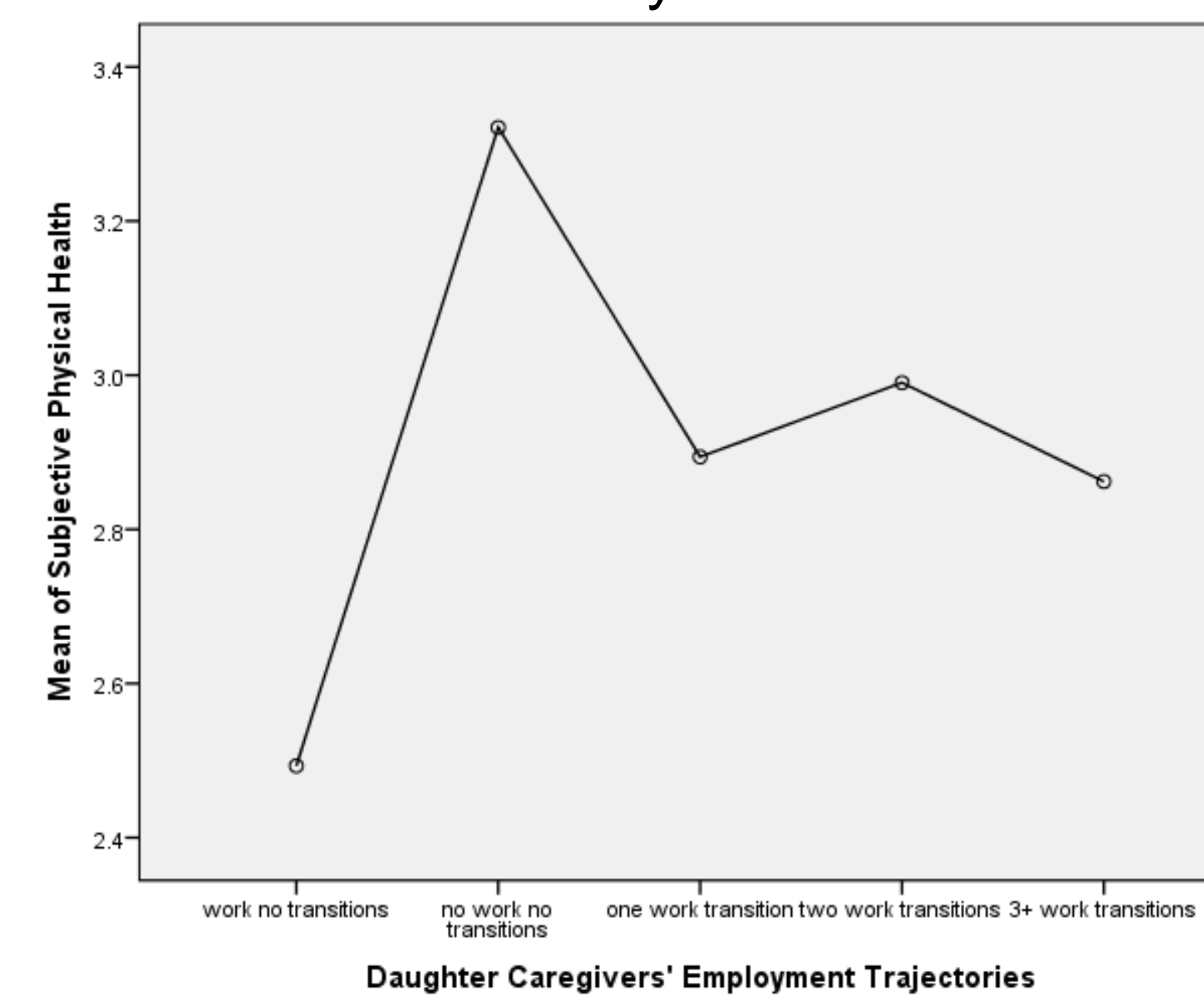
Son Marital Trajectories and Psychological Health



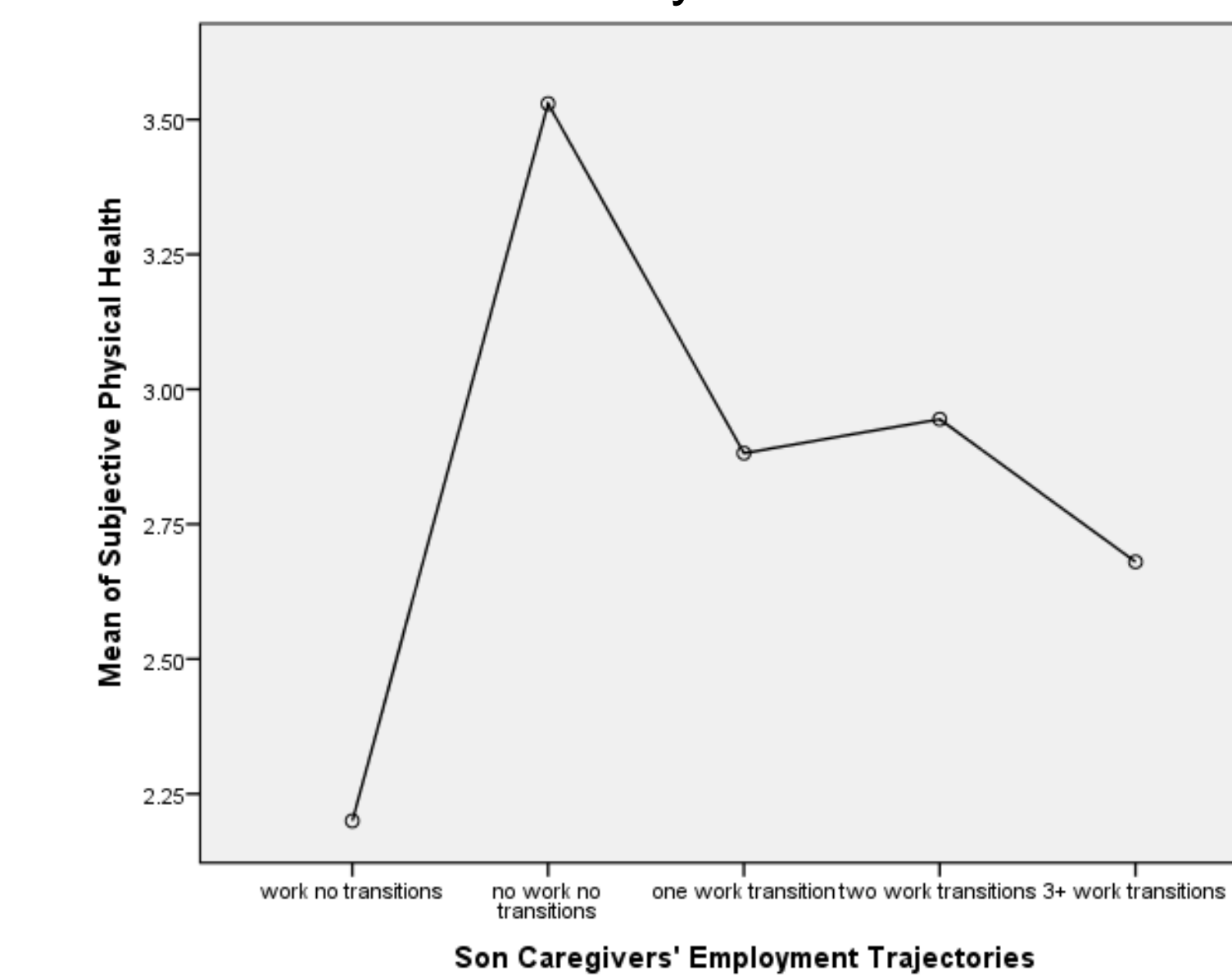
Son Parenting Trajectories and Physical Health



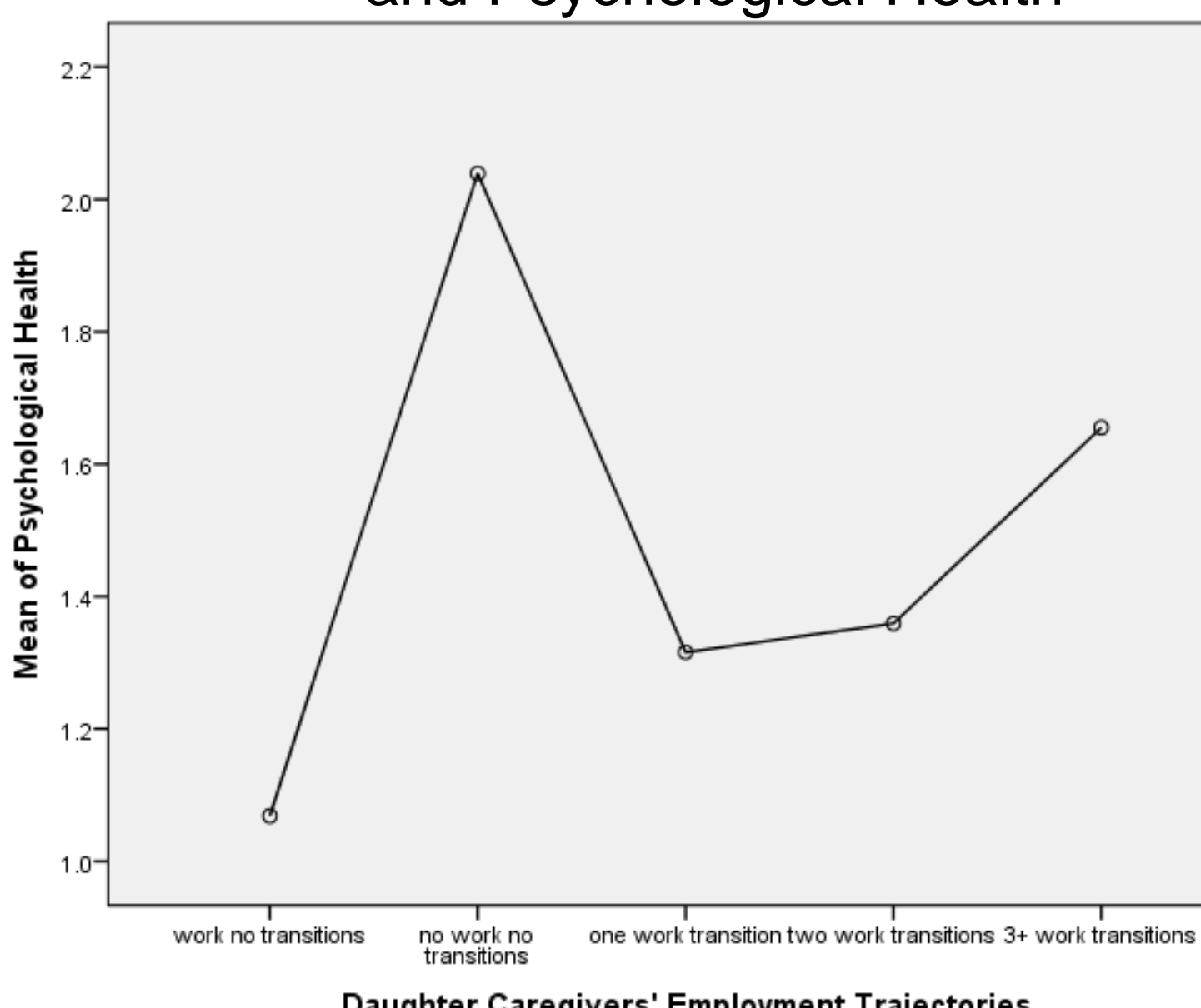
Daughter Employment Trajectories and Physical Health



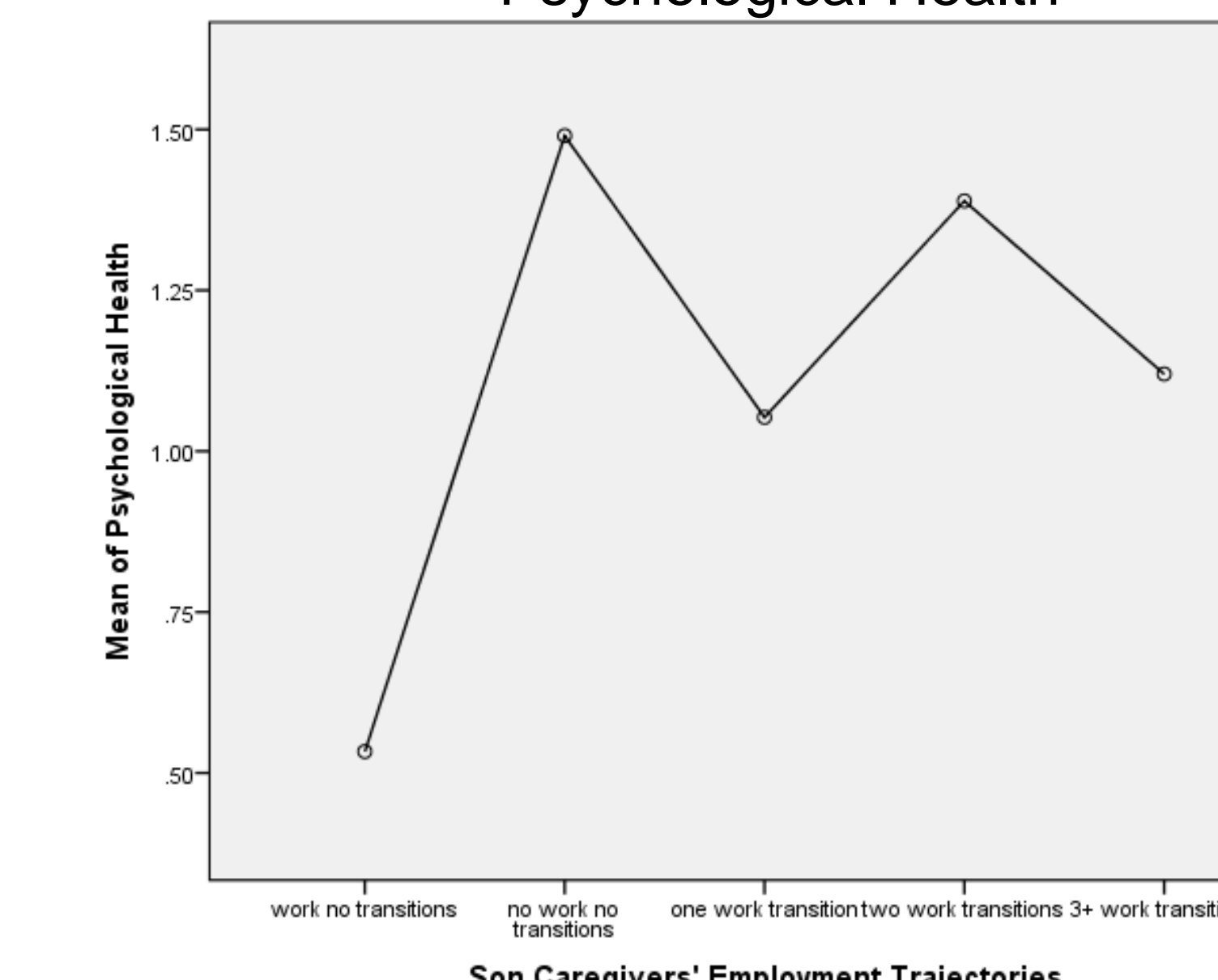
Son Employment Trajectories and Physical Health



Daughter Employment Trajectories and Psychological Health



Son Employment Trajectories and Psychological Health



Conclusions

- Daughter and son caregivers occupy similar family and non-family role trajectories that are related differently to their respective health outcomes.
- No differences in health outcomes exist for daughter caregiving and parenting trajectories.
- Continuously married and working caregivers have more optimal psychological health.
- Continuously not working and not married caregivers have less optimal psychological and physical health.
- Multiple transitions in role trajectories do not equate with worse psychological and physical health.
- Researchers, family practitioners, and policy makers can utilize study findings to support services specific to the multiple role and health needs of daughter and son caregivers.

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