

Analysis of the Correlation Between Non-Residential Parents and Adolescents Feeling Lonely and/or Disliked



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Introduction

While there is a large gap in literature focusing solely on the feelings of children in single-parent families, the topics that have been covered by research in the last 30 or so years are largely negative; matters such as behavioral issues, educational troubles (Owusu-Bempah, 1995), and juvenile delinquency are covered extensively (Kroese et al., 2021), while other subjects like the emotional wellbeing of children and adolescents in single-parent families are left unexamined. I have decided that I want to look further into the self-reported emotional wellbeing of children living without one or both of their biological parents. While behavior of these children has been heavily reported on, the root of these issues—their mental wellbeing—has been vastly ignored. Is there a link between feelings of loneliness and missing a parent? Does missing a parent have a correlation with feeling disliked?

Methods

The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) is a longitudinal study spanning over 20,000 adolescents who were in grades 7-12 during the 1994-95 school year. These participants have been reevaluated over five waves of research, but this analysis is exclusive to the initial wave 1. "Wave I took place between 1994 and 1995, during which 90,118 students from 145 middle, junior, and high schools completed a 45-minute questionnaire administered in the school. Of the students who completed an in-school questionnaire, 20,745 adolescents were sampled to complete an in-home interview" (Add Health). Originally, the purpose of the research administered in Add Health was to supply insight into the causes of adolescent health and behavior, "with special emphasis on the effects of multiple contexts of adolescent life" (Harris, 2013). Therefore, the study explored many concepts, including: substance use, family composition, nutrition, sexual activity, and biological data. (Add Health)

Measures

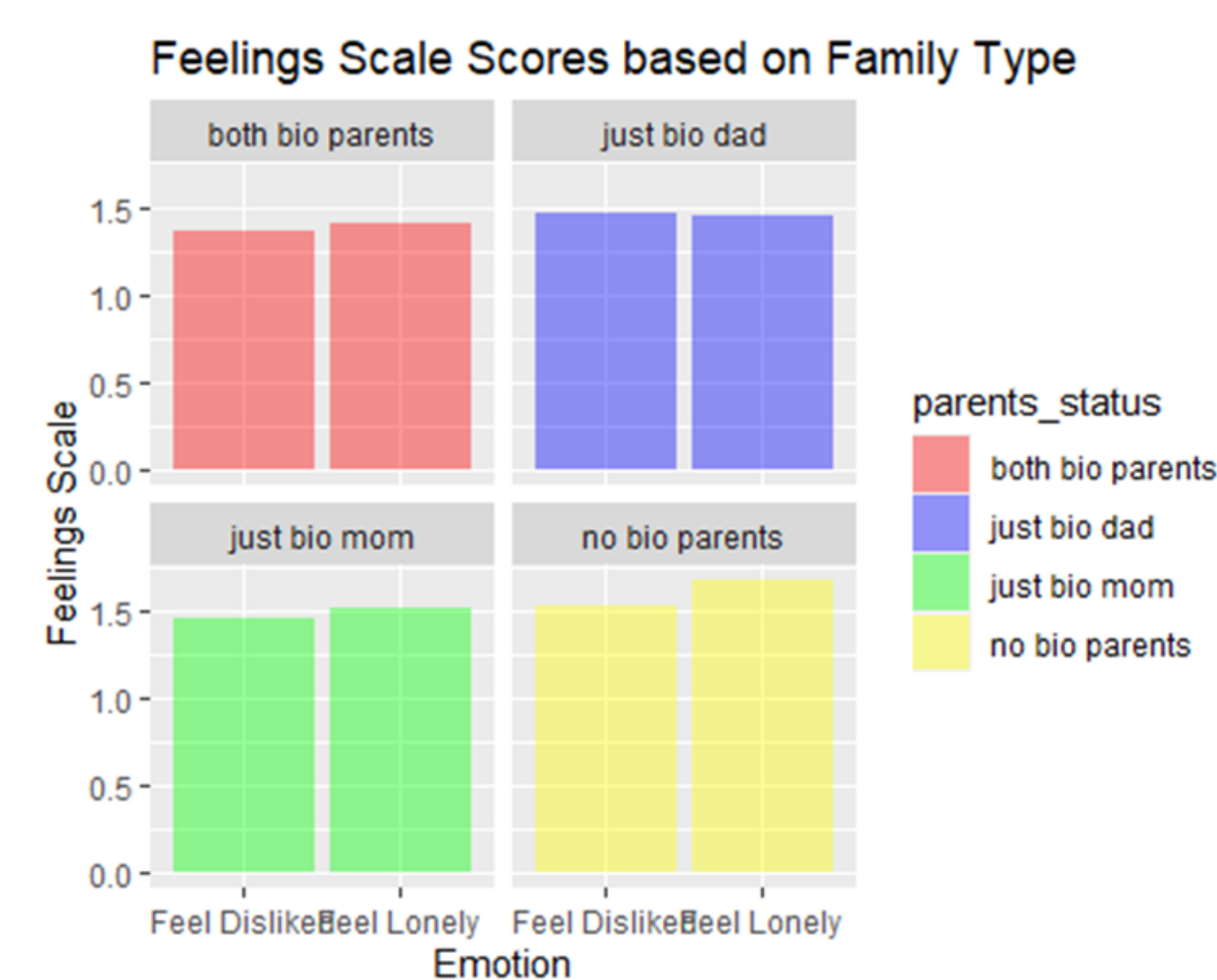
The variables I will be focusing on are self reported feelings of loneliness, being disliked, and a variable I created, titled Parent Status. This variable codes participants based on the number of biological parents in their household. This includes "both bio parents," "just bio father," "just bio mother," and "no bio parents."

Participants reported on a number of questions related to feelings they had felt in the two weeks prior to the survey. Ranked on a "Feelings Scale," these variables were ranked numerically from 0-3, 0 meaning "never or rarely" and 3 meaning "most or all of the time." Additionally, after analysis of these variables, an additional variable, Biological Sex, was considered as a potential confounding variable, but was instead shown to be an additional covariate.

Results

Analyzed here is the link between the number of biological parents in the household and adolescents' reports of feeling lonely ($f=19.04$, $p=2.79e-12$) and disliked ($f=10.94$, $p=3.69e-07$).

When compared to the other family types, adolescents with both biological parents in their household are significantly less likely to feel lonely ($\beta:1.39988$, $t:117.978$, $p<2e-16$) or disliked ($\beta:1.36484$, $t:125.658$, $p<2e-16$).

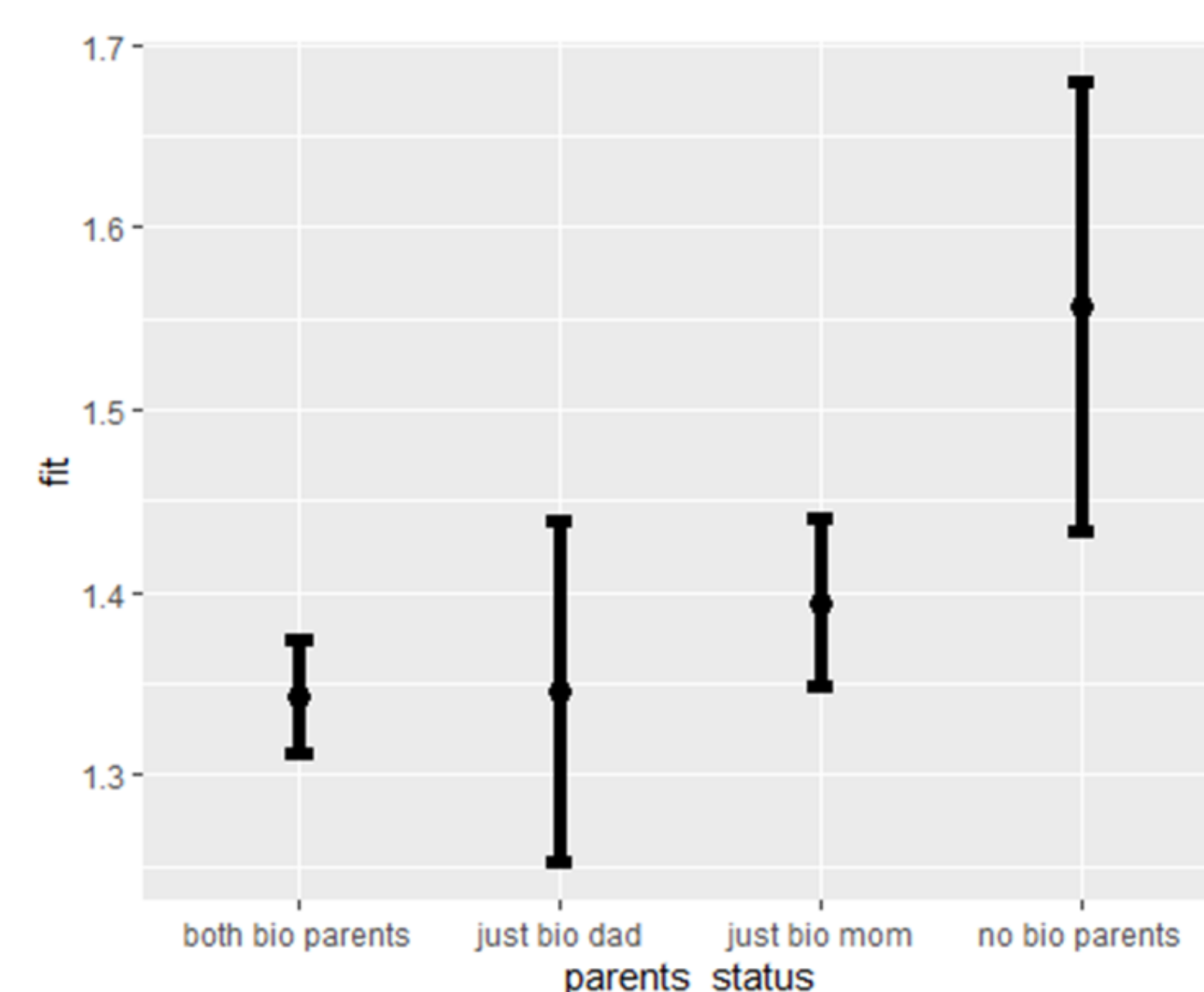
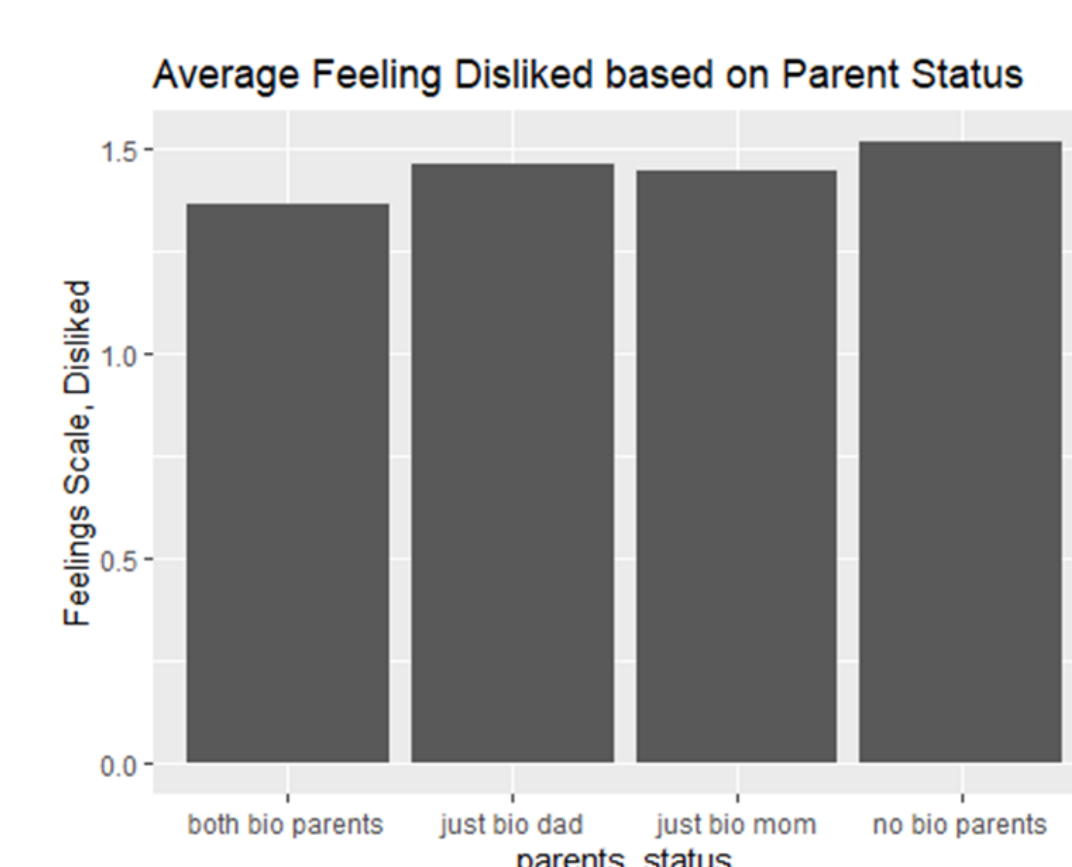
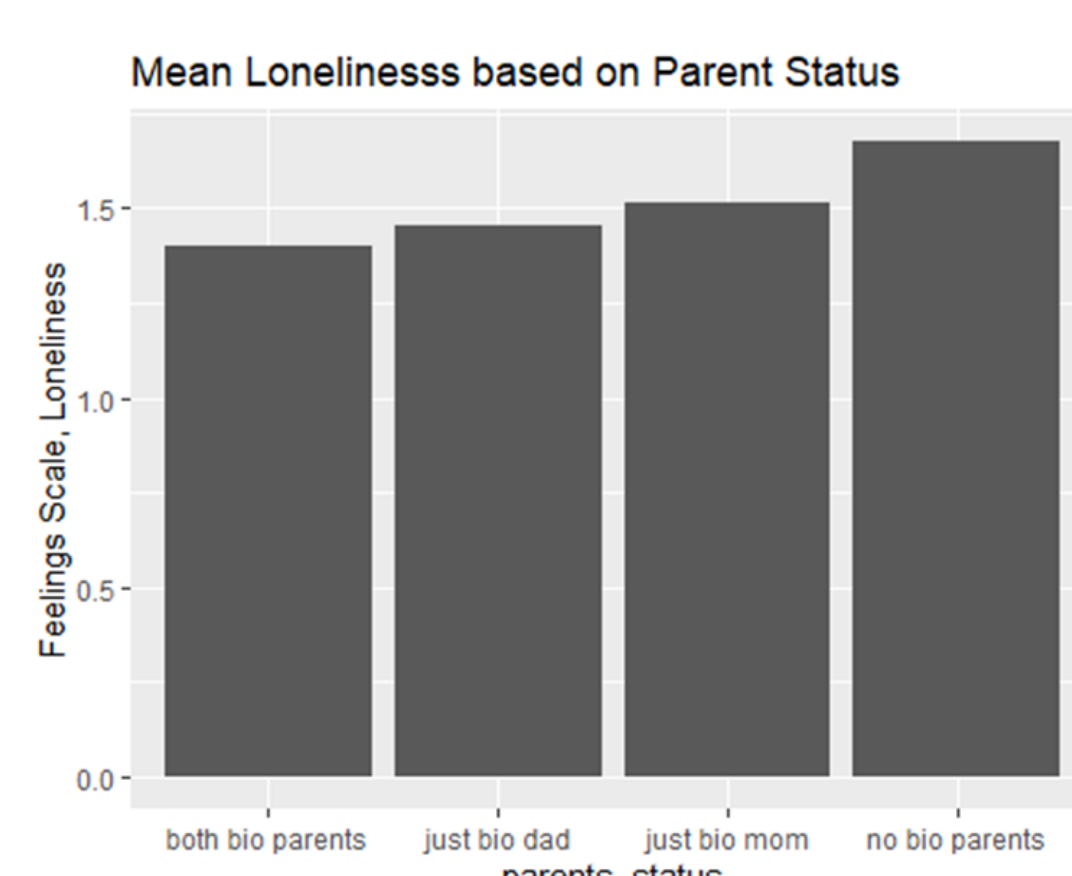


When controlling for gender, family type is still associated with the feelings scale variables but in a somewhat different way. Male participants with one or more biological parents absent for the household are significantly more likely to report feeling disliked when compared to male participants with both parents, while only male participants with no bio parents in their household are significantly more likely to report feeling lonely.

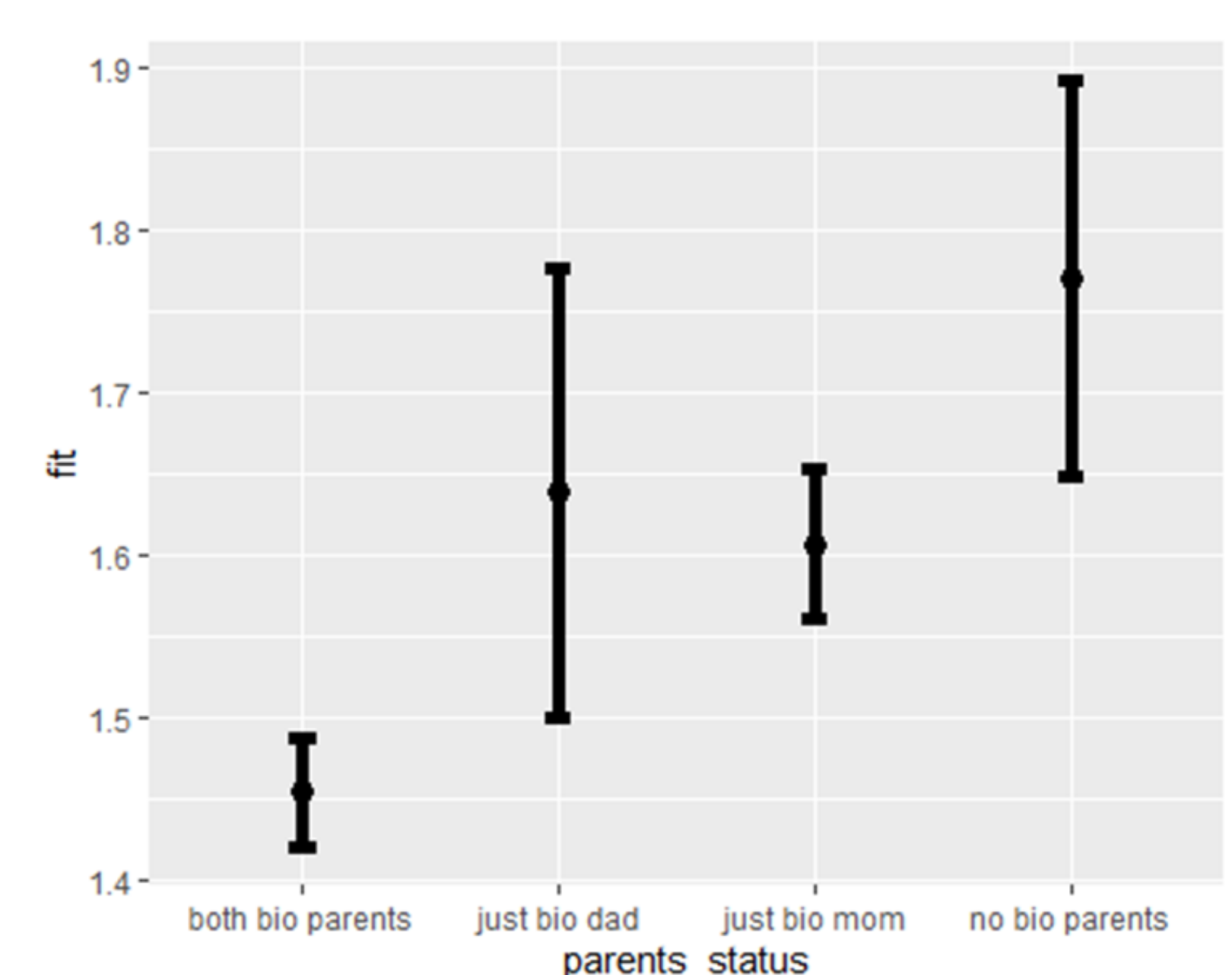
An opposite of this is shown when analyzing only female participants. Female participants with one or more biological parents absent for the household are significantly more likely to report feeling lonely when compared to female participants with both parents.

Additionally, there is no significant difference between any of the family types when comparing female participants reporting feeling disliked.

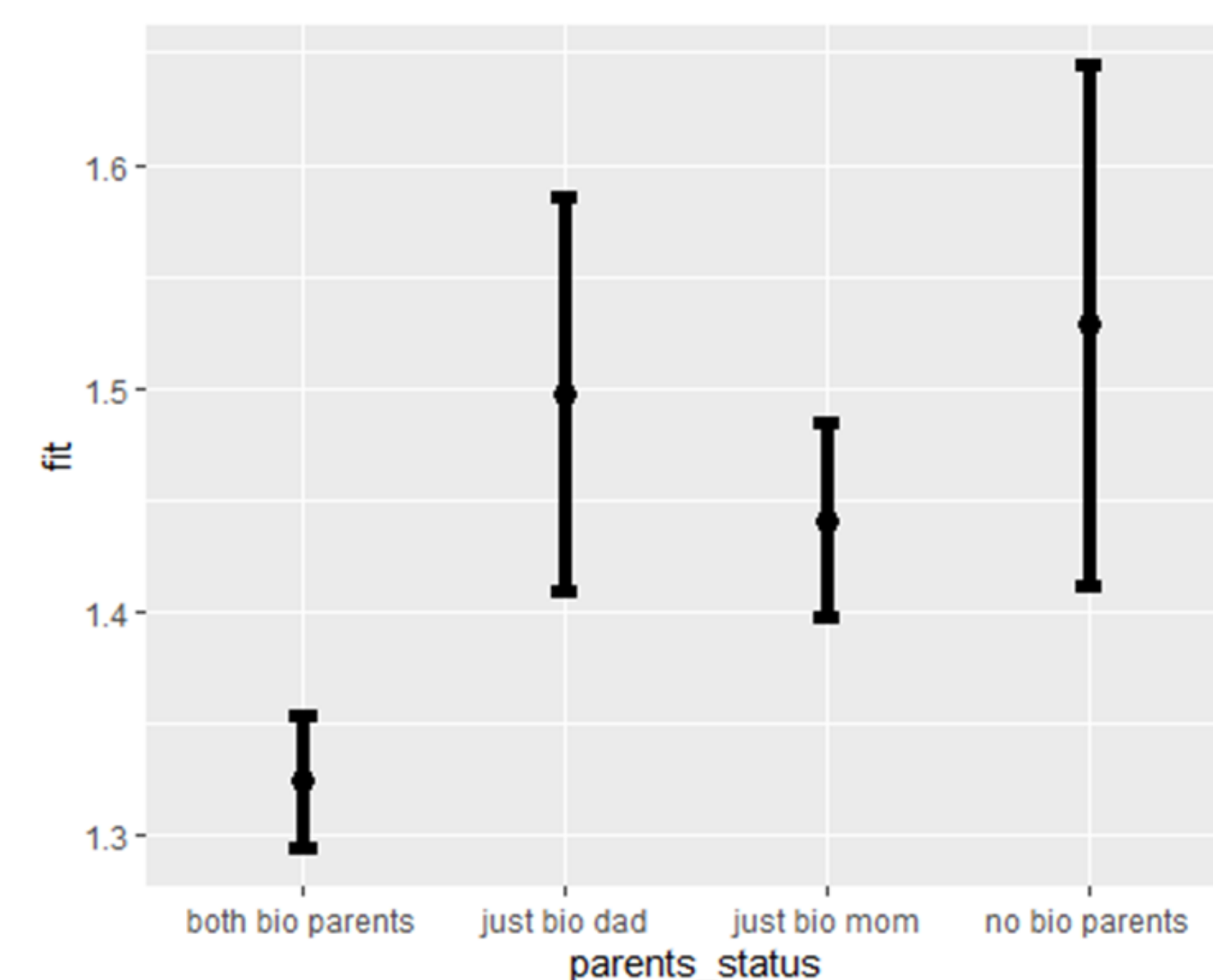
A simple stat summary shows an increased average in both feelings scale variables, based on the number of biological parents absent from the household.



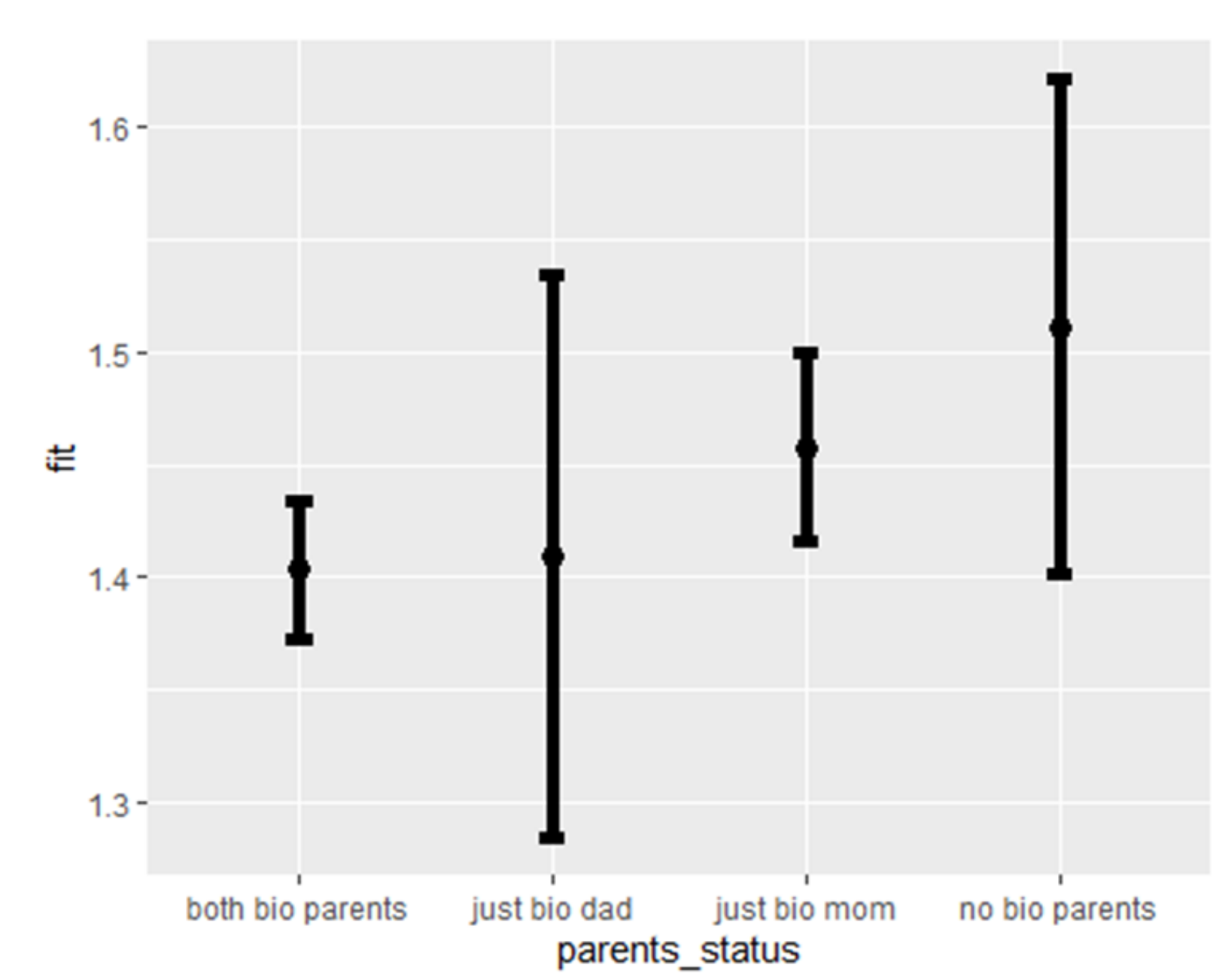
Male participants' reported feelings of loneliness, based on family type.



Female participants' reported feelings of loneliness, based on family type.



Male participants' reported frequency of feeling disliked, based on family type.



Female participants' reported frequency of feeling disliked, based on family type.

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