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Big Five Personality Traits Predict Parenting Stress and Maternal Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

This study, including 60 primiparous mothers, analyzed whether personality traits predicted post-partum parenting stress and maternal self-efficacy. The Big Five Inventory measured personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience (John & Srivastava, 1999) prenatally. The Parental Efficacy Questionnaire (Leerkes and Crockenberg, 2003) assessed maternal self-efficacy at 3 and 6 months, and total scores were averaged across timepoints. Two subscales of the Abindin Parenting Stress Index analyzed stress and maladaptive parenting. Role restriction aimed to detect lifestyle barriers resulting from parenthood, and sense of competence aimed to detect parenting ignorance and dysfunction (Piskernik et al., 2019). Subscale scores were averaged across 3- and 6-month timepoints.

Regression results found a positive relationship between conscientiousness and self-efficacy and between neuroticism and parenting stress. Trend results suggested a relationship between agreeableness and self-efficacy and between conscientiousness and lower parenting stress. Results of this research suggest personality may contribute to parents' well-being and sense of efficacy during the transition to parenthood. Particularly, neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness seem to be important factors to consider in understanding parents' adjustment to their new role. Practitioners working with new mothers may benefit from understanding the role that personality factors may play in mothers' well-being post-partum.

Big Five Personality Traits Predict Parenting Stress and Maternal Self-Efficacy



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Introduction

Background:

- Parent personality is tied to parental well-being and behavior. Mothers with higher extraversion have reduced probabilities of bonding disorder, inadequate affection, and anger and rejection toward their infants (Murakami et al., 2021).
- Associations have been found among parenting stress and agreeableness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness (Hutteman et al., 2014), as well as among parenting stress and neuroticism and extraversion (Rantanen et al., 2014).
- Little research is available on the way personality, measured prenatally, influences parenting stress and maternal self-efficacy, particularly 3- and 6-months post-partum.

Study Hypothesis:

We hypothesize parent personality would predict both parenting stress and maternal self-efficacy.

Design and Sample

The current study utilized longitudinal data from a community sample of 60 first-time mothers in the last trimester of pregnancy. The average age of mothers was 27.92 (SD = 5.01). The sample majority was white (80%) and married/partnered (90%). The mothers were surveyed prenatally and at 2-, 3-, and 6-month time points post-partum.

Measures

Maternal Personality

The Big Five Inventory (BFI) was used to measure personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience prenatally.

Maternal Self-Efficacy

The Parental Efficacy Questionnaire (PEQ) (Leerkes and Crockenberg, 2003) assessed maternal perceptions of self-efficacy at 3 and 6 months. Total scores were averaged across timepoints.

Parenting Stress

The Abindin Parenting Stress Index (PSI) was completed by the participants at 3- and 6-month time periods. Two subscales, role restriction and sense of competence, were used to analyze stress and maladaptive parenting. Scores for each subscale were averaged across timepoints.

Demographic Variables

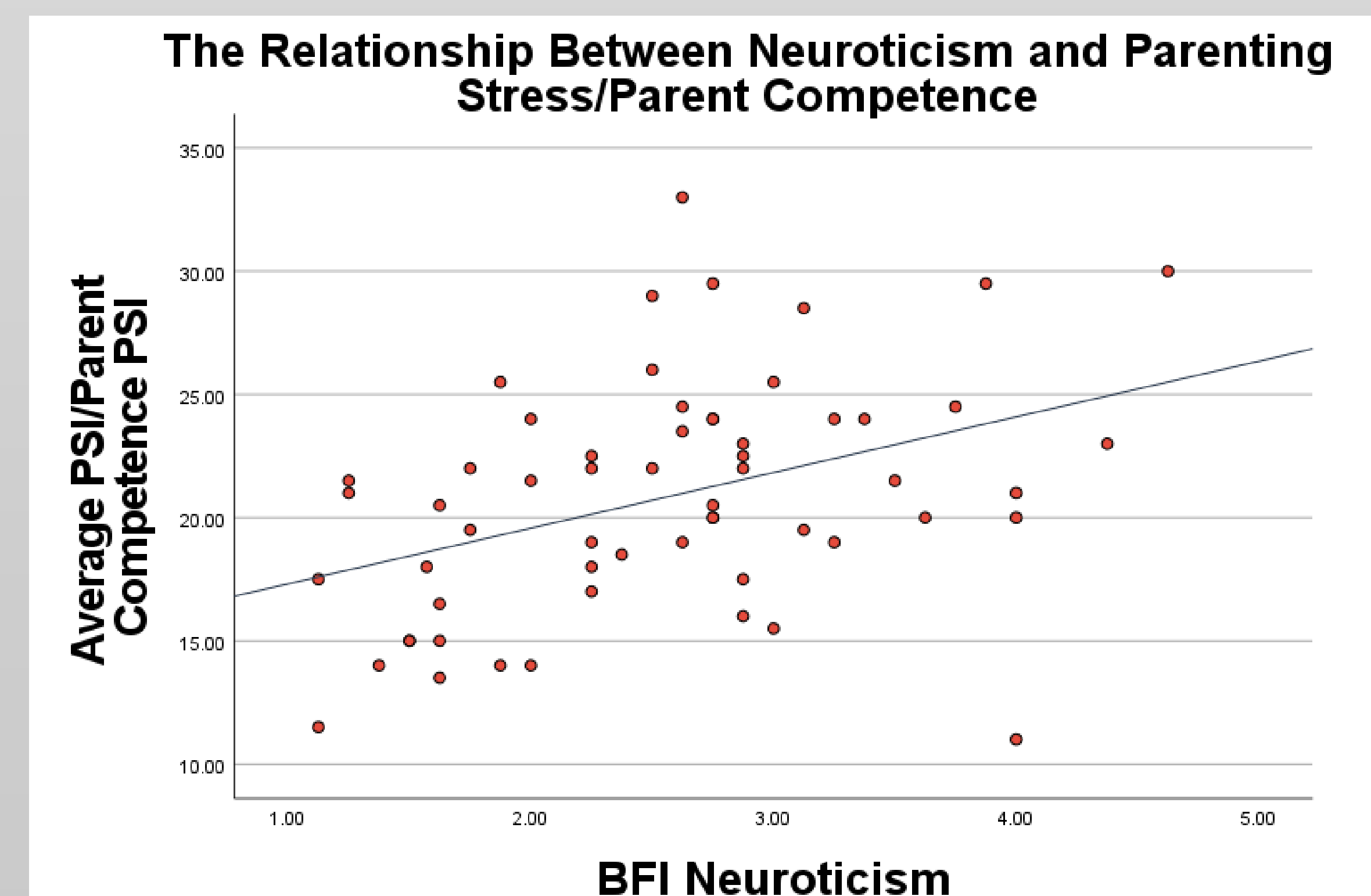
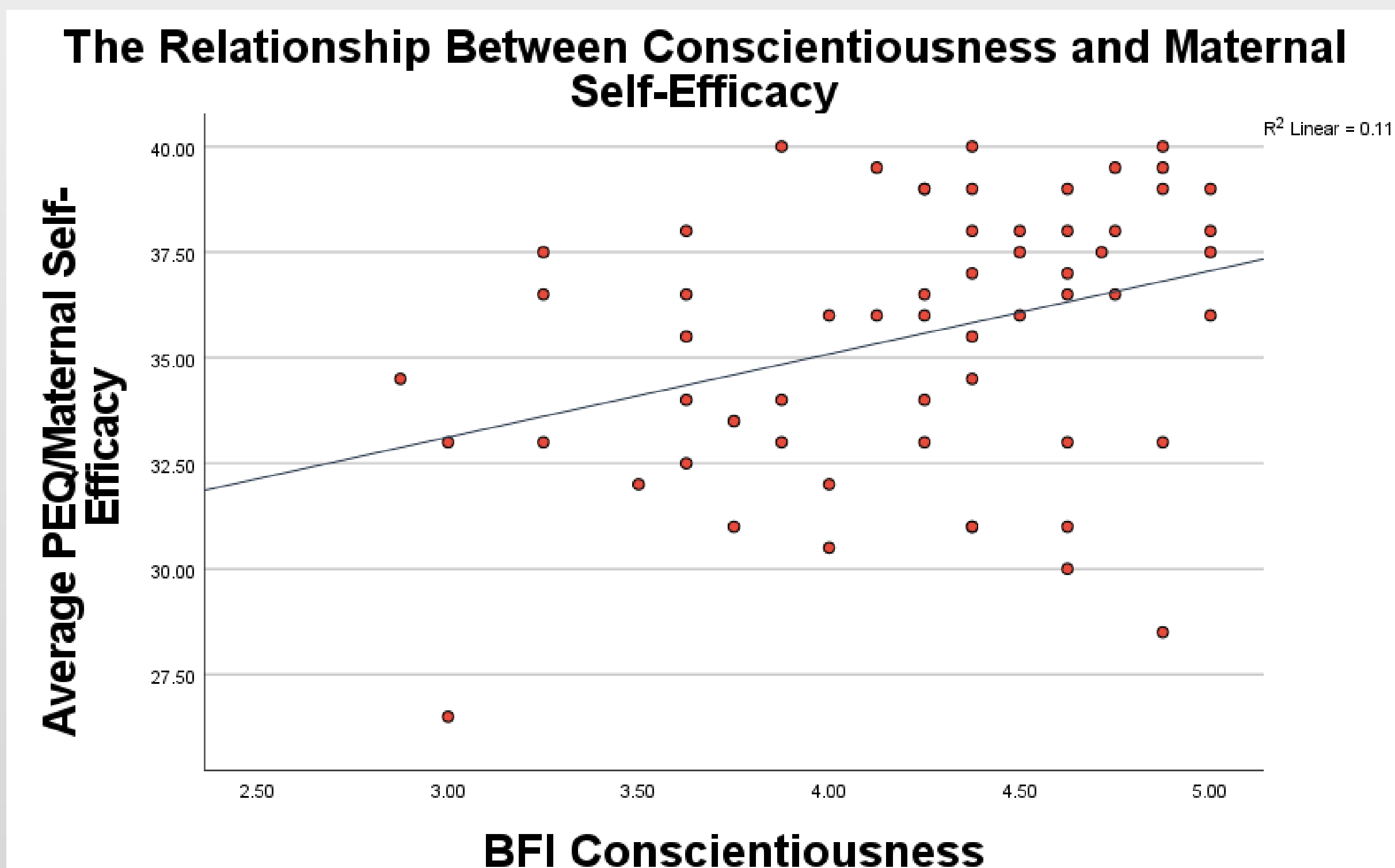
Demographic information including age, ethnicity, and marital status was gathered prenatally.

Results

- Regressions were calculated using SPSS.
- As predicted in the hypothesis, correlations were found among personality traits and parenting stress and maternal self-efficacy.
- In the first regression, the set of predictors significantly predicted maternal efficacy, $F(8,50) = 2.56, p < .05$. The regression indicated that mothers higher in conscientiousness had higher levels of maternal self-efficacy, $b = 1.82, t(58) = 2.25, p < .05$. There was also a trend for greater agreeableness to predict higher levels of maternal self-efficacy, $b = .74, t(58) = 1.95, p = .06$.
- In the second regression, the set of predictors significantly predicted parenting stress/parent competence, $F(8,50) = 3.49, p < .01$. The regression indicated that mothers with higher levels of neuroticism reported increasing feelings of parental incompetence, $b = 1.92, t(58) = 2.27, p < .05$. There was also a trend for mothers with greater conscientiousness to report greater feelings of competence in their new parenting role, $b = -2.12, t(58) = -1.86, p = .07$.
- In the third regression, the set of predictors significantly predicted parenting stress/role restriction, $F(8,50) = 2.14, p < .05$. None of the big-five factors significantly predicted this outcome, although single mothers reported reduced role restriction.

Conclusion

- Our results suggest personality may contribute to parents' well-being and sense of efficacy during the transition to parenthood. Particularly, neuroticism, conscientiousness and agreeableness seem to be important factors to consider in understanding parents' adjustment to their new role



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