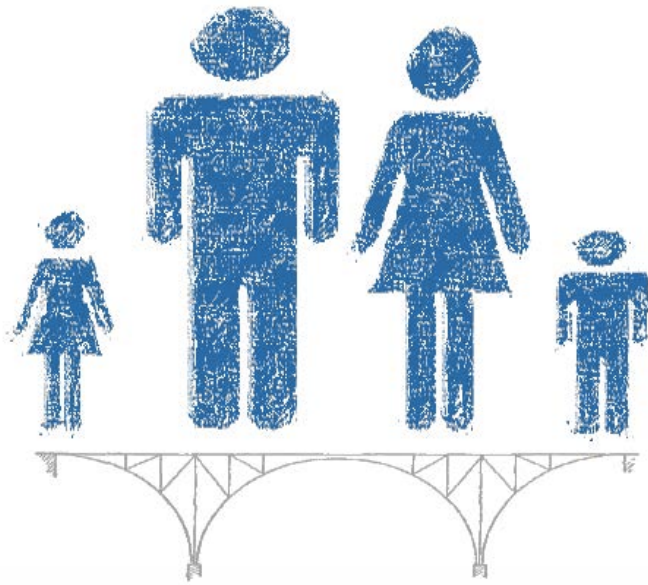


**Stress, coping and well being for parents of
children with special needs
- A cross-cultural research study -**



SUCEAVA

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Stress in family life



- Family stress negatively influences:
 - parents' wellbeing,
 - the quality of parents' relationship and
 - the quality of parent-child interaction.
- Parenthood → significant changes in parents' life and parenting in itself can be stressful.

Stress in family life

- Studies from family psychology analysed the influence of different types of stressors on couple and parent-child interaction (i.e. minor, major, acute, chronic, external and internal stressors, Bodenmann, 2005).
- In general, major and chronic stressors (such as having a child with special needs - SN) determine more instability and dysfunction in family than the other types of stressors.

Parenting a child with special needs

- Studies have shown that families parenting a child SN experience **higher levels of stress** compared to families with children with a typical development (Delambo, et al, 2011; Lee, 2013);
- Having a child SN requires **more effort and involvement** from parents (i.e. long term psychological therapies, medical treatments);
- The stress faced by families raising children SN may **continue** during adolescence and adult life, influencing the quality of family relationships on a long term;

Parenting a child with special needs

- Parents of children with SN experience higher levels of emotional distress (Lecavalier, et al, 2006), **depression** (Benson, 2006), **anxiety** (Pakenham, et al, 2004) and **social isolation**;
- This category of parents may feel overwhelmed by the problems associated with their child disability.

Additional stressors in families of children with SN

- Distress may arise for many reasons that are not directly linked to having a child with a disability (e.g., pre-existing pathology or other environmental stressors) (*Hayes & Watson, 2013*).
- Interaction between stressors

The present study

- Aims to increase understanding of stress, coping and wellbeing within parents of children with special needs

The aim of our study

- ▶ The present study examines whether mothers and fathers' **individual variables**



- ▶ are associated with **family variables** and



- ▶ ultimately affect their **well-being**.

Research aims

- ✓ To analyze the associations between **individual variables**: parental stress, coping (individual and dyadic), emotion regulation, support (social support and partner support) and parents' relationship satisfaction and positive functioning;
- ✓ To examine the associations between **dyadic variables** (SDC and relationship satisfaction);
- ✓ To investigate the relationships between **individual variables and parent-child interaction** (emotional warmth, negative communication);
- ✓ To investigate the relationship between **individual variables and interaction between parents** (SDC and relationship satisfaction);
- ✓ To evaluate the link between: **parent-child interaction and interaction between parents.**

Research study – Variables

Stress

- General stress (related to job, social contacts, free time, living situation, finances)
- Parental stress

Parent child interaction

- Emotional warmth
- Negative communication
- ***Interaction between parents***
- Coparenting
- Supportive Dyadic Coping by Partner
- Supportive Dyadic Coping by Oneself
- Couple Relationship satisfaction

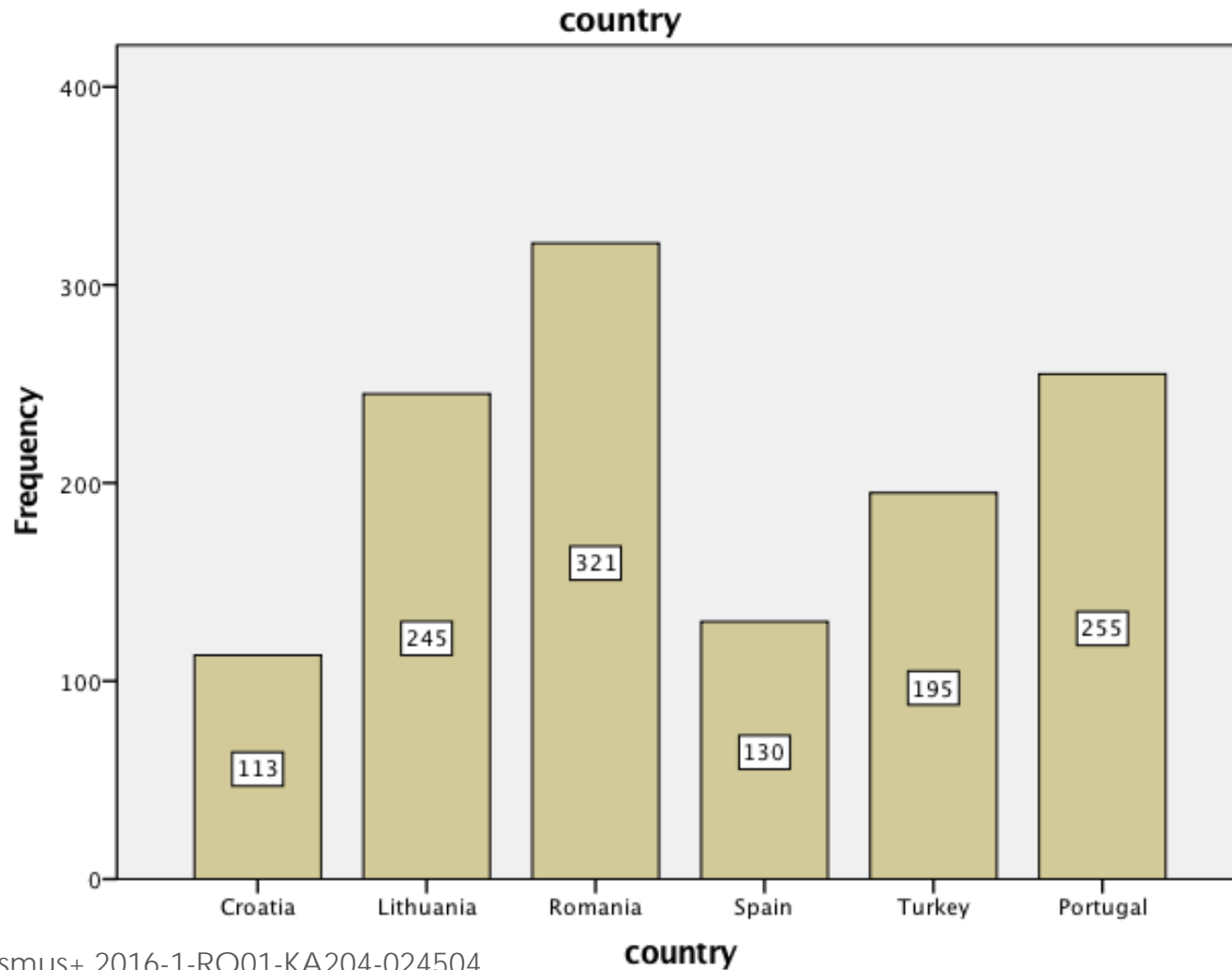
Research study – Variables

- ***Emotional competence: Difficulties in Emotion Regulation***: awareness, clarity, non-acceptance, strategies, goals, and impulse;
- ***Individual religious coping*** – positive and negative, importance of religious faith measured as well
- ***Psychological well-being/Positive functioning*** – support, community, trust, respect, loneliness, belonging

Demographic variables

- *Age*
- *Gender*
- *Education*
- *Marital status*
- *Income*
- *Number of children*
- *Disability type*
- *Religion, Religious faith – importance*

Sample



Total: 1259 participants

796 mothers

400 fathers

*63 participants did not
provide information about
gender*

Procedure of data collection

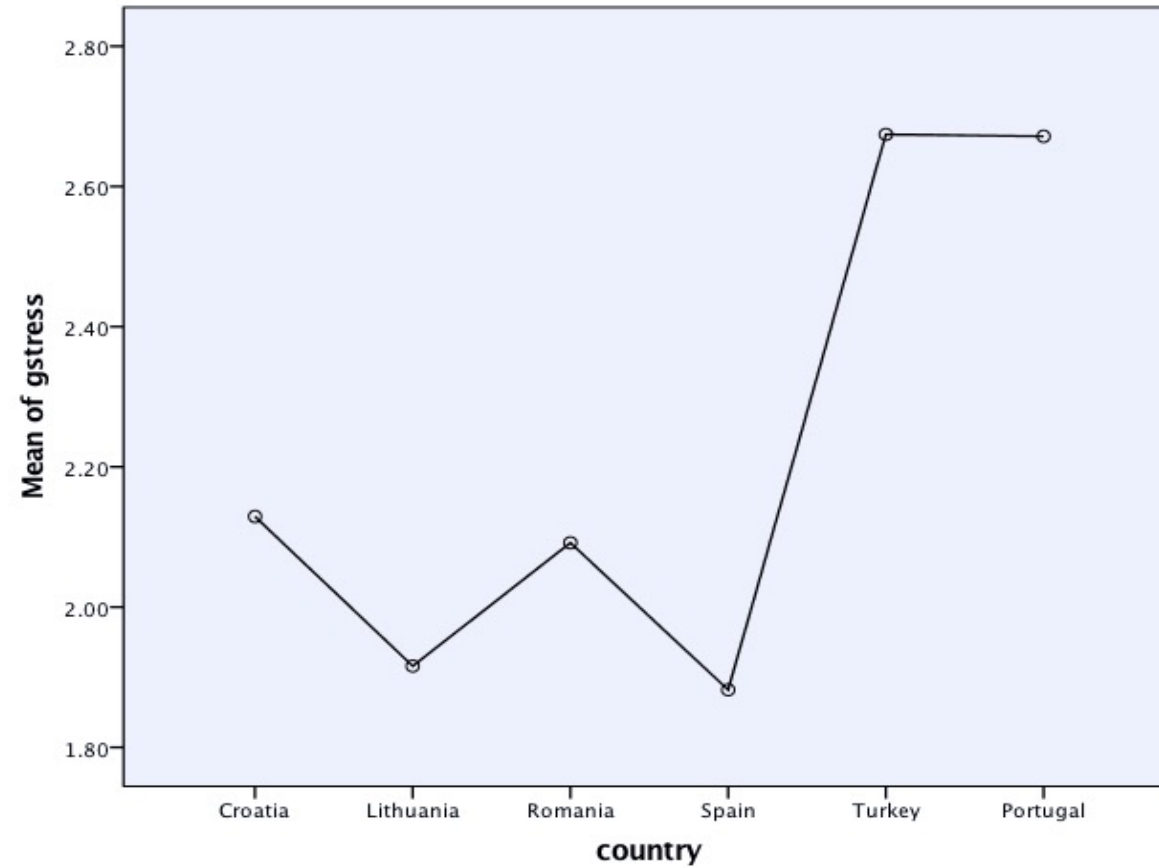
- Parents from each participating country were recruited through local **Special Education Centres for children and local organisations that offer parent support services.**
- Special education teachers, school managers, counsellors, psychologists and students were involved in the data collection process;
- Parents agreed to participate in the study on a **voluntary** basis.
- The **Institutional Review Board** of the Romanian University approved the study. All parents signed an informed consent to participate in the study.

Measures

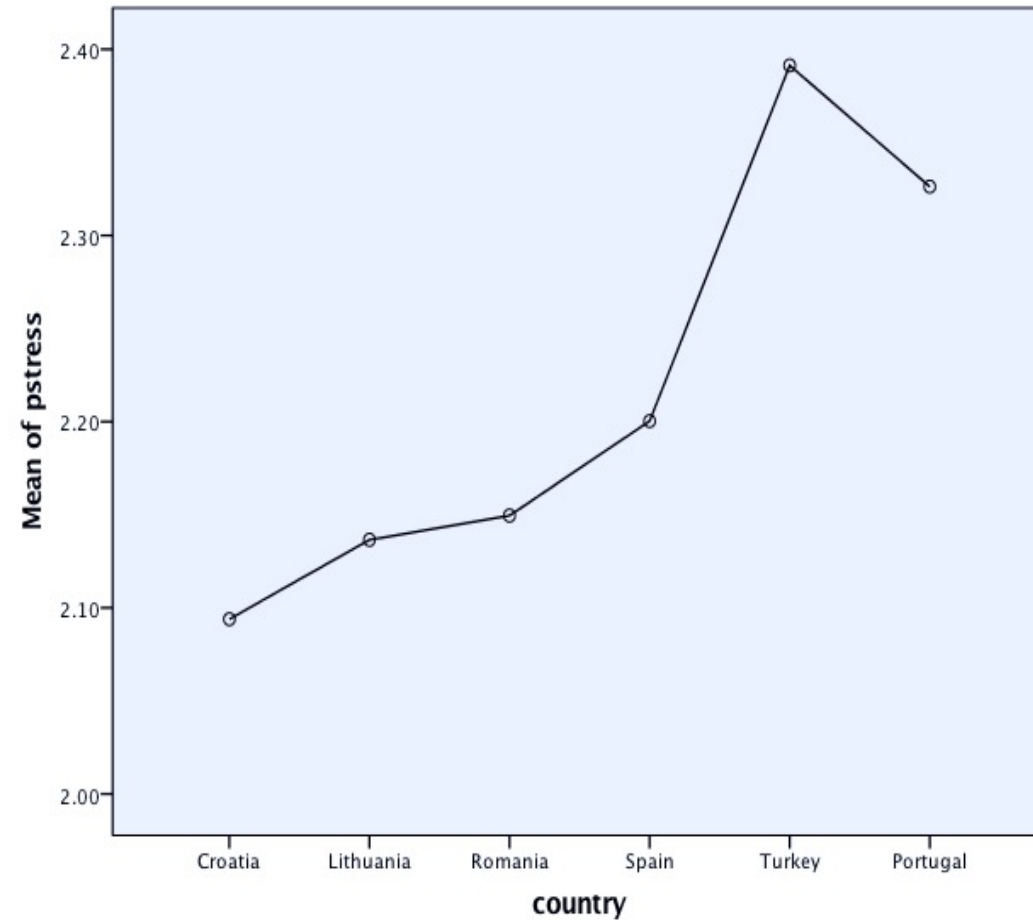
- Socio-demographic variables were measured by items about *age, gender, marital status, income, number of children, education, and type of child' disability.*
- The survey contained questionnaires for assessing the study variables: *general stress, parental stress, parent-child interaction, co-parenting, supportive dyadic coping, couple relationship satisfaction, emotional competence, religious coping and psychological well-being*

Comparing VARIABLES across countries

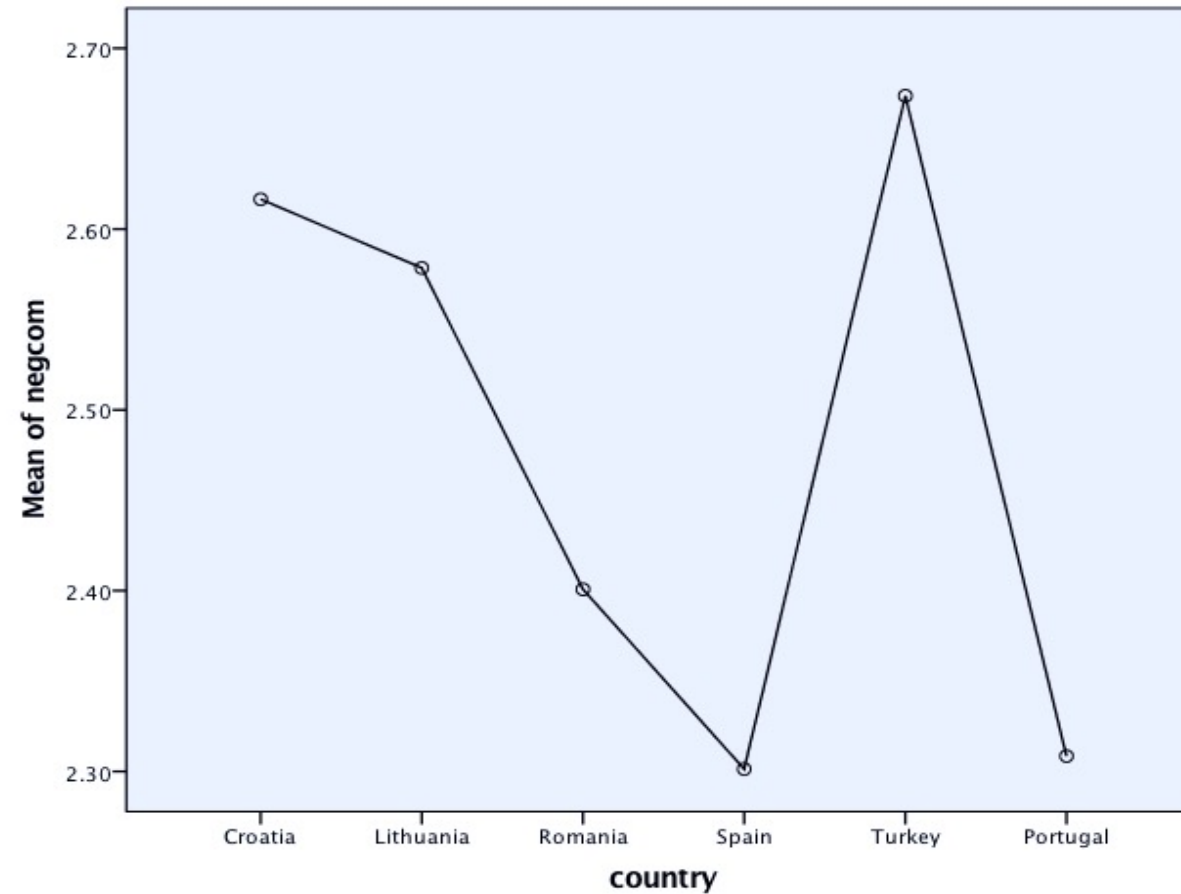
General Stress



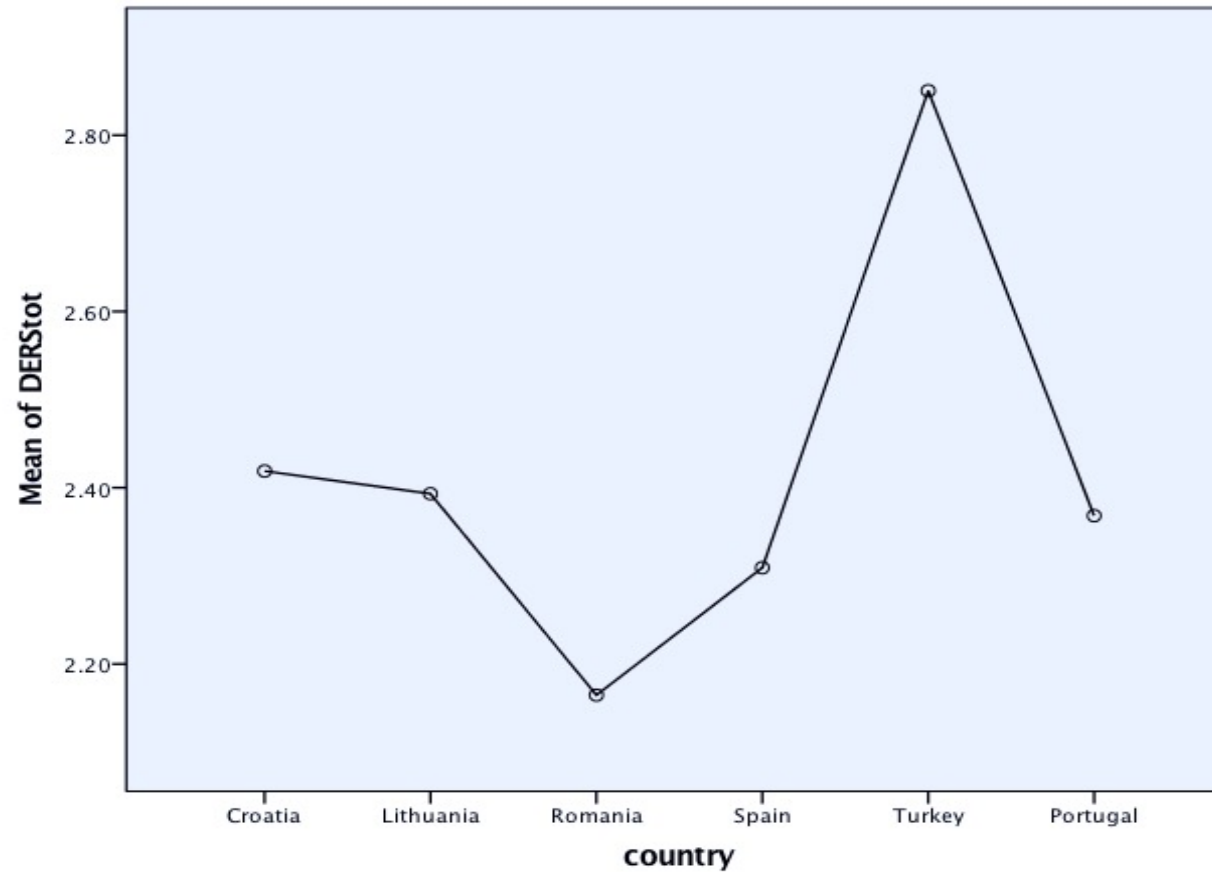
Parental stress



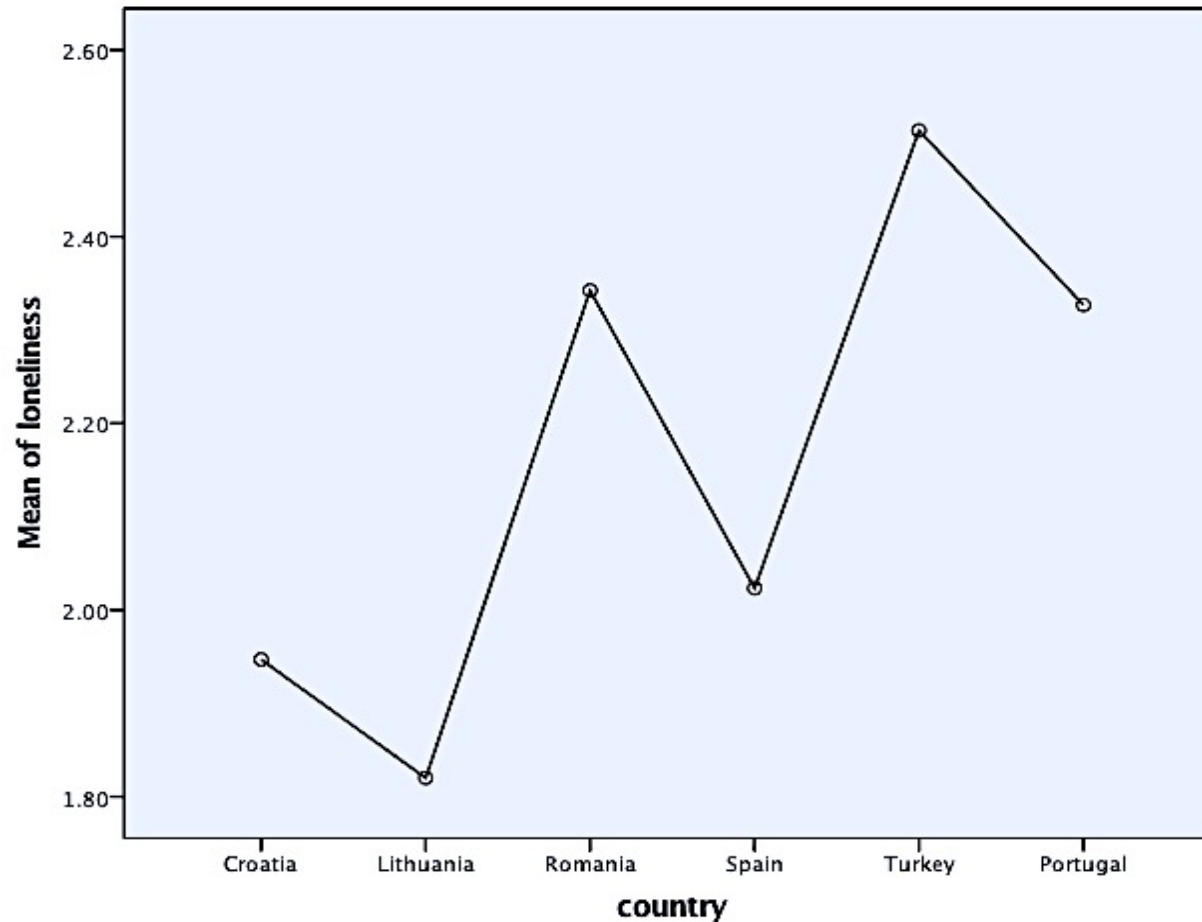
NEGATIVE PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION



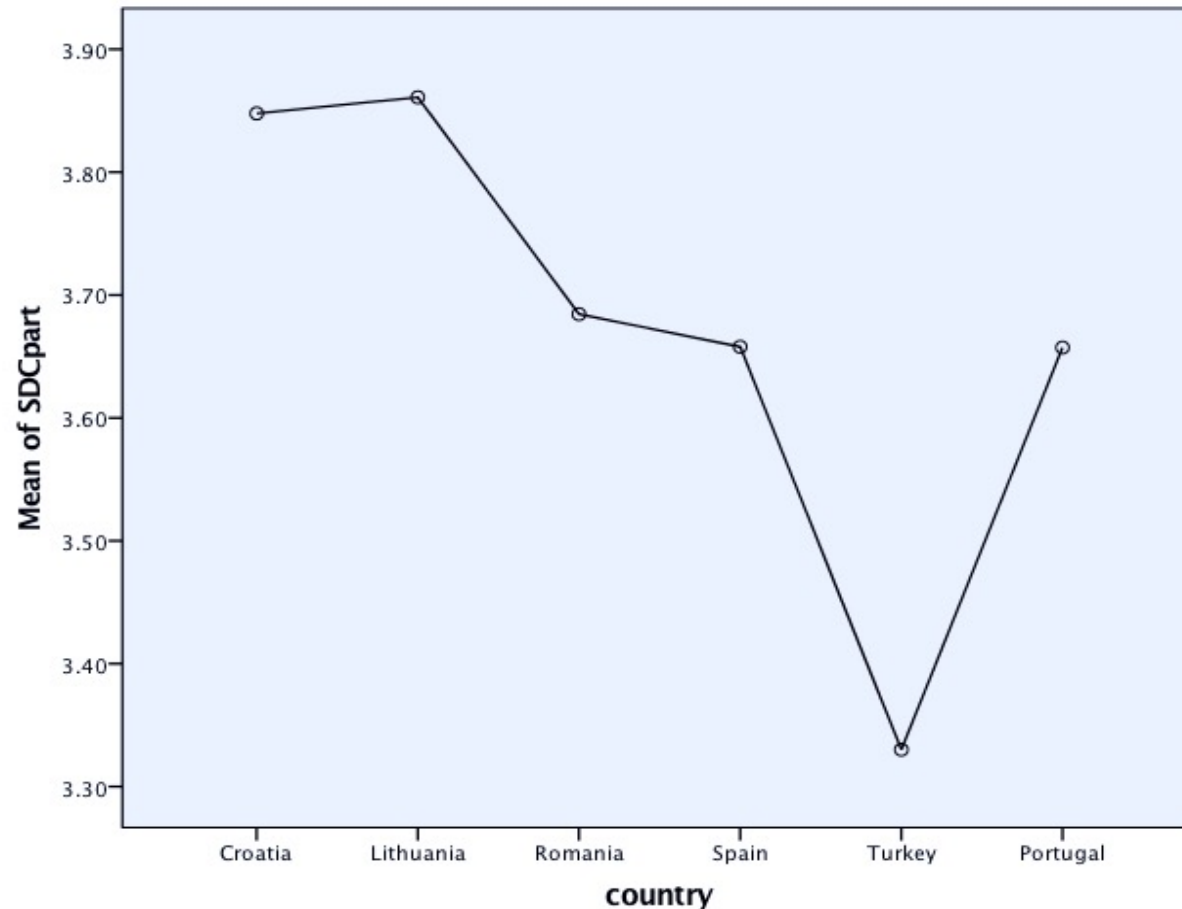
DIFFICULTIES IN EMOTION REGULATION



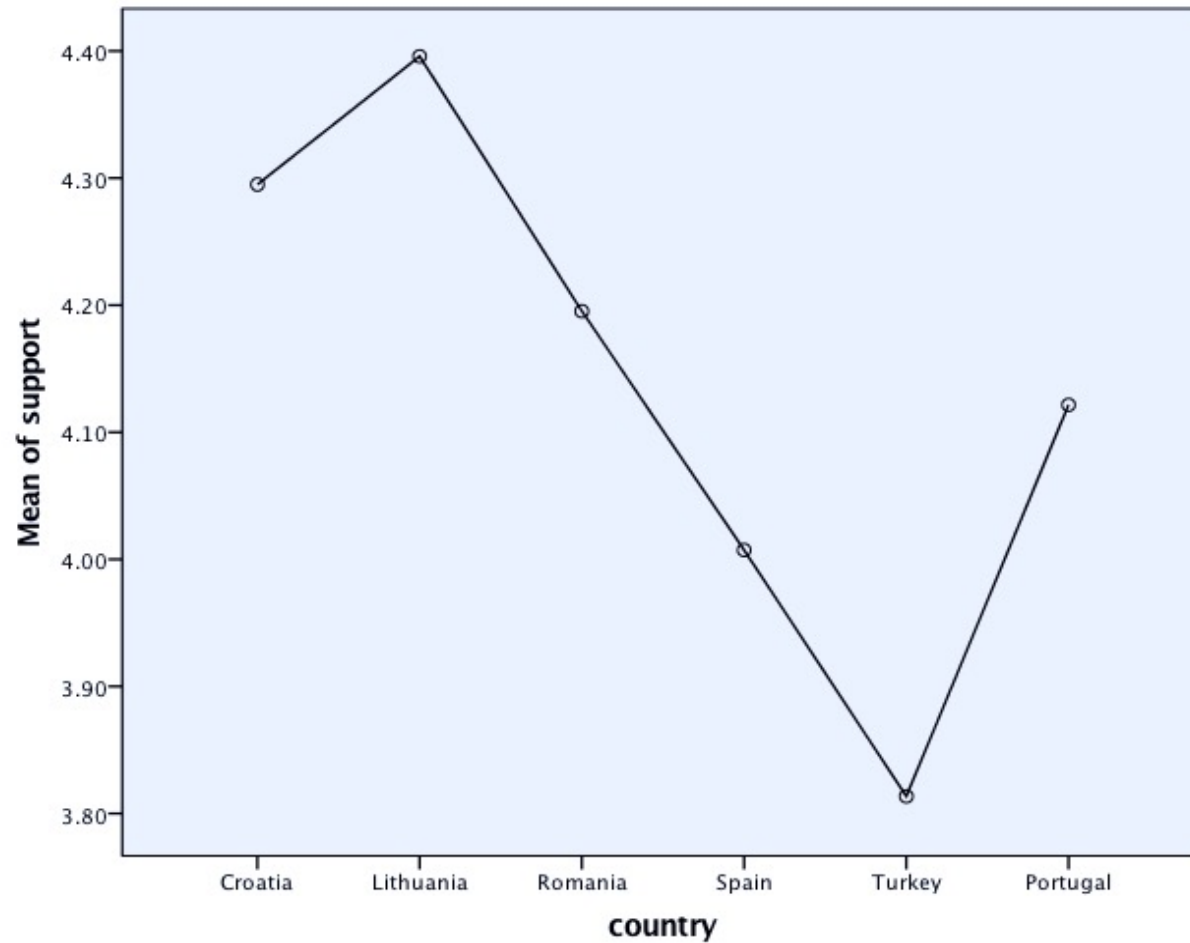
LONELINESS



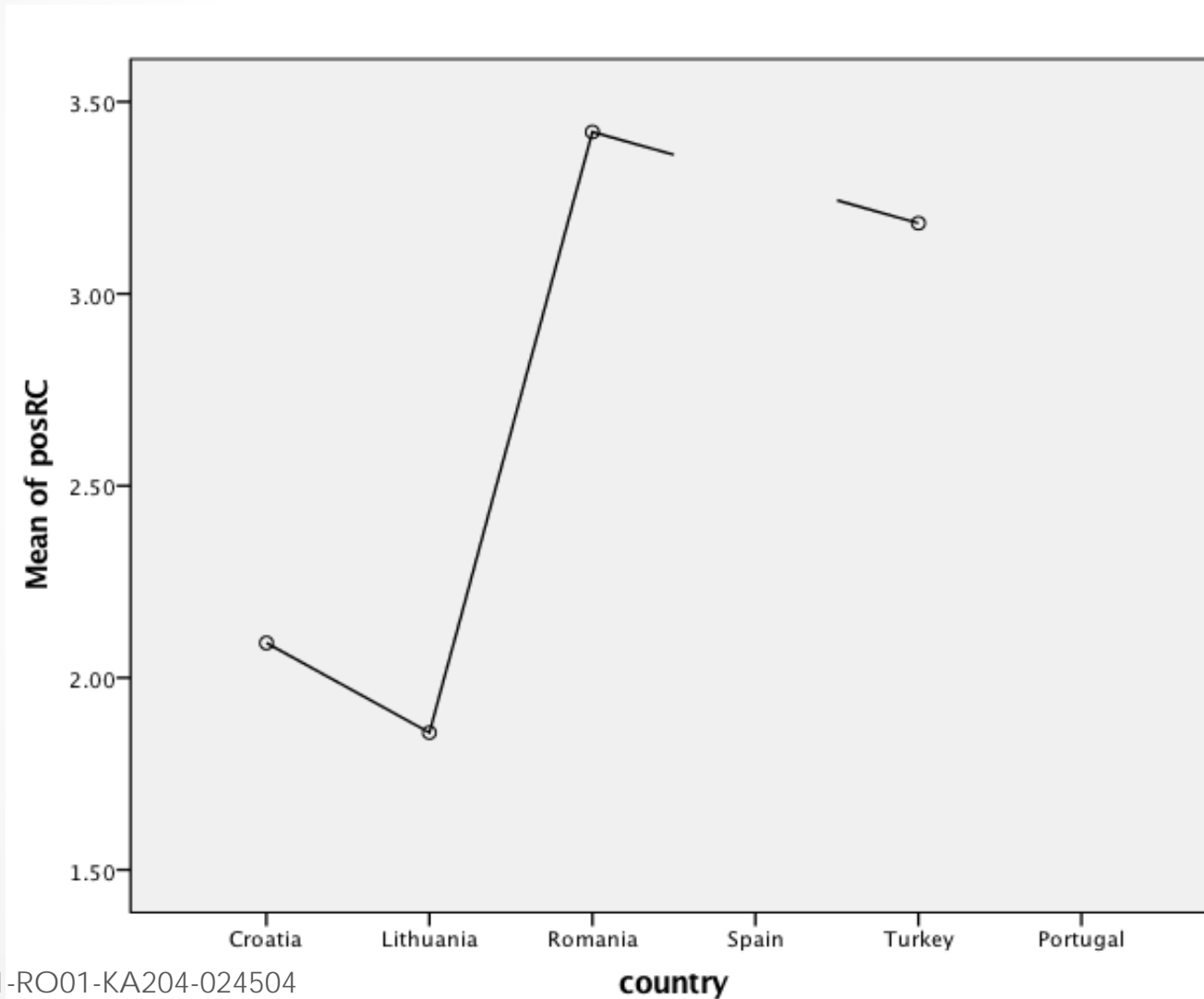
SUPPORTIVE DYADIC COPING BY PARTNER



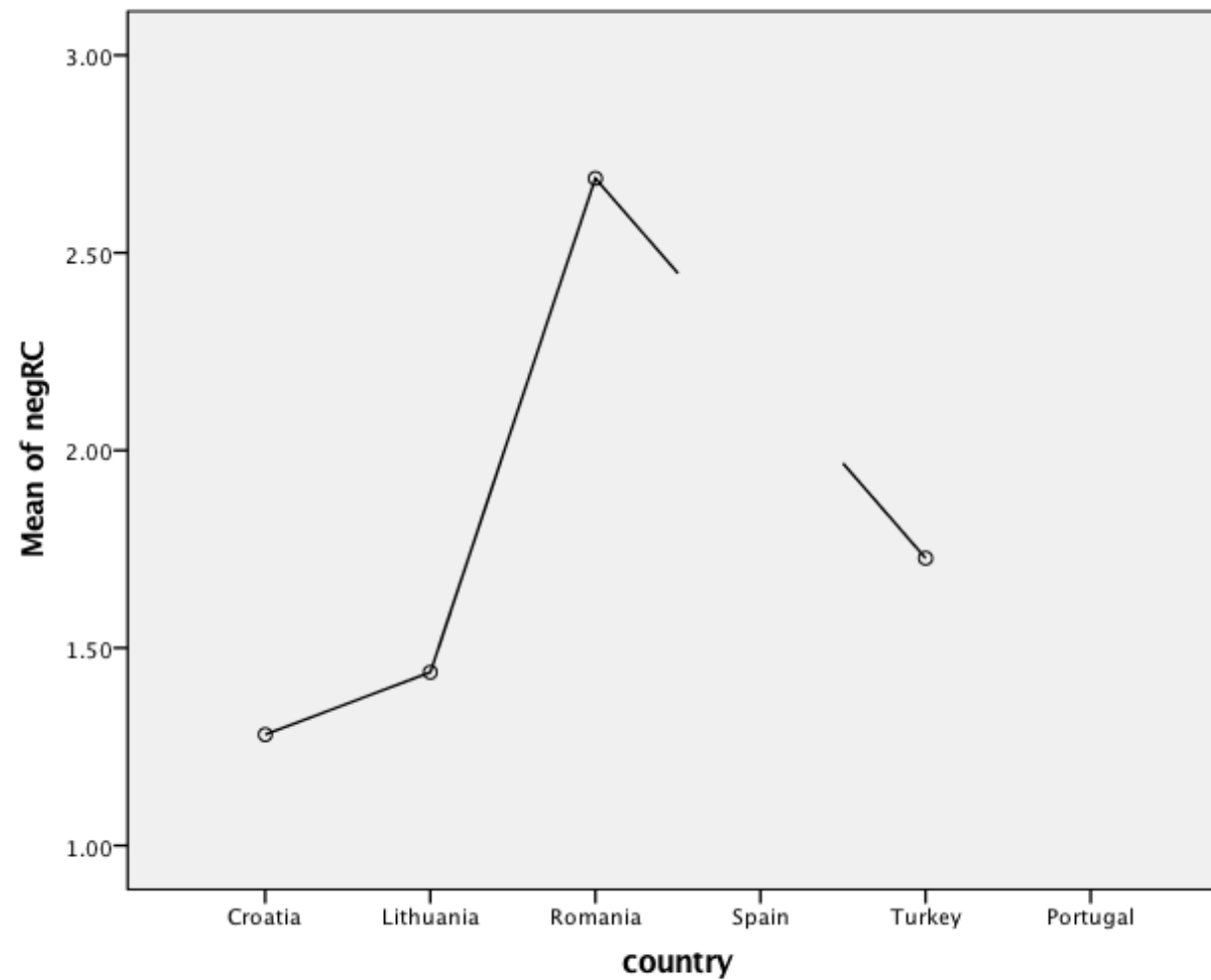
SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITY



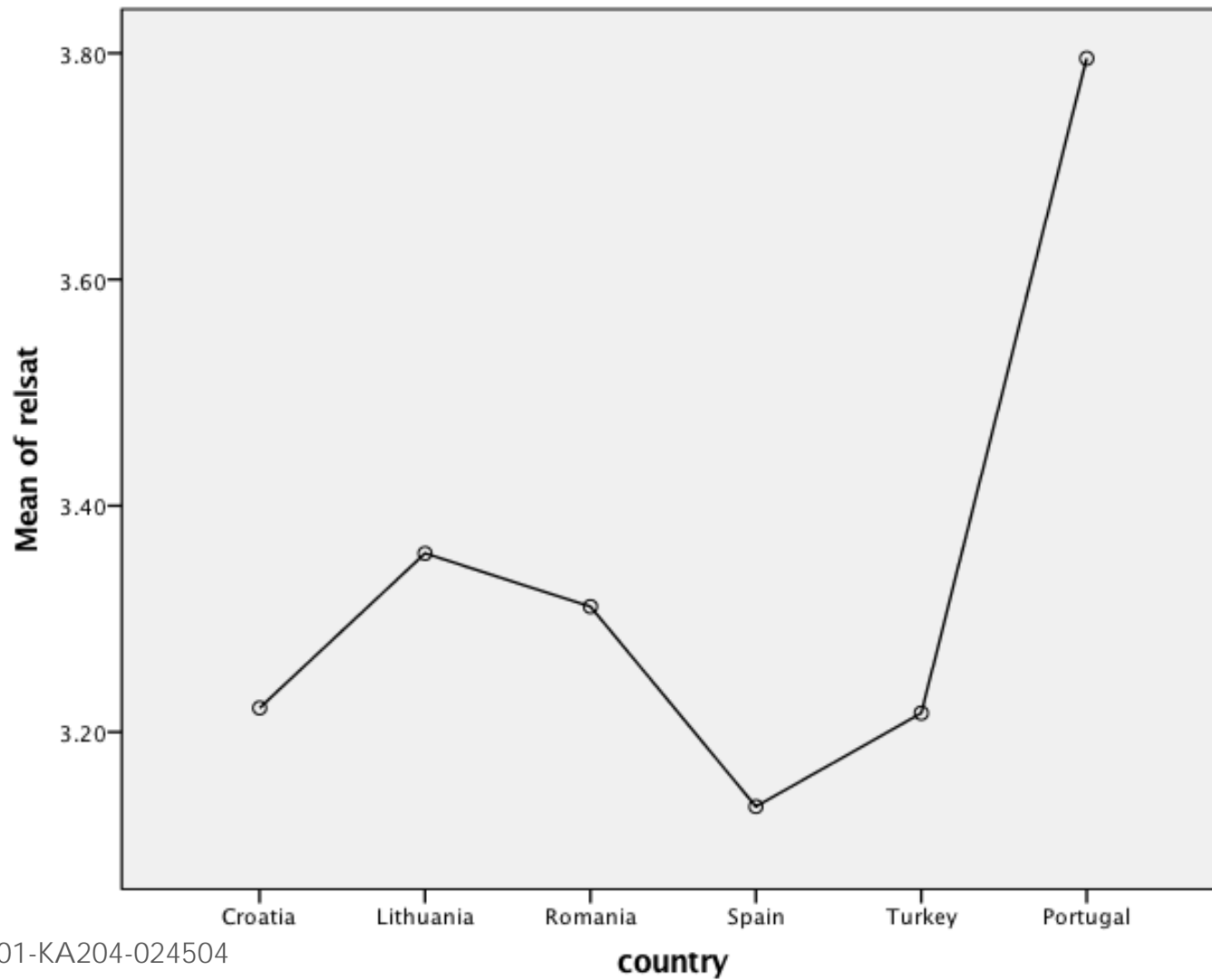
POSITIVE RELIGIOUS COPING



NEGATIVE RELIGIOUS COPING



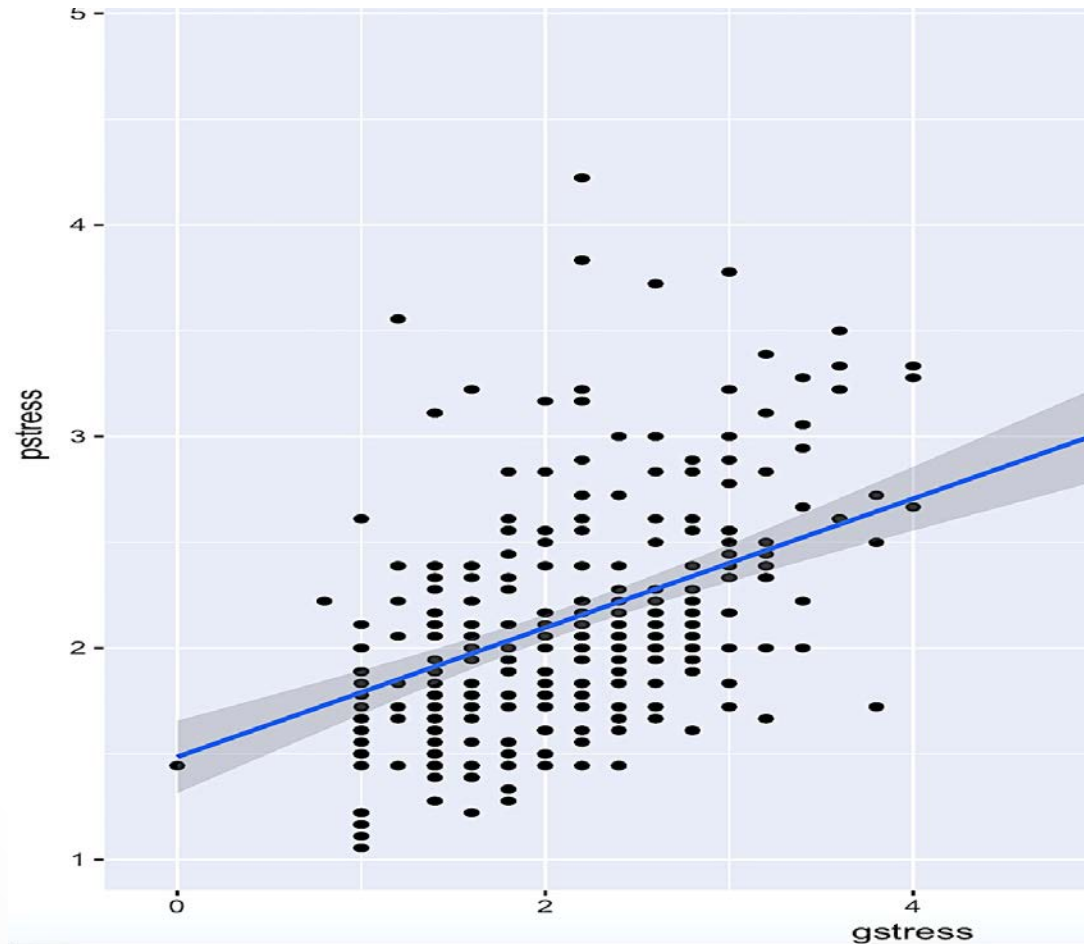
RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION



Associations between the study variables

The spill-over of external stress into the family

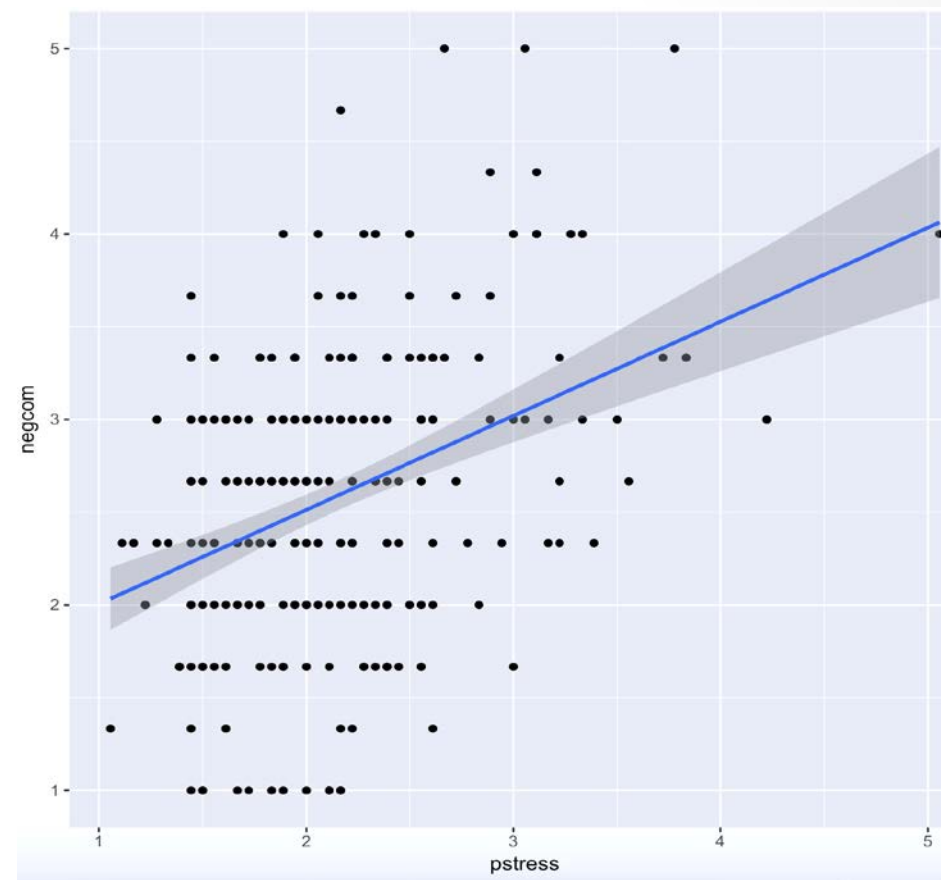
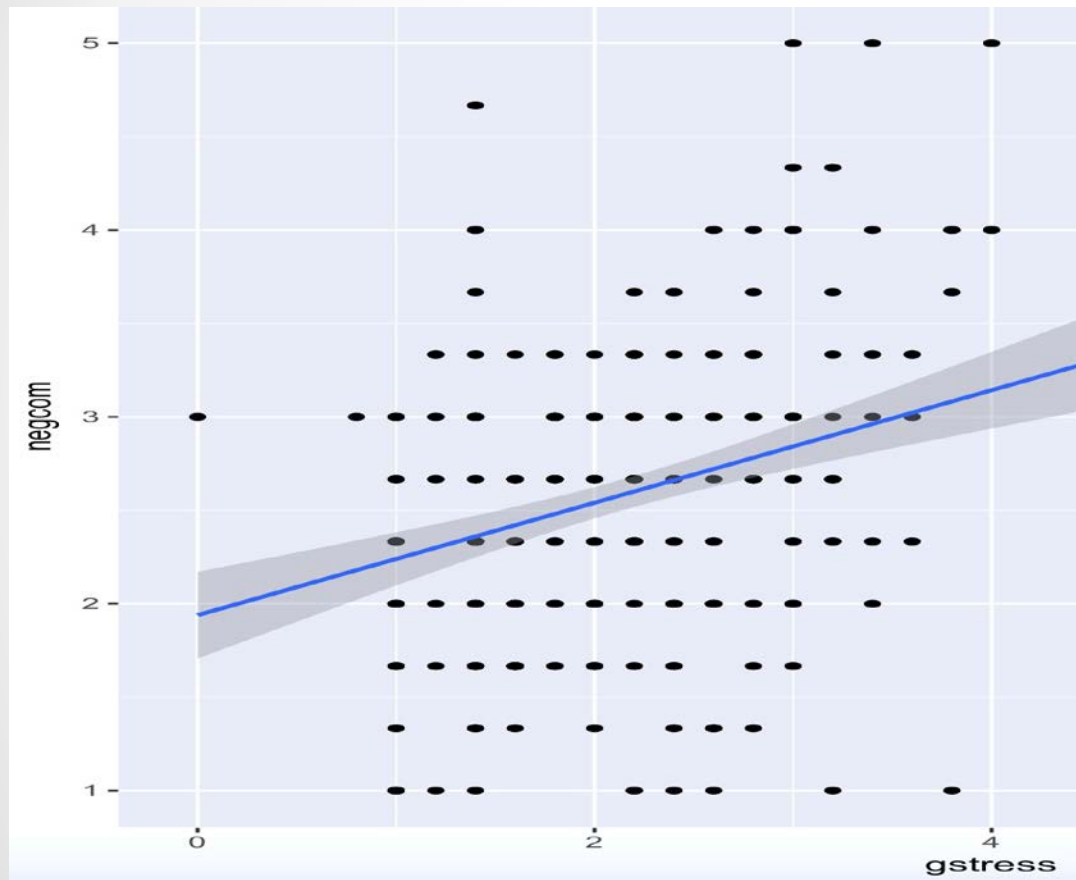
General stress and parental stress



General stress and parental stress

- stressors originating outside the family (related to job, social contacts, free time, living situation, finances) spill over into the family relationships and affect parent-child interactions.
- *In our study, parents experiencing higher levels of stress outside their family reported also higher levels of parental stress.*
- Research studies on family stress frequently address stress spillover, family functioning is negatively affected by daily stressors (Bodenmann, 2005; Karney, Storry & Bradburry, 2005.).

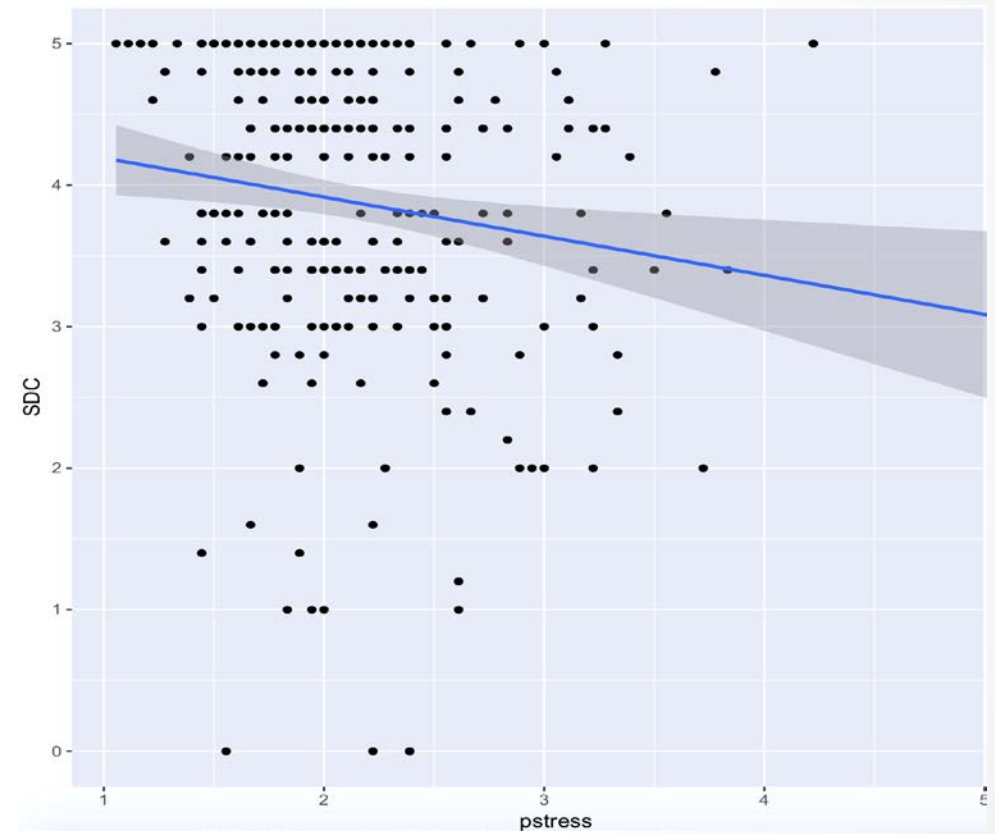
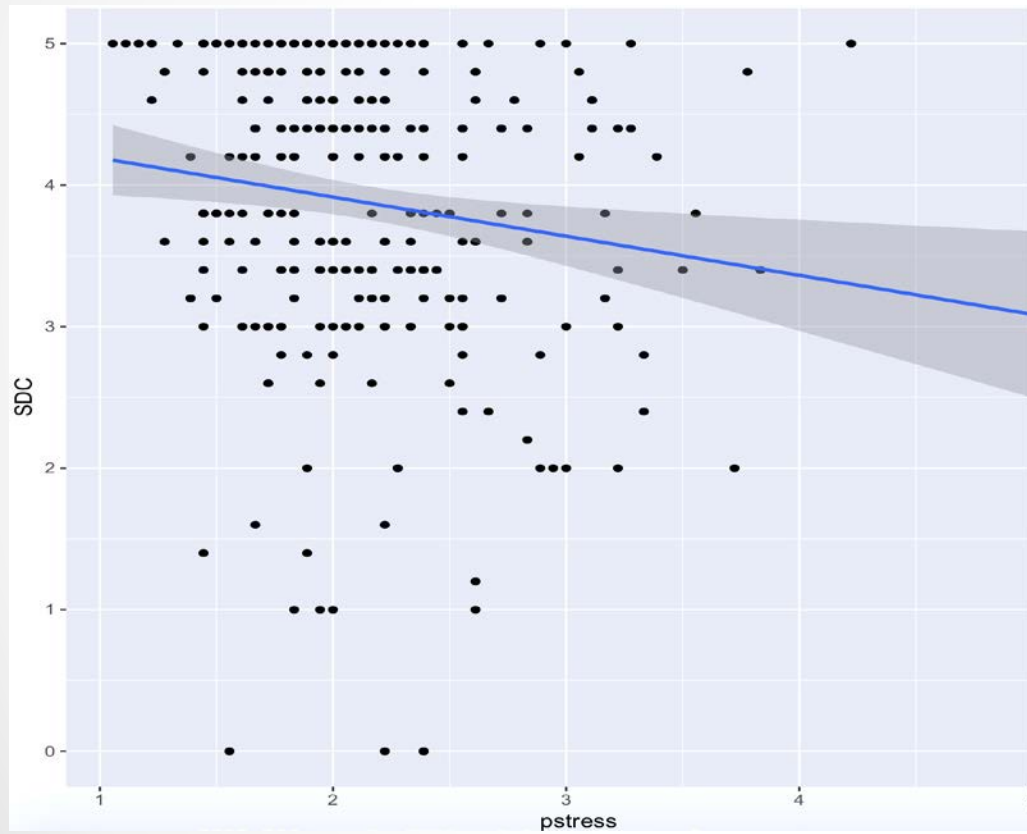
Stress and parent-child interaction



Stress and negative parent-child communication

- As stress outside the family and parental stress increase, negative parent-child communication has higher levels.

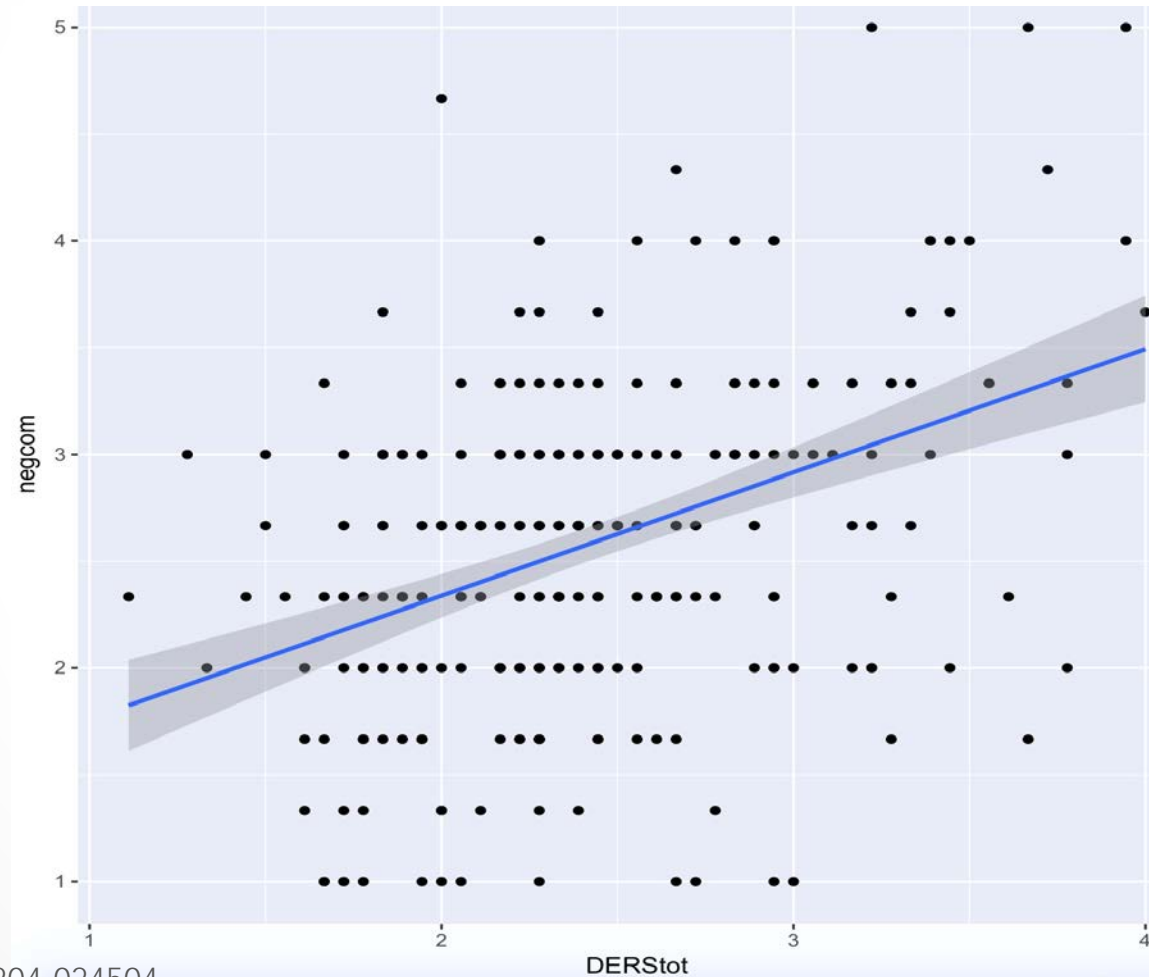
The spill-over of child related stress into parents' relationship



The spill-over of child related stress into parents' relationship

- Parental stress was significantly negatively related to couple supportive behaviours (SDC by oneself and by partner) and with relationship satisfaction.
- These negative associations might be interpreted in light of recent research indicating that *child-related stress impair parents' relationship quality and worsen couple communication* (Zemp, Nussbeck, Cummings, & Bodenmann, 2017).

Parents' difficulties in emotion regulation and family interactions



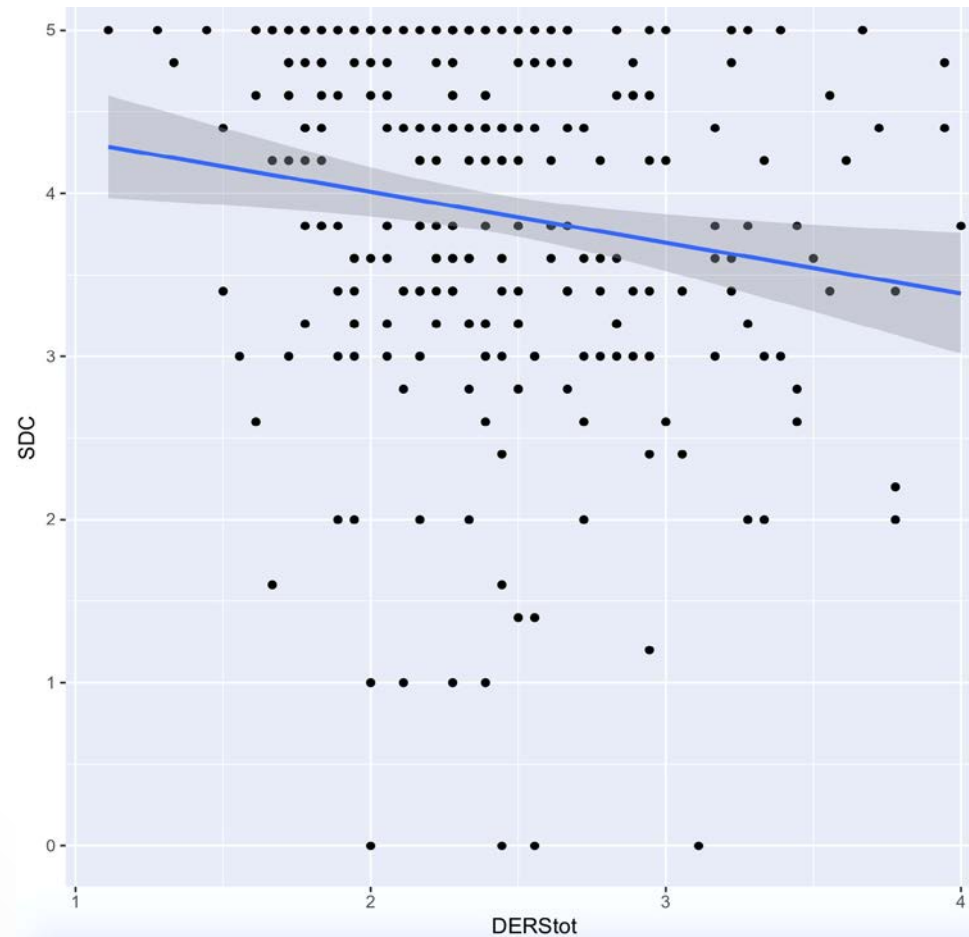
Parents' difficulties in emotion regulation and family interactions

- Parents with difficulties in emotion regulation reported *higher levels of negative parent-child communication* and *lower levels of emotional warmth*.

Parents' difficulties in emotion regulation and family interactions

- These findings extend the results of previous studies relating *difficulties in emotion regulation to stress, depression and anxiety* (Bardeen, Fergus, & Orcutt, 2012).
- Similarly, existing studies indicated emotion *dysregulation was negatively related to supportive maternal responses.*

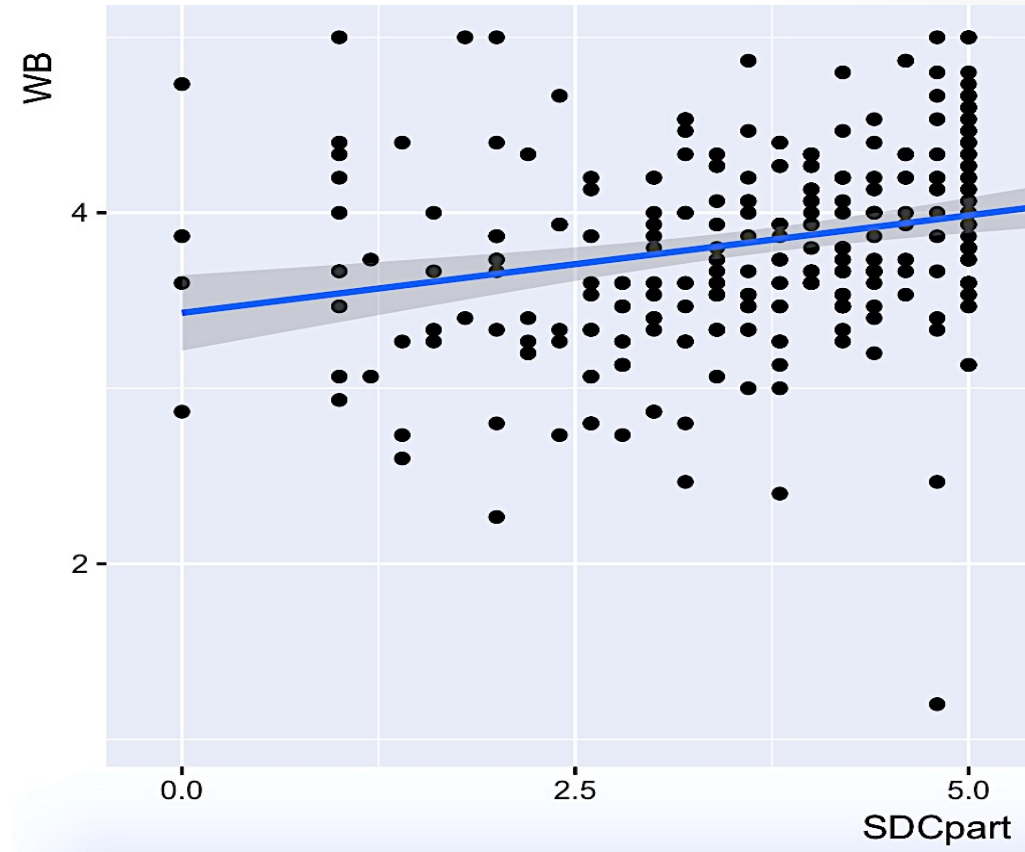
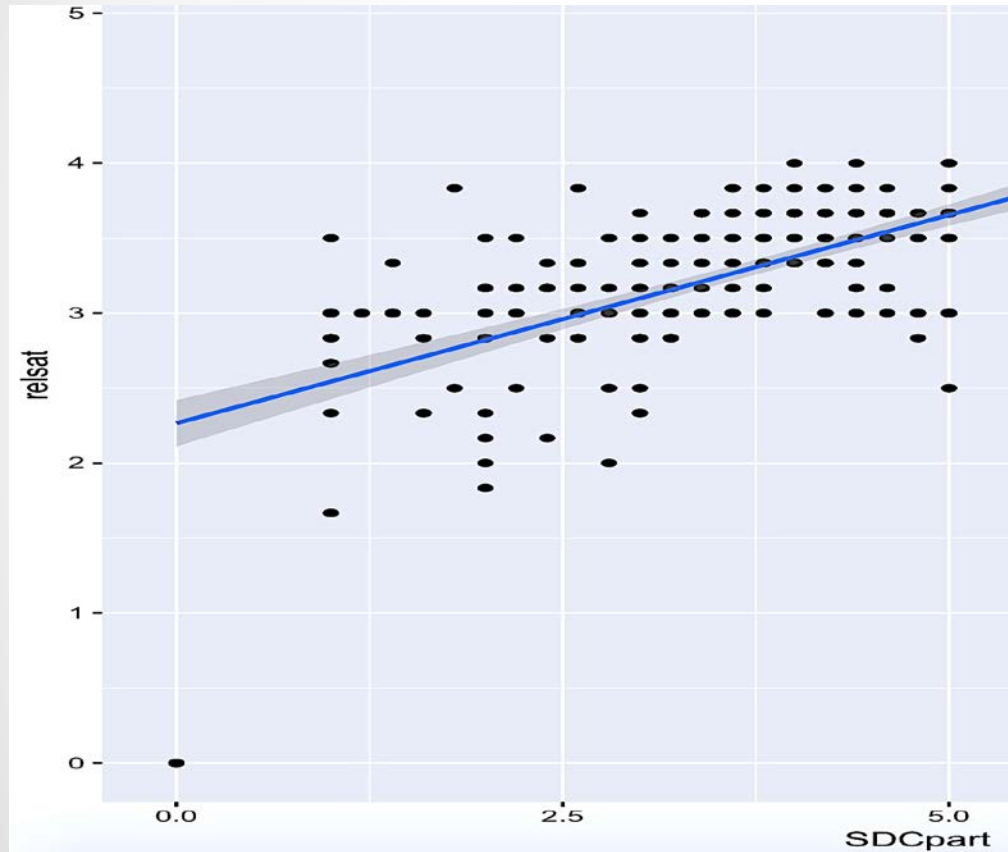
Difficulties in emotion regulation - negative effect on parents' relationship



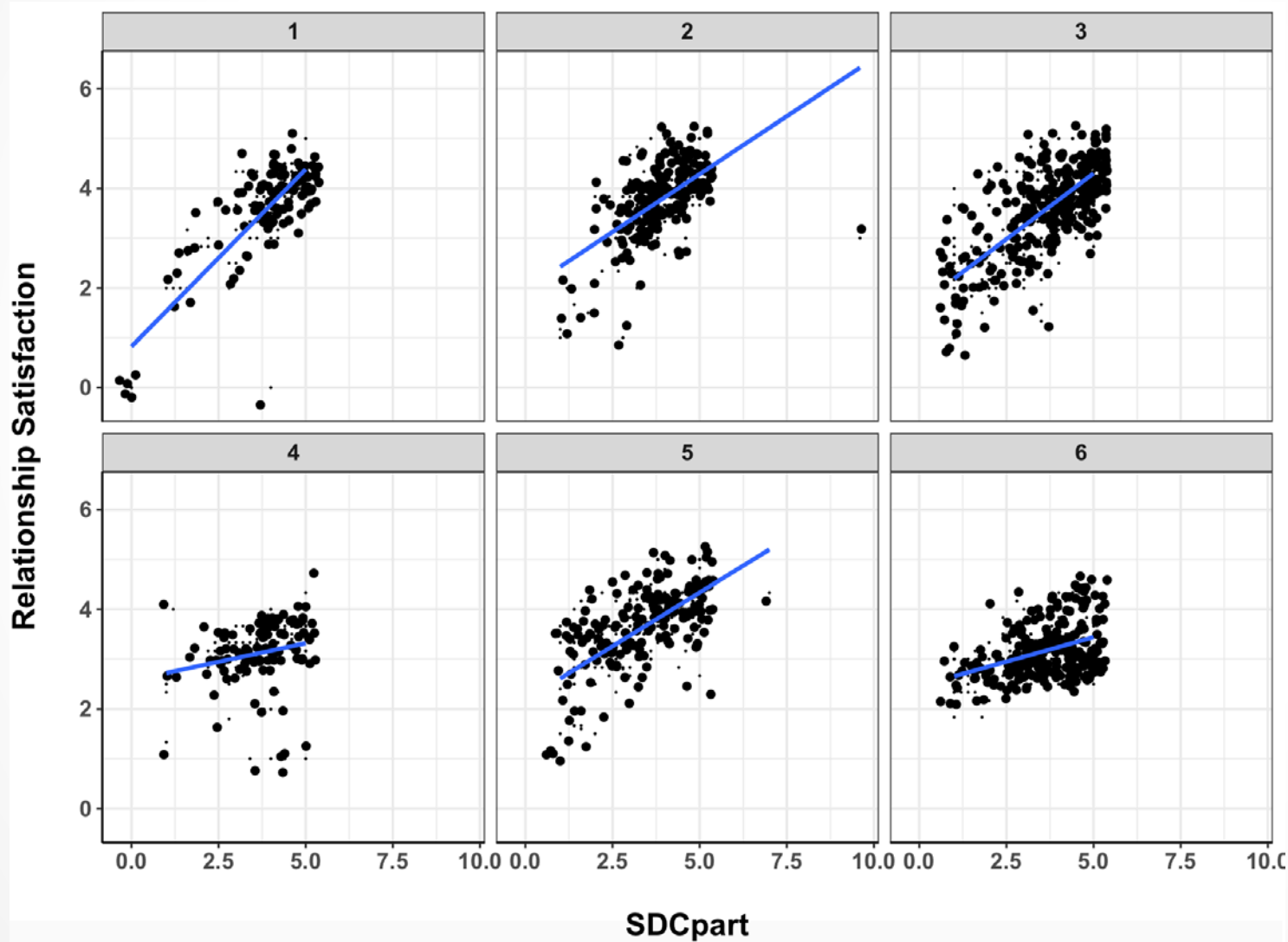
Difficulties in emotion regulation - negative effect on parents' relationship

- *Difficulties in emotion regulation decrease positive coping in parents' relationship and decrease their relationship satisfaction.*
- These findings are consistent with prior research showing that partners' difficulties in emotion regulation *determine criticism*, violence and low levels of relationship satisfaction (Bloch, Haase, & Levenson, 2014; Klein, Renshaw, & Curby, 2016; McNulty & Hellmuth,

Support received and parents relationship satisfaction and well being



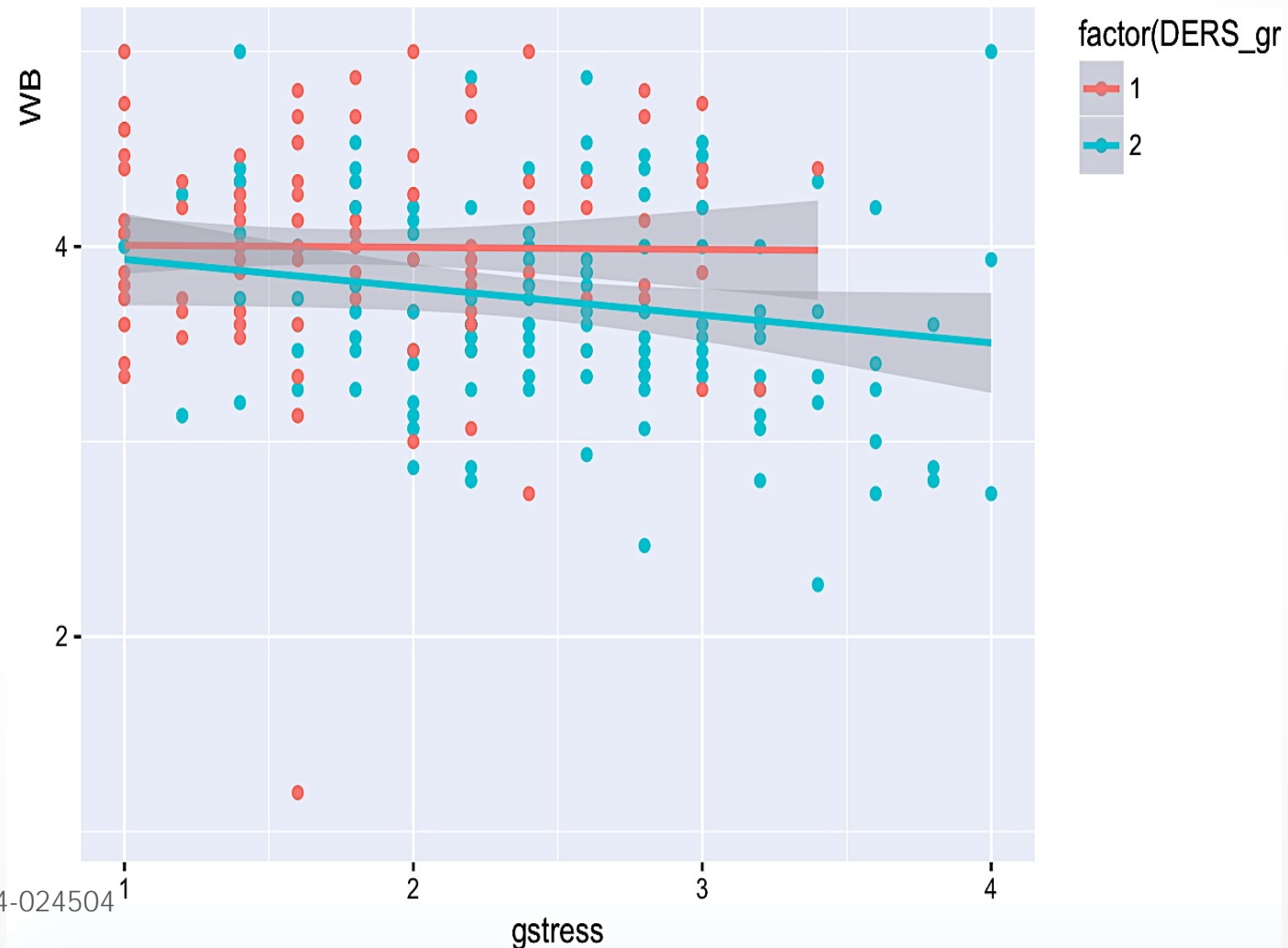
SDC by partner and Relationship satisfaction across countries



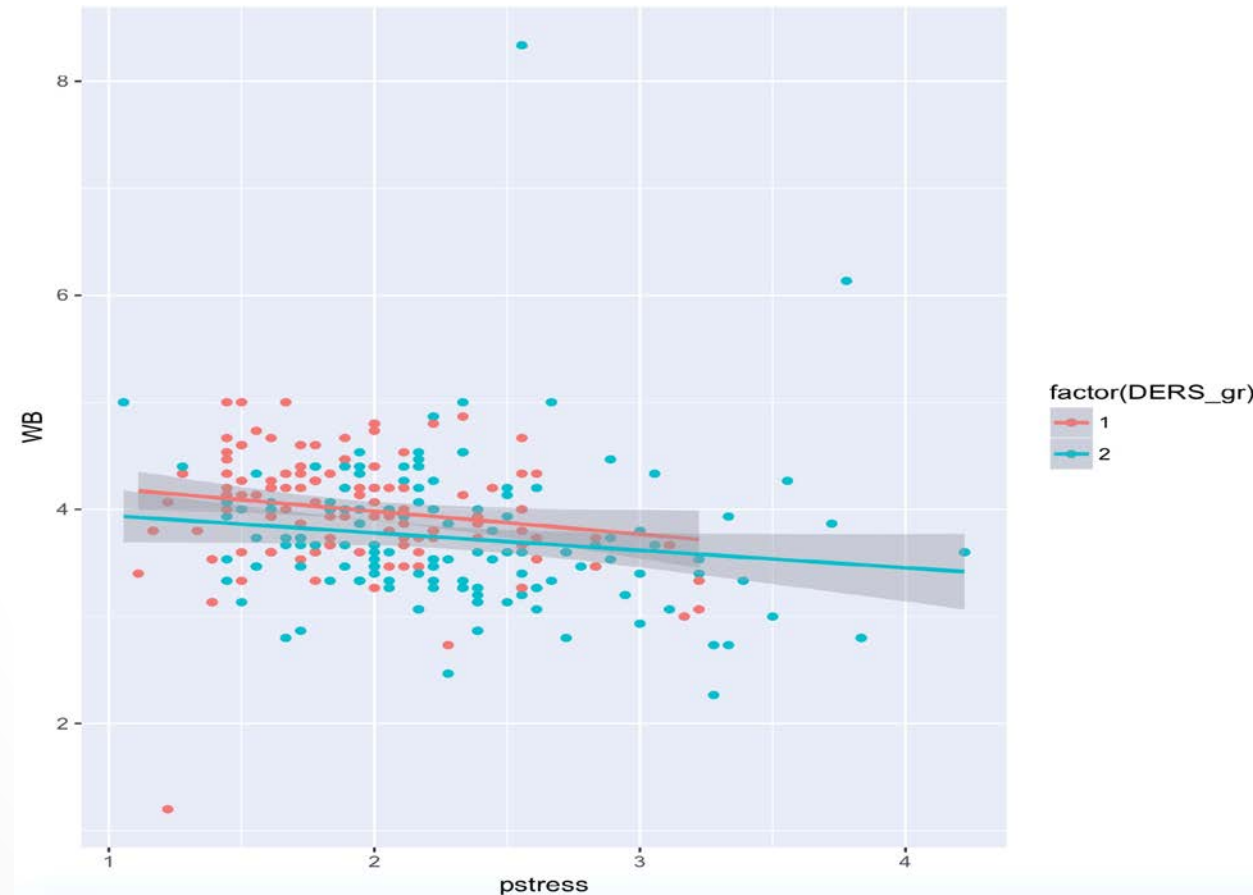
Support received and parents relationship satisfaction and well being

- Although both types of support (support from the partner and support from community) have been significantly positively associated with parents' well being, the results showed that *support from the partner was more related to well-being than support from the community.*
- These findings are consistent with the ones of prior studies, suggesting that positive dyadic coping is positively related to partners' well being (Rusu, 2016).

The association between general stress and well being depends on emotion regulation



The association between parental stress and well being depends on emotion regulation



Implications

- Training and counselling programs for this category of parents should target *parents' difficulties in emotion regulation and should focus on parents' individual and dyadic coping skills* in confronting with the major stress of having a child with special needs.
- According to the Systemic Transactional Theory (Bodenmann, 2005), *when parents are able to cope with their stress and to regulate their emotions, lower levels of stress will spill-over into the family.*

благодар
спасибо
danke

謝謝

ngiyabonga

tesekkür ederim

thank you

gracias

mochchakkeram

go raibh maith agat

bedankt

dziękuję

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terima kasih

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