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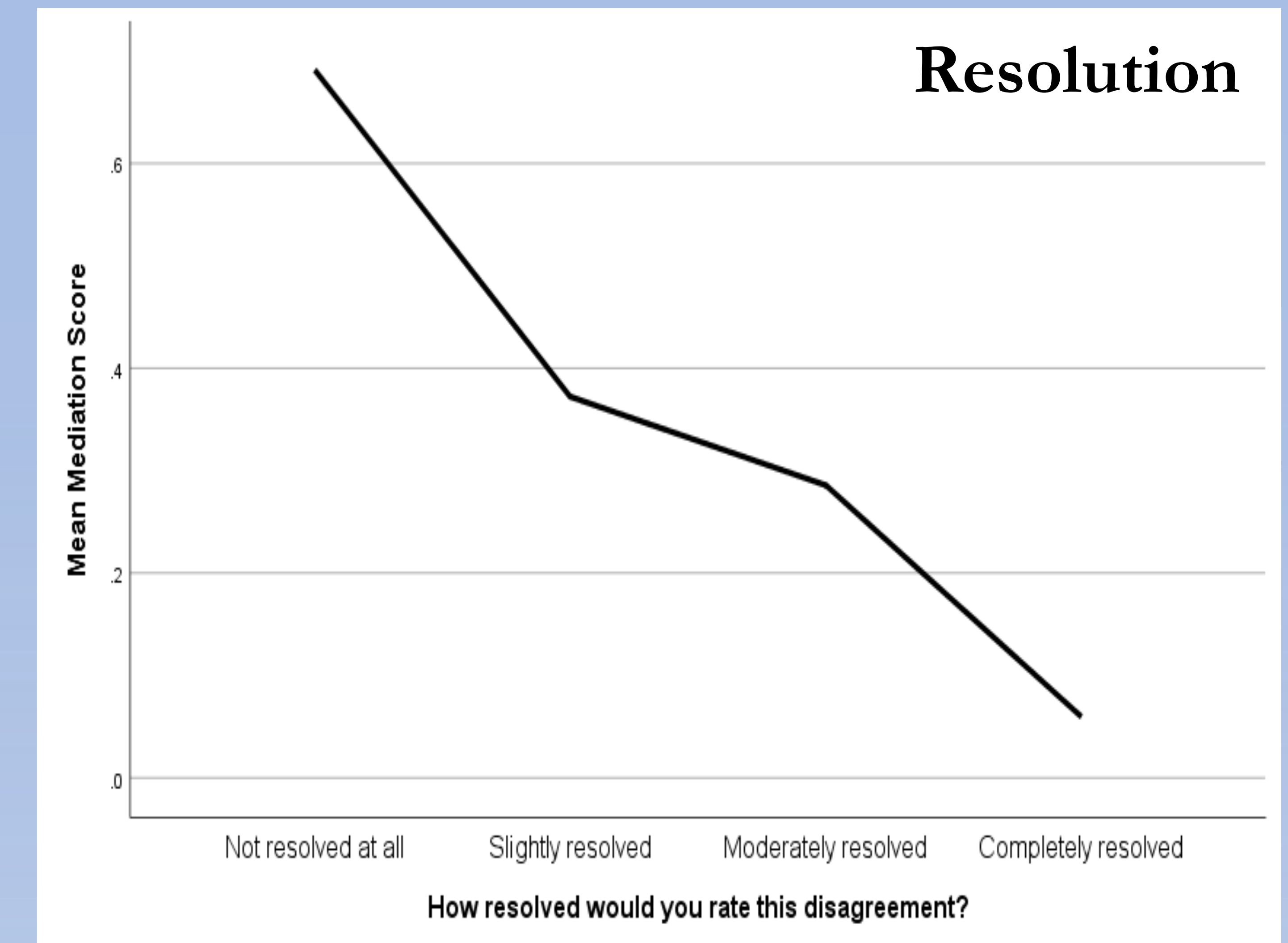
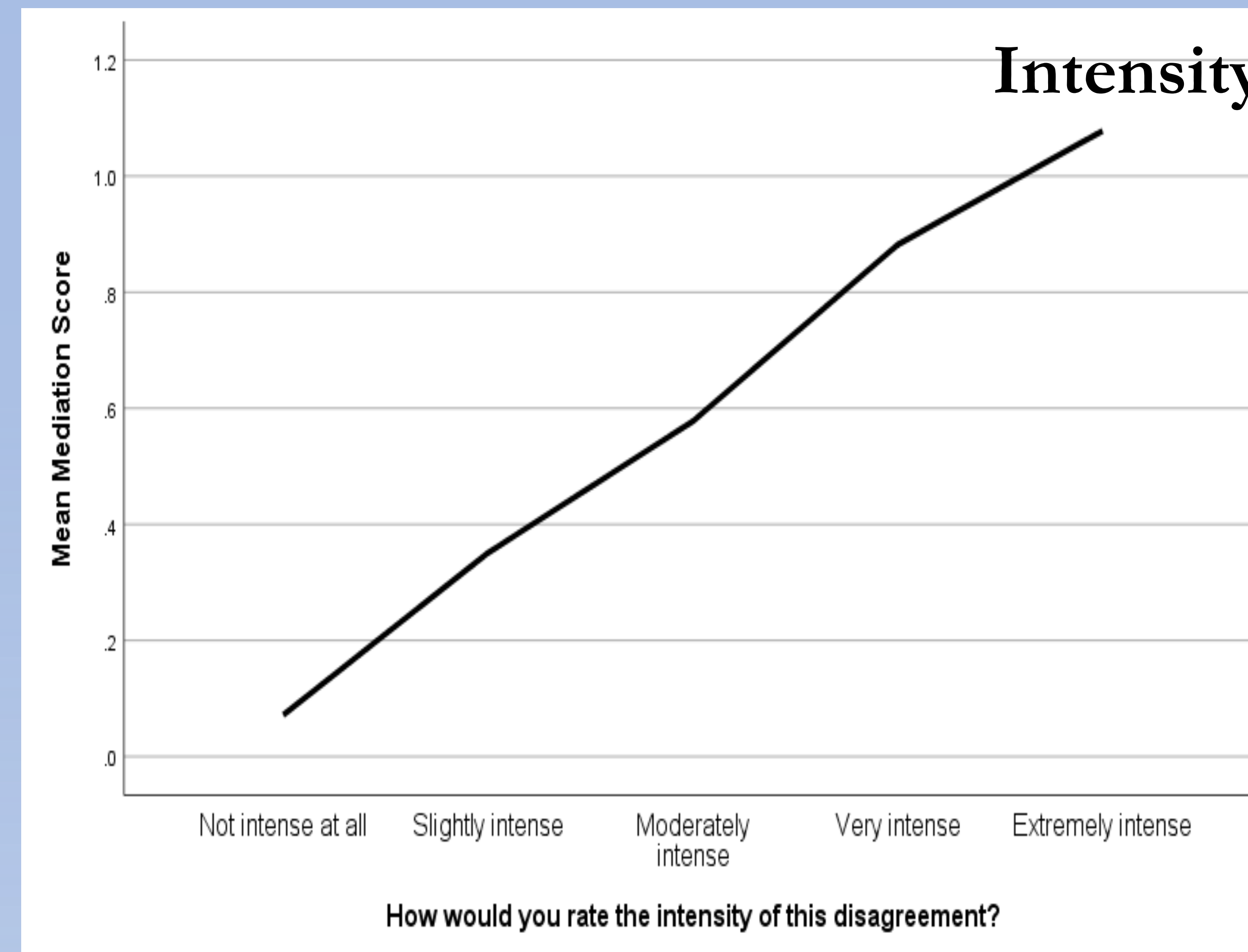
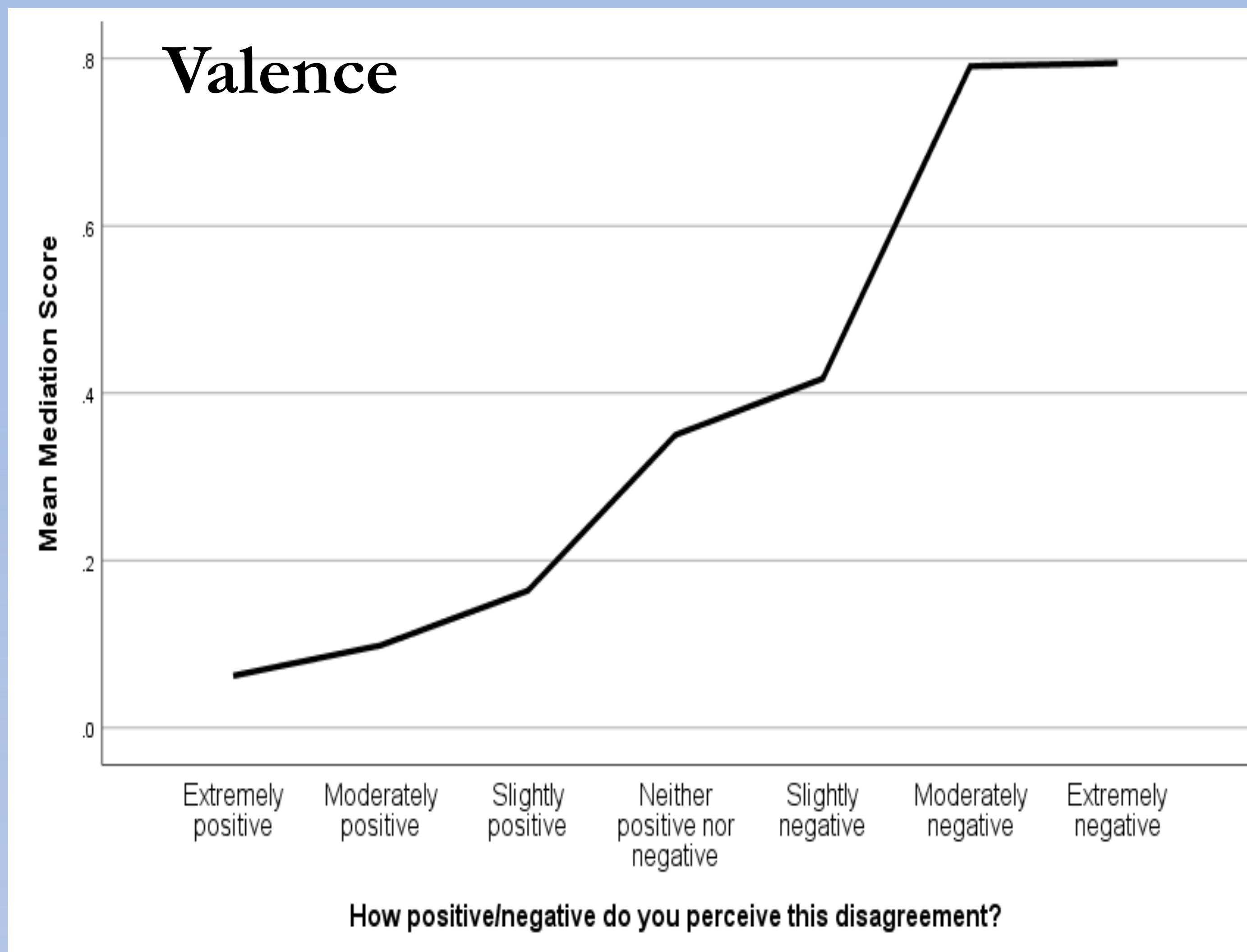
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Undergraduates' Interparental Conflict Mediation Based on Conflict Valence, Intensity, and Resolution

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Introduction

- Emotional Security Theory (Davies & Cummings, 1994)
- Children are less likely to intervene or mediate during constructive parental disagreements when their security in the family is not threatened.
- Destructive conflict leads to emotional insecurity in children, leading to negative emotional reactions and behavior dysregulation.
- Few studies have explored these concepts in college students.
- **Hypothesis:** As valence and intensity increase and resolution decreases, college students would mediate in interparental conflict more.

Method

Participants

- 161 undergraduates (45 male, 116 female, $M_{age} = 20.03$ years, $SD = 1.02$)
- 81% White ($n = 131$), 5% Black ($n = 8$), 2% Asian ($n = 3$), 8% Hispanic/Latino ($n = 14$), and 3% Biracial/Multiracial ($n = 5$)

Procedure

Participants were recruited using the SONA research participation system and completed an online questionnaire through Qualtrics, which included survey items, demographics, and six audio clips of disagreements (three constructive, three destructive). After listening to each audio clip, participants reported their perceptions of the disagreements as if they occurred in their own family. Participation took approximately 35 minutes and participants were granted SONA credit as compensation.

Measures

- **Mediation**
 - “How would you respond if you just overheard this disagreement between your parents?”
 - Sum of six mediation options (e.g., “Do something to solve the problem,” “take sides with one parent”) rated 0 (*no*) or 1 (*yes*).
- **Valence**
 - “How positive/negative do you perceive this disagreement?”
 - 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*extremely positive*) to 7 (*extremely negative*).
- **Intensity**
 - “How would you rate the intensity of this disagreement?”
 - 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*not intense at all*) to 4 (*extremely intense*).
- **Resolution**
 - “How resolved would you rate this disagreement?”
 - 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*not resolved at all*) to 3 (*completely resolved*).

Results

- On average, mediation ($M = .04-.94$, $SD = .26-1.32$), negativity ($M = 1.64-6.65$, $SD = .38-1.29$), and intensity ($M = .10-3.27$, $SD = .34-.86$) increased.
- Resolution ($M = .04-2.85$, $SD = .27-.81$) tended to decrease.
- As hypothesized, mediation scores increased as perceived negativity increased ($\beta = .04$, $SE = .02$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.01, .08]) and as perceived intensity increased ($\beta = .13$, $SE = .03$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.07, .19]).
- Contrary to hypotheses, mediation scores did not increase in relation to declining resolution scores ($\beta = .03$, $SE = .02$, $p > .05$, 95% CI [-.02, .08]).

Discussion

- As conflict intensity and negativity increased, students were more likely to report mediating.
- Decreases in resolution were not linked with higher mediation as hypothesized.
- As interparental conflict becomes more destructive, individuals feel as though their security as a family is threatened and attempt to restore security by mediating the conflict (Lee et al., 2019).
- The lack of significant results regarding perceived resolution may be explained by the restricted range of that item or by participants' difficulty in distinguishing between the different degrees of resolution (e.g., moderately vs. slightly resolved, or slightly resolved vs. not resolved at all).
- Future research should better differentiate these categories to prevent interpretational discrepancies among participants. More research should be conducted in this field to provide families with useful information emphasizing the benefits of constructive conflicts on their child's emotional security.

Contact Information

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