

# Effect of Income Burden on Family Dynamic in ASD Families



Jordan L. Bondeson & Sigan L. Hartley  
Human Development and Family Studies, Waisman Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison



## Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disability. ASD involves impairments in social communication and restricted and repetitive behaviors. About 2.2% of the population in 2014 were reported to meet criteria for ASD (Zablotsky, Black, Maenner, Schieve, & Blumberg, 2015). The total cost of care associated with ASD was estimated to be \$1.4 to \$2.4 million per year (Buescher, Cidav, Knapp, & Mandell, 2014). Some of this cost is a direct cost to families. In addition to these high costs, the heightened child-related responsibilities associated with ASD may mean that parents often have to reduce their time in paid employment. Little is known about the role of household income in shaping family outcomes in the context of child ASD.

## Study objective

- Compare time spent in paid employment in parents of children with ASD vs. parents of children without disabilities.
- Examine the association between household income and family outcomes in families with a child with ASD.

## Methods

### Sample

- 189 families with a child with ASD
  - Parents: Age (M = 39.72, SD = 5.99); 83.6% White non-Hispanic; 76.3% some college education
  - Household income M = \$80,000-89,999, SD = \$20,000 - \$30,000
  - Child with ASD: Age (M = 7.90, SD = 2.25); 85.54% male
- 183 families of a child without a disability
  - Parents: Age (M = 39.72, SD = 5.99); 83.6% White non-Hispanic; 79.3% some college education
  - Household income M = \$80,000-89,999, SD = \$20,000 - \$30,000
  - Child with ASD: Age (M = 7.98, SD = 2.32); 84.23% male

### Measures

Parents independently reported on:

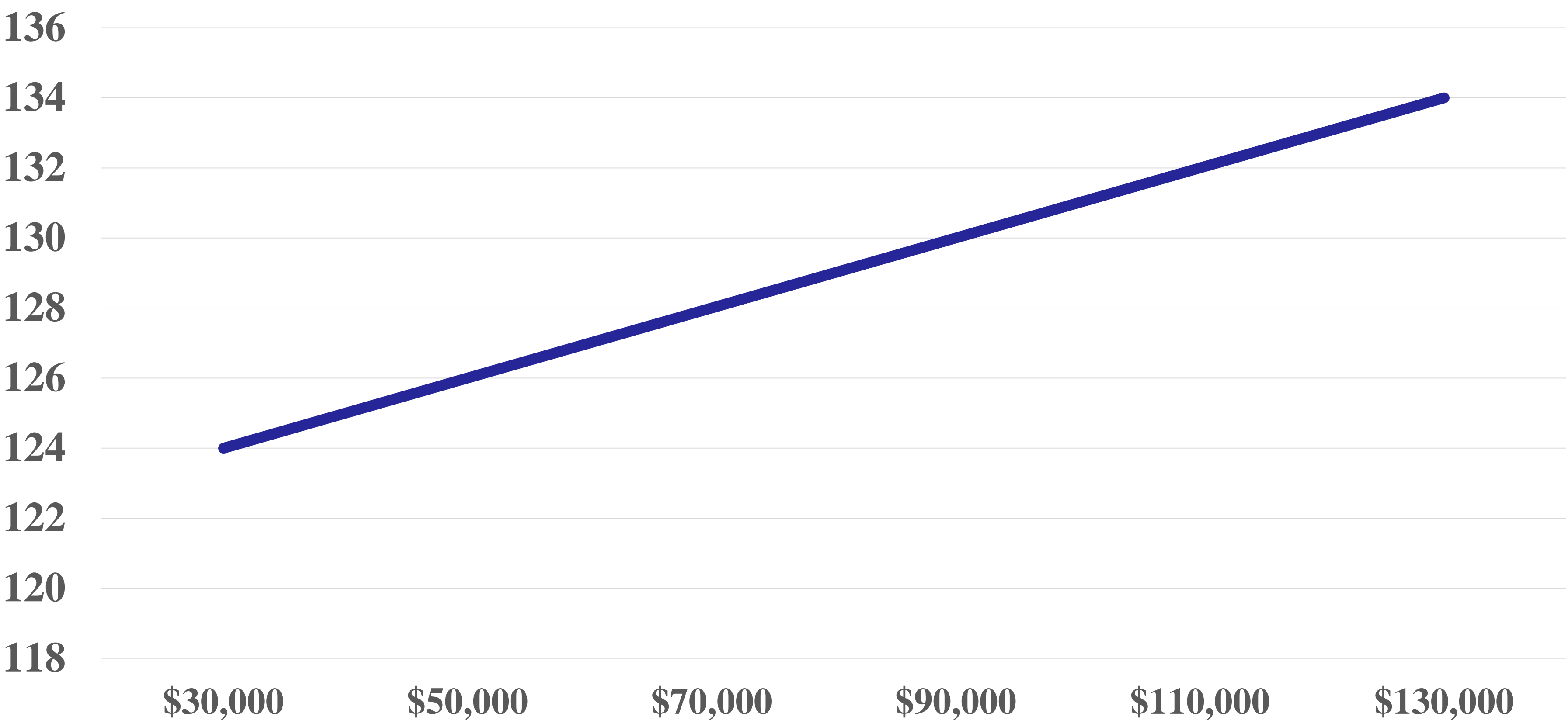
- Average hours per day in paid employment
- Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI; Funk & Rogge, 2007)
- Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000; 2001)
- Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ; Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001)

## Results

Table 1. Comparison of time spent in paid employment for mothers and fathers in the ASD and Comparison groups					
	ASD		Comparison		F value, p value
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	
Average # of hours per week of paid employment	30.23 (10.23)	48.87 (7.43)	37.14 (8.21)	48.24 (7.32)	14.23, p < .02

## Results

Figure 1. Association between Household Income and Marital Relationship Satisfaction in Parents of Children with ASD in Regression Controlling for child age and parent education level



\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ s

## Main Findings

\* Mothers in the ASD group spent less time in paid employment than mothers in the comparison group. There was not a group difference in time spent in paid employment for fathers.

\* In the ASD group, household income was significantly positively related to level of couple relationship satisfaction and authoritative parenting style. Household income was not related to the child's level of behavior problems.

## Implications

The heightened level of child-related challenges associated with ASD may mean that mothers spent less time in paid employment activities than comparison mothers. However, this was not true for fathers. This may mean that mothers need more family related supports (due to taking on more child related care responsibilities) than fathers.

Overall, in families of children with ASD household had important associations with family outcomes. Specifically, parents with a higher income reported being more satisfied in their marital relationship. They also reported engaging in more adaptive parenting styles than did parents with a lower household income. This finding suggests that providing financial support to families of children with ASD may be a way to improve family experiences. It also suggests that families with lower household income may need more family-wide supports.

Future research should be directed towards looking at the effects of individual parental income, and how that is potentially associated with the family dynamic outcomes.

## Results

Figure 2. No significant association between Household Income and CBCL in Parents of Children with ASD in Regression Controlling for child age and parent education level

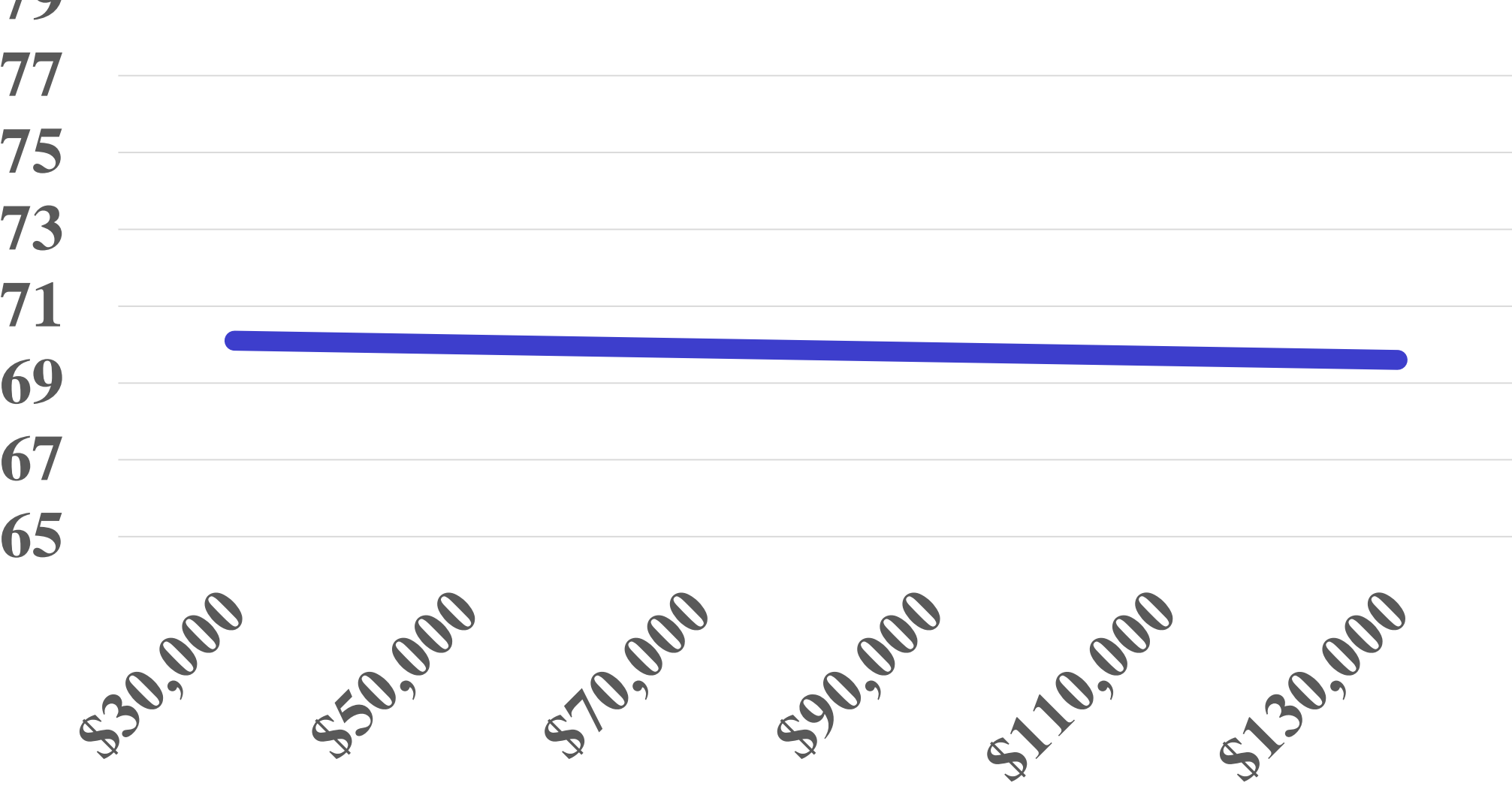
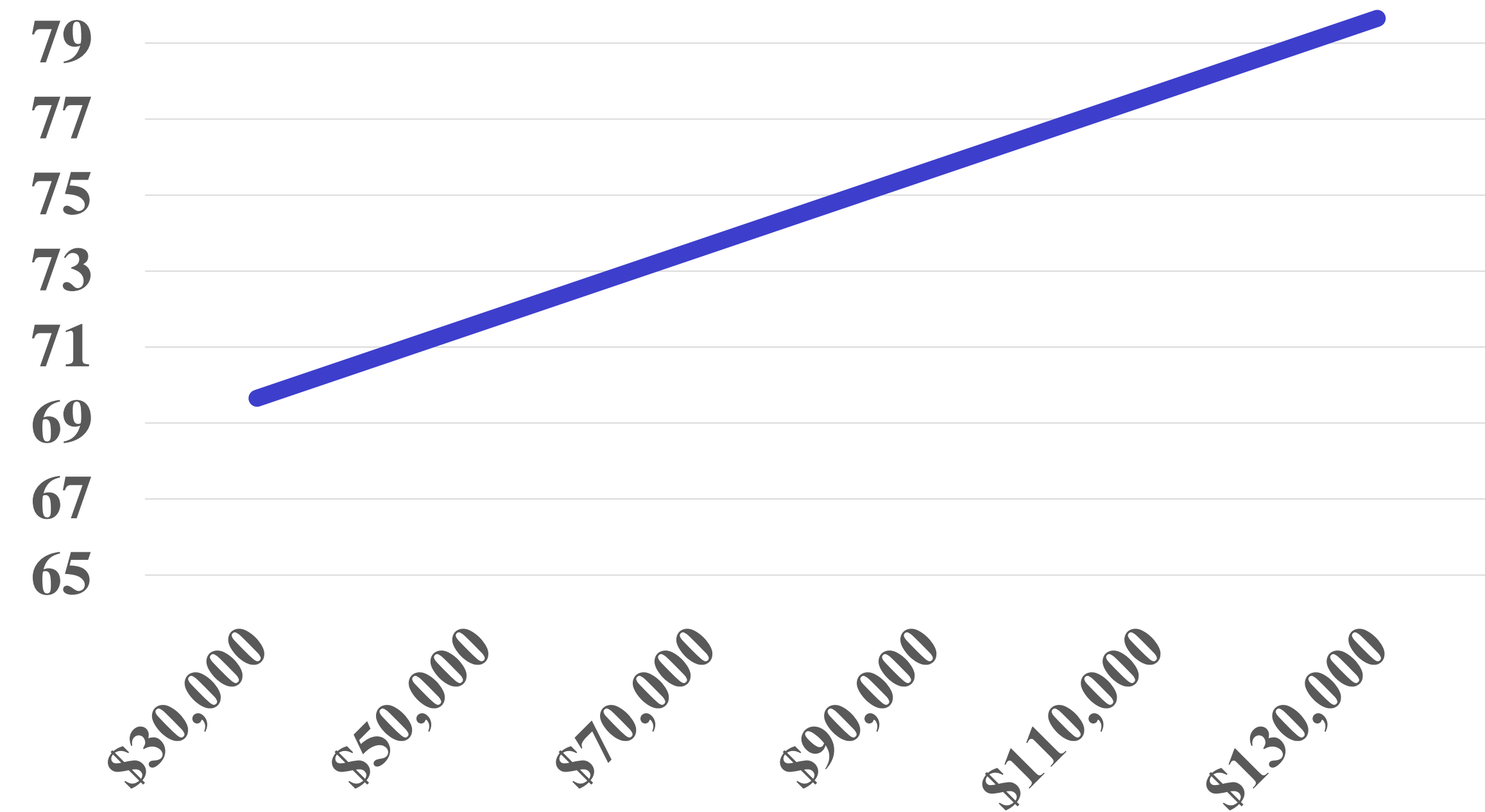


Figure 3: Significant Association between Household Income and Authoritative Parenting Style in Parents of Children with ASD in Regression Controlling for child age and parent education level



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Correspondence: Sigan L. Hartley ([slhartley@wisc.edu](mailto:slhartley@wisc.edu))

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