

INTRODUCTION

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by impairments in social communication and restricted/repetitive interests and behaviors.¹ Research in the general population suggests that parental conflict is associated with child challenging behaviors.² Parents who have a child with ASD report an increased risk for parent conflict, potentially due to unique challenges and stressors of raising a child with ASD.³ It is likely that parent conflict and child behaviors are bi-directionally related. Previous research has examined parental conflict using the subdomains: severity, frequency, and resolution.⁴ The purpose of this study is to better understand the relation specifically between the severity of parental conflict and severity of ASD symptoms. This study also investigated the relation between conflict severity and specific ASD behavioral subtypes.

STUDY AIMS

1. Describe relation between child ASD severity and severity of parental conflict
2. Investigate relation between conflict severity and specific ASD behavioral subtypes

SAMPLE

	Parents
	N = 189
Age M(SD)	
Mothers	38.69(5.61)
Fathers	40.76(6.19)
Bachelor's degree or higher N(%)	
Mothers	117(61.90%)
Fathers	107(56.50%)
Household Income N(%)	
<\$50,000	25(13.20%)
\$50,000 to \$99,999	84(44.40%)
>=\$100,000	72(38.20%)
Distressed Couples N(%)	
Mothers	59.7(31.6%)
Fathers	62.37(33%)
	Children
Age M(SD)	7.90(2.248)
Male N(%)	162(85.70%)
Intellectual Disability N(%)	65(34.4%)

MEASURES

- Couple Conflict and Problem-Solving Scale (CCPSS; Kerig, 1996)⁴
- Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS; Constantino, Gruber, 2005)⁵

RESULTS

Figure 1

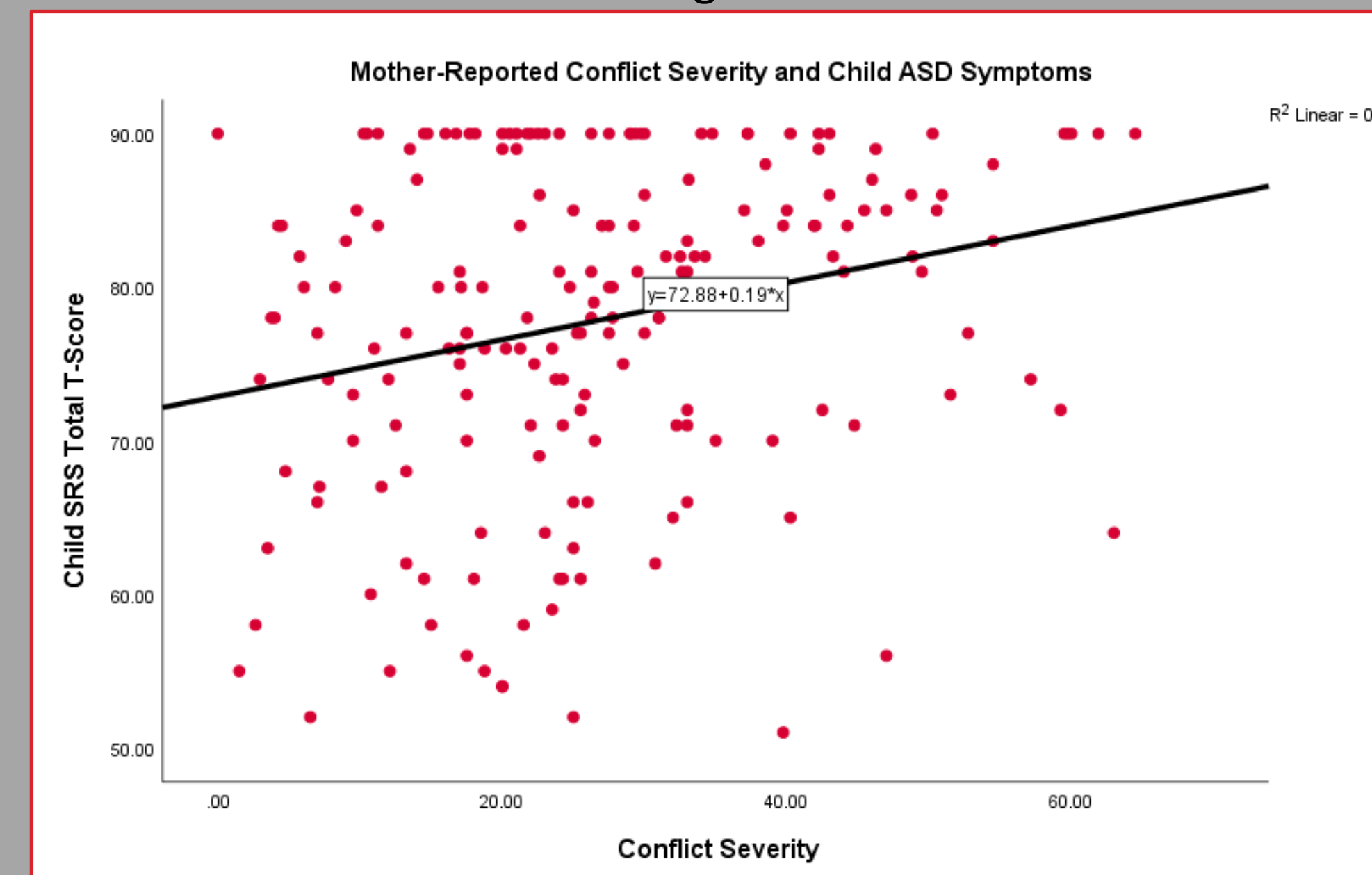
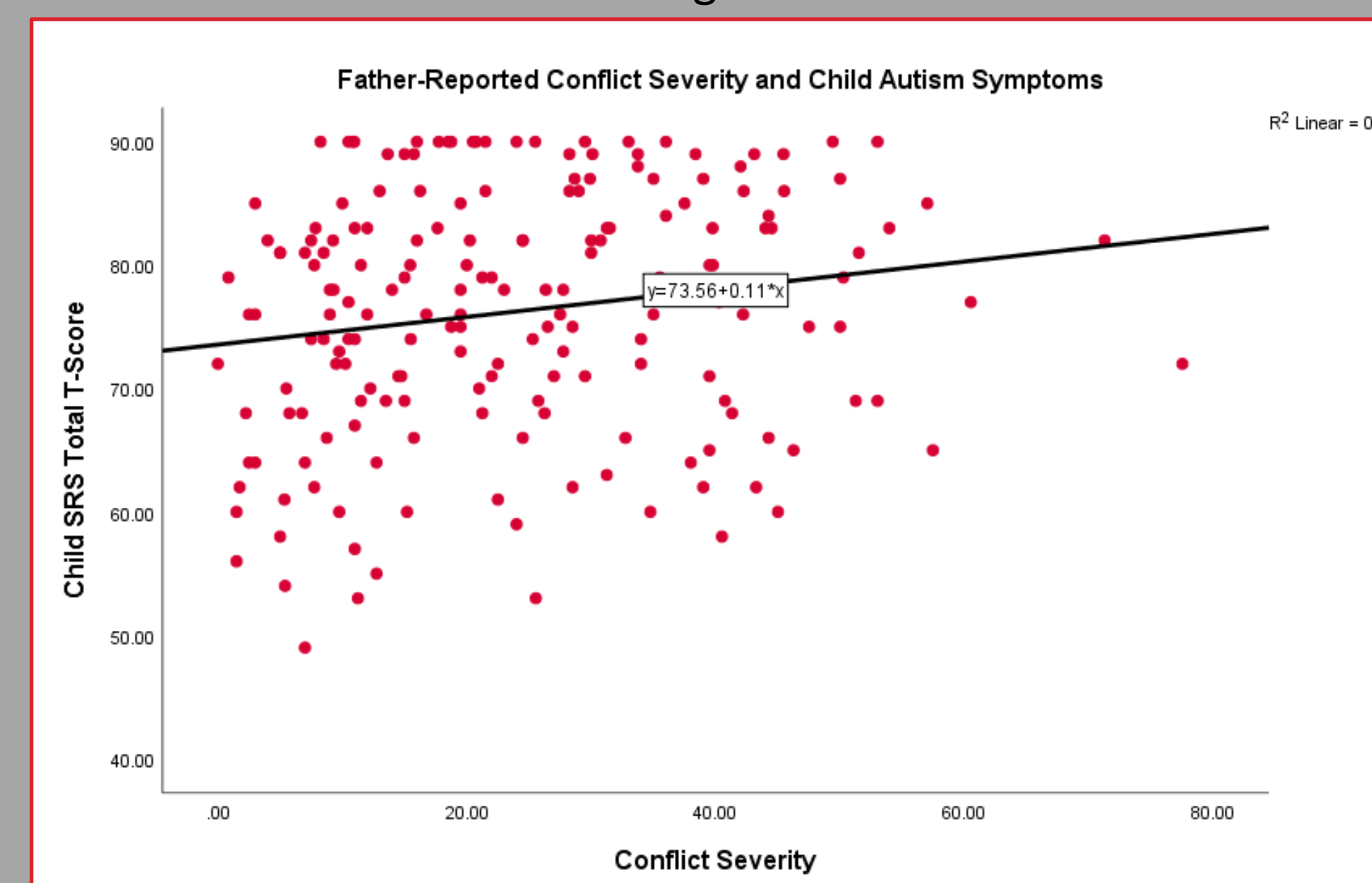


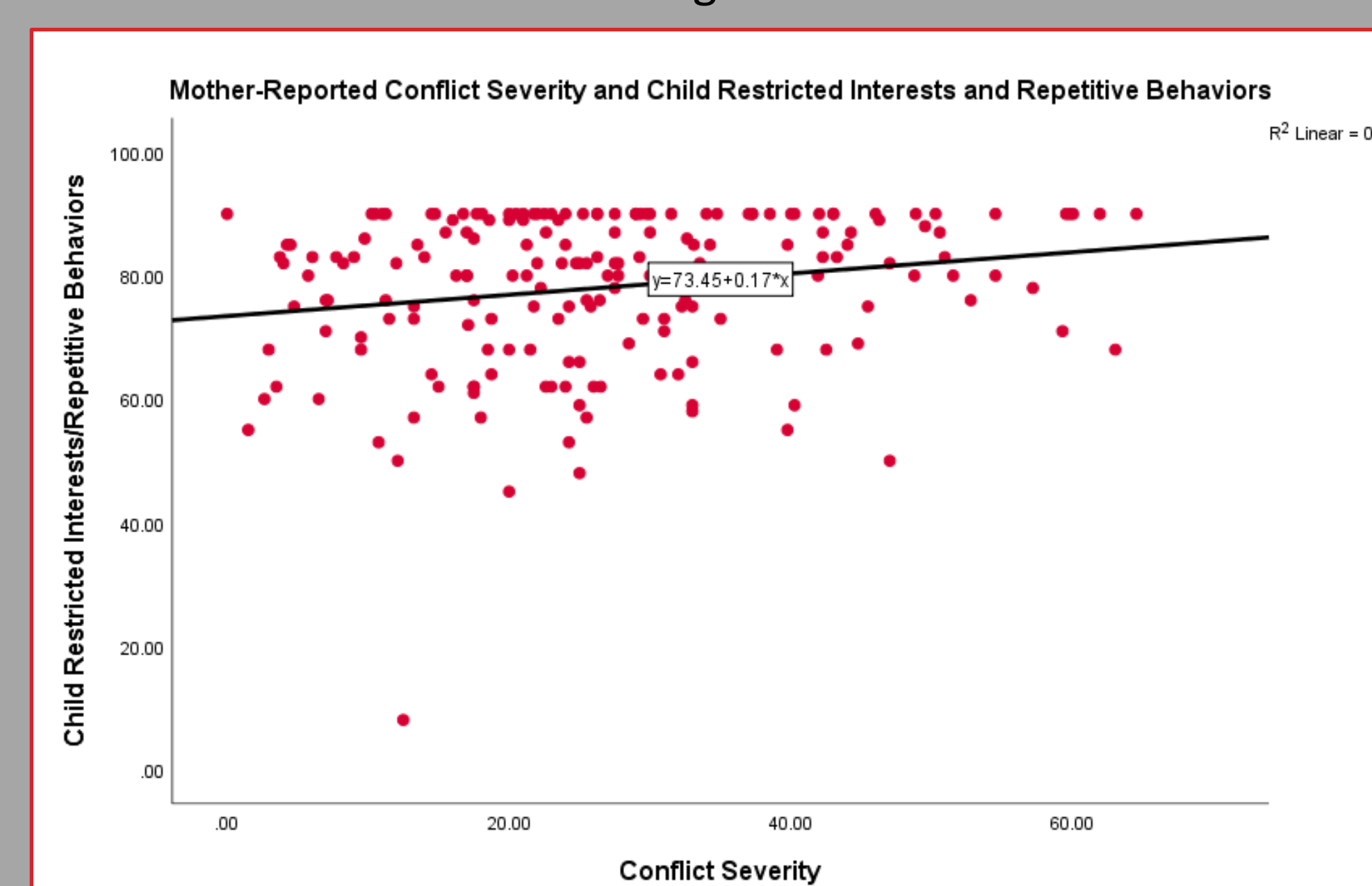
Figure 2



KEY FINDINGS

- Findings indicate a strong, positive correlation between rated severity of couple conflict and severity of autism symptoms for both mothers ($r = 0.252$, $p = 0.01$) and fathers ($r = 0.174$, $p = 0.05$).
- A simple linear regression was calculated to predict child SRS based on mother reported conflict severity. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1, 186) = 12.573$, $p < 0.01$), with an r^2 of 0.063 (Figure 1).
- A simple linear regression was calculated to predict child SRS based on father reported conflict severity. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1, 184) = 5.769$, $p < 0.05$), with an r^2 of 0.025 (Figure 2).

Figure 3



KEY FINDINGS

- Findings indicate mothers' rating of severity of conflict with their partner was significantly correlated ($r = .199$, $p = .01$) with child restricted and repetitive behavior (Figure 3).
- A simple linear regression was calculated to predict child restricted repetitive behaviors based on mother reported conflict severity. A significant regression equation was found, ($F(1, 186) = 7.703$, $p < .01$), with an r^2 of 0.040.

DISCUSSION

Based on our sample, there is a strong correlation between reported parental conflict severity and severity of child ASD. These findings are expected and consistent due to previous research using the ecological systems theory, specifically within the microsystem where parental interactions and home-life play a significant role in the development and behaviors of children.² Based on these findings, we examined the subscales of the SRS. After review, we found that mothers' rated severity of conflict with dad is predictive of child restricted/repetitive behaviors. However, there was no significant correlation found between fathers' rated severity and the same subscale. We think this could be the case because mothers in our study are on average rated as more involved with their children.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

- Future studies should investigate the relationship between fathers' rated severity of parental conflict and child restricted/repetitive behaviors using a sample with more paternal involvement, on average
- Future studies should investigate the association between mothers' rated severity of parental conflict and child restricted/repetitive behaviors using a larger sample size

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