

Associations Between Transdiagnostic Symptoms and Parent-Child Relationship Quality in Families of Children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities



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INTRODUCTION

- Children with **neurodevelopmental disabilities** (NDDs) often display mental health challenges (e.g., anxiety) and core symptoms of specific conditions (e.g., social communication difficulties)
- Studies have investigated interactions between these transdiagnostic variables¹, but few have examined these interactions in relation to **parent-child relationship quality**, which has been shown to be related to child outcomes²
- Most studies have focused on samples of children with homogenous NDD, and no study has examined these associations in treatment-seeking families

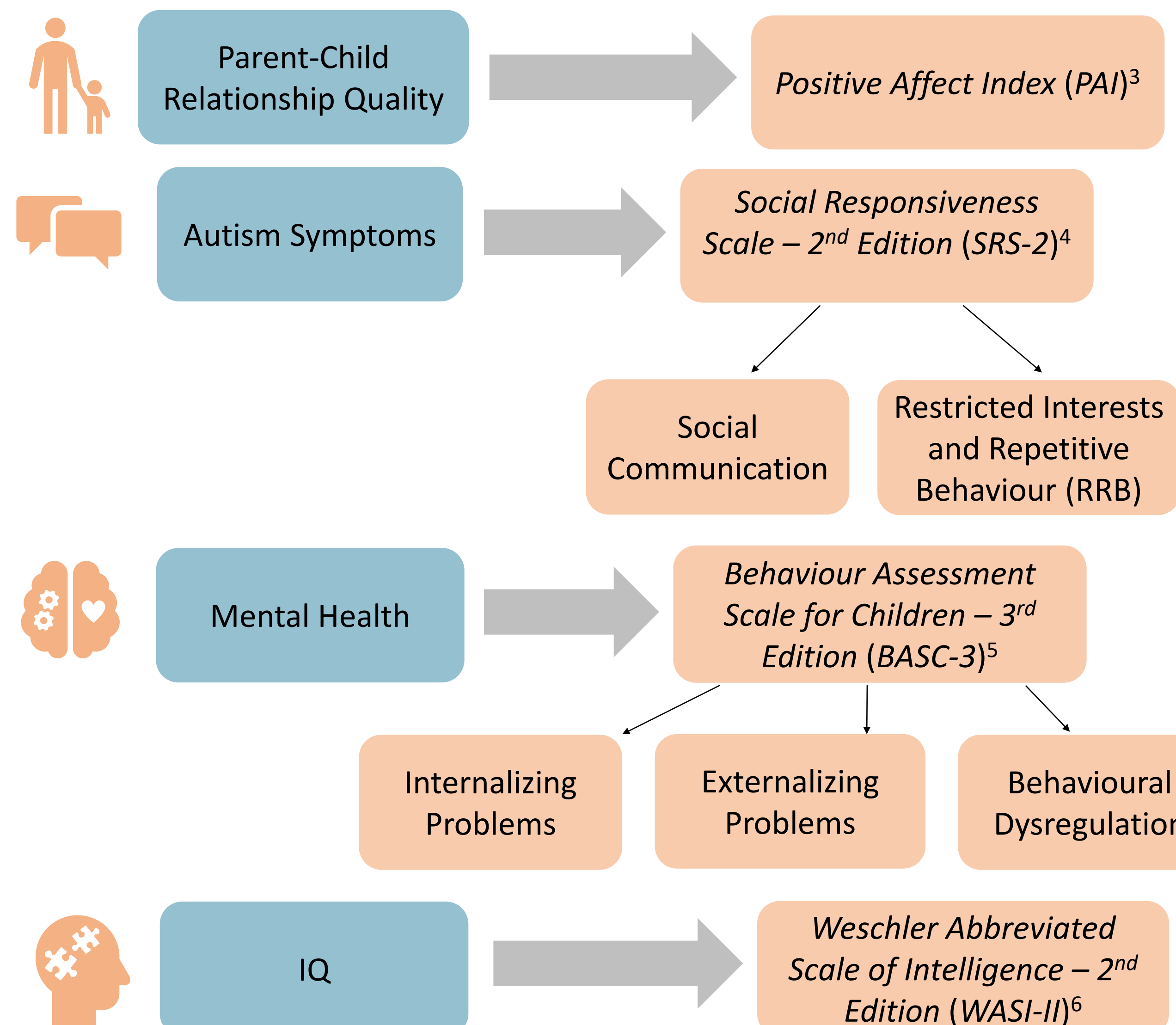
OBJECTIVE: Examine interactions between intellectual functioning and child clinical symptoms (mental health, social communication, and behavioural rigidities) in relation to parent-child relationship quality in treatment-seeking families of children with NDDs

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

- $N = 68$ parent-child dyads at baseline prior to being involved in cognitive behavioural therapy
- Parents were 29 to 54 years ($M = 43.76$ years, $SD = 5.67$ years)
 - 85% female
- Children were 8 to 13 years ($M = 9.75$ years, $SD = 1.52$ years)
 - 79% male
 - Categorized into groups of relatively low IQ ($< 1 SD$; $N = 11$), average IQ (within $1 SD$; $N = 46$), and high IQ ($> 1 SD$; $N = 11$)
- Child diagnoses included autism, ADHD, learning disability, and cerebral palsy

MEASURES



RESULTS

Table 1. Spearman rho correlations between IQ, mental health, autism symptoms, and PAI scores.

	N	Range	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. PAI Total Score ($M = 44.65$, $SD = 7.81$)	63	27-58	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. IQ	68	Low IQ, Average IQ, High IQ	-.37**	-	-	-	-	-
3. Social Communication ($M = 72.24$, $SD = 8.42$)	68	50-90	-.38**	-.02	-	-	-	-
4. RRB ($M = 73.62$, $SD = 9.15$)	68	53-90	-.21	-.05	.55**	-	-	-
5. Internalizing Problems ($M = 63.97$, $SD = 11.68$)	64	39-94	-.15	-.06	.57**	.46**	-	-
6. Externalizing Problems ($M = 65.81$, $SD = 13.24$)	64	40-99	-.37**	.03	.33**	.26*	.42**	-
7. Behavioural Dysregulation ($M = 73.39$, $SD = 11.19$)	64	52-101	-.29*	-.07	.56**	.45**	.65**	.82*

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

Table 2. Hierarchical regressions between IQ, mental health, autism symptoms, and PAI scores.

Regression	Predictor	β	t	Sig.
Social Communication \times IQ	Social Communication	.03	.15	.88
	IQ	-.42	-3.95	< .001
	Interaction	-.48	-2.24	.03
RRB \times IQ	RRB	.05	.23	.82
	IQ	-.41	-3.56	.001
	Interaction	-.33	-1.48	.14
Internalizing Problems \times IQ	Internalizing Problems	.19	.76	.45
	IQ	-.41	-3.50	.001
	Interaction	-.41	-1.59	.12
Externalizing Problems \times IQ	Externalizing Problems	-.24	-1.15	.26
	IQ	-.38	-3.51	.001
	Interaction	-.18	-.82	.41
Behavioural Dysregulation \times IQ	Behavioural Dysregulation	-.11	-.48	.63
	IQ	-.45	-3.89	< .001
	Interaction	-.28	-1.21	.23

Social communication difficulties, externalizing problems, behavioural dysregulation, and IQ are associated with parent-child relationship quality in families of children with neurodevelopmental disabilities.



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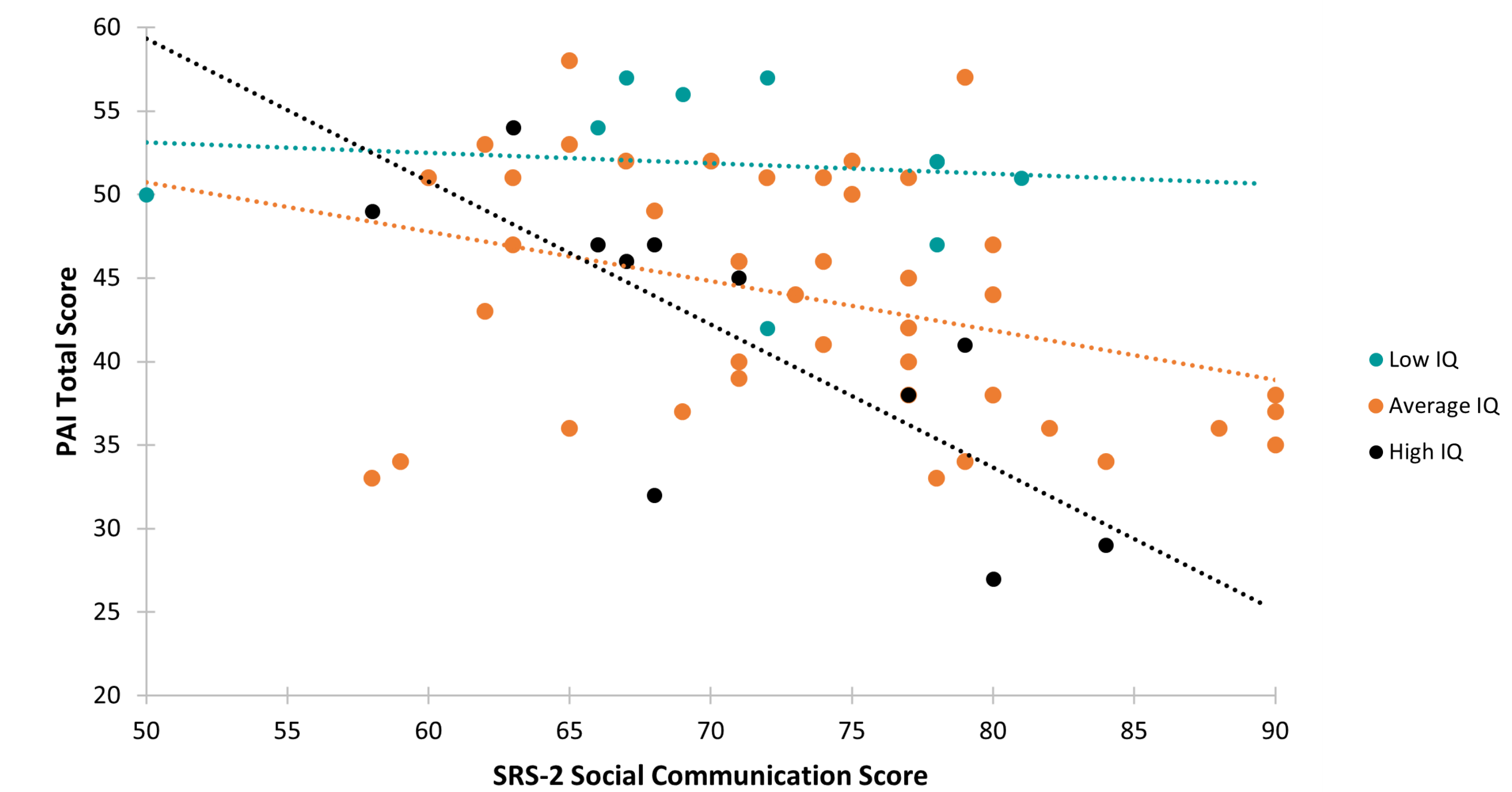


Figure 1. Scatterplot of the association between SRS-2 Social Communication and total PAI scores at each IQ level.

DISCUSSION

- Social communication difficulties, externalizing problems, behavioural dysregulation, and IQ are associated with parent-child relationship quality**
 - In children with high IQ, social communication difficulties had a stronger negative association with parent-child relationship quality
- Understanding the interactions between **child-level factors** is critical as parents of children with NDDs often manage multiple symptoms
- These **child-level factors** may be addressed in interventions to improve parent-child dynamics, and potentially, **child and family wellbeing**

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Parent-child relationship quality was measured using a brief parent-report scale
- Sample was small, and consisted primarily of males with female caregivers
- Future research with a larger and more diverse sample is needed

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