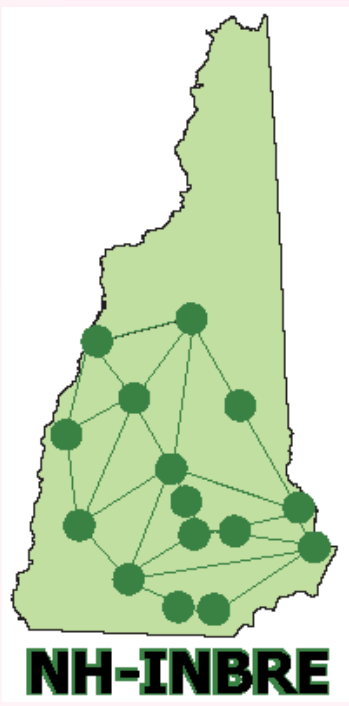


Grandparents Raising Adolescent Grandchildren: A Daily Diary Study of Stress and Health



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Background

- Approximately 6 million children are being cared for, part-time or full-time, by their grandparents (Generations United, 2015) for numerous reasons including abuse, child neglect, substance abuse, etc. (Gleeson et al., 2009; Jendrick, 1994)
- Research has shown that providing extensive care and/or being a custodial caregiver may affect grandparent's health and wellbeing (Musil et al., 2010) but reports of their experiences are limited
- Dolbin-MacNaband & Keiley (2009) examined grandparenting reported on the perceptions of adolescent grandchildren. Adolescents perceive a close bond, surrogate parental role, and a sense of gratitude, along with generational dissonance and feeling limited in participating in social activities with peers
- Research is needed to understand grandparents perceptions of caring for adolescents. This study plans to extend research by exploring daily experiences and the relationships with overall health of grandparents caring for adolescent grandchildren

Research Questions

- How frequently do grandparents who care for their grandchildren report daily stressors and daily positive events?
- Are daily stressors correlated with daily health (daily mood and daily physical symptoms)? (i.e. emotional and physical reactivity to stress)
- How do experiences of positive events correlate with daily health (daily mood and daily physical symptoms)?

Method

Participants

Seven grandparents who provided care 10+ hours/week were surveyed for 5 consecutive days ($n=35$ days)

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Mean (SD) or %
Age	60.17 (5.56)
Gender (% Female)	71%
Ethnicity (% White)	86%
Education (% Associates degree or higher)	57%
Employment Status (% Employed)	43%
Mean Household Income (% less than 74,999)	57%
# of People in Household	3.57 (.98)
# of Children	2.43 (1.27)
# of Grandchildren	5.57 (3.87)

Design

- Correlational daily diary study
- Participants filled out a background/demographic survey and then they completed five consecutive days of daily diaries

Measures

Background Survey:

- Age, gender, ethnicity, education status, employment status, household income, number of people living in household, number of children, number of grandchildren

Daily Diaries:

Average daily positive and negative affect adapted for daily diary (Crawford & Henry, 2004), participants reported on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (none of the time to all of the time) for the follow items. Positive affect items were cheerful, extremely happy, calm, peaceful, satisfied, and full of life. Negative affect items were sad, nervous, restless, worthless, and hopeless.

- Total number of daily stressors and positive events came from the The Daily Inventory of Stressful Events (Almeida, Wethington, & Kessler, 2002)
- Total number of daily physical symptom was reported each day (e.g., backache, muscle soreness, joint pain, fatigue; Larsen & Kasimatis, 1991).

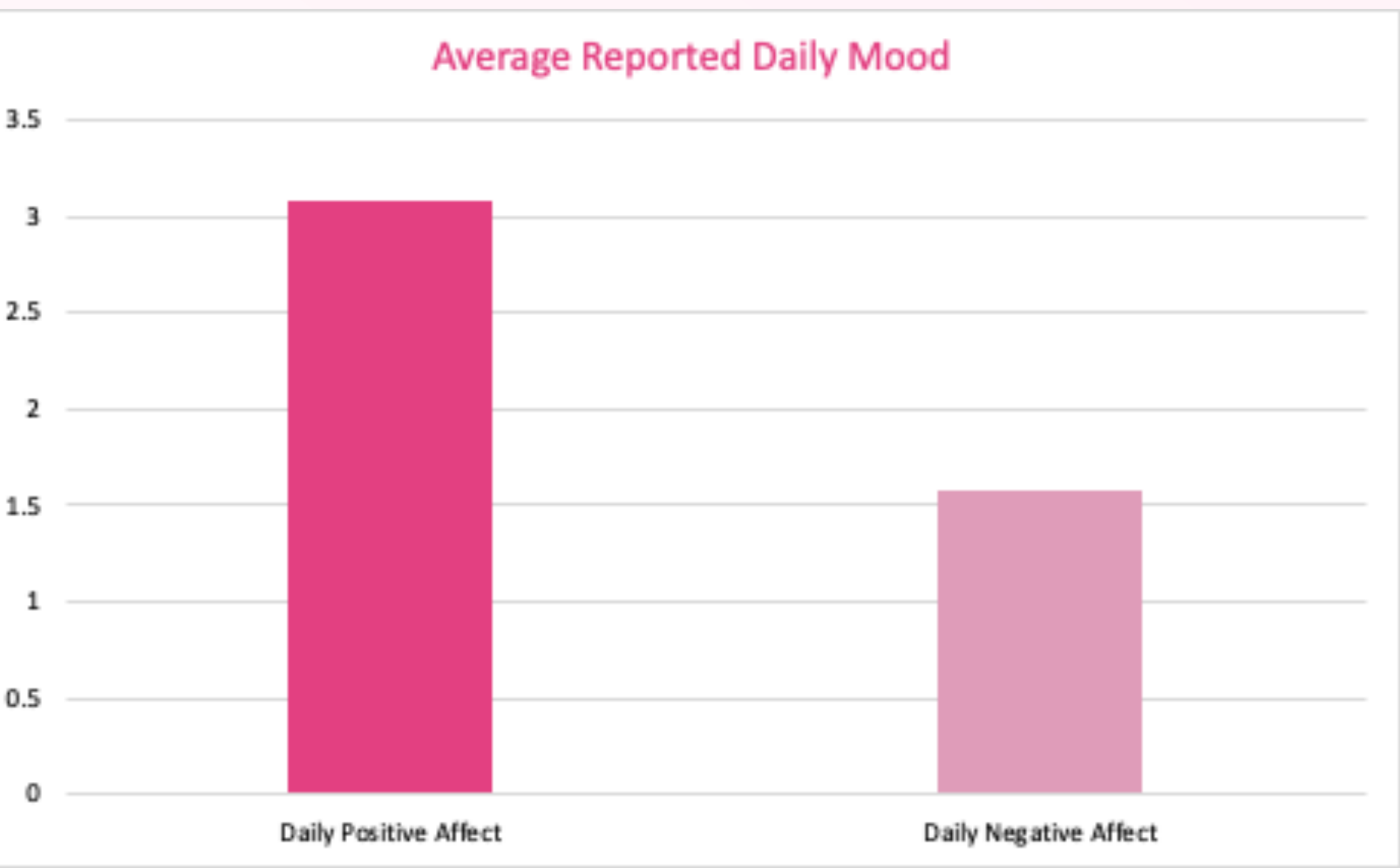


Figure 1. The average reported daily mood (positive and negative affect).

Adolescent grandparents on average reported higher daily positive affect ($M = 3.13$, $SD = .72$) than negative affect ($M = 1.55$, $SD = .55$)

Results

Research Question 1:

Adolescent grandparents on average reported more stressors ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.77$) than positive events ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 1.17$) (see Figure 2).

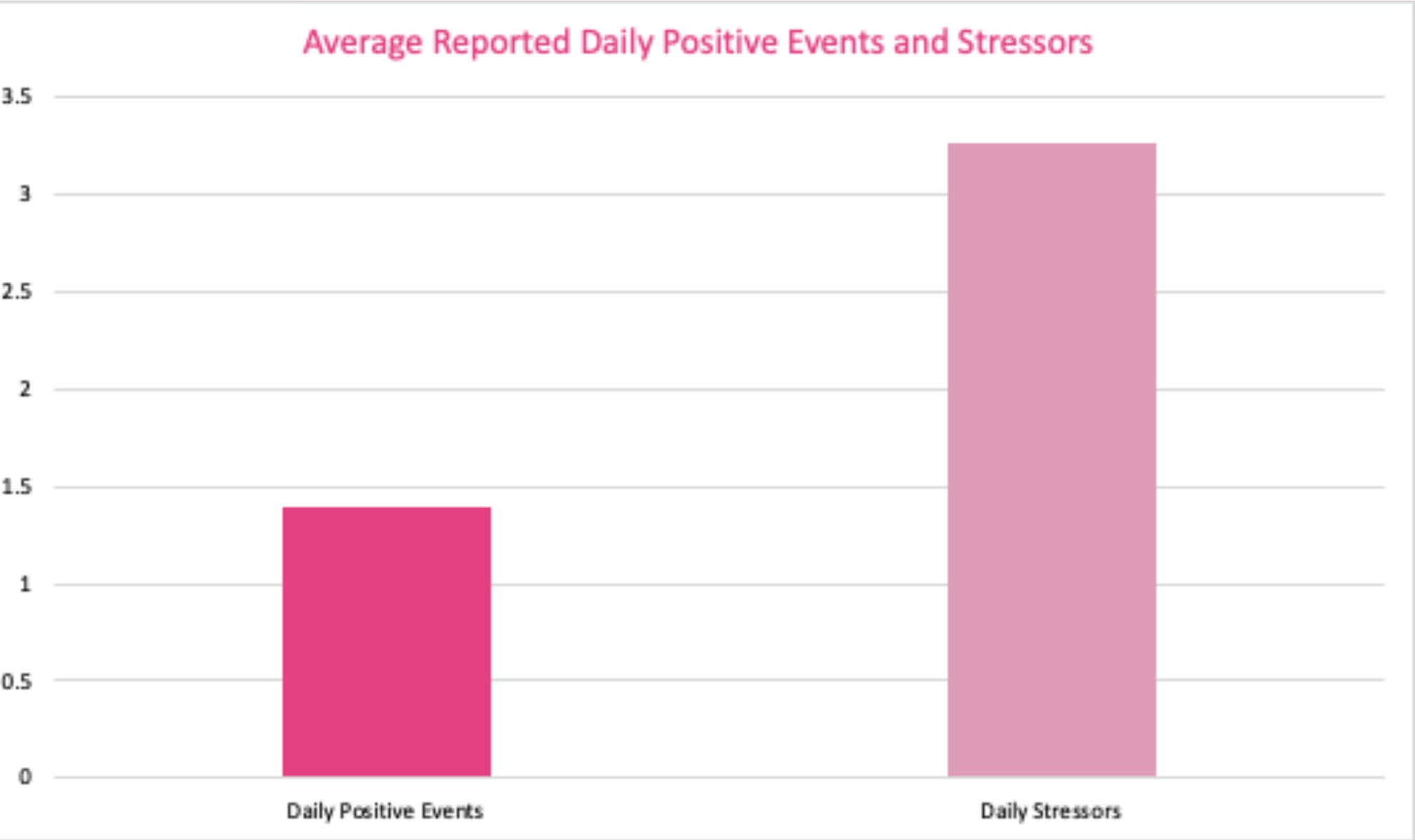


Figure 2. The average reported daily positive events and stressors experienced over 5 days.

Research Question 2:

In Pearson correlational analysis, daily stress was significantly associated with negative affect ($r = .44$, $p = .009$) (see Figure 3), and daily physical symptoms ($r = .51$, $p = .007$) (see Figure 4), but daily stress was not associated with positive affect ($r = -.18$, $p = .300$)

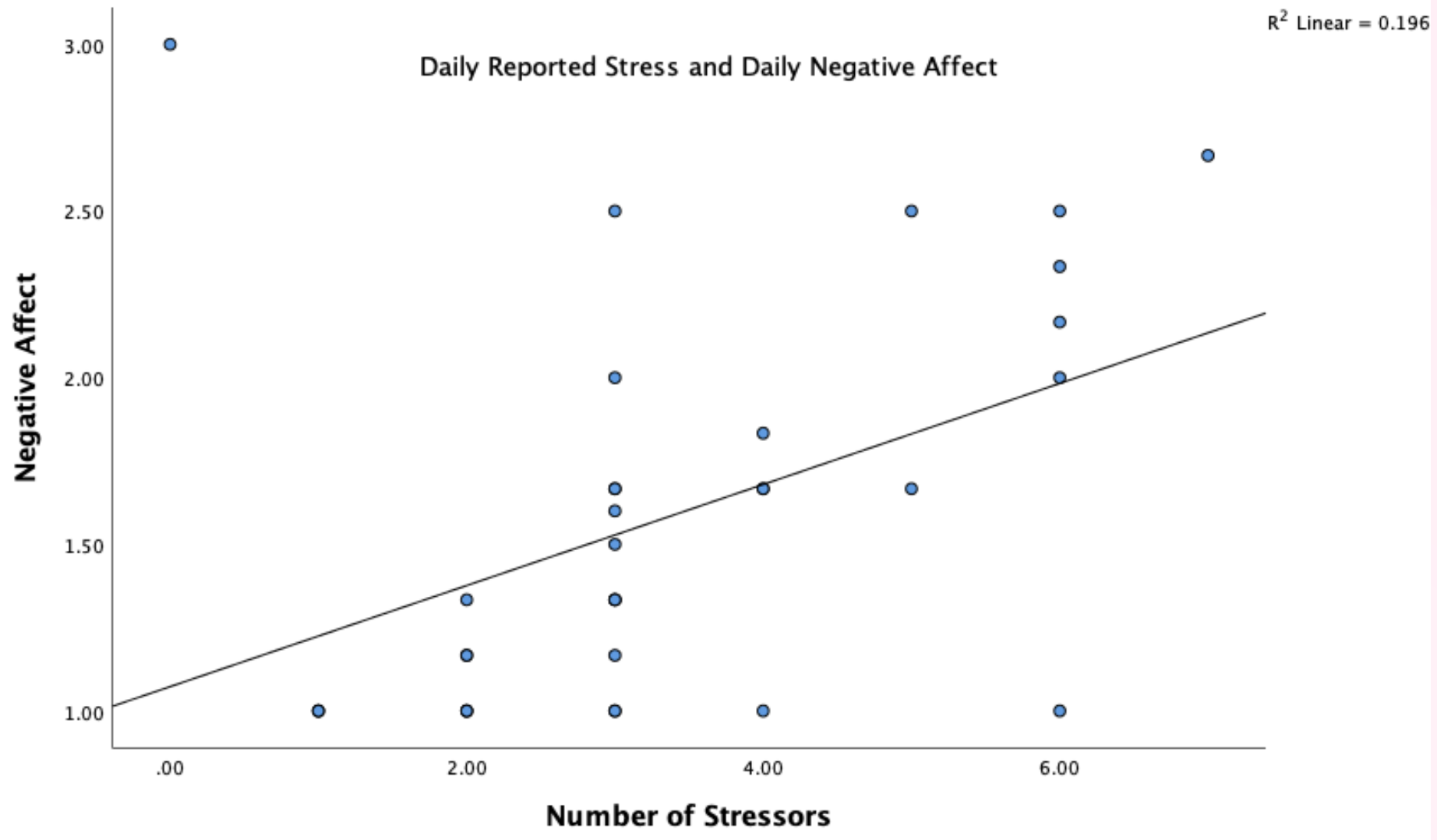


Figure 3. Emotional reactivity to stress

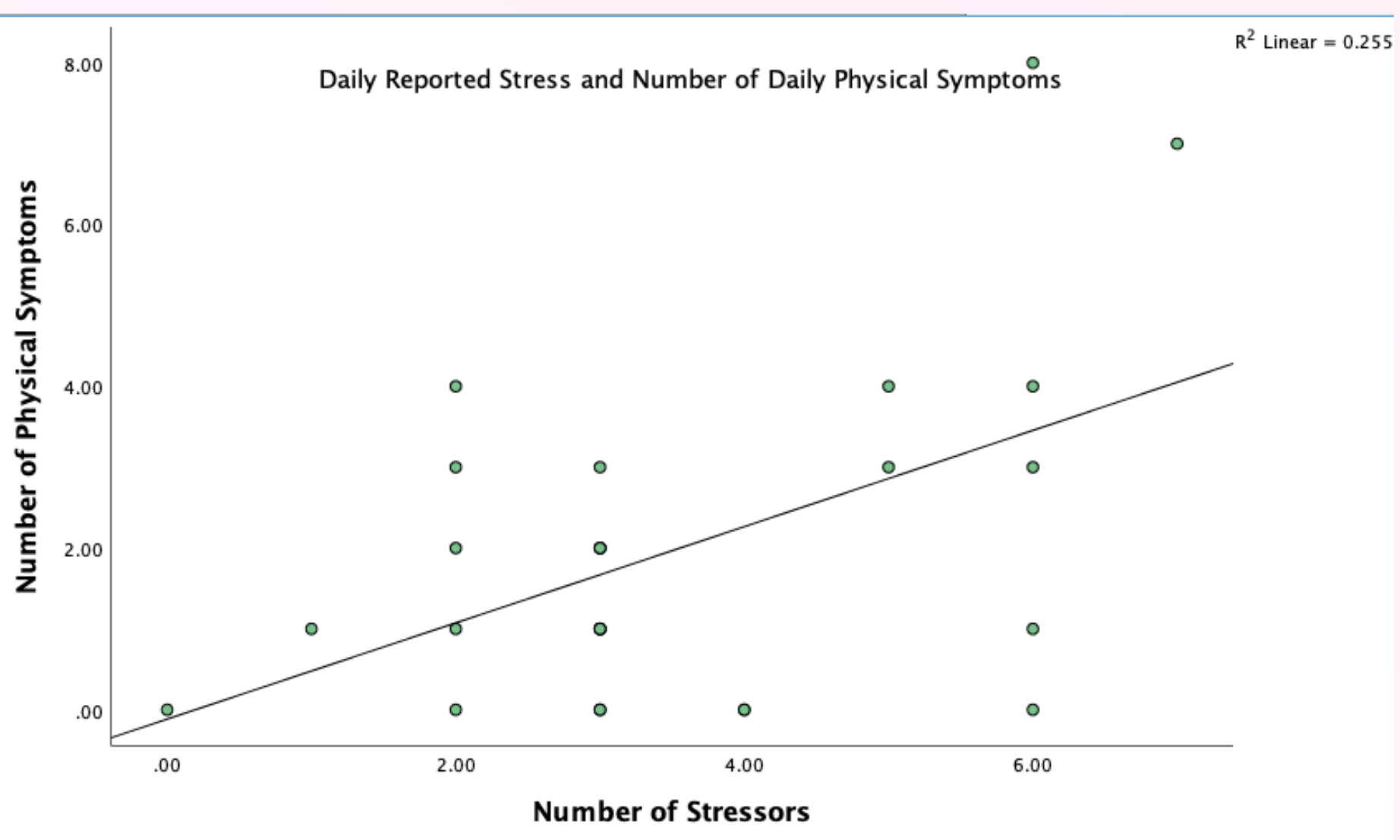


Figure 4. Physical reactivity to stress.

Research Question 3:

In Pearson correlational analysis, positive events were significantly associated with positive affect ($r = .46$, $p = .007$) (see Figure 5), but not with daily symptoms ($r = .09$, $p = .64$) or negative affect ($r = -.18$, $p = .304$).

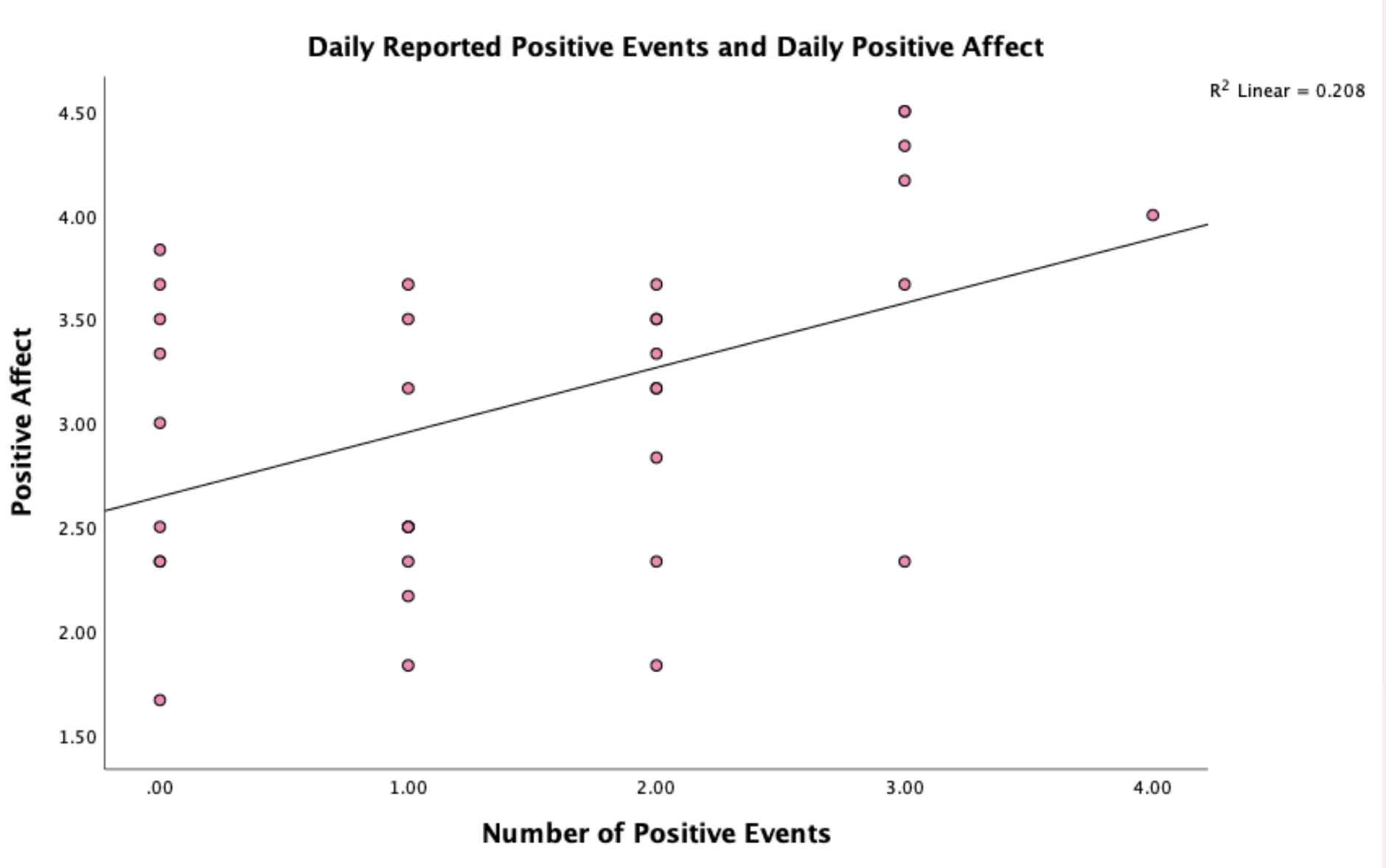


Figure 5. Emotional reactivity to positive events

Conclusions

- Grandparents of adolescents reported more daily stressors than positive events
 - Daily stress had positive correlations with physical symptoms and negative affect/mood
 - Daily positive affect was reported more than negative affect
- This study supports past work which has found a negative correlation of stress and health among grandparents (Musil et al, 2010; Peterson, 2017)
- This study adds to the literature by including measures of daily experiences and health among adolescent grandparents
- Limitations of the study include a small/non-diverse sample, lack of male participants
- Future research should examine whether stressors were specific to grandchildren and the role of conflict with grandchildren
- The daily diary design of the study was a strength as it looked at daily events and reduced recall bias
- The study examined grandparents' experience of caring for a child in this tumultuous period of life
- Information about stressors/challenges associated with caretaking of an adolescent could be used for grandparenting support groups
- Research should look at challenges of caregiving for young vs. adolescent grandchildren, and if there are different levels of emotional/physical reactivity in relation to stress
- References are available upon request