

CONTEXTUAL-BEHAVIORAL MODEL OF SELF PREDICTS BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER SYMPTOMS

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BACKGROUND

- Dysregulation of self is argued to be at the core of borderline personality disorder (BPD). It is linked to symptoms such as identity disturbance and chronic feelings of emptiness (Linehan, 1993).
- There is some evidence that psychotherapy can decrease self-related difficulties in BPD, however, basic processes underlying change and specific interventions responsible for it remain unknown (Roepke et al., 2011).
- From a contextual-behavioral perspective, there are three behavioral repertoires with important implications for a healthy self: self-as-content, self-as-process and self-as-context (McHugh, 2015).
- Deficits in these repertoires may significantly contribute to BPD symptoms and training these repertoires may alleviate some difficulties (Morgan & Aljabari, 2019).
- **The aim of this study was to investigate if, and how well the specific elements of the contextual-behavioral model of self predict BPD symptoms.**

METHOD

- 349 participants (211 women, 134 men, 4 other) aged 18-56 ($M=27.52$, $SD=7.70$) were recruited from BPD-themed Facebook groups and university settings. No formal diagnoses were made.
- Participants completed a demographic questionnaire and self-report measures of self-as-content flexibility (summed score of self-kindness, over-identification, and self-judgment subscales from SCS-SF), self-as-process (MAAS), self-as-context (SEQ), and BPD symptoms (BPD checklist).
- To answer the research question, multiple regression analysis was performed. In addition, to check for the potential moderating role of demographic variables, series of moderation analyses with age and gender as moderators were performed.

DISCUSSION

- **This study is the first to suggest that deficits in all three behavioral repertoires related to self may play a role in BPD and therefore they may be relevant targets for interventions for people with BPD symptoms.**
- The fact that self-as-process emerged as the strongest predictor of BPD symptoms is in line with insights from evidence-based treatments for BPD. **Nonreactive monitoring moment-to-moment experience seems to be a foundational skill for this population** (Linehan, 1993; Zurita Ona, 2020). It may be especially important for younger people.
- **Self-as-context emerged as an independent predictor of BPD symptoms.** Effects of self-as-distinction and self-as-hierarchy framing should be investigated in the population with this diagnosis.
- Gender-related differences in the relationship between self-as-content flexibility and BPD symptoms may be explained by the differences in the way men and women are socially trained to self-relate (Yarnell et al., 2019). The topics of gender socialization and gender-based oppression are worth exploring with BPD-diagnosed clients (Linehan, 1993).
- Caution is required when doing self-related work with highly dysregulated clients. A graded approach may be helpful when exposing these individuals to training self-as-context (Bailey et al., 2009).
- Future research should focus on investigating the role of functional processes in different symptom topographies that may be present in people struggling with self dysregulation, e.g. identity disturbance or chronic feelings of emptiness.

RESULTS

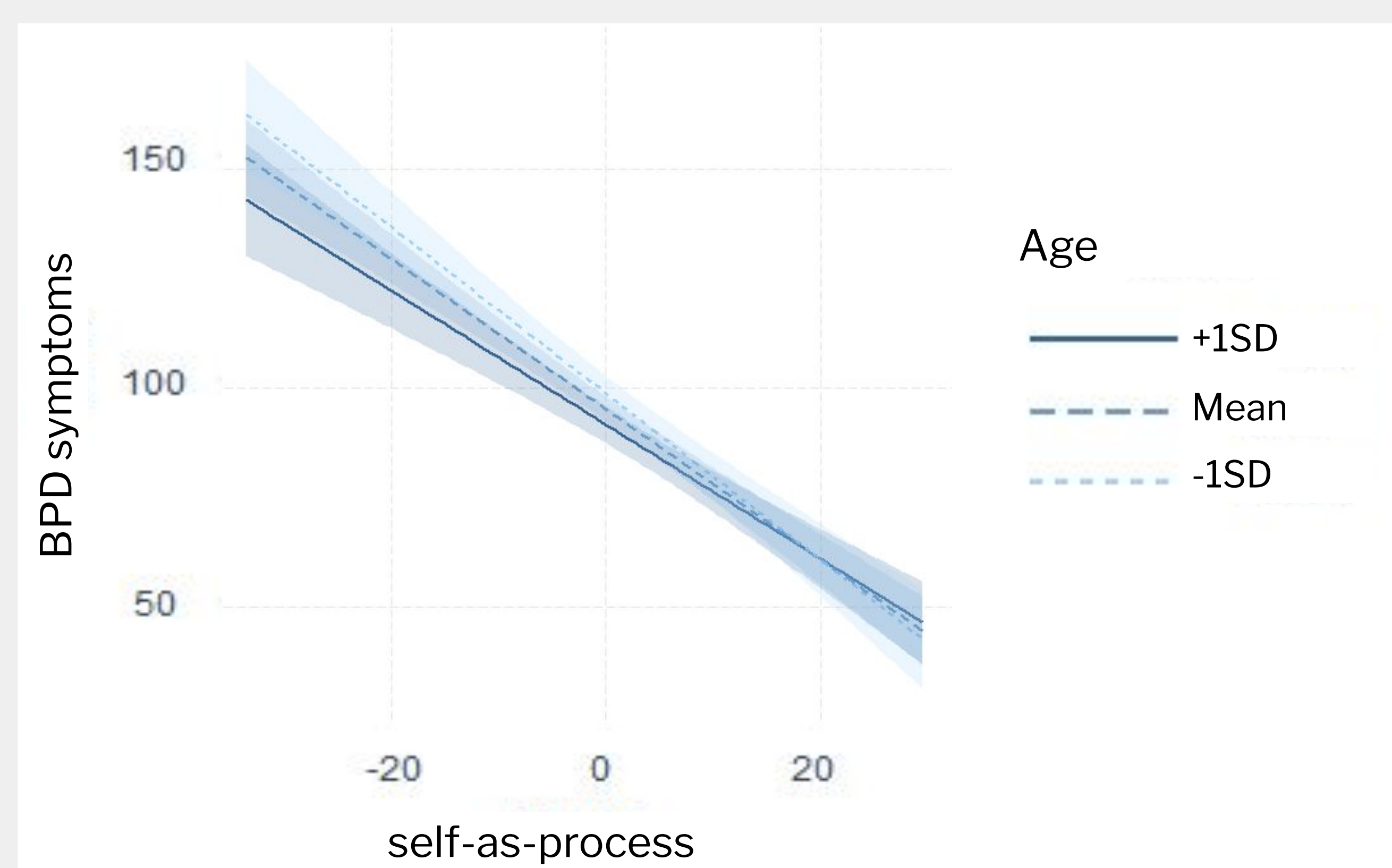
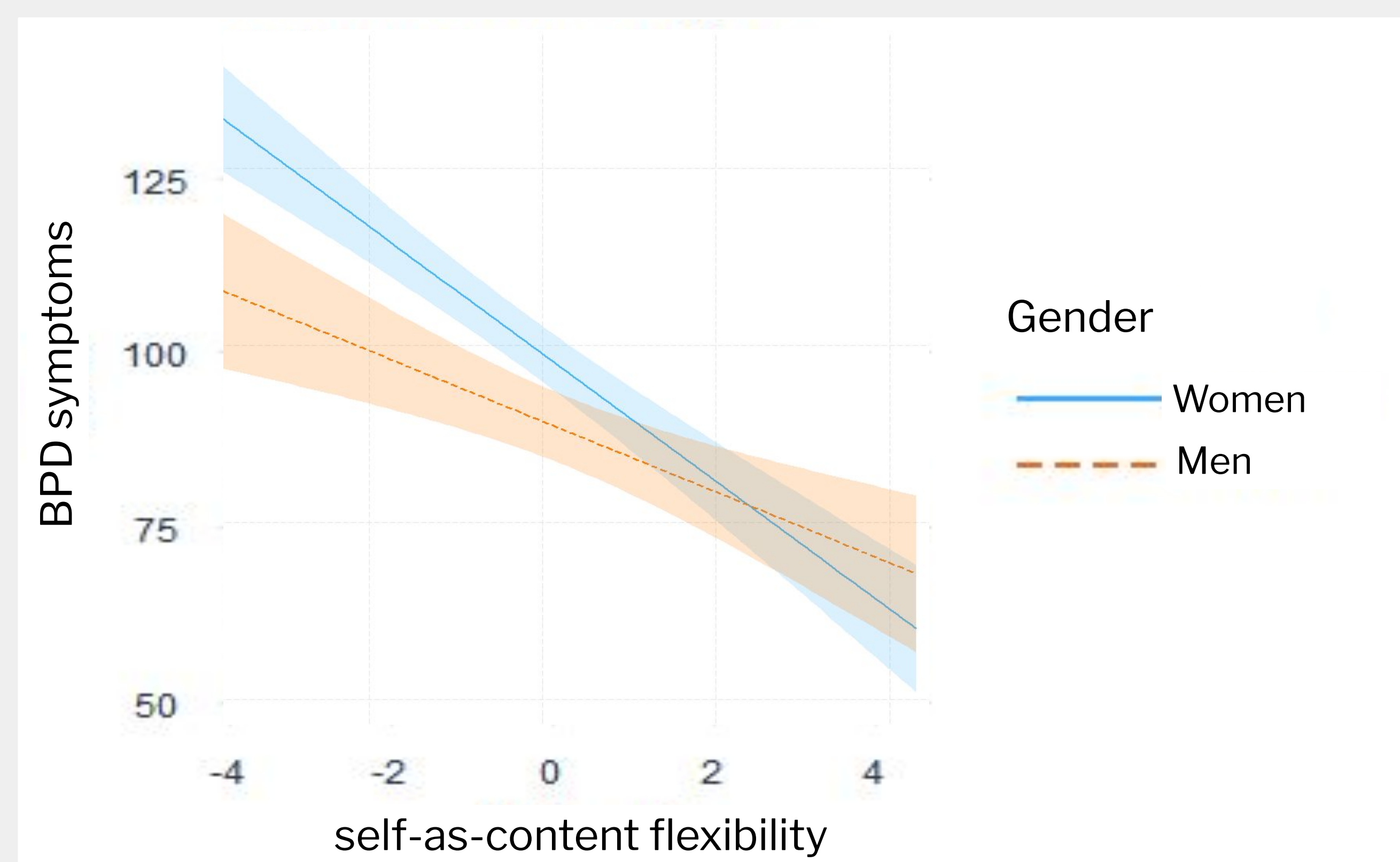
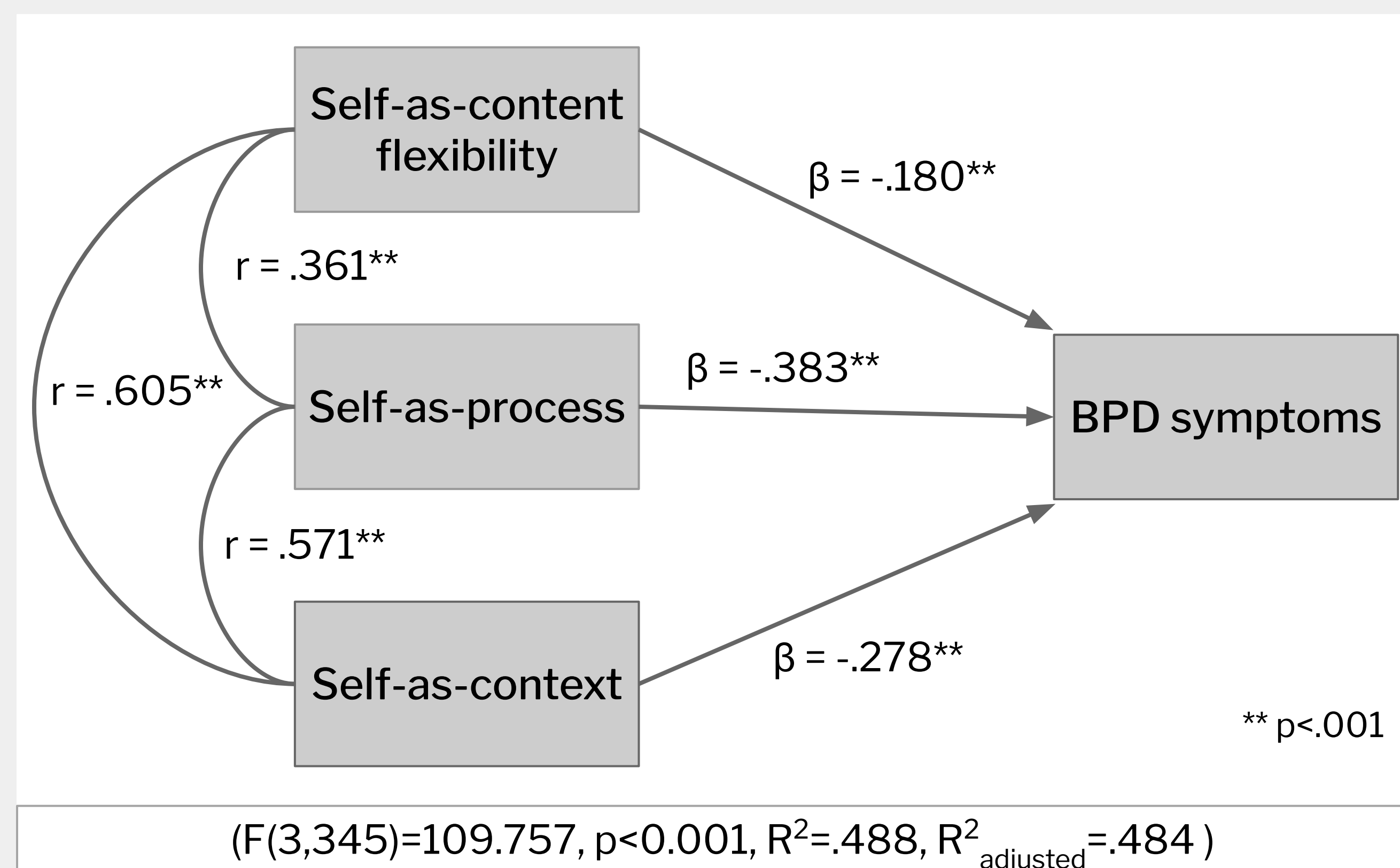


Fig. 1. Multiple regression analysis results.

The contextual-behavioral model of self was found to be predictive of BPD symptoms with a total of 48.4% of variance accounted for. All three elements emerged as significant predictors. **Self-as-process was found to be the strongest predictor.**

Fig. 2. Moderation analysis results - gender.

Self-as-content flexibility was found to predict BPD symptoms only in women when controlling for self-as-process, self-as-context, and age. Gender did not moderate the effects of other variables on BPD symptoms.

Fig. 3. Moderation analysis results - age.

Self-as-process was found to be a stronger predictor of BPD symptoms in younger participants when controlling for gender, self-as-content flexibility, and self-as-context. Age did not moderate the effects of other variables on BPD symptoms.

REFERENCES

