

INTRODUCTION

- Prior research shows that older adults handle stress and cope better than younger adults.
- This may be due to:
 - Older adults having greater emotional intelligence than younger adults¹.
 - Life course perspective of older adults, allowing them to better regulate their emotions^{2,3}.
- We wanted to see if older adults were coping as effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic, a stressful and novel event.

RESEARCH AIM

Do older adults report less mental health symptoms than younger adults during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

METHOD

- Survey was distributed to participants from April-May 2020 (N=525, age range=25-84)
- Asked to endorse all applicable mental health symptoms
- Planned linear regression models were run using predictors of interest (age, loneliness, physical health)

Depression Cluster

- Depression
- Loneliness
- Low self-worth
- Change in appetite
- Communicate less often
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of Interest

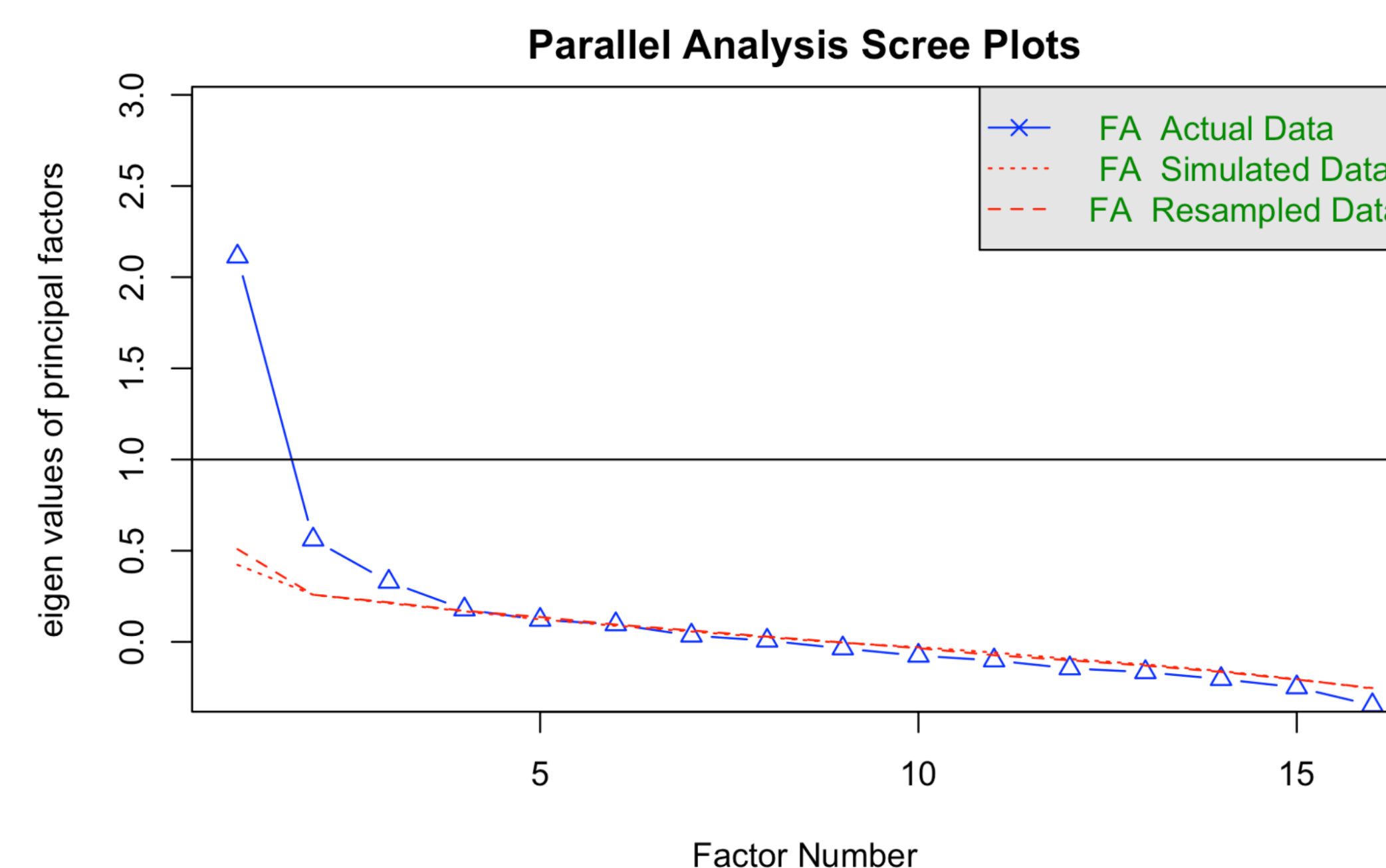
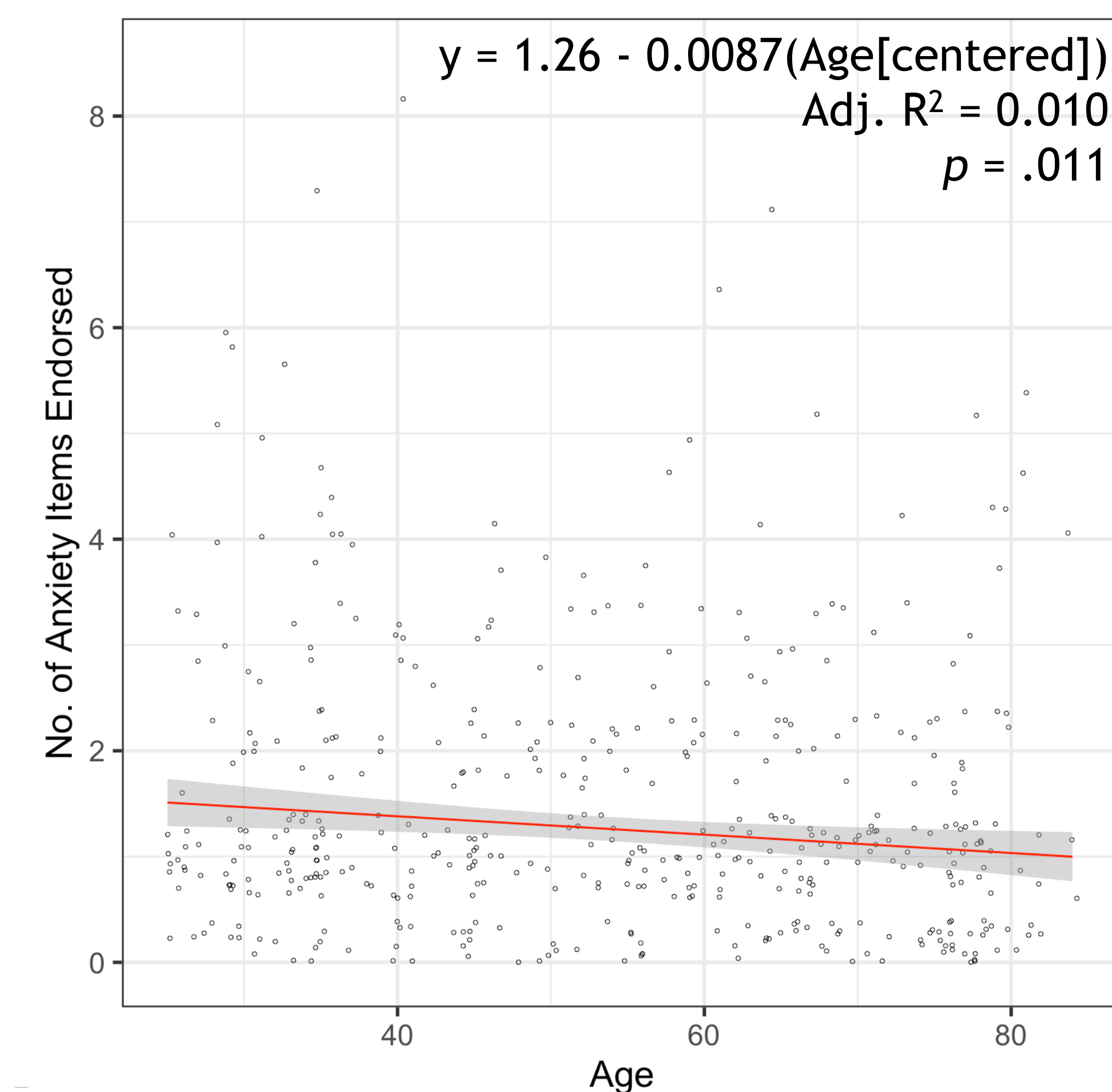
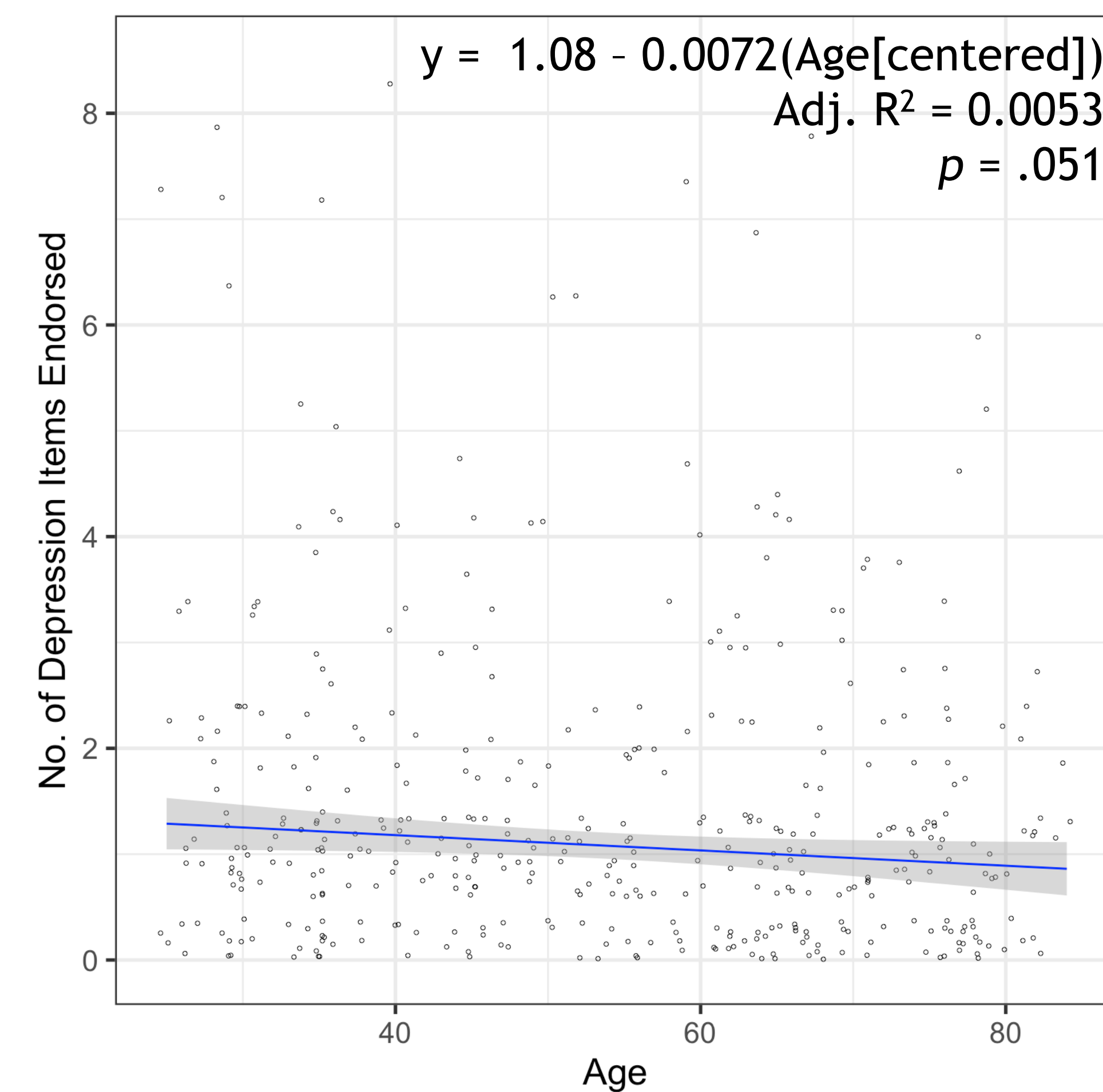
Anxiety Cluster

- Anxiety
- Stress
- Irritability
- Obsessive checking on family/friends
- Obsessive cleaning
- Cannot stop consuming COVID media
- Cannot stop physical symptoms

Shared items between clusters

- Changes in sleep
- Difficulty concentrating

RESULTS



Planned Linear Regressions

- Age predicted the number of anxiety cluster items endorsed, $F(1, 523) = 6.47$, $p = .011$, but not depression cluster items, $F(1, 523) = 3.82$, $p = .051$.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

- Examined how well the survey items clustered compared to our two *a priori* clusters.
- Three factors were extracted, $X^2(75) = 93.51$, $p = .073$.

Factor 1: Depression-related

7 items
Cronbach's alpha = .62
E.g.:
• Loneliness
• Low self-worth
• Lack of motivation

Factor 2: Anxiety-related (general)

2 items
Cronbach's alpha = .48
E.g.:
• Anxiety
• Stress

Factor 3: Anxiety-related (COVID)

2 items
Cronbach's alpha = .41
E.g.:
• Checking on family/friends
• COVID media consumption

- Loneliness ($\beta = 1.28$, $p < .001$) and general physical health ($\beta = -0.25$, $p = .013$) predicted an increase in number of overall mental health symptoms endorsed.

Outcome variable	Model predictors	Model results
No. of mental health symptom items (exclude loneliness)	$B0 + B1(\text{Age}) + B2(\text{Loneliness}) + B3(\text{Age} * \text{Loneliness})$	$F(3, 521) = 9.78$, $p < .001$
	$B0 + B1(\text{Age}) + B2(\text{Physical health}) + B3(\text{Age} * \text{Physical health})$	$F(3, 521) = 3.62$, $p = .013$

CONCLUSION

- As age increased, the number of anxiety symptoms reported generally decreased.
- Greater mental health symptoms reported if participants experienced loneliness or low general physical health.
- Data was collected early in the pandemic, and people's wellbeing and expectations may have shifted over the time course of the pandemic.

REFERENCES

1. Isaacowitz, D. M., Livingstone, K. M., & Castro, V. L. (2017). *Current Opinion in Psychology*.
2. Carstensen, L. L., & Mikels, J. A. (2005). *Current Directions in Psychological Science*.
3. Charles, S. T., & Luong, G. (2013). *Current Directions in Psychological Science*.