



# The Association Between Materialism and Spending Across Age Groups

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## Introduction

- Materialism is a value system that prioritizes material wealth as the focal point of life, viewing it as a source of happiness and a measure of success in one's personal life. Defined by Richins, three domains—centrality, happiness and success—are commonly used in the study of materialism (Richins, 2004). Materialism has long been linked to consumption behaviors (Hamza 2024).
- Impulsive buying is defined as immediate and unplanned purchases, and is said to affect around 20%–30% of consumer-purchases (Hamza 2024).
- Studies have shown that younger individuals in particular are seen to exhibit higher degrees of materialism and impulsive spending (Antinienė, 2021; Hamza, 2024).

## Research Questions

- Is there a significant negative correlation between materialism and responsible spending, and do demographic factors play a mediating role in this relationship?
- How do impulsivity, life satisfaction, age, and income influence the relationship between materialism and spending habits?

## Methods

### Sample

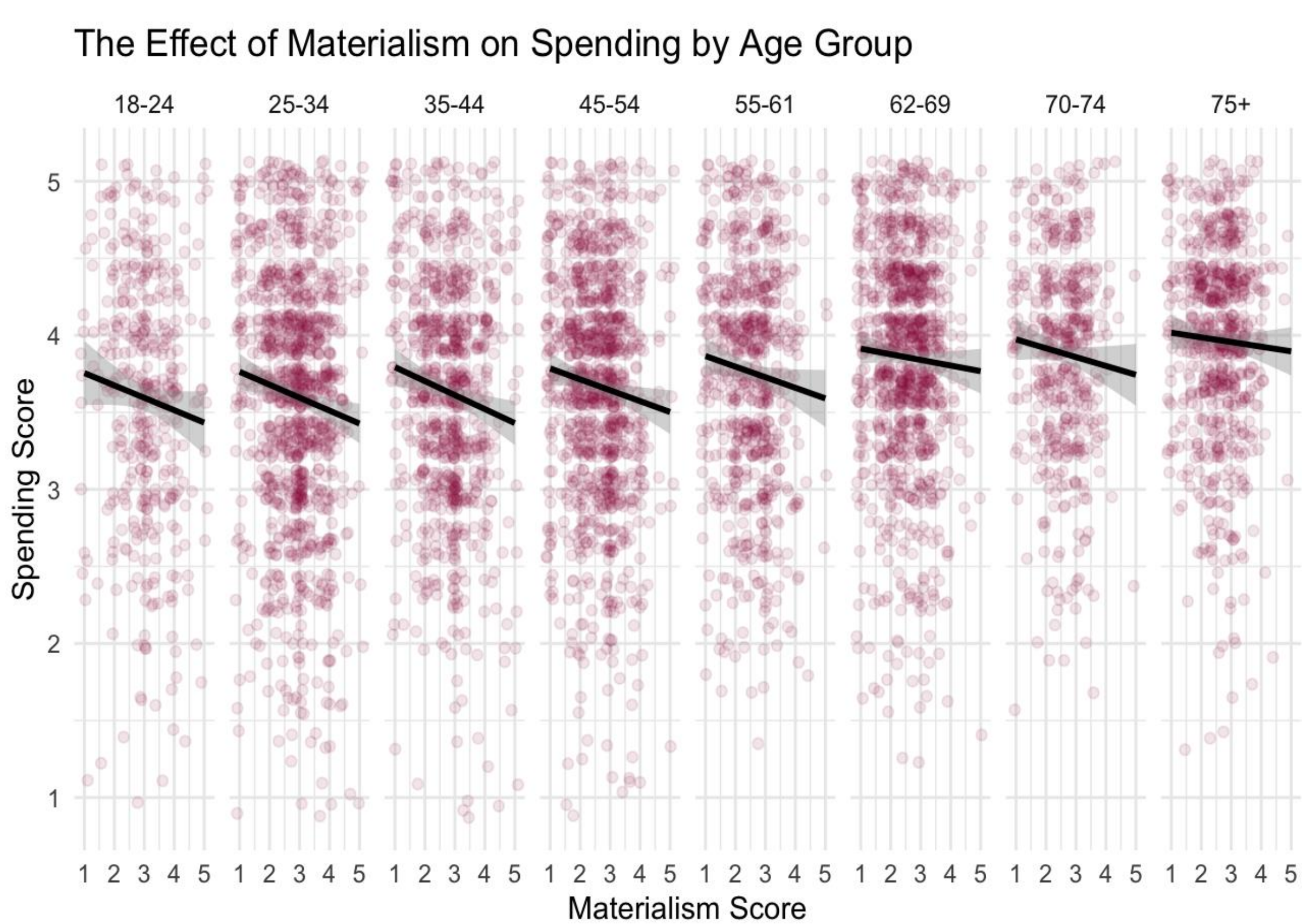
- The National Financial Well-Being Survey was completed by a nationally representative sample of 6,394 non-institutionalized adult American respondents in 2016 in both English and Spanish.

### Measures

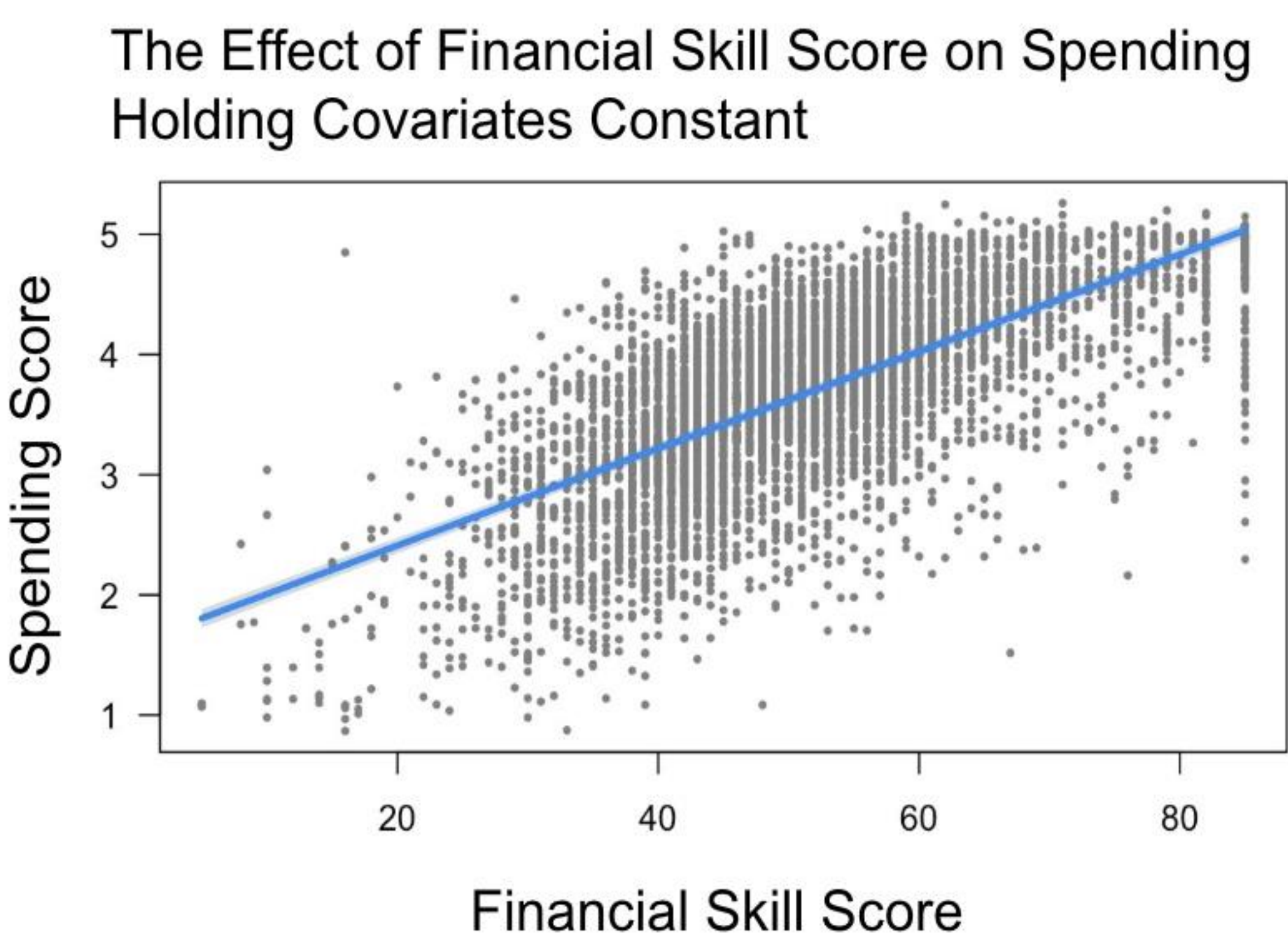
- Materialism, SpendingWell (ability to spend well), and Impulsivity were calculated by summing 3 related variables on the same scale and taking the average. All 3 range from 1 (negative/low) to 5 (positive/high).
- Materialism is constructed from three statements, two of which can be aligned with two of Richins' divisions of materialism, centrality ("I like to own things that impress people") and success ("The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life").

## Results

- Spending score had a mean of 3.7
- Financial Skill score had a mean of 50.78
- The mean Materialism score was 2.67
- Linear Regression showed that Materialism is significantly and negatively associated with spending well ( $\beta = -0.0867$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).
- After controlling for income, age, financial literacy score, and life satisfaction, Materialism ( $p < 0.001$ ) was still significantly and negatively associated with responsible spending. For each one-unit increase in materialism, an individual is expected to report 0.0557 fewer units of responsible spending, holding all other variables constant.
- Age was not found to significantly moderate the relationship between materialism and spending score (Fig. 1). Financial Skill Score did. The interaction term was statistically significant and lessened the impact of Materialism on Spending (Fig. 2).
- Impulsivity moderated the relationship of materialism as centrality (Beta: 0.03681,  $P$ : 0.00932) but not as success (Fig 3).

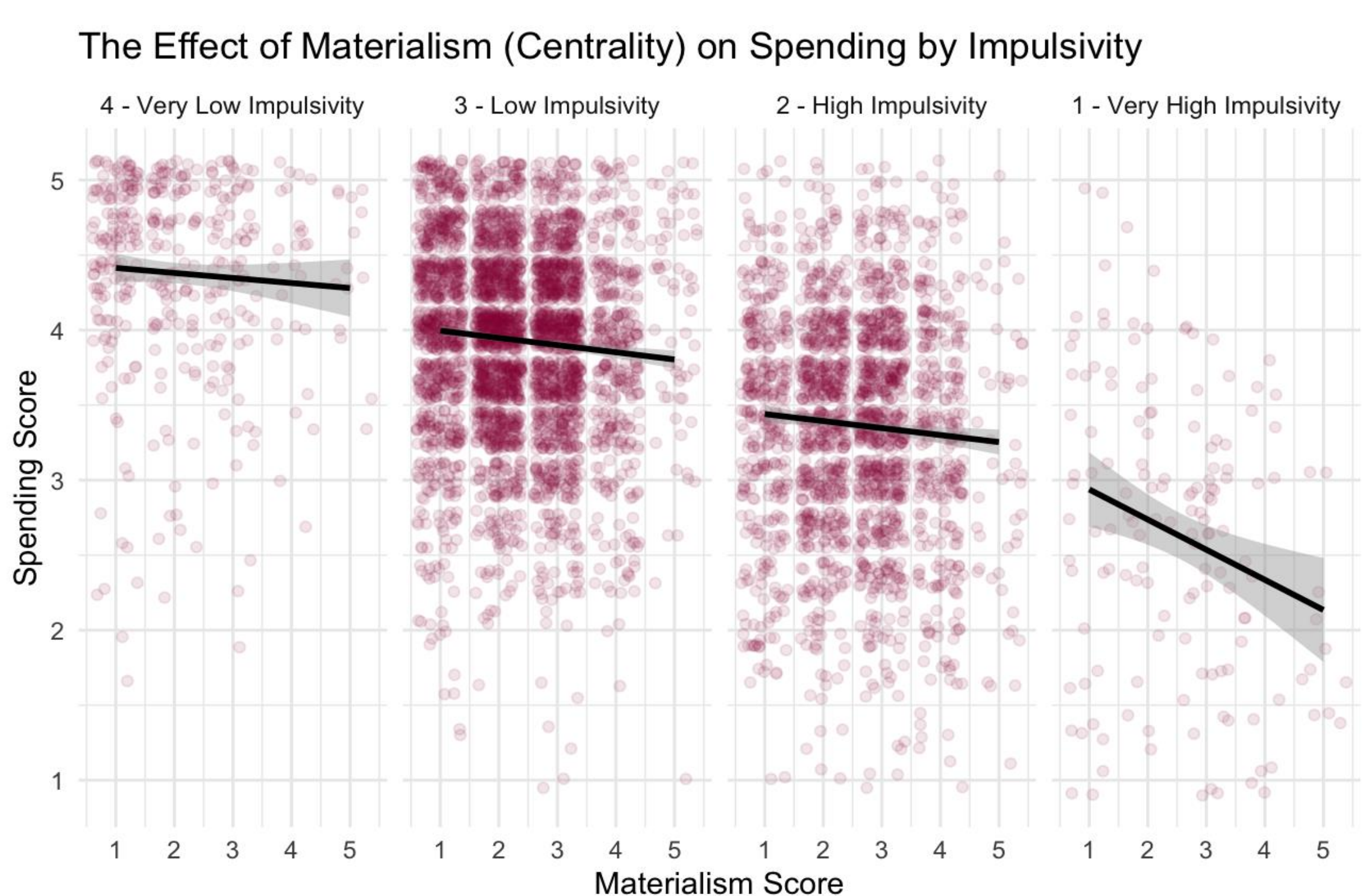


**Figure 1: The Effect of Materialism on Spending Responsibly Categorized by Age Group.**



**Figure 2: The Effect of Financial Skill Score on Spending Controlling for Materialism, Income, Age, & Life Satisfaction.**

**Figure 3: The Effect of Materialism as Centrality on Spending Categorized by Level of Impulsivity.**



## Discussion

- Materialism was found to have significant weak relationship with Spending behavior.
- These findings support the idea that a combination of income, life satisfaction, age, materialism, & financial skill all contribute to spending behavior.
- While financial skill is shown to have a strong positive effect on spending behavior, the results also suggest that there are psychological & sociological factors that should be addressed.
- Future research is needed on measuring materialism in order to determine the best way to mitigate impulsive spending habits.

## References

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