

Does Shame Moderate the Relationship Between Emotion Dysregulation Facets and PTSD Symptom Severity?



Preventing Interpersonal
Violence and Overcoming
Trauma Lab
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Padideh Hassanpour, MS, Stephanie Ward, MS, Kate Walsh, PhD, Department of Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Background

Emotion dysregulation (ED), which refers to difficulties attending to, experiencing, managing, and expressing emotional states, underlies PTSD symptoms.¹

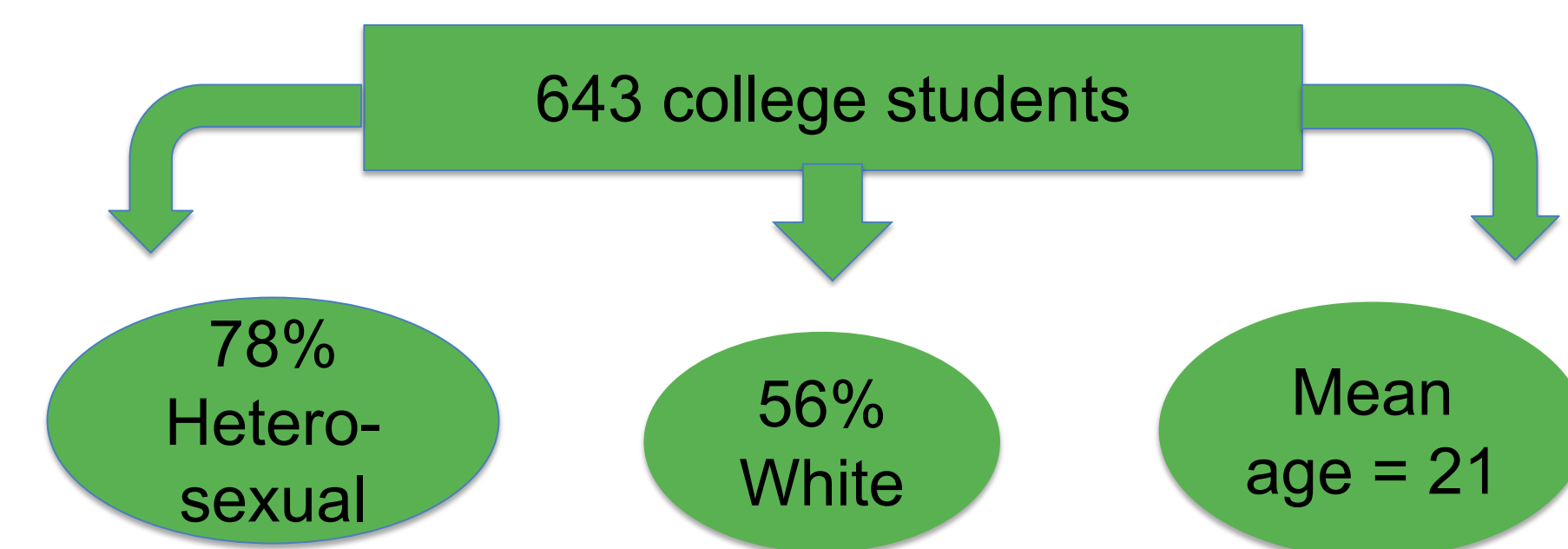
Feelings of **shame**, a negative self-conscious emotion, might exacerbate **emotion dysregulation** and lead to more severe **PTSD symptoms**.^{2,3}

Shame and **ED** interact to associate with **PTSD symptoms** in clinical and women-only samples.^{4,5} It is unclear whether these findings generalize to mixed-gender college populations.

Objective

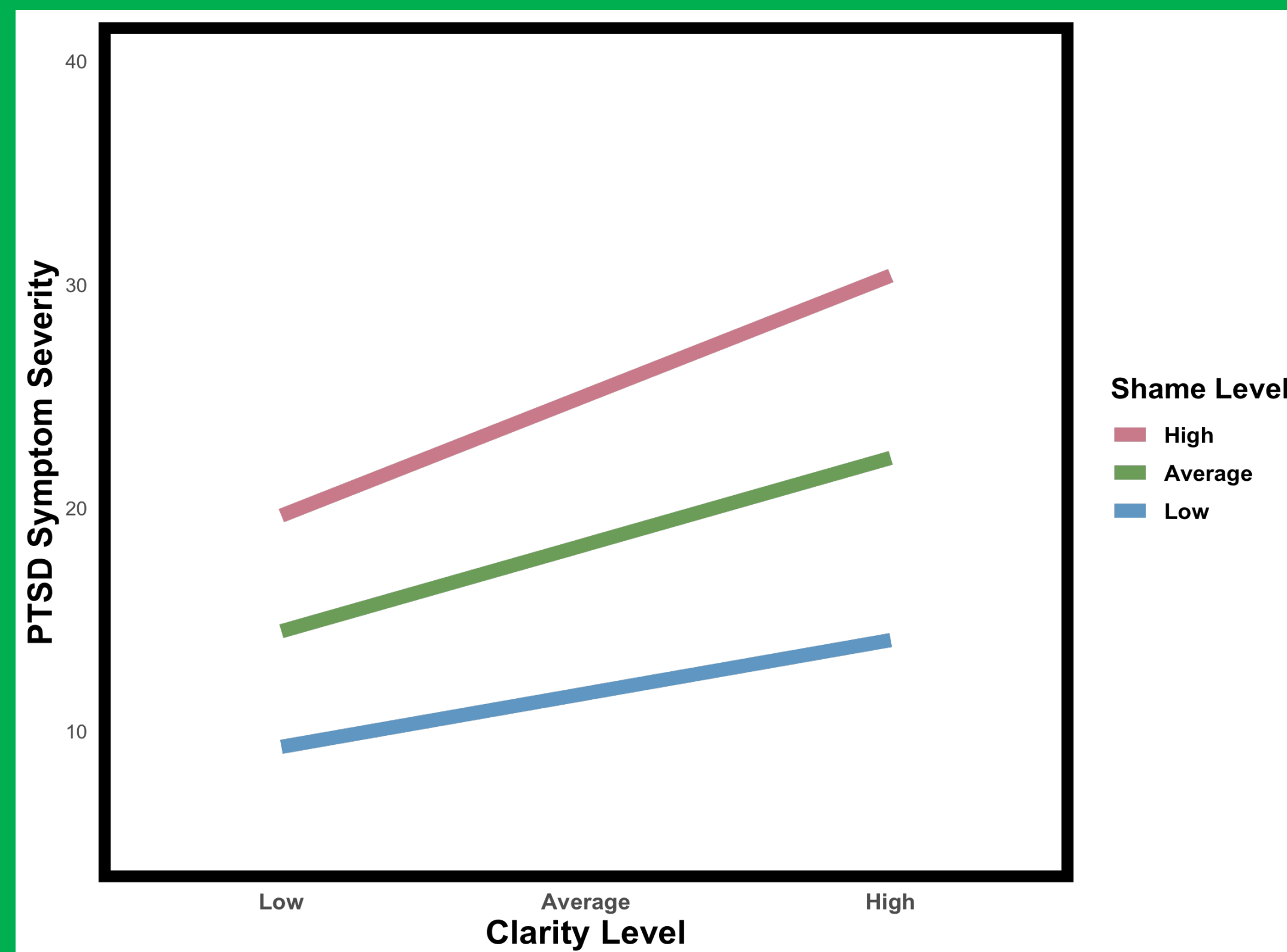
We examined whether **shame** and **6 facets of ED** interact to influence **PTSD symptom severity** among trauma-exposed college students.

Methods

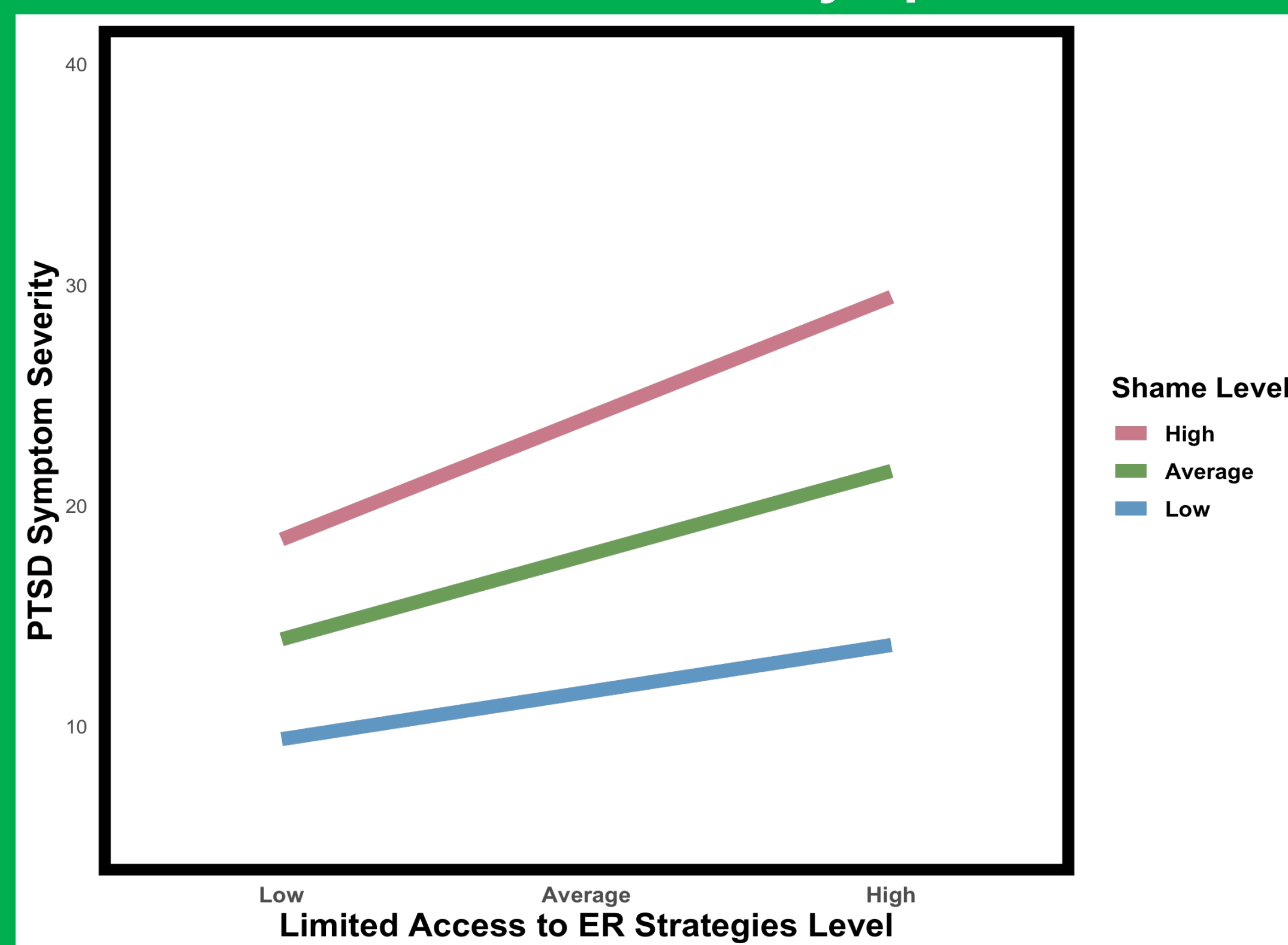


Statistical Analysis

Predictor variables were mean-centered; six regression analyses were run to test the influence of **shame** on the relationship between **ED facets** and **PTSD symptom severity**, controlling for **age**, **sexual orientation**, and **race/ethnicity**.



Higher shame and lack of emotional clarity are linked to more severe PTSD symptoms.



Higher shame and greater difficulty accessing ER strategies are linked to more severe PTSD symptoms.

Discussion

Consistent with prior research,⁴ those with higher **shame** who had **difficulty accessing emotion regulation strategies** had higher **PTSD symptoms**.

Inconsistent with previous research, however, those with higher **shame** and **greater difficulty discerning emotions** also had higher **PTSD symptoms**.

Findings align with studies linking general **emotion dysregulation** and **shame** to PTSD symptoms among women with histories of interpersonal violence.⁵ Results highlight the importance of addressing specific **ED facets**, such as **clarity** and **strategies to change emotional states**, along with **shame** in interventions targeting **PTSD symptoms**.

Future Directions

Future research should examine interactions between specific types of shame (e.g., trauma-related), other self-conscious emotions (e.g., guilt), and ED facets on PTSD symptoms to better understand the nuanced roles these factors play in exacerbating or mitigating symptoms.

Examining separate PTSD clusters (e.g., avoidance, hyperarousal) could provide insight into whether different emotional and regulatory processes contribute uniquely to specific symptom dimensions, potentially guiding more targeted interventions.



Institute for Diversity Science
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

