



Political Extremity, Conservatism, and Reliance on First Impressions



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Introduction

The research I conducted focused on how political extremity is associated with an individual's reliance on their first impressions. This area of interest is significant because there is very little research comparing political ideology and first impressions.

There are two dominant theories relevant to this question, the extreme ideology theory and rigidity of conservative ideology theory.

Extremity theory: Strong identification with political ideologies on either the far-left or far-right increases cognitive rigidity₂.

Conservatism theory: Strong identification with conservative (far-right) ideologies increases cognitive rigidity₁.

This research analyzes ideology and level of reliance on first impressions to determine whether political extremity or political conservatism is associated with cognitive rigidity₃ in the form of reliance on first impressions.

Hypothesis

Political Extremity Hypothesis: Increased political extremity scores (liberalism or conservatism) is associated with increased reliance on first impressions scores.

Conservatism Theory Hypothesis: Increased political conservatism is associated with increased reliance on first impressions scores.

- **Predictor variable:** political ideology
- **Outcome/Criterion variable:** First Impression reliance (agreement scale) average
- Created linear regression function and curvilinear regression function

Results

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Political Ideology	0.096	0.048	0.160	2.013	0.046
Political Ideology_sq	-0.011	0.028	-0.146	-0.403	0.688

Methodology

Participants took an online survey on the Prolific research survey platform. They were compensated \$8 hourly to take a 15 min (avg.) survey that tested multiple scales about impression formation. The relevant scales are reliance and political ideology.

Participant demographics:

N = 157 (age = M = 41.73, SD= 13.409)

78 Female, Male 75, Non-binary or third gender 4.

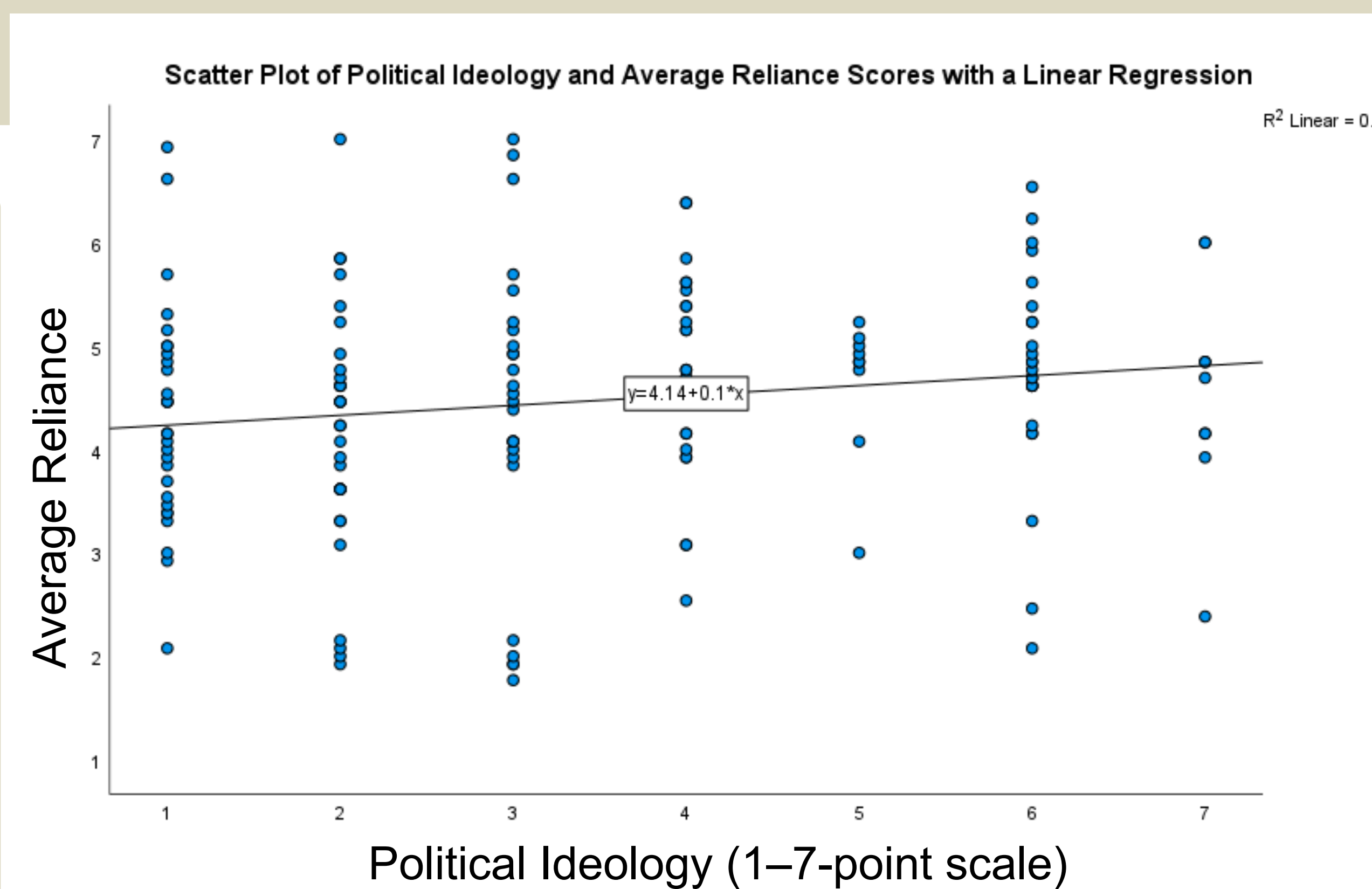
Tested Scales:

First impression reliance (agreement scale): 13 items (1-Strongly disagree, 7-Strongly agree)

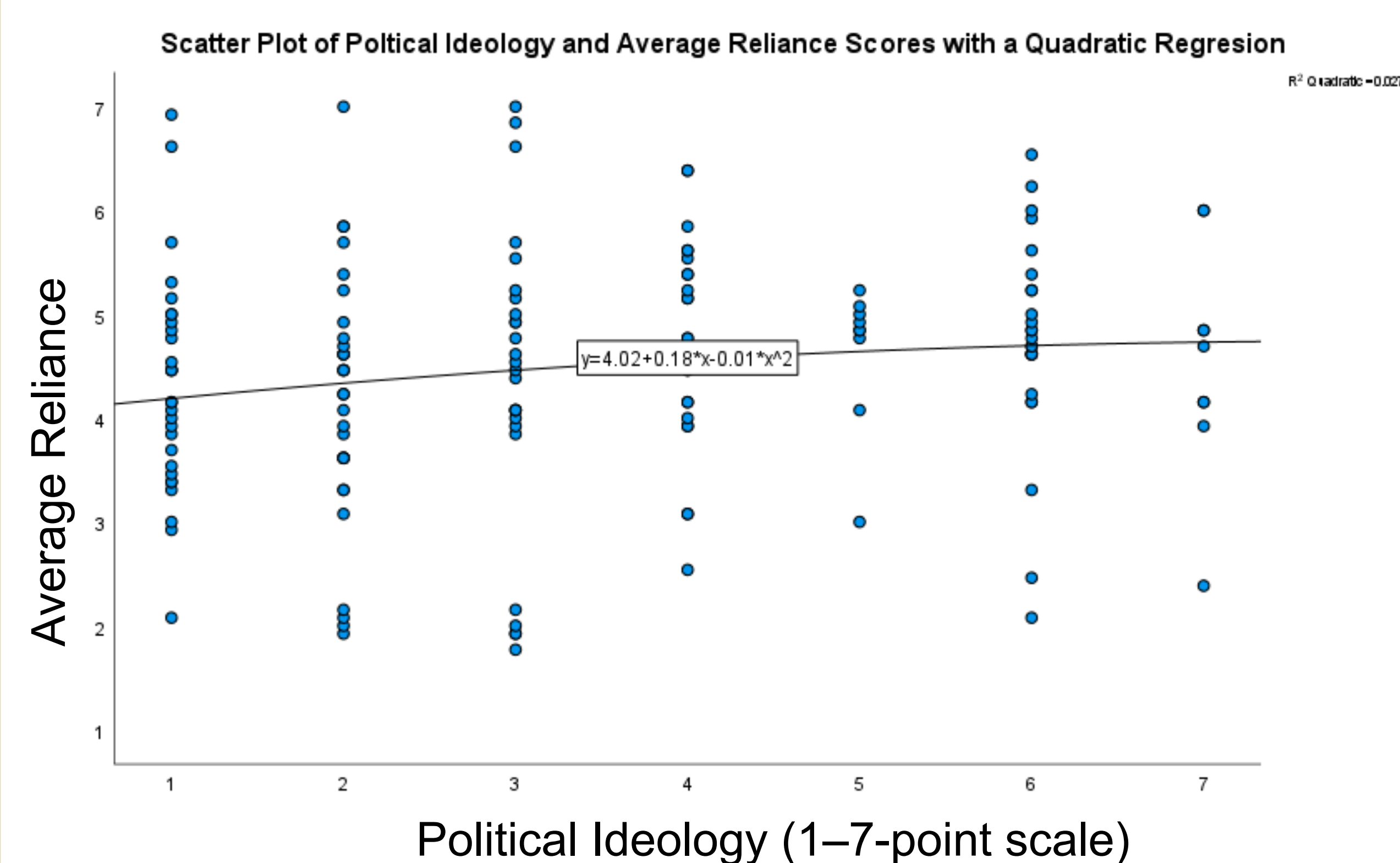
Cronbach's alpha score = 0.95

Example item: "I consider my first impressions of people when evaluating them."

Political Ideology: 1 item (1- very liberal, 4- neither conservative nor liberal, 7 - very conservative)



Linear representation: slight positive correlation (statistically significant)



Curvilinear (quadratic) representation: No correlation (statistically insignificant)

Discussion

The results indicate that political conservatism is weakly but significantly correlated with higher reliance on first impressions. This supports the conservatism theory hypothesis.

The political extremity hypothesis was not supported since there was no significant correlation between political extremity and reliance on first impressions.

Finding that a higher conservatism score relates to higher reliance on first impressions supports the idea that conservatives tend to be more cognitively rigid. This may have further implications in other areas such as bias formation, which would be an important follow-up on this research.

References

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