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Doctoral Psychology Students' Attitudes Toward Evidence-Based Practice

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Introduction

Evidence-based practice (EBP) combines evidence, expert judgement, and client contexts and leads to optimal outcomes (APA Presidential Taskforce on Evidence-Based Practice, 2006). However, most Practitioners may not understand (Wilson et al., 2009) or practice EBP to its fullest extent (Becker et al., 2013; Nelson & Steele, 2007; Steir et al., 2007). Attitudes towards EBP partially predict engagement in or proxy behaviors of engagement in EBP (Czincz & Romano, 2013; Johnson et al., 2016; Nelson & Steele). In addition, interactive education during graduate education may be more proactive in fostering positive attitudes towards EBP in future professionals (Haworth & Conrad, 1997; Rogers, 2003).

Method

Participants (N=226)

- **Demographics:** all participants were doctoral psychology students, 65.9% Clinical PhD, 87.6% female, 67.3% White, 60.2% aged 21 to 27 years, ($M=27.13$, $SD=3.87$)

Measures

- **Evidence-Based Practice Attitude Scale-36 items** (EBPAS-36; Rye, et al., 2017),
- **Survey of Program Quality Attributes, Interactivity Cluster, Presence Subscale** (SPQA; Mustan, 1998),
- **Misunderstandings about EBP** (author created, based on Lilienfeld et al., 2013)
- **Program & Student Characteristics**
 - Emphasis on research or practice Exposure to EBP Degree earned & semesters completed
 - Student & student-reported professor theoretical orientation

Results

Correlations/Associations

- Greater interactivity of participants' academic program was associated with more favorable attitudes towards EBP (see Figure 1), $r=.32$, $p<.001$.
- Greater misunderstanding about EBP was associated with less favorable attitudes toward EBP (see Figure 2), $r=-.54$, $p<.001$.
- Participants reporting their programs emphasized research (more than practice) also reported more favorable attitudes toward EBP (see Figure 3), $r=.25$, $p<.001$.

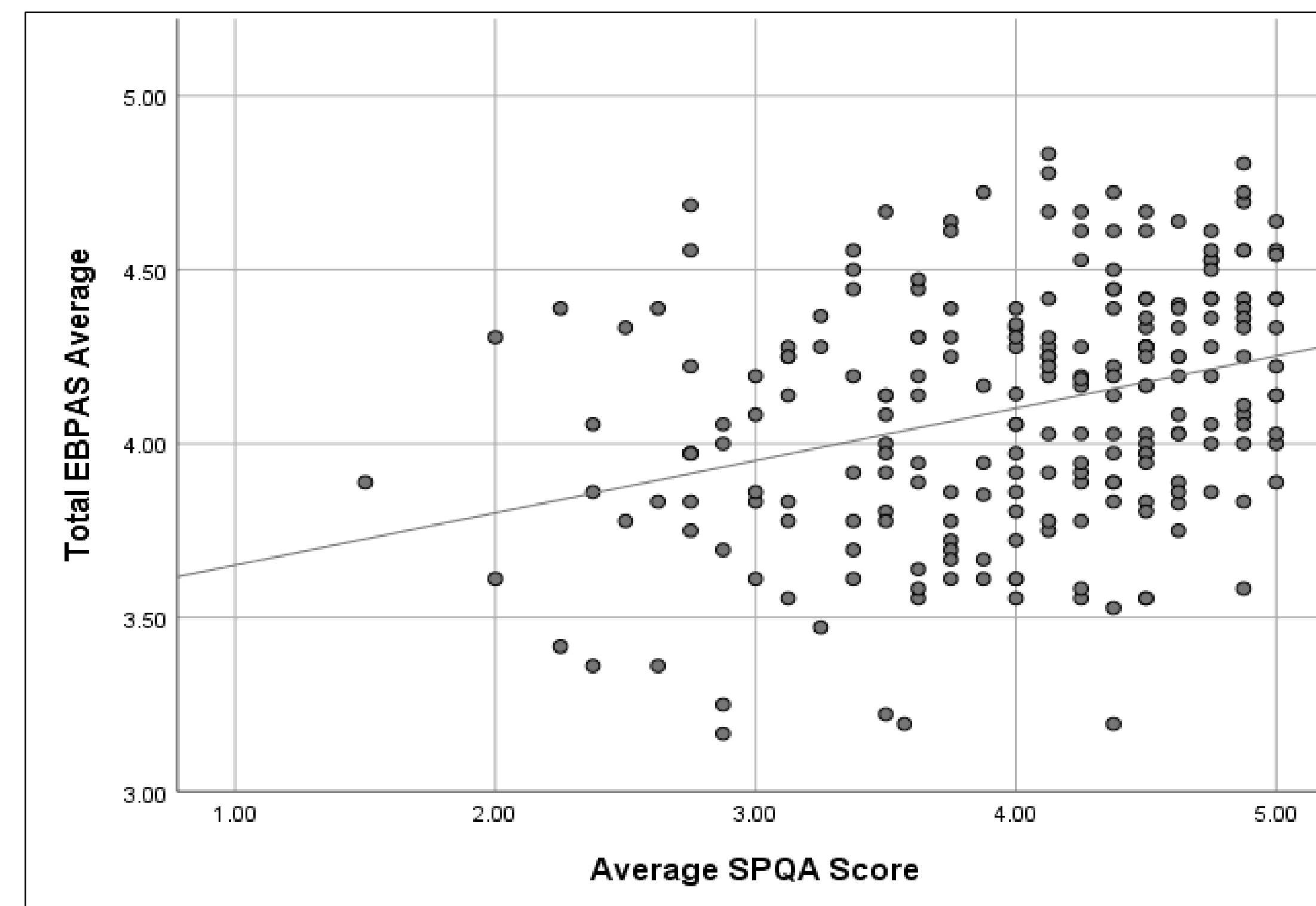


Figure 1: Scatterplot of Reported Interactivity of Academic Program & Attitude Toward EBP

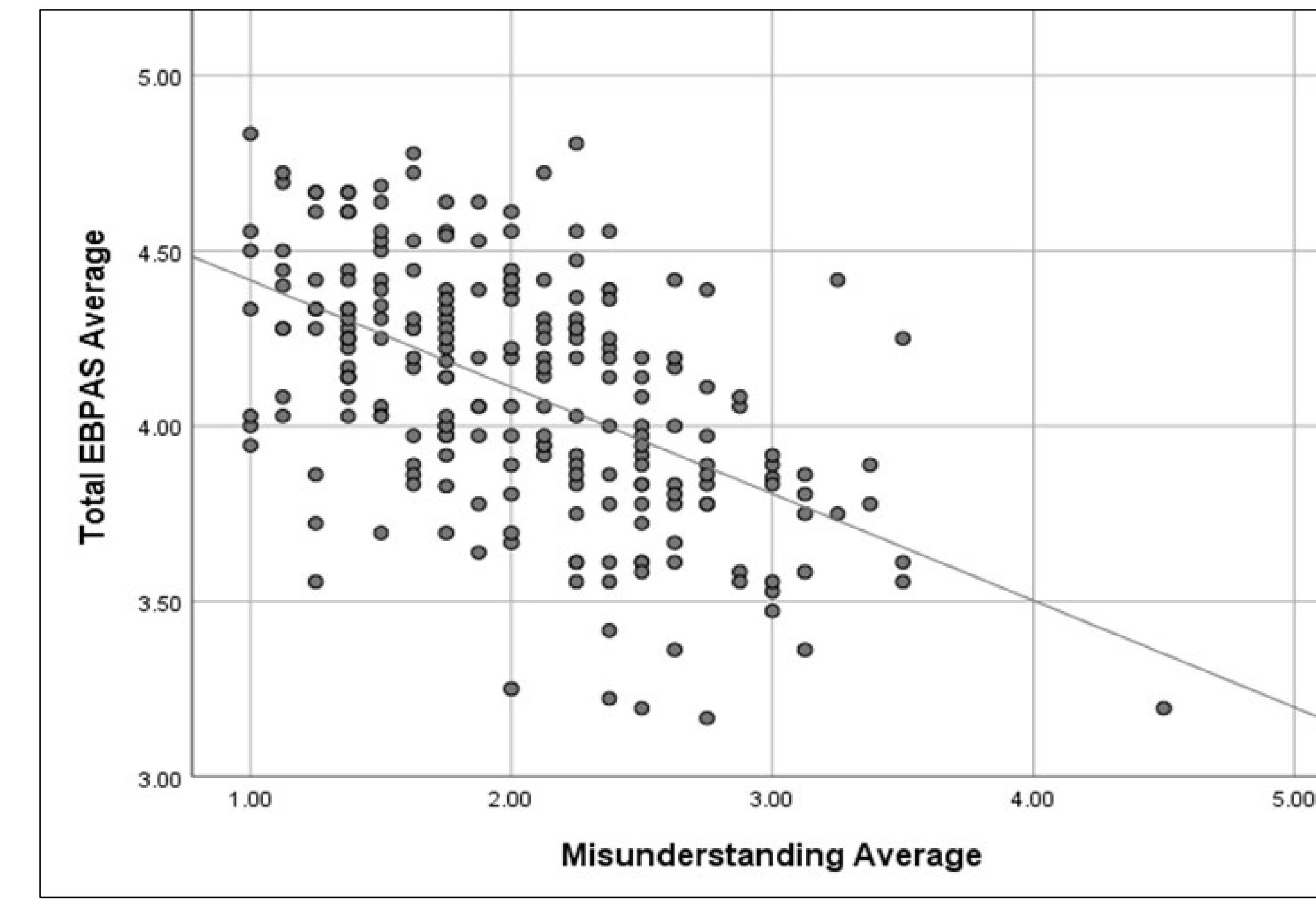


Figure 2: Scatterplot of Misunderstanding about EBP & Attitude Toward EBP

Students with more favorable attitudes toward EBP were in more interactive, research-focused, clinical programs with professors' and themselves identifying with CBT orientation.

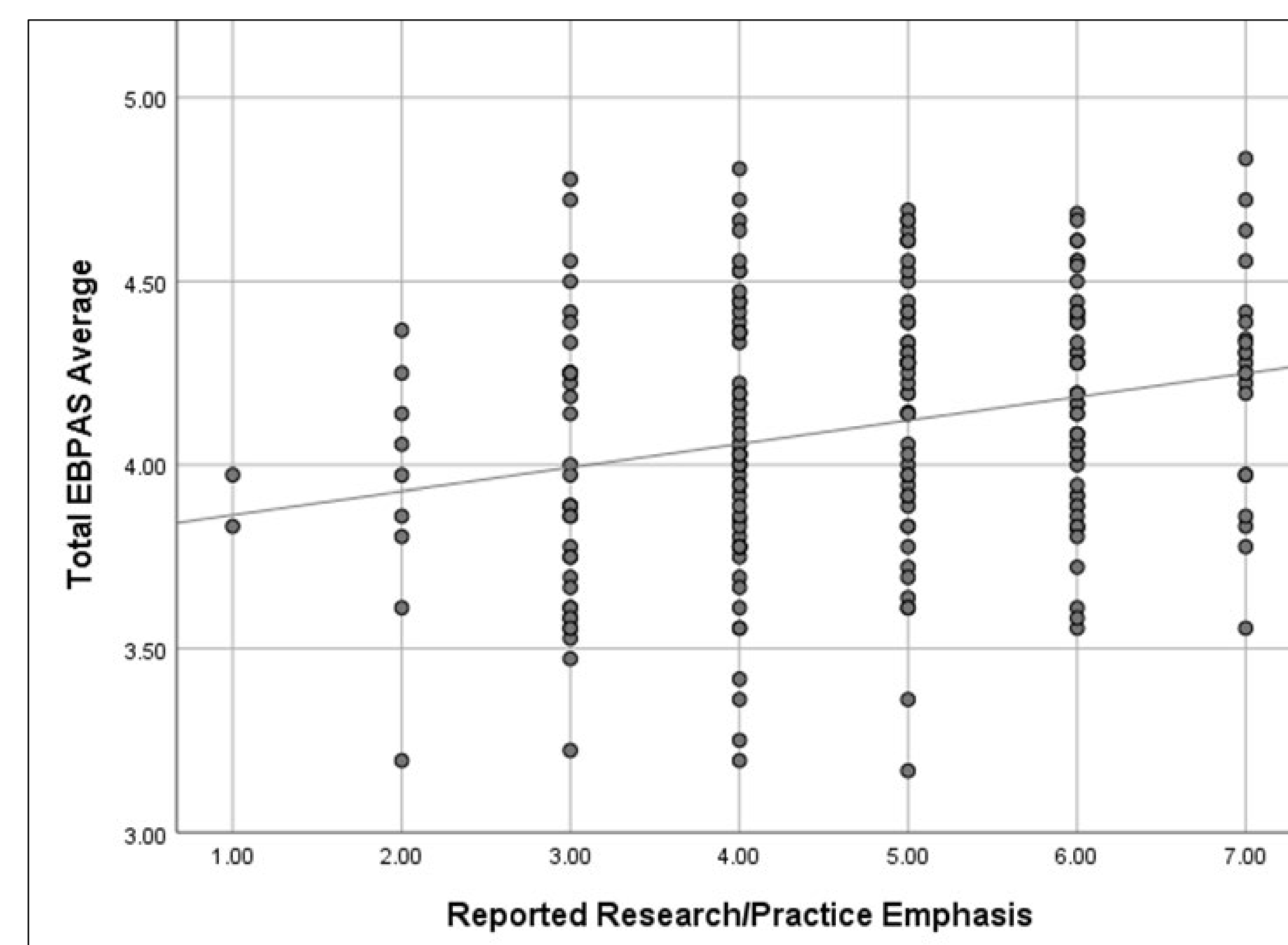


Figure 3: Scatterplot of Reported Program Emphasis & Attitude Toward EBP

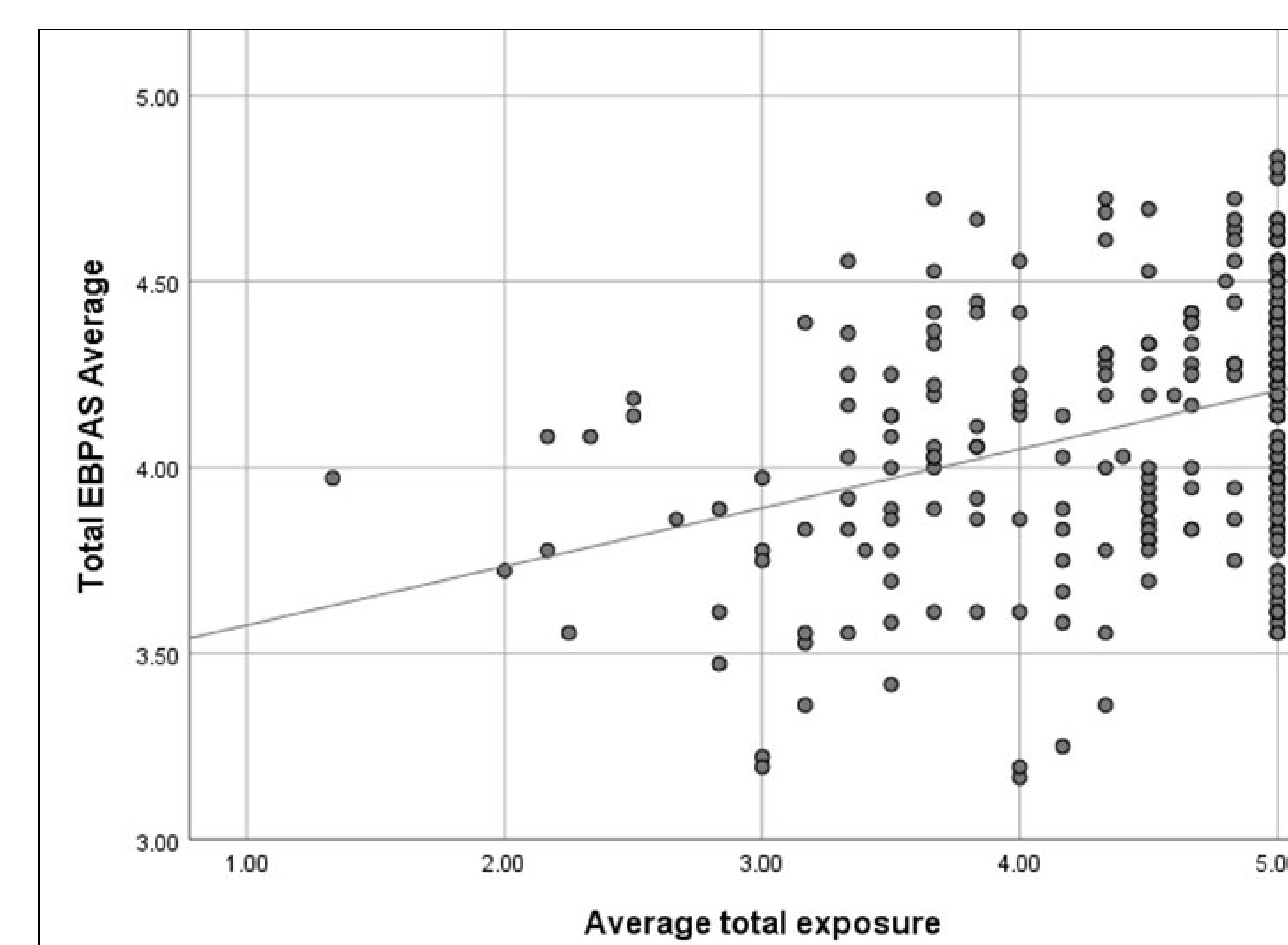


Figure 4: Scatterplot of Reported Exposure to EBP & Attitude Toward EBP

Results (continued)

Correlations/Associations (cont.)

- Increased exposure to EBP was associated with more favorable attitudes toward EBP (see Figure 4), $r=.34$, $p<.001$.

Comparisons

- Participants in a Clinical PhD or Clinical PsyD program had more favorable attitudes toward EBP than participants in any Counseling program, $F(2, 225)=15.743$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=0.12$ 95% CI: [0.05; 0.20].
- Students reporting a CBT/Evidence-based theoretical orientation had more favorable attitudes toward EBP compared to participants reporting another theoretical orientation, $t(207)=4.597$, $p<.001$, $d=0.65$ 95% CI [0.38; 0.96].
- Participants whose professors had a CBT/Evidence-based theoretical orientation had more favorable attitudes toward EBP than participants whose professors' orientation was anything else, $t(202)=4.340$, $p<.001$, $d=0.76$ 95% CI [0.40; 1.08].

Discussion

These results suggest doctoral psychology students with more favorable attitudes toward EBP are those that report: 1) being in Clinical PhD or PsyD programs; 2) their and/or their professors' theoretical orientation as CBT/Evidence-based; 3) their program as more interactive; 4) their program emphasizing research (more than practice); and 5) more exposure to and/or less misunderstanding about EBP. Future research could explore if other variables (e.g. baseline characteristics of students, curriculum structure) explain how or why such students report more favorable attitudes toward EBP. To improve psychological practice, it appears effective to increase interactivity of all graduate programs and directly address students' misunderstandings about EBP.