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Investigating the stigmatizing gaze towards visible difference

R² Project VISHU - <https://www.researchgate.net/project/VISage-et-HUMANITE-comprendre-et-prevenir-les-difficultes-dintegration-sociale-des-personnes-atteintes-de-defiguration-faciale>

OSF - <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/7D62M>

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Backgrounds

The **gaze** directed towards visible facial differences (VFD) can be experienced as highly **stigmatizing** [1].

This gaze is made of a **focus** on the **VFD** combined with a **lack of attention** to the **eyes** [2].

This gaze is correlated with stigmatizing affective reactions [2,3].

Aim

To demonstrate that the way people visually treat faces with VFD is stigmatizing because it is specific to VFD and not observed for another feature.

Methods

Participants

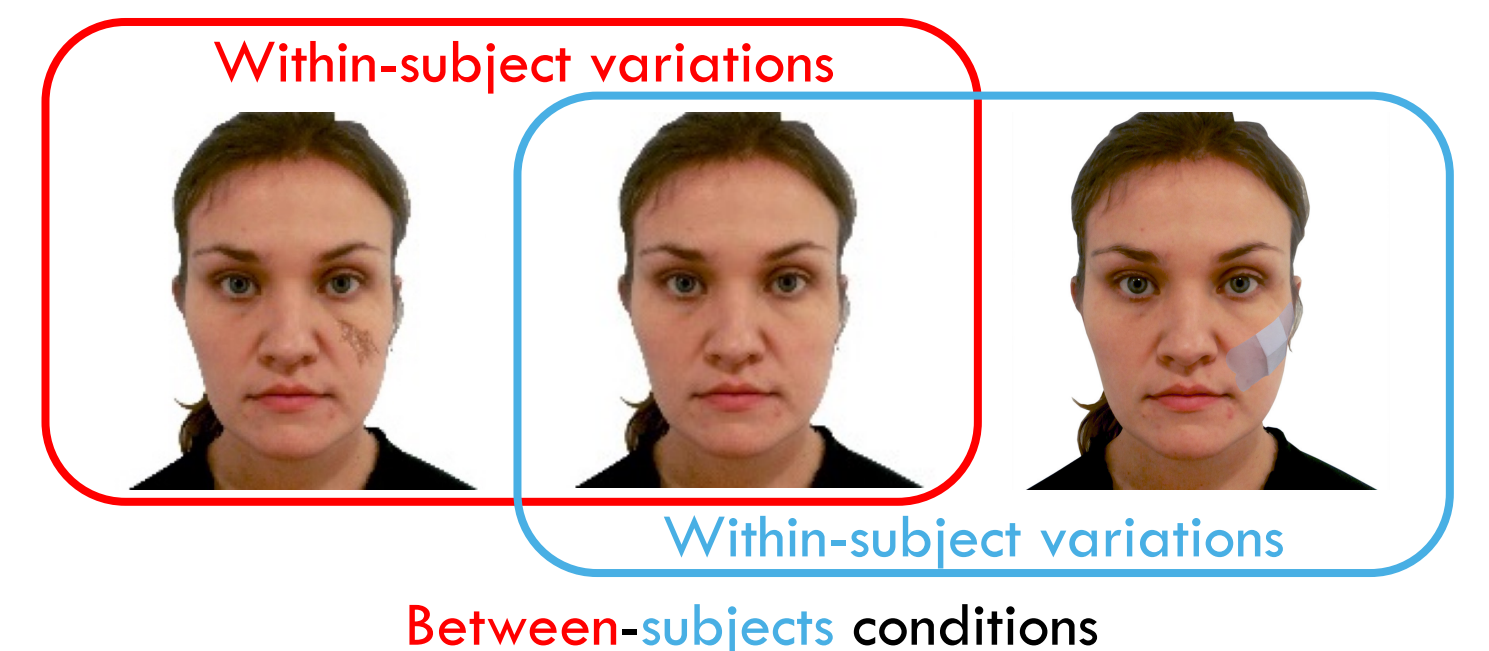
N = 164 students without VFD, Age: M = 19.70, SD = 1.92

Stimuli

Portraits with and without a burn-like scar or a plaster on a cheek.

Measures

Eye-tracking (Self-reported) Affective reactions

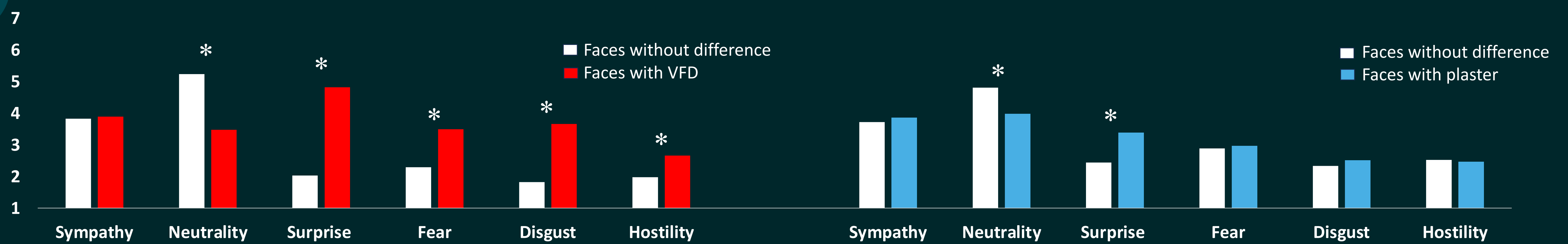


Procedure



Findings

1 Affects



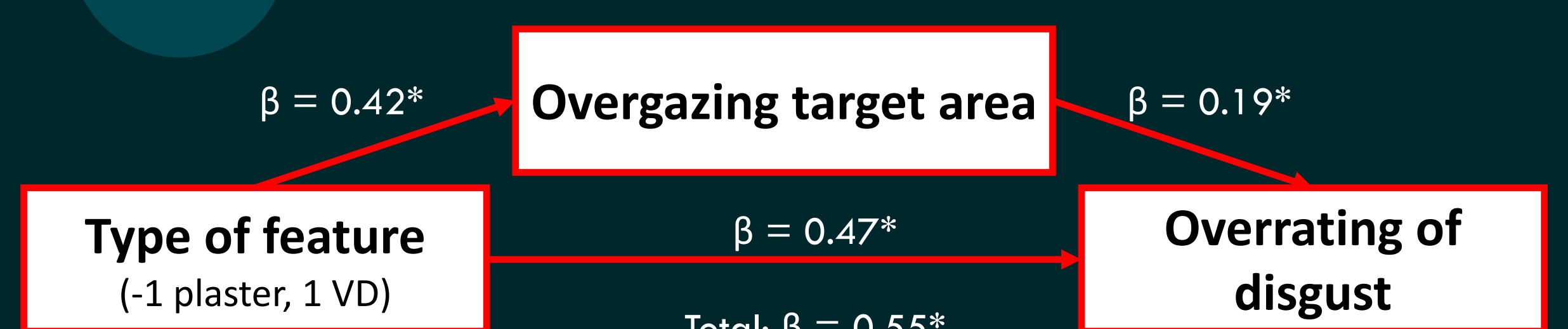
Participants reported more and stronger stigmatizing affective reactions when watching faces with VFD than faces with plaster.

2 Gaze



Participants gazed more at the feature area and neglected the eyes to a greater extent when the face was with VFD than plaster.

3 The mediating role of gaze



Gazing at VFD mediated the impact on disgust.

* for p < .05

Discussion

Gaze towards VFD is intrinsically problematic because :

It diverges from the way faces without VFD are treated.

It is associated with stigmatizing reactions.

It is specific to VFD.

→ There is a need to reeducate the gaze towards VFD.

References

- [1] Bogart, K. R., Tickle-Degnen, L., & Joffe, M. S. (2012). Social interaction experiences of adults with Moebius syndrome: a focus group. *Journal of Health Psychology, 17*(8), 1212-1222.
- [2] Rasset, P., Mange, J., & Montalan, B. (2022). Look me in the eyes! A pre-registered eye-tracking study investigating visual attention and affective reactions to faces with a visible difference. *Body Image, 40*, 67-77.
- [3] Stone, A., & Potton, A. (2019). Emotional responses to disfigured faces and Disgust Sensitivity: An eye-tracking study. *Journal of Health Psychology, 24*(9), 1191-1200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105317692856>

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