Technical Report

'Elke Relatie Telt'

(Every Relationship Counts)

COPING WITH MINORITY STRESS IN THE INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS OF LESBIAN WOMEN, GAY MEN, AND BISEXUALS

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September 2019

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Executive summary

PROJECT OUTLINE

Stigma, prejudice, and discrimination create a stressful social environment that can lead to mental health problems in people who belong to stigmatized minority groups such as lesbian women, gay men, and bisexuals (i.e. LGBs). By extension, these experienced minority stressors may also explain lower intimate relationship satisfaction in LGBs. This study was set up to better understand the impact of minority stress on the intimate relationships of LGBs, and the role of coping as a buffer in response to minority stress.

Coping may refer to all sorts of strategies that people apply to deal with stress. In this study, visibility management is included as a coping strategy. Visibility management refers to LGBs' decisions about and management of the disclosure of their sexual orientation in different environments. Open visibility management may be an adaptive coping strategy, although this may also depend on the social context. Furthermore, the study includes personal coping and dyadic coping as potential buffers against minority stress and its negative impact on relationship satisfaction.

As an extension, the study included some questions regarding (safe) sexual behavior and satisfaction. The experience of (minority) stress may have an impact on sexual satisfaction much in the same way as it affects relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the information on (safe) sexual behavior will offer valuable input for prevention policy.

METHOD AND PARTICIPANTS

Data were gathered in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, via an online survey. For the recruitment of participants, targeted sampling was set up. In total 5813 respondents participated (37.8% male) and (62.2% female), of which 2850 respondents were categorized as LGB (48.0% male and 52.0% female). Via a unique couple identifier code, 1188 respondents could be matched with their partner. Thus, data was available on the level of the couple for 594 couples. Of these, 346 were mixed-sex couples, 112 were male same-sex, and 136 were female same-sex.

Non-minority stress refers to the variables 'stress experienced outside the relationship' and 'dyadic stress'. Minority stress refers to 'stigma consciousness', 'everyday discrimination' and 'internalized homonegativity'. Coping refers to 'confidant support', 'personal coping', 'dyadic coping', 'openness about being LGB', 'openness about the relationship', and 'visibility management'. Relationship satisfaction is measured as 'dyadic adjustment' and 'happiness in the relationship'.

RESULTS

Factors that affect intimate relationships of LGBs. Contrary to the expectations, LGB respondents do not have lower relationship satisfaction than heterosexual respondents. Differences in relationship satisfaction according to sexual orientation are very small. The least happiness in the relationship is reported by female respondents who are in a relationship with a man. Thus, the intimate relationships of lesbian women, gay men and bisexuals are certainly not less successful in terms of dyadic adjustment and happiness as compared to intimate relationships of heterosexual men and women. However, the experience of minority stress may challenge these relationships.

Hierarchical regression analysis shows that internalized homonegativity has a minor negative effect on dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship, while dyadic stress has a strong negative effect on these variables. The effect of internalized homonegativity disappears and the effect of dyadic stress

diminishes when including coping variables. Dyadic coping has a strong positive effect on relationship satisfaction. Openness about being LGB, openness about the relationship and confidant support have minor positive effects on the relationship satisfaction.

The analyses on the level of the dyad show that in most couples, both partners experience the relationship in more or less the same way. This means that the scores on the variables dyadic stress, dyadic coping, dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship did not differ greatly between both partners. Further it was found that stress experienced by one partner, in terms of stress outside the relationship and internalized homonegativity, negatively impact on the experience of the relationship by the other partner. However, these correlations were very small.

Sexual behavior and experience. Sexual behavior and experiences refer to the variables 'exclusiveness of the relationship', 'frequency of having sex', 'sexual pleasure' and 'sexual satisfaction'. Furthermore, some questions regarding condom- and PrEP-use were included, which are especially relevant to learn more about safe sexual behavior on non-monogamous relationships.

Exclusiveness of the relationship, frequency of having sex, sexual pleasure and sexual satisfaction all differed according to respondents' sexual orientation and the relationship constellation (same-sex or opposite-sex relationship). Frequency of sex, sexual pleasure and sexual satisfaction all correlated positively with each other, and this for male as well as female respondents. All the variables, except sexual pleasure, correlated negatively with age for both male and female respondents.

Sexual behavior and satisfaction were related with the experience of (minority) stressors and characteristics of the relationship, especially dyadic stress, dyadic coping, dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship. In hierarchical regression analysis, the negative effect of dyadic stress on sexual pleasure and satisfaction diminishes or disappears when including coping variables. Especially dyadic coping is a strong predictor of sexual pleasure and satisfaction.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Being LGB implies the risk of exposure to minority stress, and some personal characteristics further increase this risk. E.g., people who do not identify with a gender (who are 'gender neutral') report more minority and non-minority stress and bisexual people report more internalized homonegativity.
- LGB's do not have a lower relationship satisfaction than heterosexuals. Women who have a relationship with a man, are the least happy about their relationship.
- The experience of minority stress may diminish coping opportunities. E.g., internalized homonegativity goes together with less openness about being LGB and about the relationship.
- Minority stress does not have a negative impact on relationship satisfaction, when taking into account coping. Relationship satisfaction largely depends on the experience of dyadic stress and dyadic coping.
- (Minority) stress that is experienced by the partner correlates weakly with the respondent's report of relationship satisfaction.

Sexual behavior, pleasure and satisfaction differ according to gender and sexual orientation. Bisexual and homosexual men are the least likely to have an exclusive relationship with their partner (in terms of sexual behavior), while lesbian women are the most likely.

Content

1. Project outline

1.1 Literature review

Stigma, prejudice, and discrimination create a stressful social environment that can lead to mental health problems in people who belong to stigmatized minority groups such as lesbian women, gay men, and bisexuals (i.e. LGBs) (Meyer, 2003). By extension, some studies also explain lower intimate relationship satisfaction in LGBs as a result of these experienced minority stressors (Balsam & Szymanski; Frost & Meyer, 2009; Mohr & Daly, 2008). However, many questions related to how those minority-specific stressors might influence intimate relationship characteristics in this population, remain unanswered. As visibility management (i.e. the ongoing process by which LGBs make careful and planned decisions about whether they will disclose their sexual orientation) has been identified as a coping strategy aimed at minimizing stigma (Dewaele, Van Houtte, Cox, & Vincke, 2013; Lasser, Ryser, & Price, 2010), we want to explore if being open or closed about one's sexual orientation explains the association between minority-specific stressors and relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, as dyadic coping (i.e., the way couples cope together with stress) is highly predictive for relationship functioning (Randall & Bodenmann, 2009), it might also act as a buffer against the negative consequences of minority stress. This project aims to develop a theory that combines the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003; Meyer, Schwartz, & Frost, 2008) with dyadic coping models (Bodenmann, 2000) in order to offer a more comprehensive view on the impact of minority stress on stigmatized relationships. The study also contributes to investigating the relationship between social structures (and how they are manifested in the immediate context of thought, feeling, and action) and interpersonal intimate relationships.

1.1.1 Minority stress and its impact on intimate relationships among LGBs

All people suffer from general stressors (Meyer, 2003). According to Bodenmann and colleagues (Bodenmann, Ledermann, Blattner, & Galluzzo, 2006; Bodenmann, Ledermann, & Bradbury, 2007), these include (a) major stressors (e.g., critical life events such as severe illness, handicap, unemployment) and (b) minor or everyday stressors (e.g., irritation, frustration, and distressing demands in everyday interactions with the social environment). Individuals from stigmatized social categories – such as LGBs – are exposed to additional stress. According to the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003; Meyer, Schwartz, & Frost, 2008), the particular social position of these minorities makes them vulnerable for experiences with victimization, stigmatization, and discrimination. It differentiates between distal minority stress processes (i.e., objective events and conditions such as discrimination) and proximal minority stress processes (i.e., subjective events that rely on individual perceptions and appraisals such as the expectation of rejection).

With regard to LGBs, we thus distinguish two categories that refer to stress that originates outside the relationship: general stressors on the one hand (major versus everyday stressors) and minority-specific stressors on the other hand (distal versus proximal). All these stressors have been found to have an adverse impact on intimate relationships (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Rostosky, Riggle, Gray, & Hatton, 2007; Bodenmann, Pihet, & Kayser, 2006). For example, high levels of internalized homonegativity (i.e., a form of self-stigmatization in which homonegative social values are directed toward the self, see Meyer, 2003) are associated with less relationship attraction and relationship satisfaction (Mohr & Daly, 2008) and with more relationship problems (Frost & Meyer, 2009) and domestic violence (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005). Furthermore, experiences with discrimination are associated with lower relationship quality and domestic violence in women's same-sex relationships (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005).

Although evidence has been found for the association between minority-specific stressors and adverse relationship outcomes, research that examines the underlying mechanisms remains scarce. One of these studies has shown that in response to minority stressors, couples use certain coping strategies such as the concealment of their intimate relationship to avoid rejection (Rostosky et al., 2007). According to Mohr and Daly (2008), concealment of one's sexual orientation might negatively influence relationship quality through its effects on social support (intimate relationships that stay hidden cannot receive support from their social environment) and through its effects on psychological functioning (hiding takes a lot of energy and thus increases stress levels). Of course, hiding one's intimate relationship is only one of the many behavioral options to cope with minority specific stressors. Early literature (see Goffman, 1963) already identified managing one's identity as a coping strategy to deal with potential discrimination on the one hand and to avoid self-denial (being 'true' to oneself) on the other. In this study, we will therefore specifically focus on visibility management strategies as a way for LGBs to manage experienced or anticipated minority stressors.

1.1.2 Visibility management as a coping strategy

Visibility management (VM) refers to an ongoing process by which LGBs make careful, planned decisions about whether they will disclose their sexual orientation and by which they continue to monitor the presentation of their sexual orientation in different environments (Lasser & Tharinger, 2003). Its goal is to regulate disclosure for the purposes of maintaining privacy as well as minimizing stigma, harm, or marginalization (Dewaele et al., 2013; Lasser et al., 2010). Previous studies (Dewaele et al., 2013; Dewaele, Van Houtte, & Vincke, 2014) have found that visibility management strategies (VMS) mediated the relationship between experiences of every day discrimination on the one hand and minority stressors on the other.

In a qualitative study (24 in-depth interviews with LGB youth), support was found for a theoretical model that describes the association between distal minority stress processes (experiencing the social environment as LGB friendly or homonegative), maintaining open or closed VMS, and proximal minority stress processes (e.g., feelings of self-loathing; Dewaele et al., 2013). Multivariate analysis in a non-representative sample of 2378 Flemish LGBs showed that VM was significantly related to the experience of internalized homonegativity in both men and women. VM also mediated the link between experiences of everyday discrimination on the one hand and internalized homonegativity and mental distress on the other hand (Dewaele, Van Houtte, & Vincke, 2014). These studies thus support the notion that VM acts as a coping strategy for LGBs to manage stigma and to regulate experienced levels of stress. A recent quantitative study also shows that there is a link between VM and other forms of coping (D'Haese, Dewaele, & Van Houtte, 2016).

Open VMS go together with higher levels of problem-oriented coping, higher levels of avoidance coping and with lower levels of emotion-oriented coping (D'Haese et al., 2016). These associations raise the question whether VM has a positive impact on the long term or not. More specifically, problem-oriented coping strategies have been identified as adaptive because they work actively toward the source of stress (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Compas et al., 2001) whereas emotion-oriented coping strategies are evaluated as more passive and thus as maladaptive (Compas et al., 2001; Endler & Parker, 1990; 1994). Based on these findings, it is plausible to assume that maintaining open VMS operates as a rather adaptive coping strategy. At the same time, we should be cautious in identifying open VMS as adaptive in every single social context. Research has shown that for LGBs with a low SES (McGarrity, 2014), with an ethnic minority background (Yip, 2004), or those who live in an extreme homophobic environment (Dewaele et al., 2013), maintaining closed VMS might be, at least from a short-term perspective, adaptive.

As VM mediates the relationship between minority stressors and mental health, we hypothesize that the former might also mediate the relationship between minority stressors and relationship satisfaction. The role of VM with regard to intimate relationships was illustrated by research of Mohr and Daly (2008). They argue that not being open about one's sexual orientation (cfr. Closed VMS) might negatively influence intimate relationship quality through its effects on social support. Furthermore, some studies have offered evidence for a negative association between concealment on the one hand and relationship satisfaction on the other hand in same-sex couples (Berger, 1990; Jordan & Deluty, 2000; Murphy, 1989), whereas others have produced null findings (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Beals & Peplau, 2001; Eldridge & Gilbert, 1990). Although these studies used some measure of concealment, they did not elaborately measure VMS. Therefore, it remains unknown if and how VMS relate to characteristics of intimate relationships.

The impact of minority stressors on relationship satisfaction could also be buffered by other coping mechanisms. Recent literature has specifically focused on dyadic coping models. As these models are highly predictive for the developmental course of intimate relationships, relationship functioning, and relationship stability (Randal & Bodenmann, 2009), they could also contribute to explaining the association between minority stress and specific relationship characteristics (e.g., relationship satisfaction).

1.1.3 Dyadic coping and intimate relationships

Dyadic coping is related to dyadic stress. The latter is then conceptualized as a stressful event or encounter that always concerns both partners, either directly when both partners are confronted by the same stressful event or when the stress originates inside the couple, or indirectly when the stress of one partner spills over to the close relationship and affects both partners. In both cases dyadic stress elicits joint appraisals and joint coping efforts referred to as dyadic coping (Bodenmann, 2000). The systemic view of stress assuming that the stress of one partner always has an impact on the other partner and that the individual stress of one partner impinges on the dyad, has become increasingly shared by theorists and researchers (Randall & Bodenmann, 2009). It has been shown that stress that comes from outside the relationship affects relationship quality by decreasing the time that partners spend together as a couple, decreasing the quality of their communication, increasing the risk of psychological and physical problems (e.g., sexual dysfunction), and increasing the likelihood that problematic personality traits will be expressed between partners. Especially when chronic everyday stress is poorly handled, stress that comes from outside of the relationship might lead to stress inside the relationship (Randall & Bodenmann, 2009).

A systemic–transactional perspective of dyadic coping differentiates between positive and negative dyadic coping. Positive forms of dyadic coping include supportive dyadic coping (e.g., helping each other with daily tasks), common dyadic coping (e.g., joint problem solving), and delegated dyadic coping (i.e., one partner is asked for help, and as a result, a new division of tasks is established). Negative forms of dyadic coping include hostile dyadic coping (e.g., mocking, sarcasm), ambivalent dyadic coping (e.g., giving support unwillingly), and superficial dyadic coping (e.g., support that lacks empathy; Bodenmann, 2000). Several studies have shown that positive dyadic coping is associated with higher levels of relationship quality, lower levels of stress experience, and a better psychological and physical well-being (for an overview see Bodenmann, Pihet, & Kayser, 2006) as it alleviates the negative impact of stress on marriage and by strengthening the feeling of 'we-ness' (i.e., mutual trust and intimacy) in the relationship.

As studies have found minority stressors to have an impact on relationship satisfaction, relationship quality, and relationship problems (Balsam & Szymanski; Frost & Meyer, 2009; Mohr & Daly, 2008), we

hypothesize that they will also be associated with stress inside the relationship. If this is the case, different forms of dyadic coping might act as a buffer against the negative consequences of minority stress. An integrated theoretical model would thus predict that stressors originating from the social context in which one lives (i.e., major stressors, daily stressors, and minority stressors) as well as stressors from inside the relationship (i.e., tensions within the dyad) would be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. Positive dyadic coping might buffer the impact of general stressors on relationship satisfaction. Open VMS might mediate the relationship between minority stressors and relationship satisfaction. An integrated theory that combines the minority stress model and theories of dyadic coping should enable us to better predict intimate relationship satisfaction in LGBs, and enable us to clarify the relationship between characteristics of the social context and interpersonal intimate relationships.

1.2 Goals

In this study, we pursue the following objectives:

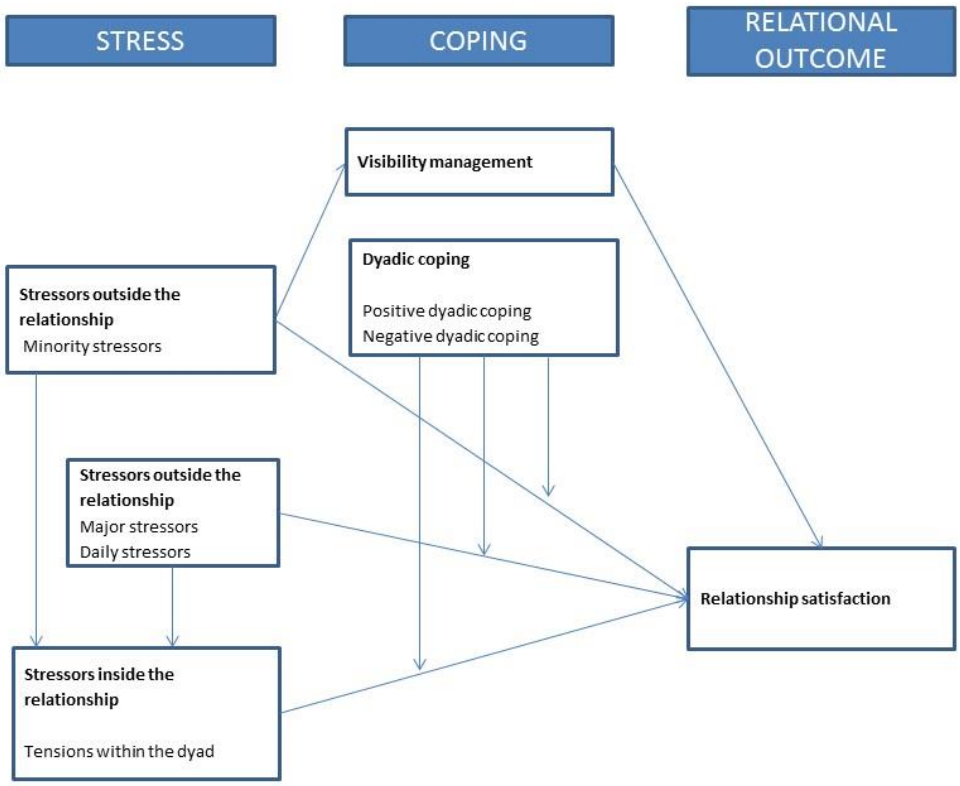
Objective 1: Examining the association between experienced (minority) stressors, stressors inside the relationship, and relationship satisfaction. Several studies show a significant association between higher levels of stress and lower levels of relationship satisfaction (for a review, see Story & Bradbury, 2004). Also, relationship satisfaction seems to be linked more closely to daily hassles than to critical life events (see Williams, 1995). Although several studies have found specific minority stressors to negatively impact intimate relationships of LGBs (see e.g. Frost & Meyer, 2009), none of them systematically includes a range of general and minority stressors. Therefore, in this study we want to explore how each of these types of stressors contribute to stressors inside the relationship and relationship satisfaction. Also, from a dyadic perspective, we want to know if minority stress as it is experienced by one partner, influences the other partner negatively.

Objective 2: Examining the association of visibility management and relationship satisfaction. Studies that investigate the relationship between being open about one's sexual orientation and relationship quality have yielded mixed results. They may have been hampered by the use of unstandardized measures of outness and small sample sizes (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005). The use of a standardized measure for visibility management could address problems with measurement. Also, given that visibility management has been found to mediate the relationship between minority stress and mental health (Dewaele, Van Houtte, & Vincke, 2014), we hypothesize that visibility management could mediate the relationship between minority stress and relationship satisfaction.

Objective 3: Examining the association between dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction. Some studies that focus on intimate relationships of LGBs, do not address coping mechanisms with regard to minority stress (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Mohr & Daly, 2008). Others refer to coping mechanisms such as self-acceptance, creating social support systems, reframing the experiences with rejection (Rostosky et al., 2007), or to the role of LGB community connectedness (Frost & Meyer, 2009). Those studies that address coping, consider the latter as an individual resource with impact on the relationship as a whole. As such, they do not address dyadic coping mechanisms. Therefore, we want to investigate if dyadic coping is related to relationship satisfaction in an LGB population and whether dyadic coping provides a buffer in response to minority stress. Hypothesized relationships are summarized in the figure below.

Figure 1.

Hypothesized relationships between (minority) stress, coping and relational outcome



2. Method

Data were gathered in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. A quantitative research design was used, based on an internet survey with self-report measures. For the recruitment of participants, targeted sampling was set up. Previous Flemish studies successfully used a social marketing approach to reach LGBs as a hidden population (e.g., Cox, Dewaele, Van Houtte & Vincke, 2010; Vanden Berghe, Dewaele, Cox, & Vincke, 2010). To attract a relatively diverse sample a variety of recruitment channels and methods was used to avoid both bias and a lack of representation of specific groups. Recruitment channels included specific locations such as LGB discotheques, LGB parties and LGB events; advertisements in the written press; LGB-specific and non-LGB-specific associations and organizations. Previous research has shown that this method produces relatively large sample sizes in a limited amount of time while optimizing the quality and validity of these nonrandom samples (Dewaele, Caen, & Buysse, 2014; Dewaele, Van Houtte, & Vincke, 2014). Recruitment and completion of the internet survey took place between November 2017 and June 2018.

2.1 Description of the participants

In this section, the participants are described in terms of their socio-demographic background, gender identity, sexual orientation, and relationship status.

2.1.1 Socio-demographics

In total 5813 respondents participated. Gender, measured as 'sex as registered at birth' results in 2199 male (37.8%) and 3614 female (62.2%) respondents.

Respondents indicated the channel through which they accessed the online survey. The large majority (67.5%) found the survey via social media, and another 10.1% accessed the survey via another electronic channel. Other channels were the press (7.7%), school, education or work (4.6%), a promo team that spoke about it (1.7%), an advertising poster (1.7%), an association (0.4%), one's social network (0.4%), or yet via another channel (5.8%).

1.7% indicated that they belong to a religious minority group and 2.0% that they belong to an ethnic minority group. 4.8% indicated to be disabled. The respondents' approximate age at the moment of completion (measured based on birth year alone), varied from 16 years to 81 years (M = 31.17, SD = 11.87).

About one third of respondents (30.3%, N = 1762) are enrolled in a form of fulltime education. Of those, 10.8% are still in high school, 84.5% are studying for a bachelor or master's degree, and another 4.7% are enrolled in 'another type of education'. Among the 4051 respondents who are no longer in fulltime education, the majority holds a higher education degree (69.6%).

The majority of respondents (84.6%) lived together, mostly with their partner (43.2%), their parents (30.2%), or their children (19.8%). To measure financial security, respondents indicated how easy or hard it is for their household to make ends meet, going from 'very easy' (score 1) to 'easy' (score 2), 'pretty easy' (score 3), 'with a little effort' (score 4), 'with effort' (score 5) and 'with a lot of effort' (score 6) (M = 2.9, SD = 1.23). For most respondents, making ends meet is rather easy, with 68.6% giving a maximum score of 3.

2.1.2 Gender identity

Respondents indicated on a seven-point scale to what extent they feel male and to what extent they feel female, ranging from 'not at all' (score 1) to 'totally' (score 7). Table 1 presents the results for male and female respondents respectively.

Table 1.

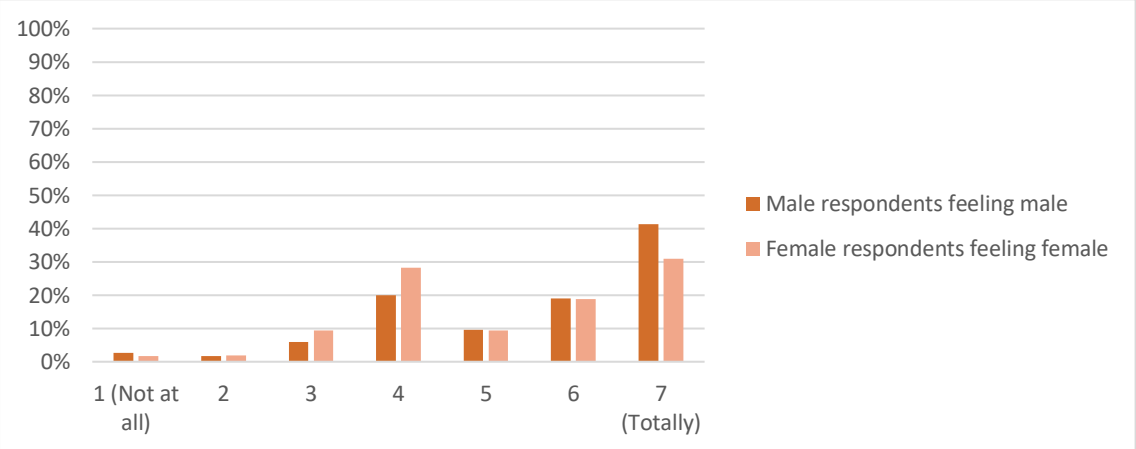
Feeling male and female among male and female respondents

	Male respondents (*N* = 2199)		Female respondents (*N* = 3614)	
	Feeling male	Feeling female	Feeling male	Feeling female
1 (Not at all)	2.7%	62.6%	64.6%	1.7%
2	1.7%	26.1%	25.3%	1.8%
3	6.0%	5.4%	5.1%	9.3%
4	20.0%	1.8%	2.1%	28.2%
5	9.5%	1.0%	0.9%	9.3%
6	18.9%	1.3%	1.0%	18.8%
7 (Totally)	41.3%	1.8%	0.9%	30.9%

Figure 2 visualizes the extent to which male and female respondents identify with their biological sex as registered at birth. For male respondents it is more common to identify 'totally' with their biological sex (41.3%) as it is for female respondents (30.9%). Together, categories 5, 6 and 7, indicate the number of respondents who (rather) identify with their biological sex. This sums up to 69.7% for male respondents and 59.0% for female respondents.

Figure 2.

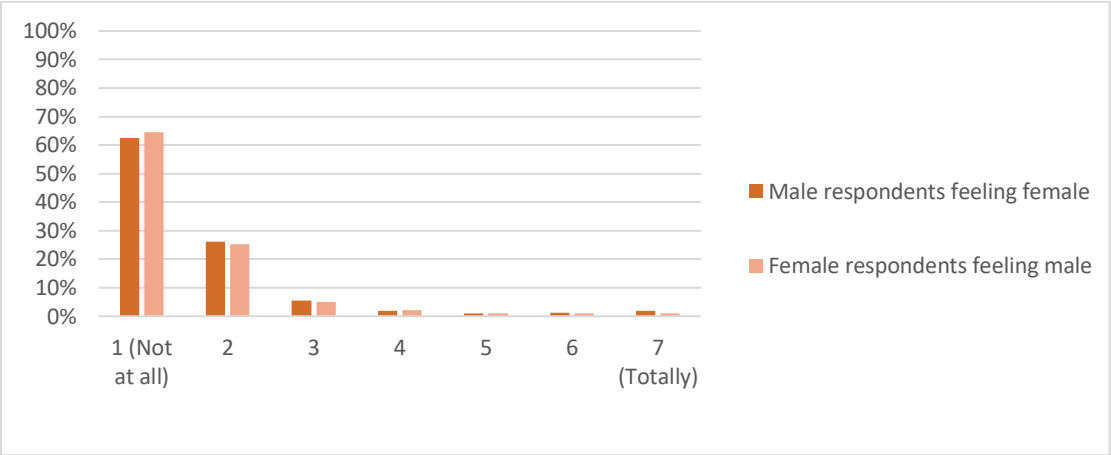
Respondents' identification with sex as registered at birth



Self-identifying with the opposite sex, occurred slightly more often among the male than among the female respondents. Among male respondents 4.1% (rather) feel female (combination of categories 5, 6 and 7). Among female respondents, 2.8% (rather) feel male. Figure 3 visualizes respondents' identification with the opposite sex.

Figure 3.

Respondents' identification with opposite sex



Based on the respondent's identification with the biological and the opposite sex, different categories of gender identity are constructed:

- Cisgender: the respondent identifies with the biological sex (scores 5 to 7) but does not identify with the opposite sex (scores 1 to 4).
- Transgender: the respondent does not identify with the biological sex (scores 1 to 4) and does identify with the opposite sex (scores 5 to 7).
- Gender neutral: the respondent gave score four on both variables.
- Bigender: the respondent both identifies with the biological sex (scores 5 to 7) as with the opposite sex (scores 5 to 7).
- Agender: the respondent does not identify with either gender (scores 1 to 4 on both variables, except score 4 on both variables).

The table below shows the distribution of male and female respondents over the five gender identity categories. A Pearson chi-square test indicates a significant difference in the distribution between male and female respondents ($\chi^2(4) = 86.577$, $p < .001$).

Table 2.

Gender identity for male and female respondents

	Male respondents		Female respondents		Total	
	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*
Cisgender	68.8%	1513	58.4%	2111	62.3%	3624
Transgender	3.3%	73	2.3%	82	2.7%	155
Both genders in between	0.8%	18	0.9%	32	0.9%	50
Bigender	0.9%	19	0.6%	21	07%	40
Agender	26.2%	576	37.9%	1368	33.4%	1944
Total *N*	2199		3614		5813	

Respondents evaluated whether they feel to belong to a minority group. 39.1% of respondents indicate to belong to a sexual minority group and 3.0% specifically indicate to belong to the transgender minority group. Interestingly, of the 172 respondents who say that they are transgender, only 110 can be found among those who were categorized as such based on one's identification with the biological and opposite sex. Furthermore, 49 respondents who were categorized as agender, 7 who were categorized as cisgender, 5 as neutral, and 1 as bigender, say themselves to be transgender.

2.1.3 Sexual orientation

Respondents were asked who they feel sexually attracted to and how they would label themselves in terms of sexual identity. Tables 3 and 4 show the results for the variables sexual attraction and sexual identity respectively.

Table 3.

Sexual attraction to same and opposite sex for male and female respondents

	Male respondents		Female respondents		Total	
	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*
Only to opposite sex	34.6%	761	43.3%	1565	40.0%	2326
Mainly to opposite sex	9.6%	212	24.7%	892	19.0%	1104
As much to opposite sex as to same sex	4.0%	87	8.1%	292	6.5%	379
Mainly to same sex	10.1%	222	10.3%	373	10.2%	595
Only to same sex	40.9%	899	11.8%	427	22.8%	1326
Neither to boys/men or girls/women	0.4%	8	0.7%	27	0.6%	35
Other	0.5%	10	1.1%	38	0.8%	48
Total *N*	2199		3614		5813	

$\chi^2(6) = 740.024$, $p < .001$

Table 4.

Sexual identity for male and female respondents

	Male respondents		Female respondents		Total	
	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*
Heterosexual	37.1%	816	56.4%	2037	49.1%	2853
More heterosexual than homosexual	4.6%	102	10.2%	367	8.1%	469
Bisexual	5.9%	129	8.9%	321	7.7%	450
More homosexual than heterosexual	5.1%	113	5.0%	182	5.1%	295
Homosexual (or lesbian)	44.2%	971	14.0%	507	25.4%	1478
Something else	3.1%	68	5.5%	200	4.6%	268
Total *N*	2199		3614		5813	

$\chi^2(5) = 676.683$, $p < .001$

Respondents who indicated that they identify as 'more heterosexual than homosexual' or who indicated 'something else' were asked whether they are able to complete questions that concern LGBs. Thereby respondents were instructed that they could change the term LGB for something else such as queer. Of the 737 who were presented this question, 627 confirmed that they could answer questions related to being LGB.

In sum, respondents who were presented questions for LGBs throughout the questionnaire, consist of the following (*N* = 2850, 48.0% male and 52.0% female):

- respondents who indicated to be bisexual (*n* = 450);
- respondents who indicated to be more homosexual than heterosexual (*n* = 295);
- respondents who indicated to be homosexual (*n* = 1478); and
- respondents who indicated to be more heterosexual than homosexual or who identify as something else, but who confirmed that they were able to answer questions for LGB (*n* = 627).

2.1.4 Relationship status and characteristics

The definition of being in a relationship was based on the definition formerly used by Koniak-Griffin et al. (2008), which goes as follows 'Do you currently have a partner? With partner we refer to a person with whom you have shared romantic feelings for at least three months and whit whom you have sex. With sex we refer to all sorts of making love where there is genital contact. There does not have to be penetration.' Two thirds of the respondents (*n* = 4359, 75.0%) indicate that they are involved in a romantic relationship. However, for 71 of those the relationship started less than three months ago and therefore was too recent to be included according to the definition. For these respondents the relationship status was adjusted accordingly, which makes a total of 4288 (73.8%) respondents that are included in the analyses as 'being in a relationship'.

The length of the relationships varies from three months to 57 years (M_{months} = 80.64, *SD* = 97.56). Among those in a relationship, one quarter (24.4%) are also married to their partner. About half of the male respondents (49.7%) have a same-sex partner (biological sex as registered at birth), against about one fourth (25.7%) of the female respondents with a same-sex partner. The average duration of the relationship does not differ significantly between same-sex couples (M_{months} = 78.22) and opposite-sex couples (M_{months} = 81.90, $t(4284) = -1.249$, $p = .212$). Table 5 gives an overview of the number of respondents according to their relationship status and their partner's gender.

Table 5.

Breakup of respondents by sex, relationship status and partner's sex

	Male respondents	Female respondents	Total
Same-sex partner	785	694	1479
Opposite-sex partner	796	2011	2807
Single	618	907	1525
Total	2199	3612	5811
Missing*		2	2

*Two female respondents did not provide information on their partner's sex

2.2 Description and exploration of the study variables

First, the measurement of the variables is described. Validated and reliable questionnaires were used. Second, the distribution of the variables is examined and required adjustments to the variables are made. Third, the univariate results of the variables are summarized.

2.2.1 Measurement

The variables are divided in five groups: general stressors (personal and related to the dyad), minority-stressors, coping (personal and dyadic), visibility management, and relationship functioning.

2.2.1.1 General stressors

Respondents' experience of stress was measured by the Multidimensional Stress Questionnaire for Couples (MSF-P; Bodenmann et al., 2007). This questionnaire contains items that refer to daily stressors outside the relationship and items that refer to stress internal to the dyad. Additionally, the occurrence of major events that are potentially stressful, external and internal to the dyad, are measured.

Daily stressors that occurred over the past year, were measured by eight items that refer to hassles such as one's financial situation, conflicts at work or school, and one's living situation. Respondents rated each item on a four-point scale according to how much stress was caused by each hassle (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = on average, 4 = very). These items were presented to all respondents, regardless of their relationship status. The scale had a low internal consistency (α= .649).

Major life events were assessed by presenting eight potentially stressful situations that might have occurred over the past year (e.g., a serious illness or death of a loved one, unemployment, a conviction or legal procedure). First the respondent indicated whether or not the event occurred, and if so, to what extent the respondent experienced this as stressful (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = on average, 4 = very). Among the respondents, 2364 reported no major life event, 1319 reported one event, 1153 reported two events, 635 reported three events, 248 reported four events, 70 reported five events, 20 reported six events, and 4 reported seven events. Because there is no data on this variable for respondents who did not experience a major life event, the variable is not included in this report.

Stress within the dyadic relationship was measured by ten items (e.g., disagreement with your partner, annoying habits of your partner, or too many restrictions in the relationship). Respondents rated each item on a four-point scale according to how much stress was caused by its occurrence (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = on average, 4 = very). These items were presented to respondents who indicated that they have a romantic partner since at least three months. The scale had a high internal consistency (α= .855).

Major stressors within the dyadic relationships, were measured by four potentially stressful experiences that occurred within the dyad (e.g., aggressive or violent behavior, infidelity or health problems). For each situation, respondents indicated whether or not this occurred over the past year and if so, how damaging this experience was for the respondent (1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = on average, 4 = very). These items were presented to respondents who indicated that they have a romantic partner for at least three months. Of the 4288 respondents in a relationship, 1452 reported one major relationship event, 530 reported two events, 144 reported three events, and 23 reported 23 events. Because there is no data on this variable for respondents who did not experience a major event in the relationship, the variable is not included in this report.

2.2.1.2 Minority-stressors

Respondents who did not identify as heterosexual were offered three scales that measure the occurrence of minority-stressors.

Internalized Homonegativity was measured by a subscale of the Internalized Homonegativity Inventory as developed by Mayfield (2001). This subscale consists of nine items that measure the extent to which LGB respondents have developed negative attitudes towards homosexuality (e.g. 'I feel ashamed of my homosexuality' and 'When people around me talk about homosexuality, I get nervous'). Respondents rated each item on a five-point scale (score 1 = agree completely, score 5 = completely disagree). The scores of negatively phrased items were reversed so that a higher score refers to more internalized homonegativity. The scale had a high internal consistency (α = .742).

The **Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire** as developed by Pinel (1999) was applied. This scale consists of ten items such as 'When I talk to heterosexuals, I feel that they interpret all my behaviors in terms of my LGBTness' and 'Most heterosexuals do not condemn gay people on the basis of their sexual preference'. All items are rated on a seven-point scale (score 1 = agree completely, score 7 = totally disagree). The score on some items was reversed so that a higher score refers to more stigma consciousness. The scale had a high internal consistency (α = .771).

The **Experiences of Everyday Discrimination Questionnaire** as developed by Williams, Yu, Jackson, and Anderson (1997) was applied. Respondents indicated for eleven items how often they experienced incidents such as being treated in a less friendly manner than other people, or being insulted. Answering categories included the following: 1 'never', 2 'an exceptional time', 3 'about once a month', 4 'several times a month', 5 'about once a week', 6 'several times a week', and 7 'daily'. The scale had a high internal consistency (α = .918).

2.2.1.3 (Dyadic) coping

Confidant support measures the extent to which the respondent receives support from other people. This variable is measured by the confidant support scale developed by Vanden Berghe et al. (2010). The scale consists of four items such as 'Is there someone you could talk to if you were excited, worried, nervous or depressed?'. Each item is rated on a five-point scale (score 1 = certainly not, score 5 = certainly). The scale had a high internal consistency (α = .945).

Individual coping was measured by the short version of the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (CISS-21), developed by Endler and Parker (1990). The scale consists of 21 items and measures three types of coping: task-oriented, avoidance-oriented and emotion-oriented coping. Task-oriented coping is considered a successful type of coping while avoidance-oriented and emotion-oriented are related to negative outcomes. Respondents were asked to indicate how they generally deal with stressful or unpleasant situations, e.g., 'Treat myself to something that I really like', or 'Think about how I have solved similar problems in the past'. Items were rated on a five-point scale (score 1 = this does not fit me at all, score 5 = this completely fits me). The three subscales each had a high internal consistency, with α = .863 for emotion-focused coping, α = .780 for task-focused coping, and α = .713 for avoidant coping. For calculating the full-scale score, the scores on emotion-focused and avoidant coping were reversed so that a higher score refers to more successful coping. The full scale for successful coping had a high internal consistency with α = .751.

The **Dyadic Coping Inventory** developed by Bodenmann (2000) was applied (Dutch version by Ponnet, 2012). This scale consists of 35 items that measure the way couples communicate about and cope with stress, and two additional items that measure how satisfied one is about the way stress is dealt with

in the relationship. Dyadic coping refers to one partner's attempt to reduce the other partner's stress as well as to a couple's efforts to deal with external stress that affects the relationship. The Dyadic Coping Inventory generates an overall score that indicates the quality and quantity of dyadic coping. This total score does not include two items of the scale that refer to the respondent's own evaluation of the way in which the couple deals with stress. The scale had a high internal consistency (α = .923).

2.2.1.4 Visibility management

Overall openness about being LGB was measured by one item, whereby respondents indicated on a ten-point scale how open they are about being LGB (score 0 = totally closed, score 10 = totally open). This item was only presented to respondents who are in a relationship. Respondents who are not in a relationship, completed the visibility management scale with reference to their sexual orientation.

The **Visibility Management Scale** developed by Lasser et al. (2010) was applied to measure how the respondent manages LGB visibility. The items that were presented, differed for LGB respondents that were and were not in a relationship since at least three months. LGB respondents who were not in a relationship were presented 15 items that measure openness about being LGB, e.g., 'I want my acquaintances to know that I am gay' and 'I am afraid others will reject me if they discover my sexual orientation'. Respondents who were in a relationship (LGB and others) were presented items that measure openness about being in a same-sex relationship such as 'I want my acquaintances to know that I have a relationship' and 'I am afraid others will reject me if they discover that I have a relationship'. All items were rated on a six-point scale (score 1 = disagree completely, score 6 = agree completely). The scores on negatively phrased items were reversed so that a higher score refers to more openness. Both the visibility management scale for sexual orientation and the visibility management scale for being in a same-sex relationship had a high internal consistency (α = .891 and α = .838 respectively).

2.2.1.5 Relationship functioning

The **Brief Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)** developed by Sabourin, Valois and Lussier (2005) was applied to measure the relationship quality. This scale consists of three items, including 'How often do you discuss, or have you considered separating, or ending your relationship?', 'Overall, how often do you think things are going well between you and your regular partner?', and 'How often do you entrust your partner with something?'. Each item was rated on a six-point scale (score 1 = always, score 6 = never). The scale had a high internal consistency (α = .733).

Overall happiness with the relationship was measured by one item. Respondents indicated 'what best describes the general level of happiness in your relationship' on a seven-point scale (score 1 = very unhappy, score 7 = perfect). The item included the clarification that 'the middle point "happy" stands for the degree of happiness in most relationships'.

2.2.2 Distribution of the variables and variable adjustment

First, the distribution of the variables is explored in terms of normality and detection of outliers. For variables that are measured by multiple items (all variables except *overall openness about being LGB*), the mean score on the respective items is used. Second, some variables are dichotomized in order to make them more usable in analyses. Third, the univariate and bivariate results for all the study variables are presented.

2.2.2.1 Distribution of the variables

The table below presents the test results for skewness (indicating the symmetry of the distribution)[1], kurtosis (indicating the tail-heaviness of the distribution)[2] and Kolmogorov-Smirnov (tests the hypothesis that the data are normally distributed). The test results show that none of the variables meet the distribution requirements of normality. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic is highest (indicating the most distortion from a normal distribution) for the experience of everyday discrimination and confidant support. Kurtosis is also particularly high for the experience of everyday discrimination.

Table 6.

Distribution statistics of the study variables

	N	Skewness (*SE*)	Kurtosis (*SE*)	Kolmogorov-Smirnov test
Stress outside relationship	5813	0.565 (0.032)	0.328 (0.064)	0.087***
Stress related to the dyad	4285	0.968 (0.037)	0.626 (0.075)	0.120***
Internalized homonegativity	2847	0.540 (0.046)	0.278 (0.092)	0.073***
Stigma consciousness	2847	0.333 (0.046)	-0.125 (0.092)	0.051***
Everyday discrimination	2845	3.852 (0.046)	22.841 (0.092)	0.288***
Confidant support	5813	-1.822 (0.032)	3.033 (0.064)	0.291***
Successful coping	5813	0.170 (0.032)	-0.002 (0.064)	0.042***
Dyadic coping	4275	-0.345 (0.037)	0.142 (0.075)	0.038***
Satisfaction about dyadic coping	4278	-0.861 (0.037)	0.565 (0.075)	0.194***
Openness about being LGB	2842	-0.862 (0.046)	-0.313 (0.092)	0.191***
Openness about relationship	4280	-0.705 (0.037)	0.888 (0.075)	0.063***
Openness about sexual orientation	797	-0.204 (0.087)	-0.364 (0.173)	0.039**
Dyadic adjustment	4278	-1.469 (0.037)	2.899 (0.075)	0.194***
Happiness in relationship	4278	-0.689 (0.037)	0.422 (0.075)	0.194***

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

It should be noted, however, that for large samples (over 200 observations), skewness and kurtosis statistics become less useful as even the smallest deviation from normality will give significant values (Field, 2009, p. 139). The same applies for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test result; for large samples, this test very easily indicates a significant difference from a normal distribution (Field, 2009, p. 144). Therefore, a visual inspection of the distribution is warranted in order to make an informed decision on how to move forward with these variables. For each variable, a histogram and Q-Q plot is presented

[1] The closer to one, the more the distribution resembles a normal distribution. Rule of thumb for interpreting skewness (https://www.spcforexcel.com/knowledge/basic-statistics/are-skewness-and-kurtosis-useful-statistics):

- Between -0.5 and 0.5: data are (fairly) symmetrical
- Between -1 and -0.5 or between 0.5 and 1: data are moderately skewed
- Less than -1 or greater than 1: data are heavily skewed

[2] The closer to one, the more the distribution resembles a normal distribution.

below. The Q-Q plot sets off the observed values against the expected values in a normal distribution, where deviations from the diagonal show deviations from normality. Ideally, the dots in the Q-Q plot are on or very close to the diagonal.

Figure 4.

Distribution of variable 'Stress outside the relationship'

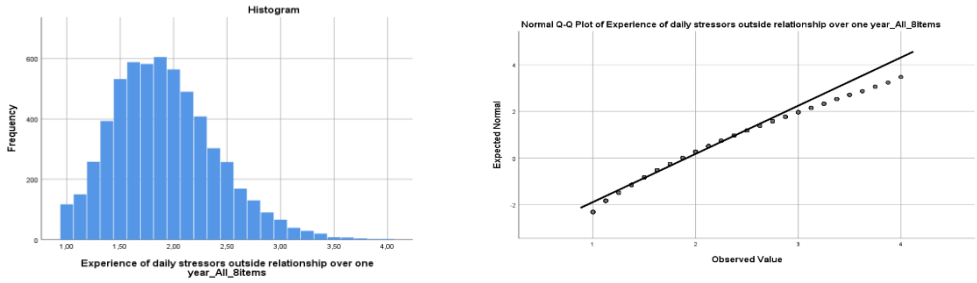


Figure 5.

Distribution of variable 'Stress related to the dyad'

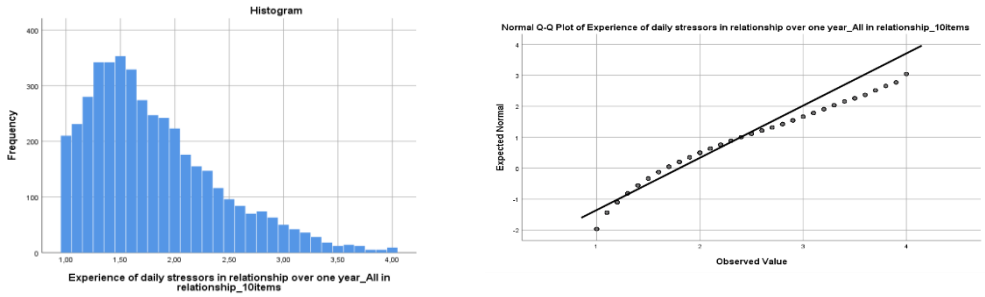


Figure 6.

Distribution of variable 'Internalized homonegativity'

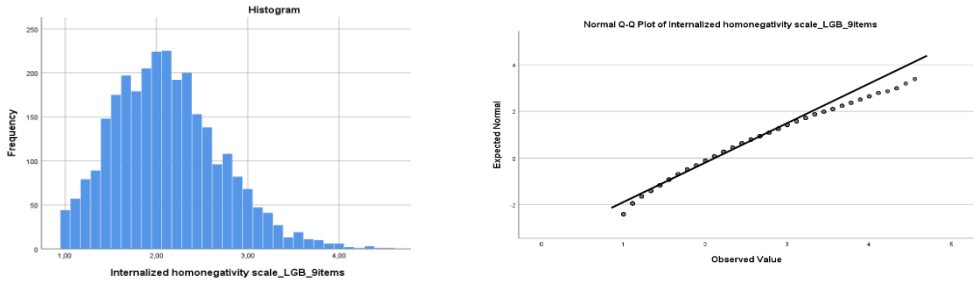


Figure 7.

Distribution of variable 'Stigma consciousness'

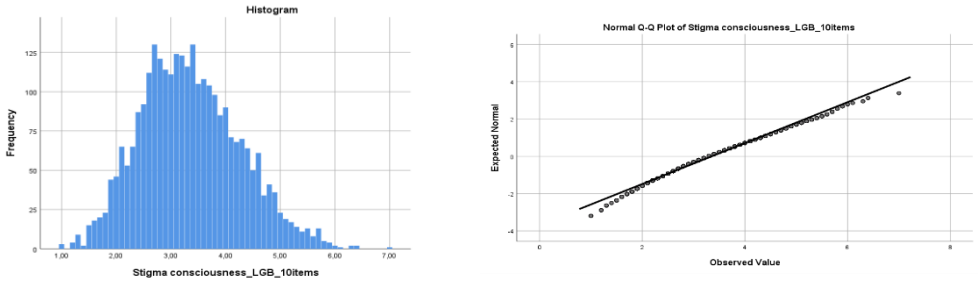


Figure 8.

Distribution of variable 'Experience of everyday discrimination'

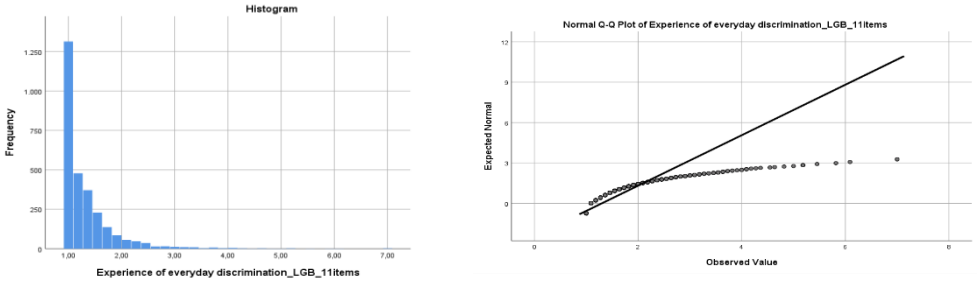


Figure 9.

Distribution of variable 'Confidant support'

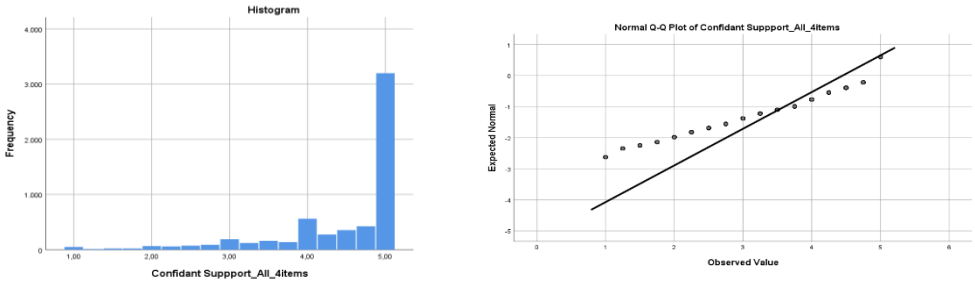


Figure 10.

Distribution of variable 'Successful coping'

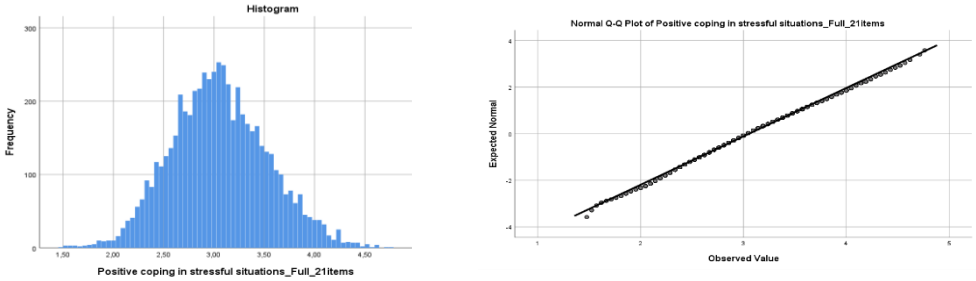


Figure 11.

Distribution of variable 'Dyadic coping'

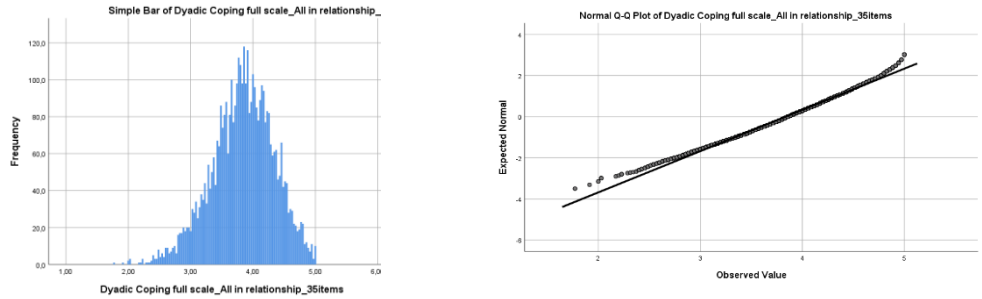


Figure 12.

Distribution of variable 'Satisfaction about dyadic coping'

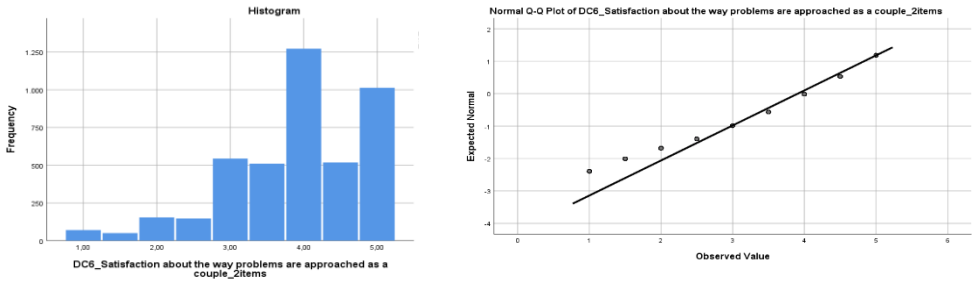


Figure 13.

Distribution of variable 'Openness about being LGB – All LGB respondents'

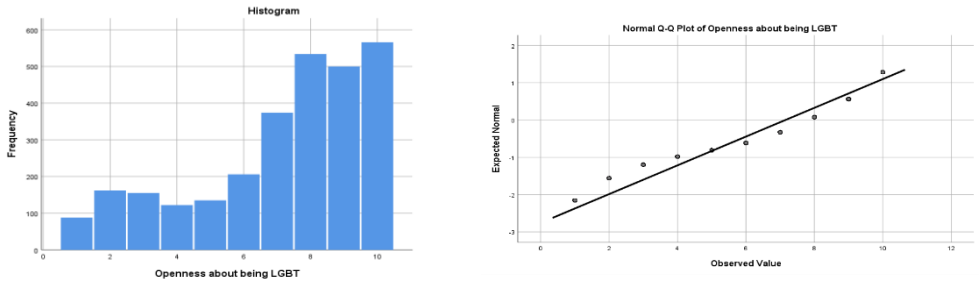


Figure 14.

Distribution of variable 'Openness about relationship'

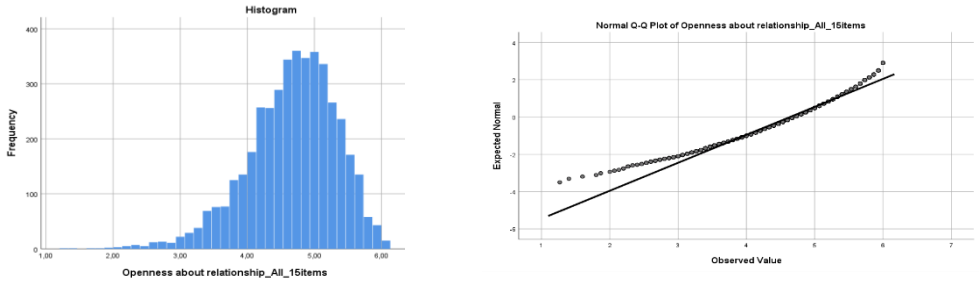


Figure 15.

Distribution of variable 'Openness about being LGB (LGB respondents without partner)'

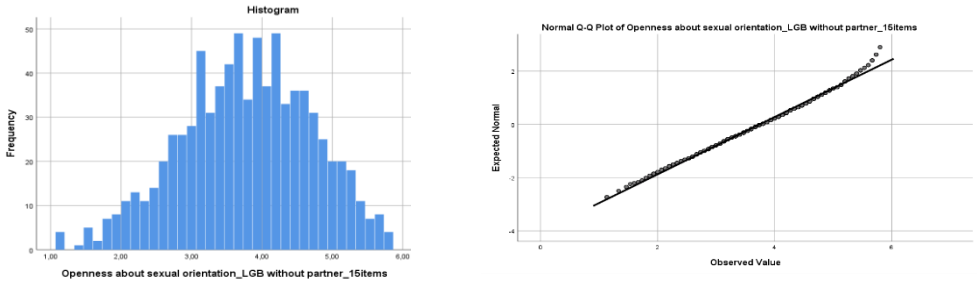


Figure 16.

Distribution of variable 'Dyadic adjustment scale'

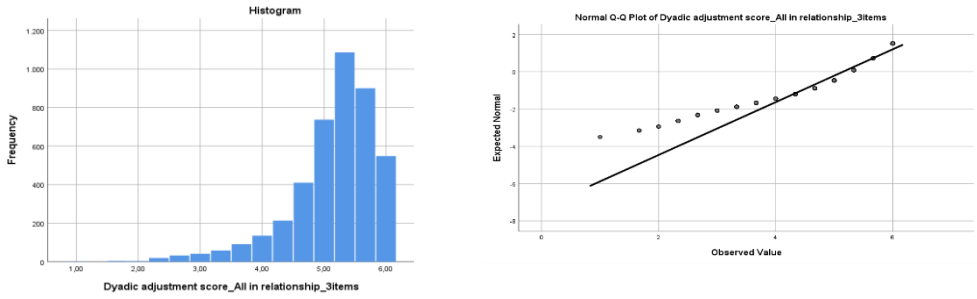
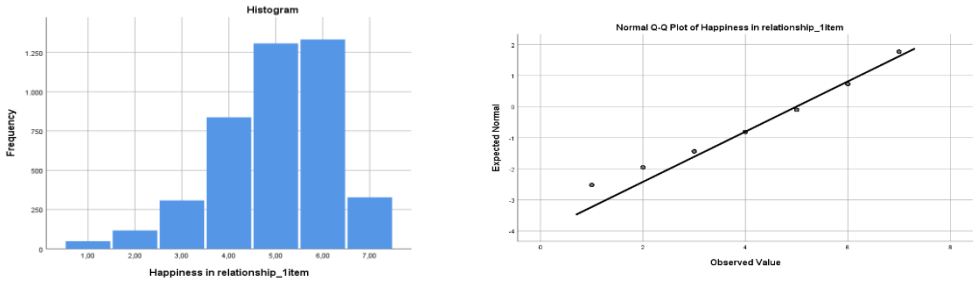


Figure 17.

Distribution of variable 'Overall happiness about relationship'



Based on a visual inspection of the distributions it can be concluded that the following variables approach a normal distribution:

- Stress outside the relationship, moderately skewed to the right
- Stress related to the dyad, moderately skewed to the right
- Internalized homonegativity, moderately skewed to the right
- Stigma consciousness, mildly skewed to the right
- Successful coping, mildly skewed to the right
- Dyadic coping, moderately skewed to the right
- Openness about the relationship, moderately skewed to the right
- Openness about sexual orientation, mildly skewed to the left
- Dyadic adjustment, moderately skewed to the right
- Overall happiness about the relationship, moderately skewed to the left

Four variables should not be treated as normally distributed. These variables are converted into categorical variables:

- Experience of everyday discrimination
- Confidant support
- Satisfaction with coping in the couple
- Openness about being LGB (based on one item)

2.2.2.2 Detection of outliers for normally distributed variables

No data transformations are performed but variables that approach a normal distribution are tested for outliers. Outliers are detected based on the standardized values (the z-scores). The table below gives an overview of the distribution of the absolute z-scores. In a normal distribution, 95% of the cases should have an absolute z-score lower than 1.96, maximum 5% should have an absolute z-score between 1.96 and 2.57, and maximum 1% should have an absolute z-score between 2.58 and 3.29. No observations should have an absolute z-score higher than 3.29, which is the threshold for outliers within a normal distribution. Observations that are identified as outliers, are recoded to the threshold. This is the converted value from a z-score +/- 3.29. The final column indicates for each variable how many cases were converted to the threshold value.

Table 7.

Distribution of the absolute z-scores for normally distributed variables

	<1.96	1.96-2.57	2.58-3.29	>3.29	*n* converted cases
(% in normal distribution)	(95%)	(Max. 5%)	(Max. 1%)	(0%)	
Stress outside relationship	95.4%	3.4%	1.0%	0.3%	15
Stress related to the dyad	94.6%	3.6%	1.3%	0.4%	19
Internalized homonegativity	96.5%	2.1%	1.2%	0.3%	8
Stigma consciousness	95.6%	3.8%	0.5%	0.1%	3
Successful coping	94.7%	4.3%	1.0%	0.0%	2
Dyadic coping	94.9%	4.0%	0.9%	0.2%	8
Openness about relationship	95.4%	3.1%	0.9%	0.5%	23
Openness about sexual orientation	95.6%	3.8%	0.6%	0.0%	0
Dyadic adjustment	94.2%	3.5%	1.0%	1.4%	59
Happiness in relationship	96.1%	2.7%	1.1%	0.0%	0

Given the total size of the sample, the impact of recoding the outliers has only a minimal effect on the distributions. For variables with a higher number of adjusted outliers, however, such as ‘openness about the relationship’ and ‘dyadic adjustment’, recoding the outliers clearly diminishes the skewness and kurtosis of the distributions. The table below gives an overview of skewness and kurtosis before and after adjustment.

Table 8.

Skewness and Kurtosis before and after adjustment for outliers

	Skewness			Kurtosis		
	Before adjustment	After adjustment	*SE*	Before adjustment	After adjustment	*SE*
Stress outside relationship	0.565	0.527	0.032	0.328	0.150	0.064
Stress related to the dyad	0.968	0.938	0.037	0.626	0.478	0.075
Internalized homonegativity	0.540	0.504	0.046	0.278	0.116	0.092
Stigma consciousness	0.333	0.324	0.046	-0.125	-0.167	0.092
Successful coping	0.170	0.167	0.032	-0.002	-0.010	0.064
Dyadic coping	-0.345	-0.322	0.037	0.142	0.040	0.075
Openness about relationship	-0.705	-0.607	0.037	0.888	0.393	0.075
Dyadic adjustment	-1.469	-1.261	0.037	2.899	1.695	0.075

2.2.2.3 Dichotomizing non-normally distributed variables

Variables that are heavily skewed, with an identical outcome for a high number of respondents, are dichotomized in order to make them more usable for analysis.

The distribution of the variable **experience of everyday discrimination** shows that most respondents did not, or did only exceptionally, experience discrimination regarding their sexual orientation. The variable is dichotomized, with the first category (score 0) consisting of those respondents who indicated 'never' on each of the eleven items (46.2%) or 'an exceptional time' on one (9.3%) or two (7.5%) of the eleven items (total *n* = 1792, 63.0%). The second group (score 1) consists of those who experienced discrimination more often (*n* = 1053, 37%).

The distribution of the variable **confidant support** shows that a majority of the respondents gave a maximum score on each of the four items that were presented. Two categories are constructed, with the first (score 0) consisting of those respondents who are less certain that they would find appropriate support (average score lower than 4, *n* = 1000, 17.2%). The second category (score 1) consists of respondents who believe that they would find appropriate social support (average score of 4 or higher, *n* = 4813, 82.8%).

Most respondents indicate that they are (rather) open about their sexual orientation, with only 23.3% giving a score 5 or lower on a ten-point scale measuring **overall openness about being LGB**. Two groups are constructed with respondents giving a score lower than 7 belonging to the group 'not open' (score 0, *n* = 868, 30.5%) and the respondents with a score 7 or higher belonging to the group 'open' (score 1, *n* = 1974, 69.5%).

Satisfaction about coping is a self-evaluation of dyadic coping, based on two items that are part of the dyadic coping scale but that are not included in the scoring of the variable 'dyadic coping'. As the dyadic coping scale is more informative, the respondent's own evaluation of dyadic coping is not further included in the analyses.

2.2.3 Univariate results

All univariate results of the study variables are summarized in the table below. For the normally distributed data, these results are based on the adjusted variables, after recoding the outliers. For the non-normally distributed variables, the univariate results are presented before recoding into dichotomous variables.

Table 9.

Univariate measures of the study variables

	Items	α	*N*	Range	*M*	*SD*
General stressors						
Stress outside relationship[1]	8	.649	5813	1-4	1.915	0.484
Stress due to major life events[1]	8	na	3449	0.13-3.50	0.657	0.422
Stress related to the dyad[2]	10	.855	4285	1-4	1.802	0.593
Stress due to major relationship events[2]	4	na	2149	0.25-4	1.004	0.632
Minority-specific stressors						
Internalized homonegativity[3]	9	.742	2847	1-4.56	2.116	0.590
Stigma consciousness[3]	10	.771	2847	1-7	3.352	0.912
Everyday discrimination[3]	11	.918	2845	1-7	1.299	0.534
Coping						
Confidant support[1]	4	.945	5813	1-5	4.453	0.848
Succesful coping[1]	21	.748	5813	1.29-4.81	3.157	0.471
Dyadic coping[2]	35	.923	4275	1.77-5	3.840	0.499
Satisfaction about dyadic coping	2	.898	4278	1-5	3.909	0.926
Visibility management						
Openness about being LGB[3]	1	na	2842	1-10	7.15	2.593
Openness about relationship[2]	15	.838	4280	1.27-6	4.636	0.667
Openness about sexual orientation[4]	15	.891	797	1.13-5.80	3.744	0.929
Relationship satisfaction						
Dyadic adjustment[2]	3	.733	4278	1-6	5.156	0.706
Happiness in relationship[2]	1	na	4278	1-7	5.0	1.24

1 = items presented to all respondents (total *N* = 5813); 2 = items presented to respondents in a relationship (total N = 4288); 3 = items presented to LGB (total N = 2850); 4 = items presented to LGB not in a relationship (total *N* = 837); na = not applicable because not a scale or only one item

3. Results

First, the variable outcomes according to gender, in terms of biological sex as determined at birth, are presented. Second, the bivariate correlations between the variables are presented. Third, the distributions of the variables along the analytic groups of interest (gender identity, sexual orientation and relationship constellation) are discussed. Third, hierarchical regression analysis is applied to understand how (minority) stress and coping together determine the relationship functioning among LGBs.

3.1 Variable outcomes according to gender

The table below shows the mean values for the study variables according to gender. Female respondents report more stress coming from outside the relationship as well as more dyadic stress than male respondents. There is no difference between male and female respondents in terms of internalized homonegativity but male respondents are more stigma conscious. While male respondents score higher in terms of successful coping, female respondents score (marginally) higher in terms of dyadic coping. Female respondents also tend to be slightly more open about their relationship, although the difference between both groups is minimal.

Table 10.

Variable outcomes according to gender, with independent samples t-test

	Male		Female		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*
Stress outside relationship	1.84	0.49	1.96	0.47	-9.533***
Stress related to the dyad	1.74	0.56	1.84	0.61	-5.247***
Internalized homonegativity	2.12	0.62	2.11	0.55	0.723
Stigma consciousness	3.49	0.91	3.22	0.89	7.872***
Successful coping	3.20	0.48	2.97	0.46	17.840***
Dyadic coping	3.79	0.48	3.86	0.50	-4.833***
Openness about the relationship	4.58	0.69	4.67	0.64	-4.190***
Openness about sexual orientation	3.75	0.99	3.74	0.86	0.210
Dyadic adjustment	5.15	0.68	5.16	0.69	-0.607
Happiness in relationship	5.03	1.19	4.98	1.27	1.314

*** $p < .001$

For the three variables that were dichotomized, Pearson Chi-square tests show significant differences according to gender. Male respondents are more likely to have experienced discrimination (42.2%) than female respondents (32.2%; $\chi^2(1, N = 2845) = 30.26$, $p < .001$). Male respondents are less likely to indicate that they can find confidant support when needed (79.2%) than female respondents (85.0%, $\chi^2(1, N = 5813) = 31.82$, $p < .001$). And male respondents are more likely to be open about being LGB (75.3%) than female respondents (64.0%, $\chi^2(1, N = 2842) = 42.42$, $p < .001$).

3.2 Correlations between the study variables

Partial pearson correlations are performed for testing the linear relations between the study variables. This is done while controlling for the variable 'sex at birth'. For an easy overview, the cells in table 11 are shaded according to the level of significance. Correlations that are not significant, as well as significant correlations smaller than .1, are left blank. Significant correlations between .1 and .3 are shaded in light grey, correlations between .3 and .5 are shaded in darker grey, and correlations larger than .5 are shaded in dark grey.

The main outcome variable, dyadic adjustment, correlates strongly with the other variables that refer to characteristics of the relationship, and this in the expected direction. The experience of relationship stress correlates negatively with dyadic adjustment, while dyadic coping correlates positively with dyadic adjustment. Respondents with a higher score on dyadic adjustment also feel happier in their relationship. A remarkable finding is that the experience of relationship stress, is negatively correlated with dyadic coping. Thus, couples who experience more stress in their relationship rely less on each other for dealing with this stress.

Dyadic adjustment also significantly correlates with some of the predictor variables on the level of the individual. The experience of daily stress outside the relationship and internalized homonegativity both correlate negatively with dyadic adjustment, suggesting that these types of stress negatively impact the relationship dynamic. Furthermore, respondents who are open about being LGB and who are open about their relationship, score higher on dyadic adjustment. Respondents who believe that they can find social support when needed, also score higher on dyadic adjustment. This is possibly due to the fact that these people would rely on their partner for confidant support.

When looking at the minority stressors, it is apparent that respondents who experience everyday discrimination, are more stigma conscious. Stigma consciousness and internalized homonegativity are also positively correlated, while respondents who are more stigma conscious and have more internalized homonegativity, are less open about their relationship and about their sexual orientation. The linear relationship between minority stressors and dyadic adjustment is less pronounced, but these correlations do suggest that minority stress might negatively impact dyadic adjustment via its negative effect on openness about one's sexual orientation and one's relationship.

Table 11.

Partial Pearson correlations between the study variables, controlling for gender

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 - Stress outside relationship		.322***	.117***	.203***	.195***	-.181***	-.246***	-.133***	-.061**	-.102***	-.068	-.177***	-.155***
2 - Stress related to the dyad	.322***		.121***	.055*	.076**	-.220***	-.144***	-.520***	-.113***	-.152***		-.575***	-534***
3 - Internalized homonegativity	.117***	.121***		.253***	.042*	-.184***	-.088***	-.166***	-.402***	-.451***	-.691***	-.128***	-139***
4 - Stigma consciousness	.203***	.055*	.253***		.409***	-.125***	-.148***	-.072**	-.030	-.244***	-.217***	-.062**	-.054*
5 - Everyday discrimination (dichotomous)	.195***	.076**	.042*	.409***		-.101***	-.128***	-0.30	.079***	-.086***	.047	-.032	-.023
6 - Confidant support (dichotomous)	-.181***	-.220***	-.184***	-.125***	-.101***		-.001	.300***	.184***	.144***	.215***	.266***	.239***
7 - Successful coping	-.246***	-.144***	-.088***	-.148***	-.128***	-.001		.063***	.040*	.051**	.020	.096***	.071***
8 - Dyadic coping	-.133***	-.520***	-.166***	-.072**	-.030	.300***	.063***		.118***	.244***		.650***	.592***
9 - Openness about being LGB (dichotomous)	-.061**	-.113***	-.402***	-.030	.079***	.184***	.040*	.118***		.249***	.656***	.150***	.145***
10 - Openness about relationship	-.102***	-.152***	-.451***	-.244***	-.086***	.144***	.051**	.244***	.249***			.238***	.209***
11 - Openness about sexual orientation	-0.68		-.691***	-.217***	.047	.215***	.020		.656***				
12 - Dyadic adjustment	-.177***	-.575***	-.128***	-.062**	-.032	.266***	.096***	.650***	.150***	.238***			.681***
13 - Happiness in relationship	-.155***	-.534***	-.139***	-.054*	-.023	.239***	.071***	.592***	.145***	.209***		.681***	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

3.3 Variable outcomes along the analytic groups

Apart from gender – in terms of one's biological sex as determined at birth – there are three major analytic variables:

- Gender identity (five categories, see distribution in table 2)
- Sexual orientation (four categories, see distribution in tables 3 and 4)
- Relationship constellation (four categories, see distribution in table 5)

The groups of comparison are unbalanced in terms of being very different in size, which suggests that a regular one-way ANOVA test will not generate the most accurate results. Homogeneity of variance tests are performed for each variable of comparison. Appendices 1 to 3 give an overview of the distribution of the study variables according to the three respective analytic variables. In the case of highly unequal sample sizes and/or a violation of the homogeneity of variances assumption, the Welch procedure is used as a more robust alternative to the ANOVA test. Group differences for the dichotomized variables (the experience of everyday discrimination, confidant support, and overall openness about being LGB), are tested by Chi-square tests. These are also included in the appendices. For most of the study variables, statistically significant differences are found according to gender identity, sexual orientation and relationship constellation. Below, only the most striking results are discussed.

Regarding **gender identity**, those who feel neutral about being male as well as about being female, thus those who are 'gender neutral', appear to be more vulnerable. Gender neutral respondents experience the most stress outside the relationship as well as the most dyadic stress, they report the highest stigma consciousness, they score the lowest on successful coping and they are the least open about their relationship. Gender neutral respondents are also the most likely to have experienced everyday discrimination. It is not the case that cisgender respondents score consistently 'better' on the study variables as compared to the respondents that are not cisgender. Dyadic adjustment does not differ according to gender identity. For happiness about the relationship, however, a significant difference was found: bigender respondents – those who feel male as well as female – are the least happy in their relationship. Transgender respondents gave the highest score on relationship happiness.

Regarding **sexual orientation**, it is not the case that heterosexual respondents score consistently 'better' than sexual minorities. Respondents who are homosexual or lesbian, report the highest dyadic adjustment and happiness in their relationship. Homosexual and lesbian respondents also report the least stress coming from outside the relationship as well as the least dyadic stress. Dyadic coping is the lowest among heterosexual respondents. Internalized homonegativity is the strongest among bisexual respondents, and they are also the least open about their sexual orientation. At the same time, bisexual respondents score the lowest on stigma consciousness.

Regarding the **relationship constellation**, female respondents who are in a relationship with a man report the most stress related to the dyad and they are the least happy in their relationship. Male respondents who are in a relationship with a woman, but who are not heterosexual, report the most internalized homonegativity. Male respondents who are in a relationship with a man, report the most stigma consciousness. Female respondents in a lesbian relationship report the most dyadic coping and they are also the happiest in their relationship. Respondents in a same-sex relationship experience more everyday discrimination than respondents in an opposite-sex relationship.

Overall, the bivariate analyses suggest that being in a same-sex relationship, nor belonging to a sexual minority or gender minority group, determines dyadic adjustment or happiness in the relationship.

Contrary to the expectations, the lowest relationship happiness is reported by female respondents who are in a heterosexual relationship and heterosexual couples report the least dyadic coping. The three figures below summarize the mean scores for dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship according to gender identity, sexual orientation, and relationship constellation respectively.

Figure 18.

Dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship according to gender identity

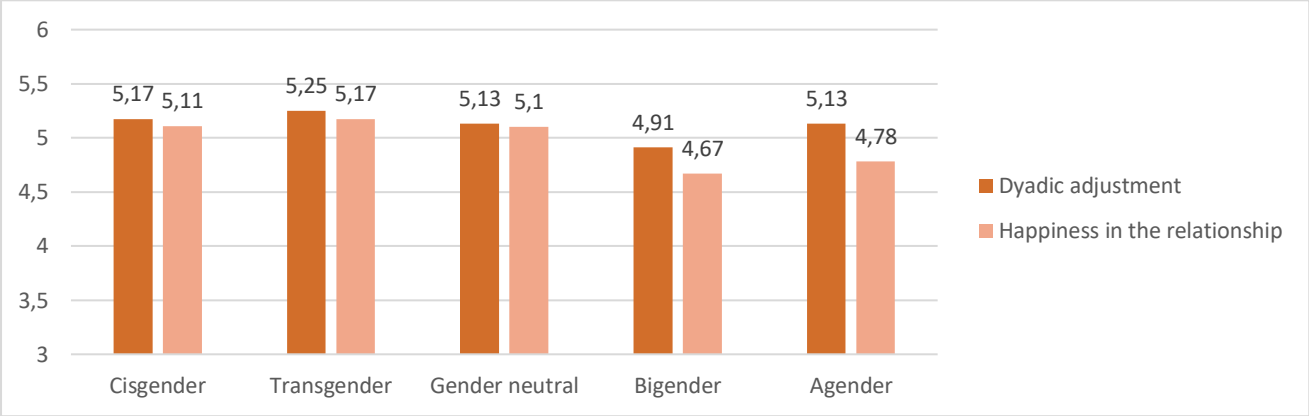


Figure 19.

Dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship according to sexual orientation

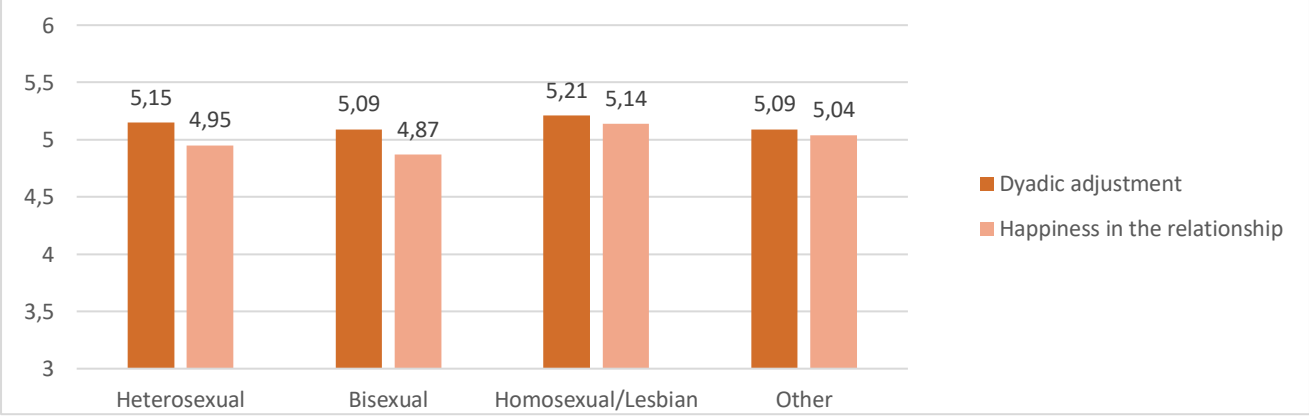
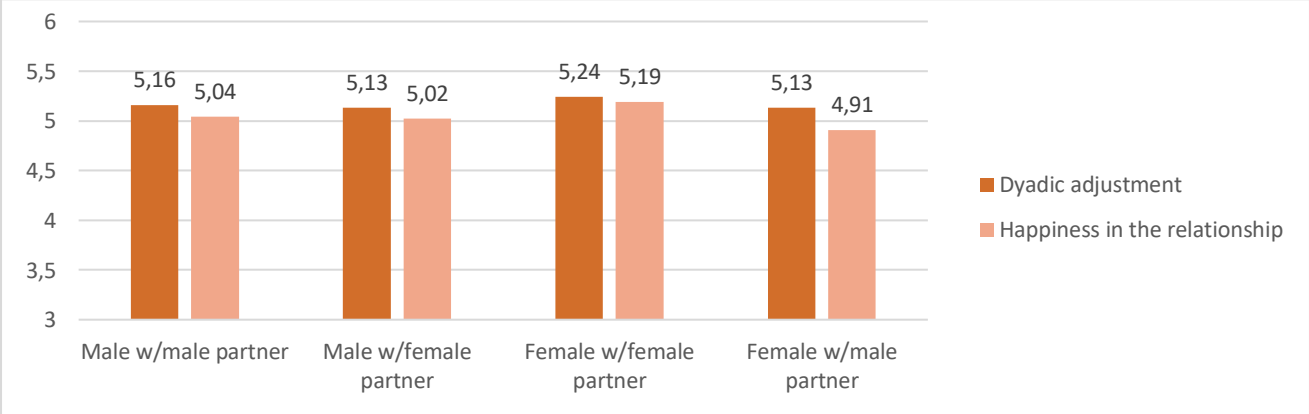


Figure 20.

Dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship according to relationship constellation



3.4 Hierarchical regression analyses

The objectives of the study are centered around the question what affects relationship adjustment and satisfaction of lesbian women, gay men and bisexuals. Hence, for the following analyses, data are used only from LGB respondents who are in a relationship. Of the 2850 LGB respondents, 2025 were in a relationship of which 45.7% are male and 54.3% female. The mean age of the respondents in this subsample is 32.46 years.

Two hierarchical regression analyses are applied, one with dyadic adjustment as the dependent variable and one with happiness in the relationship as the dependent variable. The models contain insertion of the following three blocks of variables: gender and age (1), minority and non-minority stressors (2), and coping (3). To construct a meaningful and parsimonious model, only variables that correlate significantly with the outcome variables, and with an absolute correlation coefficient larger than .1, are included in the model (see table 11). This means that the variables stress outside the relationship, dyadic stress, internalized homonegativity, confidant support, dyadic coping, openness about being LGB, and openness about the relationship are included.

While the correlation table does not suggest potential multicollinearity issues, extra tests to avoid multicollinearity were done. Therefore, each independent variable was subsequently entered in a linear regression model as the dependent variable, with all the other variables as independent variables, and multicollinearity statistics were requested. The VIF did not exceed value 2 for any of these models.

The tables below present the results for both hierarchical regression analyses. The outcomes are very similar. The R^2 for the full models show that 48.3% of the variance of dyadic adjustment and 43.0% of the variance of happiness in the relationship is explained by the respective models. Also, the beta-coefficients of the independent variables are very similar for both models. Stress related to the dyad is a strong predictor of dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship, while stress from outside the relationship and internalized homonegativity are not. When adding the coping variables in the third block, the effect of dyadic stress diminishes and dyadic coping becomes the strongest predictor of the full model. Openness about the relationship and openness about being LGB, only have a very small effect on both dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship. For both models, the standardized residuals are normally distributed.

Table 12.

Hierarchical regression analysis with 'dyadic adjustment' as the dependent variable

	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3	
Variable	*B* (*SE*)	β	*B* (*SE*)	β	*B* (*SE*)	β
Sex	.014 (.030)	0.011	.048 (.025)	.037	-.019 (.023)	-.015
Age	-.005 (.001)	-.092***	-.006 (.001)	-.097***	-.003 (.001)	-.054**
Stress outside relationship			.019 (.025)	.015	.011 (.023)	.008
Stress related to the dyad			-.650 (.022)	-.571***	-.402 (.022)	-.353***
Internalized homonegativity			-.082 (.021)	-.071***	.039 (.022)	.034
Openness about being LGB (dichotomous)					.075 (.026)	.052**
Openness about relationship					.068 (.017)	.074***
Confidant support (dichotomous)					.096 (.036)	.045**
Dyadic coping					.541 (.026)	.403***
R^2	.009		.344		.483	
F for change in R^2	9.239***		339.943***		134.100***	

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 13.

Hierarchical regression analysis with 'happiness in the relationship' as the dependent variable

	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3	
Variable	*B* (*SE*)	β	*B* (*SE*)	β	*B* (*SE*)	β
Sex	-.013 (.055)	-.006	.045 (.047)	.019	-.070 (.043)	-.030
Age	-.013 (.002)	-.118***	-.013 (.002)	-.126***	-.009 (.002)	-.084***
Stress outside relationship			.017 (.048)	.007	-.001 (.044)	-.001
Stress related to the dyad			-1.092 (.041)	-.524***	-.656 (.043)	-.315***
Internalized homonegativity			-.188 (.040)	-.089***	.011 (.042)	.005
Openness about being LGB (dichotomous)					.138 (.049)	.052**
Openness about relationship					.096 (.033)	.057**
Confidant support (dichotomous)					.132 (.069)	.034
Dyadic coping					.961 (.051)	.391***
R^2	.014		.304		.430	
F for change in R^2	13.859***		278.255***		110.283***	

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

3.5 Conclusion

Overall, the results suggest that intimate relationships of lesbian women, gay men and bisexuals are certainly not less successful in terms of dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship as compared to the intimate relationships of heterosexual men and women. However, the experience of minority stress and visibility management may directly or indirectly challenge these relationships.

Belonging to a minority group makes it more likely that certain risk factors, associated with lower dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship, occur. As such, internalized homonegativity correlates negatively with dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship. However, for stigma consciousness and the experience of everyday discrimination no such relationship is found. Openness about one's sexual orientation and about one's relationship correlate positively with dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship, but it is also found that some minorities are less likely to disclose their sexual orientation and/or relationship status to other people.

While minorities do not necessarily report more dyadic stress and less dyadic coping, it is found that minority stress correlates positively with dyadic stress and negatively with dyadic coping. Openness about one's relationship and sexual orientation, on the other hand, correlates negatively with dyadic stress and positively with dyadic coping.

The three objectives of the study as described in the project outline are subsequently discussed, based on the results of the hierarchical regression analyses.

Objective 1. Examining the association between experienced (minority) stressors, stressors inside the relationship and relationship satisfaction.

Higher levels of stress are clearly linked with less relationship satisfaction. Particularly stress that is related to the relationship, dyadic stress, is a strong predictor of dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship. The experience of minority stress is less relevant in this respect. LGBs with higher levels of internalized homonegativity do report lower levels of relationship satisfaction, but this effect is weak. The other minority stressors that were included, stigma consciousness and the experience of everyday discrimination, are not (or very weakly) associated with relationship satisfaction. The experience of minority stress does also not substantially increase the experience of dyadic stress.

Objective 2. Examining the association of visibility management and relationship satisfaction.

An open visibility strategy, referring to openness about being LGB and openness about the relationship, correlates negatively with dyadic stress. Hence, respondents who are open about their sexual orientation and about being in a relationship, experience less stress in the relationship. The effect on relationship satisfaction is very weak, however.

Objective 3. Examining the association between dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction.

Dyadic coping is a very strong predictor of relationship satisfaction. (Minority) stressors correlate negatively with dyadic coping, and thus they may put strain on a couple's coping resources. Stress from outside the relationship, dyadic stress, internalized homonegativity, and stigma consciousness all correlate negatively with dyadic coping. Confidant support, successful coping (on the personal level), openness about the relationship and openness about being LGB, all correlate positively with dyadic coping. Dyadic coping lowers or neutralizes the negative impact of dyadic stress and internalized homonegativity on relationship satisfaction.

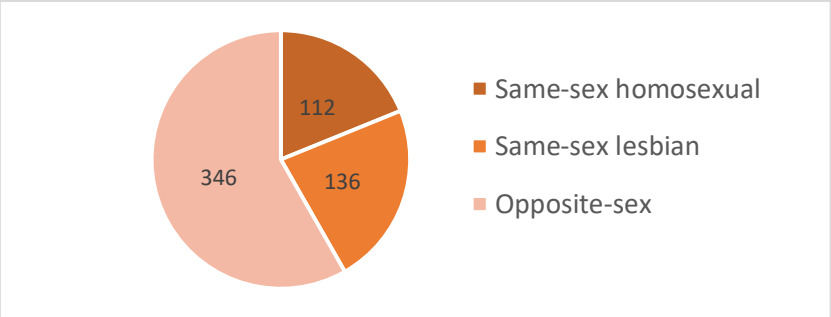
4. Partner data

Respondents were motivated to ask their partner to also complete the survey. Via a unique couple identifier code, it was possible to match respondents with their partner. Only couples that had been together since at least three months were retained. In nine cases, one partner indicated that the relationship lasted since more than three months but the other partner indicated that the relationship was shorter than three months. Those respondents were also not included.

In total, 1188 respondents could be matched with their partner (594 couples). Of the 1188 respondents that were retained, 570 (48.0%) were male and 618 (52.0%) were female. Of the 594 couples, 346 were mixed-sex and 248 were same-sex. The pie chart below shows the distribution of couples according to both partner's gender. Note that these numbers are based on both partner's biological sex at birth. In some cases, gender was altered later in life.

Figure 21.

Number of couples according to both partners' gender



First it is investigated to what extent both partners experience the relationship and the relationship functioning in the same way. Second it is tested whether (minority) stress that is reported by the partner correlates with the respondent's experience of the relationship.

4.1 Congruence between both partners in how they experience the relationship

Variables that refer to the relationship include dyadic stress, dyadic coping, happiness in the relationship and dyadic adjustment. For each variable, a congruence score was calculated by distracting the partner's score from the respective respondent's score. A congruence score zero means that both partners have the exact same score and thus experience the relationship in the same way.

Table 14 gives an overview of how much both partners' scores overlap for each variable. As each negative score evidently has a positive counterpart on the level of the couple, the absolute congruence scores are used. Because the distribution of the congruence scores depends on the variable range, Z-scores are presented. This makes it easier to compare the distribution of the different congruence scores.

Table 14.

Distribution of congruence scores (absolute z-scores) for the relationship variables

	Range			Distribution absolute Z-scores				
	Variable	Congruence scores	Absolute Z-scores	0	0.01 – .5	0.6 – 1	1.1 – 1.5	>1.5
Dyadic stress	1 - 4	0 – 2.2	0 – 3.68	9.1%	45.5%	23.3%	9.1%	13.3%
Dyadic coping	1.77 – 5	0 – 1.63	0 – 3.43	3.2%	38.7%	29.5%	14.8%	14.0%
Happiness in relationship	1 – 7	0 – 4	0 – 3.52	36.7%		48.6%		14.7%
Dyadic adjustment	1 – 6	0 – 2.84	0 – 5.11	30.8%	0.2%	40.2%	18.0%	10.9%

For the variables happiness in the relationship and dyadic adjustment, there was a perfect match between both partners in about one third of the couples. However, there are also couples where both partners experience the relationship very differently. Then the question becomes in which couples, divergent experiences are more likely. The table below shows the mean congruence scores for male and female respondents, and this for the subgroup of respondents in a heterosexual relationship, with independent samples t-tests. The results show that women do not systematically have a more negative or positive experience of the relationship than men. Women do report significantly more dyadic stress and more dyadic coping than men, although the differences are very small.

Table 15.

Congruence scores according to gender with independent samples t-tests (respondents in opposite-sex relationships only)

	Male		Female		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*
Dyadic stress	-0.09	0.59	0.09	0.59	-4.196***
Dyadic coping	-0.06	0.46	0.06	0.46	-3.621***
Happiness in relationship	0.06	1.16	-0.06	1.16	1.243
Dyadic adjustment	-0.02	0.61	0.02	0.61	-0.744

*** $p < .01$

Further it is tested whether same- and opposite-sex couples have different congruence scores. In other words, is there more or less compatibility between partners in same-sex couples or in opposite-sex couples in the way they experience their relationship? This is done for male and female respondents separately, and absolute scores are used to avoid positive and negative scores balancing each other out on the level of the couple. Only for one variable a significant difference was found, and this only among female respondents. Female respondents who are in a same-sex couple, have lower absolute congruence scores on dyadic adjustment (0.29) than female respondents who are in an opposite-sex couple (0.43). This difference is statistically significant ($t(596) = -4.592$, $p < .001$). Thus, women with a male partner are less likely to experience the relationship in the same way as their partner as compared to women with a female partner. For male respondents, no such difference was found.

Both for male ($r(565) = .139$, $p = .001$) as for female respondents ($r(613) = .118$, $p = .004$), there is a weak positive correlation between the total duration of the relationship and the partner congruence score on dyadic adjustment. There is no correlation between duration of the relationship and the partner congruence scores on dyadic stress, dyadic coping, and happiness in the relationship.

4.2 Influence of stress experienced by partner

Stress experienced by the partner may also have a negative effect on the respondent's experience of the relationship. Pearson correlation tests were used to investigate the linear relationship between the experience of (minority) stress by the partner, and the respondent's score on dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship. The table below presents the results. Only minor significant correlations were found with the partner's experience of stress outside the relationship and the partner's internalized homonegativity.

Table 16.

Correlations between the experience of (minority) stress by the partner and relationship satisfaction

	Reported by the respondent	
Reported by the respondent's partner	Dyadic adjustment	Happiness in relationship
Stress outside relationship	-.139***	-.124***
Internalized homonegativity	-.099*	-.080*
Stigma consciousness	.003	.031
Everyday discrimination (dichotomous)	.014	-.033

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

4.3 Conclusion

By matching 1188 respondents with their partner, insights were gained in how both partners' experiences of the relationship differ or match with each other. Reports on the relationship functioning (dyadic stress and dyadic coping) as well as satisfaction with the relationship (dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship), largely overlapped between both partners. Nevertheless, in some cases both partners have a very different experience of the relationship. The degree of congruence or divergence between both partners is only marginally linked to the relationship constellation.

Stress experienced by the partner may have a (weak) negative effect on the partner's relationship satisfaction.

5. Addendum 1. Sexual behavior, pleasure and satisfaction

The survey included a range of questions that offer insight into the sexual behavior, pleasure and satisfaction among the respondents. This addendum discusses the results of these questions. First sexual behavior, pleasure and satisfaction are discussed according to sexual orientation and relationship constellation. Second, it is tested whether the experience of (minority) stress can be linked with sexual behavior, pleasure and satisfaction.

5.1 Description of the variables

Sexual experience was defined as 'all kinds of ways of making love where there is genital contact. There is no need for penetration'. Most respondents (95.6%, *N* = 5560) had sexual experience. Among those, 90.3% (*N* = 5018) also had sex over the past six months.

Respondents who are in a relationship were asked how **exclusive their sexual relationship** with their partner is ('How do you deal with (possible) sex with others, outside the relationship?'). Of the 4288 respondents who are in a relationship of at least three months, 4217 completed this item (10 missing and 61 indicated that they don't know). There were nine different answering categories, including 'Neither one of us has sex with others, we are monogamous' (81.0%), 'Only I have sex with others' (3.7%), 'Only my partner has sex with others' (0.8%), 'We both have sex with others but only separately, without each other' (2.6%), 'We both have sex with others but only together' (3.1%) , 'We both have sex with others, separately and with each other' (3.1%), 'I have sex with others, but I have no idea what my regular partner does' (2.4%), 'I do not have sex with others, but I have no idea what my regular partner does' (3.3%). For these analyses, a dichotomous variable is constructed, labelled 'monogamous relationship' with categories 'no' (score 0, 19.0%) and 'yes' (score 1, 81.0%).

Questions regarding the frequency of having sex, sexual pleasure and sexual satisfaction were only presented to those respondents who had been sexually active over the past six months.

Respondents indicated on a seven-point scale **how often they had sex** over the past six months. 4.8% had sex once, 29.2% had sex less than once a week, 29.4% had sex about once a week, 25.9% had sex two to three times a week, 5.9% had sex four to five times a week, 3.9% had sex more than five times a week to daily, and 0.9% had sex several times a day. For the analyses, this variable is treated as a scale variable (*M* = 3.14, *SD* = 1.21).

Sexual pleasure was measured by the following three items (based on de Graaf, 2012): 'I enjoy sex very much', 'During sex I feel completely at ease' and 'I feel relaxed through sex'. Respondents indicated on a Likert scale how often each statement applies to them, going from 'never' (score 1) to 'always' (score 5). The scale had a high internal consistency, with $\alpha = .844$. For the analyses, the mean score on the three items is used. Scores ranged from 1 to 5 (*M* = 4.07, *SD* = 0.79).

Sexual satisfaction was measured by the following three items (based on de Graaf, 2012): 'I feel disappointed about my sex life', 'I am happy with my sex life', and 'I thought the last person with whom I had sex was attractive'. Respondents indicated on a Likert scale to what extent they agree with these statements, going from 'totally disagree' (score 1) to 'totally agree' (score 5). The scores on the first item were reversed. Internal consistency analysis shows that the third item is intrinsically different from the first two, as deletion of this item improves the scale reliability score from $\alpha = .740$ to $\alpha = .877$. Therefore, only the first two items are included for measuring the variable 'sexual satisfaction'. The mean score on these two items is used. Scores range from 1 to 5 (*M* = 3.56, *SD* = 1.25).

Figure 22.

Distribution of the variable 'Frequency sexual contact last six months'

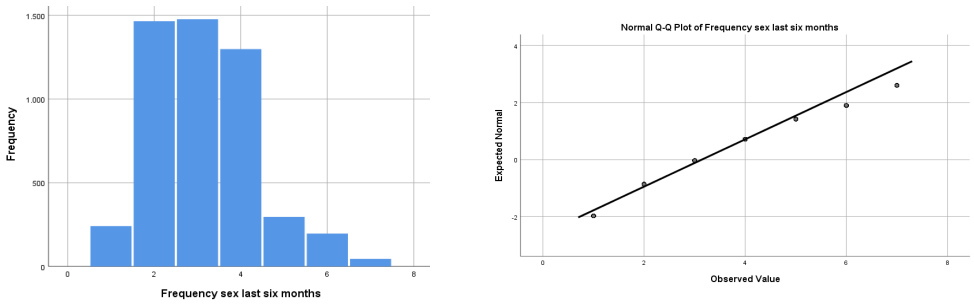


Figure 23.

Distribution of the variable 'Sexual pleasure'

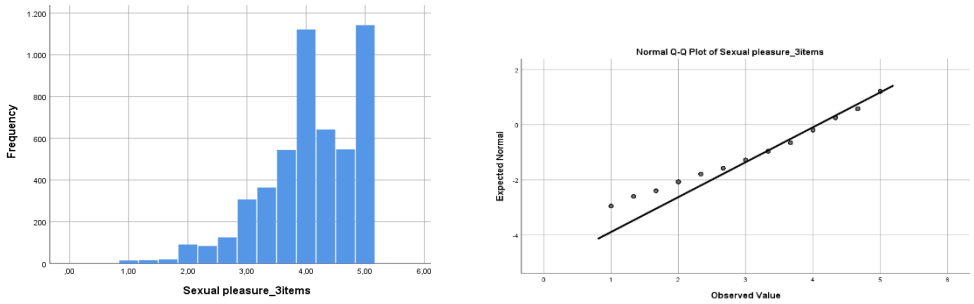
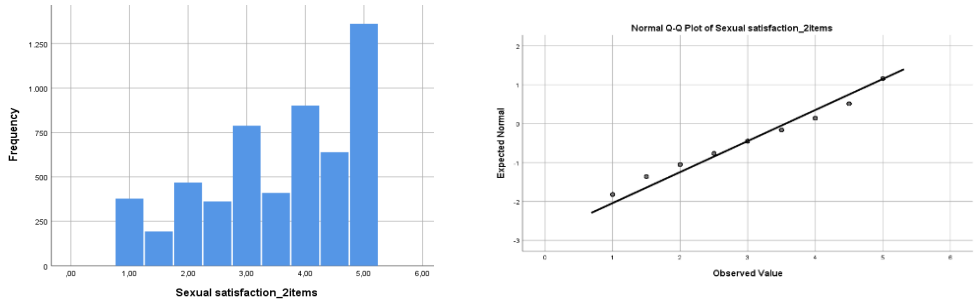


Figure 24.

Distribution of the variable 'Sexual satisfaction'



5.2 Study variables according to gender, sexual orientation and relationship constellation

5.2.1 Monogamous relationships

Whether or not a relationship is monogamous, depends greatly on the respondents' gender and sexual orientation. Overall, female respondents (89.2%) are much more likely than male respondents (67.3%) to indicate that they have a monogamous relationship ($\chi^2(1) = 312.84$, $p < .001$). Table 17 gives a breakdown of monogamy according to gender and sexual orientation. The category that is most likely to be in a monogamous relationship, are lesbian women. Bisexual men are the least likely to be in a monogamous relationship.

Table 17.

Monogamy according to sexual orientation and relationship constellation, by gender

	Male	Female
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	86.8%	91.0%
Bisexual	51.4%	80.0%
Homosexual/Lesbian	53.7%	94.4%
Other	60.0%	77.6%
X^2	191.903(3)***	77.276(3)***
Relationship constellation		
Same-sex relationship	53.6%	92.3%
Opposite-sex relationship	80.4%	88.1%
X^2	126.125(1)***	9.375(1)**

** p < .01; *** p < .001

5.2.2 Frequency sex, sexual pleasure and satisfaction

The table below presents frequency of having sex, sexual pleasure and satisfaction according to gender. There is a remarkable overlap between men and women in the frequency with which they have sex. Men report significantly more sexual pleasure than women but women report significantly more sexual satisfaction than men. Although for the latter variable, the difference between the two groups is small.

Table 18.

Frequency sex, sexual pleasure and satisfaction according to gender with independent samples t-tests

	Male		Female		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*
Frequency sex over past six months	3.16	1.21	3.13	1.21	0.852
Sexual pleasure	4.20	0.74	3.99	0.81	9.198***
Sexual satisfaction	3.48	1.28	3.61	1.24	-3.916***

*** *p* < .001

Furthermore, it is tested whether the study variables differ according to the respondents' sexual orientation and relationship constellation. This is tested for male and female respondents separately, by applying One-Way ANOVA and independent samples t-tests. The results for the three respective variables (frequency of having sex, sexual pleasure and sexual satisfaction), are presented in tables 19 to 21.

Table 19.

Frequency sex according to sexual orientation and relationship constellation, by gender

	Male *M* (*SD*)	Female *M* (*SD*)
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	3.27 (1.25)	3.23 (1.19)
Bisexual	3.15 (1.27)	3.16 (1.21)
Homosexual/Lesbian	3.10 (1.15)	2.79 (1.15)
Other	2.89 (1.25)	3.09 (1.33)
ANOVA *F*	3.847**	20.331***
Relationship constellation		
Same-sex relationship	3.34	2.86
Opposite-sex relationship	3.30	3.37
t-test	0.537	-9.722***

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 20.

Sexual pleasure according to sexual orientation and relationship constellation, by gender

	Male *M* (*SD*)	Female *M* (*SD*)
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	4.33 (0.72)	3.95 (0.81)
Bisexual	4.29 (0.70)	4.00 (0.83)
Homosexual/Lesbian	4.10 (0.74)	4.16 (0.75)
Other	4.06 (0.78)	3.93 (0.88)
ANOVA *F*	14.284***	10.544***
Relationship constellation		
Same-sex relationship	4.18 (0.70)	4.18 (0.74)
Opposite-sex relationship	4.36 (0.70)	3.97 (0.82)
t-test	-4.973***	5.723***

*** $p < .001$

Table 21.

Sexual satisfaction according to sexual orientation and relationship constellation, by gender

	Male *M* (*SD*)	Female *M* (*SD*)
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	3.51 (1.35)	3.66 (1.23)
Bisexual	3.25 (1.32)	3.62 (1.23)
Homosexual/Lesbian	3.51 (1.21)	3.49 (1.23)
Other	3.32 (1.28)	3.55 (1.27)
ANOVA *F*	2.807*	3.117*
Relationship constellation		
Same-sex relationship	3.71 (1.15)	3.67 (1.16)
Opposite-sex relationship	3.69 (1.25)	3.84 (1.16)
t-test	0.203	-3.269**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 19 shows that among male respondents, sexual orientation was related to the frequency of having sex although the relationship constellation was not relevant in this respect. Among female respondents, the differences were more pronounced. Lesbian respondents as well as women who have a relationship with a woman, report a lower frequency of sexual contact.

Table 20 shows that the respondents' reports on sexual pleasure differ according to sexual orientation and relationship constellation. Among male respondents, being gay and being in a same-sex relationship is linked with lower sexual pleasure. Among female respondents the opposite is found: being lesbian and being in a same-sex relationship is linked with more sexual pleasure.

Table 21 shows that sexual satisfaction differs only marginally according to sexual orientation and relationship constellation. Nevertheless, some differences are statistically relevant.

5.2.3 Bivariate correlations

Pearson correlations are applied to investigate the linear relationships between age, monogamy, the frequency of having sex, sexual pleasure and sexual satisfaction. Table 22 presents the results, and this for male and female respondents separately. The cells are shaded according to the level of significance. Correlations that are not significant, as well as significant correlations smaller than .1, are left blank. Significant correlations between .1 and .3 are shaded in light grey, correlations between .3 and .5 are shaded in darker grey, and correlations larger than .5 are shaded in dark grey.

The correlations are similar for male and female respondents. Older respondents are less likely to have a monogamous relationship, they have less sex and are less sexually satisfied. Age is not correlated with sexual pleasure. For male and female respondents, there is a positive correlation between the frequency of having sex on the one hand and sexual satisfaction and sexual pleasure on the other hand. Satisfaction and pleasure are also positively correlated with each other.

Table 22.

Pearson correlations between the variables on sexual behavior and experiences, by gender

Female / Male	Age	Monogamous relationship	Frequency sex	Sexual pleasure	Sexual satisfaction
Age		-.181***	-.238***	-.037	-.164***
Monogamous relationship	-.298***		-.001	.003	.099***
Frequency sex	-.155***	.013		.288***	.518***
Sexual pleasure	.005	.078**	.259***		.483***
Sexual satisfaction	-.137***	.126***	.518***	.385***	

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Pearson correlations are applied to investigate the linear relations between (minority) stress, coping and relationship functioning on the one hand, and sexual behavior and experiences on the other hand. Table 23 presents the results, with shaded cells according to the strength of the correlation. Relational stress, dyadic coping, dyadic adjustment and happiness in the relationship stand out for correlating strongly with sexual pleasure and satisfaction. But these variables also correlate with monogamy and the frequency of having sex. Minority stress correlates negatively with pleasure and satisfaction while openness about the relationship and about being LGB correlates positively with sexual pleasure and satisfaction.

Table 23.

Pearson correlations between stress, coping and relationship variables and sexual behavior variables

	Monogamous relationship	Frequency sex	Sexual pleasure	Sexual satisfaction
Stress outside relationship	.006	-.039**	-.163***	-.166***
Stress related to the dyad	-.116***	-.183***	-.204***	-.385***
Internalized homonegativity	.097***	-.068**	-.167***	-.139***
Stigma consciousness	-.059**	-.044*	-.107***	-.100***
Everyday discrimination (dichotomous)	-.064**	.011	-.041*	-.060**
Confidant support (dichotomous)	.071***	.104***	.160***	.217***
Successful coping	-.067***	.007	.093***	.075***
Dyadic coping	.199***	.217***	.319***	.403***
Openness about being LGB (dichotomous)	-.020	.030	.070**	.069***
Openness about relationship	.104***	.032*	.142***	.112***
Openness about sexual orientation	na	.100*	.120**	.120**
Dyadic adjustment	.252***	.175***	.251***	.397***
Happiness in relationship	.198***	.208***	.242***	.423***

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

5.3 Hierarchical regression analyses

Two hierarchical regression analyses are applied, one with sexual pleasure and one with sexual satisfaction as the dependent variable. The models contain the subsequent insertion of the following four blocks of variables: gender and age (1), minority and non-minority stressors (2), coping (3) and dyadic adjustment (4). To construct a meaningful and parsimonious model, only variables that correlate significantly with the outcome variables, and with an absolute correlation coefficient larger than .1, are included in the model (see table 23). This means that the variables stress outside the relationship, dyadic stress, internalized homonegativity, stigma consciousness, confidant support, dyadic coping, openness about the relationship, and dyadic adjustment are included. The variable 'openness about sexual orientation' was only measured among respondents who are not in a relationship and is therefore left out of the model. Happiness in the relationship is not included as an independent variable because of its strong overlap with the variable dyadic adjustment.

The results show that the full models explain 15.7% and 24.0% of the total variance in sexual pleasure and sexual satisfaction respectively. Each of the (minority) stressors has a significant negative effect on the outcome variables. Internalized homonegativity is a more important predictor of sexual pleasure than it is of sexual satisfaction. Stress related to the dyad, on the other hand, is a more important predictor of sexual satisfaction than it is of sexual pleasure. Including the coping variables in the third block significantly improves the model, especially due to the predictive power of dyadic coping. The inclusion of dyadic adjustment in the fourth block, only marginally improves the model, and this variable is a better predictor of sexual satisfaction than it is of sexual pleasure.

Table 24.

Hierarchical regression analysis with 'sexual pleasure' as the dependent variable

	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4	
Variable	*B* (*SE*)	β	*B* (*SE*)	B	*B* (*SE*)	β	*B* (*SE*)	β
Sex	-.205 (.037)	-.126***	-.194 (.036)	-.119***	-.237 (.035)	-.146***	-.235 (.035)	-.144***
Age	.001 (.002)	.017	.001 (.001)	.009	.004 (.001)	.053*	.004 (.001)	.058**
Stress outside relationship			-.113 (.038)	-.069**	-.127 (.037)	-.077**	-.126 (.037)	-.077**
Stress related to the dyad			-.208 (.031)	-.155***	.005 (.034)	.004	.031 (.036)	.023
Internalized homonegativity			-.165 (.030)	-.123***	-.104 (.032)	-.077**	-.106 (.032)	-.079**
Stigma consciousness			-.064 (.020)	-.074**	-.053 (.019)	-.061**	-.053 (.019)	-.061**
Openness about relationship					.104 (.046)	.050*	.098 (.046)	.047*
Confidant support (dichotomous)					.012 (.029)	.010	.005 (.029)	.004
Dyadic coping					.470 (.041)	.295***	.427 (.046)	.269***
Dyadic adjustment							.070 (.034)	.060*
R^2	.017		.087		.155		.157	
F for change in R^2	17.182***		38.383***		53.878***		4.192*	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 25.

Hierarchical regression analysis with 'sexual satisfaction' as the dependent variable

	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4	
Variable	*B* (*SE*)	β	*B* (*SE*)	B	*B* (*SE*)	β	*B* (*SE*)	β
Sex	.069 (.058)	.027	.140 (.054)	.054*	.085 (.053)	.033	.093 (.053)	.036
Age	-.015 (.002)	-.145***	-.014 (.002)	-.133***	-.010 (.002)	-.093***	-.009 (.002)	-.082***
Stress outside relationship			-.122 (.057)	-.047*	-.131 (.056)	-.050*	-.129 (.056)	-.050*
Stress related to the dyad			-.749 (.046)	-.353***	-.477 (.051)	-.225***	-.383 (.055)	-.180***
Internalized homonegativity			-.200 (.045)	-.093***	-.144 (.048)	-.067**	-.151 (.048)	-.071**
Stigma consciousness			-.064 (.030)	-.047*	-.055 (.029)	-.040	-.056 (.029)	-.041
Openness about relationship					.213 (.070)	.064**	.190 (.070)	.057**
Confidant support (dichotomous)					-.053 (.043)	-.028	-.079 (.043)	-.041
Dyadic coping					.599 (.061)	.237***	.444 (.069)	.176***
Dyadic adjustment							.256 (.051)	.139***
R^2	.023		.184		.230		.240	
F for change in R^2	23.578***		98.331***		40.256***		24.757***	

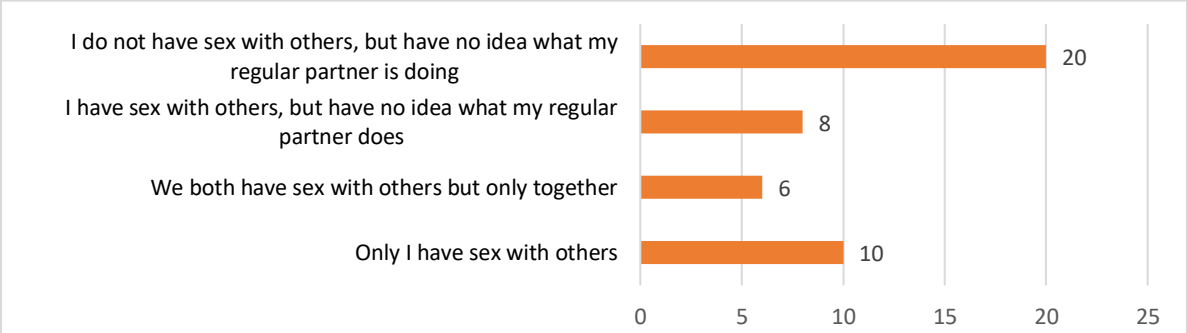
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

5.4 Partner data

In his section, the answers that were given by both partners in the same couple are compared. Regarding the question whether the relationship is monogamous, both partners gave the same answer in the majority of couples (*n* = 539, 92.5%). In 44 couples, there was a mismatch between what both partners responded, one partner indicating that the relationship is exclusive and the other partner indicating something else. However, for 20 of those 44 couples it was the case that the other partner does not have sex with other people but indicated not to know what the partner does. The figure below illustrates the answers that were given in those cases where one partner said that the relationship is exclusive, while the other partner gave a different answer.

Figure 25.

Incongruence in responses by respondents whose partner indicates to be in a monogamous relationship



Regarding the frequency with which one had sex over the past six months, in 63.8% (*n* = 361) of the couples both partners gave the exact same answer. For another 30.8% (*n* = 183), the difference between both partners' responses was only one category. For example, one partner saying they had sex once a week, while the other partner saying it was two to three times a week. For 3.8% (*n* = 22) of the couples, both partners' answers lay further apart.

The table below gives an overview of the partner congruence scores for the variables sexual pleasure and sexual satisfaction. Congruence scores are calculated by distracting the respondent's partner's score from the respondent's score on the respective variable. As both variables have the same range (1 to 5) it is not necessary for interpretation to present the Z-scores.

Table 26.

Partner congruence scores (absolute values) for sexual pleasure and satisfaction

	Range scores	0	0.01 – .5	0.6 – 1	1.1 – 1.5	>1.5
Sexual pleasures	0 – 3.3	19.6%	24.7%	35.2%	7.6%	12.9%
Sexual satisfaction	0 – 4.0	28.6%	26.9%	21.5%	10.6%	12.4%

For the variables frequency of having sex and sexual satisfaction, it remains unclear which couples are more likely to have compatible experiences. For sexual pleasure, however, the lack of compatibility situates itself mainly among the opposite-sex couples. Male respondents in same-sex couples have an average congruence score of .01 against .36 for male respondents in opposite-sex couples ($t(551) = -4.290$, $p < .001$). Female respondents in same-sex couples have an average congruence score of -.01

against -0.36 for female respondents in opposite-sex couples ($t(584) = 4.269$, $p < .001$). Thus, while men in heterosexual relationships experience more sexual pleasure than their partner, men and women in same-sex relationships experience the same amount of sexual pleasure as their partner.

The duration of the relationship was not related to the congruence scores among male respondents. For female respondents, only very weak correlations were found: a weak positive correlation between duration of the relationship and congruence on sexual pleasure ($r(584) = .096$, $p = .020$), a weak positive correlation with congruence on sexual satisfaction ($r(597) = .120$, $p = .003$), and a weak negative correlation with congruence on frequency of sex ($r(584) = -.097$, $p = .018$).

5.5 Conclusion

There are clear differences in sexual behavior and experiences according to sexual orientation and relationship constellation. Whether or not the relationship is exclusive in terms of sexual contact, the frequency with which one has sex, and sexual pleasure and satisfaction all differ according to sexual orientation and relationship constellation. The most pronounced differences are found regarding monogamy. Women are clearly more monogamous than men, and among women, lesbian and heterosexual women are more monogamous than bisexual women and women who do not identify with any of the sexual orientation categories. Other apparent between-group differences were that lesbian women report the lowest frequency of sexual contact and that heterosexual men report the most sexual pleasure.

Stress, coping and relationship satisfaction all correlate with sexual behavior and experiences. Hierarchical regression analyses show that these variables are more adequate predictors of sexual satisfaction than of sexual pleasure.

When matching the responses of both partners, it is found that both partners tend to have similar experiences of the sexual relationship. Nevertheless, in some couples there is a lack of agreeance even about whether or not the relationship is exclusive.

6. Addendum 2. Safe sex in non-monogamous relationships

Sex outside relationship

Respondents who had indicated that they are not in a monogamous relationship, were asked whether they had had sex over the last six months. Male respondents with a male partner were most likely to say that they did (95.0%), followed by male respondents with a female partner (88.5%), female respondents with a male partner (80.7%) and lastly female respondents with a female partner (78.6%). A Pearson Chi-square test showed that the differences between the groups are also statistically significant ($\chi^2(3) = 23.125$, $p < .001$).

Intention to disclose about sex outside the relationship

All respondents were asked whether they would tell their partner if they would have sex with somebody else. Respondents could answer on a five-point scale going from 'no, certainly not' (score 1) to 'probably not' (score 2), 'maybe, maybe not' (score 3), 'probably yes' (score 4), and 'yes, certainly' (score 5). In total 4349 respondents answered this question ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.321$). Male respondents were less inclined to say that they would tell their partner ($M = 3.32$) than female respondents ($M = 3.71$). The difference between male and female respondents was statistically significant ($t(3075) = -9.175$, $p < .001$). A one-way ANOVA test found that the intention to disclose also depends on the relationship constellation ($F(3) = 38.282$, $p < .001$). Female respondents with a female partner are the most likely to tell their partner ($M = 3.90$), followed by female respondents with a male partner ($M = 3.64$), male respondents with a male partner ($M = 3.38$) and lastly male respondents with a female partner ($M = 3.24$).

Condom use outside the relationship

Respondents who indicated that they have a relationship but that they or their partner also have sex outside the relationship, were asked whether they have an arrangement with their partner regarding condom use. Agreements on condom use depend on the relationship constellation. The table below presents the outcomes according to both the respondent's and the respondent's partner's gender. A Pearson Chi-square indicates significant differences between the categories ($\chi^2(9) = 73.648$, $p < .001$).

Table 27.

Agreements on condom use according to relationship constellation

	Male respondent		Female respondent	
	Male partner	Female partner	Male partner	Female partner
Yes, we have agreed to use condoms outside the relationship	64.0%	31.7%	39.1%	40.7%
Yes, we have agreed that we should not use condoms outside the relationship	2.6%	1.4%	4.3%	0.5%
No, we have no agreement about this	28.1%	62.6%	39.1%	53.9%
Other	5.3%	4.3%	17.4%	4.9%

PrEP use

Respondents who are not in an exclusive relationship, were asked how they would respond if their partner would propose to use PrEP. Respondents could answer on a five-point scale, going from 'I would really like it' (score 1), to 'rather not' (score 2), 'no opinion, I would not find it good nor bad' (score 3), 'I would prefer not to' (score 4), and 'I would find it very bad' (score 5). Respondents could also indicate that they wouldn't know how they would react. In total, 586 respondents answered the question (*M* = 2.55, *SD* = 1.317). Male respondents with a male partner had the lowest average score and thus were the most in favor (*M* = 2.42), followed by female respondents with a female partner (*M* = 2.44), male respondents with a female partner (*M* = 2.59) and finally female respondents with a male partner (*M* = 2.75). A one-way ANOVA showed that these differences are not significantly different.

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Appendix 1. Distributions of the study variables according to gender identity

Table 28.

Experience of stress outside the relationship according to gender identity

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Cisgender	3624	1.88	0.46	1.00	3.51
Transgender	155	2.02	0.53	1.00	3.50
Gender neutral	50	2.12	0.64	1.00	3.51
Bigender	40	1.83	0.46	1.13	3.51
Agender	1944	1.97	0.51	1.00	3.51
Total	**5813**	**1.91**	**0.48**	1.00	3.51
Levene	$F(4, 5808) = 9.317$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(4, 153.891) = 15.623$, $p < .001$				

Table 29.

Experience of dyadic stress according to gender identity

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Cisgender	2731	1.77	0.57	1.00	3.75
Transgender	86	1.73	0.61	1.00	3.70
Gender neutral	29	1.96	0.85	1.00	3.75
Bigender	30	1.85	0.57	1.10	3.10
Agender	1409	1.85	0.61	1.00	3.75
Total	4285	1.80	0.59	1.00	3.75
Levene	$F(4, 4280) = 5.877$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(4, 98.560) = 4.857$, $p = .001$				

Table 30.

Internalized homonegativity according to gender identity

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Cisgender	1681	2.12	0.58	1.00	4.06
Transgender	121	2.08	0.65	1.00	3.78
Gender neutral	40	2.13	0.73	1.11	4.00
Bigender	18	1.93	0.64	1.00	3.00
Agender	987	2.11	0.59	1.00	4.06
Total	2847	2.11	0.59	1.00	4.06
Levene	$F(4, 2842) = 1.998$, $p = .092$				
ANOVA	$F(4) = 5.401$, $p = .628$				

Table 31.

Stigma consciousness according to gender identity

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Cisgender	1681	3.35	0.90	1.00	6.35
Transgender	121	3.60	0.92	1.60	6.00
Gender neutral	40	3.68	0.96	1.90	5.10
Bigender	18	3.48	0.82	1.80	4.40
Agender	987	3.32	0.92	1.00	6.35
Total	2847	3.35	0.91	1.00	6.35
Levene	$F(4, 2842) = 0.499$, $p = .736$				
ANOVA	$F(4) = 4.114$, $p = .003$				

Table 32.

Successful coping according to gender identity

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Cisgender	3624	3.09	0.48	1.52	4.64
Transgender	155	3.07	0.54	1.52	4.62
Gender neutral	50	2.85	0.45	1.57	3.86
Bigender	40	3.03	0.33	2.43	3.62
Agender	1944	3.00	0.47	1.48	4.52
Total	5813	3.06	0.48	1.48	4.64
Levene	$F(4, 5808) = 2.997$, $p = .018$				
Welch	$F(4, 155.677) = 14.417$, $p < .001$				

Table 33.

Dyadic coping according to gender identity

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Cisgender	2725	3.84	0.48	2.19	5.00
Transgender	86	3.90	0.53	2.46	5.00
Gender neutral	29	3.95	0.58	2.54	4.86
Bigender	30	3.68	0.58	2.34	4.54
Agender	1405	3.82	0.52	2.19	5.00
Total	4275	3.84	0.50	2.19	5.00
Levene	$F(4, 4270) = 3.894$, $p = .004$				
Welch	$F(4, 98.476) = 1.629$, $p = .173$				

Table 34.

Openness about being in a relationship according to gender identity

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Cisgender	2727	4.62	0.65	2.44	6.00
Transgender	86	4.75	0.73	2.44	6.00
Gender neutral	29	4.31	0.82	2.47	5.67
Bigender	30	4.53	0.83	2.67	6.00
Agender	1408	4.67	0.65	2.44	6.00
Total	4280	4.64	0.66	2.44	6.00
Levene	$F(4, 4275) = 1.810$, $p = .124$				
ANOVA	$F(4) = 3.635$, $p = .006$				

Table 35.

Openness about sexual orientation according to gender identity

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Cisgender	437	3.72	0.93	1.13	5.80
Transgender	45	3.75	1.11	1.13	5.67
Gender neutral	16	4.13	0.94	2.73	5.60
Bigender	6	4.51	0.72	3.33	5.13
Agender	293	3.74	0.89	1.13	5.73
Total	797	3.74	0.93	1.13	5.80
Levene	$F(4, 792) = 1.070$, $p = .370$				
ANOVA	$F(4) = 1.773$, $p = .132$				

Table 36.

Dyadic adjustment according to gender identity

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Cisgender	2725	5.17	0.65	2.83	6.00
Transgender	86	5.25	0.78	2.83	6.00
Gender neutral	29	5.13	0.81	2.83	6.00
Bigender	30	4.91	0.90	2.83	6.00
Agender	1408	5.13	0.72	2.83	6.00
Total	4278	5.16	0.68	2.83	6.00
Levene	$F(4, 4273) = 5.978$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(4, 98.296) = 1.488$, $p = .212$				

Table 37.

Happiness about the relationship according to gender identity

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Cisgender	2725	5.11	1.17	1.00	7.00
Transgender	86	5.17	1.37	1.00	7.00
Gender neutral	29	5.10	1.63	1.00	7.00
Bigender	30	4.67	1.27	1.00	6.00
Agender	1408	4.78	1.31	1.00	7.00
Total	4278	5.00	1.24	1.00	7.00
Levene	$F(4, 4273) = 13.253$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(4, 98.434) = 16.186$, $p < .001$				

Table 38.

Distribution of the dichotomous variables according to gender identity

	Everyday discrimination		Confidant support		Overall openness LGB	
	(Almost) never	Happened	Low	High	Not open	Open
Cisgender	66.3%	33.7%	16.3%	83.7%	28.5%	71.5%
Transgender	38.0%	62.0%	17.4%	82.6%	27.3%	72.7%
Gender neutral	32.5%	67.5%	20.0%	80.0%	28.2%	71.8%
Bigender	66.7%	33.3%	27.5%	72.5%	27.8%	72.2%
Agender	61.6%	38.4%	18.5%	81.5%	34.6%	65.4%
Total	63.0%	37.0%	17.2%	82.8%	30.5%	69.5%
χ^2	57.082***		7.534		11.712*	

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

Appendix 2. Distributions of the study variables according to sexual orientation

Table 39.

Stress outside the relationship according to sexual orientation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Heterosexual	2941	1.90	0.47	1.00	3.51
Bisexual	831	2.00	0.49	1.00	3.51
Homosexual/Lesbian	1773	1.87	0.48	1.00	3.51
Other	268	2.08	0.50	1.00	3.51
Total	5813	1.91	0.48	1.00	3.51
Levene	$F(3, 5809) = 1.882$, $p = .130$				
ANOVA	$F(3) = 27.297$, $p < .001$				

Table 40.

Dyadic stress according to sexual orientation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Heterosexual	2262	1.83	0.61	1.00	3.75
Bisexual	595	1.85	0.59	1.00	3.75
Homosexual/Lesbian	1262	1.73	0.55	1.00	3.75
Other	166	1.84	0.63	1.00	3.75
Total	4285	1.80	0.57	1.00	3.75
Levene	$F(3, 4281) = 5.419$, $p = .001$				
Welch	$F(3, 677.746) = 10.792$, $p < .001$				

Table 41.

Internalized homonegativity according to sexual orientation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Heterosexual					
Bisexual	830	2.21	0.55	1.00	4.06
Homosexual/Lesbian	1771	2.07	0.59	1.00	4.06
Other	246	2.11	0.61	1.00	4.06
Total	2847	2.11	0.59	1.00	4.06
Levene	$F(2, 2844) = 4.062$, $p = 0.017$				
Welch	$F(2, 648.829) = 18.362$, $p < .001$				

Table 42.

Stigma consciousness according to sexual orientation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Heterosexual					
Bisexual	830	3.10	0.86	1.00	5.80
Homosexual/Lesbian	1771	3.46	0.90	1.20	6.35
Other	246	3.45	0.97	1.30	6.35
Total	2847	3.35	0.91	1.00	6.35
Levene	$F(2, 2844) = 4.075$, $p = .017$				
Welch	$F(2, 642.805) = 49.442$, $p < .001$				

Table 43.

Successful coping according to sexual orientation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Heterosexual	2941	3.07	0.49	1.48	4.64
Bisexual	831	2.97	0.49	1.52	4.62
Homosexual/Lesbian	1773	3.08	0.47	1.62	4.52
Other	268	2.97	0.48	1.52	4.29
Total	5813	3.06	0.48	1.48	4.64
Levene	$F(3, 5809) = 1.619$, $p = .183$				
ANOVA	$F(3) = 15.079$, $p < .001$				

Table 44.

Dyadic coping according to sexual orientation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Heterosexual	2258	3.80	0.51	2.19	5.00
Bisexual	593	3.87	0.49	2.19	5.00
Homosexual/Lesbian	1258	3.88	0.48	2.23	5.00
Other	166	3.85	0.46	2.46	4.86
Total	4275	3.84	0.50	2.19	5.00
Levene	$F(3, 4271) = 2.308$, $p = .075$				
ANOVA	$F(3) = 7.345$, $p < .001$				

Table 45.

Openness about the relationship according to sexual orientation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Heterosexual	2260	4.68	0.61	2.44	6.00
Bisexual	594	4.58	0.69	2.44	6.00
Homosexual/Lesbian	1260	4.60	0.71	2.44	6.00
Other	166	4.56	0.73	2.44	6.00
Total	4280	4.64	0.66	2.44	6.00
Levene	$F(3, 4276) = 14.251$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(3, 666.119) = 7.629$, $p < .001$				

Table 46.

Openness about the sexual orientation according to sexual orientation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Heterosexual					
Bisexual	225	3.39	0.95	1.13	5.60
Homosexual/Lesbian	483	3.92	0.87	1.33	5.80
Other	89	3.71	0.92	1.13	5.73
Total	797	3.74	0.93	1.13	5.80
Levene	$F(2, 794) = 0.755$, $p = .470$				
ANOVA	$F(2) = 26.578$, $p < .001$				

Table 47.

Dyadic adjustment according to sexual orientation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Heterosexual	2259	5.15	0.72	2.83	6.00
Bisexual	594	5.09	0.68	2.83	6.00
Homosexual/Lesbian	1259	5.21	0.62	2.83	6.00
Other	1660	5.09	0.73	2.83	6.00
Total	4278	5.16	0.68	2.83	6.00
Levene	$F(3, 4274) = 8.538$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(3, 678.462) = 5.604$, $p = .001$				

Table 48.

Happiness about the relationship according to sexual orientation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Heterosexual	2259	4.95	1.28	1.00	7.00
Bisexual	594	4.87	1.30	1.00	7.00
Homosexual/Lesbian	1259	5.14	1.11	1.00	7.00
Other	166	5.04	1.23	1.00	7.00
Total	2259	4.95	1.28	1.00	7.00
Levene	$F(3, 4274) = 9.302$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(3, 680.666) = 9.166$, $p < .001$				

Table 49.

Distribution of the dichotomous variables according to sexual orientation

	Everyday discrimination		Confidant support		Overall openness LGB	
	(Almost) never	Happened	Low	High	Not open	Open
Heterosexual			19.7%	80.3%		
Bisexual	77.1%	22.9%	16.5%	83.5%	60.0%	40.0%
Homosexual/Lesbian	56.8%	43.2%	13.0%	87.0%	15.7%	84.3%
Other	59.8%	40.2%	19.4%	80.6%	37.8%	62.2%
Total	63.0%	37.0%	17.2%	82.8%	30.5%	69.5%
X^2	100.459***		35.993***		526.792***	

*** $p < .001$

Appendix 3. Distributions of the study variables according to relationship constellation

Table 50.

Stress outside the relationship according to relationship constellation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Male w/male partner	785	1.77	0.46	1.00	3.51
Male w/female partner	796	1.82	0.50	1.00	3.51
Female w/female partner	694	1.93	0.48	1.00	3.51
Female w/male partner	2011	1.94	0.47	1.00	3.51
Total	4286	1.89	0.48	1.00	3.51
Levene	$F(3, 4282) = 2.642$, $p = .048$				
Welch	$F(3, 1749.589) = 32.203$, $p < .001$				

Table 51.

Dyadic stress according to relationship constellation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Male w/male partner	784	1.72	0.52	1	3.70
Male w/female partner	796	1.76	0.59	1	3.75
Female w/female partner	694	1.76	0.58	1	3.75
Female w/male partner	2011	1.86	0.61	1	3.75
Total	4285	1.80	0.59	1	3.75
Levene	$F(3, 4281) = 8.514$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(3, 1805.112) = 15.321$, $p < .001$				

Table 52.

Internalized homonegativity according to relationship constellation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Male w/male partner	771	2.01	0.57	1	3.89
Male w/female partner	151	2.28	0.63	1	4.06
Female w/female partner	679	2.06	0.56	1	4.06
Female w/male partner	408	2.08	0.47	1	4.06
Total	2009	2.06	0.56	1	4.06
Levene	$F(3, 2005) = 8.245$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(3, 590.600) = 8.352$, $p < .001$				

Table 53.

Stigma consciousness according to relationship constellation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Male w/male partner	771	3.45	0.90	1.30	5.90
Male w/female partner	151	3.24	0.77	1.30	5.50
Female w/female partner	679	3.31	0.86	1.20	6.10
Female w/male partner	408	2.90	0.81	1.00	5.80
Total	2009	3.27	0.88	1.00	6.10
Levene	$F(3, 2005) = 4.050$, $p = .007$				
Welch	$F(3, 612.094) = 38.426$, $p < .001$				

Table 54.

Successful coping according to relationship constellation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Male w/male partner	785	3.17	0.47	1.76	4.52
Male w/female partner	796	3.31	0.47	1.48	4.64
Female w/female partner	694	3.00	0.46	1.52	4.33
Female w/male partner	2011	3.00	0.47	1.52	4.64
Total	4286	3.08	0.48	1.48	4.64
Levene	$F(3, 4282) = 0.182$, $p = .909$				
ANOVA	$F(3) = 109.543$, $p < .001$				

Table 55.

Dyadic coping according to relationship constellation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Male w/male partner	784	3.80	0.46	2.37	5.00
Male w/female partner	791	3.77	0.50	2.19	5.00
Female w/female partner	690	3.99	0.46	2.31	5.00
Female w/male partner	2010	3.82	0.51	2.19	5.00
Total	4275	3.84	0.50	2.19	5.00
Levene	$F(3, 4271) = 5.251$, $p = .001$				
Welch	$F(3, 1790.952) = 29.722$, $p < .001$				

Table 56.

Openness about the relationship according to relationship constellation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Male w/male partner	784	4.56	0.72	2.44	6.00
Male w/female partner	793	4.60	0.66	2.44	5.93
Female w/female partner	692	4.57	0.71	2.44	6.00
Female w/male partner	2011	4.70	0.61	2.44	6.00
Total	4280	4.64	0.66	2.44	6.00
Levene	$F(3, 4276) = 13.442$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(3, 1689.237) = 13.305$, $p < .001$				

Table 57.

Dyadic adjustment according to relationship constellation

	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Male w/male partner	784	5.16	0.61	2.83	6.00
Male w/female partner	792	5.13	0.74	2.83	6.00
Female w/female partner	691	5.24	0.62	2.83	6.00
Female w/male partner	2011	5.13	0.71	2.83	6.00
Total	4278	5.16	0.68	2.83	6.00
Levene	$F(3, 4274) = 13.485$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(3, 1796.707) = 5.505$, $p = .001$				

Table 59.

Happiness about the relationship according to relationship constellation

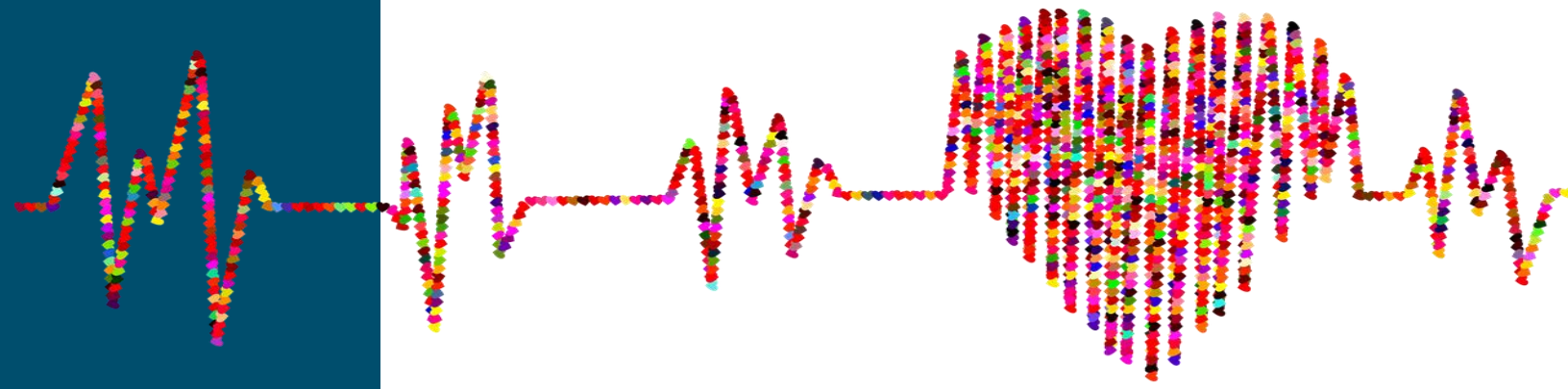
	N	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Male w/male partner	784	5.04	1.07	1.00	7.00
Male w/female partner	792	5.02	1.29	1.00	7.00
Female w/female partner	691	5.19	1.18	1.00	7.00
Female w/male partner	2011	4.91	1.29	1.00	7.00
Total	4278	5.00	1.24	1.00	7.00
Levene	$F(3, 4274) = 13.472$, $p < .001$				
Welch	$F(3, 1799.083) = 10.039$, $p < .001$				

Table 60.

Distribution of the dichotomous variables according to relationship constellation

	Everyday discrimination		Confidant support		Overall openness LGB	
	(Almost) never	Happened	Low	High	Not open	Open
Male w/male partner	60.4%	39.6%	11.1%	88.9%	11.0%	89.0%
Male w/female partner	72.8%	27.2%	23.5%	76.5%	66.9%	33.1%
Female w/female partner	63.6%	36.4%	6.9%	93.1%	14.8%	85.2%
Female w/male partner	86.0%	14.0%	14.3%	85.7%	62.5%	37.5%
Total	67.6%	32.4%	14.2%	85.8%	27.0%	73.0%
X^2	87.867***		92.854***		534.086***	

*** $p < .001$



ELKE RELATIE TELT

Resultatenfiche

UNIVERSITEIT GENT

September 2019

Auteurs: Symons, K., Dewaele, A., Van Houtte, M. and Buysse, A.

ELKE RELATIE TELT

Omgaan met minderheidsstress in de partnerrelaties van holebi's

1. Doel van de studie

Wie behoort tot een gestigmatiseerde minderheidsgroep, kan blootgesteld worden aan 'minderheidsstress'. De ervaring van minderheidsstress kan op zijn beurt een negatieve impact hebben op verschillende levensdomeinen, waaronder de intieme partnerrelatie. Deze studie onderzocht de mate waarin holebi's minderheidsstress ervaren, hoe zij daarmee omgaan, en welke impact dit heeft op de partnerrelatie.

Ter aanvulling werden het seksueel gedrag, de seksuele beleving en veilig vrijgedrag onderzocht. Deze resultaten bieden ondersteuning voor het preventieve gezondheidsbeleid.

2. Methode

Een online survey werd uitgevoerd tussen november 2017 en juni 2018. De doelgroep bestond uit Vlaamse mannen én vrouwen, single én in een relatie, hetero én LGB/queer. Door middel van gerichte rekruteringsacties werden voldoende LGB/queer respondenten bereikt om waardevolle uitspraken te kunnen doen over deze groep.

Naast informatie over persoonlijke achtergrondkenmerken, seksuele- en genderidentiteit en seksuele oriëntatie, bevatte de survey vragen rond de volgende factoren:

A) Stress	• relatiestress • de ervaring van stress buiten de relatie • de ervaring van minderheidsstress: discriminatie, stigmabewustzijn, en geïnternaliseerde homonegativiteit
B) Coping	• de zekerheid te kunnen rekenen op sociale steun • individuele en dyadische coping (probleemoplossend omgaan met stress, op individueel niveau en op het niveau van het koppel) • zichtbaarheidsmanagement (de openheid omtrent de relatie en de seksuele oriëntatie naar de buitenwereld toe)
C) Relatiekwaliteit	• functioneren van de relatie • relatietevredenheid
D) Seksueel gedrag en beleving	• (seksuele) exclusiviteit van de relatie en afspraken omtrent seks buiten de relatie • frequentie van seksueel contact • seksueel plezier en seksuele tevredenheid
E) Veilig vrijgedrag	• afspraken en houding ten opzichte van condoom- en PrEP-gebruik

3. Deelnemers

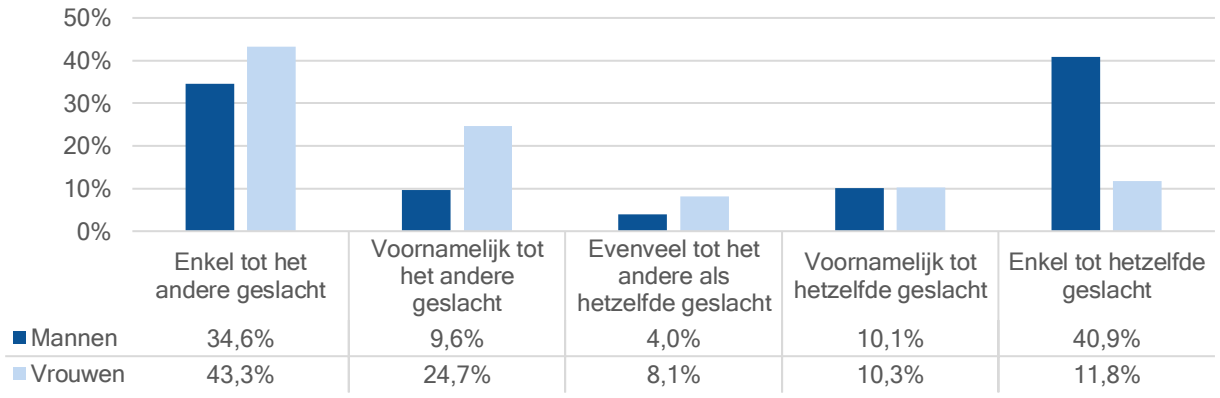
Socio-demografische kenmerken

Er namen 5.813 mensen deel aan de online survey, waarvan 37.8% mannen en 62.2% vrouwen (gebaseerd op het biologische geslacht bij de geboorte). De leeftijd varieerde van 16 tot 81 jaar, met een gemiddelde van 31 jaar. Drie op de tien deelnemers zaten in het voltijdse onderwijs, waarvan de meerderheid les volgde aan de hogeschool of universiteit. Bij degenen die zijn afgestudeerd, is de meerderheid (zeven op de tien) in het bezit van een diploma hoger onderwijs. De religieus-etnische diversiteit onder de deelnemers is zeer laag, met slechts 2% die aangaf te behoren tot een minderheidsgroep.

Seksuele oriëntatie

Deelnemers gaven aan in welke mate ze zich seksueel aangetrokken voelen tot mensen van hetzelfde geslacht en/of mensen van het andere geslacht. Grafiek 1 toont de resultaten voor vrouwelijke en mannelijke deelnemers afzonderlijk (de antwoordcategorie 'andere' werd niet opgenomen in de grafiek).

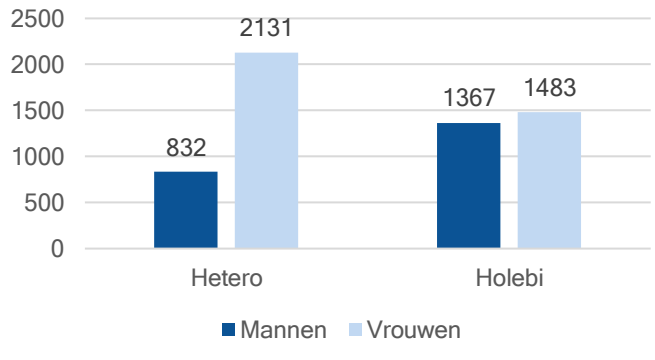
Grafiek 1. Seksuele aantrekking naar geslacht



	Enkel tot het andere geslacht	Voornamelijk tot het andere geslacht	Evenveel tot het andere als hetzelfde geslacht	Voornamelijk tot hetzelfde geslacht	Enkel tot hetzelfde geslacht
Mannen	34,6%	9,6%	4,0%	10,1%	40,9%
Vrouwen	43,3%	24,7%	8,1%	10,3%	11,8%

Vragen omtrent de ervaring van minderheidsstress en zichtbaarheidsmanagement werden enkel voorgelegd aan deelnemers die holebi zijn. Tot de holebi's werden de respondenten gerekend die aangaven dat ze zich voornamelijk of enkel tot mensen van hetzelfde geslacht aangetrokken voelen, of evenveel tot mensen van beide geslachten. Deelnemers die zich voornamelijk maar niet exclusief aangetrokken voelen tot mensen van het andere geslacht, konden zelf aangeven of ze vragen die gericht zijn naar holebi's kunnen beantwoorden. Op die manier werden er in totaal 2.963 deelnemers als 'hetero' gecategoriseerd, en 2.850 als 'holebi'. Grafiek 2 toont het aantal respondenten volgens geslacht en seksuele oriëntatie. Bij de hetero-respondenten is er een grote oververtegenwoordiging van vrouwelijke deelnemers, bij de holebi-respondenten is de verdeling van mannen en vrouwen meer gelijk.

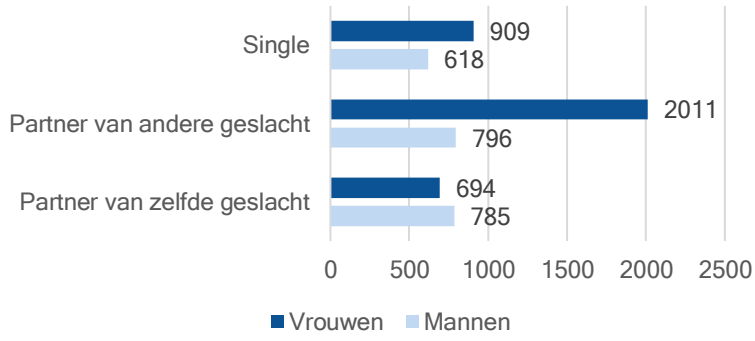
Grafiek 2. Aantal respondenten naar geslacht en seksuele oriëntatie



Relatiestatus

Vragen omtrent relatiestress, coping op het niveau van het koppel, en relatiekwaliteit, werden enkel voorgelegd aan deelnemers die een vaste relatie hebben. Een partner werd daarbij gedefinieerd als een persoon waarmee men gedurende een periode van minstens drie maanden romantische gevoelens deelde en met wie men ook seks had (allerlei manieren van vrijen waarbij er genitaal contact is). Twee derde van de deelnemers had een vaste relatie (in totaal 4.359 respondenten). Bij de mannelijke respondenten ging het in de helft van de gevallen om een relatie met een partner van hetzelfde geslacht. Bij de vrouwelijke respondenten met een relatie, had een vierde een partner van hetzelfde geslacht. Grafiek 3 toont het aantal respondenten volgens geslacht en relatiestatus.

Grafiek 3. Aantal respondenten naar geslacht en relatiestatus

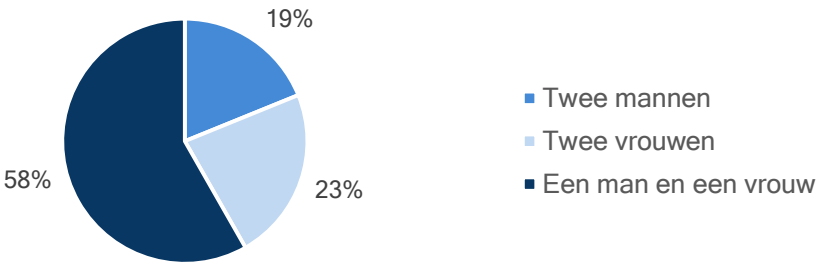


De duur van de relatie varieerde van 3 maanden tot 57 jaar, met een gemiddelde van 81 maanden (6 jaar en 9 maanden). Er is geen verschil in gemiddelde relatieduur naargelang het gaat om een relatie met iemand van hetzelfde geslacht of met iemand van het andere geslacht.

Partnerdata

Deelnemers met een partner werden aangemoedigd om ook hun partner de survey te laten invullen. Door middel van een unieke identificatiecode konden beide partners nadien (tijdens de dataverwerking) aan elkaar gelinkt worden, zonder de voorwaarden van anonimiteit en vertrouwelijkheid te schenden. In totaal konden 594 koppels op deze manier aan elkaar gelinkt worden. Daarvan bestonden 346 koppels uit een man en een vrouw, 112 bestonden uit twee mannen, en 136 bestonden uit twee vrouwen. Voor deze koppels kan nagegaan worden hoe beide partners de relatie ervaren, en in welke mate deze ervaringen overlappen met elkaar. Ook kan met behulp van deze data worden nagegaan of de ervaring van stress bij de ene partner een impact heeft op de relatiebeleving bij de andere partner. Grafiek 4 toont de respectievelijke percentages van de gendersamenstelling van de 594 koppels die deel uitmaken van de partnerdata.

Grafiek 4. Gendersamenstelling van de koppels in de partnerdata



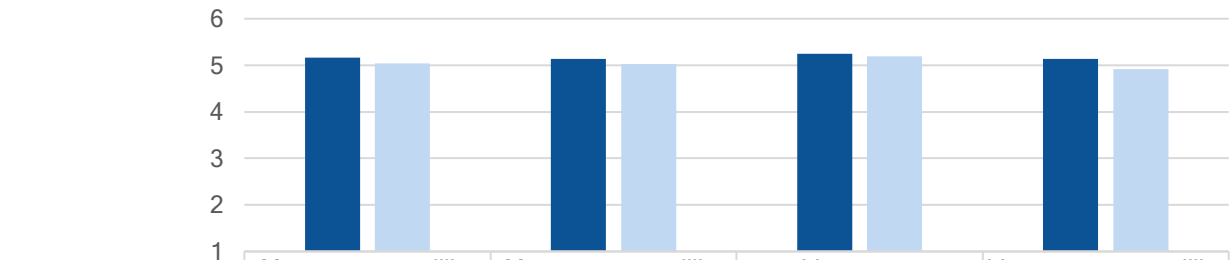
4. Resultaten rond de ervaring van stress, coping en relatiekwaliteit

Relatiekwaliteit naargelang de gendersamenstelling van de relatie

De relatiekwaliteit werd op twee verschillende manieren gemeten. Enerzijds verwijst dit naar het relatiefunctioneren (in de zin van hoe vaak er gesproken wordt over uit elkaar gaan, hoe vaak men het gevoel heeft dat de relatie goed zit, en hoe vaak men zijn of haar partner in vertrouwen neemt), en anderzijds de mate waarin men gelukkig is in de relatie. Relatiefunctioneren werd gemeten op een schaal van 1 tot 6, waarbij 1 staat voor heel slecht functioneren en 6 heel goed. De mate van relatiegeluk werd gemeten op een schaal van 1 tot 7, waarbij 1 staat voor zeer ontevreden en 7 voor perfect. Daarbij werd in de vragenlijst verduidelijkt dat een score 4, het midden van de schaal, staat voor een gemiddeld niveau van relatiegeluk.

Er zijn slechts kleine verschillen in het relatiefunctioneren en relatiegeluk naargelang de relatie bestaat uit twee mannen, twee vrouwen, of een man en een vrouw. Vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een man scoren het laagste op relatiegeluk (gemiddeld 4.91 op 6), terwijl vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw, het hoogste scoren (gemiddeld 5.19). Vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw, scoren ook het hoogste op relatiefunctioneren. Grafiek 5 toont de gemiddelde scores op beide variabelen.

Grafiek 5. Relatiefunctioneren en -geluk volgens gendersamenstelling van de relatie



	Man met mannelijke partner	Man met vrouwelijke partner	Vrouw met vrouwelijke partner	Vrouw met mannelijke partner
Relatiefunctioneren	5,16	5,13	5,24	5,13
Relatiegeluk	5,04	5,02	5,19	4,91

De ervaring van stress en coping

Er werd nagegaan of de ervaring van (minderheids)stress, zowel buiten als binnen de relatie, en de manier van omgaan met stress, inclusief zichtbaarheidsmanagement, verschillend zijn naargelang geslacht en de gendersamenstelling van de relatie.

Verschillen tussen mannen en vrouwen

Gemiddeld genomen rapporteren vrouwen iets meer stress buiten de relatie alsook iets meer relatiestress dan mannen. Mannen zijn iets meer stigmabewust dan vrouwen, en ze zijn iets minder open over de relatie naar de buitenwereld toe. Deze verschillen tussen beide geslachten zijn echter zeer klein. Mannen scoren wel beduidend hoger op ‘coping’ dan vrouwen, wat wil zeggen dat mannen meer probleemoplossend met stress omgaan.

Verschillen naargelang de gendersamenstelling van de relatie

Stress buiten de relatie (vb. conflicten op het werk of op school). Er is geen verschil tussen vrouwen met een vrouwelijke partner en vrouwen met een mannelijke partner in de mate waarin zij stress ervaren buiten de relatie. Ook bij mannen is er geen verschil naargelang het geslacht van hun partner.

Relatiestress (vb. conflicten met de partner of kleine ergernissen). Vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een man, ervaren meer relatiestress dan vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw. Vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw ervaren evenveel relatiestress als mannen met een mannelijke of vrouwelijke partner.

Geïnternaliseerde homonegativiteit (vb. zich ongemakkelijk voelen wanneer mensen spreken over homoseksualiteit). Mannen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw, maar niet exclusief hetero zijn, ervaren de meeste geïnternaliseerde homonegativiteit. Bij vrouwen die samenzijn met een man, maar die niet exclusief hetero zijn, ligt het niveau van geïnternaliseerde homonegativiteit even laag als bij mannen die een relatie hebben met een man, of vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw.

Stigmabewustzijn (vb. het gevoel hebben dat men continu beoordeeld wordt op zijn of haar holebi-zijn). Mannen die een relatie hebben met een man, zijn het meest stigmabewust. Vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw zijn het minst stigmabewust. Mannen en vrouwen die een relatie hebben met iemand van het andere geslacht, maar niet exclusief hetero zijn, liggen daar tussenin.

Discriminatie (vb. uitgescholden of onvriendelijk behandeld worden). Zowel mannen als vrouwen die een partner hebben van hetzelfde geslacht, zijn kwetsbaar om discriminatie mee te maken. Ongeveer vier op de tien van hen maakte dit mee (meemaken betekent dat het vaker voorkwam dan eens één uitzonderlijke keer). Bij mannen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw, maar niet exclusief hetero zijn, maakte één op vier dit mee, en bij vrouwen die samenzijn met een man maakte één op zeven dit mee.

Sociale steun (vb. hoe zeker is men dat men iemand in vertrouwen kan nemen om te praten over zichzelf). Mannen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw, zijn het minst zeker dat ze op iemand beroep zouden kunnen doen wanneer ze nood hebben aan advies of een luisterend oor (76.5% is zeker dat ze zo iemand zouden vinden). Vrouwen met een vrouwelijke partner zijn het meest zeker (93.1%), gevolgd door mannen met een mannelijke partner (88.9%), en vrouwen met een mannelijke partner (85.7%).

Individuele coping (hoe gaat men om met stresserende situaties, vb. zichzelf verwijten maken of iets lekkers eten). Bij vrouwen is er geen verschil in de mate waarin zij in staat zijn om succesvol met problemen om te gaan naargelang ze samen zijn met een vrouw of met een man. Mannen met een vrouwelijke partner scoren iets beter op coping dan mannen met een mannelijke partner.

Dyadische coping (hoe gaan koppels om met stress, vb. elkaar om hulp vragen of empathie tonen). Vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw, scoren het hoogst op dyadische coping. Zij geven dus aan dat ze als koppel het beste in staat zijn om samen problemen aan te pakken. Verder zijn er geen grote verschillen in dyadische coping naargelang de gendersamenstelling van het koppel.

Openheid over de relatie (in welke mate houdt men de relatie geheim of is men er open over). Vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een man, zijn het meest open over de relatie. Verder zijn er geen grote verschillen in openheid naargelang de gendersamenstelling van het koppel.

Openheid over seksuele oriëntatie (is men al dan niet open over holebi-zijn). Mannen en vrouwen die een relatie hebben met iemand van hetzelfde geslacht, zijn beduidend vaker open over hun seksuele oriëntatie dan mannen en vrouwen die een relatie hebben met iemand van het andere geslacht, maar die niet exclusief hetero zijn.

De impact van stress en coping op de relatietekwaliteit bij holebi's

Holebi's worden blootgesteld aan bepaalde minderheidsstressoren die de intieme relatie kunnen belasten. Wanneer alle voorspellers voor het relatiefunctioneren en relatiegeluk samen worden genomen, dan gaat de grootste voorspellende waarde uit van de relatiestress en dyadische coping. Dus, koppels waar meer conflicten zijn en er minder aan dyadische coping gedaan wordt, functioneren minder goed en zijn minder tevreden over hun relatie. De minderheidsstressoren hebben slechts in beperkte mate een invloed op de intieme relaties bij holebi's. Meer openheid over de relatie en over de seksuele oriëntatie, hebben beide wel een positief effect op het relatiefunctioneren en het relatiegeluk, zij het dat deze effecten slechts zeer klein zijn wanneer ook rekening wordt gehouden met de effecten van relatiestress en dyadische coping.

Partnerdata

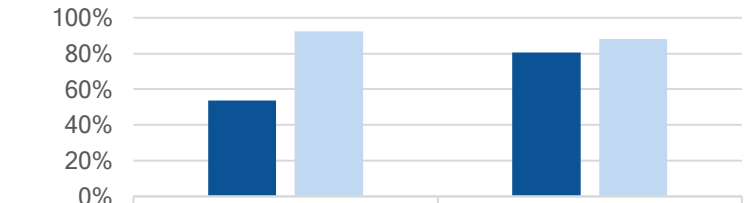
De ervaringen van de relatie (waaronder de mate waarin er relatiestress wordt ervaren, de mate waarin men het gevoel heeft dat men als koppel problemen kan oplossen, en de tevredenheid over de relatie), zijn opvallend gelijklopend tussen beide partners. Maar er zijn ook koppels waar de ervaringen van beide partners sterk uiteenlopen. Het is niet duidelijk waar dit aan ligt. Wel is het zo dat er in relaties tussen twee vrouwen een grotere overlap is tussen het relatiegeluk van beide partners dan in relaties tussen een vrouw en een man. Maar verder speelt de gendersamenstelling van het koppel geen rol. De stress die ervaren wordt door de partner kan potentieel een negatief effect hebben op de ervaren relatiekwaliteit. Dit bleek slechts in heel beperkte mate het geval te zijn.

5. Resultaten rond seksueel gedrag en beleving

Exclusiviteit van de relatie

Deelnemers met een relatie van ten minste drie maanden, konden aangeven of de relatie al dan niet exclusief is in termen van seksueel contact. Grafiek 6 toont het percentage monogame relaties naargelang het geslacht van de deelnemer en de gendersamenstelling van de relatie. Relaties tussen twee vrouwen zijn het vaakst monogaam, relaties tussen twee mannen het minst vaak.

Grafiek 6. Percentage met monogame relatie naargelang geslacht en geslacht partner



	Partner van zelfde geslacht	Partner van andere geslacht
Mannen	53,60%	80,40%
Vrouwen	92,30%	88,10%

Aan degenen die aangaven dat hun relatie niet exclusief is, werd ook gevraagd of ze de afgelopen zes maanden seks hadden met iemand anders dan hun partner. 95.0% van de mannen die een open relatie hebben met een man, had seks met iemand anders, bij mannen die een open relatie hebben met een vrouw was dat 88.5%, bij vrouwen die een open relatie hebben met een man 80.7% en bij vrouwen die een open relatie hebben met een vrouw 78.6%.

Frequentie seks

De frequentie waarmee men seks had werd bevraagd met betrekking tot de afgelopen zes maanden. Daarbij konden deelnemers kiezen uit zeven categoriën:

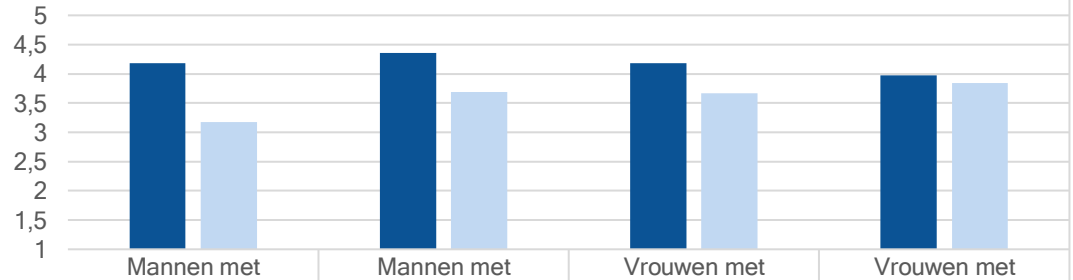
- 4.8% had slechts een uitzonderlijke keer seks (score 1)
- 29.2% had gemiddeld minder dan één keer per week seks (score 2)
- 29.4% had ongeveer één keer per week seks (score 3)
- 25.9% had ongeveer twee à drie keer per week seks (score 4)
- 5.9% had vier à vijf keer per week seks (score 5)
- 3.9% had meer dan vijf keer per week tot dagelijks seks (score 6)
- 0.9% had meerdere keren per dag seks (score 7)

De gemiddelde score bedraagt 3.14, wat overeenkomt met gemiddeld één keer per week. Er is geen verschil in de gemiddelde frequentie waarmee mannen en vrouwen seks hebben. Maar de frequentie verschilt wel naargelang de gendersamenstelling van de relatie. Vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw, hebben gemiddeld minder vaak seks (score 2.86) dan vrouwen die een relatie hebben met een man (score 3.37), mannen die een relatie hebben met een man (score 3.34) en mannen die een relatie hebben met een vrouw (score 3.30).

Seksueel plezier en tevredenheid

Seksueel plezier en seksuele tevredenheid werden beide gemeten aan de hand van verschillende vragen die werden beantwoord op een vijf-puntenschaal. Seksueel plezier verwijst naar zaken zoals genot en zich ontspannen voelen tijdens seks. Seksuele tevredenheid verwijst naar een meer globale tevredenheid over het eigen seksleven. De gemiddelde eindscores voor zowel seksueel plezier als seksuele tevredenheid variëren van 1 tot 5, waarbij 1 staat voor weinig seksueel plezier respectievelijk een lage seksuele tevredenheid en 5 staat voor veel seksueel plezier respectievelijk een hoge seksuele tevredenheid. Grafiek 7 toont de gemiddelde uitkomsten naargelang de gendersamenstelling van de relatie. Mannen met een vrouwelijke partner rapporteren het meeste seksuele plezier, maar vrouwen met een mannelijke partner het minste. De meer algemene tevredenheid over het seksleven is dan weer wel het hoogste bij vrouwen met een mannelijke partner. De seksuele tevredenheid is het laagste bij mannen met een mannelijke partner.

Grafiek 7. Seksueel plezier en seksuele tevredenheid naargelang gendersamenstelling van de relatie



	Mannen met mannelijke partner	Mannen met vrouwelijke partner	Vrouwen met vrouwelijke partner	Vrouwen met mannelijke partner
Seksueel plezier	4,18	4,36	4,18	3,97
Seksuele tevredenheid	3,17	3,69	3,67	3,84

Factoren die seksueel gedrag, plezier en tevredenheid bepalen

Zowel voor mannen als voor vrouwen geldt dat naarmate men vaker seks heeft, men meer plezier beleeft aan seks en (vooral) ook meer seksueel tevreden is. Naarmate men ouder wordt, heeft men iets minder vaak seks en is men ook iets minder seksueel tevreden. Maar, leeftijd houdt geen verband met seksueel plezier.

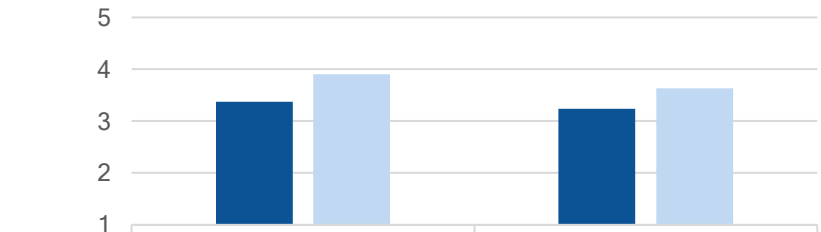
Relatiestress, probleemoplossend vermogen binnen de relatie, en relatietevredenheid, zijn duidelijk gelinkt aan de frequentie waarmee men seks heeft, het seksele plezier en (vooral) de seksuele tevredenheid. Alles bij elkaar genomen, is vooral de factor 'dyadische coping', dus het vermogen van een koppel om samen problemen aan te pakken, van belang met betrekking tot de seksuele tevredenheid.

6. Resultaten rond condoom- en PrEP-gebruik

Openheid over seks buiten relatie

Aan alle deelnemers werd gevraagd of zij het aan hun partner zouden vertellen indien ze met iemand anders seks zouden hebben. Ze konden antwoorden op een vijf-puntenschaal, gaande van 'nee, zeker niet' (score 1) tot 'ja, zeker wel' (score 5). Vrouwen zijn gemiddeld genomen meer geneigd dan mannen om hun partner in te lichten, met een gemiddelde score van 3.7 voor vrouwen tegenover 3.3 voor mannen. Grafiek 8 toont de uitkomsten volgens geslacht en het geslacht van de partner. Vrouwen met een vrouwelijke partner zijn het meest zeker dat ze het zouden vertellen, gevolgd door vrouwen met een mannelijke partner, mannen met een mannelijke partner, en ten slotte mannen met een vrouwelijke partner.

Grafiek 8. Waarschijnlijkheid dat men de partner zou inlichten volgens geslacht en geslacht partner



	Partner van zelfde geslacht	Partner van andere geslacht
Mannen	3,38	3,24
Vrouwen	3,9	3,64

Afspraken over condoomgebruik buiten relatie

Aan deelnemers die een open relatie hebben, in de zin dat zijzelf en/of hun partner ook seks heeft buiten de relatie, werd gevraagd of ze afspraken hebben met hun partner over condoomgebruik. Of er afspraken zijn, hangt af van het geslacht van beide partners. Bij mannen die een relatie hebben met een man, geeft 64.0% aan dat ze de afspraak hebben om buiten de relatie een condoom te gebruiken. Bij mannen met een vrouwelijke partner, geeft slechts 31.7% aan dat er zo'n afspraak is, bij vrouwen met een mannelijke partner is dat 39.1% en bij vrouwen met een vrouwelijke partner 40.7%.

Houding tegenover PrEP

Bij de respondenten die een open relatie hebben werd gepeild naar hun houding ten opzichte van PrEP-gebruik. De vraag werd gesteld hoe ze zouden reageren indien hun partner zou voorstellen om PrEP te gebruiken. Deelnemers konden antwoorden op een vijf-puntenschaal, gaande van score 1 'ik zou het heel goed vinden', tot score 5 'ik zou het heel slecht vinden'. Mannen die een relatie hebben met een man, staan het meest positief tegenover PrEP-gebruik, met een gemiddelde score 2.42. Vrouwen met een vrouwelijke partner scoorden

ongeveer gelijk (gemiddelde score 2.44), gevolgd door mannen met een vrouwelijke partner (gemiddelde score 2.59), en ten slotte vrouwen met een mannelijke partner (gemiddelde score 2.75).