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- 1 **Perceived Discrimination and Relationship Satisfaction Among Same-Sex Couples: The**
 - 2 **Role of Dyadic Stress and Sex**
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1 Perceived Discrimination and Relationship Satisfaction Among Same-sex Couples: The 2 Role of Dyadic Stress and Sex

3 Abstract

4 Based on the fact that most research drawn from the minority stress theory on the association
5 between minority stress and relationship satisfaction has focused on an individual perspective
6 rather than a dyadic perspective, and the limited evidence of the systemic transactional model
7 (STM) explore the topics of same-sex couples. This study aims to combine both theories to
8 examine the association between perceived discrimination and relationship satisfaction
9 among lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people on both partners and test the potential
10 mediating role of dyadic stress and sex difference in this association. Using an actor-partner
11 interdependence mediation model (APIMeM), we analyzed data including a sample of 241
12 LGB couples (133 female and 108 male same-sex dyads). Results showed that perceived
13 discrimination had no direct actor-partner effects on relationship satisfaction. APIMeM
14 revealed significant indirect partner effects from perceived discrimination on both
15 individuals' and their partners' relationship satisfaction through the partner's dyadic stress.
16 Additionally, the effect of personal dyadic stress on a partner's relationship satisfaction was
17 stronger for women compared to men. These findings demonstrated the utility of the minority
18 stress theory and STM framework for understanding the risk of stressors in damaging LGBs'
19 romantic relationships. Couple interventions should integrate knowledge from a dyadic
20 perspective with attention to sex differences.

21 **Keywords:** Same-sex Couples, Perceived Discrimination, Relationship Satisfaction, Dyadic
22 Stress, Minority Stress Theory, Systemic Transactional Model

1 Minority stress theory suggests that sexual minority individuals are at greater risk for
2 health problems than heterosexuals, because LGBs face greater exposure to social stress
3 related to prejudice and stigma (Meyer, 2003). These stressors include distal stressors (i.e.,
4 experiences of discrimination and prejudice) and proximal stressors (i.e., internalized
5 homonegativity, expectations of rejection, and identity concealment) (Meyer, 2003). The
6 overall impact of both distal and proximal stressors on mental health and how to buffer
7 adverse effects has been widely documented in prior studies (see reviews in Dürbaum &
8 Sattler, 2020; Chaudoir et al., 2017). Moreover, this theory has been extended by some
9 studies in explaining the ways in which minority stress could have a detrimental impact on
10 relationship satisfaction and well-being: Minority stress deprives LGB individuals of
11 relationship validation and support, which in turn can lessen the couple's ability to cope with
12 stress and strain, and decreases the commitment to, investment in, and perception of rewards
13 from their romantic relationships (see, e.g., Guschlbauer et al., 2019; Kamen et al., 2011;
14 Pepping et al., 2019; Authors et al., 2020; Sullivan et al., 2017). However, the data in these
15 studies were only collected from one member in the relationship dyad. In fact, when LGBs'
16 romantic relationships are devalued or diminished by society, individuals may face hardships
17 or adversity as a result, which in turn diminishes relationship satisfaction and well-being.
18 Thus, the minority stress theory may not explain the stress experiences in same-sex romantic
19 relationships (Holman, 2018; Sarno et al., 2021).

20 Despite the limitations above, recent studies have combined Minority Stress Theory
21 with other theories such as the stress proliferation theory (LeBlanc et al., 2015), the
22 work–family border theory (Holman, 2018), and the systemic transactional model (STM)

1 (Randall et al., 2017b) to investigate how stress experiences impact same-sex relationships.
2 For example, Cooper et al. (2020) found that individuals who reported higher minority stress
3 also reported higher levels of perceived relationship stress. Randall et al. (2017b) found that
4 perceived partner emotion-focused supportive dyadic coping weakened the association
5 between perceived discrimination stress and depressive symptoms. In this study, we would
6 draw from minority stress theory and the STM by using the actor-partner interdependence
7 model (APIM) to examine the association between perceived discrimination and
8 individuals' as well as partners' relationship satisfaction in the context of same-sex couples.
9 Additionally, we test the possible mediating roles of dyadic stress and potential sex
10 differences in these associations.

11 *Perceived discrimination and relationship satisfaction*

12 Relationship satisfaction can be described as "people's global subjective evaluation of
13 their marriage quality" (Li & Fung, 2011). It has been strongly associated with indicators of
14 mental and physical health, such as depression, anxiety, substance use, suicide,
15 cardiovascular functioning, and pain interference (Du Bois et al., 2019; Holt-Lunstad et al.,
16 2008; Till et al., 2016). Therefore, identifying the risk mechanisms of relationship satisfaction
17 has important clinical and social implications not only for individual health, but also for
18 relational health. Relatively few studies have investigated the mechanisms underlying the
19 potential influence of relationship satisfaction in LGB romantic relationships (Pepping et al.,
20 2019; Author, 2020).

21 Some studies found deleterious direct associations between discrimination regarding
22 sexual orientation and relationship satisfaction for sexual minority individuals (Doyle & Lisa,

1 2014; LeBlanc et al., 2015; Sullivan et al., 2017). More specifically, the experience of
2 discriminatory events leads to additional relational stressors (e.g., conflictual communication
3 and emotional distance), which in turn negatively impact relationship satisfaction for both
4 partners (Otis et al., 2006a). However, not all findings are consistent. For example, Gonçalves
5 et al. (2020) found that perceived discrimination is not associated with relationship
6 satisfaction in elderly LGBs. The negative association between perceived discrimination and
7 relationship satisfaction was also found in women (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005) but not in
8 men (Kamen et al., 2011). Given these mixed findings, additional research is needed to
9 further explore these associations.

10 Some studies indicate that relationship satisfaction might be more the product of the
11 dyadic environment than of individual factors (Brown et al., 2020; Keizer, 2012). One
12 person's characteristics and behavior affect his or her partner's relationship satisfaction
13 (Keizer & Schenk, 2012). In romantic relationships, dyadic stress (i.e., issues arising within
14 the relationship itself, such as communication problems; incompatibility; divergent goals,
15 values, habits and attitudes; or unrealistic expectations) plays an important role (Bodenmann
16 et al., 2007; Karney et al., 2005). This dyadic phenomenon has been considered an important
17 factor in relationship satisfaction (Brown et al., 2020; Falconier et al., 2015). In other words,
18 each individual's experienced dyadic stress may influence their motivation to engage in
19 behavioral change (i.e., an actor effect), as well as their partner's motivation (i.e., a partner
20 effect). We thus propose a model in which dyadic stress is considered as a potential mediator
21 in the association between perceived discrimination and relationship satisfaction.

22 *Dyadic stress as a mediator*

1 According to the systemic transactional model (STM), stress can have a negative impact
2 on individual psychological and physical health as well as on the quality of a romantic
3 relationship (Bodenmann, 2005). In terms of experiencing a romantic relationship, the
4 external stress (i.e., tension that originates outside of a relationship, such as work and
5 finances; Randall & Bodenmann, 2009) of one romantic partner can predict increases in
6 maladaptive relationship behaviors and decreases in relationship satisfaction (Bodenmann et
7 al. 2007; Randall & Bodenmann, 2009). Studies in heterosexual couples found that dyadic
8 stress is a robust mediator between external stress and relationship satisfaction (Breitenstein
9 et al., 2018; Falconier & Epstein, 2010; Falconier et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2018). Perceived
10 discrimination can also act as an external source of stress for same-sex couples, which is
11 related to a decline in relationship satisfaction (Sullivan et al., 2017). In interpreting the
12 effects of perceived discrimination on relationship outcomes, the STM views dyadic stress as
13 a mediating mechanism through which external stress has a negative impact on partners'
14 relationship satisfaction. More specifically, when a partner experiences discrimination, it
15 might have an impact on dyadic stress (e.g., decrease the quality of communication, weaken
16 feelings of connectedness). Heightened dyadic stress may in turn contribute to feeling less
17 satisfied with the relationship.

18 Several studies have tested the STM in a sexual minority population and considered
19 minority stress as an external stressor (Cooper et al., 2020; Randall et al., 2017a; Randall et
20 al., 2017b; Tao et al., 2018; Totenhagen et al., 2017). However, only Totenhagen and
21 colleagues (2017) examined associations between minority stress and relational outcomes
22 (i.e., relationship function). Moreover, existing research is often based on relatively small

1 samples (i.e., less than 100 couples; see, e.g., Randall et al., 2017; Totenhagen et al., 2017),
2 which may have led to an inability to detect meaningful results. The present study overcomes
3 these issues and allows us to capture the interplay between individual and partner behavior
4 (i.e., APIM; see Kenny et al., 2006) in a relatively large sample. Our hypotheses are as
5 follows (shown in Figure 1):

6 H1: Perceived discrimination will be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction
7 for actors (i.e., direct paths a3) as well as for partners (i.e., direct paths p3).

8 H2: Perceived discrimination will be positively associated with dyadic stress for actors
9 (i.e., direct paths a1) as well as for partners (i.e., direct paths p1).

10 H3: Dyadic stress will be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction for actors
11 (i.e., direct paths a2) as well as for partners (i.e., direct paths p2).

12 H4: Dyadic stress will mediate the negative association between perceived
13 discrimination and relationship satisfaction for actors (i.e., indirect paths a1 to a2) as well as
14 for partners (i.e., indirect paths a1 to p2, p1 to p2, p1 to a2).

15 -----
16 **Figure 1**
17 -----

18 *Sex as a moderator*

19 Sex appears to be an essential moderator in influencing the association between stress
20 and romantic relationship outcomes (Greil et al., 2018). According to the traditional gender
21 role view and subordination-reactivity hypothesis, women experience greater psychological

1 reactivity to marital stress because they typically occupy subordinate positions relative to
2 men (Pietromonaco et al., 2021; Wanic & Kulik, 2011). For example, women carry a heavier
3 burden in respect of household maintenance and childcare, whereas men hold more power
4 over finances, decision-making, and conflict resolution strategies (Tichenor, 2005). Among
5 heterosexual couples, it has long been asserted that men have greater relationship satisfaction
6 than women (Greil et al., 2018; Jackson et al., 2014). A recent study found that women
7 experienced higher levels of stress and lower levels of relationship satisfaction than men
8 (Riina & Feinberg, 2018). Compared to different-sex couples, same-sex couples are supposed
9 to be more fluid with respect to gender dynamics and scripts. Additionally, there would be
10 fewer power differences between same-sex as opposed to different-sex romantic partners
11 (Garcia & Umberson, 2019; Moore, 2008; Reczek & Umberson, 2016). Therefore, the impact
12 of stress on romantic relationships may follow a different pattern in a sexual minority
13 population.

14 Despite this, little is currently known about sex differences in romantic relationships
15 among LGBs. There is some evidence, however, that the levels of minority stress factors
16 might differ between both sexes (Guschlbauer et al., 2019). Interestingly, previous findings
17 about the effect of minority stress on female and male same-sex couples were not consistent.
18 A recent meta-analysis and review study suggested that minority stress was significantly and
19 negatively associated with relationship well-being among same-sex female couples, but not
20 among same-sex male couples (Cao et al., 2017). Other studies showed that the correlation
21 between minority stress (e.g., perceived discrimination and victimization) and negative
22 mental health outcomes is stronger in gay and bisexual men compared to lesbian and bisexual

1 women (Almeida et al., 2009; Dürbaum & Sattler, 2020). Given the fact that the very limited
2 body of literature on sex differences shows inconsistent results, we will further explore
3 whether the associations of perceived discrimination, dyadic stress and relationship
4 satisfaction vary across women and men in same-sex couples.

5 **Methods**

6 *Participants*

7 A cross-sectional online survey was performed and took place between November 2017
8 and June 2018, using diverse recruitment strategies including advertisements in the written
9 press; LGB-specific and non-LGB-specific events and associations; and social media (mainly
10 Facebook) for recruiting LGB couples living in Flanders. Flanders is one of the three regions
11 of Belgium and is the Dutch-speaking community in Belgium. In 2003, Belgium became the
12 second country in the world to legalize same-sex marriages, and in 2006 granted same-sex
13 couples the right to adopt children in 2006 (D'haese et al., 2016).

14 The study was approved by the University institutional review board. All participants
15 met the following inclusion criteria: (a) were at least 18 years of age; (b) indicated they
16 identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual through the item 'How would you label yourself in terms
17 of your sexual orientation?'; (c) were in a romantic relationship with a same-sex partner; and
18 (d) had been in the current relationship for at least six months. Both partners were matched
19 by a unique couple identifier code. A total of 265 LGB couples were eligible to participate in
20 the current study. However, we excluded 11 couples who identified as having different-sex
21 partners, as well as 13 couples whose relationship duration was less than six months. The
22 final sample included 241 dyads (482 individual LGBs) with 133 female and 108 male

1 same-sex couples. Participants had an average age of 34.36 years ($SD = 10.88$). The average
2 relationship duration was 87.26 months ($SD = 84.55$; range = 6–444 months). 77.6%
3 participants reported that all the sources of income that their household has that is pretty easy
4 to make ends meet, and 22.4% of participants reported they need to make efforts for making
5 ends meet. Regarding educational level, we found that 18.2% had finished high school,
6 28.2% had earned a bachelor's degree, 29.3% had earned a master's degree, 4.6% had earned
7 a PhD degree, and 19.7 % were still studying.

8 ***Measures***

9 Sex: The sex was assessed using a single question with a “male” and “female” option: at
10 birth you were registered as (on the birth certificate).

11 Perceived discrimination: A slightly modified version of the Experiences of Everyday
12 Discrimination Questionnaire, adapted to assess sexual minority-specific discrimination, was
13 used to assess participants' discrimination experiences (see Authors, 2014; Williams et al.,
14 1997). This 11-item questionnaire assesses chronic, routine, and relatively minor experiences
15 of unfair treatment over the last six months (e.g., people were less friendly to you than to
16 others). Participants could answer these questions on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging
17 from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*daily*). A higher sum score on 11-item refers to experiencing more
18 perceived discrimination. In the current study, the internal consistency was $\alpha = .837$. The
19 results of the CFA indicated that the model has an acceptable fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.81$, RMSEA = 0.06,
20 CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.96, and SRMR=0.03).

1 Dyadic stress: The Multidimensional Stress Questionnaire for Couples (Bodenmann et
2 al., 2007) is made up of 30 items that assess dyadic stress. It includes four subscales, but only
3 a subscale for assessing dyadic stress was used in this study. It contains 10 items (e.g., "too
4 little involvement, little time for each other, little intimacy and few things you share, no
5 common hobbies and interests"). Respondents rated on a four-point Likert-type scale the
6 stressfulness of a situation originating within the couple's relationship, ranging from 1 (*not*
7 *stressful at all*) to 4 (*highly stressful*). Higher sum scores on 10-items reflect a higher level of
8 dyadic stress. In this sample the scale's internal consistency was $\alpha = .846$. The results
9 obtained from the CFA demonstrated that the model fit is acceptable ($\chi^2/df= 2.31$, RMSEA =
10 0.05, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.96, and SRMR=0.03).

11 Relationship Satisfaction: The Brief Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Sabourin et al., 2005)
12 has four items that assess relationship satisfaction. The first three items in the questionnaire
13 employ a six-point Likert-type response format with responses ranging from 1 (*always*) to 6
14 (*never*) to evaluate individuals' perceptions regarding the quality of life shared with their
15 partners (e.g., How often do you discuss, or have you considered separating, or ending your
16 relationship?). The fourth item measures the individuals' subjective experience of happiness
17 in their romantic relationships. It employs a seven-point Likert-type response format with
18 responses ranging from 1 (*extremely unhappy*) to 7 (*perfectly happy*). A total score on 4-items
19 is calculated by summing four items. In the present study, the internal consistency of this
20 scale was $\alpha = .703$. The results of the CFA indicated that the model fit is acceptable ($\chi^2/df=$
21 4.83, RMSEA = 0.04, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.96, and SRMR=0.02).

22 ***Analytical Strategy***

1 We first explored Pearson bivariate correlations analysis for all variables by SPSS
2 version 23.0 (IBM, 2015). For the dyadic data, we tested an actor-partner interdependence
3 mediation model (APIMeM) within the structural equation modeling framework using Mplus
4 version 7.4, to separately examine the actor, partner, and mediation effects (Muthén &
5 Muthén, 2015). Full information maximum likelihood was used as the estimation method.
6 The APIMeM for interchangeable dyads is designed with partner A and partner B
7 designations as totally arbitrary and used to estimate the interchangeable twin dyads model
8 by forcing equality constraints on all parameters—means, variance, intercepts, and paths (the
9 same actor effect and the same partner effect)—that are indistinguishable (Kenny et al., 2006;
10 Ledermann et al., 2011; Sadler et al., 2011). Indirect effects were also estimated and tested by
11 bootstrap analyses as recommended by Hayes (2013). If the 95% confidence interval includes
12 zero then the indirect effect is not significant at the .05 level; if 0 is not in the interval then
13 the indirect effect is statistically significant at the .05 level (Hayes, 2013).

14 **Results**

15 *Sex differences and correlations in variable characteristics*

16 Independent-samples t test showed that scores on perceived discrimination were higher
17 for men ($Mean = 13.98, SD = 4.49$) than for women ($M = 13.22, SD = 3.13$), $t =$
18 $2.161, p < .05$. Scores on dyadic stress were higher for women ($M = 17.87, SD = 5.86$) than
19 for men ($M = 15.94, SD = 4.57$), $t = -3.94, p < .01$. We did not find any significant sex
20 differences related to relationship satisfaction ($p > .05$).

21 Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations of all variables in the

1 model. With regard to men, perceived discrimination was positively correlated with dyadic
2 stress and negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction; dyadic stress was negatively
3 correlated with relationship satisfaction. For women, dyadic stress was negatively correlated
4 with relationship satisfaction; There were no significant correlations either between perceived
5 discrimination and dyadic stress or between perceived discrimination and relationship
6 satisfaction

7 -----
8 **Table 1**
9 -----

10 *Actor and partner effects of perceived discrimination and dyadic stress on relationship*
11 *satisfaction*

12 After controlling for a series of confounding variables, including sex, age, and
13 relationship duration, the APIMeM provided a good fit to the data, $\chi^2/df=1.52$, RMSEA =
14 0.05, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.95, and SRMR=0.07.

15 Results are shown in Figure 2. We did not find support for H1, since there are no direct
16 effects between perceived discrimination and relationship satisfaction for either individuals or
17 partners (respectively $\beta = .006, p > .05$; $\beta = .036, p > .05$). We found partial support for H2:
18 higher scores on perceived discrimination were associated with a higher level of dyadic stress
19 for the partner ($\beta = .123, p = .016$), but not for the individual ($\beta = .058, p > .05$). Finally, we
20 found support for H3: higher scores on dyadic stress were associated with a lower level of
21 relationship satisfaction for both the individual and their partner (respectively $\beta = -.435, p$

1 < .01; $\beta = -.248, p < .01$).

2 -----
3 **Figure 2**
4 -----

5 Indirect associations are reported in Table 2. Individuals' perceived discrimination was
6 significantly associated with their own relationship satisfaction through their partner's dyadic
7 stress (respectively $\beta = -.031, 95\% \text{ CI} = [-.061, -.007]$). Likewise, individuals' perceived
8 discrimination was significantly associated with partners' relationship satisfaction through the
9 partner's dyadic stress (respectively $\beta = -.054, 95\% \text{ CI} = [-.100, -.011]$). However, indirect
10 effects of perceived discrimination on individuals' and partners' relationship satisfaction
11 through their own dyadic stress were non-significant. Thus, H4 was partially supported.

12 -----
13 **Table 2**
14 -----

15 Multigroup analysis was conducted to identify whether the path coefficients differ
16 significantly between men and women. The sex differences were examined by comparing the
17 first model, which allows the structural paths to vary across sexes, with the second model,
18 which constrains the structural paths between women and men to be equal. The results
19 showed that the chi-square difference on two models was significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 361.894,$
20 $\Delta df = 52, p < .01$). Critical ratio tests were conducted to pinpoint which paths in the structural
21 model are significantly different across the two investigated samples. The results indicated
22 that there was one significantly different path: the path coefficient from individuals' dyadic

1 stress to their partners' relationship satisfaction was greater for women than for men
2 (*Wald* χ^2 [1]=4.882, $p = .027$). Specifically, individual dyadic stress was negatively related
3 with the partner's relationship satisfaction for men ($\beta = -.135$, $p = .032$) and women ($\beta = -.313$,
4 $p < .01$)

5 **Discussion**

6 The study built on STM, which emphasizes the interdependence and mutuality between
7 the two partners' stress processes (Bodenmann et al., 2016). Specifically, this study examined
8 the associations between perceived discrimination as an external stressor, dyadic stress, and
9 relationship satisfaction in LGB romantic relationships, while exploring sex differences
10 within these associations. Overall, our findings demonstrated only significant indirect partner
11 effects from perceived discrimination to individuals' and partners' relationship satisfaction,
12 through the partner's dyadic stress. Additionally, the association between individuals' dyadic
13 stress and partners' relationship satisfaction was significantly stronger for women compared
14 to men.

15 With regard to our first hypothesis, although perceived discrimination and relationship
16 satisfaction correlated significantly with one another, this association was no longer
17 significant after controlling for the mediator variable (dyadic stress). This is broadly
18 consistent with prior research, which demonstrated that minority stressors do not directly
19 impact relationship satisfaction (Kamen et al., 2011; Pepping et al., 2019). This could be
20 explained in several ways. First, this finding showed that the impact of perceived
21 discrimination on relationship satisfaction is fully mediated by dyadic stress, which is
22 consistent with previous research (Authors, 2021). In the aforementioned study, visibility

1 management fully mediated the association between internalized homonegativity (a sexual
2 minority stressor) and relationship satisfaction (Authors, 2021). Second, the participants were
3 recruited in Flanders, a relatively LGB-friendly community (Flanders; Authors, 2013) where
4 public attitudes have significantly improved towards sexual minorities. Therefore, the impact
5 of perceived discrimination on dyadic stress and relationship satisfaction might be limited.
6 Levels of perceived discrimination were even lower in women compared to men, which
7 might also explain the lack of ‘dyadic stress’ as a mediating variable between perceived
8 discrimination and relationship satisfaction. Previous research has shown that lower levels of
9 perceived discrimination in women could be explained by a lack of visibility (Authors, 2014).
10 Because female same-sex behavior (e.g., walking hand-in-hand with a partner in the street) is
11 tolerated more than male same-sex behavior, women are less sanctioned in public
12 environments. Third, relationship satisfaction refers to dyadic interactions (Keizer, 2012), yet
13 perceived discrimination is a variable that refers to an individual experience. Thus, perceived
14 discrimination might mainly influence individual outcomes. As reported in previous research,
15 the effect of minority stress on relationship satisfaction in LGBs was explained through other
16 individual variables, such as feelings of depression (Frost & Meyer, 2009). In addition,
17 Authors (2020) suggested that specific variables, such as family support and confidant
18 support, might positively explain the association between minority stress and relationship
19 satisfaction.

20 The results of this study partially support the hypothesis that perceived discrimination
21 indirectly decreases relationship satisfaction by increasing dyadic stress from relationship
22 problems. Individuals' perceived discrimination was significantly associated with their own

1 and their partners' relationship satisfaction through the partner's rather than own dyadic stress.
2 This is similar to the findings of a previous study, which indicated that stress response in one
3 partner predicted more negative perceptions of the relationship quality and less relationship
4 satisfaction (Otis et al., 2006). These findings contribute to the STM by adding knowledge on
5 the dyadic implications of minority stress for same-sex relationship satisfaction (Randall &
6 Bodenmann, 2009; Authors, 2020). This result may be explained by the fact that experiences
7 of perceived discrimination may create ongoing stress and relationship strains for partners,
8 leading to conflict, lack of trust, or lack of desired intimacy. For some partners, not being able
9 to talk about these stressors with a partner creates additional problems (e.g., heightened
10 dyadic stress; LeBlanc et al., 2015). Despite positive coping mechanisms buffering the
11 adverse consequences of minority stress, it still seems to be difficult for some couples to
12 manage experiences of discrimination and the stress it causes within the relationship
13 (Donarelli et al., 2016; Randall et al., 2017b). In our study, these relationship strains were in
14 turn associated with lower relationship satisfaction for both individuals and their partners,
15 which is in line with existing research in heterosexual couples (Breitenstein et al., 2018;
16 Falconier et al., 2015).

17 Finally, these findings also highlight the importance of taking sex differences into
18 account when studying LGB romantic relationships. Much like the results in different-sex
19 couples (Breitenstein et al., 2018; Falconier et al., 2015), our findings suggest that the
20 negative association between an individual's dyadic stress and their partner's relationship
21 satisfaction was stronger for women than for men. This seems consistent with the traditional
22 gender role view and subordination-reactivity theory, which emphasize that women

1 experience greater psychological stress in romantic relationships compared to men (Tichenor,
2 2005; Wanic & Kulik, 2011). It has been argued that women have a more interpersonal,
3 interdependent orientation, whereas men tend to be more independent and self-reliant (Cross
4 & Madson, 1997). This reflects the fusion phenomenon that is sometimes described in
5 same-sex female couples, i.e., an overly close and interdependent romantic relationship with
6 a lack of emotional and physical boundaries (Frost & Eliason, 2009). Female partners would,
7 more than male partners, focus on partner interactions and therefore more likely experience
8 dyadic stress with a resulting negative impact on relationship satisfaction. However, it is
9 worth noting that the sex difference is relatively weak, and we should therefore refrain from
10 overinterpreting this result.

11 Our analysis is limited in a few ways. Firstly, the data are cross-sectional and therefore
12 we could not capture the evolution of the effect of stress on relationship satisfaction. A
13 longitudinal design could help us understand how initial levels of perceived discrimination,
14 dyadic stress, and relationship satisfaction evolve over time. Secondly, the relationship
15 satisfaction measure has relatively low reliability, in part because we used only four items to
16 measure relationship satisfaction. Nonetheless, supplemental factor analyses show the
17 variables consistently load together, so we trust the items adequately to measure relationship
18 satisfaction. Finally, according to the STM, dyadic coping is a beneficial coping resource for
19 couples with a buffering effect (Bodenmann, 2007). Research on dyadic coping (Rusu et al.,
20 2019) therefore offers promise for identifying ways in which couples can actively learn how
21 to cope with stress. Future researchers might consider assessing dyadic coping and learn how
22 to prevent minority stress spillover in same-sex relationships.

1 Despite these limitations, the current study makes a number of important contributions.
2 Minority stress model is a useful heuristic theory for examining mental health outcomes, but
3 it may not directly explain the workings of a same-sex relationship (Kamen et al., 2011). Our
4 study shows that the combined minority stress and theory STM can be successfully applied to
5 LGB romantic relationships. On both methodological and theoretical grounds, our results
6 highlight the importance of adopting a dyadic perspective in examining the effects of
7 minority stress on relationship satisfaction and the role of dyadic stress on the above
8 associations. Therefore, integrating the important roles of both minority stress and dyadic
9 stress in a theoretical model and in intervention appears to be a promising way of better
10 supporting romantic relationships to cope with stressors. Additionally, this study's findings
11 reveal important sex differences in the association between dyadic stress and relationship
12 satisfaction. This either exhibits a similarity with the potential influence of traditional
13 heterosexual norms on same-sex couples (i.e., women experience greater psychological
14 reactivity to dyadic stress in romantic relationships) or a dynamic (i.e., fusion) that is unique
15 to female same-sex couples. This study thus expands our understanding of both sex and
16 dyadic stress mechanisms in romantic relationships.

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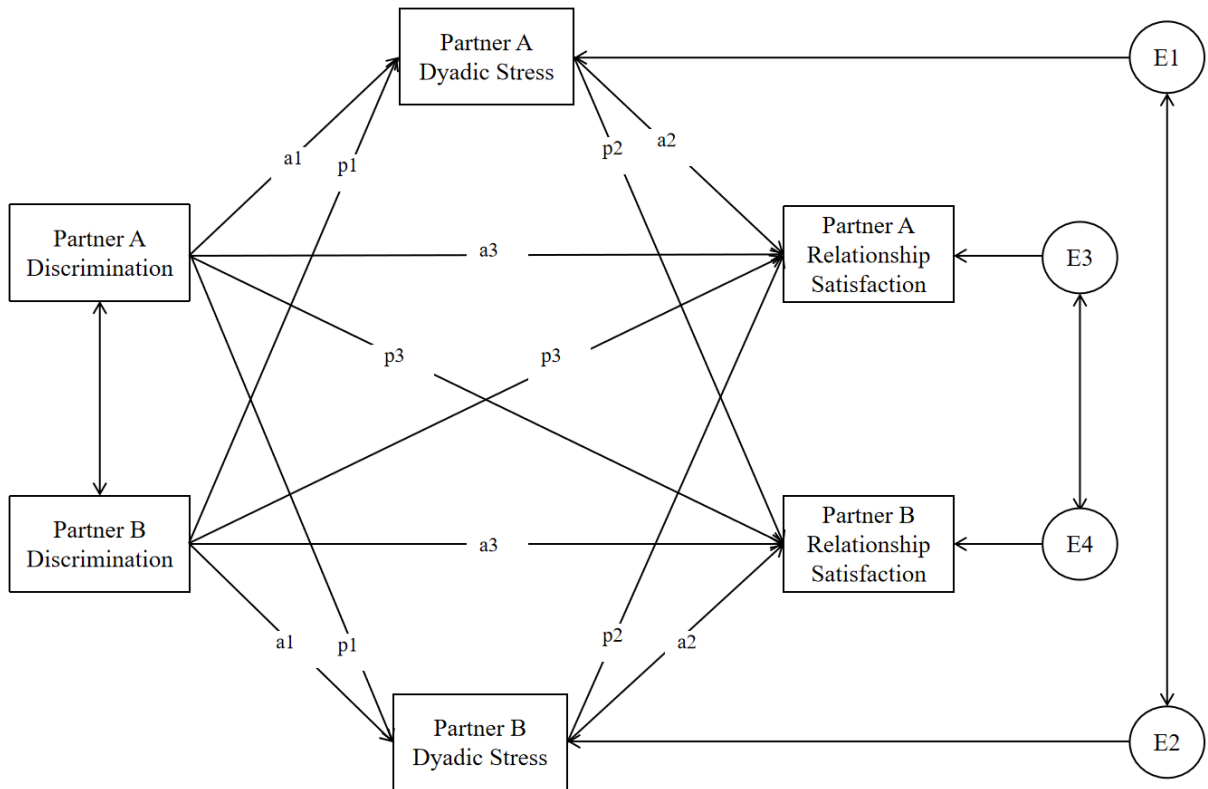


Figure 1. Theoretical model of actor, partner, and mediating effects. A paths are actor effects, P paths are partner effects.

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Table 1 Correlations statistics for all variables ($N=482$)

	M	SD	1	2	3
Men ($n=216$)					
1 Discrimination	13.977	4.475	1		
2 Dyadic stress	15.944	4.557	.184**	1	
3 Relationship Satisfaction	21.135	1.983	-.164**	-.567**	1
Women ($n=266$)					
1 Discrimination	13.218	3.103	1		
2 Dyadic stress	17.868	5.864	.031	1	
3 Relationship Satisfaction	21.313	2.520	.019	-.497**	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

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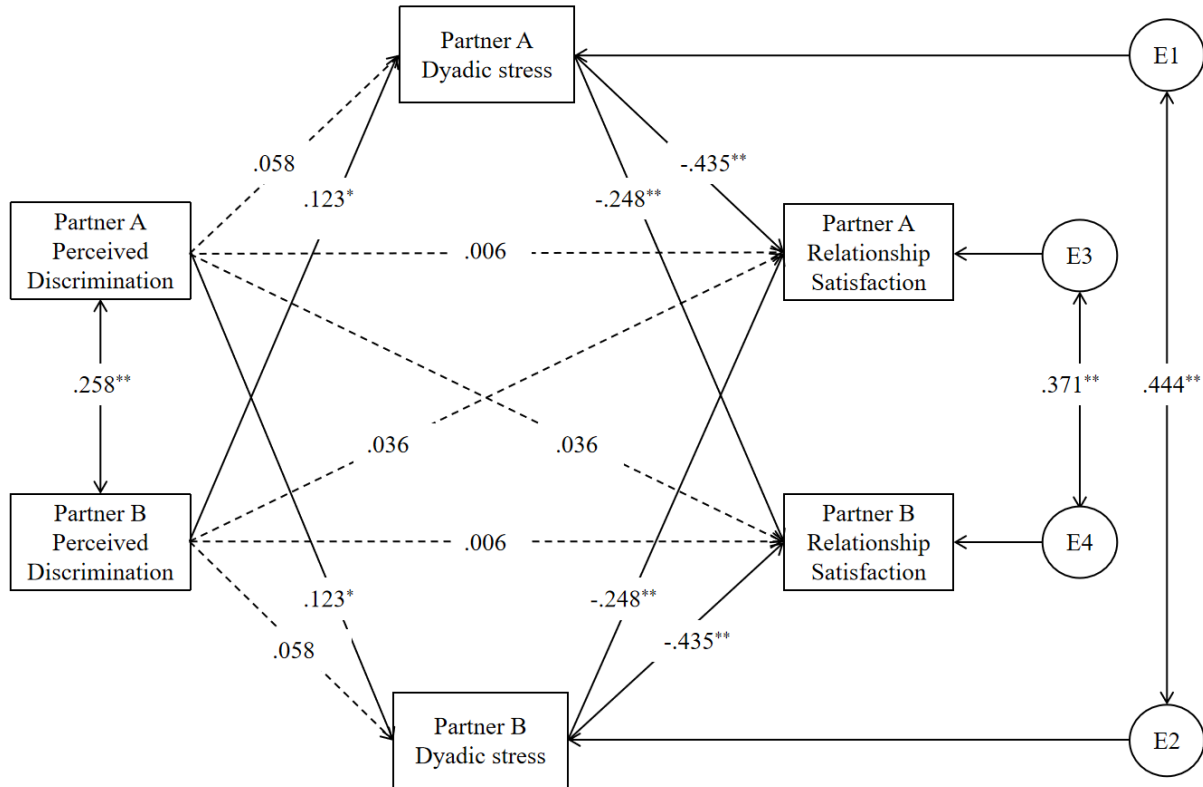
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Fig.2. Actor-Partner Interdependence Mediation Model. Coefficients are standardized regression coefficients. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2 APIMeM results for the indirect results

	β	95% CI	<i>p</i> -value
Own discrimination → Own relationship satisfaction			
via own dyadic stress	-.025	[-.065, .009]	.177
via partner's dyadic stress	-.031	[-.061, -.007]	.024
Own discrimination → Partner's relationship satisfaction			
via own dyadic stress	-.014	[-.036, .005]	.166
via partner's dyadic stress	-.054	[-.100, -.011]	.019

Note: CI =confidence interval.