A Systematic Review of Constructs Studied as Potential Correlates of Relationship Quality in Sexually Minoritized People of Color



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Enduring Qualities

124 variables

Mental Health 31 variables Anxiety/Depression (13) Race Substance use (10) Alcohol use (6) 14 variables Poor mental health (1) Self-esteem (1)

Age 14 variables

Age (13) Class level in school (1)

Internalized stigma 10 variables

Internalized homophobia (7) Internalized stigma (2) Internalized racism (1)

Sense of identity

7 variables

Sense of male identity (3)

Couple identity strength (1) Ethnosexual identity strength (1)

Racial identity attitude (1)

Differentiation of self (1)

Outness/

concealment

4 variables

Gender

2 variables

Oklahoma

1 variable

Black (3) Hispanic/Latino (3 Asian (2) White (2) Minority (2) Other (2)

Socioeconomic status 14 variables

> Education (7) Income (6) Employment status (1)

> > Traditional views on gender 8 variables

Traditional/conventional views on gender (3) Concerns with fulfilling traditional masculine role (5)

Attachment

4 variables

Peer attachment (1)

Parental attachment (1)

Attachment avoidance (1)

Attachment anxiety(1)

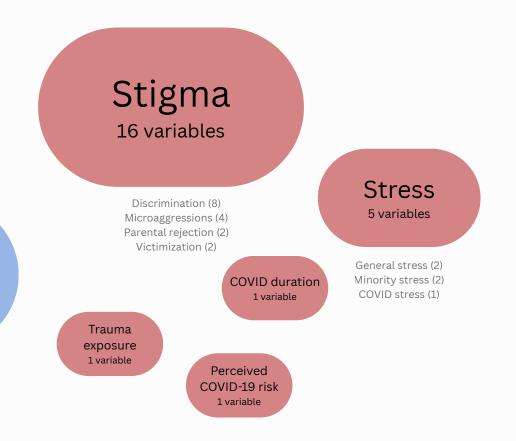
Religion

2 variables

Flourishing

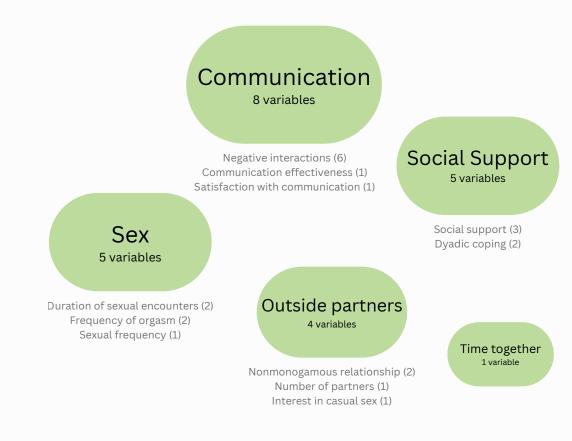
Stressful Events

24 variables



Adaptive Processes

23 variables



Relationship Outcomes

21 variables

Relationship functioning 15 variables Sexual Commitment/dedication (8) satisfaction Trust (3) Intimacy (1)

Sexual satisfaction/dissatisfaction (3) Changes in relationship functioning (1) Emotional satisfaction with sex (1)

5 variables

Quality of alternatives 1 variable

Relationship quality (1)

Passion (1)

Relationship Characteristics

16 variables

Length of relationship 8 variables Relationship

Relationship length (7) Time partners have known each other (1)

> Gender composition 2 variables

Misc.

3 variables

COVID-19 prevention behaviors

Consensus about COVID-19 prevention effort

Social

Physical health

HIV status (2) Partner HIV status (1) BMI (1) Average exercise (1)

> Characteristics of family of origin 3 variables

Family history of distress (1) Family closeness (1) Family religiosity (1)

Appreciation of

differences among

1 variable

Body dissatisfaction

Spanish language

Positive affect

Introduction

- The romantic relationships of sexually minoritized people of color (SMPOC) face distinctive challenges.
- Using the Vulnerability Stress Adaptation (VSA; Karney & Bradbury, 1995) model, we systematically reviewed variables included in studies as constructs potentially associated with relationship quality among SMPOC.
- We categorized these variables into the central VSA components of adaptive processes, stressful events, and enduring qualities.
- We conclude with a summary of which constructs have strong empirical support describing their association with relationship quality and which need further study.

Method

- We conducted a search of six databases yielding 1,039 articles.
- We included studies that examined relationship quality in a sexually minoritized sample with at least 39% people of color, the current population percentage.
- A total of 211 variables (described in the ovals above) from 28 studies had effect size information available and therefore were included in the final review.

Results

We found that, of the three VSA categories, research on relationship quality for SMPOC seems focused on enduring vulnerabilities (124 variables, 110 variables other than race/ethnicity), with stressful events (24 variables) and adaptive processes (23 variables; 40 variables studied did not fit within the VSA model) recieving relatively little

attention.

Discussion

status

5 variables

Cohabitation

status

1 variable

- The focus on enduring vulnerabilities overemphasizes individual deficits and downplays the role of contextual stressors.
- Because the experience of stigmarelated stress is a distinctive characteristic of the relationships of SMPOC (Meyer, 2003), stressful events should be a more prominent focus of research on these couples.
- Adaptive processes also warrant more attention due to their particular importance for couples experiencing high stress (McNulty et al., 2021) and their especially proximal influence on relationship quality (VSA; Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

References

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Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. Psychological Bulletin, 129(5) 674-697. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674

McNulty, J. K., Meltzer, A. L., Neff, L. A., & Karney, B. R. (2021). How both partners' individual differences, stress, and behavio predict change in relationship satisfaction: Extending the VSA model. *Proceedings of the* National Academy of Sciences PNAS, 118(27), e2101402118. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2101 402118