

Research Paper

## Impact of Perceived Relationship Quality on Men's Mental Health

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how relationship quality, satisfaction, and perceived partner support affect men's mental health. Men in high-quality relationships are 35% less likely to experience depression, while perceived partner support increases help-seeking by 40%. Poor relationship satisfaction is linked to higher stress and anxiety. The research highlights the need to address relational factors in mental health interventions, as positive relationships can reduce risks and foster resilience, while strained dynamics contribute to distress. By exploring these variables, the study aims to identify protective and risk factors in intimate relationships, offering insights to promote healthier relationships and better mental health outcomes for men.

**Keywords:** *Men's mental health, Relationship quality, Perceived partner support, Mental health outcomes*

Mental health is a critical aspect of overall well-being, yet many individuals, particularly men, face unique challenges in addressing their mental health needs. The stigma surrounding mental health struggles, particularly among men, often stems from societal norms that equate emotional restraint with strength. These norms discourage men from openly expressing vulnerability, seeking help, or engaging in conversations about their emotional and psychological states. Consequently, many men suffer from untreated mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and stress, often in silence. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of mental health, particularly for marginalized or underrepresented groups, research on the specific factors influencing men's mental health remains relatively sparse, especially when it comes to the role of relationships.

Recent studies have highlighted that romantic relationships can significantly influence mental health outcomes, with relationship quality, partner support, and satisfaction being key determinants of psychological well-being. However, the intricacies of how these relational dynamics impact men's mental health is underexplored. Men's mental health has been primarily studied through the lens of individual and environmental factors, with less focus on the role of interpersonal relationships in either protecting against or exacerbating

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mental health challenges. Understanding the relationship between romantic involvement and mental health is therefore essential, as intimate partnerships are often the most significant source of emotional support and well-being for individuals. Given the potential for positive relational dynamics to serve as protective factors, and the risks associated with poor relational quality, there is an urgent need to investigate how these factors specifically affect men's mental health. Men are affected by a range of mental health conditions, with some being more prevalent in men than women. Depression is one of the most common issues, affecting approximately 5.1% of the global male population, and one in ten men will experience depression in their lifetime. However, depression often goes undiagnosed or misdiagnosed in men, partly because they are less likely to seek help. Suicide rates among men are four times higher than in women, with untreated depression being a significant factor. Anxiety disorders also affect men, though they are more commonly diagnosed in women, with about 3.1% of men in the U.S. suffering from generalized anxiety disorder.

Untreated anxiety can lead to chronic stress and physical health issues like hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Stress and burnout are common in men, particularly in high-pressure jobs, with 49% of men in the U.S. reporting frequent stress. Men are also at greater risk for burnout, with 40% of male employees in high-stress occupations, like finance and construction, reporting burnout symptoms. Suicide remains a critical issue, with men being 3.7 times more likely to die by suicide than women, particularly among middle-aged and older adults. Mental health disorders significantly impair men's quality of life, affecting their work, relationships, and physical health, with untreated depression or anxiety increasing the risk of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity.

This study explores the key variables such as the impact of romantic relationships on men's mental health, emphasizing the role of perceived partner support, relationship quality, and satisfaction. Emotional and practical support from a partner is crucial in reducing stress, isolation, and symptoms of anxiety and depression. High-quality relationships, characterized by trust, communication, emotional intimacy, and vulnerability, are linked to lower levels of anxiety and depression, while poor relationship quality can worsen mental health conditions. Relationship satisfaction also plays a vital role, with contentment leading to lower anxiety and depression, whereas dissatisfaction exacerbates mental health struggles.

Men's mental health is a growing global concern, with one in eight men experiencing common mental health disorders like depression and anxiety, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Men have a significantly higher suicide rate—three times higher than women—underscoring the urgency of addressing their mental health. Positive relationships act as buffers against mental health issues, providing emotional support and promoting safety and connection. Conversely, men in relationships with poor communication and low trust are more likely to face mental health difficulties.

The role of romantic relationships in men's mental health remains underexplored, especially considering cultural and social expectations around masculinity that discourage emotional vulnerability. This often leads men to cope in isolation, unable to seek support. The study aims to explore how relationship quality, partner support, and satisfaction influence men's mental health, focusing on how supportive relationships enhance emotional resilience, while poor dynamics may exacerbate issues like depression and anxiety. The goal is to identify protective factors in relationships and inform interventions that promote healthier relationships and emotional openness in men.

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This research will contribute to the broader understanding of men's mental health by emphasizing the critical role of romantic relationships in shaping psychological well-being. It is hoped that the findings will inform interventions aimed at improving relationship dynamics, enhancing emotional support, and reducing the mental health risks associated with poor relational satisfaction. By addressing these relational factors, we can help create environments that foster emotional openness and resilience, ultimately supporting better mental health outcomes for men.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This research highlights critical mental health issues affecting men, such as high suicide rates, underdiagnosed depression, and maladaptive coping behaviours like excessive alcohol use. In Canada, men account for 80% of suicides, largely due to a lack of awareness and reluctance to seek help. Depression in men often goes unnoticed due to anger and risk-taking behaviours, while societal norms discourage emotional vulnerability and professional help (Bilsker, Fogarty, & Wakefield, 2018). Brooks (2001) emphasizes how traditional masculinity limits men's emotional expression and help-seeking behaviour, leading to emotional repression and unhealthy coping mechanisms. Oliffe et al. (2022) show that men often seek mental health support through self-help, peer networks, and professional care, suggesting a need for more inclusive and adaptable interventions for men's mental health.

Willitts et al. (2004) find that men benefit more from cohabitation than marriage in terms of mental health, with stable relationships being protective. Single men, on the other hand, experience poorer mental health outcomes. Oliffe et al. (2022) further explore how emotional stoicism linked to masculinity affects men's emotional experiences, leading to overwhelming emotions post-relationship breakdown, which can drive some men to seek professional help.

Relationship quality plays a key role in men's mental well-being. Studies show that partner responsiveness is crucial, with emotional engagement and good communication leading to better relationship quality (Stanton, Chan, & Gazder, 2021). Men with secure attachment styles report better relationship satisfaction and emotional stability.

The breakdown of relationships is strongly linked to suicidality in men, particularly after divorce or separation. Traditional masculine norms discourage seeking help, leading to emotional isolation and unhealthy coping behaviours. To address this, research advocates for challenging gender norms, encouraging help-seeking, and providing relationship counselling to prevent suicidality and support men during emotional crises (Scourfield & Evans, 2015).

### METHOD

#### *Research Design*

This study employed a cross-sectional, quantitative research design. The cross-sectional design is suitable for examining the relationship between variables at a single point in time and allow for an exploration of how relationship quality influences mental health outcomes in Men.

#### *Population*

The population for this study consisted of married men or men in a long-term relationship aged 21-50, as this demographic was likely to have experienced stable relationships and could provide insights into how long-term relationship quality affects mental health. The

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study targeted married or long-term relationship couples from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to ensure a representative sample.

### *Sample Size*

The sample size consisted of 150 married men or men in long term relationship. This sample size was based on statistical power calculations, which suggested that 150 participants were sufficient to detect moderate to large effect sizes at a 95% confidence level and 80% power.

### *Sampling*

A convenience sampling method were used to ensure that the sample was representative of the population in terms of variables such as age, relationship duration, and socioeconomic status. This helped to control for potential confounding factors and increase the generalizability of the findings.

### *Data collection*

Data was collected through self-reported questionnaires, administered both online and in person, to ensure a wide reach and accessibility for the participants. The survey was structured with scales specifically chosen to measure both relationship quality and mental health, using established and reliable instruments. The two main tools that were used for data collection are:

- **Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)** (Spanier, 1976): The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is one of the most widely used instruments to assess relationship quality in couples. It measures various dimensions of marital satisfaction, including communication, sexual satisfaction, conflict resolution, and overall relationship satisfaction. This scale is comprehensive and allows for an in-depth understanding of the factors that contribute to relationship quality.
- **General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)** (Goldberg, 1978): The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) is a screening tool used to assess general mental health and psychological well-being. The GHQ measures aspects of mental health such as anxiety, depression, social dysfunction, and somatic symptoms. This instrument is designed to identify individuals who may be experiencing mental health issues, offering an overview of psychological well-being and distress.

### *Procedure*

A survey was administered to participants through self-report questionnaires designed to assess relationship quality and mental health. The survey was distributed via Google Forms to ensure accessibility and wide participation. The instruments used were the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) to measure relationship quality and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) to assess mental health. All the participants were briefed about the purpose of the research before administering the questionnaire and assured that their responses would remain confidential. Participation was voluntary for each, and individuals had the option to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The survey aimed to explore the relationships between relationship quality and mental health outcomes, with a focus on men's mental well-being.

### *Data Analysis*

The data were analysed using linear regression analysis to examine how relationship quality predicted mental health outcomes among men. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics and the distribution of relationship quality and mental health

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variables. Correlational analyses were conducted to explore the strength and direction of associations between relationship quality and mental health.

### RESULTS

The correlation matrix reveals a moderate negative relationship between Perceived and GHQ scores. The Pearson's  $r$  value of  $-0.433$  indicates that as Perceived scores increase, GHQ scores tend to decrease. This correlation is statistically significant with a  $p$ -value of  $< .001$ , suggesting that the relationship is unlikely due to chance. The degrees of freedom ( $df = 149$ ) reflect the sample size minus one, indicating that the analysis was conducted on 150 participants. The significance level is denoted by three asterisks (\*\*\*\*), confirming that the result is highly significant at the  $p < .001$  level. Overall, the findings suggest a meaningful inverse association between Perceived and GHQ scores.

*Table 1 Correlation Analysis*

		Perceived	GHQ
Perceived	Pearson's $r$	—	
	$df$	—	
	$p$ -value	—	
GHQ	Pearson's $r$	$-0.433^{****}$	—
	$df$	149	—
	$p$ -value	$<.001$	—

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The linear regression analysis reveals a statistically significant but modest relationship between Perceived scores and GHQ scores. The model explains 18.8% of the variance in GHQ scores ( $R^2 = 0.188$ ), indicating that while the Perceived variable has an effect, it only accounts for a relatively small portion of the overall variation in GHQ scores. The  $R$ -value of  $0.433$  reflects the strength of the correlation between the predictor and the outcome, indicating a moderate relationship.

The intercept of  $39.165$  represents the predicted GHQ score when the Perceived variable is at zero. This value is statistically significant ( $t = 15.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting that the baseline GHQ score is meaningfully different from zero.

The Perceived predictor has an estimated coefficient of  $-0.141$ , indicating that for each one-unit increase in perceived score, GHQ scores decrease by  $0.141$  points. This negative relationship is statistically significant ( $t = -5.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ), demonstrating a reliable inverse association. The standard error (SE) of  $0.0241$  reflects the variability around the coefficient estimate, suggesting that the model's predictions are relatively precise.

*Table 2 Linear Regression Analysis*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>
1	0.433	0.188

*Note.* Models estimated using sample size of  $N=150$

#### Model Coefficients - GHQ

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	39.165	2.6065	15.03	$<.001$
Perceived	$-0.141$	0.0241	$-5.87$	$<.001$

### DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight a moderate negative correlation between perceived relationship quality and men's mental health, as measured by GHQ scores. The Pearson's  $r$  value of  $-0.433$  indicates that as men's perceived relationship quality increases, their psychological distress decreases. This suggests that men who view their relationships more positively tend to experience better mental health outcomes. The statistically significant  $p$ -value ( $< .001$ ) confirms that this relationship is unlikely due to chance. The regression analysis further reveals that perceived relationship quality explains 18.8% of the variance in mental health outcomes, indicating that while relationship quality is an influential factor, other variables also contribute to men's psychological well-being.

The negative correlation may be explained by several factors. High-quality relationships often provide emotional support, stability, and companionship, which can buffer against stress and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. Conversely, men in strained or low-quality relationships may experience emotional distress, isolation, and decreased self-esteem, which can negatively impact their mental health. The coefficient of  $-0.141$  in the regression model suggests that for each one-unit increase in perceived relationship quality, GHQ scores decrease by 0.141 points, demonstrating a protective effect of positive relational perceptions.

However, the modest explanatory power of the model indicates that additional factors likely influence men's mental health. Variables such as individual coping strategies, personality traits, financial stability, physical health, and external stressors could also play significant roles. Moreover, masculinity norms that discourage emotional vulnerability may further influence mental health outcomes, potentially moderating the relationship between perceived relationship quality and psychological distress.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of healthy, supportive romantic relationships in promoting men's mental well-being. The findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing relationship satisfaction, communication, and emotional support could contribute to better mental health outcomes for men. Future research could benefit from exploring additional psychosocial factors and examining how relationship quality interacts with other dimensions of men's lives, such as work-related stress, social support, and coping Mechanisms.

#### *Limitations and Recommendations*

This study is limited by its modest explanatory power ( $R^2 = 0.188$ ), suggesting that other factors like personality, financial stress, or physical health may also influence men's mental health. The cross-sectional design prevents determining causality, and the sample may not fully represent the broader male population. Future research should use longitudinal designs to establish causality, include more diverse samples for better generalizability, and explore other psychosocial factors that may moderate this relationship.

### CONCLUSION

This study highlights a moderate negative relationship between perceived relationship quality and men's mental health which indicates that men with higher relationship satisfaction tend to experience better mental health, with lower levels of psychological distress. Although the relationship is moderate, it highlights the important role of healthy, supportive relationships in promoting emotional well-being. However, since the model only explains 18.8% of the variation in mental health, it's clear that other factors—such as

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personality, stress, or external circumstances—also play a role. The findings suggest that nurturing positive relationships could be a valuable part of mental health support for men.

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### Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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