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# Emotions and emotion regulation in family relationships

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# Abstract

- The aim of the present paper was to describe **how emotions and emotion regulation affect individual well-being, couple relationship quality and parenting behaviors.**
- The findings of our research studies conducted on Romanian families showed that **positive emotions and cognitive emotion regulation strategies were positively related to positive dyadic coping (supportive, common, and delegated dyadic coping), relationship satisfaction and individual well-being of both partners.**
- In addition, **parents' difficulties in emotion regulation increased negative communication between parents and children.**
- In the current conference presentation we will also discuss a research project in progress, with 2 objectives: (1) conducting a longitudinal study considering emotions and coping in couple and parent-child interactions and (2) developing a mobile application for increasing emotional support, positive emotions and well-being in couple relationship.



# Positive emotions in couples

*According to the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), the experience of positive emotions broadens people's thoughts and actions (e.g., to play, to be creative, to savour current life circumstances, and to share achievements with others), which in turn builds **intrapersonal and social benefits**, such as social support and positive relations with others (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008).*

# Positive emotions in couples



*exchanging positive emotions in close relationships (as a result of positive events that happened to one's partner) has been found to be positively associated with commitment, relationship satisfaction, and relationship stability (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000; Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006).*




*positive emotions but not negative emotions have been found to be related to resilience (Cohn et al., 2009; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), self–other overlap (Vaughn & Fredrickson, 2006), and life satisfaction (Cohn et al., 2009).*



*experimental studies showed that positive emotions have an “undoing” function on the negative consequences of stress, by being associated with downregulation of negative emotions, which is relevant to coping (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).*

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Economic strain and support in couple: The mediating role of positive emotions

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**Funding information**

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC-CRUS), Grant/Award Number: SCIEX Project12.237

**Abstract**

This study examined positive emotions as mediating mechanisms in the association between economic strain and spouses' supportive behaviour. Data were collected from 295 married couples living in Romania. Results from the Actor–Partner Mediator Model indicated that economic strain had a negative indirect effect on spouses' supportive dyadic coping due to its negative association with partners' positive emotions (joy, contentment, and pride). For both partners, positive emotions decreased when they experienced economic strain, which in turn reduced supportive dyadic coping in couples. These findings have theoretical implications in explaining the association of economic strain with partners' positive emotions and behaviours and also clinical implications for practitioners working with couples experiencing economic strain.

**KEYWORDS**

dyadic coping, economic strain, married couples, positive emotions, support

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Economic strain has been found to negatively affect both individual well-being and couples' functioning. At an individual level, economic strain has been linked to depression (Dew & Yorgason, 2010) and anxiety (Falconier, 2010), whereas at the couple level, it has been associated with relationship dissatisfaction, instability (e.g., Archuleta, Britt, Tonn, & Grable, 2011), negative interactions such as conflict (Kwon,

Horne, & Galovan, 2016). Moreover, there is longitudinal research indicating that lack of employment was more strongly related to a decrease in positive emotions than to an increase in negative emotions and psychological symptoms such as depression and anxiety (Huppert & Whittington, 2003).

On the basis of previous studies showing that stress depletes spouses' personal and relational resources, we suggest that marital economic strain is linked to a decrease in wives' and husbands' positive

- 295 married couples from Romania
- Men's mean age was 39.30 (SD = 9.34, range = 21–66), and women's mean age was 36.14 years (SD = 9.37, range = 20–64). On average, the marriage duration was 13.05 years

## Research study

# Positive emotions and dyadic coping in couples

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The results showed significant actor effects; men and women's positive emotions were positively related to their own Supportive Dyadic Coping. Moreover, we found significant partner effects; men and women's positive emotions had a positive effect on their partner SDC. Therefore, partners scoring highly on positive emotions were more likely to report providing partner support in couples.

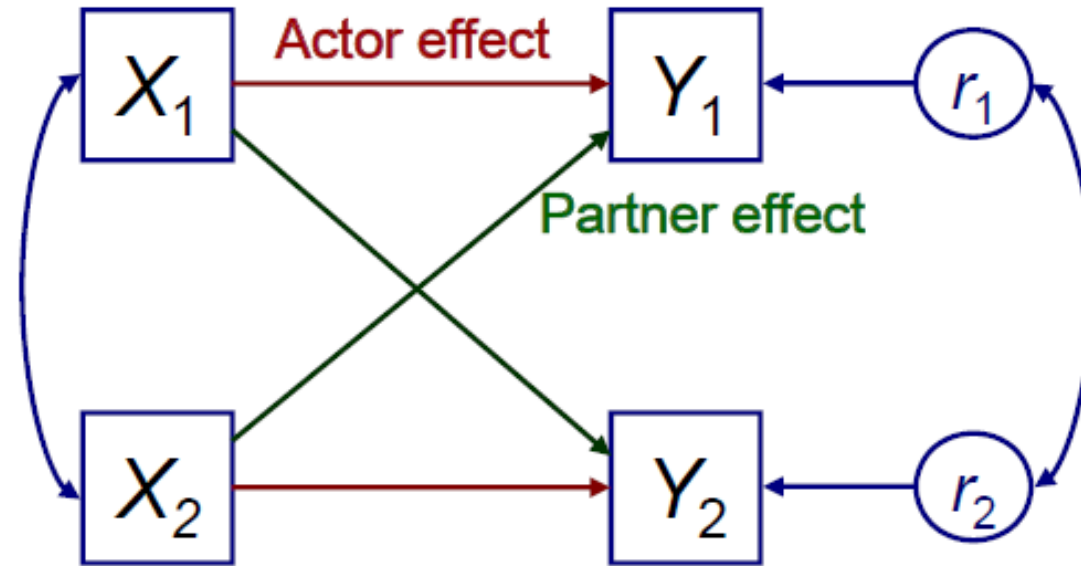
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These findings were in line with other research showing a positive association between the ability to manage emotions and perceived social support (Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003). In addition to previous studies indicating a positive association between positive emotions and better individual adjustment to stress (Gloria et al., 2013; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), we found that increasing positive emotions can also promote DC in couples.

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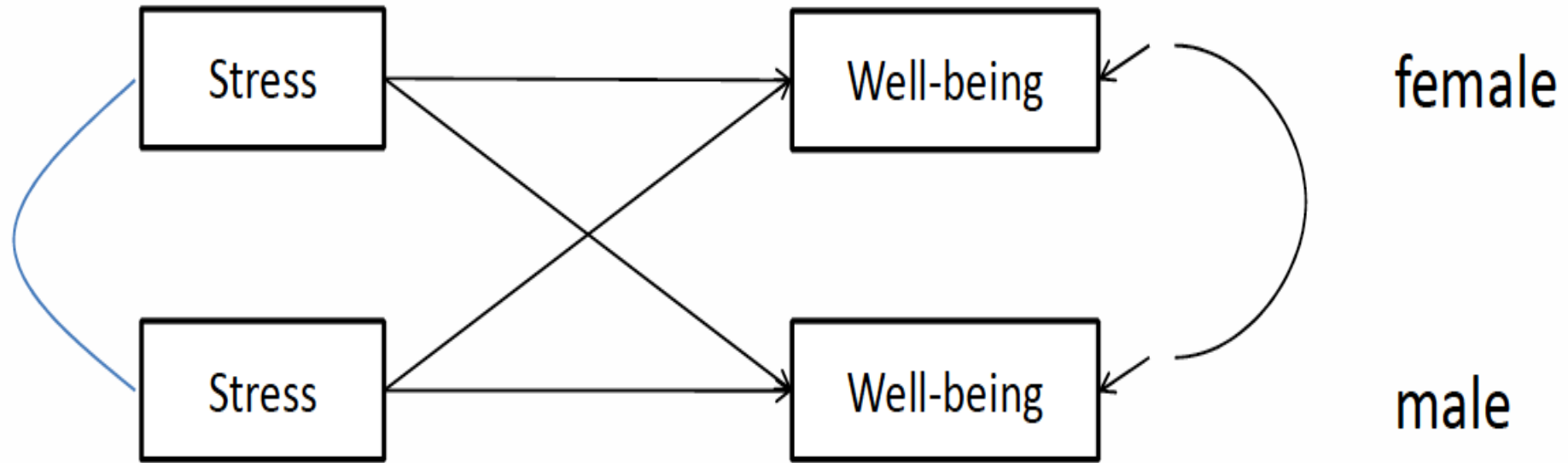
These findings highlighted the role of positive emotions in building social resources (Fredrickson, 2001) and were consistent with past research relating positive emotions with positive relations, social support, commitment, and relationship satisfaction (Aron et al., 2000; Fredrickson et al., 2008; Gable et al., 2006).

# APIM



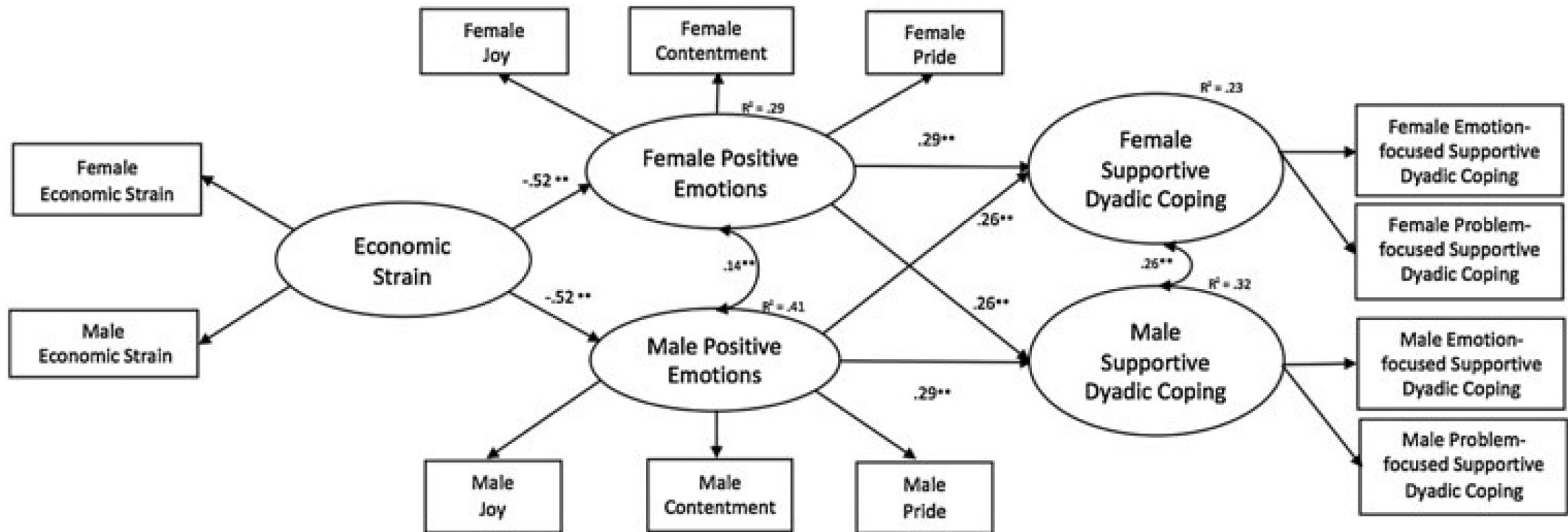


## APIM



$$y_{c1} = b_{01} + b_{11}x_{c1} + b_{21}x_{c2} + e_{c1}$$

$$y_{c2} = b_{02} + b_{12}x_{c2} + b_{22}x_{c1} + e_{c2}$$

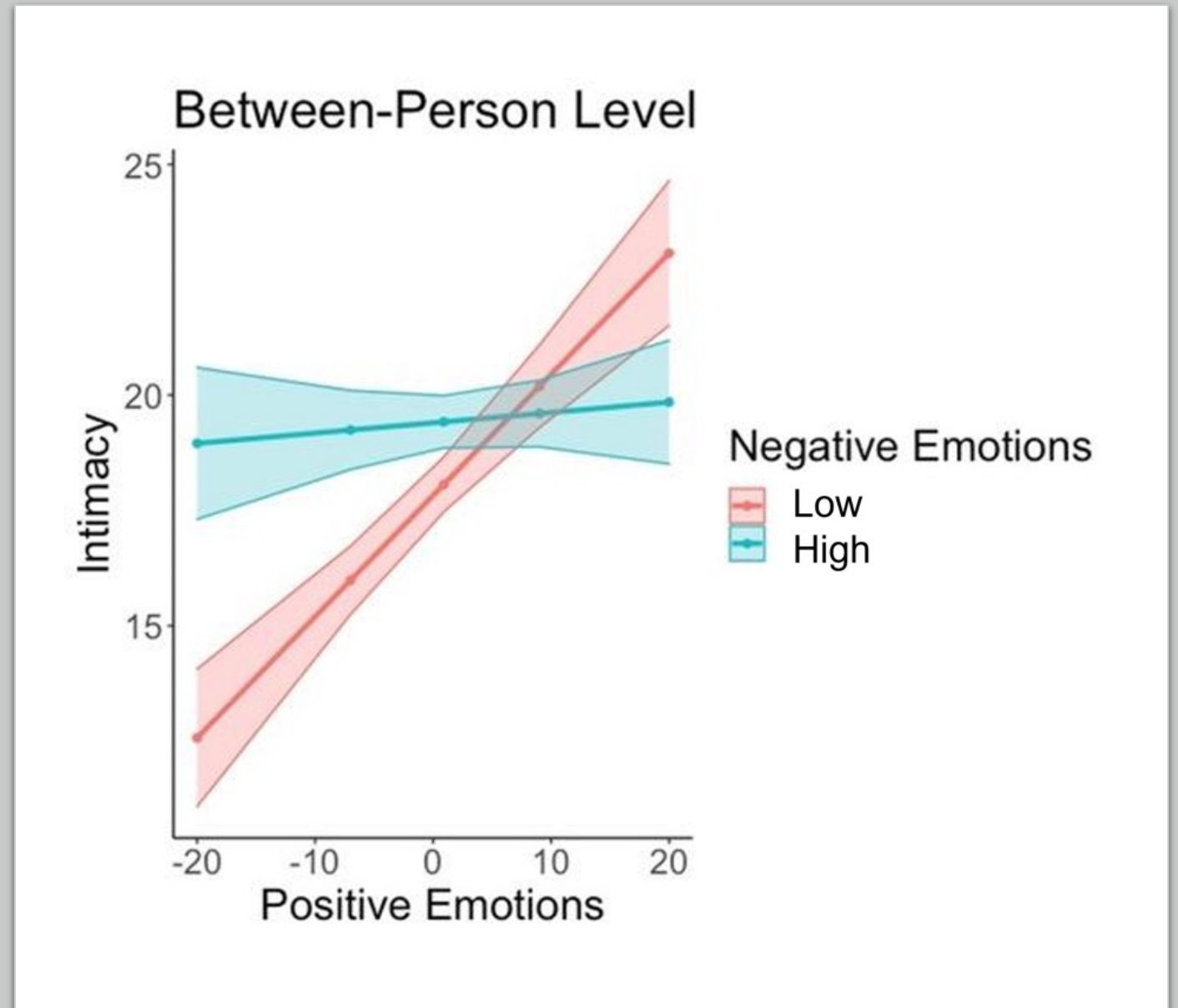


# Daily diary study

- **Rusu et al. (2021): Positive But Not Negative Emotions Predict Intimacy In Couple Relationships: A Daily Diary Study**
- The aim of the current study was to investigate **the associations of positive and negative emotions with intimacy in couple relationships by using a daily diary approach.**
- Data was collected from a sample of **81 couples** (N = 162 individuals) across 7 days.
- Multilevel modelling was used in order to disentangle the variability on the between-person level and within-person level. The results showed that **positive emotions, enhanced overall and daily intimacy.**
- Men and women, who experienced more positive emotions on average, reported higher levels of intimacy (between-person effects). In addition, we found that men and women tend to feel greater intimacy towards the partner on days when they experience more positive emotions (within-person effects).
- Moreover, **women's daily level of intimacy increased as men's daily positive emotions increased, and women's daily level of intimacy decreased as men's daily negative emotions increased**
- No effect was found for negative emotions in the association with intimacy, neither at the between-level or the within-level. Our results contribute to a better understanding of the specific roles of positive and negative emotions in couple relationships and also highlight the importance of addressing positive emotions in couple therapy.

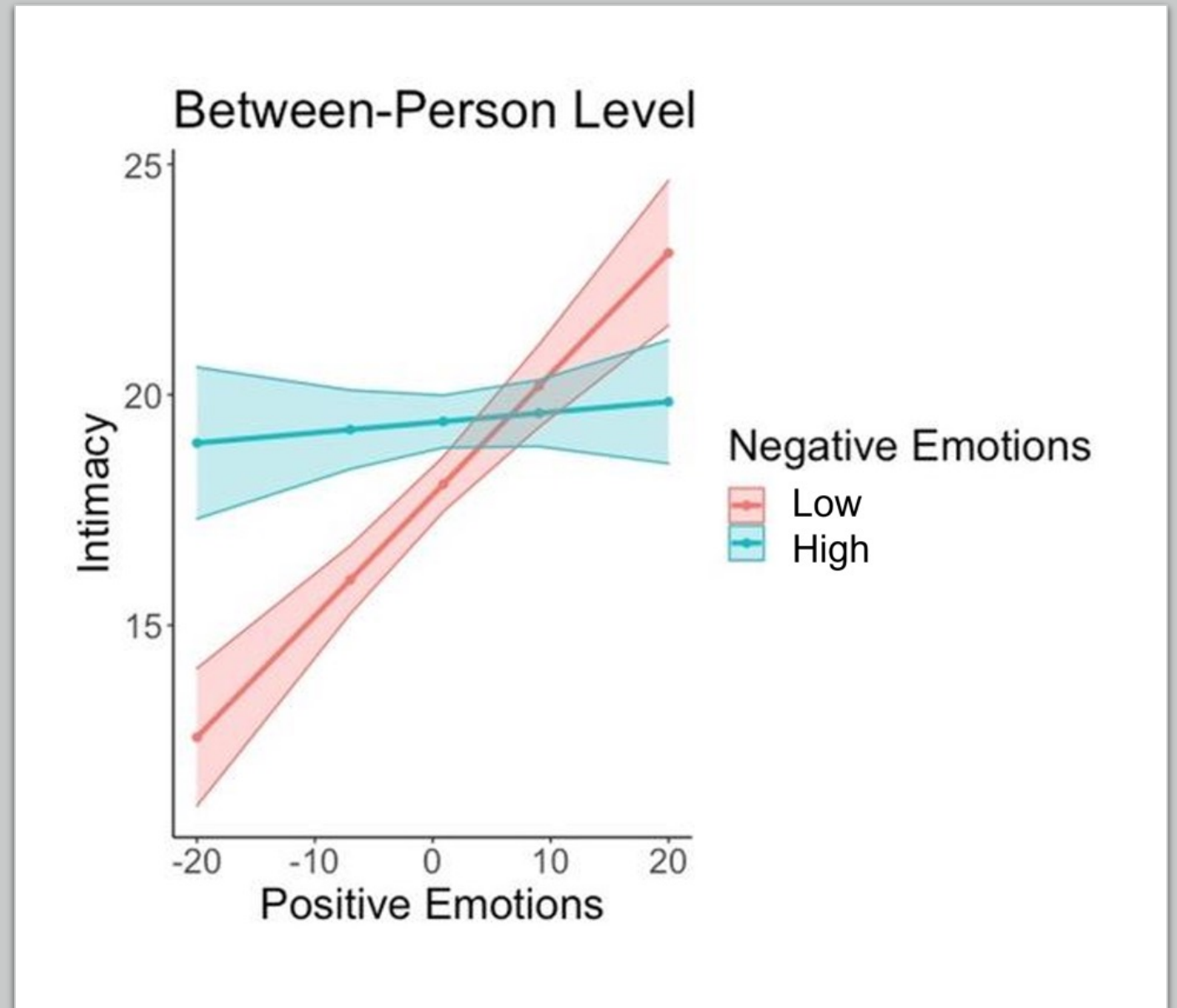
the link between today's positive emotions and intimacy is buffered by the average level of positive emotions

Rusu et al., 2021



On the between-person level, negative emotions moderate the effect of positive emotions on intimacy for women but (but nor for men).

Rusu et al., 2021





# Emotion regulation in couples

*Emotion regulation has been positively related with intrapersonal outcomes, such as higher levels of well-being, less depression, and anxiety (Cicchetti, Ackerman, & Izard, 1995; Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001; Martin & Dahlen, 2005)*

*but also with interpersonal outcomes, such as relationship quality with couples (John & Gross, 2004; Lopes, Salovey, Co<sup>^</sup>te', & Beers, 2005).*

cognitive emotion regulation strategies were positively related to positive dyadic coping (supportive, common, and delegated dyadic coping), relationship satisfaction and individual well-being of both partners.

## Cognitive emotion regulation and positive dyadic outcomes in married couples

Journal of Social and Personal Relationships  
1–18  
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/0265407517751664  
journals.sagepub.com/home/spr



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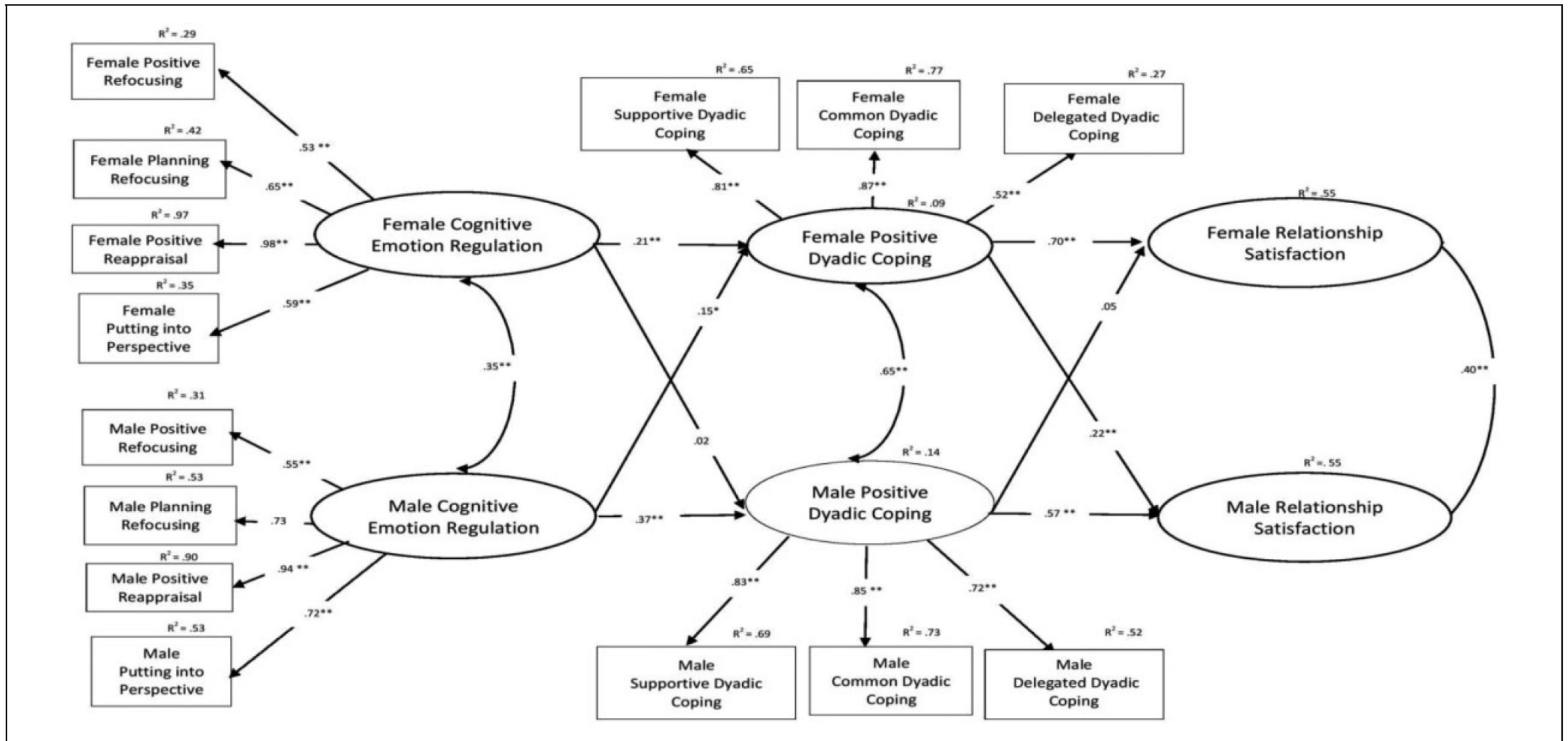
### Abstract

The aim of the present research was to investigate the association between spouses' individual cognitive emotion regulation (CER) strategies, dyadic coping behaviors, and relationship satisfaction. Using a sample of 295 couples (590 individuals), we found that adaptive CER strategies (putting into perspective, positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, and planning refocusing) were related to positive dyadic coping (supportive, common, and delegated coping in couples), which in turn increased both partners' relationship satisfaction. Analyses using actor-partner interdependence modeling indicated that dyadic coping mediated the association between spouses' CER and their own relationship satisfaction. These findings support the importance of addressing both cognitive coping strategies and dyadic coping in prevention and intervention in couples.

### Keywords

Cognitive emotion regulation, couple relationships, dyadic coping, relationship satisfaction

Emotion regulation has been positively related not only with intrapersonal outcomes, such as higher levels of well-being, less depression, and anxiety (Cicchetti, Ackerman, & Izard, 1995; Garnefski, Kraaij, & Spinhoven, 2001; Martin & Dahlen, 2005) but also



**Figure 1.** APMeM testing positive dyadic coping as a mediating variable in the relationship between adaptive CER and marital satisfaction. The correlations between male and female CER strategies (positive refocusing, planning refocusing, positive reappraisal, and putting into perspective) and between male and female positive dyadic coping (SDC by oneself and CDC and DDC by oneself) were computed in the model but were not depicted for clarity. APMeM: actor-partner mediation model; CER: cognitive emotion regulation; SDC: supportive dyadic coping; CDC: common dyadic coping; DDC: delegated dyadic coping.





## Emotion regulation in couples

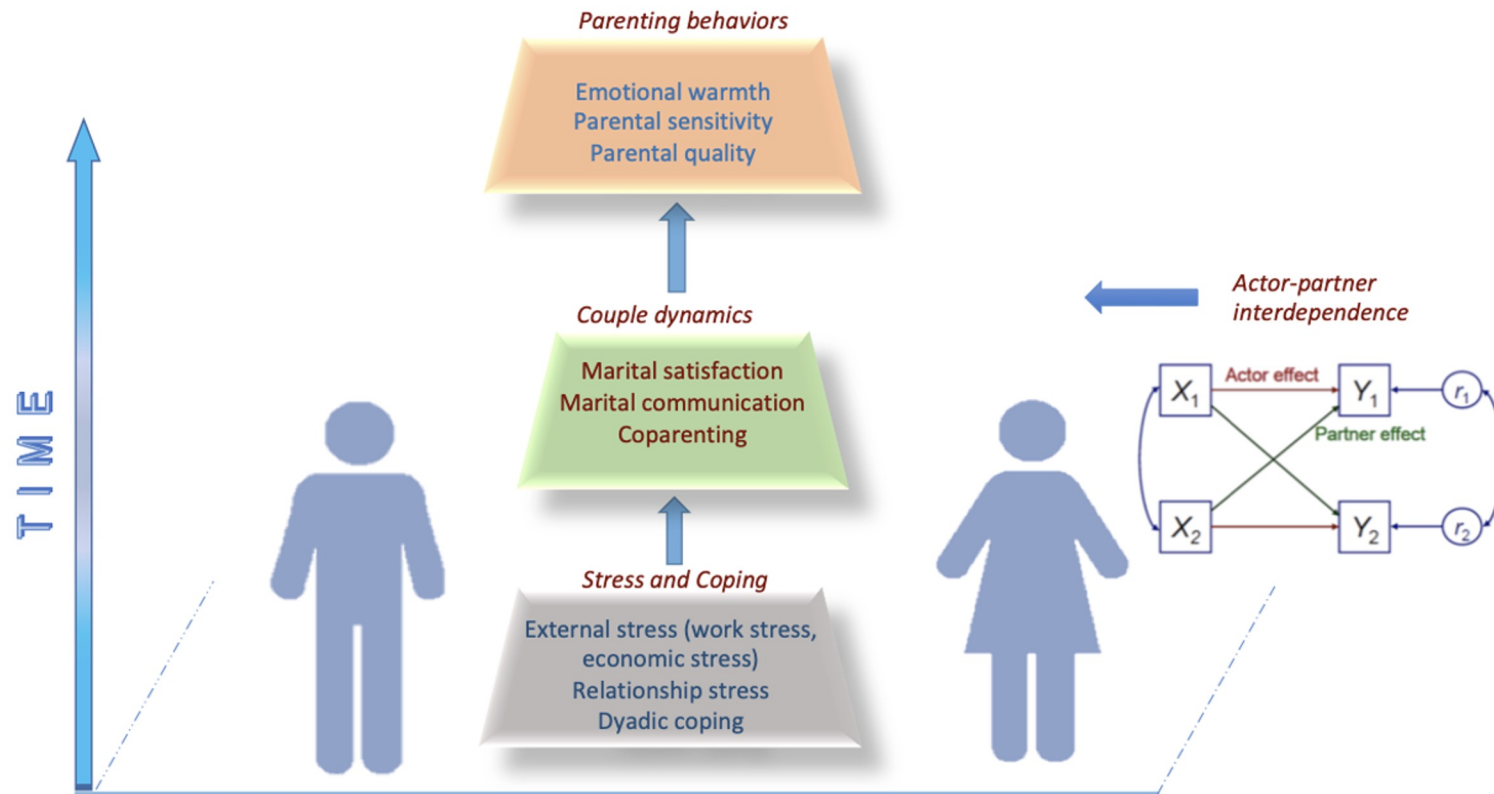
- The findings showed that CER strategies (putting into perspective, positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, and planning refocusing) were positively associated with positive dyadic coping (SDC, CDC, and DDC), which in turn positively affected relationship satisfaction.
- Our results converge with prior studies, showing that emotion regulation abilities are associated with positive relationship outcomes (Bloch et al., 2014; Zeidner et al., 2013).

# Implications for therapy

- The findings of the present study support **the importance of addressing partners' individual emotional regulation strategies within the context of working with couples.**
- Couple therapists may want to assess each partner's CER strategies to determine whether an intervention is needed to address dysfunctional cognitions before implementing dyadic interventions or in addition to couple-oriented interventions.
- Couple therapies could focus on interventions targeting cognitions contributing to maladaptive emotion regulation.
- **Through cognitive restructuring, cognitive reframing, and cognitive distraction, partners could improve their individual coping skills in confronting with stress.**
- According to STM (Bodenmann, 2005), individual emotion regulation is beneficial for relationship functioning, as a lower level of stress is spilling into the close relationship when both partners are able to cope by their own with the negative emotions.

Research project  
**Stress and Coping in Family  
Relationships: Longitudinal  
Effects on Couple Dynamics and  
Parenting Behaviors**





# Stress and Coping in Family Relationships

- ▶ The first goal of the present project is to conduct a longitudinal study in order to test models of causality in explaining how stress affects couple dynamics and parenting behaviors

# Stress and Coping in Family Relationships

- ▶ The second goal of the project will focus on designing a mobile version of the Couples Coping Enhancement Training (CCET, Bodenmann & Shantinath, 2004) for Romanian couples (**e-Romanian Couples Coping Enhancement Training: e-RoCCET, Study 2**).
- ▶ CCET is a relationship education program for preventing distress in couples based on the STM of stress and coping in couples (Bodenmann, 2005), and cognitive behavioral therapy for couples.

# Units of the CCET

Unit	Content	Materials
1. Awareness of the role of stress on close relationships. Improving understanding of stress and coping	Theoretical information on stress, subjective evaluation of stress, the influence of stress on couple interaction, spill-over and cross-over of stress.	Videos, questionnaires for assessing different types of stress, short quizzes, exercises
2. Individual coping with stress	Information about individual coping skills, learning individual coping strategies (e.g. stress-balancing activities, avoiding unnecessary stress, calming strategies, dealing with stress).	Illustrations, video examples, exercises
3. Dyadic coping with stress	Information about dyadic coping skills forms of dyadic coping, developing stress communication, supportive dyadic coping, common dyadic coping.	Exercises with the partners, video examples, illustrations, stories
4. Communication and negative behaviors in couples	Forms of communication and the influence of conflicts on relationships, resolving conflicts, recognizing negative behaviors.	Exercises with the partners on communication styles, active listening
5. Problem- solving strategies	Problem solving strategies at individual and dyadic level, the role of support provided by the partner in problem solving, discussing problem-focused supportive common dyadic coping.	Illustrations, video examples of problem solving, individual and couple exercises

Word cloud of "Thank You" in various languages and scripts:

- danke
- 謝謝
- ngiyabonga
- tesekkür ederim
- спасибо
- Баярлалаа
- рахмат
- merci
- vinaka
- spas
- welalin
- tack
- maisaotra
- matondo
- paldies
- grazzi
- mahalo
- tapadh leat
- hvala
- mauruuru
- koszonom
- akun
- dankon
- aciü
- gracias
- moichhakkeram
- asante m
- obrigada
- muraba ya
- dziękuje
- honorakaloutioun
- gratias ago
- gracies
- sulipay
- go raibh maith agat
- djere dieuf
- tau
- dякую
- mamnun
- brigado
- sobodi
- dekuji
- sagolun
- sukriya
- kop khun krap
- taiku
- arigato
- takk
- dakujem
- trugarez
- mesii
- didi madloba
- kam sah hamnida
- rahmat
- terima kasih
- tanemirt
- rahmet
- grazie
- diolch
- dhanyavadagal
- shukriya
- merce
- мерси
- তোমাকে ধন্যবাদ
- 감사합니다
- xiexie
- euxaristw
- mercii