

Parental Status as a Moderator in the Association Between Discrimination, Enacted Stigma, and Life Satisfaction Among LGB Individuals in Israel

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INTRODUCTION

Minority stress theory¹ conceptualizes discrimination and enacted stigma as chronic, socially imposed stressors that undermine the mental health of sexual minorities. While much of the literature has centered on vulnerabilities, emerging perspectives call for greater attention to resilience, or strengths-enhancing mechanisms.

This study seeks to explore parenthood as a potential buffer against the psychological impact of minority stress.

In the Israeli society, where parenthood is a core cultural ideal within a strongly pronatalist context, LGBTQ+ adults who become parents may experience enhanced belonging, social validation, and greater alignment with dominant norms². These factors may contribute to reduced exposure to discrimination and stigma, and, in turn, to improved psychological well-being³.

While LGBTQ+ parenthood has received growing academic attention, usually with a comparison to heterosexual counterparts, this study offers a distinct perspective by comparing parents and non-parents within the community itself.

The current research compares these two groups and examines whether parental status moderates the associations between minority stress indicators—specifically discrimination and enacted stigma—and life satisfaction.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

- LGB parents would report lower levels of discrimination and enacted stigma, and higher levels of life satisfaction, compared to non-parents.
- Higher levels of discrimination and enacted stigma would be negatively associated with life satisfaction.
- Parental status would moderate the associations between discrimination/enacted stigma, and life satisfaction, such that these associations would be attenuated among LGB parents.

MEASURES AND METHOD

Measures:

- Discrimination Experiences Scale⁴
- Enacted Stigma: 3 items from the stigma subscale of the Minority Stress Scale⁵
- Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)⁶

Participants: the sample included 552 LGB adults aged 18 and above, of whom 336 (60.9%) were non-parents and 216 (39.1%) were parents. Participants’ mean age was = 33.59 (*SD* = 8.94)

Procedure: Participants were recruited through convenience sampling between November 2022 and March 2024 as part of a broader study on sexual minorities in Israel. They voluntarily completed an anonymous online questionnaire. The study was approved by the ethics committee of Reichman University.

Data Analysis: ANCOVA was used to compare parents and non-parents across the main study variables. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the main and interaction effects of discrimination, enacted stigma, and parental status on life satisfaction, with sociodemographic variables (self-rated health, gender, living area, religiosity, place of birth) serving as covariates.

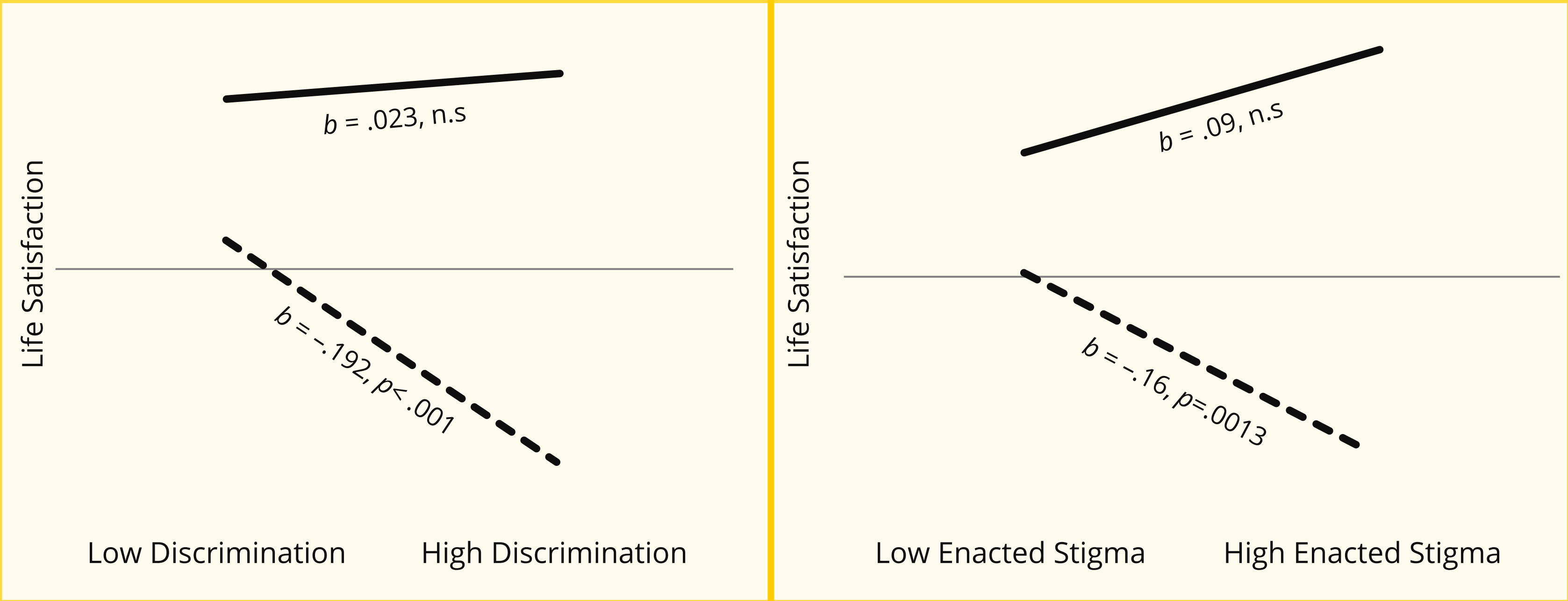
RESULTS

LGB parents reported significantly **lower levels of discrimination** ($M = 1.84$, $SD = 0.68$) and **enacted stigma** ($M = 1.96$, $SD = 0.64$) compared to non-parents ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.68$; $M = 2.1$, $SD = 0.67$), respectively ($F(1) = 24.32$, $p < .001$; $F(1) = 4.92$, $p = .02$). They also reported **higher life satisfaction** ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.0$) than non-parents ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.14$; $F(1) = 31.09$, $p < .001$).

Regression analyses indicated that both **discrimination** ($\beta = -.135$, $p = .002$) and **enacted stigma** ($\beta = -.09$, $p = .033$) **were significantly negatively associated with life satisfaction**.

Importantly, parental status moderated the associations between both discrimination ($\beta = .101$, $p = .014$) and enacted stigma ($\beta = .11$, $p = .008$) with life satisfaction. **Among non-parents, higher levels of discrimination and stigma were associated with lower life satisfaction, while no such associations were found among parents.**

The Association Between Discrimination / Enacted Stigma and Life Satisfaction as a Function of Parental Status



DISCUSSION

Findings underscore the importance of recognizing parenthood as a potential resilience factor for LGBTQ adults, commonly exposed to discrimination and stigma. In a pronatalist society like Israel—where parenthood is culturally celebrated but many times inaccessible for sexual minorities—this protective function gains particular relevance. **These insights emphasize the need to expand access to parenthood, not only as a matter of equality but also as a means of enhancing psychological well-being among sexual minorities.** They carry clear implications for policymakers, who must address systemic barriers to LGBTQ+ parenthood, as well as for mental health and education professionals working with sexual minority populations.

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