

<https://doi.org/10.5559/di.32.3.01>

EFFECTS OF MATE VALUE AND MATE VALUE DISCREPANCY ON PERCEIVED MARITAL QUALITY: A DYADIC APPROACH

Biljana TRIFUNOVIĆ MARINKOVIĆ,
Milica LAZIĆ, Jelena ŠAKOTIĆ-KURBALIJA
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad,
Novi Sad, Serbia

UDK: 159.922.1-058.833
Original scientific paper

Received: April 4, 2021

The main aim of this study was to investigate the effects of mate value assessment and mate value discrepancy on perceived marital quality, using an assessment of personal and partner mate value obtained by both partners. The sample included 442 heterosexual couples that have lived together for at least a year. The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) was used to investigate the effects of personal and partner mate value assessment on the evaluation of marital quality. In addition, two interaction effects were added to the model to examine the effect of mate value discrepancy on perceived marital quality. The APIM model showed significant actor and partner effects of the partner's mate value assessment on the evaluation of both husbands' and wives' marital quality. The model also showed a significant effect of personal mate value assessed by wives on husbands' marital quality assessment. However, the current evidence does not confirm the assumption of a possible combination of partners' mate value promoting marital quality above and beyond the contribution of both partners' mate value.

Keywords: mate value, mate value discrepancy, marital quality, Actor-Partner Interdependence Model



Jelena Šakotić-Kurbalija, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, Dr Zorana Đinđića 2, 21102 Novi Sad, Serbia.

E-mail: jelenasakotickurbalija@ff.uns.ac.rs

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, studying the factors that influence and are affected by marital quality has been a significant area of study in the psychology of close relationships (Čikeš et al., 2018; Larson & Holman, 1994; Proulx et al., 2007). As a result, numerous studies have demonstrated that various individual (e.g., personality traits), intra-dyadic (e.g., communication and conflict resolution), and extra-dyadic factors (e.g., economic stress) affect perceived marital quality across a range of sub-samples and cultural contexts (Cundiff et al., 2012; Šakotić-Kurbalija et al., 2017; Wagner et al., 2019). Also, great research attention has been paid to the effects of marital quality on subjective well-being (Proulx et al., 2007), emotional distress (Goldfarb & Trudel, 2019), general and mental health (Robles et al., 2014). However, although partner relationships always involve two actors, for years the dominant approach in this research field has been individualistic or intrapersonal. The interdependencies between the assessments of various aspects of marital functioning made by both couple members, as well as the significance of the interactions between their assessments on the outcome variables, were neglected in previous studies (Cramer, 2000; Patrick et al., 2007). With recognising the importance of taking into account the assessments of both partners and the interdependence of these assessments (Kenny et al., 2006), the use of the dyadic approach has increased dramatically over the last few years (Candel & Turliuc, 2019).

Although considerable attention has been paid to the predictors of marital quality, assessing the partner's and personal mate values has rarely been investigated in this context. Most studies investigating the impact of mate value in romantic relationships still only use data from one partner, and they frequently focus on partner selection, overlooking the importance of perceived mate value in both long-term and marital relationships (Arnocky, 2018). The concept of mate value has emerged in evolutionary theory, emphasising that our male and female ancestors faced different tasks related to survival and reproduction. As a result, the concept initially referred to any externally visible traits or phenotypic qualities that enable successful reproduction. However, over time, the definition of mate value has evolved, and some authors (Fisher et al., 2008) now include "all characteristics an individual possesses at a given moment and within a particular context that impacts on their ability to successfully find, attract, and retain a mate" under the concept of mate value (Fisher et al., 2008, p. 157). So, in addition to physical attributes, mate value also incorporates all psychological and social traits that can affect the choice of a romantic partner and the functioning of a romantic relationship (Šakotić-Kurbalija & Trifunović, 2020).

The goal of the current study aims to advance our understanding of the significance of mate value in the context of romantic relationships by examining the impact of personal and partner's mate value as well as mate value asymmetry or discrepancy on marital quality. To do this, both partners provided assessments of their own and their partner's mate values.

Mate value discrepancy and marital quality

The Social Exchange Theory, also known as Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), is the most well-known theory that emphasises the importance of dyadic exchange. It holds that people evaluate their relationships by weighing the perceived benefits of their relationships against the perceived costs of those relationships, as well as the extent to which their current partner or relationship produces results that are better than those available from the best available alternatives (Simpson & Gangestad, 1992). Individuals who believe they are receiving the benefits they deserve from a partner or relationship are more likely to be satisfied with their partner or relationship. On the other hand, the Equity Theory (Hatfield et al., 1978), grounded in the Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), highlights the significance of the equity principle in a relationship. According to this theory, individuals are more likely to be satisfied in a relationship if they are "equitably treated", that is, if their relative gains are equivalent to those of their partners. On the other side, both "over-benefited" and "under-benefited" individuals are more likely to be unsatisfied with their relationship. Although Interdependence Theory and Equity Theory have conflicting assumptions, these assumptions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Some studies (Lloyd et al., 1982) thus indicate that at the beginning of a relationship, the importance of the equity principle is more emphasised, while over time, equity begins to be valued significantly less. Thus, equity stands out as the best predictor of satisfaction in shorter relationships, while in longer relationships, equity loses its predictive power.

Some previous studies have shown that those who perceive themselves as under-benefited in terms of contributions to an intimate relationship, rate marital satisfaction lower than those who assess investment proportionally (VanYperen & Buunk, 1991). Studies on married couples supported previous findings that perceived inequity, in terms of "giving more" to the marriage (subjective under-benefit), is related to both partners' experiences of lower marital quality (DeMaris, 2010). DeMaris's (2010) study also shows that objective under-bene-

fit, in terms of contribution to income, paid labour, housework, and health, reduces women's but increases men's marital quality. Accordingly, insight into the assessment of personal or partner mate value separately is not enough to understand marital functioning. Instead, it is important to take into account the interactions between mate value assessments obtained by both partners.

Previous studies have shown that mate value discrepancy or the gap between one's assessment of personal and partner's mate values, predicts commitment and relationship satisfaction (Sidelinger & McMullen, 2008), forgiveness, and jealousy (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007), as well as mate retention behaviours (Sela et al., 2017). Particularly, when persons perceived their partner to have greater mate values than their own, they rated their relationships as satisfying and devoted, felt more jealousy and forgiving and engaged in more frequent mate retention behaviours. In a study conducted by Buss and Shackelford (1997a), in which two interviewers provided an independent assessment of husbands' and wives' mate values, women married to men of higher relative mate value were more afraid that their husbands would have affairs in the next year, and also reported a greater likelihood of divorcing them due to their infidelity (Shackelford & Buss, 1997). On the other hand, husbands who perceived their wives as more attractive reported more intense mate retention efforts (Buss & Shackelford, 1997b). The findings from Serbia (Šakotić-Kurbalija, 2016) align with the previously mentioned results, indicating that higher assessment of personal mate value is a significant predictor of how women perceive all aspects of marital quality, as well as marital stability. Women who perceived greater personal mate value estimated lower marital quality and were more willing to divorce.

Although researchers have shown that individuals who assess their partner's mate value as higher were more involved in maintaining the romantic relationship (Oltmanns et al., 2017), it is not clear enough to what extent mate value discrepancy is reflected in marital quality. Previous studies are very sporadic when it comes to the effects of mate value discrepancy on marital quality. Besides, significantly more research has used intrapersonal dimensions of marital quality, such as marital satisfaction, as an outcome variable, neglecting interpersonal dimensions, such as consensus, intimacy, etc. (e.g. Hromatko et al., 2015; Nowak & Danel, 2014).

In the study conducted by Nowak and Danel (2014), which only included a sub-sample of women and divided them into three categories where a woman had higher, equal and lower mate value than her partner, revealed that the category of women with higher self-assessed mate value had the lowest

relationship satisfaction compared to women who had equal and lower mate value than their partners. In a study using Croatian and Iranian samples, Tadinac and colleagues (Tadinac et al., 2012) found that profit in mate value (difference in personal and partner's perceived mate value) was a significant predictor of marital quality in both Croatian men and women, as well as in Iranian women. In these three sub-samples, people assessed the quality of their marriage as better if they thought their partners had a) higher mate value than they did. However, this did not apply to Iranian men, for whom profit in mate value was not a significant predictor of marital quality. Besides, Hromatko and colleagues (Hromatko et al., 2015) study's findings showed that: a) higher marital satisfaction of men in the Croatian sub-sample was associated with lower personal mate value, higher partner's mate value, and higher personal mate value assessed by a partner; b) higher marital satisfaction of women in Croatian and Iranian sub-samples was associated with higher partner's mate value; and c) the examined variables did not influence men's marital satisfaction in the Iranian sub-sample. These studies point to culture and gender-related differences in mate value assessments but also confirm the evolutionary hypothesis about the universal relevance of mate value in pair bonding (Hromatko et al., 2015).

Sex differences in mate value

Sex differences in mate value can be explained by evolutionary theories that emphasise the reproductive strategies and selective pressures that have shaped human mating preferences over time. Sexual selection theory and related fields (e.g., parental investment theory; Trivers, 1972) suggest that men and women have evolved different criteria for mate selection due to differences in their reproductive biology, investment, and potential reproductive payoffs.

In many species, males typically compete for females, while females are the choosy sex. This competition can lead to the evolution of traits in males that enhance their competitive advantage and attractiveness to females. In humans, traits such as social dominance, confidence, and displays of resources are often valued by women as indicators of genetic quality, and the ability to provide resources for offspring.

According to parental investment theory (Trivers, 1972), women generally face higher costs and greater investment in reproduction due to pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation. As a result, women are more selective in their mate choices and tend to prioritise long-term partners with qualities that indicate a man's ability and willingness to invest resources, pro-

vide protection, and support offspring. This preference is often reflected in the desire for mates with high social status, ambition, financial resources, and commitment.

On the other hand, men, as the sex with lower obligatory investment, are predicted to have a higher potential reproductive rate and are more inclined to pursue a strategy of mating with multiple partners. Men's preferences are more likely to be influenced by cues related to fertility and reproductive value, such as physical attractiveness, youthfulness, and indicators of good health. These preferences are thought to increase the likelihood of successful reproduction and passing on genes to future generations.

The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model

The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) is a state-of-the-art methodology for analysing dyadic data in the field of partner relationships. The APIM is based on assumptions of the Interdependence Theory, which holds that interactions between partners have an impact on each other's experiences and outcomes (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). Since both partners are involved in mutual, long-term interactions and their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are dependent on one another, researchers emphasise the need of examining both spouses' characteristics and assessments within the same statistical model. The great advantage of the APIM model, compared to models that do not take dyadic data into account, is that it allows examining how a certain characteristic of the spouse affects not only their own criterion variable, but also the partner's criterion variable (Campbell & Kashy, 2002). In addition, it is particularly important for this research that it is possible to introduce interaction effects between different predictor variables into the APIM model, which examines the importance of mate value discrepancy or asymmetry on the assessment of the marital quality by both partners. In short, without dyadic data and the introduction of interaction effects into the model, it would not be possible to test the assumptions of the previously mentioned theories, on the basis of which the hypotheses in this research were derived.

The present study

In the present study, we use the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model to investigate the effects of personal and partner mate value, as well as mate value discrepancy on marital quality.

In line with Hromatko et al's (2015) study that shows that men were more satisfied if they estimated their own mate value as low, we hypothesise that men's assessment of personal mate value and their evaluation of marital quality will be negatively related (H1).

In line with studies that show a link between the partner's mate value and relationship satisfaction and/or quality (Hromatko et al., 2015), we hypothesise that an individual's assessment of his or her partner's mate value and personal evaluation of marital quality will be positively related (H2). From a biological perspective, women invest more in offspring, leading to an initial imbalance in parental investment (Pawłowski & Danel, 2009). Considering that a man's potential investment in a relationship is related to his quality as a spouse, we therefore expect that the association between an individual's assessment of partner mate value and marital quality will be stronger for women than men (H2.1).

In line with Murray's (2005) assumption that individuals must believe that the partner sees them positively in order to be satisfied with their relationship, we hypothesise that an individual's assessment of his or her partner's mate value and his or her partner's marital quality will be positively related (H3). Because women are the more selective sex and men are the more competitive (Trivers, 1972), men could derive more satisfaction from being in a relationship with women who see them as highly desirable mates, and we therefore expect that the partner effect of the individual's assessment of partner mate value and marital quality will be stronger for men than women (H3.1).

Based on the assumptions of Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) that an individual who perceives to be in a relationship that provides high rewards, low costs, and exceeds the individual's generalised expectation, will be more satisfied with the relationship, we hypothesise that personal marital quality would increase when partner's mate value exceeds personal mate value (H4).

In line with studies that show that individuals with lower personal mate value, and who perceive their partner to have higher (vs. lower) mate value, perform more frequent Benefit-Provisioning mate retention tactics (Sela et al., 2017), emphasising that individuals who perceive they can be more easily replaced more often manifest behaviours that contribute to the preservation of marital functioning, thus potentially increasing the experience of general marital quality, we expect that an individual's marital quality would increase when their partner perceives themselves lower in value (H5).

In our study, both dyad members evaluated: 1) Personal mate value; 2) Partner mate value; and 3) Marital quality. Except the main actor and partner effects, two interaction effects were added to the model to test the effects of mate value discrepancy on marital quality. This is the first study to address the effects of mate value discrepancy on marital quality in such

a complex way, considering: 1) The dyad perspective; 2) Assessment of both personal and partner mate value by both partners; and 3) The interaction effects between different personal and partner mate value assessments.

METHOD

Sample and procedure

A total of 442 married couples of different educational, employment, and socioeconomic status from Serbia participated in the study. The average age of male participants was 42.22 years ($SD = 11.67$), while the female participants were, on average, 39.50 years old ($SD = 11.25$). The couples that participated in this study lived together on an average of 14.23 years ($SD = 11.56$), with 74.8% living in an official marriage and 69.8% having children.

The participants were recruited for participation at gynecologist offices and kindergartens during the year 2020. Couples who expressed interest in participation in the study were approached by researchers who explained the study and answered all their questions. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaires without consulting the partner and to return them in enclosed envelopes. The envelopes were delivered separately to each spouse to ensure the independence and privacy of the reports. The questionnaires were coded to match the partners. The study was anonymous and voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were required to: 1) be willing to participate by freely giving informed consent; 2) be over 18 years old; and 3) be in a heterosexual marriage or cohabit with their partners in a heterosexual relationship. The 58 questionnaires filled out by only one partner and the questionnaires with identical answers for both spouses on all measures were excluded. Participants were not reimbursed for their participation.

Instruments

Mate Value Inventory (Kirsner et al., 2003, modified by Tadinac et al., 2005) consists of 17 traits, representing mate values, which should be related to mating success (ambitious, attractive face, attractive body, desires children, emotionally stable, enthusiastic about sex, faithful to partner, financially secure, generous, a good sense of humour, healthy, independent, intelligent, kind and understanding, loyal, responsible, and sociable). Participants were asked to evaluate their mate value (MVI-SF) and the mate value of their romantic partner (MVI-PF), on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 ("extremely low") to 5

("extremely high"). The Mate Value Inventory demonstrated good psychometric properties cited in previous studies (Gladden et al., 2010; Hromatko et al., 2015), and adequate internal consistency in the present study ($\alpha = 0.81$ for MVI-SF and $\alpha = 0.86$ for MVI-PF).

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976, 1989) is a 32-item self-report measure originally designed to assess the quality of marriage and similar dyads. Spanier (1976) also indicated that the DAS could be used to measure the separate components of dyadic adjustment (Dyadic Consensus, Dyadic Satisfaction, Dyadic Cohesion and Affectional Expression). The majority of the items are rated on different Likert-type scales (with 5-point, 6-point and 7-point format) defining the amount of agreement or the frequency of an event. Most items use a 6-point format, with options scored from 0 ("always agree") to 5 ("always disagree"). The scale also contains two dichotomous items. In this research, only the total score was used in analysis (ranging from 0 to 151), with higher scores indicating a better adjustment to one's relationship. A Dyadic Adjustment Scale has demonstrated excellent psychometric properties cited in previous studies (Trifunović et al., 2016; Šakotić-Kurbalija et al., 2017), and excellent internal consistency in the present study ($\alpha = 0.93$).

The relationship duration, measured in months, was used as a control variable.

Statistical analysis

We tested the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model proposed by Kenny and colleagues (Kenny et al., 2006), using a structural equation modelling approach. Concerning the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model, the main advantages of the SEM approach are that equations for both criterion variables can be estimated simultaneously, and the relations between parameters in different equations can be specified (Cook & Kenny, 2005). In addition, multigroup analyses were used to test whether the path coefficients in our models were equal for the wives and husbands (Kline, 2005). We compared the model allowing the paths to vary across sex with the model constraining the structural paths across gender to be equal to examine the sex differences.

Data analysis was performed using Mplus, version 7.32 (Muthen & Muthen, 2015), with a robust maximum likelihood estimation. The following fit indices were used to evaluate the model: robust Satorra-Bentler scaled chi square ($SB\chi^2$), The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Standardised Root Mean Residual (SRMR). The $SB\chi^2$ value should

be nonsignificant to indicate a good fit, but this is rarely obtained in large samples as the chi-square value is highly sensitive to sample size (Barrett, 2007). SRMR values less than 0.8 (Perry et al., 2015), RMSEA values from 0.06 or less, and CFI and TLI above 0.95 are recognised as indicative of a good fit, while RMSEA between 0.06 and 0.08, and CFI and TLI between 0.90 and 0.95 are considered acceptable (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The main assumption of the APIM model is that in partner relationships, a personal assessment of the marital quality depends not only on the personal characteristics, but also on the characteristics of the other dyad member. Accordingly, two types of effects are calculated within the APIM model, i.e., actor and partner effects, which refer to different predictive relationships within the model. The actor effect refers to the predictive power that the personal characteristics of one partner have on the criterion variable evaluated by the same partner. On the other hand, partner effect refers to the predictive power that certain characteristics of one partner have in explaining the evaluation of a criterion variable by another partner. In this study, the assessment of personal and partner mate value by both partners was used to predict the marital quality assessed by both partners simultaneously. In this example, the actor effects refer to the effects that the assessment of personal and partner mate value by one partner has on his/her own assessment of marital quality. On the other hand, partner effects refer to the effects that the evaluation of personal and partner mate value by one partner has on the evaluation of marital quality by another partner. Accordingly, in model 1 four actor effects and four partner effects were tested.

In model 2, in addition to the actor and partner effects, two interactive effects were included: 1) the interactive effect of personal and partner mate value measured by husbands; and 2) the interactive effect of personal and partner mate value measured by wives. Each of the mentioned interactive effects in the model predicted marital quality measured by both partners.

All variables were previously standardised.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables

Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables are given in Table 1. The scores on all forms of mate value assessment are high and uniform, regardless of which partner makes the assessment. The evaluation of the quality of marriage is high for both partners and above the theoretical aver-

TABLE 1
Descriptive statistics
and correlations
among study variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Personal mate value (W)						
2. Partner's mate value (W)	0.588**					
3. Personal mate value (H)	0.417**	0.569**				
4. Partner's mate value (H)	0.492**	0.509**	0.512**			
5. Marital quality (W)	0.452**	0.762**	0.425**	0.466**		
6. Marital quality (H)	0.335**	0.594**	0.468**	0.651**	0.727**	
Mean	70.22	73.27	69.75	72.96	113.13	111.17
Standard deviation	7.61	7.80	6.72	8.15	14.55	14.92
Skewness	-0.96	-1.28	-0.38	-0.83	-0.93	-0.97
Kurtosis	1.44	1.71	0.06	0.38	1.41	1.25

Note: Personal mate value (W) = wife's estimate of own mate value; Partner's mate value (W) = wife's estimate of partner's mate value; Personal mate value (H) = husband's estimate of own mate value; Partner's mate value (H) = husband's estimate of partner's mate value; Marital quality (W) = wife's marital quality; Marital quality (H) = husband's marital quality;
** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Personal and partner's mate value and marital quality: APIM models

We tested two APIM models: 1) a model with main effects, 2) a model with main effects and two interaction effects which tested the discrepancy effect. Model 1, which included four predictors, i.e., assessment of personal and partner's mate value assessed by both partners, shows good fit indices according to the criteria proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999) ($\chi^2(9) = 889.00$, $p < 0.05$; $CFI = 0.913$; $TLI = 0.907$; $RMSEA = 0.047$ (90% $CI = 0.028, 0.059$)). Since this model also contains two criterion variables, i.e., the assessment of marital quality by two partners, eight main effects were tested in the model (Table 2). A significant predictor of marital quality, evaluated by wives, is how she assesses her partner's mate value ($\beta = 0.728$, $p < 0.001$) and how her partner assesses her mate value ($\beta = 0.121$, $p < 0.05$). With the increase of the partner's mate value, assessed by both partners, the assessment of the quality of marriage, assessed by wives, also increases. On the other hand, significant

predictors of marital quality, assessed by men, are how they assesses their partner's mate value ($\beta = 0.499, p < 0.001$), how their partners assess their mate value ($\beta = 0.402, p < 0.05$), but also how their partners evaluate personal mate value ($\beta = -0.159, p < 0.001$). With the increase of the partner's mate value, assessed by both partners, as well as with the decrease of the partner's personal mate value, the assessment of marital quality, assessed by men, also increases. The relationship duration was kept under control.

	Marital quality (W)			Marital quality (H)		
	Estimate	s.e	<i>p</i>	Estimate	s.e.	<i>p</i>
Personal mate value (W)	0.001	0.048	0.989	-0.159	0.046	0.001
Partner's mate value (W)	0.728	0.050	0.000	0.402	0.058	0.000
Personal mate value (H)	-0.052	0.053	0.321	0.051	0.049	0.296
Partner's mate value (H)	0.121	0.057	0.033	0.499	0.049	0.000
Relationship duration	-0.006	0.032	0.861	0.002	0.033	0.955

TABLE 2
Partner and actor effects of personal and partner's mate value on marital quality

In order to test the discrepancy effects (Figure 1), in addition to the main actor and partner effects, two interaction effects were added in Model 2: 1) the interaction effect of personal and partner's mate value, assessed by wives, and 2) the interaction effect of personal and partner's mate value, assessed by husbands. The same main actor and partner effects were registered as in Model 1 (Table 2; Table 3). Additionally, no significant interaction effects were registered. Also, the effect of relationship duration was not registered.

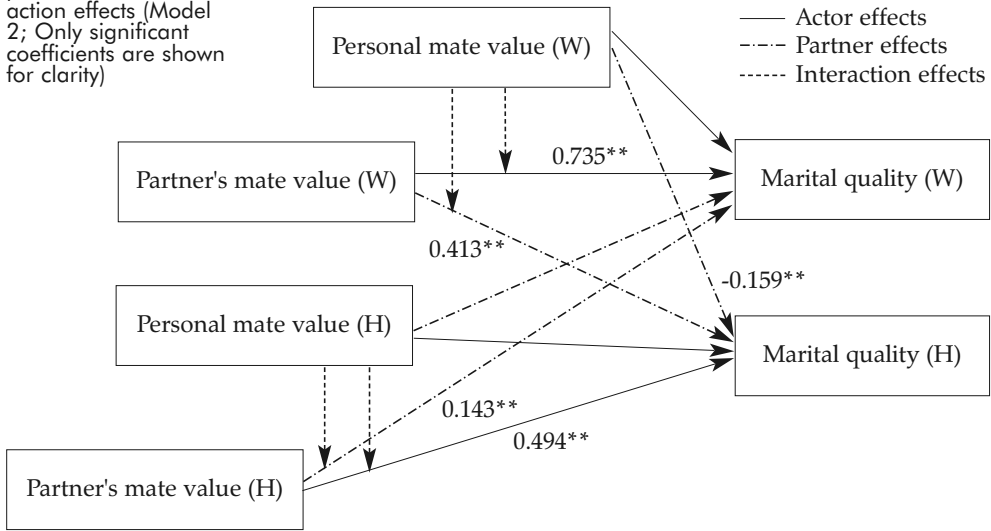
TABLE 3
Main and interaction effects of personal and partner's mate value on marital quality

	Marital quality (W)			Marital quality (H)		
	Estimate	s.e	<i>p</i>	Estimate	s.e.	<i>p</i>
Personal mate value (W)	-0.014	0.044	0.745	-0.159	0.047	0.001
Partner's mate value (W)	0.735	0.048	0.000	0.413	0.054	0.000
Personal mate value (H)	-0.034	0.049	0.493	0.050	0.047	0.289
Partner's mate value (H)	0.143	0.055	0.009	0.494	0.058	0.000
Interaction effect (W)	0.037	0.037	0.318	0.036	0.046	0.435
Interaction effect (H)	0.077	0.041	0.062	-0.008	0.032	0.808
Relationship duration	-0.001	0.031	0.963	0.002	0.033	0.948

Note. Interaction effect (W) = Personal mate value (W) * Partner's mate value (W); Interaction effect (H) = Personal mate value (H) * Partner's mate value (H).

We also used multigroup models to test whether the path coefficients differ between wives and husbands. We compared the first model (allowing the paths to vary across sex) with the second model (constraining the structural paths across gender to be equal) to examine the sex differences. The results showed non-significant chi-square differences between the two models, $\Delta\chi^2(7) = 125.49, p > 0.01$. Inspection of each

FIGURE 1
Personal and partner's mate value and marital quality: actor, partner and interaction effects (Model 2; Only significant coefficients are shown for clarity)



DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate effects of personal and partner's mate value assessment, as well as the effect of mate value discrepancy on perceived marital quality. In line with the results of previous studies (e.g., Hromatko et al., 2015; Sideling & McMullen, 2008; Tadinac et al., 2012), these study results suggest that the assessment of mate value influences not only the mate selection process but also the perceived quality of a romantic relationship once it has been formed.

Our model showed that the assessment of personal mate value is weakly related to perceived marital quality, so contrary to what was hypothesised in H1, we did not find a significant effect of husbands' personal value assessment on perceived marital quality. However, the model indicates a low yet significant negative effect of a wife's personal mate value assessment on the husband's perceived marital quality. It could be assumed that husbands feel more secure in marriages in which women value themselves less because they estimate that their wives are less likely to be unfaithful to them or leave them. On the other hand, lower wives' assessment of personal mate value may be related to their more frequent use of Benefit-Provisioning mate retention tactics, as previous research has suggested (Sela et al., 2017), emphasising that individuals who perceive that they can be more easily replaced more often manifest behaviours that contribute to the preser-

vation of marital functioning, such as sexual satisfaction of partners and an investment in improving their physical appearance (Oltmanns et al., 2017), and thus potentially increasing the experience of general marital quality. Benefit-Provisioning behaviours can also improve husbands' perception of wives' mate value, which further contributes to husbands' experience of high marital quality. In addition, it is possible that men, in accordance with traditional roles, highly value modesty in women, and evaluate as better relationships with women who, although they have a lot of qualities, in the end, do not praise themselves.

As hypothesised in H2, we found a significant effect of partners' mate value assessment on experience of marital quality, both in husbands and wives, but we did not find higher actor effect of a partner's mate value for wives' evaluation of marital quality compared to that of husbands', as hypothesised in H2.1. These results are consistent with the previously identified significance of partners' mate value for relationship development and its various aspects. Men and women who report high mate value for their partners show a greater willingness to forgive a partner's infidelity (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2007), as well as higher relationship satisfaction (Sidelinger & McMullen, 2008) and higher marital quality (Tadinac et al., 2012). According to Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), an individual's personal assessment of a romantic relationship depends on the degree to which the partner meets and exceeds his/her needs, compared to the best available option outside the relationship. Thus, individuals whose needs are not met become dissatisfied with their relationship. Therefore, many authors state that individuals who perceive their partners more positively can more easily forgive their partners for various inappropriate behaviours and take more constructive actions in order to resolve conflict situations (Arriaga et al., 2007; Miller et al., 2006). In addition, a positive partner's mate value assessment can contribute to a reduction of focusing on alternative partners which may occur at certain stages of the relationship (Lydon et al., 2008), and which can further contribute to maintaining relationship quality.

As hypothesised in H3, we found a significant effect of the husband/wife's assessment of partner's mate value on the partner's evaluation of marital quality, but we did not find a more pronounced partner effect of a partner's mate value on a husband's marital quality, compared to that of a wife's marital quality, as hypothesised in H3.1. These results are consistent with Murray's (2005) assumption that individuals must believe that a partner sees them positively in order to be satisfied with their relationship. It can be assumed that the pos-

itive evaluation of husbands' and wives' mate value by their spouses can contribute to their greater sense of security and acceptance. Husbands and wives who positively evaluate their spouses may be more likely to exhibit Benefit-Provisioning behaviours such as expressing love and affection and giving compliments, which in turn can contribute to an increased sense of acceptance, security, and irreplaceability, as well as the perception of a higher marital quality by way of strengthening the marital relationship between spouses. On the other hand, if husbands and wives evaluate their spouses less positively, spouses may perceive an increased likelihood of rejection and may feel that they are easily replaceable in the relationship, which can lead to reduced trust in one's partner, a reduced desire to further invest in the marriage, and consequently to an experience of lower marital quality. Since our data are based on correlations, it is also possible that partners who assess higher marital quality engage in behaviours that further contribute to a positive relationship climate, and in return, such behaviours could provide the mate with reasons to perceive them as better partners.

Contrary to what was hypothesised in H4 and H5, the current evidence does not confirm the assumption of a possible combination of partners' mate value promoting marital quality above and beyond the contribution of both partners' mate value. Moderator variables, such as partners' religiosity or gender-role ideologies, could play a prominent role in the absence of the predicted discrepancy effect. In most marriages, each spouse's contribution in a given domain is not the same – one spouse is contributing more but getting back a smaller outcome, in the form of the other spouse's contribution. However, religious couples have less tendency to recognise inequity in relationship contributions in contrast to less religious couples, and therefore are less likely to respond with distress if they are "under-benefited" in their relationships (Wilcox & Nock, 2006), and more traditional couples have more tendency to expect asymmetry in relationship contributions, and therefore have less tendency to react as negatively to inequity in relationship contributions in contrast to more egalitarian couples.

Also, in this study we used a composite measure to assess mate value. By using combined multiple aspects or traits that are considered important in mate selection, such as physical attractiveness, intelligence, personality, social status, etc., we aimed to capture the overall perceived value of an individual as a mate. However, it is possible that both similarity and dissimilarity between an individual's own mate value and their partner's mate value have significant effects on marital quali-

ty, depending on the specific mate value characteristics, as indicated by previous research. For example, the perception that one's partners share similar goals, such as having children, is positively associated with relationship satisfaction (Avivi et al., 2009). Being similar to the romantic partner in characteristics such as emotional stability, kindness and understanding, etc., can be beneficial to marital quality, because partners who are similar to each other may be more attuned in coordinating their interactions and better able to understand each other's emotions and to experience an increase in closeness (Anderson et al., 2003; Gonzaga et al., 2007). Contrary to that, some studies found that having a more attractive partner improves relationship satisfaction (Conroy-Beam et al., 2016), so discrepancy (in terms of perceived benefit) in some characteristics like physical attractiveness, vitality, and others, can be positively associated with marital quality. We should also consider complementarity as a specific form of discrepancy, where the partners' opposite characteristics provide satisfaction by compensating each other's weaknesses (e.g., Markey & Markey, 2007). For example, similarity on certain characteristics, such as ambition or dominance (Markey et al., 2010), could have adverse effects on relationship functioning because partners could be more likely to compete with each other as they strive to fulfil their individual needs, so this form of complementarity could prevent conflict between spouses.

The present study has several limitations. Firstly, a cross-sectional design of this study limits causal inferences, so future studies may utilise longitudinal methods to examine the causal relationships between mate value and marital quality. Secondly, we used a convenience sample that included married couples with perceived high marital quality, which raises the question of whether spouses gave socially desirable answers, or only couples with perceived high marital quality were willing to participate voluntarily in the research, thus reducing the possibility of generalising the obtained results. Also, since mate value discrepancy/similarity effects have been found to be small in size in most of the studies (e.g., Hromatko et al., 2015), large couple samples are needed to detect these effects above and beyond actor and partner effects of mate value. Although the size of our sample was as large, or larger than average couple studies, it might not suffice for the detection of very small effects. However, notwithstanding these limitations, we believe that our study has a valuable theoretical contribution, as it directly indicates how mate value assessed by both partners is related to the experience of marital quality in heterosexual relationships. In addition, results suggesting significant effects of mate value assessment on experience of marital quality may have important practical implications for

counselling and therapy in the context of marital problems, indicating the need to consider how individuals assess different characteristics in their partners.

We recommend that future research focuses on examining the mechanisms by which personal and partner's mate value affect relationship quality assessed by both partners. Understanding the relationship between these constructs can contribute to the development of more effective interventions aimed at preventing problems in both marital and more general romantic relationships, as well as increasing relationship quality and overall marital functioning.

Acknowledgements

This study was supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (project number ON179022; project name "Effects of existential uncertainty on individuals and families in Serbia").

REFERENCES

- Anderson, C., Keltner, D., & John, O. P. (2003). Emotional convergence between people over time. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(5), 1054–1068. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.5.1054>
- Arnocky, S. (2018). Self-perceived mate value, facial attractiveness, and mate preferences: Do desirable men want it all? *Evolutionary Psychology*, 16(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474704918763271>
- Arriaga, X. B., Slaughterbeck, E. S., Capezza, N. M., & Hmurovic, J. L. (2007). From bad to worse: Relationship commitment and vulnerability to partner imperfections. *Personal Relationships*, 14(3), 389–409. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2007.00162.x>
- Avivi, Y. E., Laurenceau, J. P., & Carver, C. S. (2009). Linking relationship quality to perceived mutuality of relationship goals and perceived goal progress. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 28(2), 137–164. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2009.28.2.137>
- Buss, D. M., & Shackelford, T. K. (1997a). Susceptibility to infidelity in the first year of marriage. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31(2), 193–221. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1997.2175>
- Buss, D. M., & Shackelford, T. K. (1997b). From vigilance to violence: Mate retention tactics in married couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(2), 346–361. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.72.2.346>
- Campbell, L., & Kashy, D. A. (2002). Estimating actor, partner, and interaction effects for dyadic data using PROC MIXED and HLM: A user-friendly guide. *Personal Relationships*, 9(3), 327–342. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6811.00023>
- Candel, O. S., & Turliuc, M. N. (2019). Insecure attachment and relationship satisfaction: A meta-analysis of actor and partner associations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 147, 190–199. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.04.037>
- Conroy-Beam, D., Goetz, C. D., & Buss, D. M. (2016). What predicts romantic relationship satisfaction and mate retention intensity: Mate

preference fulfillment or mate value discrepancies? *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 37(6), 440–448. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2016.04.003>

Cook, W. L., & Kenny, D. A. (2005). The actor-partner interdependence model: A model of bidirectional effects in developmental studies. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 29(2), 101–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01650250444000405>

Cramer, D. (2000). Relationship satisfaction and conflict style in romantic relationships. *The Journal of Psychology*, 134(3), 337–341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980009600873>

Cundiff, J. M., Smith, T. W., & Frandsen, C. A. (2012). Incremental validity of spouse ratings versus self-reports of personality as predictors of marital quality and behavior during marital conflict. *Psychological Assessment*, 24(3), 676–684. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026637>

Čikeš, A. B., Marić, D., & Šincek, D. (2018). Emotional intelligence and marital quality: Dyadic data on Croatian sample. *Studia Psychologica*, 60(2), 108–122. <https://doi.org/10.21909/sp.2018.02.756>

DeMaris, A. (2010). The 20-year trajectory of marital quality in enduring marriages: Does equity matter? *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27(4), 449–471. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407510363428>

Fisher, M., Cox, A., Bennett, S., & Gavric, D. (2008). Components of self-perceived mate value. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology*, 2(4), 156–168. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0099347>

Gladden, P. R., Figueredo, A. J., & Snyder, B. (2010). Life history strategy and evaluative self-assessment. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 48(6), 731–735. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.01.016>

Goldfarb, M. R., & Trudel, G. (2019). Marital quality and depression: A review. *Marriage & Family Review*, 55(8), 737–763. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2019.1610136>

Gonzaga, G. C., Campos, B., & Bradbury, T. (2007). Similarity, convergence, and relationship satisfaction in dating and married couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 93(1), 34–48. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.93.1.34>

Hatfield, E., Walster, G. W., & Berscheid, E. (1978). *Equity: Theory and research*. Allyn & Bacon.

Hromatko, I., Bajoghli, H., Rebernjak, B., Joshaghani, N., & Tadinac, M. (2015). Relationship satisfaction as a function of mate value. *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences*, 9(4), 242–256. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ebs0000055>

Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 6(1), 1–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118>

Kelley, H. H., & Thibaut, J. W. (1978). *Interpersonal relations: A theory of interdependence*. Wiley.

Kenny, D. A., Kashy, D. A., & Cook, W. L. (2006). *Dyadic data analysis*. Guilford Press.

Kirsner, B. R., Figueredo, A. J., & Jacobs, W. J. (2003). Self, friends, and lovers: Structural relations among Beck Depression Inventory scores

and perceived mate values. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 75(2), 131–148. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0165-0327\(02\)00048-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0165-0327(02)00048-4)

Kline, T. J. B. (2005). *Psychological testing: A practical approach to design and evaluation*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385693>

Larson, J. H., & Holman, T. B. (1994). Premarital predictors of marital quality and stability. *Family Relations*, 228–237. <https://doi.org/10.2307/585327>

Lloyd, S., Cate, R., & Henton, J. (1982). Equity and rewards as predictors of satisfaction in casual and intimate relationships. *The Journal of Psychology*, 110(1), 43–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.1982.9915324>

Lydon, J. E., Menzies-Toman, D., Burton, K., & Bell, C. (2008). If-then contingencies and the differential effects of the availability of an attractive alternative on relationship maintenance for men and women. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(1), 50–65. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.95.1.50>

Markey, P. M., & Markey, C. N. (2007). Romantic ideals, romantic obtainment, and relationship experiences: The complementarity of interpersonal traits among romantic partners. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 24(4), 517–533. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407507079241>

Markey, P. M., Lowmaster, S., & Eichler, W. (2010). A real-time assessment of interpersonal complementarity. *Personal Relationships*, 17(1), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01249.x>

Miller, P. J., Niehuis, S., & Huston, T. L. (2006). Positive illusions in marital relationships: A 13-year longitudinal study. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32(12), 1579–1594. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167206292691>

Murray, S. L. (2005). Regulating the risks of closeness: A relationship-specific sense of felt security. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14(2), 74–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2005.00338.x>

Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (2015). *Mplus user's guide* (7th ed.). Muthén & Muthén.

Nowak, N., & Danel, D. (2014). Mate value asymmetry and relationship satisfaction in female opinion. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 40(5), 425–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623x.2012.756839>

Oltmanns, J. R., Markey, P. M., & French, J. E. (2017). Dissimilarity in physical attractiveness within romantic dyads and mate retention behaviors. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 34(4), 565–577. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407516647203>

Patrick, S., Sells, J. N., Giordano, F. G., & Tollerud, T. R. (2007). Intimacy, differentiation, and personality variables as predictors of marital satisfaction. *The Family Journal*, 15(4), 359–367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480707303754>

Pawłowski, B., & Danel, D. (2009). Evolutionary psychology – Adaptations and evolutionary inertia of human mind. *Kosmos*, 3(58), 573–583.

Perry, J. L., Nicholls, A. R., Clough, P. J., & Crust, L. (2015). Assessing model fit: Caveats and recommendations for confirmatory factor analysis and exploratory structural equation modeling. *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science*, 19(1), 12–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1091367X.2014.952370>

- Proulx, C. M., Helms, H. M., & Buehler, C. (2007). Marital quality and personal well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69(3), 576–593. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2007.00393.x>
- Robles, T. F., Slatcher, R. B., Trombello, J. M., & McGinn, M. M. (2014). Marital quality and health: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(1), 140–187. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031859>
- Rusbult, C. E., & Van Lange, P. A. (2003). Interdependence, interaction, and relationships. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54(1), 351–375. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.54.101601.145059>
- Sela, Y., Mogilski, J. K., Shackelford, T. K., Zeigler-Hill, V., & Fink, B. (2017). Mate value discrepancy and mate retention behaviors of self and partner. *Journal of Personality*, 85(5), 730–740. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12281>
- Shackelford, T. K., & Buss, D. M. (1997). Anticipation of marital dissolution as a consequence of spousal infidelity. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 14(6), 793–808. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407597146005>
- Sidelinger, R. J., & Booth-Butterfield, M. (2007). Mate value discrepancy as predictor of forgiveness and jealousy in romantic relationships. *Communication Quarterly*, 55(2), 207–223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370701290426>
- Sidelinger, R. J., & McMullen, A. (2008). Exploring mate value across two studies: From perceptions to enhancement. *Human Communication*, 11, 53–70. <https://bit.ly/2OmESY3>
- Simpson, J. A., & Gangestad, S. W. (1992). Sociosexuality and romantic partner choice. *Journal of Personality*, 60(1), 31–51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1992.tb00264.x>
- Spanier, G. B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 38(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.2307/350547>
- Spanier, G. B. (1989). *Manual for the Dyadic Adjustment Scale*. Multi-Health Systems.
- Šakotić-Kurbalija, J. (2016). *Bračni odnosi u Srbiji: povezanost kvaliteta, potencijala za razvod i spremnosti za traženje psihološke pomoći (Marital relations in Serbia: Relationship between quality, potential for divorce and willingness to seek psychological help)*. Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Novom Sadu. ISBN 978-86-6065-399-6.
- Šakotić-Kurbalija, J., & Trifunović, B. (2020). Procena lične i partnerove vrednosti u srednjem odrasлом dobu: polne razlike (Personal and partner's value assessment in middle adulthood: Sex differences). In J. Šakotić-Kurbalija & M. Zotović (Eds.), *Kvalitet života u srednjem životnom dobu (Quality of life in middle age)* (pp. 113–132). Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Novom Sadu. ISBN 978-86-6065-594-5.
- Šakotić-Kurbalija, J., Trifunović, B., & Kurbalija, D. (2017). Efekti ekonomskog stresa na kvalitet i stabilnost bračnog odnosa (Effects of economic stress on marital quality and stability). *Primenjena psihologija*, 10(2), 263–280. <https://doi.org/10.19090/pp.2017.2.263-280>
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2013). *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 6th ed. Pearson.

Tadinac, M., Kamenov, Ž., Jelić, M., & Hromatko, I. (2005). *Što ljubavnu vezu čini uspješnom? Izvještaj s XV Ljetne psihologijske škole (What makes an intimate relationship successful? 15th Psychological Summer School Report)*. Brač. Odsjek za psihologiju i Klub studenata psihologije. http://darhiv.ffzg.unizg.hr/1975/1/335962.LJETNA_SKOLA_Sto_ljubavnu_vezu_cini_uspjesnom.pdf

Tadinac, M., Bajoghli, H., Joshaghani, N., Hromatko, I., Jelić, M., & Kamenov, Ž. (2012). Determinants of relationship quality: A cross-cultural study. *Psychology Research*, 2(1), 40–51. <https://doi.org/10.17265/2159-5542/2012.01.005>

Thibaut, J. W., & Kelley, H. H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. Wiley.

Trifunović, B., Šakotić-Kurbalija, J., & Strizović, I. (2016). Razlike u percepciji bračnog kvaliteta među parovima različitih kombinacija obrazaca partnerske afektivne vezanosti (Married couples with different combinations of attachment styles: Differences in the perception of marital quality). *Primenjena psihologija*, 9(3), 313–332. <https://doi.org/10.19090/pp.2016.3.313-332>

Trivers, R. L. (1972). Parental investment and sexual selection. In B. Campbell (Ed.), *Sexual selection and the descent of man* (pp. 136–179). Aldine. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315129266-7>

VanYperen, N. W., & Buunk, B. P. (1991). Sex-role attitudes, social comparison, and satisfaction with relationships. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 54(2), 169–180. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2786934>

Wagner, A., Mosmann, C. P., Scheeren, P., & Levandowski, D. C. (2019). Conflict, conflict resolution and marital quality. *Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)*, 29. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-4327e2919>

Wilcox, W. B., & Nock, S. L. (2006). What's love got to do with it? Equality, equity, commitment and women's marital quality. *Social Forces*, 84(3), 1321–1345. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2006.0076>

Učinak razlike u procjeni osobne i supružnikove vrijednosti kao partnera na procjenu kvalitete bračnog odnosa: dijadni pristup

Biljana TRIFUNOVIĆ MARINKOVIĆ,
Milica LAZIĆ, Jelena ŠAKOTIĆ-KURBALIJA
Filozofski fakultet, Sveučilište u Novom Sadu,
Novi Sad, Srbija

Glavni cilj ovog istraživanja bio je istražiti učinke procjene osobne i supružnikove vrijednosti kao partnera i razlike u spomenutim vrijednostima na procjenu kvalitete bračnog odnosa, koristeći se procjenom osobne i supružnikove vrijednosti dobivene od oba partnera. Uzorak istraživanja obuhvaćao je 442 heteroseksualna para, koji su zajedno

živjeli najmanje godinu dana. Model međuovisnosti aktora i partnera (APIM) iskorišten je za istraživanje učinaka procjene osobne i supružnikove vrijednosti kao partnera na procjenu kvalitete braka. Osim navedenoga, modelu su dodana dva interakcijska učinka, kako bi se istražio učinak razlike u procjeni osobne i supružnikove vrijednosti kao partnera na procijenjenu kvalitetu braka. APIM model pokazao je značajne aktorske i partnerske učinke procjene supružnikove vrijednosti kao partnera na procijenjenu kvalitetu braka obaju supružnika. Model je pokazao i znatan učinak procjene osobne vrijednosti supruge kao partnerice na suprugovu procjenu kvalitete bračnog odnosa. Međutim, model ne potvrđuje pretpostavku o interakcijskom učinku procjene osobne i supružnikove vrijednosti kao partnera na procjenu kvalitete braka.

Ključne riječi: vrijednost partnera, razlika u vrijednosti partnera, kvaliteta braka, Model međuovisnosti aktora i partnera



Međunarodna licenca / International License:
Imenovanje-Nekomercijalno / Attribution-NonCommercial