

# Religion is not always a protective factor for sexual minorities' mental health: Role of internalized homophobia

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## Introduction

Religion is a protective factor against psychological distress<sup>1</sup> → Less suicidal ideation<sup>2</sup> & higher levels of well-being<sup>3</sup>

BUT ALSO

↳ Higher risk to commit or attempt suicide<sup>4</sup> & higher levels of depression<sup>5</sup>

WHY this contradiction?

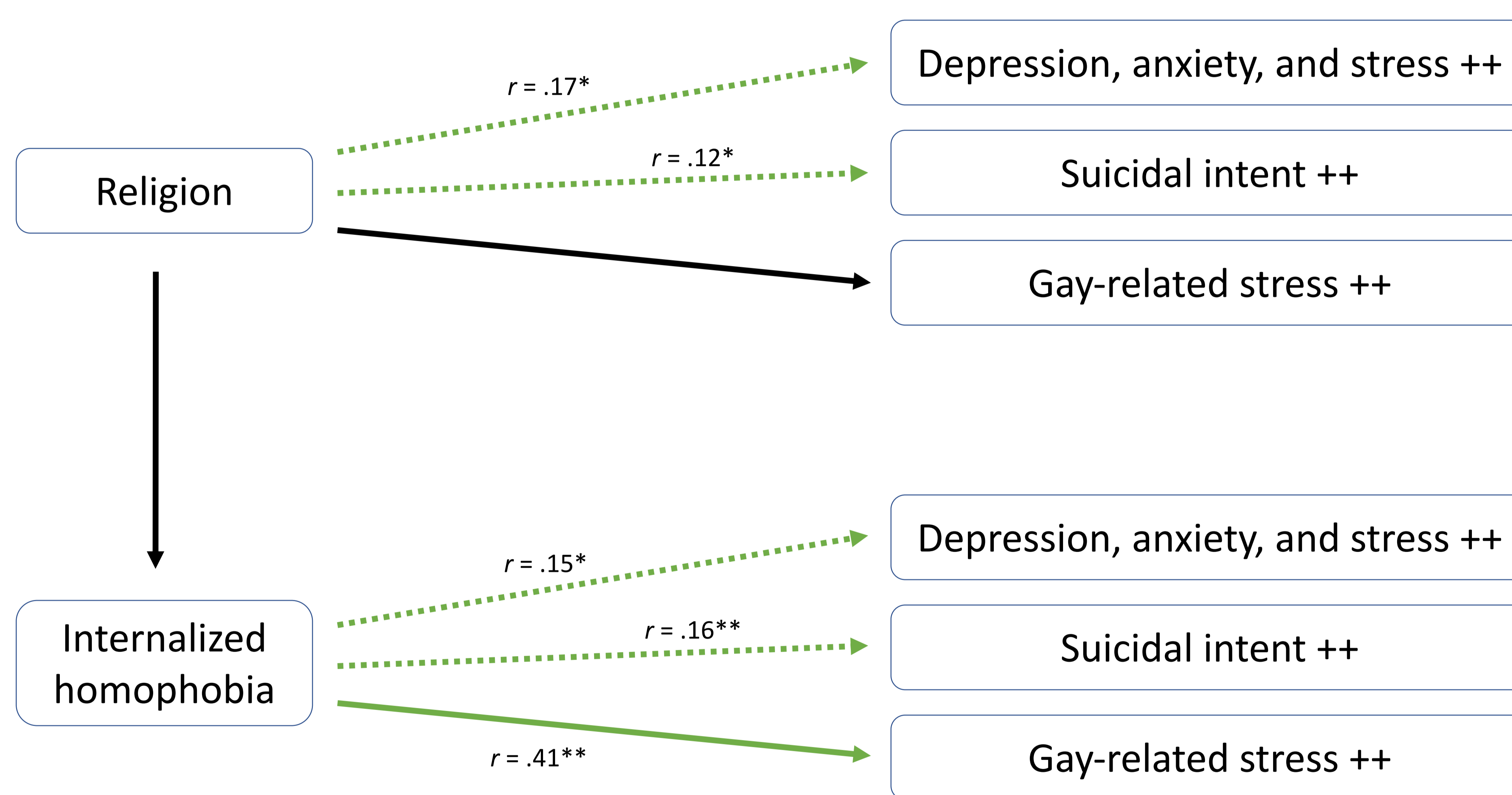
Religion is associated with negative perceptions and beliefs toward homosexuality<sup>6</sup>

↳ May contribute to an internalization of a form of homophobia<sup>2,4</sup>

↳ Create a dissonance<sup>7</sup> (incompatibility) between two identities (religious and sexual)<sup>8</sup>

↳ Higher stress levels<sup>9</sup> & higher depression<sup>10,11</sup> and suicidal intent<sup>10</sup>

## Hypotheses & Results



$$r_{IH,DASS} < r_{IH,Gay-related\ stress} (t_{(356)} = -4,82, p < .00)$$

## Discussion

Religious population is not well represented in our sample (25%, N = 89)



May explain the weakness of correlations

The more religious sexual minorities people are, the more depressed, anxious and stress they are



Congruent with the higher levels of depression discovered by<sup>5</sup> but incongruent with the positive effect found by<sup>1</sup> and<sup>3</sup>

No demonstration of the religiosity's effects on gay-related stress



These results confirm the variability and inconsistency of religion's effects on sexual minorities<sup>2</sup>

The more sexual minorities people internalize negative perceptions and beliefs toward homosexuality, the higher their gay-related stress will be, which is congruent with<sup>3,9,10</sup>, and<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bonelli, R. M., & Koenig, H. G. (2013). Mental disorders, religion, and spirituality 1990 to 2010: A systematic evidence-based review. *Journal of Religion and Health, 52*, 657-673. <sup>2</sup> Kravolec, K., Fartacek, C., Fartacek, R., & Plöderl, M. (2014). Religion and suicide risk in lesbian, gay and bisexual Austrians. *Journal of Religion and Health, 53*, 413-423. <sup>3</sup> Lefevor, G. T., Blaber I. P., Huffman, C. E., Schow, R. L., Beckstead, A. L., Raynes, M., & Rosik, C.H. (2020). The role of religiousness and beliefs about sexuality in well-being among sexual minority Mormons. *Psychology of Religion & Spirituality, 12*(4), 460-470. <sup>4</sup> Gibbs, J. J., & Goldbach (2015). Religious conflict, sexual identity, and suicidal behaviors among LGBT young adults. *Archives of Suicide Research, 19*(4), 472-488. <sup>5</sup> Dehlin, J. P., Galliher, R. V., Bradshaw, W. S., & Crowell, K. A. (2014). Psychosocial correlates of religious approaches to same-sex attraction: A Mormon perspective. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health, 18*(3), 284-311. <sup>6</sup> Rowatt, W. C., LaBouff, J., Johnson, J., Froese, P., & Tsang, J.-A. (2009). Associations among religiousness, social attitudes, and prejudice in a national random sample of American adults. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 1*, 14-24. <sup>7</sup> Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. <sup>8</sup> Anderton, C. L., Pender, D. A., & Asner-Self, K. K. (2011). A review of the religious identity/sexual orientation identity conflict literature: Revisiting Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling, 5*, 259-281. <sup>9</sup> Cole, C., & Harris, H. W. (2017). The lived experiences of people who identify as LGBT Christians: Considerations for social work helping. *Social Work & Christianity: An International Journal, 44*(1-2), 31-52. <sup>10</sup> Schuck, K. D., & Liddle, B. J. (2001). Religious conflicts experienced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health, 5*, 63-82. <sup>11</sup> Heiden-Rootes, K., Wiegand, A., Thomas, D., Moore, R. M., & Ross, K. A. (2018). A national survey on depression, anxiety, internalized homophobia, college religiosity, and climate of acceptance on college campuses for sexual minority adults. *Journal of Homosexuality, 67*(4), 435-451.