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More Than Just a Happy Ending? The Role of Orgasm Consistency for Sexual Satisfaction, Relationship Satisfaction, and Emotional Intimacy in Mixed-Gender Romantic Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Orgasm consistency is defined as the frequency with which individuals achieve orgasm during sexual encounters with a partner, while orgasm discrepancy is defined as the difference between the orgasm consistency of two partners. Orgasm consistency has been linked to sexual and relational well-being, yet little is known about how orgasm discrepancy in partners were associated with these factors. This study examined whether orgasm consistency as well as orgasm discrepancy in couples was associated with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy. Data from 327 couples were analyzed using Dyadic Response Surface Analysis. Higher orgasm consistency was associated with greater sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction, particularly among men, and with higher emotional intimacy among women. Contrary to expectations, couples with higher levels of orgasm discrepancy reported higher relationship satisfaction than couples with lower levels of orgasm discrepancy. Findings suggest that higher orgasm consistency may serve as a sexual reward, while orgasm discrepancy may not be perceived as a cost. Gendered sexual scripts likely shape these patterns. Overall, models explained limited variance, indicating that other factors beyond orgasm consistency are critical for sexual and relational well-being.

Introduction

For many, orgasm is more than just a moment of physical pleasure and the goal of sexual activity – it is a signal of intimacy, fulfillment, and sexual success (Mahar et al., 2020). As such, both men and women report individual and relational benefits associated with experiencing consistent orgasms, defined as the frequency with which individuals achieve orgasm during sexual encounters with a partner (Leavitt et al., 2021). Yet, research has shown that reaching orgasm is generally more difficult for women than for men in mixed-gender relationships (Mahar et al., 2020; McElroy & Perry, 2024), which may make it harder for both partners to equally experience the benefits associated with orgasm (Leonhardt et al., 2024). Given the importance of sexuality to many romantic relationships (Impett et al., 2020), a better understanding of how orgasm consistency and orgasm discrepancies between partners are associated with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy is needed. These insights help to identify the factors contributing to long-lasting and fulfilling relationships.

Orgasm Consistency and Romantic Relationships

Orgasm consistency has previously been identified as being associated with better sexual and relational outcomes (for reviews, see Dienberg et al., 2023; Nóbrega et al., 2025). For

example, higher orgasm consistency has been linked to increased sexual satisfaction (Frederick et al., 2017; Hämmerli et al., 2020; Leavitt et al., 2021; Leonhardt et al., 2018) and relationship satisfaction (Dienberg et al., 2023; Janssen et al., 2025; Leavitt et al., 2021; Mangas et al., 2025) for individuals and their partners. Both men and women derive at least part of their sexual satisfaction from how much sexual pleasure or orgasm their partner experiences (Kontula & Miettinen, 2016; Leonhardt et al., 2018; McClelland, 2011; Wetzel et al., 2022). Beyond satisfaction, orgasm may also be relevant for emotional aspects within relationships. Emotional intimacy often plays a central role in maintaining sexual desire and partnered sexual activity in romantic relationships (van Lankveld et al., 2018), and orgasmic pleasure has been linked to feelings of closeness and emotional connection (Cerwenka et al., 2021; Fahs, 2014; Herbenick et al., 2018; Mah & Binik, 2005). The Process Model of Intimacy proposes that intimacy develops through self-disclosure and perceived partner responsiveness (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Because consistent orgasm may depend partly on communicating sexual needs and experiencing a partner as attentive and responsive to those needs, it may reinforce feelings of being understood, validated, and cared for, thereby fostering emotional intimacy. Emotional intimacy, trust and closeness are also closely tied to oxytocin levels (Aguilar-Raab et al., 2019), which plays a role in the orgasmic response (Cera et al., 2021). However, despite these conceptual and empirical

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links, direct associations between orgasm consistency and emotional intimacy have not yet been established (Fraser et al., 2023; Lonza et al., 2020; Walker & Lutmer, 2023). Together, this literature suggests that greater orgasm consistency may be associated with greater emotional intimacy.

Although most studies have examined linear relationships between orgasm consistency and positive outcomes (e.g., Leonhardt et al., 2018; Wetzel et al., 2022), a recent study found a curvilinear association between orgasm consistency and relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction for women (Leavitt et al., 2021). This means that beyond the 61–80% range for consistent orgasms, increases in orgasm consistency led to only minimal improvements in sexual satisfaction and no improvements in relationship satisfaction (Leavitt et al., 2021). For men, a linear association was found, suggesting that higher orgasm consistency is linked to higher sexual and relationship satisfaction (Leavitt et al., 2021).

Orgasm Discrepancy and Associations with Sexual and Relational Outcomes

Orgasm discrepancy is defined as the difference between the orgasm consistency of two partners. In general, women are less likely to consistently experience an orgasm in mixed-gender sexual interactions compared to men (i.e., “the orgasm gap,” McElroy & Perry, 2024). Recent reviews identified that women generally orgasm during 30–60% of all sexual activities with a partner, while men report orgasm consistency between 70% and 100% of the time (Döring & Mohseni, 2022; Mahar et al., 2020; McElroy & Perry, 2024). This might make it more challenging for women to achieve physiological and psychological benefits associated with orgasm consistency (Leonhardt et al., 2024; Wolfer & Carmichael, 2025). On the other hand, women might be socialized to attach less importance to orgasm, thereby experiencing less distress or self-doubt when orgasm does not occur (Laan & Rellini, 2011). Nevertheless, it may also make it challenging for partners to achieve benefits when women experience a lack of orgasm due to partner effects (i.e., that partner A affects Partner B; Kontula & Miettinen, 2016; Leonhardt et al., 2018; McClelland, 2011; Wetzel et al., 2022). For one, it may be that partners internalize a lack of orgasm by their female partner as an indication that they are “bad lovers,” with negative effects for sexual self-esteem and feelings of intimacy. This way, orgasm discrepancies between partners may be negatively associated with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy.

Orgasm Discrepancy in the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction

In the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction (IEMSS; Lawrance & Byers, 1995), orgasm consistency can be conceptualized as a sexual reward, while orgasm discrepancies may be experienced as sexual costs (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). When one partner consistently experiences orgasm while the other does not, the perceived inequity in rewards may undermine satisfaction, as the exchange of sexual benefits is seen as unequal (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Conversely, when both partners experience orgasm with relative consistency, rewards

outweigh costs, and perceptions of equality in sexual exchanges are reinforced (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Thus, small orgasm discrepancy contributes to the balance of rewards and costs central to the IEMSS, whereas larger orgasm discrepancy may heighten perceived inequity and diminish sexual satisfaction over time (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). This might be especially true for women, who experience lower orgasm consistencies compared to men (McElroy & Perry, 2024).

Although the difference in orgasm consistency between men and women has been reported in many studies (e.g., McElroy & Perry, 2024), there is little scientific evidence of how orgasm discrepancies within the couple are associated with sexual and relational outcomes (Leonhardt et al., 2024). While some studies report that a higher orgasm discrepancy is associated with lower sexual satisfaction for both partners (Leonhardt et al., 2018; Wetzel et al., 2022), most of the evidence relies on difference scores or uses non-dyadic samples, which comes with several limitations (see Edwards & Parry, 1993 for an overview of the limitations).

Dyadic response surface analysis (DRSA; Schönbrodt et al., 2018) addresses these limitations as it takes into account not only the direction of orgasm discrepancies (e.g., whether men experiencing orgasms more consistently than women, or the other way around, is more strongly associated with outcomes of interest), but also captures at what point of the metric the discrepancy is more relevant (e.g., discrepancy between partners at a relatively high overall level of orgasm consistency, i.e., a difference of 10% at 90% and 80%, vs. at a relatively low overall level of orgasm consistency, i.e., a difference of 10% at 40% vs. 30%). One study to date employed the DRSA and found no association between orgasm discrepancies and sexual satisfaction of both partners (Leonhardt et al., 2024). Rather, a higher level of orgasm consistency was associated with higher sexual satisfaction in men and women (Leonhardt et al., 2024). These findings are consistent with a recent review, which indicated that overall orgasm consistency is more important for sexual satisfaction compared to orgasm discrepancies between partners (Nóbrega et al., 2025). To the best of our knowledge, no studies so far have studied orgasm discrepancies in combination with relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy in a dyad. However, given that orgasm is related to better sexual communication (Mallory et al., 2019), which in turn is associated with better relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy (Chen et al., 2024), it can be expected that lower orgasm discrepancies are related to higher relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy.

In sum, the IEMSS provides a general explanation for why imbalances in orgasm consistency may be associated with poorer sexual and relational outcomes, but it does not specify whether such imbalances are experienced similarly by women and men. However, research shows gender differences in how orgasm discrepancies are related to sexual satisfaction (Wetzel et al., 2022; Wolfer & Carmichael, 2025), relationship satisfaction (Leonhardt et al., 2018), and emotional intimacy (van Lankveld et al., 2018). These gender differences can be understood by sexual script theory (Simon & Gagnon, 1984; Wiederman, 2015).

Orgasm Discrepancy and Sexual Scripts

Sexual script theory complements the IEMSS perspective by explaining how gendered expectations may influence the meaning attributed to each partner's orgasm and, consequently, the associations of orgasm discrepancies with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy. Sexual scripts are generally defined as expectations of how sexual interactions unfold (Leonhardt et al., 2024; Simon & Gagnon, 1984; Wiederman, 2015). For sex between women and men, sexual script theory generally frames men as the initiators of sexual activity and assumes that they experience sex primarily as a source of physical pleasure or as a means of releasing tension. Meanwhile, sexual script theory portrays women as responsive to men's sexual needs through being attractive and seductive and they are expected to be gatekeepers of sexual activity, since sexual activity is viewed as potentially dangerous to their body and social reputation (Leonhardt et al., 2024; Wiederman, 2015). Sexual scripts are believed to reduce anxiety and stress as they enhance predictability of how social interactions unfold (Wiederman, 2015), motivating men and women to act in accordance with gendered norms in sexual interactions (Ford et al., 2023). In general, men are (still) perceived as more entitled to experience orgasm and to experience higher negative affect when they do not (Klein & Conley, 2022). At the same time, the notion that women should accept not experiencing orgasms during sex is prevalent in society (Dienberg et al., 2023). Additionally, women reported greater motivation to ensure that their partner has an orgasm compared to men (Barnett et al., 2018; Wolfer & Carmichael, 2025). As a result, a lack of consistency in men's orgasms contradicts gendered expectations and might therefore feel threatening for women as they question their own sexual desirability, and for men, as they question their potency and masculinity (Wiederman, 2015). This indicates that women and men may show higher sexual and relationship satisfaction from men having more consistent orgasms compared to women (Leonhardt et al., 2024).

However, sexual script theory also suggests that a man's ability to make a partner orgasm and his skill as a lover are framed as a marker of masculine success and desirability as a sexual partner (Wiederman, 2015), suggesting that sexual performance, particularly making a partner orgasm, is tied to the idea of being a "real man" (Chadwick & van Anders, 2017). This indicates that women's orgasm consistency might be equally or more relevant for men's sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction than men's own orgasm consistency. Indeed, one study found that women's orgasm consistency predicted men's higher sexual satisfaction, over and above men's own orgasm consistency (Leonhardt et al., 2018). In line with this, women reported to pretend orgasms because they believed women's orgasm was necessary for men's gratification (Harris et al., 2019), and they did not want to hurt their partners' feelings (Herbenick et al., 2019) or threaten their masculinity (Jordan et al., 2022). Regarding emotional intimacy, women more often report engaging in sexual interactions for emotional intimacy motivations compared to men (Patterson et al., 2025; van Lankveld et al., 2018), suggesting that orgasm consistency might be related to higher emotional

intimacy in women. In sum, gender differences may have implications for how differences in orgasm consistency are associated with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy (Leonhardt et al., 2024).

Together, the two theoretical perspectives suggest that both the overall balance of orgasmic rewards within the couple and the gendered meaning attached to each partner's orgasm may shape the association between orgasm discrepancy and sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy. Accordingly, the consequences of orgasm discrepancies may depend not only on their magnitude, as proposed by the IEMSS, but also on their direction and on whether the discrepancy confirms or violates gendered sexual expectations.

The Aim of This Study

A better understanding of how orgasm consistency as well as discrepancy between partners is associated with both men's and women's sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy would be advantageous to potentially clarify factors contributing to happy and stable romantic relationships. The present study addressed these gaps in research and investigated how both partners' reports of orgasm consistency, as well as discrepancies in orgasm consistencies, are associated with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy. This study aimed to replicate the findings from Leonhardt et al. (2024) and to extend these with two additional outcomes, namely relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy. Based on previous findings, we hypothesized that:

H1-3: Higher levels of orgasm consistency would be associated with higher levels of men's and women's sexual satisfaction (H1), relationship satisfaction (H2), and emotional intimacy (H3).

Given the limited and conflicting evidence, we posed two additional open research questions:

R1: Is matching in orgasm consistency (i.e., smaller orgasm discrepancy) associated with higher sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy compared to (larger) orgasm discrepancies?

R2: Is an imbalance in orgasm consistency – either a) men orgasming more consistently than women or b) women orgasming more consistently than men – associated with men's and women's sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy?

Method

Procedure

The study was preregistered on the Open Science Framework (OSF; <https://archive.org/details/osf-registrations-49gku-v1>) in alignment with open science principles. Ethical approval was granted by the institutional review board of the University of Zurich on February 20, 2024 (reference number: 22.12.17). Data collection was carried out using an anonymous online

one-time questionnaire administered through Unipark. The survey link was disseminated via various channels, including social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, e-mail lists from academic institutions (e.g., University of Zurich) and organizations (e.g., regional offices for relationship issues and sexuality), sexual health clinics, and personal networks. Targeted advertisements on digital platforms (Facebook and Instagram) were restricted geographically to German-speaking countries in Europe (e.g., Germany, Austria, Switzerland). Recruitment materials included the study name (Passion, Pleasure, & Partnerships – PPP-Study) as well as a short description of the study, the inclusion criteria, and the estimated duration of the study. Participant recruitment occurred between March 25 and July 24, 2024. Eligibility criteria included being at least 18 years old, fluent in German, in a committed romantic relationship, and having a partner who was also willing to participate. Participants were asked to first complete the questionnaire by themselves and were informed that they could provide the e-mail address of their partner at the end of the survey. The survey for the partner was then automatically sent to the e-mail address provided. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire individually and refrain from discussing it with each other. After providing informed consent, including agreement for the data to be published on OSF, each participant was asked to generate a personalized partner code, which was used to match answers of partners. The questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes to finish, after which both individuals received automated, personalized feedback regarding their sexual and relationship well-being. Once the partner completed the survey as well, the couple was provided with further resources aimed at supporting partnered sexual health. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to earn university credits and enter a prize draw.

Participants

A total of 382 couples took part in the cross-sectional online study. For the purposes of the analysis, distinguishable dyads were required, resulting in the exclusion of 41 same-gender couples (seven male–male and 34 female–female cisgender pairings) and 14 couples in which at least one partner did not identify as cisgender. The non-cisgender group included four trans men, three trans women, three individuals identifying as non-binary, and five identifying with another gender. This left a final analytic sample of 327 mixed-gender couples. The participants were mostly young university students and had diverse relationship lengths (see Table 1).

Measures

Sociodemographic Information

Participants provided information on their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, highest level of education completed, ethnic background, and current living arrangement. They also reported the length of their relationship, number of children, use of psychiatric medications (e.g., antidepressants), and hormonal treatments (e.g., contraceptive hormones) (see Table 1 for an overview).

Orgasm Consistency

Orgasm consistency was assessed asking the question “In how many cases of all sexual activities with your significant other do you experience an orgasm?” Participants estimated their orgasm consistency by selecting any percentage on a visual analogue scale from 0 to 100% (of all sexual activities, defined as sexual intercourse). This is a valid measure similar to what has been used in other studies on orgasm consistency (for reviews, see McElroy & Perry, 2024; Wetzel & Sanchez, 2022).

Sexual Satisfaction

The short version of the New Sexual Satisfaction Scale (originally developed by Štulhofer et al., 2010, and translated into German by Hoy et al., 2019) comprises 12 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = *not at all satisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*, with an additional option of 0 = *does not apply to me*; $\alpha_{\text{women}} = .83$ and $\alpha_{\text{men}} = .84$). The scale has previously shown high internal consistency and construct validity (Hoy et al., 2019; Štulhofer et al., 2010). When participants had up to three missing responses or selected “*does not apply to me*” up to three times, the total score was estimated using mean imputation as suggested by the scale developers (Hoy et al., 2019; Štulhofer et al., 2010). Otherwise, all responses were set as missing values ($n = 20$, 6%) and were considered as missing not at random due to the “*does not apply to me*” answer. Scores were summed and higher scores indicate greater sexual satisfaction (possible range 12–60).

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction was assessed using the short version of the Couple Satisfaction Index (original English version by Funk & Rogge, 2007). The scale consists of one item rated on a 7-point Likert scale (0 = *extremely unhappy* to 6 = *perfectly happy*) and three items rated on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = *never* to 5 = *all the time*). Both the original English version (Funk & Rogge, 2007) and the German adaptation (Prandstetter et al., 2023; Roth et al., 2024; Wehrli, Weitkamp, et al., 2025) have shown strong psychometric properties in previous research (i.e., internal consistency, convergent and construct validity). In the current sample, however, internal consistency was marginally below the suggested cut-off of .70, with raw Cronbach’s alpha values of .67 for women and .68 for men. Because raw alpha is calculated from the item covariance matrix, it is sensitive to differences in item variances, which may arise from the use of different response ranges (Falk & Savalei, 2011). Therefore, we also calculated standardized alpha and McDonald’s omega total using the standardized inter-item correlation matrix. Standardized alpha was .77 for women and .79 for men, while omega total was .76 for women and .81 for men, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Scores were summed and higher scores indicate greater relationship satisfaction (possible range 0–21).

Emotional Intimacy

Emotional intimacy was assessed using the Emotional Intimacy Scale (originally developed by Sinclair and Dowdy, 2005). The scale consists of a brief, five-item self-report measure designed to assess emotional closeness within relationships. It captures aspects such as the perception of closeness, sharing of personal thoughts and emotions, perceived

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Variable	Women (n = 327)				Men (n = 327)			
	<i>M</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>Md</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Age (years)	24.34	22.00	7.23	18.00–75.00	25.66	23.50	7.50	18.00–74.00
Relationship duration (years)	3.33	1.92	4.55	0.08–42.08	3.33	1.92	4.52	0.08–42.08
	%		<i>n</i>		%		<i>n</i>	
Highest educational level								
Middle school		1		3		3		9
Apprenticeship		7		22		23		74
High school		62		203		38		123
Bachelor's degree		18		59		19		63
Master's degree		9		30		12		41
Doctoral degree		1		3		2		6
Other		2		7		3		11
Living situation								
With parents (and siblings)		43		142		38		123
Shared house		23		75		23		75
With partner		20		64		20		64
Alone		7		23		12		40
With partner and children		4		14		4		14
Other		3		9		3		11
Children								
Yes		6		19		7		24
No		94		308		93		303
Ethnic background								
Western / European		94		308		95		310
American		0		0		1		2
Asian		3		9		2		8
Arab		1		4		1		3
Latin		4		12		2		6
Other		1		3		1		3
Sexual orientation								
Heterosexual		82		269		96		315
Bisexual		12		40		3		9
Pansexual		4		12		<1		2
Homosexual		<1		2		<1		1
Asexual		<1		1		0		0
Other		<1		2		0		0
Psychiatric drug use								
No		95		311		95		312
Yes		5		16		5		15
Hormone use								
No		51		166		99		325
Yes		49		160		<1		2
Prefer not to answer		<1		1		0		0

understanding, affirmation, and expressions of care (Sinclair & Dowdy, 2005). Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha_{\text{women}} = .84$ and $\alpha_{\text{men}} = .77$). The scale has previously shown high reliability (internal consistency and test-retest reliability) and validity (construct and criterion validity) (Sinclair & Dowdy, 2005). Scores were averaged and higher scores indicate greater emotional intimacy (possible range 1–5).

Statistical Analyses

For all our hypotheses, Dyadic Response Surface Analyses (DRSA) were employed (Schönbrodt et al., 2018); three models were estimated (i.e., sexual satisfaction in model 1, relationship satisfaction in model 2, and emotional intimacy in model 3; *z*-axis). The DRSA is a combination of an Actor-Partner-Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny et al., 2006) and Response Surface Analysis (Edwards, 2003; Humberg et al., 2019). It allows for the assessment of how women's orgasm consistency (*x*-axis) and men's orgasm consistency (*y*-axis) are

related to one's own and one's partners' outcomes. The advantage of DRSA is its ability to model both linear and curvilinear associations while simultaneously accounting for both actor effects (i.e., how women's orgasm consistency is associated with their own outcomes) and partner effects (i.e., how women's orgasm consistency is associated with men's outcomes) (Humberg et al., 2019; Schönbrodt et al., 2018). Furthermore, it can give insight into how smaller and larger orgasm discrepancy is associated with the outcome variable and provides three-dimensional graphs that illustrate the dyadic associations for each partner's outcome (Edwards & Parry, 1993; Shanock et al., 2010). In these graphs, there are two lines that indicate matching orgasm consistencies and orgasm discrepancy between men and women. The line of congruence (LOC; matching orgasm consistencies) goes from the front to the back corner. The line of incongruence (LOIC; orgasm discrepancy) goes from the left to the right corner.

The three DRSA models were estimated using structural equation modeling, employing a robust maximum likelihood estimator along with bootstrapping using 10,000 iterations to

address data nonnormality (see Leonhardt et al., 2024 for a graphical representation of the DRSA model). Independent variables were centered on the grand mean, which were entered as independent variables alongside a squared version of the variables (women's orgasm consistency $\times$ women's orgasm consistency; men's orgasm consistency $\times$ men's orgasm consistency) and an interaction term (women's orgasm consistency $\times$ men's orgasm consistency). The unconstrained version of a model was compared to a constrained version of the model where actor and partner effects were set to be equal across gender. The constrained models demonstrated significantly better fit to the data for the models with sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction as the dependent variable. Given that we were interested in gender differences due to gendered scripts influencing sexual experiences within relationships, we additionally ran the models for sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction with unconstrained effects and report the results in the exploratory analyses section. Regarding emotional intimacy, the unconstrained model showed a better fit for the data compared to the constrained model and was used for analysis. Furthermore, relationship duration was added to the models as a control variable (not preregistered), given that longer relationship duration has previously been found to be associated with lower orgasm consistency (Leonhardt et al., 2024). Additionally, longer relationship duration has showed associations with lower sexual satisfaction (e.g., Schmiedeborg & Schröder, 2016), lower relationship satisfaction (e.g., Józefacka et al., 2023), and lower emotional intimacy (e.g., Træen & Kvale, 2023; van Lankveld et al., 2018). For sexual satisfaction, 20 couples had missing values in one member of the couple and were therefore excluded for analysis. Outliers in the independent and dependent variables were addressed following best-practice guidelines as proposed by Aguinis et al. (2013).

All analyses were conducted using R Version 4.4.2 (R Core Team, 2023), with the statistical significance level set at $p < .05$. All code and results are openly accessible on the OSF (https://osf.io/7eaw9/overview?view_only=b8b5d0275afe486eb835cb1b74fa1970) and data was available upon request.

Overview of the DRSA Surface Parameters

Alongside the interpretation of actor and partner paths similar to APIM models (parameters b_1 – b_5), our hypothesis testing relied on the interpretation of response surface parameters a_1 to a_5 (see Bar-Kalifa et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2021; Landolt et al., 2024 for dyadic examples and detailed explanation of the parameters). To get an overall understanding of the associations between orgasm consistency/discrepancy and the outcomes, it is essential to interpret all response surface parameters in conjunction with one another rather than in isolation (Humberg et al., 2019; Schönbrodt et al., 2018).

The test score a_1 shows the linear association (i.e., LOC) between orgasm consistency and the outcomes (i.e., sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, emotional intimacy; H1–3). A significant and positive a_1 in isolation indicates that couples with higher levels of orgasm consistencies report higher levels in the outcome than couples with lower levels of orgasm consistencies. Conversely, a significant and negative

a_1 would indicate that couples with higher levels of orgasm consistencies report lower outcomes. In the case of a significant a_4 (the curvilinearity of the LOIC), however, the interpretation of a_1 only applies to matching levels of orgasm consistencies (i.e., small or no orgasm discrepancy between partners), rather than the general association between orgasm consistency and the outcomes. The a_2 response surface parameter represents a curvilinear association between orgasm consistency and the outcomes (curvilinearity of the LOC). A linear association between orgasm discrepancy and the outcome is indicated with the test score a_3 , which indicates whether the direction of discrepancy plays a role for the outcome (RQ3). The surface parameter a_4 is particularly relevant for evaluating whether smaller orgasm discrepancy is associated with better outcomes compared to larger orgasm discrepancy (RQ2). A significant a_4 shows that there is a curvilinear association between orgasm discrepancy and the outcomes (i.e., a positive a_4 indicates outcomes are higher when partners are more discrepant – versus similar – in their orgasm consistency, while a negative a_4 indicates outcomes are higher when partners are more similar – versus discrepant). Following the guidelines of Humberg et al. (2019), requirements of a broad matching effect include a significant, negative a_4 value, while a_3 and a_5 values are not significant. For our outcomes, we expected to find a significant negative a_4 , indicating a decrease in the outcomes when moving from the center of the LOIC (where it intersects with the LOC) in both directions of inequity. We expected a significant and positive a_1 value next to the significant and negative a_4 value. This pattern would suggest that partners with similar levels in orgasm consistency fare better than those with discrepant levels, while also accounting for matching at higher vs. lower level of orgasm consistency. The a_5 response surface parameter is mainly there to validate a possible (mis)matching effect. In case all response surface parameters (a_1 – a_4) indicate a (mis) matching effect, a nonsignificant a_5 would be required to confirm this.

Power Analysis for DRSA

At present, there is no established method for directly calculating the sample size needed to ensure sufficient statistical power for DRSA. The APIM calculator (Ackermann et al., 2016) recommends a sample of 159 couples to achieve 80% power for detecting small actor and partner effects ($r = .15$) with a significance level of 5%. However, current research indicates that DRSA typically demands two to three times that number of participants to reach adequate power for an APIM model (Humberg et al., 2019; Nestler et al., 2015). Based on these recommendations, we set a target of recruiting at least 318 mixed-gender couples for our DRSA. This sample size aligns with those used in prior research exploring couple sexuality through DRSA (Kim et al., 2021; Landolt et al., 2024; Tavares et al., 2022).

To ensure sufficient variability in the combination of women's and men's orgasm consistency, we assessed how many couples showed higher orgasm consistency in men compared to women and how many showed higher orgasm consistency in women compared to men. Based on the guidelines of Shanock et al. (2010); Humberg et al. (2019) and

Schönbrodt et al. (2018), independent variable scores were standardized across partners, and couples whose standardized scores differed by more than 0.5 z-points were classified as “discrepant” (Humberg et al., 2019; Shanock et al., 2010). In the current sample, 125 couples (38%) showed similar orgasm consistency levels, while 13 couples (4%) showed higher orgasm consistency in women compared to men. In 189 couples (58%), men reported they orgasmed more consistently than women. For DRSA to yield reliable results, a minimum of 10% of couples are recommended to be classified as discrepant (Shanock et al., 2010). This is an expectation not met in this sample for the group women orgasming more consistently than men, leading to diminished power to detect discrepancy effects and heightened susceptibility to extreme values (Humberg et al., 2019). However, the finding in our sample is consistent with the findings of Leonhardt et al. (2024) and the current literature on the orgasm gap (Döring & Mohseni, 2022; Mahar et al., 2020; McElroy & Perry, 2024), which justified continuing with the analysis despite the limited number of discrepant couples where women orgasmed more consistently than men.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

On average, women reported having had an orgasm in 64% of all partnered sexual activities, while men reported having had an orgasm in 92%. Both women and men reported high levels of sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy (see Table 2 for means and standard deviations).

Table 2 presents the correlations between orgasm consistencies of men and women with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy. Moderate to strong correlations were observed between partners for orgasm consistency ($r = .21, p < .001$), sexual satisfaction ($r = .53, p < .001$), relationship satisfaction ($r = .39, p < .001$) and emotional intimacy ($r = .36, p < .001$). Men showed significantly higher orgasm consistency ($t(326) = -15.91, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.88$) and sexual satisfaction ($t(306) = -3.04, p = .003$,

Cohens $d = 0.17$) compared to women, while no significant differences were observed between partners for relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy.

Is Higher Orgasm Consistency Associated with Better Outcomes in Both Partners (H1-3)?

For sexual satisfaction (H1), women's and men's higher orgasm consistency were associated with higher sexual satisfaction in both partners (significant and positive a_1 , significant and positive b_1 and b_2 , see Table 3 and Figure 1). The model explained 9% of the variance in women's sexual satisfaction and 11% of variance in men's sexual satisfaction. For relationship satisfaction (H2), women's higher orgasm consistency was significantly associated with women's and men's higher relationship satisfaction (significant and positive b_1 and b_2 , see Table 4 and Figure 2). The model explained 2% of the variance in women's and men's relationship satisfaction. For emotional intimacy (H3), women's higher orgasm consistency was significantly associated with women's, but not men's, higher emotional intimacy (significant and positive b_1 , see Table 5 and Figure 3). Men's orgasm consistency was not associated with neither men's nor women's emotional intimacy. The model explained 3% of the variance in women's emotional intimacy and 5% of the variance in men's emotional intimacy. Controlling for relationship duration did not change these results; however, more generally, longer relationship duration was significantly associated with lower sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy among both men and women.

Is Smaller Orgasm Discrepancy Associated with Better Outcomes Compared to Larger Orgasm Discrepancy (RQ1)?

Smaller orgasm discrepancy was not associated with higher sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, or emotional intimacy compared to larger orgasm discrepancy (non-significant a_4 in all models). When controlling for relationship duration, larger orgasm discrepancy was associated with higher relationship satisfaction for both men and women compared to

Table 2. Results of the Spearman's correlation analyses between study variables and overview of study variables.

		Correlations				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Orgasm Consistency	.22***	.22***	.14**	.14**	.18**
2	Sexual Satisfaction	.21***	.53***	.33***	.33***	-.27***
3	Relationship Satisfaction	.21***	.48***	.45***	.45***	-.26***
4	Emotional Intimacy	.12*	.42***	.36***	.36***	-.08
5	Relationship Duration	.07	-.21***	-.23***	-.20***	
Women						
	Mean	64.00	49.89	17.95		4.62
	SD	32.25	6.57	2.62		0.48
	Observed range	0–100	20–60	8.00–21.00		1.00–5.00
Men						
	Mean	92.00	51.02	17.96		4.66
	SD	12.95	6.50	2.78		0.43
	Observed range	10–100	27–60	6.00–21.00		2.20–5.00

Note. Correlations above the diagonal are for women, correlations below the diagonal are for men. Correlations on the diagonal are between men and women. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Response surface slopes and polynomial coefficients for sexual satisfaction.

	Women			Men		
	b	SE	p	b	SE	p
Constrained model						
Response surface slopes						
a1: linear slope of LOC	.31	.03	.005	.29	.03	.005
a2: curvilinear slope of LOC	-.06	.00	.456	-.13	.00	.456
a3: linear slope of LOIC	.16	.02	.662	.10	.02	.662
a4: curvilinear slope of LOIC	-.06	.00	.420	-.13	.00	.420
a5: centrality of LOC	-.01	.00	.472	-.12	.00	.472
Polynomial coefficients						
b1 (X)	.24	.02	.011	.19	.02	.042
b2 (Y)	.08	.02	.042	.10	.02	.011
b3 (X ²)	-.03	.00	.761	-.12	.00	.217
b4 (XY)	.00	.00	.983	.00	.00	.983
b5 (Y ²)	-.03	.00	.217	-.01	.00	.761
Explained Variance (R²)	.090			.119		

Note. The constrained model was used for analyses. X coefficients are for women's orgasm consistency, Y coefficients are for men's orgasm consistency. Significant associations are marked in bold. Controlling for relationship duration and excluding influential cases ($n = 2$) did not change results. LOC = Line of Congruence. LOIC = Line of Incongruence.

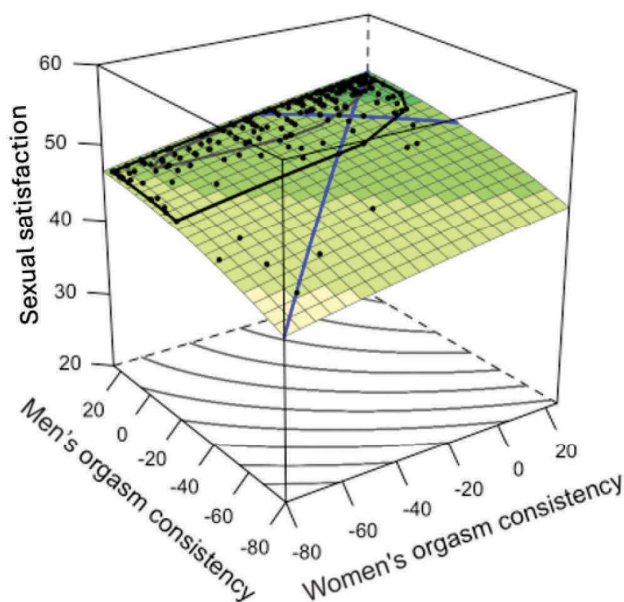


Figure 1. DRSA model with women's and men's orgasm consistency predicting sexual satisfaction. Note: Model with constrained parameters predicting men's and women's sexual satisfaction, controlled for relationship duration.

smaller orgasm discrepancy (significant and positive a_4 , see Table 4 and Figure 1). Additionally, matching at higher levels in orgasm consistency was associated with higher relationship satisfaction compared to matching at lower levels (significant and positive a_1). Controlling for relationship duration did not change the results for sexual satisfaction and emotional intimacy.

Is an Imbalance in Orgasm Consistency Associated with Outcomes (RQ2)?

An imbalance in orgasm consistency was not significantly associated with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction or emotional intimacy (non-significant a_3 in all models). This remained stable when controlling for relationship duration.

Excluding Influential Cases

To ensure that influential cases did not heavily impact the DRSA results, we checked the difference in fit, Cooks distance, and hat values (Pek & MacCallum, 2011). When influential cases were identified ($n = 3$ cases in total: $n = 2$ for sexual satisfaction, $n = 1$ for relationship satisfaction, and $n = 2$ for emotional intimacy), we evaluated whether their exclusion altered the DRSA results to assess the robustness of our findings (Aguinis et al., 2013; Pek & MacCallum, 2011). The influential cases were characterized by relatively lower orgasm consistency in women (51, 0, and 10%) and men (29, 35, and 10%), were aged between 21 and 39 years, and showed varied relationship duration (0.33–4.5 years). Results after excluding the influential cases show that larger orgasm discrepancy was associated with higher relationship satisfaction for men and women, as well as higher emotional intimacy for women, compared to smaller orgasm discrepancy.

Exploratory Analyses: Models for Sexual Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction with Unconstrained Actor and Partner Effects

Due to our interest in gender differences and the importance of sexual scripts to sexual interactions in romantic relationships, we reran the analyses for sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction using the full models with unconstrained actor and partner effects across gender. Results of the unconstrained models changed the results for H1 and H2, but not RQ1 and RQ2. Higher levels in orgasm consistency in both partners were associated with sexual satisfaction (significant and positive a_1 , non-significant b_1 and b_2) and relationship satisfaction (significant and positive a_1 , non-significant b_1 and b_2) in men, but not in women.

Discussion

The present study investigated how both partners' reports of self-perceived orgasm consistency by each partner (H1-3), as

Table 4. Response surface slopes and polynomial coefficients for relationship satisfaction.

	Women			Men		
	b	SE	p	b	SE	p
Constrained model						
Response surface slopes						
a1: linear slope of LOC	.26	.01	.064	.18	.01	.064
a2: curvilinear slope of. LOC	.07	.00	.952	-.01	.00	.952
a3: linear slope of LOIC	.19	.01	.233	.00	.01	.233
a4: curvilinear slope of LOIC	.22	.00	.079	.13	.00	.079
a5: centrality of LOC	.13	.00	.342	.01	.00	.342
Polynomial coefficients						
b1 (X)	.23	.01	.035	.09	.01	.344
b2 (Y)	.04	.01	.344	.09	.01	.035
b3 (X ²)	.14	.00	.202	.03	.00	.726
b4 (XY)	-.07	.00	.173	-.07	.00	.173
b5 (Y ²)	.01	.00	.726	.03	.00	.202
Explained Variance (R²)	.016			.017		
Constrained model controlling for relationship duration						
Response surface slopes						
a1: linear slope of LOC	.34	.01	.015	.25	.01	.015
a2: curvilinear slope of. LOC	.12	.00	.079	.04	.00	.079
a3: linear slope of LOIC	.22	.01	.235	.03	.01	.235
a4: curvilinear slope of LOIC	.27	.00	.025	.19	.00	.025
a5: centrality of LOC	.16	.00	.354	.04	.00	.354
Polynomial coefficients						
b1 (X)	.28	.01	.010	.14	.01	.139
b2 (Y)	.06	.01	.139	.11	.01	.010
b3 (X ²)	.18	.00	.097	.08	.00	.431
b4 (XY)	-.08	.00	.145	-.07	.00	.145
b5 (Y ²)	.02	.00	.431	.04	.00	.097
Control variable						
Relationship duration	-.25	.03	.000	-.23	.04	.001
Explained Variance (R²)	.077			.069		

Note. The constrained model was used for analyses. X coefficients are for women's orgasm consistency, Y coefficients are for men's orgasm consistency. Significant associations are marked in bold. When controlling for relationship duration, the a₁ and a₄ parameter became significant, indicating that being discrepant in orgasm consistency is associated with higher relationship satisfaction compared to matching in orgasm consistency. LOC = Line of Congruence. LOIC = Line of Incongruence.

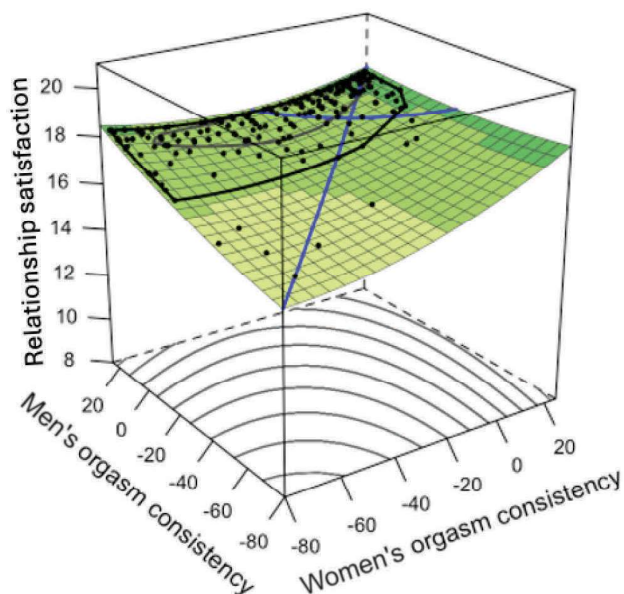


Figure 2. DRSA model with women's and men's orgasm consistency predicting relationship satisfaction. Note: Model with constrained parameters predicting men's and women's relationship satisfaction, controlled for relationship duration.

well as orgasm discrepancy between partners (RQ1 and 2), are associated with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy. We found that higher orgasm

consistency was associated with better outcomes. Additionally, we found that larger orgasm discrepancy between partners was associated with higher relationship satisfaction compared to lower orgasm discrepancy. Overall, the models explained relatively little variance, suggesting that orgasm consistency plays a minor role for relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and emotional intimacy.

In line with our hypotheses 1–3, we found that higher levels of orgasm consistency were associated with higher sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction, particularly among men, as well as higher emotional intimacy in women. These results correspond with several others finding an association between orgasm consistency and relationship satisfaction (Dienberg et al., 2023; Janssen et al., 2025; Leavitt et al., 2021; Mangas et al., 2025) as well as sexual satisfaction (Frederick et al., 2017; Hämmerli et al., 2020; Leavitt et al., 2021; Leonhardt et al., 2018, 2024). In particular, the present study replicated the findings from Leonhardt et al. (2024), while extending the evidence to relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy. Both studies found that couples with higher orgasm consistency also showed higher levels in sexual satisfaction. This convergence is notable because the two studies examined different samples and operationalized the principal constructs differently. Leonhardt et al. studied a larger sample of 725 couples who were, on average, older and in longer relationships than the couples in the present study. They also assessed orgasm consistency using a 5-point response scale,

Table 5. Response surface slopes and polynomial coefficients for emotional intimacy.

	Women			Men		
	b	SE	p	b	SE	p
Full model						
Response surface slopes						
a1: linear slope of LOC	.31	.00	.046	.19	.00	.125
a2: curvilinear slope of LOC	.09	.00	.130	-.16	.00	.395
a3: linear slope of LOIC	.28	.00	.313	-.06	.00	.483
a4: curvilinear slope of LOIC	.34	.00	.075	.07	.00	.769
a5: centrality of LOC	-.04	.00	.132	-.04	.00	.972
Polynomial coefficients						
b1 (X)	.30	.00	.025	.06	.00	.708
b2 (Y)	.02	.00	.806	.12	.00	.221
b3 (X ²)	.09	.00	.385	-.04	.00	.714
b4 (XY)	-.13	.00	.224	-.12	.00	.380
b5 (Y ²)	.13	.00	.066	-.01	.00	.964
Explained Variance (R²)	.033			.049		

Note: The unconstrained model was used for analyses. X coefficients are for women's orgasm consistency, Y coefficients are for men's orgasm consistency. Significant associations are marked in bold. Controlling for relationship duration and excluding influential cases ($n = 2$) did not change results. LOC = Line of Congruence. LOIC = Line of Incongruence.

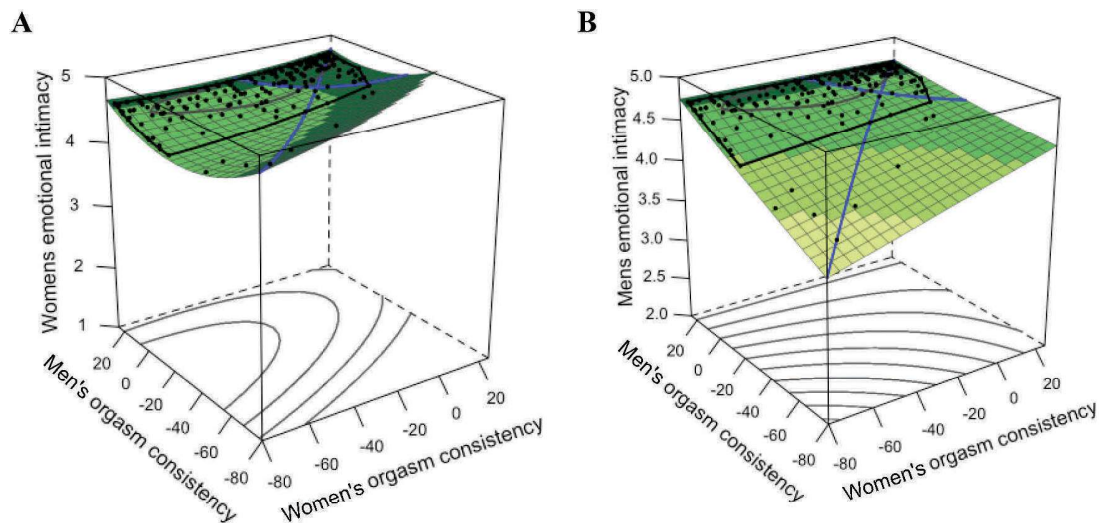


Figure 3. DRSA model with women's and men's orgasm consistency predicting emotional intimacy. Note: Model with unconstrained parameters predicting men's and women's emotional intimacy, controlled for relationship duration.

whereas the present study used a visual analogue scale ranging from 0% to 100%, and the two studies used different measures of sexual satisfaction.

The relationship between orgasm consistency and sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy may be bidirectional. On the one hand, orgasms might reinforce relational and sexual satisfaction as well as emotional intimacy. For individuals, consistent orgasm may serve as a powerful physiological and psychological reinforcer (Fleischman, 2016; Pfaus, 2025), thus strengthening the association between sex and pleasure, reinforcing desire, responsiveness, and overall satisfaction with the (sexual) relationship (Fleischman, 2016; Janssen et al., 2025; Pfaus, 2025). For partners, it may be perceived as a sign of sexual attunement and sexual skill, reinforcing relational intimacy and efficacy (Nóbrega et al., 2025; Wehrli, Landolt, et al., 2025). Conversely, irregular or unpredictable orgasm experiences, particularly if frequent, may cause sexual frustration, perceived incompatibility or incompetence, or unmet expectations, which over time can strain both sexual and relational

satisfaction (Klapilová et al., 2015). However, it is important to note that compatibility does not imply merely having identical experiences (e.g., orgasm), rather, it may be better understood in terms of more complex relational processes such as mutual regulation, responsiveness, and pacing.

On the other hand, higher levels of relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy may contribute to greater orgasm consistency, potentially through oxytocin-related mechanisms (Cera et al., 2021). Indeed, higher oxytocin levels have been associated with sexual arousal and orgasm in men and women (Cera et al., 2021). Beyond this potential physiological mechanism, healthy and emotionally vulnerable relationships may foster trust, psychological safety, and open communication about sexual preferences and needs. Feeling respected, supported, and comfortable with a partner may also reduce anxiety, self-consciousness, and performance pressure, allowing greater attention to pleasurable sensations.

However, these effects should be interpreted with caution. Our exploratory analyses indicated that orgasm consistency was associated with relationship and sexual satisfaction in men

but not in women. One possible explanation is that orgasm may occupy a more central role in goal-oriented sexuality, which is more commonly observed in men (Nemati & Weitkamp, 2020). This interpretation aligns with sexual script theory that position sexual activity (and orgasm in particular) as especially salient for men (Klein & Conley, 2022). In contrast, women may place less emphasis on orgasm as a defining feature of a happy relationship (Opperman et al., 2014), which could explain why orgasm consistency was not as strongly linked to their relationship satisfaction.

Regarding the association between orgasm consistency with emotional intimacy in women but not men (H3), prior research suggests that, for many women, orgasm is not only a source of physical pleasure but also closely tied to relational and emotional dimensions of sex (Cerwenka et al., 2021; Fahs, 2014). Several mechanisms may explain this gender-specific link. First, studies have consistently shown that, compared to men, women often engage in sexual activity with stronger emotional intimacy motivations such as seeking closeness, affection, and relational bonding (Patterson et al., 2025; van Lankveld et al., 2018). When women experience orgasms consistently, it may therefore validate the emotional connection they seek through sex, reinforcing feelings of trust, closeness, and being understood by their partner. Second, orgasm in women is often perceived as more relationally contingent, that is, influenced not only by physical stimulation but also by the quality of the partner interaction and the emotional and relational context (Mah & Binik, 2005). In this light, consistent orgasms may serve as both a signal and a result of strong emotional intimacy, reinforcing a positive feedback loop for women.

Regarding our first research question (RQ1), we found that larger orgasm discrepancy was associated with higher relationship satisfaction in both partners compared to smaller orgasm discrepancy. The second research question (RQ2) explored gender differences; however, we did not find support for an imbalance in orgasm consistency (i.e., men orgasming more consistently than women, or women orgasming more consistently than men) being associated with sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, nor emotional intimacy. This is contrary to previous findings that suggest that there are pathways through which orgasm imbalance would be a negative experience (Wetzel et al., 2022; Wolfer & Carmichael, 2025). For example, a study found that women's orgasm likelihood and satisfaction were lower when they perceived their partners as less invested in their orgasm (Wolfer & Carmichael, 2025). Given that in our sample, men generally orgasmed more consistently than women, the results of RQ1 may reflect enduring gendered sexual scripts and norms that prioritize men's sexual pleasure and emphasize men's orgasm as a central marker of "successful" sex (Klein & Conley, 2022; Thomé, 2025). When partners internalize these norms, the more predictable alignment with dominant scripts (i.e., where men climax more consistently) may be interpreted as a natural and expected trajectory of sexual encounters. Greater perceived normality and predictability in turn may foster a sense of relational stability, which could help explain why larger orgasm discrepancy corresponded with higher relationship satisfaction in the present study. However, it might also be that partners might be honest with each other about orgasm experience and non-experience, which in turn could benefit relationship satisfaction. Being

transparent about discrepancy in orgasms and unashamed of wherever each partner falls on the consistency spectrum might be healthy and beneficial for the relationship. In line with this, research has found positive associations between sexual communication and relationship satisfaction (Mallory, 2022). The result could also reflect sexual preferences of submission and dominance tendencies during sexual interactions, where orgasm imbalance meets people's preferences and thus contributes to relationship satisfaction. Another interpretation of this effect might be that matching in orgasm consistency comes from some men experiencing lower orgasm consistencies and thus matching women's generally lower orgasm consistency. Lower orgasm consistency in men might create stress and a threat to perceived masculinity and desirability as a sexual partner (Savoury et al., 2022; Wiederman, 2005), given that sexual performance was previously linked to men's sense of self (Hawley et al., 2024; Savoury et al., 2022), thus translating into lower relationship satisfaction.

In line with the IEMSS (Lawrance & Byers, 1995), our results suggests that orgasm consistency might function as a sexual reward, thus benefitting the relationship. However, a discrepancy in orgasm consistency might not necessarily be perceived as a sexual cost, particularly for women. In general, relatively little variance was explained by the models, possibly not translating into a clinically significant effect. This is consistent with another study, suggesting that high orgasm consistency alone does not ensure sexual or relationship satisfaction in both men and women (Leavitt et al., 2023). Our findings therefore suggest that while orgasm consistency can be individually rewarding, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for a satisfying intimate relationship, suggesting that the centrality often attributed to orgasm in partnered sexuality may be overstated. Rather than functioning as a definitive benchmark of sexual or relational success, orgasm consistency of partners and orgasm discrepancy between partners in romantic relationships appears to play a far more limited role than cultural narratives typically imply.

Limitations and Future Research

We are mindful of several limitations of the current research. First, the findings were based on a cross-sectional convenience sample with young mixed-gender couples who generally had high relational and sexual satisfaction as well as high levels of emotional intimacy. This limits wider generalizability to other cohorts with different characteristics (Barton et al., 2020). Additionally, the results relied on self-report, which is prone to social desirability and recall bias. We did not take measures to enhance data quality (e.g., attention checks). Future research might use a more time-sensitive measure of orgasm consistency in a longitudinal design (i.e., using a sex/event-contingent diary study), assess perceptions of orgasms of the partner, and include measures of faking orgasm, given that partner's orgasm consistencies are often misperceived by partners (Herbenick et al., 2010; Leonhardt et al., 2018). Subsequent research might also address orgasm using mixed methods, using the qualitative component to help explain the quantitative findings. Additionally, recent research indicates that women experience multiple types of orgasm (e.g., clitoral, vaginal, and whole-body orgasms), each characterized by distinct qualitative features that might contribute differently to

sexual and relationship satisfaction (Weitkamp & Wehrli, 2023). Lastly, the relationship satisfaction scale showed limited internal consistency in this sample, which might influence the reliability of the results. Given the little variance explained, future studies might focus on other factors, such as quality of sexual communication (Mallory, 2022; Mallory et al., 2019; Øverup et al., 2024), communal sexual motivation (Muise & Impett, 2015), attachment style (Øverup & Smith, 2017), dyadic coping (Falconier et al., 2015; Vasquez et al., 2023), or partner contributions to sexual self-esteem (Wehrli, Landolt, et al., 2025) to investigate important predictors of high sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and emotional intimacy.

Implications for Clinical Practice

Our findings might encourage clinicians to ask about orgasm consistency during partnered sexual activity and provide interventions that strengthen sexual health and relationship health. Given that relatively little variance was explained by our models and other factors might be more important for satisfaction, findings from this study may additionally support clinicians in reducing performance-related pressure and in addressing dysfunctional sexual beliefs (e.g., “a satisfying relationship requires achieving orgasm during partnered sex”). Indeed, empirical evidence suggests that perceived responsiveness with respect to partner’s needs is more closely related to sexual satisfaction and intimacy than objective sexual events such as achieving an orgasm (e.g., Muise et al., 2013). In other words, the relationship dynamic is more important than mutual orgasm, which is why intervention should focus on strengthening intimacy, appropriate closeness-distance regulation, dyadic coping, and attachment security. Additionally, our results are consistent with sexual script theory and point in the direction of addressing sexual scripts in the bedroom.

Conclusion

Orgasm consistency was related to higher sexual satisfaction as well as relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy. Additionally, larger orgasm discrepancy was associated with higher relationship satisfaction and emotional intimacy, compared to smaller orgasm discrepancy. This suggests that the orgasm gap is not necessarily harmful to couples. While the orgasm gap might be unjust, putting less importance on it may be an adaptive strategy to cope with it.

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Author Contributions

CRedit: **F. S. V. Wehrli**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Project administration, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **G. M. Hald**: Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing; **C. S. Øverup**: Writing – review & editing; **G. Bodenmann**: Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

A generative AI tool (ChatGPT free version) was used to check the text of this manuscript for grammar mistakes and readability using the prompt “please check the following text for grammar mistakes and readability”.

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