

Loneliness, Commitment, Well-being, and the Role of Shared Time in Close Relationships



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Background Information

To understand why some relationships prevail while others fail, social scientists concerned with intimate relationships have become increasingly interested in identifying the factors that influence commitment.

Rusbult's Investment Model, based on interdependence theory, is known for its exceptionally strong ability to predict commitment in a variety of contexts. The investment model differentiates between:

- Satisfaction: the positivity of affect to one's relationship
- Commitment: the inclination to maintain a relationship and feel emotionally attached to it (Rusbult et al., 1986). Commitment to maintain a relationship is influenced by three independent factors:
 1. Satisfaction level: the evaluation of the positivity of feelings towards one's partner and relationship.
 2. Quality of alternatives: the options beyond their current relationship.
 3. Investment size: the resources that attach partners to their relationship (Rusbult et al., 2011).

Involvement in a committed relationship has been found to be a protective factor for individual's well-being (Whittone et al., 2013). Well-being can be defined as a positive state experienced by individuals, which involves quality of life and the individual's ability to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose (World Health Organization, 2022). It has been found that loneliness is negatively associated with individual's well-being and mental health (Cacioppo et al., 2006; Chou & Chi, 2004; Durak & Senol-Durak, 2010; Nolen-Hoeksema & Ahrens, 2002). This research aims to understand how shared time contributes to the association between loneliness, well-being, relationship satisfaction, and commitment.

Method

- Participants are adults (18+) in a romantic relationship for at least 6 months.
- The study will be advertised by the research team via email and the study webpage.
- The study will be advertised in university courses as one of multiple extra credit opportunities.
- Students will be given the study website link via Canvas.
- Study design: cross sectional survey.
- Data collected via online survey.
- Psychological and relational assessments delivered using Qualtrics.
- Quantitative methods will be used to analyze the data and interpret the findings.
- Correlation analysis, regression analysis, and Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) will be used for addressing the main research questions.

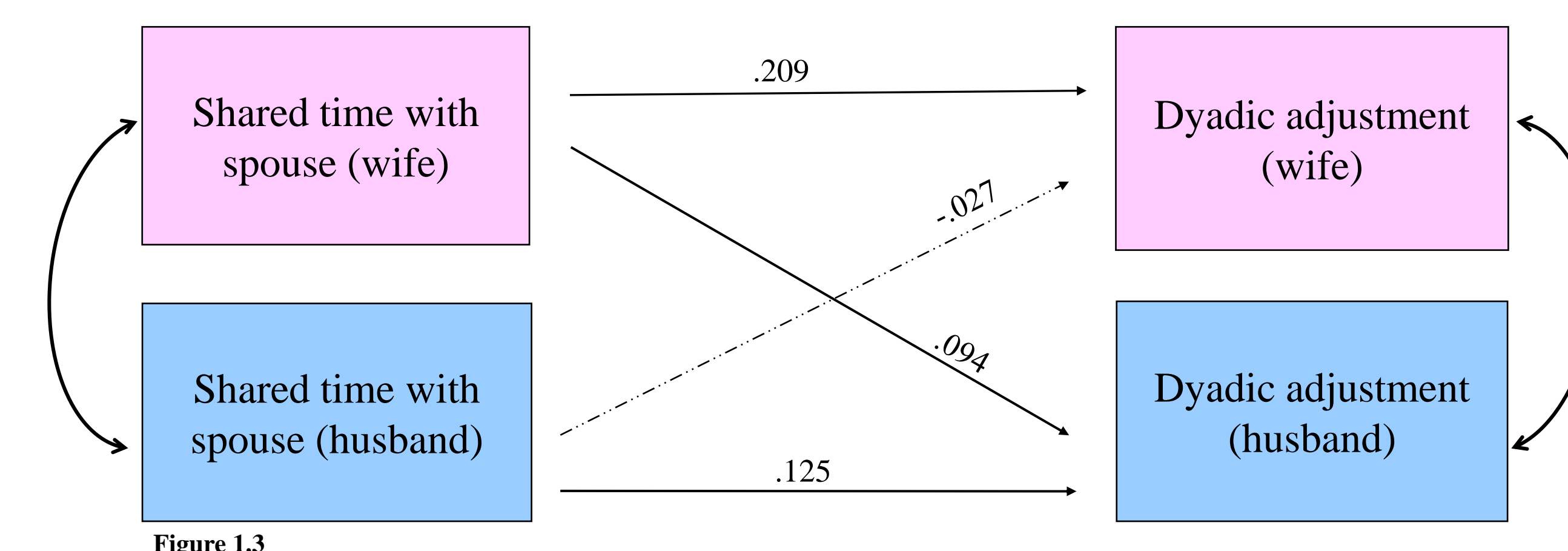
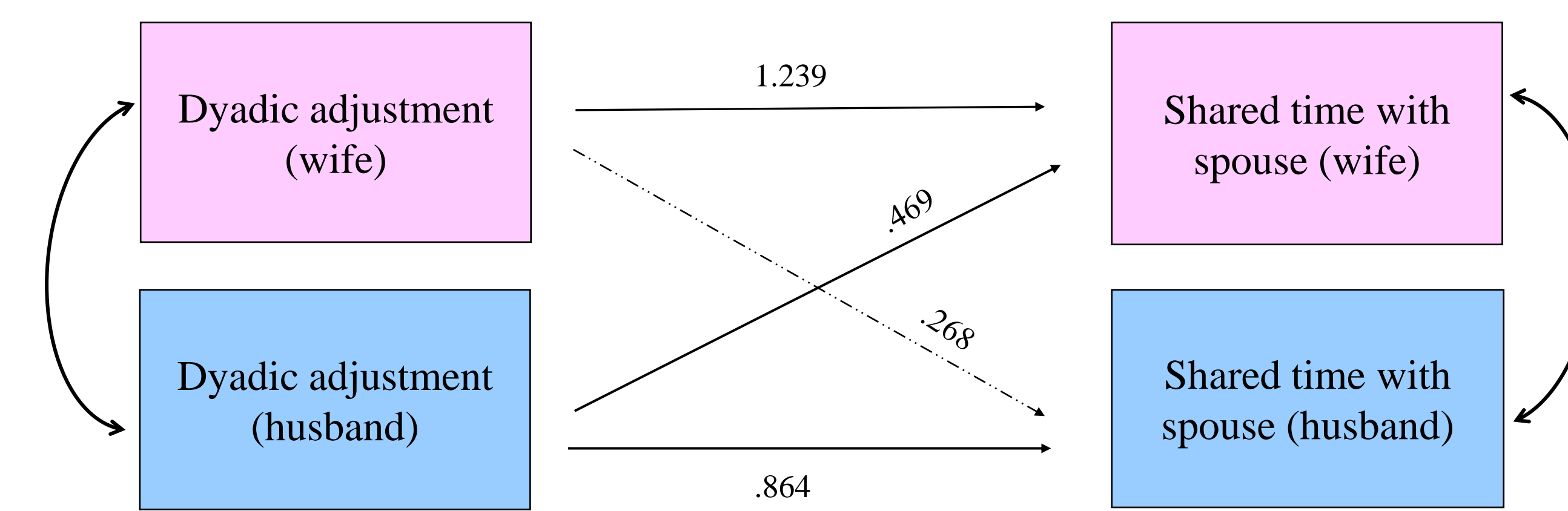
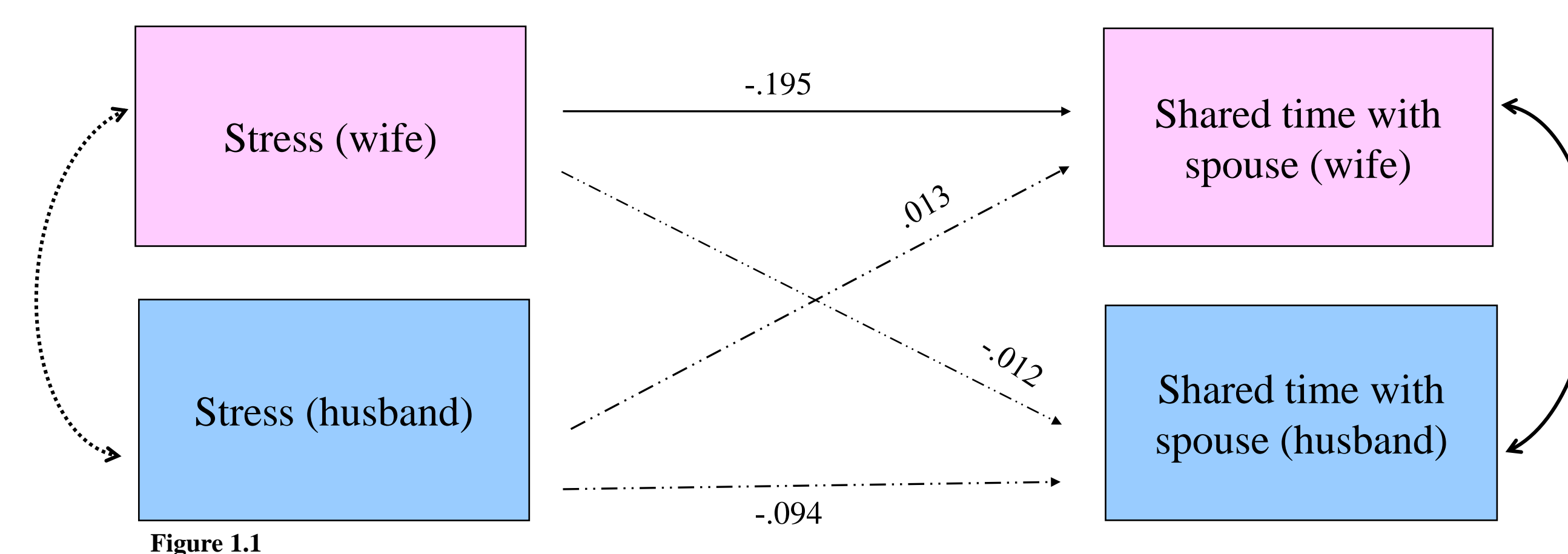
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Results

In married heterosexual couples we can expect to see the following trends:

- Wives who experience more stress spend less time with their husbands. However, the amount of stress experienced by husbands seems to be less correlated with the amount of time they share with their wives.
- Wives who feel more satisfied with their marriage will likely spend more time with their husbands. On the other hand, husband's satisfaction with the marriage has a lesser correlation with increased shared time.
- Spending more time with their spouse can lead to lesser feelings of depression for women. Shared time seems to have the same effect for men, although the correlation is weaker.
- In general, wives who experience depression will be less satisfied with their marriage. Husbands expressed a weaker correlation of the same trend.
- Surprisingly, husbands who are more satisfied with their marriage tend to experience less anxiety. This also applies to wives, but to a lesser extent.



Discussion

Key Findings:

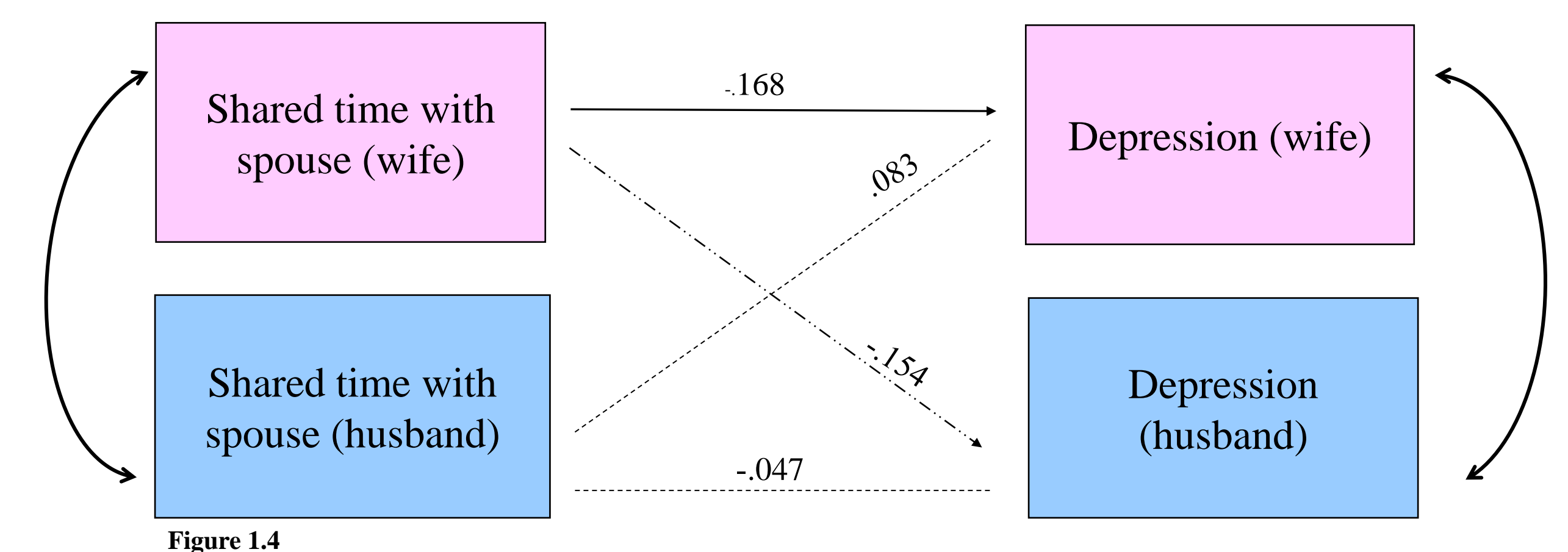
- Wives who spend more time with their husbands experience less stress, depression, and more satisfaction in their marriage. Shared time can be considered a protective factor for depression in wives and anxiety in husbands and should be prioritized to maintain relationship satisfaction. Although husbands' emotions are less impacted by shared time, their relationship satisfaction is linked to lesser anxiety.

Project Limitation:

- Limitations include basing results on a study conducted by a research mentor, potentially affecting accuracy, and only focusing on heterosexual couples due to the study's location in Turkey, which doesn't legally recognize homosexual couples

Future Directions:

- Future studies could explore the cause behind certain correlations, such as why wives who experience more stress spend less time with their husbands. This counters the belief that stressors bring people closer, suggesting that different types of stress affect shared time and relationship satisfaction in different ways.



Figures 1.1 and 1.2 represent how stress and relationship satisfaction of a wife/husband may affect shared time with their spouse. Figures 1.3 and 1.4 represent how shared time of a wife/husband with their spouse may affect depression and relationship satisfaction.

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