

Gender Differences in Responsiveness in Friendship Social Support Paradigms

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Introduction

Research Question

Do **women** vs. **men** provide better social support to a friend?

Gender Differences in Support Provision

- **Men** and **women** differ in the responsiveness of their support in the context of heterosexual romantic relationships[1][2][3]
- **Men** tend to provide less effective support to their stressed spouses, [2][4] and may also exhibit negative support behaviors at peak partner stress [1]

Importance of Responsiveness for Effective Support

- Refers to how caring, validating, and understanding support is perceived to be. [2]
- Support perceived as responsive can circumvent potential costs of support (e.g., worsened distress) and benefit recipients. [5]

Hypothesis

- **Female** providers will provide more responsive and effective support to their friends compared to **male** providers.

Method

Participants: 110 non-romantic friend dyads
N = 220 individuals, 142F, 76M, 2 unspecified

Procedure:

- Dyad members randomly assigned to a **support recipient** and **support provider** role
- Recipients instructed to prepare for a stressful speech
- 5 minute support discussion
- Questionnaire assessing support perceptions and outcomes
- Recipient delivers speech to an evaluator

Post-Support Measures (1 = Not at all, 7 = Extremely)

Perceived Partner Responsiveness [5]

- 3 items, as rated by support recipient
- "During the conversation, my partner..."
 - (1) "made me feel **cared for**."
 - (2) "**valued** my abilities and opinions."
 - (3) "**understood** me."

Perceived Support Effectiveness

- 2 items, as rated by support recipient
- (1) "How **effective** was the help you were offered by your partner?"
- (2) "How **useful** was the help you were offered by your partner?"

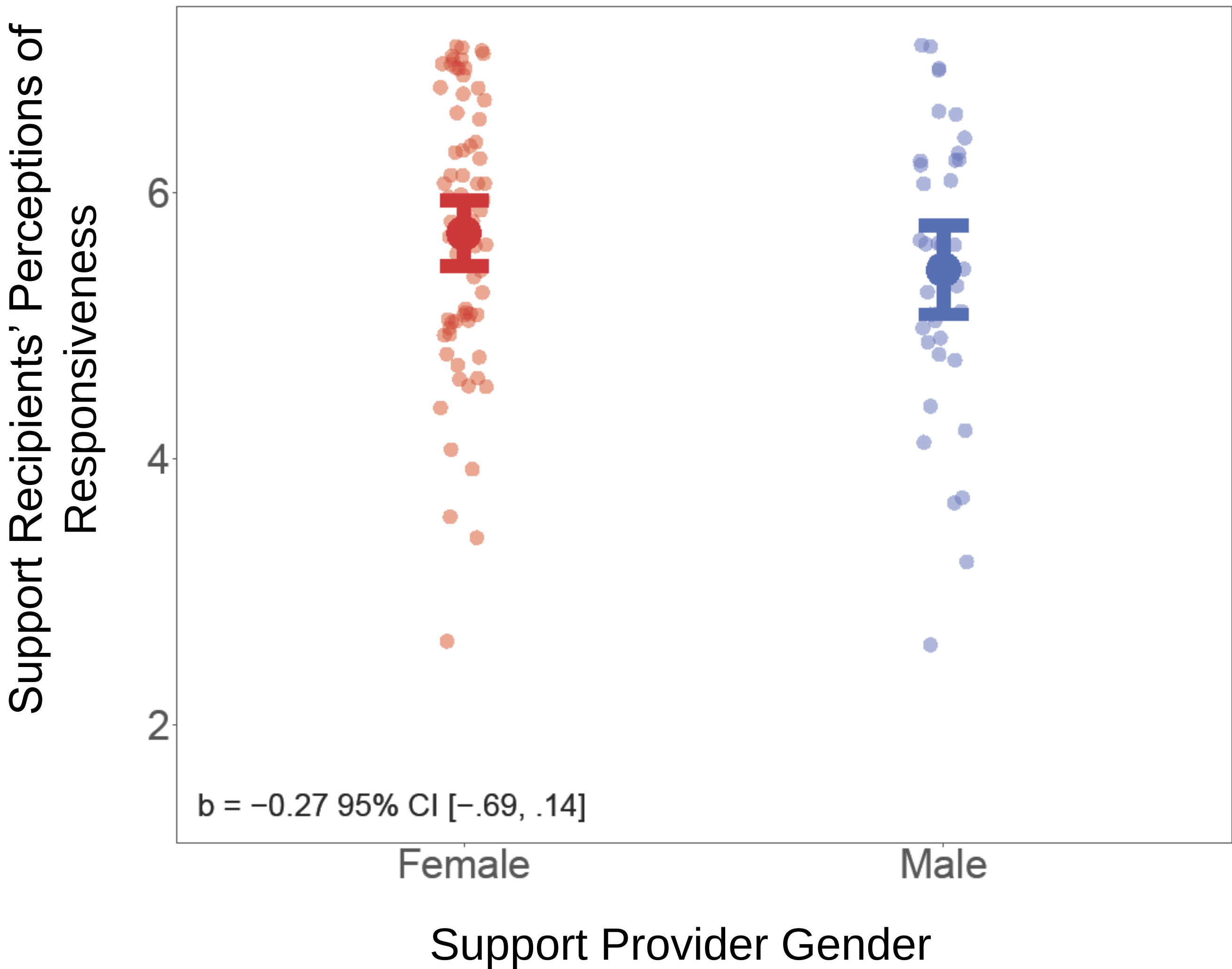
Analysis Strategy

Linear Regression Model:

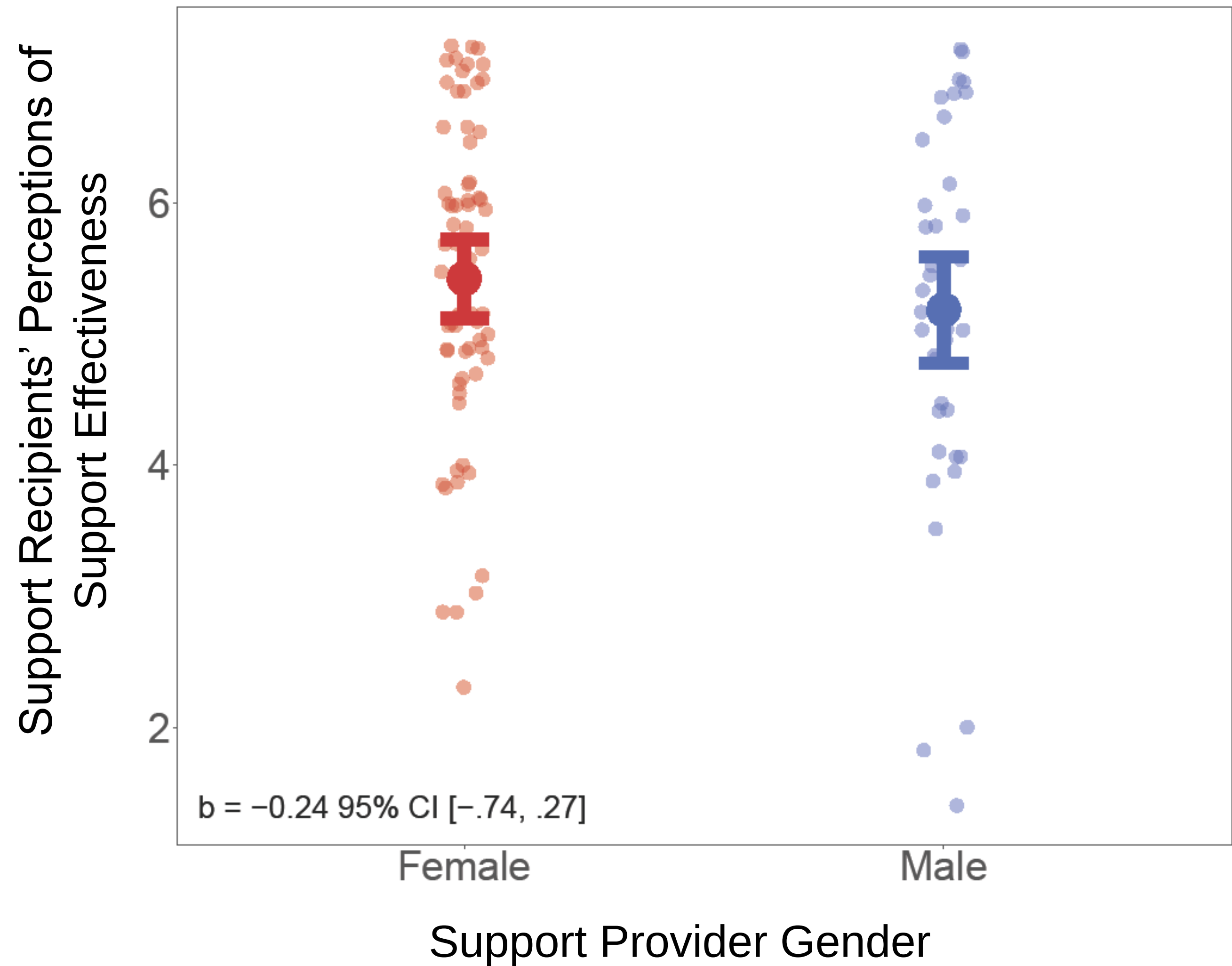
- Outcomes predicted by support provider gender
- Analysis plan was pre-registered on OSF



GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PERCEIVED RESPONSIVENESS



GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PERCEIVED SUPPORT EFFECTIVENESS



Results

Summary:

- There were no significant differences in the responsiveness or effectiveness of support provided by female vs. male providers.
- Results were somewhat inconclusive: Recipients ratings of perceived responsiveness and support effectiveness were **lower for male providers** than for **female providers**, but the trend was not conclusive.

Implications

Implications:

- Although prior work has found gender differences in the effectiveness of support provided by women vs. men in romantic dyads, this study did not reveal significant gender effects in the context of friend dyads.
- More research is needed in this area, with larger sample size

Future Directions:

- Extend scope beyond predominantly **university student** sample
- Determine if "**friend**" dyads differ from "**romantic**" dyads
- Examine interaction effects with the **recipient's gender**

References

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