



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Pathways from same-sex attraction to mental health in adolescents

van Beusekom, G.; Relijveld, L.J.; Assink, M.; Bos, H.M.W.

**Publication date**

2024

**Document Version**

Final published version

[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

van Beusekom, G., Relijveld, L. J., Assink, M., & Bos, H. M. W. (2024). *Pathways from same-sex attraction to mental health in adolescents*. Poster session presented at Psychological Association's Annual Convention 2024, Seattle, Washington, United States.

**General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

# PATHWAYS FROM SAME-SEX ATTRACTION TO MENTAL HEALTH IN ADOLESCENTS

Gabriël van Beusekom<sup>1</sup>, PhD; Linda Relyveld<sup>2</sup>, MSc; Mark Assink<sup>2</sup>, PhD, Henny Bos<sup>2</sup>, PhD

1. Utrecht University, Interdisciplinary Social Science, The European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations
2. University of Amsterdam, Research Institute of Child Development and Education

## BACKGROUND

- Sexual minority youth experience more mental health problems than their heterosexual peers.
- Minority stress and general psychological processes may account for these disparities.

## AIMS

1. To investigate whether peer victimization and future beliefs mediate the relation between same-sex attraction (SSA) and mental health.
2. To examine whether gender nonconformity affects the strength of peer victimization and future beliefs as mediators in the SSA-mental health relation.

## PARTICIPANTS

- 949 Dutch adolescents
- Ages 15-18, Mage = 16.7, SD = 0.82
- Pre-vocational secondary education, 17.9%
- Secondary vocational education, 32.5%
- Pre-university education, 49.6%
- Dutch/Western, 88%; Non-Western, 12%

## PROCEDURE

- Secondary schools in the Netherlands were invited to participate.
- Paper and pencil questionnaires were administered in exam setting.

## DATA ANALYSIS

- SPSS PROCESS for (bootstrapped) mediation and moderated mediation analysis (10,000 samples).

## MEASURES

**Same-Sex Attraction.** One item: "Have you ever experienced romantic and/or sexual feelings for someone of the same sex?" (1 = Never, 5 = Very often).

**General Peer Victimization.** 4 items from a modified version of the University of Illinois Victimization Scale. Adolescents reported how often peers: (1) gossiped, (2) were physically aggressive, (3) insulted or threatened, and (4) excluded them (1 = Never, to 5 = Multiple times a week).  $\alpha = 0.69$ .

**Future Beliefs.** 4 items of the "Planned Future" subscale of the Resilience Scale for Adults, including "I feel that my future looks very promising," (1 = Absolutely not true, to 5 = Absolutely true).  $\alpha = .88$ .

**Internalizing problems.** 32 items, the internalizing subscale of the Youth Self-Report (YSR) (e.g., "I worry a lot") (0 = not true, 2 = very true or often true).  $\alpha = .91$ .

**Gender Nonconformity.** Five items, the adapted Childhood Gender Nonconformity Scale. Boys rate "I am a feminine boy" and girls' rate "I am a masculine girl" from 1 (Absolutely not applicable) to 7 (Always applicable).  $\alpha = .74$ .

## RESULTS

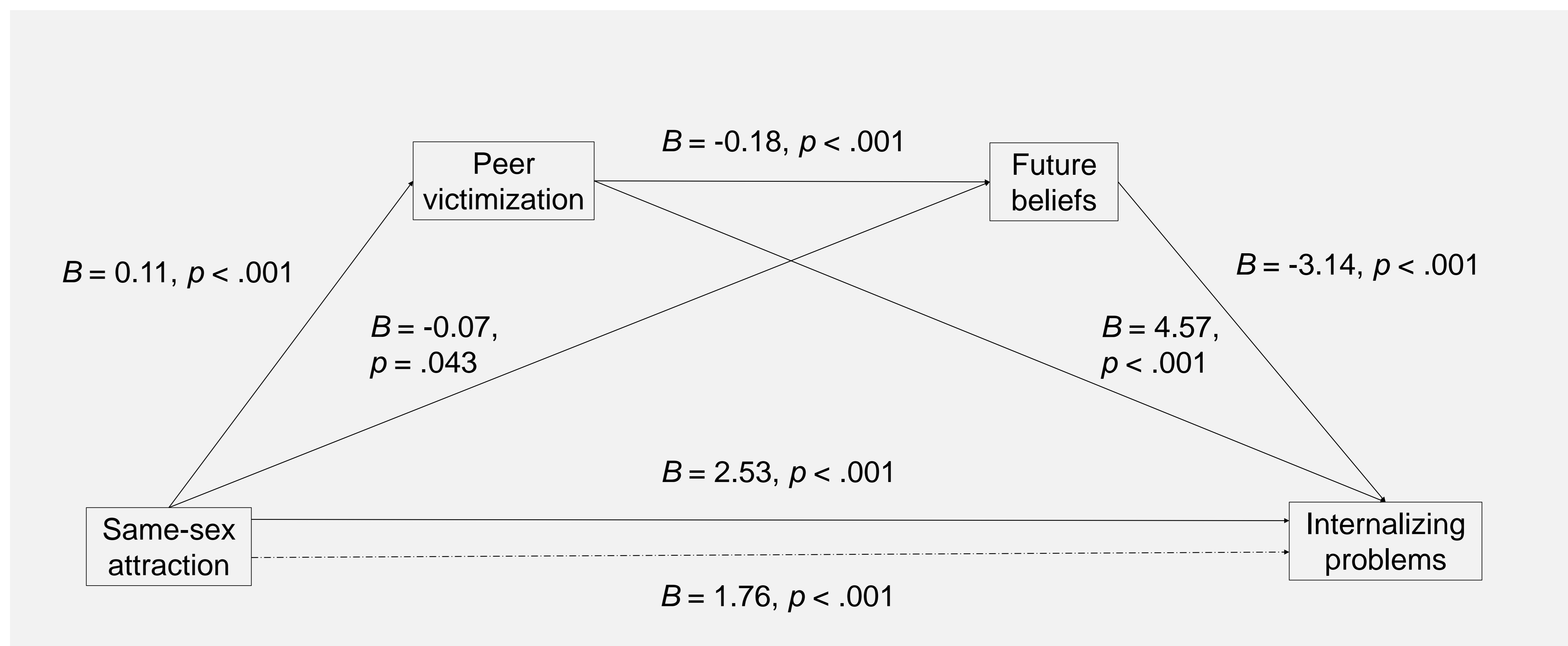


Figure 1. Serial mediation of peer victimization and future beliefs in the relation between same-sex attraction and internalizing problems (Non-standardized coefficients).

### Serial Mediation

- Peer victimization and future beliefs serially mediated the relation between SSA and internalizing problems ( $B = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI [0.01–0.13]).
- SSA adolescents experienced more peer victimization, leading to less positive beliefs about the future. These diminished future beliefs, in turn, were associated with increased internalizing problems.

### Moderated Mediation

- The index of moderated mediation was not significant in the model using peer victimization and future beliefs as mediators ( $B = -0.01$ ;  $SE = 0.11$ ; 95% CI = -0.25 – 0.21).
- Gender nonconformity did not moderate the relationship between SSA and internalizing problems.

## DISCUSSION

- Peer victimization reduced resilience among same-sex attracted youth, impacting their future outlook, which in turn intensified internalizing problems.
- These results highlight the importance of addressing mental health in sexual minority youth through strategies that improve school climate and as well as strategies that enhance their resilience to cope with adversity.