

REGULAR ARTICLE

Dispositional authenticity, facilitativeness, femininity ideology, and dyadic relationship functioning in opposite-gender couples: Actor-partner interdependence analysis

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Abstract

This prospective study examined (a) the mediating roles of Carl Rogers' facilitative interpersonal conditions (i.e., genuineness, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard) and (b) the moderating roles of femininity ideology in the association between dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning using a dyadic approach. Participants, 239 opposite-gender couples, completed the Authenticity Scale, Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory:mini, Femininity Ideology Scale, and Dyadic Adjustment Scale in two separate phases. Longitudinal data were analyzed using the actor-partner interdependence (mediation/moderation) model within a structural equation modelling framework. Perceived facilitativeness served as a mediator, channelling the positive associations from dispositional authenticity to dyadic relationship functioning, at both interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. Additionally, femininity ideology emerged as a moderator, influencing the relationships between dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning in both contexts. These findings underscore the significance of embracing authenticity and transcending traditional femininity ideologies for opposite-gender partners to thrive cohesively as a dyad. The implications of these findings and avenues for future research are further discussed.

KEYWORDS

authenticity, dyadic adjustment, dyadic study, femininity ideology, person-centred theory

1 | INTRODUCTION

Authenticity has long been highly advocated in a variety of fields, such as popular culture, philosophy, and psychology. Within psychology, authenticity has divergent definitions that can be broadly categorized into two approaches, referred to as the consistency approach and the congruence approach (Sutton, 2020). The consistency approach views authenticity as personality traits that are consistent across situations or social roles. Recent research, however, demonstrates that cross-situational or cross-role personality consistency is a different concept from authenticity (Cooper

et al., 2018; Sutton, 2018). Being authentic does not necessarily mean possessing rigid and unchangeable personality traits (Sheldon, 2013). On the contrary, an authentic person permits “himself freely to be the changing, fluid, process which he is” (Rogers, 1961, p. 181). The congruence approach, rooted in the theory of Carl Rogers (1959, 1961), the founder of client-centred therapy and the person-centred approach, regards authenticity as congruence between the three levels of psychological functioning: (a) internal experience, (b) symbolized awareness, and (c) external behaviour and communication (Barrett-Lennard, 1998). Wood et al. (2008) formulated a scale derived from the

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person-centred approach to gauge dispositional authenticity. This scale delves into three core dimensions: self-alienation, which captures the disparity between one's internal experience and conscious awareness; authentic living, which denotes the harmony between conscious awareness and external communication and behaviour; and accepting external influence, which measures the extent to which people are swayed by the viewpoints of others and their tendency to meet others' expectations.

In person-centred theory, dispositional authenticity is regarded as the bedrock of optimal psychological adjustment. The "true self" within this approach refers to the organismic self, which innately strives for maintenance, growth, actualization, and enhancement of the organism's experience (Rogers, 1959). In this context, authenticity involves being in a moment-to-moment "flowing" process. Rigidity and consistency across roles and relationships contradict the Rogerian notion of authenticity.

There are critiques of research on authenticity, but most of them actually pertain to the consistency approach rather than the congruence approach. For example, the understanding of the true self as a stable system "that coordinates all of a person's disparate psychological characteristics in a unified, coherent, and consistent fashion" has been criticized for overlooking the complex, multifaceted, and conflicted nature of human personalities (Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2019, p. 135). As discussed earlier, the congruence approach contrasts significantly with the criticized consistency approach. Even within the same roles or relationships, expressions and behaviours may vary from one moment to the next, but they can still be considered authentic based on the congruence approach. This is because, unlike the consistency approach, the reference frame is not something external to the person, such as time, location, roles, or relationships. Instead, the reference frame is within the person, reflecting how closely one's awareness, expression, and behaviour align with their changing, fluid internal experiences.

Another critique, likewise aimed at authenticity research grounded in the consistency approach, is the lack of consideration for broader cultural contexts, as potential cultural differences may exist in various aspects of authenticity. Given that Western culture is deemed more individualistic and East Asian culture more collectivistic, Westerners have exhibited less contextualization and greater consistency across diverse contexts in previous studies. Authenticity, defined by self-concept consistency across different contexts, may not be as strongly related to better psychological well-being or functioning in East Asian cultures as it is in Western cultures (Chen, 2019). However, person-centred theory posits that authenticity involves balancing individuality and interconnectedness, taking charge of one's life while engaging in responsible social

relationships (Mearns et al., 2000). Rogers asserts that humans have a deep-seated need for affiliation and communication with others, and being authentic leads to more realistic socialization rather than social isolation or maladjustment. The Rogerian concept of authenticity differs from other Western interpretations, as it encompasses both individualistic and collectivistic human needs.

Thus, the congruence approach to authenticity, rooted in person-centred theory, emphasizes the importance of balancing individuality and interconnectedness while maintaining congruence between internal experience, symbolized awareness, and external behaviour. This perspective highlights the fluid and dynamic nature of authenticity, potentially making it more adaptable to a variety of cultural contexts and social situations.

However, studies employing the authenticity scale (Wood et al., 2008) developed based on the Rogerian conceptualization to examine cultural differences in authenticity have still identified variations across cultures. Slabu et al. (2014) found that U.S. participants exhibited higher levels of dispositional authenticity than Easterners. This was partly attributed to their less holistic reasoning and relatively less interdependent self-construal. Interestingly, Indian participants also reported higher levels of dispositional authenticity than Chinese and Singaporean samples, which was partly due to their self-reported possession of relatively more independent and interdependent self-construal.

In their 2023 study, Xia and Xu discovered that the relationship between authenticity and anxiety was consistent across cultures. Both self-alienation and the acceptance of external influence were found to have a positive correlation with anxiety. However, when it came to life satisfaction, the findings varied between the U.S. and Chinese samples. In the U.S. sample, both authentic living and the acceptance of external influence showed significant correlations with life satisfaction. In contrast, these correlations were not observed in the Chinese sample. Soto et al. (2011) explored the cultural norms around emotional suppression and their impact on life satisfaction. They found that, within Hong Kong Chinese culture, where the suppression of emotions is more normative, there was no observed association between the tendency to suppress emotions and reduced life satisfaction. This finding contrasts with the situation among European Americans, where expressiveness is the cultural norm. In such a culture, a tendency to suppress emotions is typically associated with poorer life satisfaction.

In a contrasting cross-cultural study, Chen and Murphy (2019) explored the correlation between the subconstructs of authenticity and psychological well-being. They employed Ryff's (1989) psychological well-being scales, which encompass six interrelated dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy,

environmental mastery, personal growth, and purpose in life. Their findings revealed significant correlations between all the subconstructs of authenticity and psychological well-being in both Chinese and British White samples.

When synthesizing the findings from these cross-cultural studies, it is reasonable to infer that cultural and societal contexts influence individuals' levels of authenticity. Concurrently, the relationship between authenticity and life satisfaction appears to be weaker among Easterners than Westerners. However, it is important to note that the person-centred theory, which underpins the concept of authenticity, is concerned with the optimal functioning of human beings, not merely with their levels of satisfaction with their lives.

Authenticity, as a crucial foundation for growth towards optimal functioning, may have a more universal significance when it comes to higher-level functioning and well-being, such as dyadic relationship adjustment or psychological well-being. This suggests that the impact of authenticity extends beyond life satisfaction and may be universally significant for broader aspects of well-being. It is worth mentioning again that optimal functioning, as conceptualized in the person-centred theory, involves a dual emphasis on and balance between individuality and interconnectedness. These two basic human needs are deeply ingrained in our being and play a crucial role in our well-being.

Rogers hypothesized that the consequence of being authentic, inside and out, "is an alteration in personality and behavior in the direction of psychic health and maturity and more realistic relationships to self, others, and the environment" (Rogers, 1961, p. 66). Evidence supports his hypothesis by showing that authenticity is associated with various adaptive functioning and well-being indicators across a range of contexts (see Sutton, 2020). For example, researchers have reported a positive association between authenticity and mindfulness, lower verbal defensiveness, higher secure self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and psychological well-being (Chen & Murphy, 2019; Hepner & Kernis, 2007; Lakey et al., 2008; Tohme & Joseph, 2020). In contrast, empirical evidence supports a link between inauthenticity and negative psychological outcomes. For example, authenticity had an inverse relationship with distress (Boyraz et al., 2014), depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, physical symptoms, alcohol-related problems, and loneliness (Bryan et al., 2017).

The positive effect of dispositional authenticity on one's own functioning and well-being is well documented, but its interpersonal effects are less studied. This study aimed to investigate the mechanism of the interpersonal effects of dispositional authenticity on dyadic relationship functioning by using a dyadic data analytic approach.

1.1 | Dispositional authenticity in romantic relationships

Dispositional authenticity, as the congruence between inner experience, symbolized awareness, and external expression has been found to be related to one's own romantic relationship functioning, such as fear of intimacy, self-disclosure, trust, relationship satisfaction, and perceived social support (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Tracy et al., 2009). However, very few studies have investigated the interpersonal impact of dispositional authenticity on functioning or adjustment in romantic relationships. To the best of our knowledge, the only previous study that explored the impact of dispositional authenticity on romantic relationship functioning in dyadic data was conducted by Brunell et al. (2010), who found that both men's and women's dispositional authenticity predicted their own later individual relationship functioning after 2 weeks, but only men's dispositional authenticity predicted their partner's individual relationship functioning. Women's dispositional authenticity was not related to men's individual relationship functioning. The researchers explained that the gender difference might be due to the social expectations placed on women, such as by the assumptions that women are more communal than men or that women should be attuned to others and build relationships (Hentschel et al., 2019). They concluded that authentic men assist women's job of maintaining intimacy in relationships, which resulted in better relationship functioning of women. In other words, they implied that men's dispositional authenticity would moderate the association between women's femininity ideology and relationship functioning.

However, mutuality, the sense of oneness with a partner in a romantic relationship, has been found to promote the greatest level of satisfaction and authentic behaviour in romantic relationships. Individual and relationship outcomes were maximized for both partners in relationships with higher mutuality (Davila et al., 2017; Harter et al., 1997; Kayser & Acquati, 2019). In fact, from a person-centred perspective, couples' authenticity would help them to come "to a deeper mutual understanding and to a resolution of difficulties" (Rogers, 1973, p. 27).

Dyadic adjustment has been considered an indicator of couples' adaptation and consistency with each other in relationships, which includes dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression (Farero et al., 2019). A previous study found that genuine self-esteem and authentic pride had positive effects on one's own dyadic adjustment (Tracy et al., 2009). However, it is not yet clear whether individuals' dispositional authenticity has the same beneficial effect on their partner's dyadic relationship functioning. To fill this gap, the first aim of this study was to demonstrate the impact

of dispositional authenticity on dyadic relationship functioning in opposite-gender couples using a dyadic approach.

1.2 | Dispositional authenticity, facilitativeness, and relationship functioning

The facilitative conditions proposed by Rogers were genuineness, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard. It is now widely accepted that the facilitative relationship conditions are common factors that make psychotherapy effective (Bozarth & Motomasa, 2017; McAleavey & Castonguay, 2015). However, while Rogers' work is most widely known in the psychotherapy literature, he proposed these same conditions were equally applicable in any relationship involving psychological contact and would similarly produce beneficial effects on enhancing personal development and well-being (Rogers, 1959, 1961). For example, perceived facilitative conditions have been found to correlate with women athletes' body appreciation and eating style in coach-athlete relationships (Oh et al., 2012), positive client outcomes in psychotherapeutic relationships (Bell et al., 2016), prisoners' post-traumatic growth in staff-prisoner relationships (Hearn et al., 2021), and students' learning experience in student-teacher relationships (Swan et al., 2020).

Assuming both partners in a romantic relationship have a basic willingness to engage and communicate, Rogerian (1959) theory of interpersonal relationship proposes that the greater the authenticity one partner communicates, the more likely the relationship will evolve towards reciprocal authenticity, mutual understanding, better psychological adjustment, and mutual satisfaction.

First, when Partner A communicates in a way that is congruent (their experiences, awareness, and communication are aligned), Partner B is more likely to understand and respond in a similar manner. Second, given Partner A is communicating authentically, they are capable of empathetically understanding Partner B's response from their frame of reference. Third, feeling understood, Partner B experiences satisfaction and positive regard, which in turn increases Partner A's positive feelings towards Partner B. Fourth, this mutual exchange fosters a relationship environment that is characterized by congruence, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard. Fifth, this environment initiates facilitative processes, leading to decreased need for defensive behaviours and improved perception accuracy. Sixth, the continued congruent communication and accurate perception enhance reciprocal positive regard and mutual understanding.

Consequently, this process can potentially lead to improved psychological adjustment and satisfaction for both partners in a romantic relationship, within

the boundaries and timeframe of their relationship. In contrast, if there is a lack of congruence (misalignment of experience, awareness, and behaviour) in communication, the relationship is likely to suffer from misunderstanding, decreased psychological adjustment, and mutual dissatisfaction. All dimensions of authenticity play a crucial role in an individual's capacity to adopt and maintain facilitative attitudes within a relationship.

In essence, the theory posits that authenticity, encompassing all its dimensions within relationships, can enhance interpersonal dynamics, psychological well-being, and overall relationship satisfaction. However, no previous study investigated the impact of one's authenticity on another person's perception of these facilitative conditions of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard, neither in therapeutic relationships nor in other types of relationships. According to Rogers (1957), if one's authenticity makes an impact on another person's functioning and development, the effect should be exerted through the latter person's perceived facilitative conditions. To facilitate another person's growth, not only congruence but also empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard must be perceived in the relationship. The process of becoming more authentic includes leaving behind conditions of worth and being open and curious to experience (Joseph, 2016; Rogers, 1961). Recent studies have found dispositional authenticity to be positively correlated with unconditional positive self-regard (Kim et al., 2020) and to moderate the association between self-compassion and compassion to others (Bayır-Toper et al., 2020). Transparency in behaviour and communication builds closeness and trust; a deep empathic understanding enables receivers to get close to their own internal experience; unconditional acceptance takes away the threat of losing positive regard. Authentic people show their curiosity, openness, acceptance, and trust to their own and others' internal experiences through genuine behaviours and expressions in close relationships. The facilitative way authentic people perceive, understand, and treat themselves is also reflected in their interactions with other people. Therefore, people who have close relationships with authentic people perceive congruence, empathy, and unconditional positive regard in their interactions, and in turn, the perceived facilitativeness brings better relationship functioning. The second aim of this study was to examine the mediating role of perceived facilitativeness in the association between dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning in opposite-gender couples.

1.3 | Dispositional authenticity, femininity ideology, and relationship functioning

Rogers viewed authenticity as a default human state, but one that was easily derailed. Newborn infants are authentic as they are in tune with their organismic

selves (Joseph, 2016; Rogers, 1959). However, their states of congruence can hardly be maintained when their internal experiences “are discriminated by significant others as being more or less worthy of positive regard” (Rogers, 1959, p. 225). The values from significant others, also called conditions of worth, are adopted as their own and can be maintained until adulthood. Instead of acting on their organismic valuing process, they gradually alienate their symbolized awareness from their internal experience and act in accord with the conditions of worth (Murphy et al., 2020). Perceived conditional regard has been found to be detrimental to a range of psychological, behavioural, and relational outcomes, such as relationship quality, adjustment, and school dropout (e.g., Itzhaki et al., 2018; Kanat-Maymon et al., 2016).

Gender socialization is one of the best-known examples of the learning process of conditions of worth: individuals are given positive regard when their behaviours and attitudes are consistent with sociocultural expectations around their assigned or perceived sex and negative regard when their gender expressions do not meet the expectations. The internalization of conventional beliefs regarding gender roles is referred to as gender ideology (Levant et al., 2007).

Women are generally expected to show communal traits (e.g., warm, caring), and men are traditionally ascribed agentic traits (e.g., dominant, competent) (Eagly, 2013). There was no evidence of salutary effects of femininity ideology on women's relationship functioning, although women were traditionally expected to avoid conflict and preserve harmonious relationships (Wood & Eagly, 2010). However, there was evidence that femininity ideology is detrimental to girls'/women's psychological well-being. For example, femininity ideology was negatively associated with self-esteem and positively associated with depression in adolescent girls (Tolman et al., 2006). Femininity ideology had a negative correlation with body appreciation in adult women (Swami & Abbasnejad, 2010). Heterosexual women who conformed to feminine norms related to romantic relationships were found to show more romanticizing controlling behaviours (Papp et al., 2016). Women who highly valued romantic relationships and believed that they should invest their self in romantic relationships because of their gender did not seem to show better romantic relationship functioning. Moreover, conformity to feminine norms may elicit women's controlling behaviour in romantic relationships. These findings were more consistent with Rogers' (1959) theory compared to Brunell et al.'s (2010) interpretation of gender difference in the impact of one's dispositional authenticity on a partner's relationship functioning. But as women become more authentic, they will experience less conditions of worth. Women's femininity ideology would not affect the impact of their dispositional authenticity on their own psychological and relational

adjustment. But it is unknown whether women's femininity ideology affects their partners' relationship functioning in opposite-gender relationships.

According to Rogerian (1959) theory, men's femininity ideology is not associated with their self-concept; femininity ideology is not a condition of worth for men. There is a lack of research on how men's femininity ideology is associated with either their own or their partners' relationship functioning. However, men's avoidance of femininity ideology may relate to negative interpersonal experiences (Levant & Powell, 2017). More definitive evidence of the relationships between dispositional authenticity, femininity ideology, and a couple's relationship functioning is needed.

In their daily diary study, Curran et al. (2015) engaged 74 heterosexual couples in a 7-day diary exercise, wherein participants were required to complete daily surveys reflecting on their experiences in the preceding 24h. The findings revealed that irrespective of gender, emotion work was a significant predictor of both higher average scores and daily improvements in positive relationship quality.

However, when examining the impact of emotion work on relationship volatility over the course of a week, distinct and consistent gender differences emerged. Specifically, female partners who reported higher average emotion work were associated with lower volatility in love, satisfaction, and closeness. Conversely, male partners demonstrated greater volatility in love and commitment when their female counterparts reported higher average emotion work.

This pattern suggests that males may perceive themselves as overbenefitted when their female partners engage in higher average emotion work. Overbenefitting, a form of inequality, arises when individuals receive benefits disproportionate to their contributions relative to their partners, often leading to increased feelings of guilt. In this context, it is possible that the male partner perceives an excess of emotion work performed on his behalf, which he neither desires nor requires, leading to a perceived lack of relational control or an imbalance of relational power in favour of the female partner.

Regardless of the intentions of their female counterparts, men may interpret higher overall average levels of emotion work as being demanding and as a potential threat to their perceived power within the relationship. This study thus highlights the significance of the gender relations perspective, which posits gender as a social relation with a focus on the social construction of gendered behaviours and relationships. By analysing data across several days, the study illuminates how gendered behaviours can influence romantic relationship outcomes and demonstrates that gender is a construct that operates at multiple levels and within various institutions.

Both Brunell et al. (2010) and Curran et al. (2015) attribute gender differences in heterosexual couples to the

influence of gender ideology, particularly the ideology of femininity, as it pertains to relationship maintenance. However, their research designs do not incorporate a direct measure of femininity ideology.

Greenstein's (1996) research and the study by Li et al. (2020) both offer valuable insights into the dynamics of gender ideologies and their implications on domestic participation and marital satisfaction. Greenstein (1996) underscores that husbands typically engage minimally in household tasks. However, there is a noticeable shift in their participation when both the husband and wife embrace egalitarian views about gender and marital roles. In essence, husbands become more proactive in sharing domestic responsibilities when both partners possess progressive beliefs about gender roles.

Conversely, the research by Li et al. (2020) on Chinese dual-earner couples delves deeper into the relationship between traditional gender ideologies and marital quality. This study emphasizes the significance of recognizing the differences in how partners perceive traditional gender roles. Such discrepancies can have profound implications for marital satisfaction. The findings from Li et al. (2020) advocate for a re-evaluation of deeply rooted gender beliefs, particularly emphasizing the benefits of husbands adopting less traditional gender ideologies to enhance marital well-being in contemporary Chinese society.

Both studies highlight the profound influence of gender ideologies on domestic responsibilities and marital dynamics. The alignment or misalignment of these ideologies between partners can significantly shape domestic participation and marital satisfaction. Furthermore, the congruence in gender beliefs between partners, especially in more egalitarian directions, tends to foster better marital dynamics and satisfaction. Discrepancies, especially when one partner holds traditional views while the other does not, can strain marital well-being. A shared emphasis emerges from both studies on the benefits of moving away from traditional gender ideologies. Adopting more egalitarian views on gender roles is posited as a pathway to healthier relationships and improved domestic environments.

In conclusion, the intertwined relationship between gender ideologies, domestic participation, and marital satisfaction is evident in both the study by Greenstein (1996) and the research by Li et al. (2020). As societies evolve and gender roles become more fluid, understanding and re-evaluating deeply ingrained gender ideologies becomes crucial for fostering harmonious domestic and marital landscapes.

The ideology of femininity may compel women to invest more effort in their romantic relationships, as viewed from an external perspective, in order to meet societal expectations associated with their gender. However, according to the theory of personality proposed by Rogers (1959), support, care, or emotion work, which is

driven by women's adherence to femininity ideology, may enhance their partner's satisfaction or perceived quality within the relationship. However, it does not necessarily contribute to the improvement of their partner's functioning within the relationship. Simultaneously, gender ideology, when viewed as gendered conditions of worth, may impede an individual's authenticity. Consequently, this could lead to diminished functioning rather than an enhancement of it.

To address the conflicting assumptions regarding the influence of gender ideology, it would be beneficial to incorporate these variables into the research model. As societal norms evolve over time, an increasing number of individuals are challenging rigid gender norms and stereotypes. Therefore, the impact of gender ideology on individuals should not be inferred solely based on their gender. Instead, it would be more insightful to measure the levels of gender ideology across different genders and examine how these levels influence both their own and their partners' relational outcomes.

Over the past 20 years, increasing attention has been given to authenticity in various research fields (Harter, 2009). Gender ideology, as an important concept in the gender role strain paradigm, has been researched since the 1980s (Pleck, 1987). However, there is a lack of studies focused on both authenticity and gender ideology together. At the same time, femininity ideology represents a type of gendered condition of worth (Chantler & Smailes, 2004). The expectations placed on different genders were presumably intended to help individuals excel in the areas they were assigned to. For example, femininity ideology includes the expectation that women should be more adept at handling relationship issues and maintaining harmony within relationships. However, according to person-centred theory, regardless of the content of the conditions of worth, their presence undermines various aspects of authenticity, shifting one's focus of evaluation from internal to external and causing psychological adjustment to change from flexible to rigid. Femininity ideology may not lead to better functioning even if it contains complementary stereotypes. Person-centred theory highlights a paradox of the condition of worth: external expectations and norms may not guide individuals towards the positive outcomes they were intended to achieve but could potentially hinder those who do not belong to the group from developing the potential they might have in the given areas. Hence, the third aim of this study was to examine the moderating role of femininity ideology in the association between dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning in opposite-gender couples. Do the restrictions placed on women only affect women, or do they actually impact everyone within the outdated binary system? The goal was to explore how femininity ideology, as a gendered condition of worth mainly related to women, affects both man and woman in a relationship.

1.4 | Femininity ideology-authenticity interaction theory in opposite-gender romantic relationships

Building upon the foundational work of Rogers (1959), where authenticity as a whole was broadly discussed, subsequent theories have sought to expand and refine the conceptualization of authenticity (Wood et al., 2008). Rogers' original work lacked insight into how various subconstructs of authenticity interacted with other central tenets of his theory. Prior research focused primarily on overall authenticity and its behavioural aspects, often neglecting the internal and social dimensions of authenticity. The multifaceted nature of human personality suggests that individuals can experience partial congruence, they may be in touch with their inner selves yet suppress their true feelings, or they might openly share their thoughts while being disconnected from their genuine internal experiences.

It is against this backdrop that the femininity ideology-authenticity interaction theory is proposed. This theory seeks to untangle the intricate relationship between femininity ideology and authenticity in opposite-gender romantic relationships and delves into their combined influence on dyadic relationship functioning.

1.4.1 | Self-alienation and femininity ideology

For many women deeply entrenched in femininity ideology, societal norms and expectations serve as both a guiding post and a chain. They are lauded for their nurturing nature, their ability to maintain relationships, and their fulfilment of the “ideal” wife or mother role. While externally these women might exude the essence of societal expectations, internally, a tumultuous storm of emptiness or hollowness can brew. Such internal dissonance can lead to a superficial relationship, one that ticks societal checkboxes but lacks genuine depth.

Femininity ideology is not related to men's self-concept. Thus, there would be no expected relationship between men's self-alienation and femininity ideology. However, men's accepting attitudes towards femininity ideology might hinder their women partners from connecting with their internal experiences, due to the same suppressive influences from culture and society. But it's a consistent source within the relationship.

1.4.2 | Authentic living and femininity ideology

Women, influenced by traditional roles associated with femininity ideology, might stifle their genuine desires, focusing on fulfilling perceived duties. The approval they receive for aligning with societal norms might mask

their internal feelings of unfulfilment. The shift towards genuine living for women does not automatically equate to improved dyadic relationship functioning. The relationship dynamics largely hinge on the partner's perspectives, beliefs, and willingness to adapt.

Conversely, men who adhere to these ideologies can find validation in societal structures, often expecting their women partners to conform. This expectation can lead to relationship imbalances, stifling open communication, mutual understanding, and collaboration – all vital for a relationship's thriving.

1.4.3 | Accepting external influence and femininity ideology

When women, influenced by femininity ideology, align with societal gender roles, the relationship might suffer from rigidity. There's a risk of settling into predefined roles, limiting room for genuine growth and collaboration.

Men, on the other hand, by accepting these ideologies, can further solidify their belief in traditional gender roles. This belief can strain relationships, especially if there is a mismatch in ideologies between partners, leading to potential misunderstandings and conflicts.

Femininity ideology-authenticity interaction theory emphasizes that, while femininity ideology paints an ostensibly rosy picture for women, it does not guarantee a more fulfilling relationship experience. In contrast, authenticity fosters mutual growth within relationships, culminating in optimal dyadic relationship functioning and satisfaction.

1.4.4 | This study

The objectives of this longitudinal study were to (a) examine intrapersonal and interpersonal associations between dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning in opposite-gender romantic relationships, (b) test perceived facilitativeness as a mediator, and (c) examine femininity ideology as a moderator that may explain these interpersonal and intrapersonal associations.

Based on person-centred theory and previous research literature, the following hypotheses were proposed and tested with a longitudinal and dyadic approach:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). For both men and women, dispositional authenticity is positively and prospectively associated with their own and their partner's dyadic relationship functioning.

Hypothesis 2 (H2). For both men and women, both the interpersonal and intrapersonal links between prior dispositional

authenticity and later dyadic relationship functioning are mediated by both one's own and one's partner's later perceived facilitativeness. It was expected that greater dispositional authenticity would be related to greater perceived facilitativeness. In turn, perceived facilitativeness was expected to be positively associated with the levels of dyadic relationship functioning.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). Femininity ideology moderates the link between dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning. Men's femininity ideology may weaken the positive associations between their dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Procedures

The participants were recruited via social media postings in English-speaking groups on Facebook between November 2019 and September 2021. The inclusion criteria were (a) 18 years old or older; (b) both partners of the relationship agreed to participate, and it had to be an opposite-gender relationship; (c) couples were involved in the relationship for a minimum of 3 months; and (d) they agreed to complete the follow-up survey after a 2-week interval. Data were collected via Jisc Online Surveys. One member of a couple completed the survey first. Then a receipt number was given to be sent to their partner together with the link to the online survey. The partner was required to provide the receipt number when they were filling in the survey. Email addresses were requested and given to researchers to send the link to the follow-up survey.

2.2 | Participants

The final sample consisted of 239 opposite-gender couples ($N=478$). Men's mean age was 31.35 years ($SD=8.49$), and women's mean age was 30.45 years ($SD=9.23$). The average relationship duration was 4.34 years ($SD=4.38$, range=.25–27.08 years). Collectively, this sample was 55.23% Caucasian, 19.67% South Asian, 8.37% East Asian, 5.65% African, 2.51% Latino/Hispanic, 2.51% Mixed, and 6.06% identified as having another racial or ethnic background. In 35.6% of the couples, both partners identified as Caucasian. A slightly higher percentage, 39.3%, represented interracial couples where one partner was Caucasian. In contrast, couples where both partners identified as East Asian constituted a smaller fraction, accounting for only 1.7% of the total.

2.3 | Measures

Participants completed self-report surveys at two time points, 2 weeks apart. At the first time point (T1), participants completed questionnaires assessing dispositional authenticity and femininity ideology. At the second time point (T2), participants completed measures of perceived facilitativeness and dyadic relationship functioning. Sociodemographic information, including gender, age, ethnicity, and length of relationship, was also obtained.

Dispositional authenticity (TI). Dispositional authenticity was measured with the Authenticity Scale (AS; Wood et al., 2008). This is a 12-item measure composed of a four-item self-alienation subscale (e.g., “I feel as if I do not know myself very well”), a four-item authentic living subscale (e.g., “I am true to myself in most situations”), and a four-item accepting external influence subscale (e.g., “I usually do what other people tell me to do”). For all items, participants report on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*does not describe me at all*) to 7 (*describes me very well*). To compute a total scale score, items on the self-alienation and external influence subscales are reverse scored, such that higher scores on the total are indicative of higher authenticity. Wood et al. (2008) reported α coefficients for subscales ranging from .69 to .78. The 2-week and 2-week test–retest reliability coefficients were also adequate for all subscales ranging from .78 to .84. Moreover, convergent validity was demonstrated as the subscales were strongly correlated with subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and self-esteem. In this study, the values for Cronbach's alphas were .807 for the total scale, .820 for the self-alienation subscale, .802 for the authentic living subscale, and .742 for the accepting external influence subscale.

Femininity ideology (TI). The Femininity Ideology Scale (FIS) provides a measure of the degree to which participants endorse traditional femininity ideology (Levant et al., 2007). To assess the degree to which participants assume women's role in relationships, a seven-item caretaking subscale and an eight-item emotionality subscale were used. Sample items read as follows: “When someone's feelings are hurt, a woman should try to make them feel better” and “It is expected that a single woman is less fulfilled than a married woman.” Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agree with the statements using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strong disagreement with traditional norms* and 5 = *strong agreement with traditional norms*), with higher scores on all items reflecting higher agreement with traditional women gender roles in relationships. The Total Traditional Score was obtained by taking the mean of all the items. Previous research (Levant et al., 2007) revealed Cronbach's alphas for the caretaking subscale ($\alpha=.80$) and for the emotionality subscale ($\alpha=.82$). In this study, the α coefficients for the total score was .867; for caretaking $\alpha=.836$; for emotionality $\alpha=.863$.

Perceived facilitativeness (T2). Perceived facilitativeness was assessed using the 12-item Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (B-L RI:mini; Chen et al., 2023). The B-L RI:mini is a global evaluative assessment of the one-dimensional construct of Rogers' (1959) facilitative conditions. Participants were asked to report on the amount of empathy, congruence, unconditionality, and positive regard they feel their partner expresses towards them with the use of a Likert scale, which ranged from -3 (*NO, I strongly feel that it is not true*) to 3 (*YES, I strongly feel that it is true*). Example items included "My partner usually senses or realizes what I am feeling," "My partner expresses their true impressions and feelings with me," "Whether the ideas and feelings I express are 'good' or 'bad' seems to make no difference to my partner's feeling towards me." Higher scores are indicative of the participants perceiving higher facilitativeness from their partners. Chen et al. (2023) reported high reliability with an α coefficient of .91. They also reported good construct validity as perceived facilitativeness is moderately associated with perceived social support, attachment anxiety, and avoidance. The value for Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .868 in this study.

Dyadic relationship functioning (T2). The seven-item Abbreviated Dyadic Adjustment Scale (ADAS; Sharples & Rogers, 1984) was used to measure perceptions of relationship adjustment for either married or unmarried couples. Three items of the ADAS assessed topics of disagreement between partners, and they were rated on a 6-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from "always disagree" to "always agree." Three questions assessed frequency of positive exchanges, and they had a 6-point Likert scale with possible response options ranging from "never" to "more often." An additional item assessed overall happiness in the relationship with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "extremely unhappy" to "perfect." The ADAS had a possible range of 0 to 36. Higher scores indicated greater adjustment. Whisman et al. (2011) reported coefficient alphas ranging from .78 to .92. The ADAS has also demonstrated good criterion-related and construct validity. In this study, the scale showed acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .686$).

2.4 | Covariates

To evaluate the need for incorporating covariates into the dyadic models, we analysed the correlations between dyadic relationship functioning, age, and relationship duration and compared them using ANOVA across groups based on a couple-level covariate that is race/ethnicity (0 = both partners being non-Hispanic Caucasian vs. 1 = at least one partner belonging to a racial/ethnic minority). To investigate potential differences in the main study variables between the two levels of the binary covariate, we conducted independent sample *t*-tests. The *t*-values obtained from these tests are displayed in Table 1.

Age, relationship duration, and whether partners are both Caucasian showed no significant association with dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning, and as a result, no covariate was included in the model for this study.

2.5 | Statistical analyses

2.5.1 | Missing data analysis

The Little's MCAR test (Little, 1988) was employed to show that the missing data, accounting for .996% of the entire dataset, were missing completely at random (MCAR). The test resulted in a χ^2 (3775, $N = 239$) value of 3896.95 and a *p* value of 0.082. Given the small quantity of missing data and its MCAR characteristic, which would probably have an insignificant impact on variance estimations, we opted for mean imputation rather than more intricate multiple imputation methods.

2.5.2 | APIM

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to characterize the direct and indirect effects among a set of variables. SEM is one of the most widely used tools for data analysis in applications throughout the social and behavioural sciences and is particularly useful for analysis of dyadic data (Kenny et al., 2006). A common problem of non-independence in the social sciences also arises in dyadic data analysis. The actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) has been developed to account for the non-independence of dyadic data and is able to test the influence that two related individuals have on each other (Kenny, 1995; Kenny & Judd, 1996). Therefore, path analysis was used to analyse the APIM within a SEM framework in Mplus Version 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). Mplus provides the robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimator, which features robust standard errors and a chi-squared test statistic for assessing the model. The MLR estimator exhibits lower sensitivity to non-normal distributions, making it a suitable alternative to data transformation or truncation techniques. In this research, the MLR estimator was used for estimating the models.

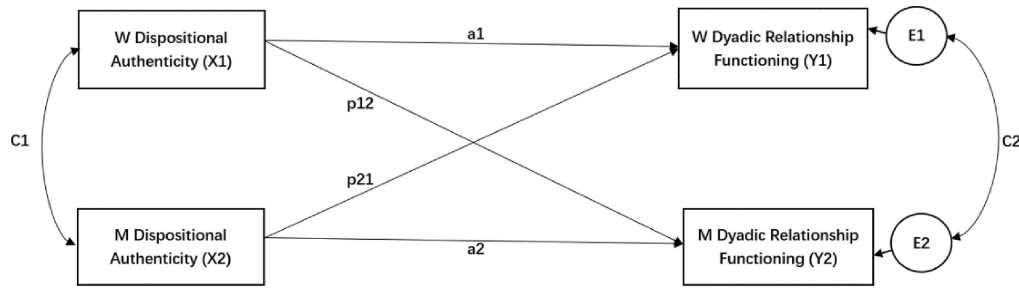
APIM nests dyadic members' scores with their individual unit measure retained. In the basic APIM, causal variables and outcome variables for both dyadic members were presented in the model (Figure 1a). Thus, the central components of the APIM are the relationships between these variables, which are called the actor effect and the partner effect. Whereas the actor effect refers to the effect of a person's causal variable on that person's outcome variable, the partner effect refers to the effect of a person's partner's causal variable on the person's outcome variable (Cook & Kenny, 2005).

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, ranges, and correlations for study variables.

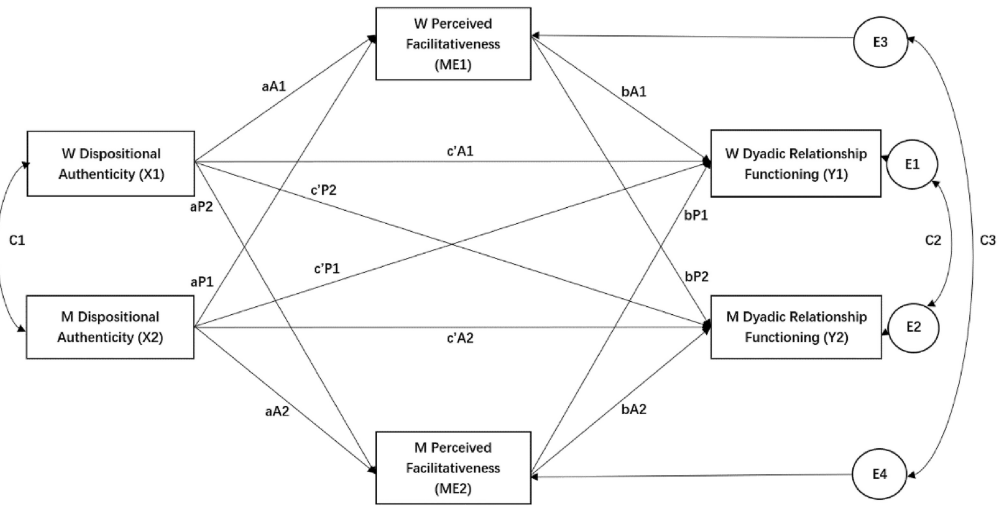
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Dispositional authenticity T1 (women)	—													
2. Self-alienation T1 (women)	-0.774**	—												
3. Authentic living T1 (women)	0.694**	-0.308**	—											
4. Accepting external influence (women)	-0.734**	0.332**	-0.291**	—										
5. Perceived facilitativeness T2 (women)	0.310**	-0.177**	0.273**	-0.244**	—									
6. Femininity ideology T1 (women)	-0.239**	0.239**	-0.088	0.186**	-0.090	—								
7. Dyadic relationship functioning T2 (women)	0.380**	-0.254**	0.369**	-0.227**	0.723**	-0.035	—							
8. Dispositional authenticity T1 (men)	0.112	-0.007	0.117	-0.134*	0.201**	-0.135*	0.200**	—						
9. Self-alienation T1 (men)	-0.062	-0.013	-0.081	0.079	-0.09	0.121	-0.117	-0.818**	—					
10. Authentic living T1 (men)	0.159*	-0.082	0.131*	-0.143*	0.188**	0.012	0.151*	0.529**	-0.142*	—				
11. Accepting external influence (men)	-0.037	-0.037	-0.048	0.079	-0.177**	0.160*	-0.172**	-0.760**	0.455**	-0.153*	—			
12. Perceived facilitativeness T2 (men)	0.228**	-0.081	0.266**	-0.176**	0.524**	0.014	0.488**	0.396**	-0.256**	0.304**	-0.305**	—		
13. Femininity ideology T1 (men)	-0.073	-0.047	-0.136*	0.091	-0.035	0.200**	-0.081	0.037	-0.004	0.021	-0.059	0.132*	—	
14. Dyadic relationship functioning T2 (men)	0.272**	-0.146*	0.255**	-0.212**	0.483**	-0.088	0.453**	0.373**	-0.206**	0.240**	-0.371**	0.703**	0.014	—
Mean	61.879	11.155	22.741	13.707	18.845	2.488	25.623	62.155	11.736	23.197	13.305	19.427	2.527	24.808
SD	11.321	5.655	4.635	5.078	10.991	0.708	4.937	10.606	5.942	4.047	4.740	11.881	0.766	5.021
Min	34	4	6	4	-13	1	10	35	4	4	8	-28	1	3
Max	82	28	28	28	34	4.267	35	84	28	28	28	34	4.2	35
Covariates														
Age (women)	0.091	0.055	0.028	0.117	0.088	0.077	0.027	0.085	-0.001	0.130	0.08	0.093	0.03	0.096
Age (men)	0.003	-0.015	0.008	0.016	0.058	0.077	-0.032	0.041	0.036	0.062	-0.007	0.037	0.047	0.092
Relationship duration	0.067	0.047	0.039	0.061	0.047	0.063	0.015	-0.017	-0.023	0.036	-0.041	0.043	0.158*	0.001
Couple racial/ethnic minority	-0.425	-0.736	-0.057	-0.077	0.677	0.945	0.191	0.583	0.195	1.449	-0.172	1.101	-0.049	0.466

Note: $N = 239$ couples. To examine potential differences in the primary study variables between the two levels of each binary covariate, we performed independent sample t -tests. The t -values obtained from these tests are presented.

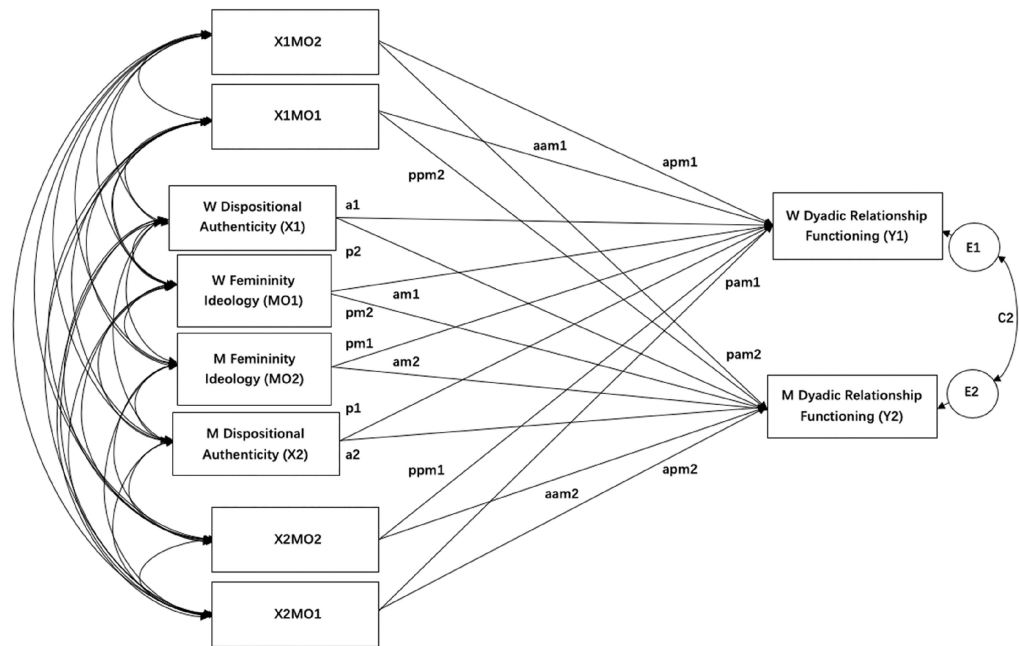
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.



(a) APIM



(b) APIMeM



(c) APIMoM

FIGURE 1 Actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) of dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning (a); APIM with a mixed mediator (APIMeM) (b); APIM with a mixed moderator (APIMoM) (c); moderated mediation APIM (d); moderated mediation APIM (e). AEI, accepting external influence; AL, authentic living; M, men; SA, self-alienation; W, women.

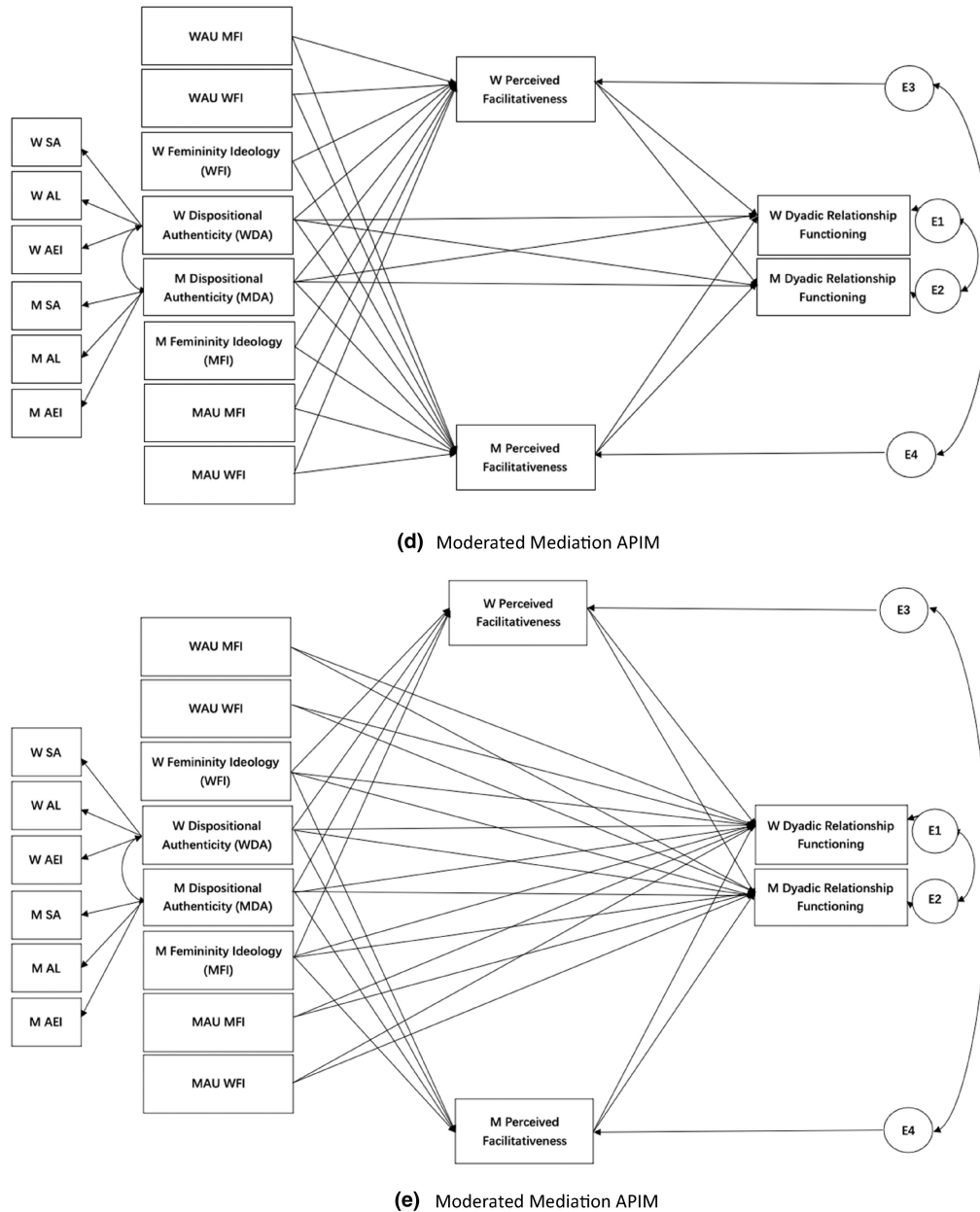


FIGURE 1 (Continued)

The actor-partner interdependence mediation model (APIMeM; Ledermann et al., 2011) and the actor-partner interdependence moderation model (APIMoM; Garcia et al., 2015) were developed based on the APIM and were utilized to examine the effects of mediator and moderator on both intrapersonal and interpersonal associations. Since the dyads are distinguishable by their genders, the fully saturated models were estimated as recommended by Peugh et al. (2013).

2.5.3 | APIMeM

APIMeM includes mediator variables besides causal and outcome variables (Figure 1b). Both the direct

effects of the dyad members' dispositional authenticity on their own and their partners' dyadic relationship functioning and the indirect effects via their own and their partners' perceived facilitativeness are estimated by APIMeM (Ledermann et al., 2011). To assess the significance level of indirect and total effects, bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were obtained using non-parametric bootstrapping with 5000 resamplings.

2.5.4 | APIMoM

APIMoM was used to evaluate the moderating role of femininity ideology on the relationship between dispositional

authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning (Figure 1c). The independent variables and moderators were grand-mean centred to facilitate the interpretation of interaction effects and reduce collinearity. After centring, the interaction terms were created by multiplying dispositional authenticity score by femininity ideology score. Parameter estimates of paths from those interaction terms to dyadic relationship functioning were also examined. The sampling-error-adjusted Bayesian information criterion (SABIC) was suggested to be used to test the model fit of APIMoM (Garcia et al., 2015), where smaller values indicate better model fit. Model fits were also evaluated using the following fit indices and a set of a priori cut-off criteria (Hooper et al., 2008; Kline, 2015) for adequate fit: comparative fit index (CFI, >0.90), standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR, <0.08), and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA, <0.08).

The simple slope procedure (Preacher et al., 2006) was adopted to further examine the pattern of the relationship. Simple slope analyses were conducted at low (1 SD below the mean), mean, and high (1 SD above the mean) levels of femininity ideology with low, mean, and high levels of dispositional authenticity. The plot was generated in R statistics (R Core Team, 2020) using the RStudio interface (version 1.3.1093; RStudio Team, 2020), using the “plot” function.

With multiple parameters being tested in the hypothesized models, the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995) was applied to control Type I error rates as recommended by Cribbie (2007).

2.5.5 | Moderated mediation APIMs

While the concepts of authenticity, facilitativeness, and conditions of worth are central to this theory, there has been a noticeable gap in the literature where these concepts have not been collectively discussed or examined in both theoretical and empirical domains. This research endeavour seeks to address this lacuna by formulating two moderated mediation APIMs that integrate all these essential concepts, offering a comprehensive framework for exploration.

The latent SEM approach was employed (Maslowsky et al., 2015), conceptualizing dispositional authenticity as a latent variable within the framework. This method was integrated with the mediation and moderation techniques inherent in the APIM. The combined approach facilitated a comprehensive examination of the interrelationships among authenticity, femininity ideology, facilitativeness, and dyadic relationship functioning, within the context of opposite-gender couples. This methodology not only facilitates a deeper understanding of these subconstructs but also enables the examination of their relative independent influences when considered in conjunction with each other. By treating subconstructs as latent variables, the model can delve

into the intricate nuances of each construct, yielding a richer and more detailed analysis. Additionally, this approach aids in minimizing potential measurement errors, ensuring that the relationships observed are genuine and not merely artefacts of overlapping constructs.

In the first moderated mediation model, the interaction variables (dispositional authenticity \times femininity ideology) collectively influence the mediators, with a particular emphasis on the perceived facilitativeness observed in both men and women (refer to Figure 1d). Conversely, in the second moderated mediation model, the variables directly and collectively impart their influence on the outcomes, as depicted in Figure 1e.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Preliminary analyses

The *p* values of Shapiro–Wilk's test of normality were below .05. Skewness was present but fell within acceptable limits, as per Kline (2015). Variables with skew index absolute values less than 3.0 are deemed acceptable. For the kurtosis index, absolute values from around 8.0 to over 20.0 signify “extreme” kurtosis. As a conservative guideline, kurtosis index absolute values greater than 10.0 indicate a potential issue. The skew and kurtosis indices for the variables are as follows: self-alienation (−0.651, 0.327), authentic living (−1.431, 2.338), accepting external influence (−0.185, −0.188), dispositional authenticity (−0.284, −0.459), perceived facilitativeness (−1.379, 2.164), femininity ideology (−1.141, −0.618), and dyadic adjustment (−1.348, 3.300). These values are within the acceptable range, suggesting that the levels of non-normality are not concerning. However, the MLR estimator was employed for model estimation due to its decreased sensitivity to violations of the normality assumption.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and correlations for men's and women's ratings of dispositional authenticity, perceived facilitativeness, femininity ideology, and dyadic relationship functioning.

Gender differences across various measures were assessed using paired sample *t*-tests. For authentic living, there was no significant difference between men ($M=23.20$, $SD=4.05$) and women ($M=22.74$, $SD=4.64$), $t(238)=1.23$, $p=.221$. Similarly, no significant gender differences were found for accepting external influence (men: $M=13.31$, $SD=4.74$; women: $M=13.71$, $SD=5.08$), $t(238)=-0.93$, $p=0.353$; self-alienation (men: $M=11.74$, $SD=5.94$; women: $M=11.15$, $SD=5.66$), $t(238)=1.09$, $p=0.277$; dispositional authenticity (men: $M=62.15$, $SD=10.61$; women: $M=61.88$, $SD=11.32$), $t(238)=0.29$, $p=0.771$; femininity ideology (men: $M=2.53$, $SD=0.77$; women: $M=2.49$, $SD=0.71$), $t(238)=0.64$, $p=0.521$; and facilitativeness (men: $M=19.43$, $SD=11.88$; women: $M=18.85$, $SD=10.99$), $t(238)=0.80$, $p=0.422$. However, a significant difference emerged for dyadic relationship functioning, with men ($M=24.81$,

SD=5.02) scoring lower than women ($M=25.62$, $SD=4.94$), $t(238)=-2.42$, $p=0.016$.

For both men's and women's reports, the perceptions of dyadic relationship functioning were positively associated with both their own and their partners' perceptions of facilitativeness. Both men's and women's dispositional authenticity were positively related to their own and their partners' perceived facilitativeness and dyadic relationship functioning. Except for the relationship between men's self-alienation and women's dyadic relationship functioning, all the other correlations between scores of the subscales of the AS and ADAS were significant. Men's and women's femininity ideologies were positively correlated with each other. Women's femininity ideology was negatively related to their own and their partners' dispositional authenticity. Women's femininity ideology was positively correlated with their own self-alienation and their own and their partners' accepting external influence. Men's femininity ideology was negatively correlated with women's authentic living. Men's femininity ideology was positively correlated with their own perceived facilitativeness.

3.2 | APIM analyses

The purpose of the APIM analyses was to examine the relationship between dispositional authenticity at T1 and perceived dyadic relationship functioning at T2 in opposite-gender romantic relationships.

The fit indices for saturated models were irrelevant, so they were not reported (Cook & Kenny, 2005). Consistent with H1, both actor (for men: $B=0.164$, $SE=0.027$, $p<0.001$, $\beta=0.347$; for women: $B=0.158$, $SE=0.030$, $p<0.001$, $\beta=0.362$) and partner (for men: $B=0.104$, $SE=0.032$, $p=0.001$, $\beta=0.234$; for women: $B=0.074$, $SE=0.025$, $p=0.003$, $\beta=0.160$) effects of dispositional authenticity on dyadic relationship functioning were statistically significant (Figure 2).

In the revised analysis, the application of the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure was employed to control for Type I errors. Notably, the estimates that were initially identified as significant in the models retained their significance even after the implementation of this correction procedure. This robustness of the findings underscores the reliability of the observed associations in our study.

3.3 | APIMeM analyses

The APIMeM analyses aimed to identify perceived facilitativeness at T2 as a possible mediator in the causal relation between dispositional authenticity at T1 and dyadic relationship functioning at T2 in opposite-gender romantic relationships.

Path estimates for the APIMeM examining the effects of dispositional authenticity on dyadic relationship functioning through perceived facilitativeness were shown in Figure 3. Both men's and women's prior dispositional authenticity were positively associated with their own (for men: $B=0.420$, $SE=0.064$, $p<0.001$, $\beta=0.375$; for women: $B=0.283$, $SE=0.066$, $p<0.001$, $\beta=0.291$) and their partner's future perceived facilitativeness (for men: $B=0.196$, $SE=0.072$, $p=0.006$, $\beta=0.187$; for women: $B=0.175$, $SE=0.054$, $p=0.001$, $\beta=0.169$). Individuals' perceived facilitativeness was related to both their own (for men: $B=0.240$, $SE=0.043$, $p<0.001$, $\beta=0.568$; for women: $B=0.271$, $SE=0.028$, $p<0.001$, $\beta=0.602$) and their partners' (for men: $B=0.062$, $SE=0.029$, $p=0.031$, $\beta=0.136$; for women: $B=0.055$, $SE=0.025$, $p=0.025$, $\beta=0.132$) dyadic relationship functioning. There was only one significant direct effect of dispositional authenticity on dyadic relationship functioning, which was the effect of women's prior dispositional authenticity on their own future dyadic relationship functioning ($B=0.071$, $SE=0.023$, $p=0.003$, $\beta=0.162$). The 95% CI was used to determine the significance of those effects. Direct, indirect, and total effects are reported in Table 2. For both men and women, all total effects and total indirect effects were significant. All the indirect effects that go through one's own perceived facilitativeness were statistically significant. The indirect effect from men's dispositional authenticity to women's dyadic relationship functioning through men's perceived facilitativeness ($B=0.23$, 95% CI [0.006, 0.042], $p=0.037$) was significant. However, it is noteworthy that after the application of the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure to control for Type I errors, the partner effects of perceived facilitativeness on dyadic relationship functioning were no longer statistically significant.

In the APIMeMs for the subconstructs of dispositional authenticity, as depicted in Figure 3 and Tables S1–S3, distinct patterns of influence were observed. Specifically, self-alienation was found to impact only one's own perceived facilitativeness. However, the external aspects of dispositional authenticity, namely authentic living and accepting external influence, exhibited significant associations with both one's own and one's partner's perceived facilitativeness. These findings suggest a nuanced interplay between different facets of dispositional authenticity and perceived facilitativeness within the context of romantic relationships. Further, perceived facilitativeness was found to be positively associated with dyadic relationship functioning among couples.

In summary, consistent with H2, there were indirect effects of dispositional authenticity on dyadic relationship functioning via perceived facilitativeness. In other words, both dyad members' dispositional authenticity predicted higher their own and each other's perceived facilitativeness, which in turn was linked to a higher than their own perceived dyadic relationship functioning.

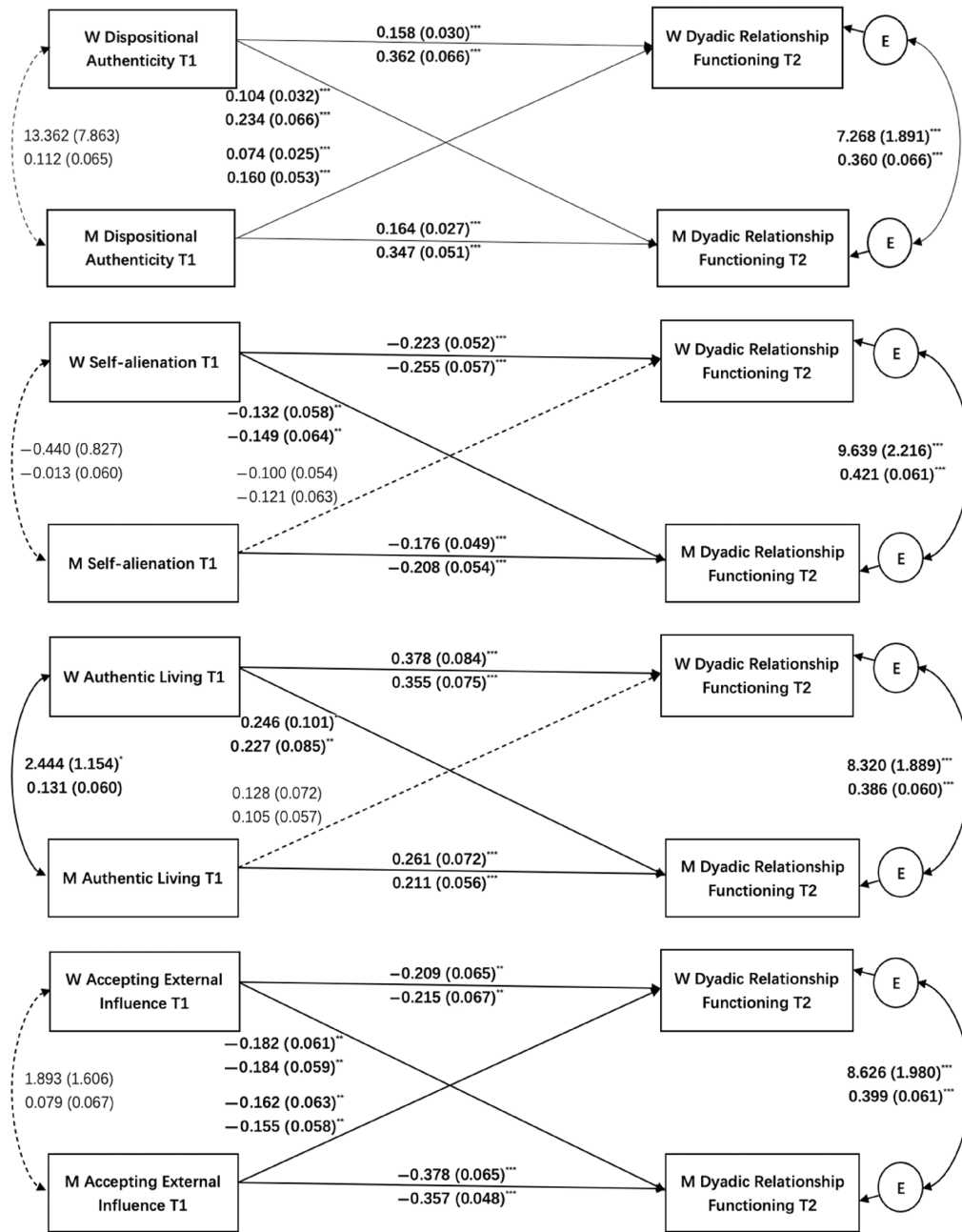


FIGURE 2 Estimated APIM. Unstandardized path estimates (upper), standardized (lower) path estimates, and standard errors are presented. Solid lines represent significant paths after applying the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure. M, men; T1, time point 1; T2, time point 2; W, women. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

3.4 | APIMoM analyses

The APIMoM analyses aimed to investigate the moderating effects of femininity ideology at T1 on relationships between dispositional authenticity at T1 and dyadic relationship functioning at T2 in opposite-gender romantic relationships.

Following the procedure recommended by Garcia et al. (2015), first a model with all interaction effects set to 0 was fitted. The fit of the model was poor ($\chi^2(8) = 27.54$, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.856; RMSEA = 0.101; SRMR = 0.033; SABIC = 159.02), which indicates that femininity ideology

moderates the relationships between dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning.

Men's femininity ideology was a moderator of the actor effect of dispositional authenticity on their own dyadic relationship functioning ($B = -0.145$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < 0.001$; see Table 3, Model I). As shown in Figure 4, the positive actor effect of men's dispositional authenticity on their levels of dyadic relationship functioning was stronger for men with lower ($B = 0.278$, $SE = 0.035$, $p < 0.001$) compared to men with average ($B = 0.167$, $SE = 0.026$, $p < 0.001$) or higher ($B = 0.056$, $SE = 0.032$, $p = 0.085$) levels of T1 femininity ideology. Specifically, traditional gender norms

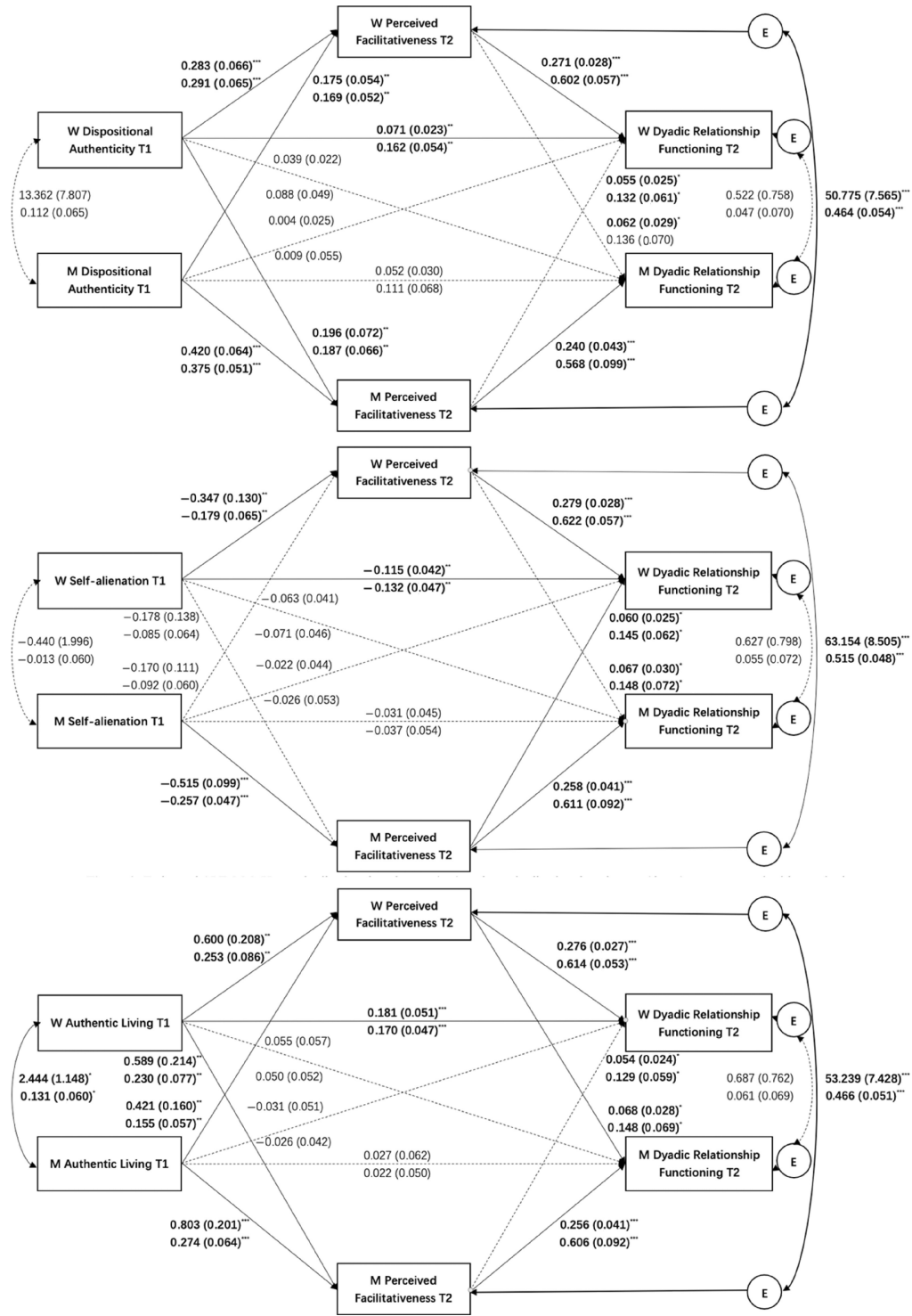


FIGURE 3 Estimated APIMeM. Unstandardized path estimates (upper) and standardized path estimates (lower) are presented with standard error. Solid lines represent significant paths after applying the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure. M, men; T1, time point 1; T2, time point 2; W, women. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

of femininity held by men inhibited the positive effects of their own T1 dispositional authenticity on T2 dyadic relationship functioning.

Regarding the subconstructs of dispositional authenticity, femininity ideology only moderates the relationship between self-alienation and dyadic relationship

functioning, because the fit of a model with all interaction effects set to 0 was poor (self-alienation: $\chi^2(8) = 17.97$, $p = 0.021$; CFI = 0.890; RMSEA = 0.072; SRMR = 0.024; SABIC = 149.46); authentic living: $\chi^2(8) = 12.91$, $p = 0.115$; CFI = 0.943; RMSEA = 0.051; SRMR = 0.032; SABIC = 144.39); accepting external influence:

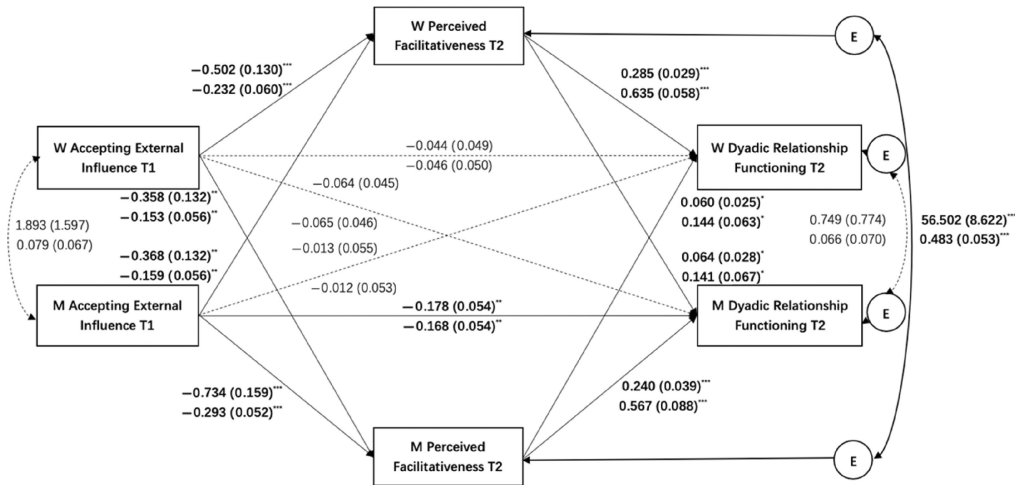


FIGURE 3 (Continued)

TABLE 2 Total, direct, and indirect effects (via perceived facilitativeness) of dispositional authenticity on dyadic relationship functioning in the APIMeM.

Effect	B	SE	95% CI	p	β	Proportion of the total effect (%)
Men actor effect						
Total effect	0.164	0.027	0.122, 0.210	<0.001	0.347	
Total IE	0.112	0.026	0.074, 0.159	<0.001	0.236	68.29
Via own perceived facilitativeness	0.101	0.027	0.061, 0.151	<0.001	0.213	61.59
Via partner's perceived facilitativeness	0.011	0.006	0.003, 0.024	0.088	0.023	6.71
Direct effect	0.052	0.030	0.001, 0.100	0.083	0.111	31.71
Women actor effect						
Total effect	0.158	0.030	0.111, 0.211	<0.001	0.362	
Total IE	0.087	0.020	0.056, 0.121	<0.001	0.200	55.06
Via own perceived facilitativeness	0.077	0.020	0.047, 0.112	<0.001	0.175	48.73
Via partner's perceived facilitativeness	0.011	0.007	0.002, 0.027	0.131	0.025	6.96
Direct effect	0.071	0.023	0.034, 0.111	0.003	0.162	44.94
Men partner effect						
Total effect	0.104	0.032	0.051, 0.155	0.001	0.234	
Total IE	0.065	0.020	0.033, 0.099	0.001	0.146	62.50
Via own perceived facilitativeness	0.047	0.021	0.018, 0.088	0.025	0.106	45.19
Via partner's perceived facilitativeness	0.018	0.010	0.006, 0.038	0.065	0.040	17.31
Direct effect	0.039	0.022	0.002, 0.075	0.077	0.088	37.50
Women partner effect						
Total effect	0.074	0.026	0.033, 0.117	0.004	0.160	
Total IE	0.070	0.019	0.041, 0.103	<0.001	0.151	94.59
Via own perceived facilitativeness	0.047	0.016	0.023, 0.076	0.004	0.102	63.51
Via partner's perceived facilitativeness	0.023	0.011	0.006, 0.042	0.037	0.050	31.08
Direct effect	0.004	0.025	-0.037, 0.047	0.872	0.009	5.41

Abbreviation: IE, indirect effect.

($\chi^2(8)=13.97, p=0.083; CFI=0.947; RMSEA=0.056; SRMR=0.021; SABIC=145.46$). Men's femininity ideology significantly moderated the actor effect of self-alienation on their own dyadic relationship functioning ($B=0.124, SE=0.50, p=0.013$; see Table 3, Model II).

Interestingly, men's levels of femininity ideology buffered the negative effects of their own self-alienation on their own dyadic relationship functioning. As seen in Figure 4, examination of simple slopes showed that the negative links between self-alienation and dyadic relationship

TABLE 3 APIMoM results for effects of dispositional authenticity and interactions between dispositional authenticity and femininity ideology on dyadic relationship functioning.

Effect	Model I: DA × FI → DRF				Model II: SA × FI → DRF			
	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	β	<i>B</i>	SE	<i>p</i>	β
Intercept								
Men	24.695	0.309	<0.001	4.928	24.701	0.349	<0.001	4.930
Women	25.579	0.301	<0.001	5.192	25.460	0.312	<0.001	5.167
Actor effect								
Men	0.170	0.026	<0.001	0.359	-0.175	0.048	<0.001	0.207
Women	0.160	0.030	<0.001	0.366	-0.242	0.052	<0.001	0.278
Partner effect								
Men	0.119	0.033	<0.001	0.269	-0.136	0.065	0.036	0.153
Women	0.078	0.024	0.001	0.167	-0.096	0.052	0.063	0.116
Moderator actor effect								
Men	-0.293	0.342	0.392	-0.045	-0.297	0.401	0.459	-0.045
Women	0.634	0.474	0.181	0.091	0.524	0.474	0.269	0.075
Moderator partner effect								
Men	0.233	0.404	0.565	0.033	-0.134	0.483	0.781	-0.019
Women	-0.449	0.381	0.239	-0.070	-0.596	0.378	0.115	-0.093
Actor <i>X</i> by actor <i>M</i>								
Men	-0.145	0.028	<0.001	-0.244	0.124	0.050	0.013	-0.132
Women	-0.012	0.045	0.794	-0.019	0.066	0.069	0.337	-0.054
Partner <i>X</i> by actor <i>M</i>								
Men	-0.016	0.035	0.638	-0.031	-0.052	0.068	0.440	0.047
Women	-0.041	0.041	0.320	-0.057	0.138	0.079	0.080	-0.122
Actor <i>X</i> by partner <i>M</i>								
Men	0.006	0.039	0.887	0.008	0.017	0.079	0.831	-0.015
Women	-0.006	0.035	0.869	-0.011	-0.042	0.065	0.515	0.038
Partner <i>X</i> by partner <i>M</i>								
Men	-0.081	0.045	0.068	-0.126	0.107	0.087	0.220	-0.086
Women	0.031	0.031	0.321	0.053	-0.116	0.059	0.051	0.126

Note: $N=239$ couples. Bold indicates statistical significance after applying the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure. $X=DA/SA$; $M=FI$; $Y=DRF$.

Abbreviations: *B*, unstandardized estimate; DA, dispositional authenticity; DRF, dyadic relationship functioning; FI, femininity ideology; SA, self-alienation; β , standardized estimate.

functioning were weaker for men at the mean levels of femininity ideology ($B=-.172$, $SE=.049$, $p<.001$) compared to men at 1 SD below ($B=-.267$, $SE=.057$, $p<.001$) in femininity ideology. However, the actor effect of self-alienation on men's dyadic relationship functioning was not significant when they held higher levels of femininity ideology ($B=-.078$, $SE=.066$, $p=.240$). In our APIMoM, the application of the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure to control for Type I errors revealed that all estimates initially identified as significant retained their significance, with one exception. Specifically, the partner effect of self-alienation on men's dyadic relationship functioning, which was initially significant, did not retain its significance after the application of this correction procedure.

H3 was partially supported. For men only, levels of femininity ideology not only weakened the positive actor effect of dispositional authenticity on their own dyadic

relationship functioning but also buffered the negative actor effect of self-alienation on dyadic relationship functioning.

3.5 | Moderated mediation APIM

In both latent moderated mediation models, as depicted in Figures 5 and 6, the findings resonate with H2 and the outcomes derived from the APIMeM analysis. Specifically, a couple's dispositional authenticity exhibits a positive association with both their own and their partner's perceived facilitativeness. Subsequently, the facilitativeness perceived is positively correlated with their individual dyadic relationship functioning. The first moderated mediation model showed that femininity ideology does not act as a moderating variable in the relationship

between dispositional authenticity and perceived facilitativeness, at both the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels, for both genders (Figure 5). In contrast, the subsequent moderated mediation model, aligning with H3, revealed that femininity ideology does play a moderating role in relationships between dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning.

For men's dyadic relationship functioning, there were significant interaction effects when both authenticity and femininity ideology were from the same individual

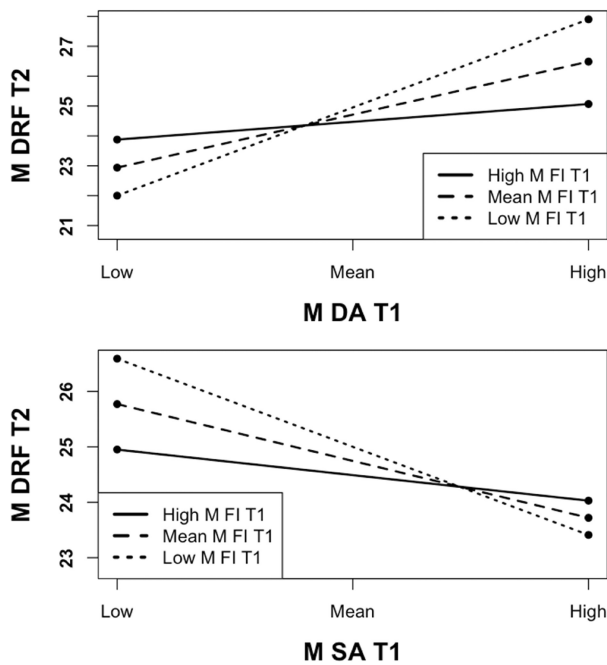


FIGURE 4 Moderating effects of men's FI (T1) on associations between men's DA/SA (T1) and men's DRF (T2). DA, dispositional authenticity; DRF, dyadic relationship functioning; FI, femininity ideology; M, men; m, slope; SA, self-alienation; T1, time point 1; T2, time point 2.

(Figure 6). Specifically, the interaction between men's authenticity and their femininity ideology was significant, $B = -2.306$, $SE = 0.364$, $p < 0.001$. Simple slope analyses indicated that as men endorsed stronger femininity ideologies, the positive association of their authenticity with their own dyadic relationship functioning diminished. At lower levels of femininity ideology, $B = 1.844$, $SE = 0.482$, $p < 0.001$, this relationship turned negative at higher levels, $B = -0.836$, $SE = 0.355$, $p = 0.019$. However, at the mean level of femininity ideology, the relationship was not significant, $B = 0.504$, $SE = 0.265$, $p = 0.057$.

In a similar vein, the interaction between women's authenticity and their femininity ideology significantly predicted men's dyadic relationship functioning, $B = -1.103$, $SE = 0.367$, $p = 0.003$. Women's authenticity was positively and significantly related to men's dyadic relationship functioning when women endorsed lower, $B = 0.628$, $SE = 0.192$, $p = 0.001$, or mean, $B = 0.323$, $SE = 0.142$, $p = 0.023$, levels of femininity ideology. However, this relationship was not significant at higher levels of femininity ideology, $B = 0.018$, $SE = 0.165$, $p = 0.913$.

Conversely, for women's dyadic relationship functioning, significant interaction effects were observed when authenticity and femininity ideology came from different individuals. The interaction between men's authenticity and women's femininity ideology was significant, $B = -0.788$, $SE = 0.400$, $p = 0.049$. Simple slope analyses showed that men's authenticity was positively and significantly related to women's dyadic relationship functioning only when women endorsed lower levels of femininity ideology, $B = 0.857$, $SE = 0.385$, $p = 0.026$. This relationship was not significant at mean, $B = 0.447$, $SE = 0.274$, $p = 0.102$, or higher levels, $B = 0.036$, $SE = 0.321$, $p = 0.910$.

Similarly, the interaction between women's authenticity and men's femininity ideology was significant, $B = -0.881$, $SE = 0.364$, $p = 0.016$. Simple slope analyses indicated that women's authenticity did not significantly

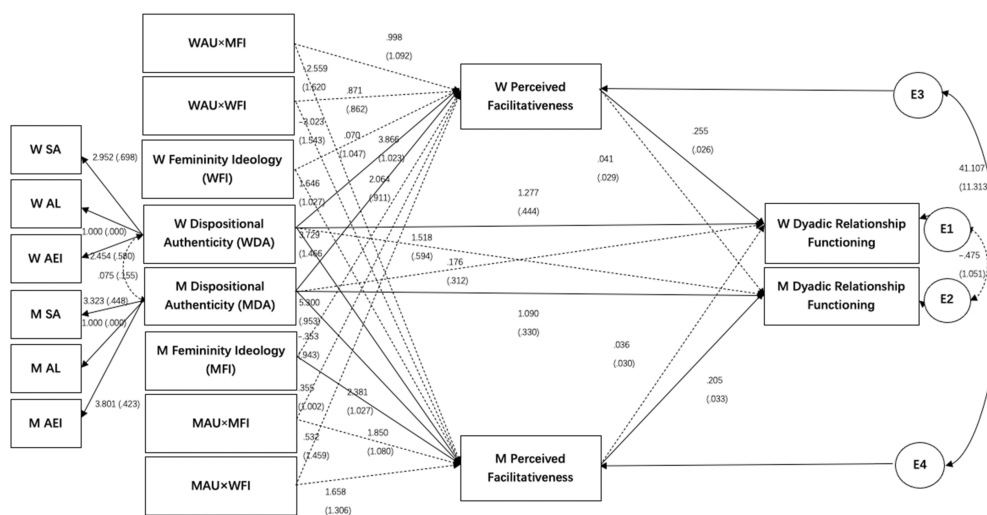


FIGURE 5 Estimated moderated mediation APIM. Unstandardized path estimates are presented with standard error. Solid lines represent significant paths. AEI, accepting external influence; AL, authentic living; M, men; SA, self-alienation; W, women.

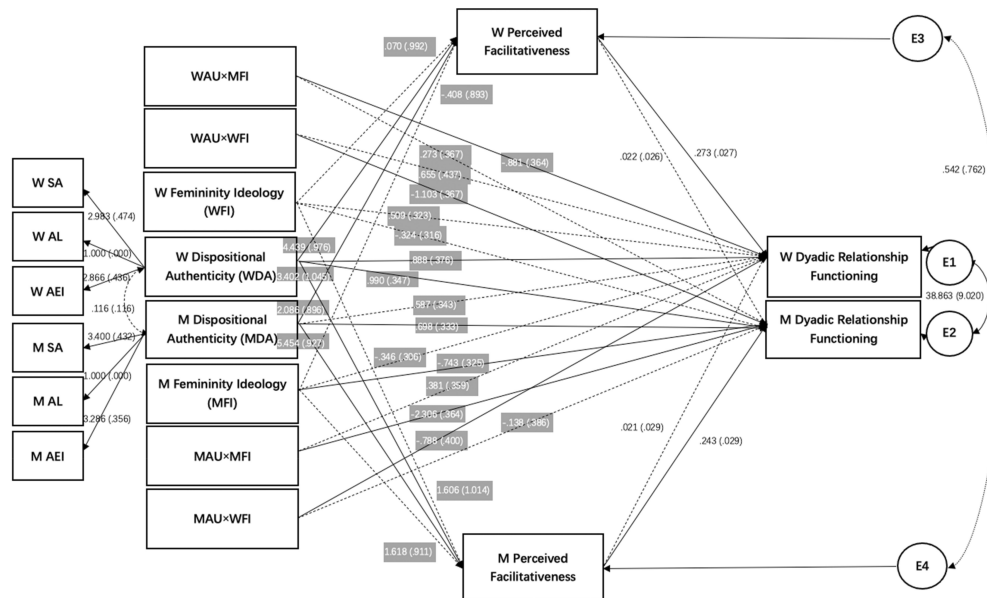


FIGURE 6 Estimated moderated mediation APIM. Unstandardized path estimates are presented with standard error. Solid lines represent significant paths. AEI, accepting external influence; AL, authentic living; M, men; SA, self-alienation; W, women.

relate to their own dyadic relationship functioning when men endorsed higher levels of femininity ideology, $B=0.221$, $SE=0.165$, $p=0.178$. However, this relationship remained significant at mean, $B=0.433$, $SE=0.142$, $p=0.002$, and lower levels, $B=0.645$, $SE=0.197$, $p=0.001$.

4 | DISCUSSION

This was the first dyadic study to examine the association between dispositional authenticity and dyadic relationship functioning among opposite-gender couples; it also tested whether these associations were mediated by perceived facilitativeness and moderated by femininity ideology. This study fills several gaps in the literature by (a) examining the effect of one's prior dispositional authenticity on one's own and one's partner's later dyadic relationship functioning; (b) examining the mediating role of perceived facilitativeness in associations according to Rogers' (1957) well-known theory of interpersonal relationship; (c) investigating the moderating role of femininity ideology in associations at the intersection of person-centred personality theory (Rogers, 1959) and the gender role strain paradigm (Pleck, 1995); and (d) using dyads, rather than the individual, as the unit of analysis, which enables the examination of the interdependence between the two partners in a romantic relationship.

4.1 | Dispositional authenticity, perceived facilitativeness, and dyadic relationship functioning

The most noteworthy finding of this study is that one's dispositional authenticity was prospectively associated

with one's partner's dyadic relationship functioning, and the association was mediated by the partner's perceived facilitativeness. Facilitativeness is an aggregation of genuineness, empathy, and unconditional positive regard. It seems that an authentic person is perceived not only as genuine but also as empathic and showing an unconditional positive regard for their partner. This finding is not surprising because an authentic person is not only genuine to others but is also open to different inner experiences without judgement.

It would seem that the unconditional and empathic way authentic persons relate to themselves is integrated into their behaviour and communication when they are interacting with others. Then a partner's levels of adjustment to the relationship and satisfaction in the relationship are facilitated by their perceived genuineness, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard in the relationship. When individuals are perceived as genuine by their partners, the feelings the individuals are experiencing are available to their partners' awareness. The ability of the individuals to live with and communicate the complexity of their feelings is an invitation to their partners' genuineness. Furthermore, when the partners perceive that they are accepted and empathized with, without reservations and evaluations, they are more likely to be aware and express whatever feeling is going on inside them at a given moment. Both partners' genuineness contributes to a sense of intimacy and trust and encourages them to face, discuss, and resolve conflicts and difficulties together as a partnership.

Consistent with prior research (Tracy et al., 2009), one's dispositional authenticity was positively associated with one's own dyadic relationship functioning. The association was also mediated by individuals' perceptions of their partner's facilitative conditions. Previous research

found that dispositional authenticity was positively related to feeling supported by others (Tracy et al., 2009), and facilitative conditions may be more accessible for authentic people to perceive in social interactions due to the open, curious, non-judgmental, and accepting attitude they hold towards themselves. In addition, dyadic relationship functioning is more reliant on the involvement of both members of a couple compared to individual relationship functioning.

Mutual perceptions of the facilitative conditions were evident in therapeutic relationships. Both clients' and psychotherapists' perceptions of genuineness, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard towards each other improved over time (Murphy & Cramer, 2014), although the spotlight of psychotherapy is on clients. In the models, partners' perceived facilitative conditions were positively correlated; the mutual generation and experiencing of the facilitative conditions ultimately lead to a better dyadic relationship functioning.

4.2 | Dispositional authenticity, femininity ideology, and dyadic relationship functioning

However, the salutary effects of these transparencies on dyadic relationship functioning can be inhibited or even reversed by femininity ideology.

For men's dyadic relationship functioning, significant interaction effects emerged when both authenticity and femininity ideology were intrinsic to the same individuals in their couple relationship. Conversely, in the context of women's dyadic relationship functioning, pronounced interaction effects were observed when authenticity and femininity ideology were attributed to different individuals.

In the realm of positive dyadic functioning for men, two scenarios emerge as pivotal. Firstly, men who embody authenticity and concurrently endorse a lower level of femininity ideology tend to exhibit enhanced dyadic functioning. Secondly, the authenticity of their women partners, when not coupled with a strong adherence to femininity ideology, also augments men's dyadic functioning. Thus, for women aiming to bolster the dyadic relationship functioning with their men partners, introspection and potential recalibration of entrenched beliefs about traditional female roles in relationships become imperative. Moreover, aligning with men who possess heightened femininity ideologies might be counterproductive, as increasing authenticity in such men could inadvertently impair their own dyadic relationship functioning.

For women to thrive in a dyadic relationship, a foundational step involves transcending traditional femininity ideologies, liberating them from conventional gendered expectations. In such an emancipated space, the authenticity of their men partners can positively influence

their dyadic relationship functioning. Conversely, when women staunchly adhere to traditional femininity ideologies, they might inadvertently circumscribe their partners from roles traditionally deemed "feminine," such as emotional labour or relationship maintenance. This not only hampers dyadic functioning but also potentially places the onus of relationship sustenance squarely on the woman. An alternative interpretation suggests that women entrenched in traditional beliefs might overlook or undervalue their partners' contributions, particularly in domains stereotypically reserved for women. Furthermore, women should exercise caution with men deeply rooted in traditional femininity ideologies, as such beliefs can stifle the positive influence of authenticity on dyadic relationship functioning. Authenticity, a well-spring of creativity and innovation, can be constrained when partners harbour rigid expectations. For a relationship to navigate challenges and evolve, it is crucial for both partners to harness their collective creativity and authenticity.

But femininity ideology also buffered the deteriorating effects of the internal incongruence on dyadic relationship functioning. The negative association between self-alienation and dyadic relationship functioning was weaker for men with average levels of femininity ideology than for those with low levels of femininity ideology. Further, the relationships between dispositional authenticity/self-alienation and dyadic relationship functioning became non-significant when men held high levels of femininity ideology.

In Eastern cultures, conformity to social expectations may lead individuals to make compromises in relationships, aiming to satisfy their partners and adapt to cultural norms. This adaptation might not necessarily suppress genuine expression to a degree that significantly reduces personal satisfaction. However, it is important to note that the effective functioning of a dyad is hardly achievable by one member alone. Although both individuals performing their own duties may not pose a problem, it could potentially hinder exploration of the possibility of maintaining one's individuality while simultaneously fulfilling the need for interrelatedness. Similarly, in Western cultures, maintaining one's individuality may not necessarily conflict with the ability to coexist harmoniously with others or fulfil familial and societal responsibilities.

In sum, the main purpose of this study was to investigate prospective actor and partner effects of dispositional authenticity in relation to dyadic relationship functioning. The study revealed that dispositional authenticity facilitates both one's own and one's partner's dyadic relationship functioning through the perception of genuineness, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard from each other. However, femininity ideology can weaken the relationship between dispositional authenticity/self-alienation and dyadic relationship functioning.

4.3 | Limitations, future research, and implications

Some limitations in the existing research are worth noting. First, the couples' participation was entirely voluntary, which means that they were probably more willing to be involved in activities related to their relationship than those who did not participate in the study. Second, as in any study using self-reported measures, the results may be affected by social desirability and recall bias. Third, this study used a 2-week interval of data collection by referring to a previous study, but a 14-day period may be too short to map onto the relationship process. The impact of authenticity can be attributed mainly to long-term relationships. This design inherently limits the ability to draw causal inferences. Specifically, the dyadic relationship functioning measured at T2 may reflect highly stable individual differences that were already present at T1, rather than changes occurring over the 2-week period. This could potentially confound our understanding of the dynamics of relationship adjustment over time. Additionally, the absence of baseline measures for perceived facilitativeness means that we cannot be certain whether any observed effects were truly due to changes in this mediator or simply reflected stable individual differences that were present from the outset. This is particularly concerning in the context of mediational analyses, where temporal ordering and causal pathways are critical for valid interpretations. An ideal design would involve measuring variables at both time points and examining their change over time. This would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the temporal dynamics of relationship functioning and could potentially provide more robust evidence for causal relationships. Future research efforts should prioritize longitudinal designs with multiple assessment points, allowing for a comprehensive examination of how relationships evolve over extended periods. Such designs would help delineate the complex interplay of factors affecting relationship functioning. Fourth, the use of social media for recruitment may have introduced a selection bias, as the sample may overrepresent individuals who are more active on social media. Future studies could consider employing a variety of recruitment methods to ensure a more representative sample. Fifth, one of the limitations of our study pertains to the lack of demographic data, specifically regarding marital status, pregnancy status, parental status, and socioeconomic status. These factors could potentially influence relationship outcomes, and our inability to control for these variables in our study may have impacted our findings. Given these potential influences, future research should consider including these demographic variables in their study design. By doing so, researchers can control for these factors in their analyses, providing a more nuanced understanding of relationship

outcomes. This would also allow for the examination of potential interactions between these demographic variables and other factors of interest, further enriching our understanding of relationship dynamics. Sixth, a significant limitation of our study pertains to the cultural composition of our sample. The majority of couples participating in this study included at least one Caucasian partner. In only four couples did both partners originated from Eastern cultures. This imbalance in our sample limited our ability to draw robust conclusions about cultural differences. Future research should aim to include a more diverse sample, particularly with respect to cultural backgrounds, to allow for a more comprehensive comparison and understanding of cultural influences on relationship dynamics.

It is important to note that the timing of the study coincided with the global COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented event has had significant impacts on various aspects of life, including interpersonal relationships. The pandemic has necessitated changes in the way people interact, with physical distancing measures and lockdowns leading to increased reliance on digital communication. This shift may have influenced the dynamics of the relationships studied.

Moreover, the sociocultural context and the pandemic's impact on mental health could have influenced the participants' responses. The pandemic resulted in increased stress and anxiety for many, which could affect relationship dynamics and the way individuals perceive and report their relationships. The study's findings should therefore be interpreted in the context of these unique circumstances. Future research could explore how the changes brought about by the pandemic have influenced relationship dynamics and whether these changes persist as society adapts to a post-pandemic world.

Future studies should test whether holding masculinity ideology is detrimental to couples' dispositional authenticity and whether it plays a moderating role in the association between dispositional authenticity and relationship functioning. Sincerely expressing and behaving in accordance with a traditional masculine role may weaken the impact of authentic living.

The results of our study, conducted during a global pandemic, provide valuable insights into the dynamics of dyadic relationships, particularly in relation to dispositional authenticity, perceived facilitativeness, and femininity ideology. These findings have important implications for both practice and research in the post-pandemic era.

In terms of practice, our findings suggest that fostering dispositional authenticity and perceived facilitativeness could enhance dyadic relationship functioning. This insight could be particularly pertinent in the context of couples counselling. Psychotherapists can guide couples towards a more genuine connection by creating a facilitative environment of empathy, congruence,

and unconditional positive regard for each other. This nurturing atmosphere would allow both partners to express themselves freely and equally. In psychotherapy, difficult dialogues are fostered, assisting couples in addressing pivotal relationship concerns that may have been too daunting or controversial to tackle on their own. Through managing these challenging matters, partners may gain the confidence and security needed to express their true selves within the relationship. This could involve fostering a deeper connection with their internal experiences and encouraging genuine expression within the relationship. As individuals cultivate authenticity, their interactions with others are likely to become more congruent, empathetic, and accepting. These facilitative attitudes could serve as valuable tools in resolving disputes or conflicts and mitigating the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, they could provide the support needed to navigate the emotional and relational turbulence induced by the pandemic, aiding couples in their journey towards recovery and resilience.

Moreover, our findings highlight the role of femininity ideology in moderating the impact of dispositional authenticity and self-alienation on relationship functioning. This suggests that challenging traditional gender norms and promoting gender equality could be beneficial for relationship functioning. In the post-pandemic era, as society continues to grapple with the impacts of the pandemic on gender roles and relationships, these findings could inform efforts to promote healthier and more equitable relationships.

In terms of research, our findings underscore the importance of considering both interpersonal and intrapersonal factors in studying dyadic relationships. Future research could build on our findings by exploring these dynamics in different contexts and populations, including in the post-pandemic era. For instance, researchers could examine how the changes in work and family dynamics brought about by the pandemic have influenced these aspects of relationships. Furthermore, our findings highlight the need for more research on the role of gender ideologies in relationship dynamics. In the post-pandemic era, as societal norms and expectations continue to evolve, it will be important to understand how these changes are influencing gender ideologies and, in turn, relationship outcomes.

5 | CONCLUSION

In conclusion, according to Rogers' (1961) person-centred theory, congruence between inner experience, symbolic awareness, and external behaviour and communication is a key result of constructive personality development. This study found that authenticity is also a source to facilitate other people's functioning.

As such, this study supports the theoretical basis of person-centred couple counselling that facilitates couple's relationship functioning by recapturing the authenticity for both members of a couple. Once the couple is authentic enough, they perceive the facilitative conditions from each other and move towards better dyadic relationship functioning.

Feminine traits in both men and women are beneficial to intimate partner relationships, but they should not become requirements and expectations imposed on any specific group of people. Femininity ideology, as a type of gendered condition of worth, has not shown any association with better relationship functioning. Instead, femininity ideology weakens couples' development of mutual adaptation and ability to resolve conflicts and difficulties together as a whole by interacting with the effect of dispositional authenticity.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Shun Chen: Conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; investigation; methodology; project administration; resources; software; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **David Murphy:** Supervision; writing – review and editing. **Stephen Joseph:** Supervision; writing – review and editing.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available upon request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to terms of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethics approval was obtained by the School of Education Research Ethics Committee of the University of Nottingham (2019/34). The study was performed in compliance with GDPR and the Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics at the University of Nottingham.

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

PREREGISTRATION STATEMENT

This study's design or its analysis were not preregistered.

RESEARCH MATERIALS STATEMENT

The materials used in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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