

Stress and Perceived Discrimination among the Arab Population in Israel

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Background

- During pandemics, minorities may experience high stress levels. Stress could harm their mental and physical health.
- As far as we know, stress levels have not been examined among the Arab minority in Israel during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Study Aims

To explore stress among the Arab minority in Israel during the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak, and its association with the population's perceived COVID-19 threat, trust in the healthcare system, adherence to preventative guidelines, and perceived discrimination.

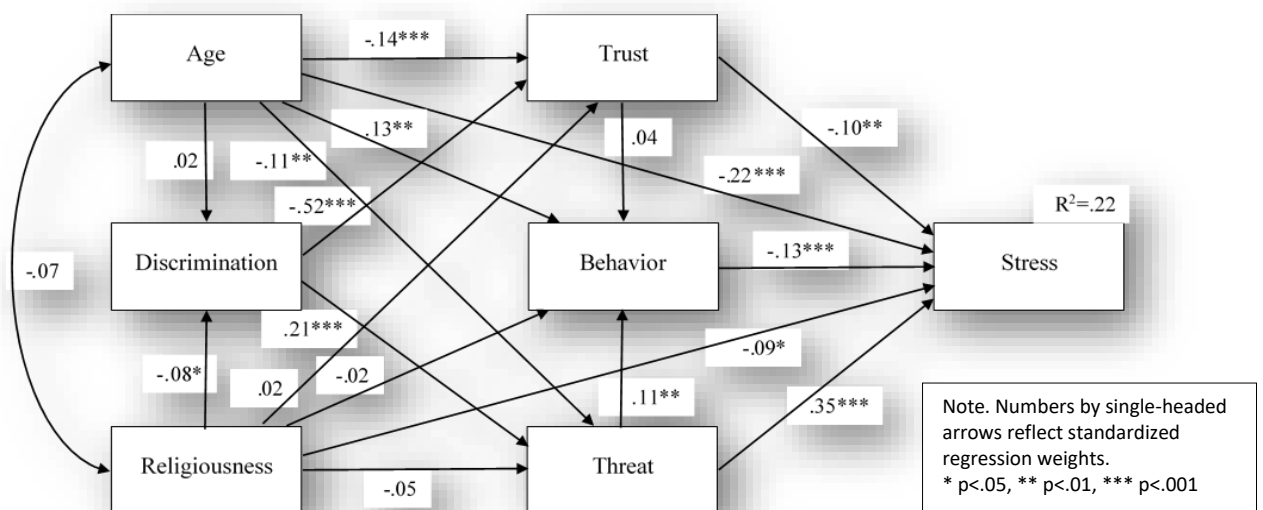
Methods

- A cross-sectional online survey of 626 Israeli Arabs was conducted during quarantine on April 5-17, 2020.
- The respondents defined themselves as Arab Muslims (68%), Bedouins (22%), Druze, or Christians.

Results

- Most participants (65%) reported moderate levels of stress, and 10% reported severe levels.
- The Bedouin population reported significantly higher levels of stress compared to other groups.
- The participants also reported a high degree of perceived threat, a moderate-to-high level of discrimination, a moderate level of trust in the healthcare system, and very high adherence to guidelines.

Structural Equation Modeling for Examining Relationships between Study Variables



Structural Equation Modeling revealed that the participants' perceived threat and trust mediated the association between their perceived discrimination and stress, whereby discrimination was negatively associated with trust, which, in turn, was negatively associated with stress.

Conclusions

- Discrimination is an important social determinant of health – especially during health emergencies when trust in healthcare systems and perceived threats are crucial.
- Developing fair policies that are tailored to various population groups may reduce stress levels among minorities, thereby improving both their mental and physical health.