



Impact of Individuals' Support for the Sexual Double Standard on Marriage Attitude

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Abstract. This paper concerns the effects of personal support to the sexual double standard on marital attitude and marital desirability among young adults. The decline in the marriage rate is a situation faced by the majority of developed countries today. One of the driven factors behind the long-term decline in the marriage rate is the changing attitudes towards marriage among young adults. The individual's marital attitude shapes the family composition in society; therefore, it is significant to examine "To what extent does the agreeableness towards explicit sexual double standard affect the marriage attitude among adults?" The explicit measurement tools in this work include the demographic questionnaire, Sexual Double Standard Scales (SDSS), and Marital Attitude Scale (MAS). A new measure of SDSS with 20 items in a 7-point Likert scale is proposed by uniting and modifying Muehlenhard and McCoy's SDSS in 1991 and Gómez Berrocal's SDSS in 2019. A new MAS measure with 15 items on a 7-point Likert scale is developed by modifying an existing MAS, and achieved internal reliability and construct validity in assessing respondents' marital attitudes in three dimensions.

Keywords: sexual double standard · sexual double standard scale · marital attitude · marital attitude scale · gender inequality

1 Introduction

In psychology, there are views that social culture and social traditions have different expectations and pressures on men and women, resulting in gender differences in many ways. Research on gender differences in sexuality in the field of psychology has found that gender differences exist in sexual attitudes, sexual values, and sexual behaviors. [1] One of the interesting phenomena is the difference in the number of lifelong sexual partners reported between men and women. Men consistently reported more sexual partners than women. [2] This phenomenon is illogical because every heterosexual relationship requires a man and a woman. Theoretically, the number of sexual partners reported by each gender should be equal. In the process of explaining this illogical phenomenon, in addition to the possible sample bias, researchers also put forward another explanation, that is, the Sexual Double Standard.

Researchers believe that the double standard of sex has always existed in society. [3] Traditionally, it is believed that there are gender differences in sexual issues. Society gives more sexual freedom to men, whereas women are subject to more strict social sanctions for the same sexual behaviors. (Lyons et al. 2010).

1.1 Literature Review

Previous research has been conducted to examine the impact of SDS perceptions on one's self-assessment and sexual behaviors. In heterosexual relationships, the sexual double standard leads to a more negative assessment of women compared to men when they exhibit the same sexual behavior. [4] Young girls who endorse the SDS tend to feel shame and guilt after engaging in sexual behaviors, while young men who more strongly endorse the SDS tend to have more sexual partners. [5] There are few studies on the association between SDS perception and marital attitude, but a recent explanation of the demographic change in the marriage rate and fertility rate suggests that the prevalence of egalitarian gender norms is key to understanding shifts in marital attitudes. [6, 7] Some researchers argued that the low level of marriage desirability in developed countries today is shaped by the inconsistency between high gender equity in individual-oriented social institutions and sustained gender inequity in family-oriented social institutions. (McDonald, 2000) Some other researchers suggested that the changing SDS perception can affect how the household or childcare responsibilities are shared within a marriage. [8].

1.2 Significance of the Present Work

Over the period 1990 to 2021, the annual marriage rate in most countries around the world, such as the United States, South Korea, Australia, United Kingdom, Italy, and Argentina, has experienced a long decline and reached the lowest level in recorded history as of 2021. [9] Some of the driving factors behind the marriage rate decline are the changing attitudes towards marriage among young adults, the improvement of gender equality, female education, and economic independence. The shifts in attitudes toward marriage can, to some extent, affect the marital composition and fertility rate of society, thereby affecting the economy, which makes it significant to study how the shifts in attitudes toward marriage are affected by the sexual double standard.

2 Present Work

Is a person's marriage attitude (including his/her marriage desirability) determined, in part, by his or her agreeableness towards explicit Sexual Double Standard? Also, does this depend in part on the degree of individuals' support for the Sexual Double Standard? This research aims at investigating the general situation of sexual double standards and marital attitudes among adults and finding out the association between individuals' support for the Sexual Double Standard and their marriage attitudes. Statistical approaches will be taken to answer the research question: "To what extent does the agreeableness towards explicit SDS affect the marriage attitude among adults?"

A new measure of Sexual Double Standard Scales with 20 items in a 7-point Likert scale is proposed by uniting and modifying two existing Sexual Double Standard Scales, namely the Muehlenhard and McCoy's SDSS in 1991 and Gómez Berrocal's SDSS in 2019 [10]. Another new measure Marital Attitude Scale (MAS) consisting of 15 items on a 7-point Likert scale is also proposed by modifying Park's Marital Attitude Scale

(MAS) in 2012 to measure the participants' general attitudes towards marriage. The questionnaire consisting of both Sexual Double Standard Scales and Marital Attitude Scale is used for the same adult group to examine the relationship between sexual double standard and marital attitude among adults.

3 Experiment

3.1 Method

The online questionnaire will be carried out on SurveyMonkey Platform. The questionnaire link will be distributed through email, Line, WhatsApp, and WeChat. A convenience sampling (also known as opportunity sampling) method will be used in the study.

3.2 Participants

Unmarried adult individuals will be invited to participate in the survey.

The sample size will be generated from G*Power 3.1. A correlational test (two-tailed) would be used. We estimated the effect size of $d = .3$, 112 participants would allow us to achieve a .9 statistical power. Responses from the married groups and non-adult groups, incomplete questionnaire responses, careless answers (the answer time is too short, the choices of options are highly consistent), and the questionnaire with statistical analysis beyond 3 standard deviations ($S.D. > 5$) will be screened out. The remaining questionnaire responses will be recorded as valid questionnaire, which is expected to be around 100 samples. Such questionnaire response screening method contributes to eliminating respondent bias.

3.3 Primary Hypothesis

H1: Adults who agree more with SDS hold more positive attitudes toward marriage.

We expect that the quantified support for SDS will be positively associated with the quantified positive attitude toward marriage.

According to the hypothesis, the questionnaire designed covers adult sexual double standard scales and marital attitude scales, which can measure the degree of adult SDS perception and the corresponding characteristics of marital attitude.

4 Experimental Design

4.1 Explicit Measurement Tools

Sexual Double Standard Scales (SDSS): There are 20 items on this scale, which has good reliability and validity. Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.815$.

Marital Attitude Scale (MAS): 15 items in this scale.

4.2 Measure 1. Sexual Double Standard Scales (SDSS)

The Independent variable in this study is individuals' perception and support for the sexual double standard. A new measure of 20 questions in a 7-point Likert scale is designed by uniting and modifying two existing Sexual Double Standard Scales (SDSS) to assess participants' perceptions and attitudes toward the sexual double standard. [10]

The 7-point Likert scale used in this psychology survey range from 1 to 7. The level of options is progressive from 1 to 7, where "1" stands for "strongly disagree with the statement", "2" stands for "disagree with the statement", "3" stands for "somewhat disagree", "4" stands for "neither agree nor disagree", "5" stands for "somewhat agree", "6" stands for "agree", 7 stands for "strongly agree". The same 7-point Likert scale is applied to both the independent variable and dependent variable. The SDSS is designed to be applicable to any individual, regardless of sexual orientation.

Questions used to measure the independent variable (personal support to SDS) contain 20 items:

1. It is worse for a woman to sleep around than it is for a man.
2. It's best for guys to lose their virginity before they are out of their teens.
3. A woman who initiates sex is too aggressive.
4. I question the character of a woman who has a lot of sexual partners.
5. A man should be more sexually experienced than his wife.
6. A girl who has sex on the first date is "easy".
7. I feel sorry for a 21-year-old man who is still a virgin.
8. Women are naturally more monogamous and inclined to stick with one partner than are men.
9. A man should be sexually experienced when he gets married.
10. A woman should be sexually experienced when he gets married. (*reverse scored)
11. I approve of an 18-years-old girl having sex just as much as an 18-years-old boy having sex. (*reverse scored)
12. A man who is a virgin when he gets married should be admired.
13. I question the character of a man who has had a lot of sexual partners. (*reverse scored)
14. A guy who has sex on the first date is "easy". (*reverse scored)
15. A man who initiates sex is too aggressive. (*reverse scored)
16. It's okay for a woman to have more than one sexual relationship at the same time. (*reverse scored)
17. A girl who has had sex with a lot of guys should be admired. (*reverse scored)
18. It's ok for a woman to have sex with a man she is not in love with. (*reverse scored)
19. A woman should be sexually experienced when she gets married. (*reverse scored)
20. It's best for a girl to lose her virginity before she is out of her teens. (*reverse scored)

4.3 Measure 2. Marital Attitude Scale (MAS)

The dependent variable in this study is individuals' attitudes toward marriage.

In the present study, a new measure of 15 items in a 7-point Likert scale is developed by modifying the Marital Attitude Scale (MAS) by Park S in 2012 to measure the

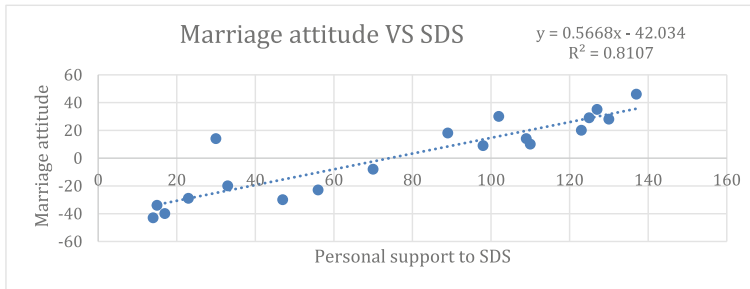


Fig. 1. A scatter diagram used to examine the correlation

participants' general attitudes towards marriage. [11] The same 7-point Likert scale as the measure of the independent variable is applied to rate the answers.

Questions used to measure the dependent variable (marriage attitude) contain 15 items:

1. Marriages make people happy.
2. Marriage is beneficial.
3. Marriage is a "good idea".
4. Marriage is important.
5. Most marriages are unhappy situations. (*reverse scored)
6. Marriage is unnecessary. (*reverse scored)
7. I can understand why people don't want to get married. (*reverse scored)
8. I can accept that people don't want to get married. (*reverse scored)
9. People should get married if they can.
10. People who never marry should be accepted by society. (*reverse scored)
11. People should not marry. (*reverse scored)
12. I have fears of marriage. (*reverse scored)
13. I have doubts about marriage. (*reverse scored)
14. I would like to get married.
15. I intend to get married someday.

8 out of 15 items are reverse scored. The lowest score for each item is 1, and the highest score is 7. The score of the total scale ranges from - 49 to 41. The higher the score, the more positive the marriage attitude is.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Aim 1. Calculate the Pearson's correlation coefficient value between personal support to SDS ($p \leq 0.01$) and the Total Explicit Marital Attitude Score ($p \leq 0.01$).

5.2 General Discussion

Aim 1. There is a strong positive correlation between the SDS score (personal support to SDS, $p \leq 0.01$) and the Total Explicit Marital Attitude Score ($p \leq 0.01$), with a Pearson's correlation coefficient of $r = 0.81$.

A scatter diagram as shown in Graph 1 is plotted to examine the correlation between the SDS score and the Explicit Marital Attitude score. The line of best fit is generated in MS Excel and the R^2 indicates a high level of correlation. That determines that if the participants have high agreeableness to SDS they will also have more positive attitudes towards marriage.

Our approach to analyzing the impact of support for sexual double standards on marriage attitudes contributes to prior work on adults' marriage attitudes and desirability in several ways. Taking female SDS endorsers as an example, in the process of establishing intimate relationships, they often adopt the safe attachment model, are more willing to share the family responsibilities such as childcare and housework, and believe that their spouses will respond to their needs and efforts. Marriage attitude is a personal subjective view of marriage, including the subjective understanding of the relationship between spouse and oneself. Therefore, subjects with high SDS have a higher demand for the marriage relationship and a more positive attitude towards marriage.

The new measures of SDSS and MAS developed in this study achieved internal reliability and construct validity in assessing respondents' SDS perception and marital attitude. Due to geographical and time constraints, this research proposal only puts forward expectations for the results without detailed data analysis. A large number of data collection will be completed in the future research to support the hypothesis of this.

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