

What Role does People's Acceptance and Agreement on Sexual Double Standard Play on Their Attitudes Toward Marriage? Examine From the Chinese Adults' Perspectives

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Abstract: The current research uniquely explores the relationship between the acceptance and agreement on sexual double standard (SDS) and the marriage attitudes. Under the circumstances of the declining marriage rate, this research helps to find out one of the possible causes behind this situation. The current study does a passive correlational design among a group of Chinese adults aged from 18 to 35 by asking them to answer the questionnaires. According to the results, there is a weak positive correlation which means people who agree and accept more on SDS will hold more positive attitudes toward marriage, the perception and desirability of people towards marriage (Wood, Avellar, & Goesling, 2008). The results indicate that the low acceptance and agreement on SDS leads to negative marriage attitudes which causes less people desire to get married.

Keywords: sexual double standard, marriage attitudes, gender differences, gender equality.

1. Introduction

Sexual Double Standard (SDS) is a topic has been discussed and researched for decades which means a standard that judges sexual behavior differently for men and women, with men being more positively evaluated than women for showing the same sexual behaviors [1]. Previous researches have already confirmed the existence of SDS. To specify, people both endorse an explicit SDS and an implicit SDS [2]. People's awareness of the existence of SDS influences their choices related to sexual behavior. Females might avoid conceding their desire for sex if they doubt whether their partners hold egalitarian attitudes [3]. According to OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) Family Database, there is a decline in marriage rates. At the same time, there is an increase in the average age of those getting married. Marriage is an important structure of society so it is important to research the factors leading to the decline of marriage rates. Sexual behavior and attitudes toward it are significant parts of marriage. The current research aims to explore whether there is a correlation between the acceptance and agreement on SDS and people's attitude toward marriage.

2. Present Work

The present study is designed based on the recognition of the existence of both implicit and explicit SDS confirmed by previous studies. The current research advanced the existing literature by extending the existence of SDS to Chinese adults' acceptance and agreement on it. The study also assesses whether the acceptance and agreement on SDS will influence their attitudes toward marriage. It is hypothesized that the more people accept and agree on SDS, the more positive their attitudes toward marriage are.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The sample size was calculated by using the power analysis tool: the software package G*Power [4]. The power analysis tool indicated that at least 112 people would be needed to detect an effect size of Cohen's d of .3, using a correlational test at a 5% alpha level (two-tailed) threshold with 90% statistical power. In the study, there are 128 males and females participated in the study in total, and all of them responded to the questionnaire. Two participants were removed from the result due to being under 18 years old. Of the 126 participants, 73 of them are females, and 53 samples are males (estimated ratio is 58% to 42%). All of the participants are native Chinese adults aged from 18 to 35.

3.2 Procedures

All participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire is the combination of two questionnaires which has two sections. The first section measured the participants' acceptableness and attitudes toward the sexual double standard. The second section focused on assessing how individuals view marriage. In order to avoid the influences of the process of answering the first section on the process of answer the second section, we created two versions of the questionnaire, version A and version B, with two sections placed in opposite order. All versions had two basic information questions in the beginning, to assess the participants' ages and genders (for data exclusion). Half of the participants were given version A and the other half were given version B. The questionnaires were given out by social media. The data were collected by scanning the survey's QR code. Most of the participants completed the questionnaire within five minutes.

Measure 1. The independent variable in the current study is people's acceptance and agreement on SDS which is measured by the 9 items from "Sexual Double Standard: A Psychometric Study From a Macropsychological Perspective Among the Spanish Heterosexual Population [5]. The measure is called "The Double Standard Scales" (SDSS). All question addressed the acceptance of the sexual double standard and their agreeableness to it. This section required participants to grade each statement from a seven-point scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. "Strongly agree" equals six points and "strongly disagree" equals zero point. All other answers fell in between this range. The questions mainly required participants to answer based on their opinions. Questions that accessed acceptance of sexual activities of men included such as "A man should be sexually experienced when he gets married" and "It's best for a guy to lose his virginity before he's out of his teens". Participants were asked to complete all questions. The scores were averaged from the answers to indicate their agreeableness with the sexual double standard.

Measure 2. The dependent variable in the current study is adults' attitudes toward marriage which is measure by the 10 items from GAMS (General Attitudes towards Marriage Scale) [6]. The seven questions in this section focused on marriage attitudes. The attitudes of participants are evaluated from their averaged scores on the statements. A scale determined the measurement from strongly

agree (6 points) to strongly disagree (0 points). We changed some of the questions by Park and Rosen [6] to express a more positive tone and to keep the measurement the same as SDSS. Questions that assessed the positive attitude toward marriage included “Marriages make people happy”, “Marriage is a good idea”, and “I am not fearful of marriage”. The scores were also averaged to show their attitudes toward marriage.

3.3 Data Analytic Approach

After collecting all results from the questionnaires, there will be two quantified results for each participants for their agreement and acceptance on SDS and their attitudes toward marriage. The data will be analyzed by SPSS to see whether there is a significant correlation between the dependent variable and independent variable. Any questionnaires that are incomplete (< 90% completion) will be excluded. Any answers from participants under 18 will be excluded as well.

4. Results

None of the questions were left out by any participants (100% completion). All participants answered both SDSS and GAMS completely. According to the results, most people held both negative attitudes toward sexual double standard and marriage. A more negative attitude toward sexual double standard ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.14$) correlated with a negative attitude toward marriage ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.39$). Consistent with the hypothesis, the results indicate a small correlation between two variables ($r = .23$, $p < 0.01$).

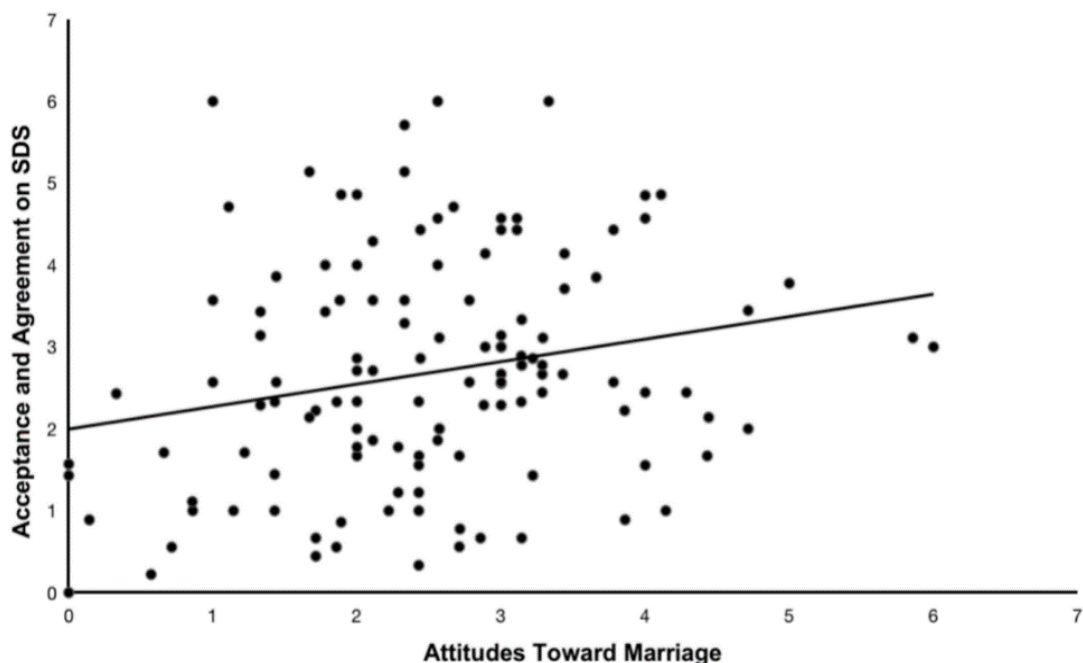


Figure 1. Results illustrating a small positive correlational relationship between participants' agreement and acceptance on SDS and their attitudes toward marriage.

5. Limitation and Future Direction

The current study was conducted by using quantitative research methods to examine 126 Chinese adults, which only gave a small correlation between sexual double standard and marriage. This might be caused by the small number of sample size. Future researches can expand the sample size to see if there is a stronger correlation. Besides, since participants are providing answers through self-report questionnaires, the results might be inaccurate. More object methods can be used in the future. Moreover, this study only considered Chinese adults and excluded other racial and ethnic groups which leads to the difficulty of generalizing the results to other groups. Future research can include people from different backgrounds and races to see if culture would play a role in how they view the sexual double standard. Also, even there is a positive correlation found, there is no evidence showing that the low acceptance and agreement on SDS is the causation of the negative attitudes toward marriage. Lastly, even though this current study indicated that a low marriage rate might be correlated with disagreement regarding sexual double standard, future studies can focus more on how to equalize both genders and educate people to accept that men and women are not different when it comes to sexual activities, so that women can feel more secure in their relationships.

6. Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between sexual double standard and marriage; other literature works often overlooked this area. Women tend to become more vulnerable when it comes to having sexual activities because men always play the dominant role [3]. We aimed to discover more about how Chinese adults believe about the sexual double standard, and if these standards played a role in their decisions about marriage. This study is further intended to serve as a reason for low marriage rates in China. Marriage and fertility rates had declined since the 1950s, and the age of a woman to have her first child had also shifted upward [7]. By conducting this study, we were able to reveal another reason for this declined adult marriage rate in China. By examining the 126 Chinese adults, we had a general picture of what most people currently believed in sexual double standard and marriage. We received a correlation between these two factors, but it was only a small one. Even with a new adaptation of equalizing different genders, this current study continues to show that sexual double standard still exists nowadays.

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