

Intensity of the Reverse Sexual Double Standards in Females and Males and Possible Factors

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ABSTRACT

Despite past research on sexual double standards (SDS), recent research has found that reverse sexual double standards (reverse SDS) exist. In this work, different levels of men's body appearance and financial status were considered factors influencing the reverse SDS. People's implicit endorsement of the reverse SDS associated with different factors of the reverse SDS was investigated using the Implicit Association Test (IAT). An explicit endorsement of the reverse SDS was investigated using the SDSS (sexual double standard scale). The results showed that participants endorsed both an implicit and explicit reverse SDS, but women endorsed it more strongly than men. Also, when men are more attractive, women will judge them less harshly. In this work, men's reverse SDS was found, and different factors of reverse SDS were discussed. Future researchers can imply this work to call attention to the reverse SDS and gender equality.

Keywords: *sexual double standard, reverse sexual double standards, implicit association test, women's judging factors, sexual double standard scale*

1. INTRODUCTION

People today tend to pay much attention to sexual double standards, which means that women are judged more harshly in comparative sexual behaviors than men. Also, current studies on slut-shaming mainly focus on female "sluts" instead of male "sluts" [1]. However, there is evidence that reverse sexual double standards exist, which means that men are judged more harshly than women in comparative sexual behaviors. Also, the "shamer" will be more objective and less congratulatory while judging female "sluts" than male "sluts" [2,3]. What is more, women tend to endorse more reverse sexual double standards than men [4,5]. Surprisingly, the reverse sexual double standard exists because most previous studies showed endorsement of the sexual double standard.

Recent studies have shown that the reverse sexual double standard is not as simple as it had been thought before, and several research have been conducted to explore more about the reverse sexual double standard. Scholars have adopted many possible explanations for the reverse sexual double standard. Various explanations focus on potential risks of sexual infection, women's preference for sexual partners, and evolutionary perspective.

According to Sakaluk and Milhausen [5], from women's perspective, it is more likely for a man with many past sexual partners to be infected by the transmitted disease and held casual attitudes towards sex than a woman, and men are more likely to become "sexual predators who lie and manipulate to get sex" [5]. As a result, females may be considered to potentially be sexual victims by their women friends [6].

Other researchers found that the stronger endorsement of the reverse sexual double standard by women may be related to women's preference in choosing their sexual partners. Women tend to prefer men with limited sexual experiences as their sexual partners, and they show a higher preference for virginity while choosing sexual partners than men [7,8]. Another explanation is the shift in attitude towards men's sexual behaviors. While men with many sexual partners were considered successful, men having many sexual partners currently are regarded as exploitative. Additionally, with the wide publicity of sexual assault and harassment, the tendency for males to be regarded as sexual predators increases, which will also be a possible interpretation for the appearance of the reverse sexual double standard [9]. Though several studies have been done on the sexual double standard and reverse sexual double standard [2,9], the number of studies that focus on the reverse sexual double standard is limited. Thus, by using both implicit and explicit measurement to measure the

reverse sexual double standard, this study will focus on the intensity of the reverse sexual double standard and the possible factors of the reverse sexual double standard, as existing researchers have found that women endorse the reverse sexual double standard. In contrast, men endorse the sexual double standard [2,10]. The current work claims that the reverse sexual double standard also exists in men(H1), and women will endorse more reverse sexual double standards than men(H2), which means women will judge men more harshly than men in comparative sexual behaviors.

Also, there is evidence that women would judge men's attractiveness based on their financial status and body appearance. Women tend to judge men as more attractive, healthy, and more positive characteristics and qualities when the men are with WHR (waist-to-hip ratio) in the typical male range [11,12]. It can be concluded that the reverse sexual double standard of women to men may be related to the men's body attractiveness and financial status. Women's visual reaction to men may affect their judgment. If women's reverse sexual double standard is judged based on men's attractiveness (in this study, body appearance and financial status), then the level of the reverse sexual double standard will be lower, and women will judge men less harshly if the men's attractiveness level is higher (H3).

2. METHODS

2.1 Participants

A total of 200 participants were recruited from Shanghai to participate in exchange for a 10\$ gift card. No participant was excluded. Of all participants, there were 110 females and 90 males. Their ages ranged from 20 to 50. They were randomly divided into two groups after arriving in the laboratory, and one group did the IAT first, while the other did the SDSS first.

2.2 Design and procedure

Since previous studies have found that explicit endorsement of sexual double standard was small [10], this study adopted both implicit and explicit measurements to measure endorsement of the reverse sexual double standard.

Once the participants arrived at the laboratory, they signed the consent form and were randomly divided into two groups. The first group did the implicit measurement, IAT first, and the other group did the explicit measurement, SDSS first. After they finished their first test, the first group did the SDSS instead, and the second group did the IAT.

Before the IAT, the participants were shown several individual faces. The source of those individual faces

was the Chicago Face Database [13]. Faces of men were selected and displayed to the participants, and the participants were asked to rate how afraid, happy, angry, surprised, and attractive the individual faces expressed. This procedure was aimed to ensure that the participants' average standard of men's attractiveness is generally similar.

Several factors determine the level of facial appearance. According to previous studies [13,14], face width, the upper to lower length ratio of the face, and facial symmetry (women prefer men with more symmetrical faces) contributed to the judgment on whether the person was attractive or not. Thus, the level of facial appearance was based on the three factors, which meant that the more balanced and proper the ratio was, the higher the level of facial appearance would be. Especially, only men's faces were selected to be displayed to both women and men participants in this study as the study focused on the reverse sexual double standard.

2.3 Measurement

2.3.1 Implicit measurement: IAT (implicit association test)

For implicit measurement, an implicit association test (IAT) [15] will be used, which is a computer-based task aimed to measure participants' implicit attitudes by asking them to classify given materials [16]. Participants are asked to categorize stimuli as fast as possible. It is assumed that if the pairing concepts are more strongly associated, the participants will react and categorize the pairing concepts faster.

After the rating procedure, five blocks would be presented to the participants. A masked repetition priming procedure was used, in which only the data in the third and fifth blocks were analyzed, and the other three were masks. Each block asked the participant to complete a different categorization. The categorization in the IAT test was completed by pressing choices on both the right and the left sides of the screen. The first block required the participant to practice classifying stimuli in the form of pictures which was from target categories: sexual (men involved in sexual behaviors) and neutral (men were riding a bike), with "sexual" on the left and "neutral" on the right. The second block required the participant to categorize attribute categories: "positive" and "negative" words. The third block required the participant to match the target categories to the attribute categories, and they were required to match "sexual" stimuli to "positive" words and "neutral" stimuli to "negative" words. The fourth block was identical to the first block, except that "sexual" was on the right and "neutral" was on the left. The fifth block was the same as the third block, except those participants were asked to match "sexual" stimuli

to “negative” words and “neutral” stimuli to “positive” words. The priming stimuli were presented for 20ms for the second, third, and fifth blocks and 100ms for the first and fourth blocks. The limited time was aimed at limiting participants’ conscious awareness and obtaining implicit attitudes towards the reverse sexual double standard. The first, second, and fourth blocks contained 20 trials each, and the third and fifth blocks contained 30 trials.

2.3.2 Explicit measurement: sexual double standard scale (SDSS; [17])

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 IAT score

A difference score (D score) was obtained from the IAT, which measures the extent to which people are faster and consequently stronger to implicitly associate sexual image with positive [10]. According to Greenwald, A. G. et al. [18], the score is calculated by a higher latency-based algorithm that determines the classification errors, response time, and trials. A higher D score means lower level of reverse SDS. The D score is calculated by the difference between the latencies of participants’ response divided by the total standard deviation. Also, latencies that exceeded 15000 ms were removed to avoid the situation where participants may be distracted or think over their choices. Two separate D scores were calculated for each participant, with one for the men’s body appearance priming trials and one for men’s financial status priming trials.

3.2 SDSS score

The sexual double standard scale’s total score ranges from 48(strong acceptance for reverse SDS) to 0(permissive)to -30(strong disagreement for reverse SDS). By adding up the total scores of each person using the computation method, and a higher score corresponds

to a stronger endorsement of explicit reverse SDS, the data collected by the scale can be analyzed.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Results for implicit endorsement of the reverse SDS:

Four D scores, two for men’s higher and lower body appearance ($D_{\text{higher body appearance}}$ and $D_{\text{lower body appearance}}$) and the other two for men’s higher and lower financial status ($D_{\text{higher financial status}}$ and $D_{\text{lower financial status}}$), were analyzed to examine the implicit endorsement of the reverse SDS. As shown in figure 1, for females, the mean $D_{\text{higher financial status}}$ was 0.5 for and the mean $D_{\text{lower financial status}}$ was 0.23, and the mean $D_{\text{higher body appearance}}$ was 0.65 and the mean $D_{\text{lower body appearance}}$ was 0.12, while for males, the mean $D_{\text{higher financial status}}$ was 1.2 and the mean $D_{\text{lower financial status}}$ was 0.9, and the mean $D_{\text{higher body appearance}}$ was 0.7 and the mean $D_{\text{lower body appearance}}$ was 0.6. They indicate that the implicit preference for pictures in which men were having sexual behaviors was stronger when primed with men with body appearance as compared to men with financial status. Also, these D scores indicate that while priming with men’s pictures whose body appearance or financial status was higher, the implicit preference for male’s sexual images was stronger as compared to priming with men whose body appearance of financial status was lower. However, the effects of financial status’ level are not very significant compared to body appearance’s level.

To determine implicit endorsement of the reverse SDS as well as participants’ gender differences, a mixed ANOVA was applied with participant gender (male vs. female) as between subjects and target gender and attractiveness as within person factors to measure the relationship between the factors. $p=0.235<0.05$, which indicates that there was a significant effect of disparate types of priming materials on participants’ performance on IAT, and null hypothesis can be rejected.

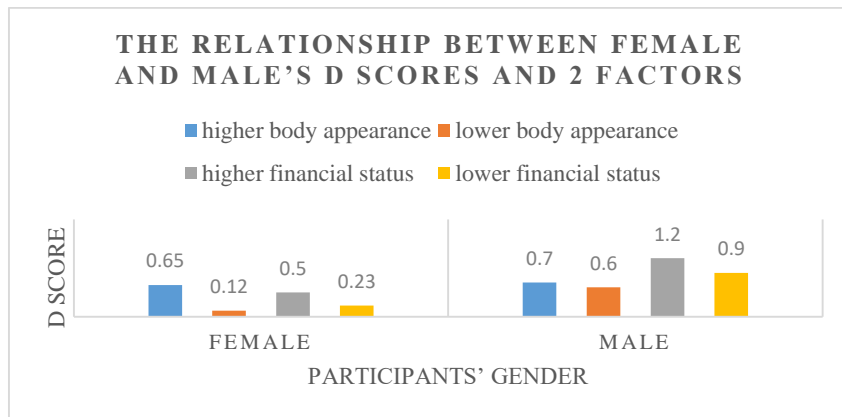


Figure1: The relationship between female and male’s D scores and 2 factors

This table shows the IAT score influenced by the two factors: body attractiveness and financial status. A lower IAT score corresponds to a higher level of implicit reverse SDS. For example, when the body attractiveness is higher, women will endorse more reverse SDS than men.

4.2 Results for explicit endorsement of the reverse SDS

A one-sample t-test was used to calculate and analyze participants' SDSS scores. The scores were significantly different from zero, and $p < 0.03$,

$d = 1.24$, evidencing that both women and men endorse an explicit reverse SDS to different extents.

An independent-samples t-test was used to measure women's and men's endorsement of the explicit reverse SDS. According to the analysis, women ($M = 6.7$, $SD = 3.4$) scored significantly higher than men ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 4.5$), with $p < 0.05$, which indicates that the difference is significant and null hypothesis can be rejected. As shown in the figure 2, both women and men held explicit endorsement for the reverse SDS, but the endorsement was significantly stronger in women than in men.

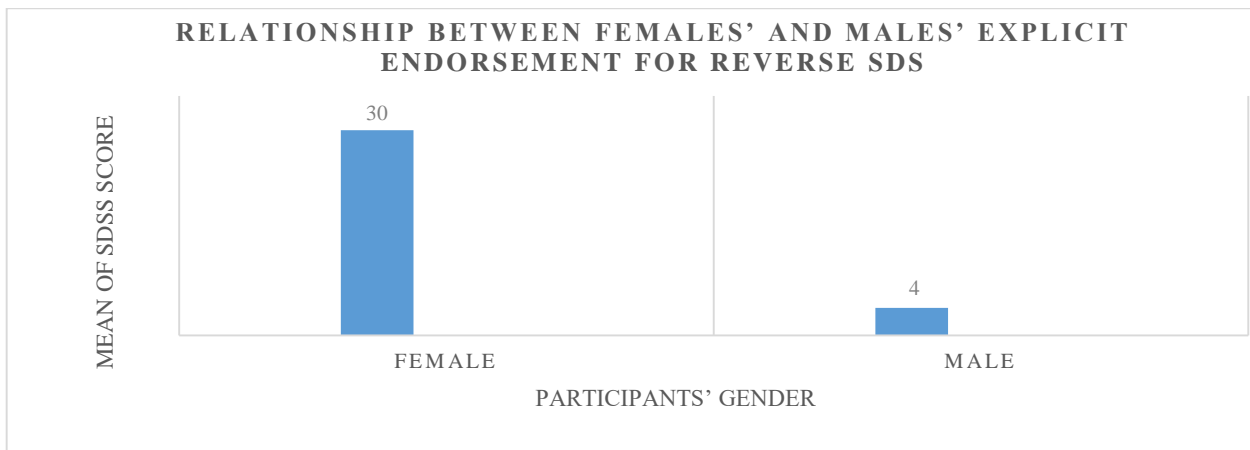


Figure 2: The relationship between female's and males' explicit endorsement for reverse SDS

This table shows the relationship between explicit endorsement of the reverse SDS and participants' gender. Female participants endorsed reverse SDS more than male participants.

5. DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to shed light on the intensity of the reverse SDS of females and males and possible factors that cause the different intensity levels. To measure both implicit and explicit reverse SDS, IAT and SDSS were employed. Overall, both female and male adults in Shanghai endorsed both an explicit and an implicit reverse SDS, but men endorsed the reverse SDS significantly less than females, both from implicit and explicit perspectives. In addition, If men's financial status and body appearance are on a higher level, women will judge men less harshly, but this influence is not significant while men judge men.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Conclusions

Consistent with my first hypothesis, the reverse SDS also exists in men, but the intensity is much weaker than women's reverse SDS. Also, men's reverse SDS is more significant implicitly than explicitly. This may be

associated with the shift in men's role from evolutionary perspectives. According to Milhausen, R. R., & Herold, E. S. [9] and Thompson, A. E. et al. [10], men would benefit more from having many sexual partners, but women would adopt a more selective mating strategy. However, currently, men with many sexual partners are regarded as exploitative [9], which leads to male participants' implicit endorsement of reverse SDS as they are not willing to be regarded as that. On the other hand, since men previously tended to endorse the SDS more than the reverse SDS [10], men's explicit endorsement for the reverse SDS might be revealed due to social desirability.

Consistent with my second hypothesis, women endorse more reverse SDS than men, even when men have higher body appearance and financial status.

Consistent with my third hypothesis, women will judge men less harshly if the men are of higher body appearance and financial status. Besides, according to the data, a higher body appearance contributes more to women's judgment than a higher financial status. Also, men did not show a significant change in their attitudes and judgments regarding the level of men's body appearance and financial status change. This may be related to the halo effect [12]. According to Rhodes, G. et al. [12], women tend to rate more attractive men as

more trustworthy, and women judge men less harshly when men's body appearance and financial status levels are higher.

6.2 Implications

The results from the current study can be considered as a contribution to the growing literature on the reverse SDS endorsement, and the conclusions can be implied by researchers and educators. Consistent with Thompson, A. E. et al. [10]'s paper, the combination of the priming procedure and the IAT shows the feasibility to determine the preferences for different body appearances and financial status. In addition, educators may use the conclusions from the current study to draw the society's attention to men's being judged more harshly than women. While the SDS is widely known currently, the reverse SDS should be paid more attention to.

6.3 Limitations and future directions:

Although the current study has improved people's understanding of the reverse SDS, some limitations should be noted. First, supplementary forms of external validity need to be assessed to enhance and ensure the generalizability of my results. For instance, social desirability may influence participants' response in the explicit measurement SDSS, for the explicit measurement did not control participants' conscious awareness. Holding a negative attitude towards women's sexual behaviors may not be accepted from their perspectives. Therefore, they might emphasize more negative attitudes towards men instead of women. Also, other factors may contribute to women's shift in attitudes and should be studied.

Second, the participants were adults in Shanghai whose ages ranged from 20 to 50. Consequently, the results may fail to generalize to the whole society as Shanghai is a relatively open city, and citizens in Shanghai may hold more acceptance of women's sexual behaviors than relatively remote areas. Researchers should continue to replicate this study and pre-experiment with samples more representative of adults from various areas.

Finally, the method used to control participants' feelings on different levels of body appearance and financial status. More extra literal descriptions may be used to illustrate the factors to make the difference in levels of body appearance and financial status clearer, for example, the prices of the jewelry and clothes.

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