



# Who Bears More of The Public Pressure for Accidental Pregnancy? Gender, Unintended Pregnancy, Relationship Type and The Sexual Double Standard

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**Abstract.** In contemporary society, it is widely believed that Individuals tended to evaluate men and women with same sexual behavior equally. This study aims to examine whether sexual double standard exists in unintended pregnancy in different commitment to relationship. We use Students (n=300) from the central China. They are randomly divided into two conditions (casual or committed relationship) and asked to respond to one of two scenarios. Responses will be analyzed using two-test. The work suggests that Sexual Double standard may still present in the negative consequence of sexual behavior-unintended pregnancy. The work finds that sexual double standard may not exist in serious relationship. People's evaluation about male and female is almost the same in serious relationship. However, Sexual Double Standard may exist in casual (short term) relationship when unintended pregnancy happened. In casual relationship, participants may evaluate the male more positively than female when unintended pregnancy happened.

**Keywords:** Sexual Double Standard, unintended pregnancy, different relationship type, person perception

## 1 Introduction

In contemporary society, it is generally accepted that women and men are held to various principles of sexual activity. [1]. As Barash and Lipton noted, "a man who is successful with many women is likely to be seen as just that—successful ... [whereas] a woman known to have 'success' with many men is... likely to be known as a 'slut' " [2]. The sexual double standard refers to the belief that men are socially compensated for sexual activity while women are socially stigmatized [3]. However, in 2012, the women's affirmative action movement entered the "fourth wave of feminist movements," characterized by the prominent role of the Internet and social media in women's rights advocacy. The movement swept across the globe, including developing countries. More diverse issues were raised, including gender equality, sexual minority rights, and abortion rights. Also, abortion to be legalized in Northern Ireland in 2019. This has an important role in spreading correct gender concepts and promoting gender equality.

So whether we really achieving equality between men and women in terms of sexuality?

In sexual intercourse, it is inevitable that the negative consequence will happen especially like unintended pregnancy. Studies in Family Planning constitute the core of unintended pregnancies[4]. The global pregnancy rate decreased only slightly between 2008 and 2012, after declining significantly between 1995 and 2008. In 2012, 85 million pregnancies were unintended, accounting for 40 percent of all pregnancies. Of these, 50% resulted in abortion, 13% resulted in miscarriage, and 38% resulted in an unplanned birth. Miscarriage and abortion cause great harm to a woman's body. Unintended pregnancies (mistimed or unwanted during the time of conception) can result in adverse outcomes both to the mother and to her newborn. Furthermore, preventing unintended pregnancies is critical to achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal 5: improving maternal health. Because urbanization and social and economic development have led many couples to want fewer children, the amount of time a woman typically spends avoiding unwanted or mistimed pregnancies has increased in recent decades[4].

Therefore, questions related to unintended pregnancies have attracted a large share of attention in debates concerning Sexual Double Standard. The relationship between people's perception of unintended female and male and different level of relationship has been a subject of this study.

While most studies had predominantly focused on people's different standards towards male and female in common sexual behavior, few studies pay attentions on the specific relationships and consequence of sexual behavior. Smith discovered that the sexual double standard does not exist in common sexual behavior, but only in some uncommon sexual behavior, such as the negative consequences of casual sexual behavior[5]. To fill this gap, this research aims to identify the Sexual Double Standard in the unintended pregnancy. Also, degree of affection was an important factor in sexual attitude [6]. Therefore, this work evaluates people's perception of unintended pregnancy in two different relationship types.

Our hypothesis is participants would evaluate women less favorable when unintended pregnancy happened in casual relation than men. According to Kenrick and Trost, in casual mating situations, females are expected to be more selective in their choice of partners than males due to females' higher likelihood of parental investment. So participants may regard the woman with an unwanted pregnancy as sexually active woman and may think this woman is not cautious and mature[7,8]. (H1) participants' evaluation of unintended pregnancy about men and women would be no different in a long-term serious/committed relation because they are both expected to have equal parental investment [9]. (H2)

Through researching a representative sample of the young aged 18-24, the current study distinguishes the sexual double standard in the situation of unintended pregnancy between serious and casual relationship. To achieve this goal, the participants were randomly assigned to two different scenarios regarding the type of relationship(committed/casual). This study uses a form of the revised version of Hynie and Lydon's scenario made up of two different conditions (serious/casual relation) [7]. To this end,

this research uses a modified evaluation of people scale from Marks and Fraley to analyze people's perception of male and female targets in different relationship type[3].

The goal of this research is to be able to contribute to the theoretical debate on whether sexual double standard truly exists in negative consequence of sexual behavior and in this way to promote gender equality, to establish the correct view and solution of unintended pregnancy and to protect women from abortion and public opinion pressure.

Following the introduction, section 2 begins with the discussion of literature review. Then, section 3 focuses on methodology. Section 4 concludes with research limitation, the expectation of further study and the implication.

## **2 Method**

### **2.1 Overview**

The current study was designed to further assess the existence of the Sexual Double Standard in the negative consequence of sexual behavior. We assess how evaluations differ across different types of relationship and different genders. Participants would randomly assign to one of the between-subject condition regarding different relationship type. Then, the study utilize the modified evaluation of people scale to measure participants' attitude[3].

### **2.2 Participants and design**

We performed a power analysis using the software package G\*Power made by Erdfeiler, Faul, and Buchner. The results indicated that with  $N=271$ , our experiment could detect an effect size of Cohen's  $d$  of .4, using a paired t-test at a 5% alpha level (one-tailed) threshold with 95% statistical power. In order to avoid some noise in our experiment, three hundred male ( $n=150$ ) and female ( $n=150$ ) students from Henan Vocational and Technical College are recruited. Participants are recruited through classroom sign-up sheets. The lab staff will distribute sheets to each class and also make posters in the school hall. The classroom sign-up sheets are listed as a "person perception study". All of the participants are age 18-24, Han Chinese (the Han Chinese are the most numerous ethnic groups in China), heterosexual. Each student were paid \$6 if they successfully pass attention check in our experiment. This experiment was carried out with the consent of the IRB and the participants themselves.

We employed a 2 (gender of the target: males and females) x 2 (scenarios of unintended pregnancies: casual relationships, committed relationships) x 4 (evaluation: value, likability, success, intelligence) mixed design. The scenarios will be a between-subject design. The gender will be the within-subject design.

### **2.3 Materials**

#### **Scenarios.**

We used the revision of Hynie and Lydon’s material, two different scenarios regarding the serious degree of relationship about both female and male targets were utilized[7]. The scenarios are mainly about the female target’s unplanned pregnancy after the sexual intercourse with male target. For all two extents of relationship, the scenarios detailed the same sexual encounter: “Daniel and Jenny were both college students who graduated last year. They both got employed after graduation.” However, the scenarios differ from one of the following statements depending on condition: “Daniel and Jenny met each other at a party one night. They really hit it off! They not only found that they were from the same college but also discovered similar hobbies. They talked a lot and stayed until the party ended. Daniel offered to walk Jenny home. He tarried because neither he nor Jenny wanted to end the conversation. Under the dim light, they kept talking and started to make out. Things had gotten carried away since that night. Jenny found that she was pregnant because they had sex on the night Daniel stayed. They were planning what they should do next.” (short-term/casual relation), “They had been dating since freshmen year and committed a formal relationship in sophomore year. This is the fourth year that they have been together. Recently, they planned to get engaged, and they visited each other's parents. They also decided to live together. One week before, Jenny found that she was pregnant because they had sex on the night they moved into the same house. They were planning what they should do next. ” (long term/committed relation)

## 2.4 Procedures and Measures

### Modified Evaluation of People Scale (Marks & Fraley, 2005)

**Instructions**

Please evaluate the person you thought about using the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Subscale 1: Values

1. This person is trustworthy
2. This person is respectful
3. This person is immoral\*
4. This person is dishonest\*
5. This person is careless\*
6. This person is dependable

Subscale 2: Subjective perceptions (Likability)

1. This person gets along well with others
2. I distance myself from this person\*
3. I like this person
4. This person is socially competent
5. I like being around this person

Subscale 3: Success

1. This person performs well in everything he/she does
2. This person is successful
3. This person is a high achiever
4. This person has a bright future
5. This person is lazy\*

Subscale 4: Intelligence

1. This person is intelligent
2. This person makes a lot of mistakes\*
3. This person is good at analyzing situations
4. This person is bright

Note. \*Reverse keyed.

Fig. 1. Modified Evaluation of People Scale[3]

As Figure1 shows, four aspects assessed Daniel and Jenny behavior using a seven-point likert rating scales. Subscale 1 was mainly about Values. For example like: The person is trustworthy. Subscale 2 was mainly about Subjective perceptions. For instance: This

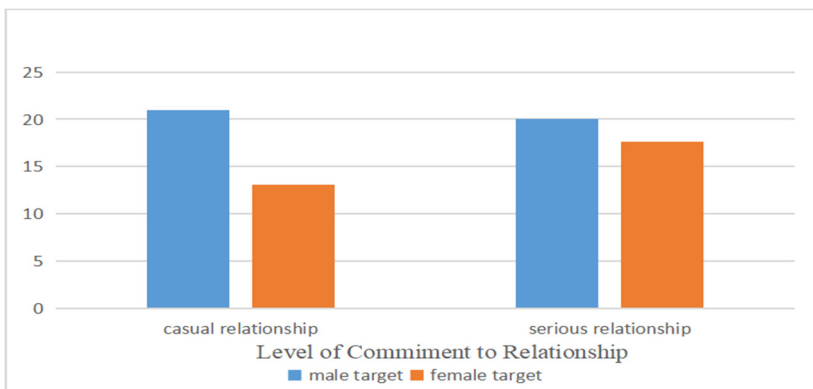
person gets along with others. Subscale 3 was mainly about Success: This person performs well in everything he/she does. The final subscale is mainly about Intelligence: This person is intelligence, this person makes a lot of mistakes, this person is good at analyzing situations, this person is bright. (1-7 means strongly disagree to strongly agree)

First, participants need to complete demographic survey included gender, age, sexual orientation, race, hometown. Then, participants randomly assign to two scenarios regarding the degree of relationship: committed/ long time relation, casual/ short time relation. Each scenario contained 150 participants. The decontextualized scenario allows participants to make more accurate evaluation without influencing by the others' angle. Participants are asked to read the storey which is about Jenny got pregnant by accident after sexual intercourse with Daniel.

After that, participants need to complete the evaluation towards the female and male targets. In order to measure whether our research is too explicit and whether participants' evaluation might be influenced by what the researchers want them to answer, participants are asked to write their guesses about the purposes and hypothesis of this study. In next step, participants are required to complete attention checks to avoid some distracted sample. The memory test contains basic information about the experiment like the targets' name, degree of relationship and the main content of the scenario. If participants don't get 90% of the memory test right, their evaluation will be excluded from the experiment.

In the end of the experiment, they are debriefed on the nature and purpose of the study. The participants who pass the memory test will get \$6.

### 3 Results



**Fig. 2.** Predicted Evaluation of The Targets Regarding Unintended Pregnancies (self-painted)

Based on the participants' questionnaire about the target in the scenario, we make predictions about the results. First, we calculate the mean of the evaluation score (two targets) of the participants in each subscale (value, likability, success, intelligence). Next, we add up all the evaluation score in each section to get the total score.

### **3.1 Casual Relationship**

We predict that participants will perceive male more positively than female. We predict that our p-value is less than 0.05. So there is a statistical significance between the perception of male target and female target.(see Figure 2)

### **3.2 Serious Relationship**

As predict, the judgments of male and female would be no different. We predict that our p-value is more than 0.05. So there is no statistically significance effect of gender in serious relationship.(see Figure 2)

## **4 General Discussion**

Across two different scenarios regarding different relationship type. We document evidence for a previously Sexual Double Standard in the situation of unintended pregnancy in casual relationship. First, the participants randomly assign to one of the scenarios. Then, they will evaluate the targets from four aspects: value, likability, success and Intelligence. We find that sexual double standard may not exist in serious/ long term relationship. However, it may exit in casual(short term)relationship when unintended pregnancy happened. In casual relationship, participants may evaluate the male more positively than female when unintended pregnancy happened.

The present work contributes to the substantial literature on sexual double standard in which people have different criteria to assess the sexuality of men and women. Importantly, whereas past work has focused on directly measuring participants' perception of sexual double standard in common sexual activity, especially in casual relationship. We measured participants' perception of sexual double standard in uncommon sexual activity (unintended pregnancy) from different relationship type. We support Smith et al findings which suggested that the sexual double standard are more likely to exist in relation to some aspects of sexual behavior, for instance, the negative consequences of casual sexual behavior[5]. Also, most studies focused only on female in sexual activity. In this experiment, our targets contained both female and male. Our decontextualized scenarios allowed participants to make more accurate evaluation without influencing by the others' angle. In addition, the sample of quantitative studies used here is necessarily more systematic than the sample of qualitative studies.

### **4.1 What accounts for different perception towards male and female of unintended pregnancy?**

Although the primary aim of the present work is to demonstrate the presence of sexual double standard in unintended pregnancy, here we consider several accounts for why this effect occurs.

Some feudal ideology of ancient China still exists. In ancient China, chastity, weakness, and submissiveness were the criteria for a good woman. Nowadays, Chinese

people still tend to be conservative in their thinking. Premarital sex is not yet generally accepted in society. Most people believe that a woman should be a virgin before marriage, especially in a relationship with no intention of marriage. Therefore, this may explain why participants view men more favorably than women when an unexpected pregnancy occurs in short-term relationship.

Another explanation for Sexual Double Standard in casual relationship may lie in sexual strategies theory. Humans are similar to most mammals in that women typically invest more in sex. This happens in part as a result of women's internal processes for fertilization, gestation, and placentation. Adversely, men do not bear these sorts of significant parental investment[10]. Buss and Schmitt's studies on sexual strategies theory showed that men especially seek to avoid commitment when seeking a short-term mate, a partial solution to the problem of maximizing copulatory opportunities[11]. This can also increase the cost of unwanted pregnancy for women in casual relation. However, in the serious relationship, participants may think pregnancy in casual relationship more unexpected than pregnancy in serious relationship. Man and woman in serious relationships are more likely to be reasonably responsible for the consequences of unintended pregnancy like getting married. The cost to woman of an unplanned pregnancy is also relatively low because woman may have the support of the man. So the woman's health is also more secure.

## 5 Limitation and Future Study

Although our decontextualized scenarios allows participants to make more accurate evaluation without influencing by the other's angle, participants' evaluation may be effected by the social desirability and egalitarian norms. Also, we used two identical questionnaires to measure participants' ratings of men and women separately. Compared to Implicit Association Test, our research is less implicit. Participants may be aware of the research' purpose and they may answer the way the experimenter wants them to answer. There are a few other limitations worthy of note. The most notable is that previous studies have demonstrated that people's sexual experiences might affect whether or not they support the sexual double standard. In our experiment, we didn't measure participants' experience, which could be a factor that potentially affect the results of the experiment. Another limitation is that we just presented two relation type which is serious or casual relation. However, many different relationship possibilities between casual and serious relation are not represented. Like in Sprecher and Hatfield research, they divided relationships into five specific dating stages-first date, casually dating, seriously dating, pre-engaged, and engaged[12].

The sample is constrained to the Chinese young students (age 18-24) in Henan Vocational and Technical College and to one negative consequence of sexual behavior (pregnancy by accident). This samples are unrepresentatives of the general population. Crawford and Popp discovered that sexual standards differed depending on the ethnicity, age, and social class of the group studied. We didn't consider the factor of ethics, culture difference, region difference, different age groups [13].

Future studies on this topic could extend, and improve on, several aspects of this analysis. First, we need to experiment with the presence or absence of SDS in different

age groups and people with different educational background or different social status. Because age of participants is also an important factor which influence the presence of sexual double standard [13]. The majority of the experiments were conducted with a sample of undergraduates. When comparing college students to non-students, results from college student samples may be overestimated in terms of sexual activities and attitudes [14].

Future studies may also need to address the topic of methodology. Research on double standards may be affected by general and specific methodological decisions (such as experimentation versus interviewing techniques) (e.g., linguistic and conceptual categories employed) in terms of ethnicity, race, age, socioeconomic class, and social position, participants in qualitative and interpretive studies were more diverse than those in quantitative studies [13]. we used quantitative study in this experiment. In the future, qualitative study is needed because it is possible to know exactly what each participant is thinking through investigating the participants' real personal experience, facial expressions, and eye contacts. Furthermore, most of the studies were focused on premarital sexual double standard. We could also investigate whether sexual double standard exists after marriage. Marriages are typically regarded as formal reproductive alliances that include (a) mutual obligation between husband and wife, (b) sexual access rights, (c) an expectation that the marriage will continue through pregnancy, lactation, and child rearing, and (d) recognition of the legitimate status of the couple's children [15]. Sexual Double Standard may vary between premarital relationship and the relationship after marriage.

Future researchers should also consider not just the physical consequence of sexuality, but also the more commonly experienced emotional and social consequence associated with sexuality [16].

In conclusion, with the progress of society under the rule of law and the development of the feminist movement, there is a trend toward gender equality in society. Sexual Double Standard is rarely presented in experiments using the explicit method and common sexual behavior. In comparison, it may still present in implicit and uncommon sexual behavior.

## 6 Conclusion

The aim of the present study is to examine whether Sexual Double Standard still exist in contemporary society, especially in some negative consequence of sexual behavior. The study has identified the Sexual Double Standard is no longer present in evaluations of common sexual behaviors, it is most likely present in evaluations of less common ones, like the negative consequence of sexual behavior. In this experiment, the Sexual Double Standard is present in the casual relationship of unintended pregnancy, rather than in the serious relationship of unintended pregnancy. The current study highlight the importance of protecting women from physical hurt like abortion and spiritual hurt like public pressure. The findings of this research show that there is a trend towards gender equality, but it is not yet fully achieved. The major limitation of this study is the limited age group which can not generalize the whole population. Also, our



questionnaire to evaluate people's perception is less implicit compared to Implicit Association Test. The future study could assess the Sexual Double Standard in different age group, and with different methodology.

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