

Comparative Study

Sexual Attitude and Marital Status: A Comparative Study Among South Indian Adults

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ABSTRACT

Sexuality is a core element of human life, shaping relationships, identity development, and overall well-being. Understanding individual's attitudes toward sexuality is essential for promoting sexual health, fostering healthy relationships, and addressing societal norms and values. Within the rich tapestry of cultural diversity that characterizes India, the exploration of sexual attitudes takes on added significance, given the country's complex social and cultural landscape. The study aims to explore the impact of marital status on sexual attitudes among South Indian adults. The sample size of the study is 131 adults including 61 males and 70 females between the age of 18 to 48 from the southern states of India (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana). The Cross-sectional Comparative research design is used in this study. The data were collected using google form questionnaire. The Brief Sexual Attitude Scale were used as tool in this study. The BSAS consist of 23 items with four subscales namely, permissiveness, birth control, communion, and instrumentality. The independent t test is used as statistical tool in this study. The findings of the study reveal that Birth Control and Instrumentality were significant different in male and female adults in sexual attitudes. Permissiveness and Communion were significant different in married adults and unmarried adults in the sexual attitudes. Permissiveness was significant different in married male and unmarried male in sexual attitudes.

Keywords: *Sexual Attitude, Marital Status, South Indian Adults*

The broader term 'sexuality' is used to encompass sexual practice, desire, identities and gender distinctions. Sexual practice is generally considered to be pleasurable. It is associated with love, intimacy and desire. As a physical relationship, it is generally seen as a matter of private concern and is experienced subjectively. But in the contemporary society, sex is around us all the time. It is used to entertain, sell directly itself and a wide range of other products (Saraga, 1998).

According to Plummer (1995), sexuality is a constant, dynamic, and multifaceted aspect of every individual. It serves as an energy-driven psychological means for pleasure, self-discovery, attachment, and self-esteem. Cultural norms dictate the rules and patterns of

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sexual behavior, defining what is deemed normal or abnormal, natural or unnatural, sinful or morally correct. These cultural factors influence all aspects of sexuality and sexual practices within a society.

Sexual attitude refers to an individual's beliefs, opinions, and feelings towards various aspects of sexuality. This includes attitudes towards sexual relationships, intimacy, sexual orientation, gender roles, contraception, reproductive rights, and sexual health. It encompasses both explicit and implicit attitudes, as well as cultural and societal influences on perceptions of sexuality.

Sexual attitudes are evaluative beliefs about sexual activities, practices, and behaviors, as well as the individuals who engage in them. These attitudes encompass a wide range of opinions from acceptance and approval to disapproval and condemnation, and they are influenced by cultural, social, and personal factors. (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987) Sexual attitude describes one's perspective on sexuality or sexual behaviors, which can range from liberal to conservative. (Manjula M and Dutt S, 2017) It is reflected in an individual's sexual behavior, which is shaped by family and cultural views on sexuality, sexual education, and past sexual experiences. (Waite L.J and Laumann E.O, 2009) It also plays a crucial role in understanding sexual behavior, including sexual desire and satisfaction, as these attitudes shape our thoughts, intentions, and behaviours. (Dosch et. al 2016).

Marital status is a crucial determinant of sexual attitudes and behaviors due to its association with societal expectations, legal frameworks, and interpersonal dynamics. Marital status can significantly impact sexual attitudes. Marriage provides a socially sanctioned space for sexual expression, potentially leading to more positive and open views on sexuality among married individuals. Conversely, unmarried adults may navigate societal pressures and a lack of sanctioned sexual outlets, which could influence their attitudes. This research aims to comparative analysis of sexual attitudes among married and unmarried adults in South India, shedding light on the nuanced interplay between marital status and sexual perspectives within this cultural context.

South India, comprising of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra and Telangana, represents a microcosm of this cultural complexity. The region is renowned for its cultural heritage, linguistic diversity, and distinctive social customs, all of which contribute to shaping individuals' beliefs, values, and attitudes toward sexuality. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to investigate the multifaceted interplay between sexual attitudes and marital status among South Indian adults.

The existing literature on sexual attitudes in India has predominantly focused on broad sociocultural factors, with limited attention paid to the nuanced interplay between sexual attitudes and marital status, particularly within the context of South India. While studies have examined the influence of religion, culture, and socioeconomic status on sexual attitudes in India, few have explored how marital status intersects with these factors to shape individual's sexual beliefs and behaviors. Much of the existing research has adopted a correlational approach to studying sexual attitudes, often overlooking the comparative nature of sexuality. Constructs such as permissiveness, communion, instrumentality, and attitudes toward birth control represent distinct dimensions of sexual attitudes, each with its unique implications for individuals' sexual experiences and relationships. By adopting a comparative framework, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of

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sexual attitudes and marital status among South Indian adults, accounting for the diverse array of factors that influence individuals' sexual beliefs and behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The purpose of the study is:

- To find out the differences in sexual attitudes between married and unmarried South Indian adults.
- To identify any potential gender difference in sexual attitudes.
- To provide insights into the relationship between marital status and sexual attitudes.

Hypotheses

- There is a significant difference in sexual attitudes between male and female adults.
- There is a significant difference in sexual attitudes between married and unmarried adults.
- There is a significant difference in sexual attitudes between married male and unmarried male adults.
- There is a significant difference in sexual attitudes between married female and unmarried female adults.

Participants

The sample size of the study is 131 adults including 61 males and 70 females between the age of 18 to 48. The sample consist of 67 married adults and 64 unmarried adults from the southern states of India (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana).

Inclusion criteria

- The men and women between the age group of 18 to 48 are included.
- Individuals who are currently residing in the South Indian states, viz, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Exclusion criteria

- Individuals who are divorced or separated.
- Non-binary or transgender individuals.

Instruments

Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (BSAS; Hendrick and Hendrick (2006) measures respondents' attitude to sexuality. It has totally 23 items with four permissiveness, birth control, communion, and instrumentality as dimensions. Permissiveness reflects attitudes where sex and/or open relationships are acceptable, birth control measures the responsibility of using contraception and practicing safe sex, Communion signifies the extent to which sex is seen as a profound connection between souls, surpassing all other interactions and Instrumentality assesses attitudes towards deriving pleasure from sex. It has the following alpha: Permissiveness = 0.93; Birth Control = 0.84; Communion = 0.71; and Instrumentality = 0.77. Scoring is based on 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree". Here in this study scores are reverse interpreted.

Procedure

The data were obtained from the married and unmarried people between the age group of 18-48 years. The questionnaire of *The Brief Sexual Attitude Scale* is prepared using Google

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form. In order to ask informed consent, the consent form was displayed in the first page of questionnaire and only those who are willing to give consent are included to participate in this study. The participants took only 5 to 8 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. After filling the questionnaire, the data are kept confidentially and protected.

RESULTS

Table - 1: Showing difference between male and female adults (Independent t-test)

Subscale	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value
Permissiveness	Male	21.22	7.53	0.49
	Female	20.61	6.24	
Birth Control	Male	10.11	4.04	2.96*
	Female	11.97	2.89	
Communion	Male	20.78	4.08	0.33
	Female	20.55	3.54	
Instrumentality	Male	13.16	4.70	2.90*
	Female	15.69	4.83	

* Significant difference at 0.05 level

Table - 1 is presenting the comparison results of male and female adults reveals on the scale of Birth Control with t-score of 2.96 significant at 0.05 level, male have a mean score (M= 10.11) and female (M= 11.97). In the scale of Instrumentality with t- score of 2.90 significant at 0.05 level, male have a mean of (M= 13.16) and female (15.69).

Table - 2: Showing difference between married and unmarried adults

Subscale	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value
Permissiveness	Married	19.61	6.23	2.12*
	Unmarried	22.20	7.21	
Birth Control	Married	10.61	3.98	1.65
	Unmarried	11.67	3.00	
Communion	Married	21.45	3.23	2.41*
	Unmarried	19.83	4.13	
Instrumentality	Married	14.56	5.09	0.04
	Unmarried	14.53	4.78	

* Significant difference at 0.05 level

Table - 2 presenting the comparison results of married and unmarried adults reveals on the scale of Permissiveness with t-score of -2.121 significant at 0.05 level, married have a mean score (M= 19.61) and unmarried (M= 22.20). In the scale of Communion with t- score of 2.413 significant at 0.05 level, married have a mean of (M= 21.45) and female (19.83).

Table - 3: Showing difference between married male and unmarried male

Subscale	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value
Permissiveness	Married Male	18.04	5.41	3.35**
	Unmarried Male	24.29	8.08	
Birth Control	Married Male	9.26	4.44	1.55
	Unmarried Male	10.93	3.48	
Communion	Married Male	21.63	3.76	1.53
	Unmarried Male	19.96	4.28	
Instrumentality	Married Male	12.15	4.52	1.59
	Unmarried Male	14.14	4.75	

** Significant difference at 0.01 level

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Table - 3 presenting the comparison results of married male and unmarried male adults reveals on the scale of Permissiveness with t-score of -3.354 significant at 0.01 level, married male has a mean score (M= 18.04) and unmarried male (M= 24.29).

Table - 4: Showing difference between married female and unmarried female

Subscale	Gender	Mean	SD	t-value
Permissiveness	Married Female	20.83	6.61	0.29
	Unmarried Female	20.38	5.89	
Birth Control	Married Female	11.26	3.28	0.93
	Unmarried Female	12.31	2.38	
Communion	Married Female	21.31	2.80	1.88
	Unmarried Female	19.72	4.06	
Instrumentality	Married Female	16.43	4.77	1.32
	Unmarried Female	14.88	4.85	

Table - 4 presenting the comparison results of married female and unmarried female adults reveals that the subscales Permissiveness, Birth Control, Communion and Instrumentality, there is no significant relation were found.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to explore the impact of marital status on sexual attitudes among South Indian adults. This research investigated variances among males and females, as well as between married and unmarried individuals. It also explored the differences between married males and unmarried males, as well as between married females and unmarried females, across various subscales including permissiveness, birth control, communion, and instrumentality. The statistical technique used for significant differences was independent t-test.

As hypotheses 1 there is a significant difference in sexual attitudes between male and female adults, the study findings show subscale birth control and instrumentality are significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in among male and female adults. The birth control measures the responsibility of using contraception and practicing safe sex and Instrumentality assesses attitudes towards deriving pleasure from sex. The mean values of birth control and instrumentality are greater in females than males. In the study by Hendrick and Hendrick (2002) shows that women were more endorsing of Birth Control than were men. However, the lack of significance for the subscales of permissiveness and communion warrants further exploration and interpretation.

As hypotheses 2 there is a significant difference in sexual attitudes between married and unmarried adults, the study findings show subscale permissiveness and communion are significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in among married and unmarried adults. Permissiveness reflects attitudes where sex and/or open relationships are acceptable. The mean values of permissiveness are greater in unmarried adults than married ones, which means unmarried adults have higher positive attitude in Permissiveness. Communion signifies the extent to which sex is seen as a profound connection between souls, surpassing all other interactions. The mean values of communion are greater in married adults than unmarried ones, which means married adults have higher positive attitude in communion.

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In hypotheses 3 there is a significant difference in one dimension of sexual attitudes between married male and unmarried male adults, the study results show permissiveness are significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in among married male and unmarried male adults. The mean values of permissiveness are greater in unmarried male than married male adults which indicates unmarried adults has higher positive attitude towards permissiveness. While looking other subscales Birth Control, Communion and Instrumentality there is no significant relation were found.

In hypotheses 4 there is no significant difference in sexual attitudes between married female and unmarried female adults, the study results show there is no any subscales are significant difference in among married female and unmarried female adults.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the impact of marital status on sexual attitudes among South Indian adults. 131 participants including 61 males and 70 females between the age of 18 to 48 were included. They were assessed using *The Brief Sexual Attitude Scale* and Sociodemographic profile were collected from the analysis of the result. It was concluded that Birth Control and Instrumentality were significant different in male and female adults in sexual attitudes. Permissiveness and Communion were significant different in married adults and unmarried adults in the sexual attitudes. Permissiveness was significant different in married male and unmarried male in sexual attitudes.

Limitations

- In this study the sample was collected from South Indian states only, which limits its generalizability to other settings.
- The sensitive contents of the study impact the availability of sample. The sample size is small compared to the population ratio of South India.
- People are more concerned about their privacy so they have some fear of violating their privacy.

Directions for Future Research

- The more variables like quality of relationship, couple satisfaction, sexual health, life satisfaction etc. could be used to assess more psychological and social aspect of sexual attitudes.
- This study only focused on the married and unmarried adults. If it could be considering other groups such as divorced, separated or living together gives more information about sexual attitudes.
- Using larger and diverse population gives more accurate and reliable findings.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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