



STUDY OF SEXUAL SELF DISCLOSURE AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN SINGLE AND DUAL EARNING COUPLES

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ABSTRACT

Sexual self-disclosure is one of the most intimate forms of self-disclosure and it directly impacts quality of life among couples. The present study focuses on sexual self-disclosure (SSD) and quality of life (QOL) in single and dual earning couples. The aim is 1. to find out relationship between SSD and QOL between single and dual earning couples, 2. to compare SSD between single and dual earning couples and 3. to compare QOL between single and dual earning couples. Present study was carried out on 60 couples (N=120), out of which 30 couples (n=60) were single earning couples and 30 (n=60) were dual earning couples. The sample was collected through purposive sampling. Two tools were used: sexual self disclosure (Snell Jr et al) and quality of life (World Health Organization). The results indicate 1. there is a positive relationship between sexual self disclosure and quality of life among single and dual earning couples. 2. On sexual self disclosure, single earning couples do more sexual self disclosure than dual earning couples. 3. On quality of life, there is no difference between single and dual earning couples.

Key words: sexual self disclosure, quality of life, single and dual earning couples

Introduction

Sex is one of the basic instincts in human beings, it is powerful and marriage is an arrangement we have created to discipline and channelize this powerful instinct in us. So, it is natural for us to think about our sex life, our sexual needs, and fulfillment, particularly when we are married. There are three ways in which people respond, whenever their sex life sets them thinking. First way is suppress or deliberately avoid thinking. This is a choice taken by those whose spouse is unavailable due to reasons such as job compulsions, extramarital involvement, religious ideas or physical incapability. Husbands and wives in such situations suppress their sexual urges out of helplessness and, thus, consciously avoid thinking of sex. This state is similar to those who have taken the oath of celibacy. The second way is to ignore the thought of sex. This choice is taken by those who find the sexual connection with their spouse less important than some other aspects of their life, such as money, business, ambition, name and fame. Many busy celebrities, politicians, businessmen and social workers come in this category. Third way is to give a sincere thought to sex life. This is healthy, with the exception of a small percentage of people who think “excessively” about sex. Problems may appear, in the later, due to faulty expectations and misconceptions brought on by the media, erotic films, and novels.

The current study focuses on “Sexual self-disclosure”: is the “degree to which a member of a romantic dyad discloses his or her sexual thoughts, feelings, and behavior to his or her partner” (Tang, Bensman and Hatfield, 2013) and possesses some unique attributes and it is an especially intimate form of communication. Metts and Cupach (1989) posit that sexual self-disclosure can benefit a relationship, in two ways: by enhancing relationship closeness and intimacy (expressive pathway) and by allowing partners to understand each others’ sexual preferences and desires, thus enhancing sexual rewards and minimizing sexual costs (instrumental pathway), which, in turn, increases sexual satisfaction.

Sexual self disclosure is just like other forms of self disclosure in being fuller and more intimate when it is reciprocated by one’s partner. People are more comfortable talking honestly about sex if their partners do the same. The literature reports that a few experimental studies (Byers & Demmons, 1999; Cupach and Metts, 1991, 1995) have shown the importance of sexual

expression and sexual self-disclosure in marriage. Couples often engage in the sexual act blindly believing that they know what their spouse wants based on pornographic viewing, or reading and this invariably results in an unpleasant and awkward sexual act, so couples really do need to ask questions such as, “What would you like me to do?” “Are you comfortable?” “Does this feel pleasurable?” “What can I do to make it better for you?” “Is there anything in particular that you enjoy more, or something you do not enjoy at all?” If you are uncomfortable asking such questions, than probably you are not at a point in relationship where you should explore sex at all. You can ask your spouse to signal to you, by squeezing your arm to suggest if she/he wants anything in particular. They may participate in these activities mechanically thinking they “should” be enjoying what their spouse is doing.

Men think that they are expected to know what to do and women expect them to know it all. However, the truth is that neither of them knows it all and sexual self disclosure is the only master key to explore it all. Reviewing 30 years of studies on sexual disclosure several years ago, Canadian researcher Byers (2005) found that rates of sexual self-disclosure, even in committed long-term relationships, were surprisingly low. When asked about the duration of foreplay and intercourse their partners prefer, people’s estimates correlate closely with their own sexual stereotypes but have little to do with what their partners say they actually want. In her research, rates of self-disclosure about sexual dislikes were particularly low, the average adult knows only a fourth of the things about his or her partner finds sexually distasteful. In the context of an ongoing sexual relationship, good sex can mean knowing what you want and what your partner wants, knowing how to talk about it comfortably, and never being forced to do anything you don’t want to do. Having good sex in a relationship can contribute to a person’s overall sexual satisfaction, but it’s not the only factor that often make the difference between being in a happy relationship and being in an unhappy relationship also appear to enhance sexual satisfaction.

Life changes, like having children and getting older, can also have an impact on sex and sexual pleasure (both positive and negative). Dealing with such changes could require you and your partner to be flexible, recognize your limitations and even shift the way you think - and it is always important to keep the lines of communication open but lack of communication will lead to other problems (Wood, 2002). When we less communicate, many other problems could arise

as we did not try to solve the problems in a compromising manner. Marital or relationship dissatisfaction, sexual dissatisfaction, and other matters such as money, interference etc could not be tackle as a couple if they did not communicating well (Wood, 2002).

Sexual communication can contribute greatly to the satisfaction of an intimate relationship. Good communication about sexual desires and concerns has frequently been identified as a valuable asset to the development and maintenance of a satisfying and enduring sexual relationship (Byers & Demmons, 1999). Furthermore, lack of intimacy is one of the most common reasons for seeking couple therapy (Doss, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004; Geiss & O’Leary, 1981). Therapists identify deficits in intimacy as one of the most damaging problems in relationships and as the most difficult problem to treat (Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997). One aspect of intimacy in relationships is self disclosure, which involves revealing personal information and feelings to another person about oneself. According to Waring (1988), self disclosure is the single factor which most influences a couple’s level of intimacy. A study that compared happily married couple with unhappily married couples found that, in almost every regard, the happily married couples showed superior communication skills (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). Opening up and sharing your thoughts and feelings with your partner helps you to grow together as a couple.

In recent years there has been a broadening focus in the measurement of health beyond traditional health indicators such as mortality, morbidity, and quality of life (QOL) has turned into an important outcome in clinical and interventional studies. Different definitions of QOL have been proposed by different researchers or organizations. The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined “QOL” as “an individual's perception of his position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns”. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and their relationship to salient features of their environment.

One of the most important factors in sexual satisfaction is mental health. In most studies, mental health has referred as the strongest influencing factor on sexual satisfaction. In this way, it is stated that mental health refers to the fact that people on personal standards, how to think and feel about their life in general and in specific areas such as sex, interpersonal relationships,

physical and mental status. Sexual self disclosure leads to sexual satisfaction which in turns leads to better mental health. Mental health as factor which has the greatest impact on sexuality, especially sexual satisfaction is so defined, positive and rational evaluation of person from various aspects of life and creates a balance between positive affect such as happiness, will, self-confidence, positive self-image and negative affect like anxiety, stress and depression.

Yet, there is surprisingly little research on the present topic compared to the voluminous research that exists on self-disclosure (in general) and few researches have been done on sexual self disclosure and quality of life in single and dual earning couples that too in the foreign countries and not in India. India is a country where taboo is still attached to sexuality in both urban and rural areas and there is a gap between researches done in this area, therefore, to know the present scenario of sexual self disclosure and quality of life in single and dual earning couples, the researcher in present study is studying both these variables and exploring the following

Objectives

1. To assess the relationship between sexual self disclosure and quality of life in single earning and dual earning couple.
2. To compare sexual self disclosure between single and dual earning couples; between husbands in single and dual earning couples and between wives in single and dual earning couples.
3. To compare quality of life between single and dual earning couples; between husbands in single and dual earning couples and between wives in single and dual earning couples.

Hypothesis

1. There will be a positive relationship between sexual self disclosure and quality of life in single and dual earning couples.
2. There will be significant difference between single and dual earning couples on sexual self- disclosure.
3. There will be no difference between husbands in single and dual earning couples on sexual self disclosure

4. There will be significant difference between wives in single and dual earning couples on sexual self disclosure
5. There will be significant difference between single and dual earning couples on quality of life.
6. There will be no difference between husbands in single and dual earning couples on quality of life.
7. There will be significant difference between wives in single and dual earning couples on quality of life.

Method

Sample

The sample of the present research consists of 60 couples comprising of 30 single earning couples (in which only husband was working) and 30 dual earning couples (in which both partners were working). The age range of the couples was 26-50 years and data was collected from Bangalore and Gurugram city. Purposive random sampling technique was used for selecting the subjects.

Description of the tool

- **Sexual Self-Disclosure scale-R** used in the present research was developed by Snell Jr et al, (1989) to examine women's and men's willingness to discuss a variety of sexual topics with intimate partner. The Revised Sexual Self-Disclosure Scale (SSDS-R) developed by Snell et al. (1989) consists 72 items that form 24 three-item subscales for the disclosure target (i.e., an intimate partner). The internal consistency of the 12 subscales on the original SSDS was determined by calculating Cronbach alpha coefficients, ranged from .83 to .93 (average = .90). The reliability coefficients for the Revised Sexual Self-Disclosure Scale (SSDS-R) ranged from .59 to .91 (average = .81).
- **WHOQOL – BREF**, World Health organization (1991) is a 26-item instrument consisting of four domains: physical health (7 items), psychological health (6 items), social relationships (3 items), and environmental health (8 items); it also contains QOL and general health items. Each individual item of the WHOQOL-BREF is scored from 1 to 5 on a response scale, which is stipulated as a five-point likert scale. Internal

Consistency – Cronbachs alpha for the overall scale was 0.89 and ranged from 0.74 to 0.77 for individual domains. All values were above 0.70 which demonstrated adequate internal consistency.

Statistical Tool

Correlation and t test was applied using SPSS to find out the results, correlation test was applied to find out the relationship between two variables and t test was applied to compare the two variables.

Result

Table 1 showing relationship between sexual self disclosure and quality of life in single and dual earning couples

Variable	Quality of life

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There is a positive relationship between sexual self disclosure and quality of life between single and dual earning couples as the correlation value is .333 and significant at 0.01 level. If the sexual self disclosure is good than quality of life will be good or if there is less sexual self disclosure than quality of life will not good. The result of present study result accepts the hypothesis-1 which states that there will be positive relationship between sexual self disclosure and quality of life among single and dual earning couple.

Table 2 showing comparison between single and dual earning couples on sexual self disclosure

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	Sig
Sexual self disclosure	Single earning couples (30)	60	243.22	41.27	118	2.138	0.002
	Dual earning couples (30)	60	222.15	63.78			

The results displayed in table 2 clearly reveal that there is a significant difference on sexual self disclosure between single and dual earning couples ($t= 2.138, p=0.1$). The single earning couples scored significantly higher than the dual earning couples, as the mean of single earning couple is 243.22 whereas the mean of dual earning couple is 222.15. Therefore, it can be predicted from the table that single earning couples do more sexual self disclosure than dual earning couple and it lead to acceptance of hypothesis-2 which states that single earning couple will do more sexual self disclosure than dual earning couple.

Table 3 showing comparison between husbands in single and dual earning couples on sexual self disclosure

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	Sig
Sexual self disclosure	Husband in single earning couples	30	255.13	34.33	58	1.66	0.18
	Husband in dual earning couples	30	236.43	51.02			

The results displayed in table 3 clearly reveal that there is no significant difference between husband in single and dual earning couples ($t=1.66$). The mean score of husband in single earning couple is 255.13 and in dual earning couple is 236.43 which indicates that husband in single earning couples might do more sexual self disclosure as the mean score is higher than husbands in dual earning couple, though there is no significant difference between them. The result of present study accepts the hypothesis-3 which states that there will be no difference between husbands in single and dual earning couples on sexual self disclosure.

Table 4 showing comparison between wives in single and dual earning couples on sexual self disclosure

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	Sig
Sexual-self disclosure	Wives in single earning couples	30	231.30	44.64	58	1.99	0.005
	Wives in dual earning couples	30	208.07	72.51			

The results displayed in table 4 clearly reveal that there is a significant difference between wives in single and dual earning couples on SSD ($t= 1.994, p = .005$). The wives in single earning couples scored significantly higher than the wives in dual earning couples, as the mean score is

231.3 and 208.07 respectively. Therefore, it can be predicted from the table that wives in single earning couples do more sexual self disclosure than wives in dual earning couples and result lead to acceptance of hypothesis-4 which states that wives in single earning couples will do more sexual self disclosure than wives in dual earning couples.

Table 5 showing comparison between single and dual earning couples on quality of life

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	sig
Quality of life	Single earning couples (30)	60	91.33	11.54	118	.989	.697
	Dual earning couples (30)	60	89.30	10.97			

The results displayed in table 5 clearly reveal that there is no significant difference on quality of life between single and dual earning couples ($t=.989$). The mean score of single earning couples is 91.33 which are higher than the mean score of dual earning couples (89.30) which indicates that single earning couples might have good quality of life than dual earning couples. Of course, the results indicate that there is no difference on quality of life between both the couples; therefore, it depicts the rejection of the hypothesis-5 which states that there will be significant difference on quality of life between single and dual earning couples.

Table 6 showing comparison between husbands in single and dual earning couples on quality of life

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	Sig
Quality of life	Husbands in single earning couples	30	94.16	9.94	58	1.31	.198
	Husbands in dual earning couples	30	91.03	8.51			

The results displayed in table 6 clearly reveal that there is no significant difference on quality of life between husbands in single and dual earning couples ($t=1.311$). The mean score of husbands in single earning couples is 94.166 which are higher than the mean score of husband in dual earning couples (91.03) and indicates that there might be good quality of life for husbands in single earning couples than husband in dual earning couples. The result of present study accepts the hypothesis-6 which states that that there will be no difference between husbands in single and dual earning couples on quality of life.

Table 7 showing comparison between wives in single and dual earning couples on quality of life

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	sig
Quality of life	Wives in single earning couples	30	88.50	12.46	58	0.28	.663
	Wives in dual earning couples	30	87.56	12.90			

The results displayed in table 7 clearly reveal that there is no significant difference on quality of life between wives in single and dual earning couples ($t=0.285$). The result of present study rejects the hypothesis-7 which states that there will be significant difference between wives in single and dual earning couples on quality of life.

Discussion

The present study was concerned with finding out the relationship between SSD and QOL among single and dual earning couples as well as to find out comparison between single and dual earning couples on SSD and QOL. We found very interesting results, on the basis of which we can justify our hypothesis:

In present study, researcher found that there is a positive relationship between SSD and QOL among single and dual earning couples. According to Davison, et al (2009), individuals who are sexually satisfied report a higher quality of life, with better overall health and wellbeing than individuals with lower sexual satisfaction. Chao et al (2011) studies revealed that sexual desire does not directly influence quality of life, but it does have a direct effect on sexual satisfaction; hence, sexual satisfaction will indirectly affect quality of life. Dogan, Tugut and Golbasi (2013) studies states that sexual self disclosure and quality of life is a significant predictor of happiness and satisfaction with life and also explains 19 % of the variance concerning happiness and 25 % of the variance regarding satisfaction with life. The findings obtained from the present study show that the sexual self disclosure in couples is important in relation to happiness, quality of life and satisfaction with life. Penhollow, Young and Denny (2009) study states that sexual self confidence was found to be single most important predictor of sexual satisfaction and quality of life.

The SSD is an important aspect for married couples as if they disclose their sexual desire with their partner it will lead to sexual satisfaction and it is a part of QOL so it directly leads to better QOL including social relationship. When couples do SSD of sexual preferences, it increases the partner's understanding of those preferences resulting in a sexual script that is more rewarding and less costly (MacNeil and Byers, 2009). People who do SSD have considerably better QOL than those who reported no sexual disclosure; it has an important role in prevention of risky sexual behaviors, serious mental illness, social crimes and ultimately divorce (Shahhosseini et al, 2014).

The ability to communicate about sexuality is one of the criteria of a sexually healthy person. Research has affirmed that intimacy is related to both couples' relationship satisfaction (Greef & Malherbe, 2001; Toldstedt & Stokes, 1983). The present study has been done on Indian population, according to table-2, single earning couples do more SSD than dual earning couples this might be because now-a-days dual earning couples have hectic life and they won't be able to spend much of the time with their partner as their timings may not match, as one of the partner comes early and another comes late night and it can be possible that the shift of the work is such that the couples sometimes are not able to meet each other at all especially in metro cities. Since they can't meet and spend quality of time, they are not able to disclose their sexual preferences with their intimate partners whereas in single couples, only husband is working, so they may get ample time to disclose their sexual preferences with other each other.

In the present research there is no difference on SSD between husband in single and dual earning couples, this is because husbands in both single and dual earning couples are working and their life would be hectic, experiences the same working conditions and similar working hours due to which they might not be different in disclosing their sexual desire with their wives. So, we can say that there is no difference found on SSD between husbands of both the couples.

According to table-4, wives in single earning couples do more SSD than wives in dual earning couples. As wives in single earning couples is a housewife and she is just occupied with household works, so get's enough time to express her desire with the husband than wives in dual earning couples. As working wives are quite busy with both office and household works and when they are free the partners would be busy due to which wives won't get good quality of time

to disclosing sexually herself. The present study has shown that women who were at home do more SSD than working women. Working women have financial independence, more self-confident; in spite of they can't feel satisfied with their sex life as a result of lack of time.

There is no difference on quality of life between single and dual earning couples (table-5), this might be because in the present study both single and dual earning couples are living in metro cities experiences the similar hectic life, stress and environmental conditions. Every individual living in metro cities are so occupied with their own work that nobody gets time for other individual, even not quality of time for them to relax.

There is no difference on quality of life between husbands and wives in single and dual earning couples (table 6 and 7) this might be because husbands in both the groups are facing similar kind of environment, social relations they experience is almost similar and even the working conditions, similar hectic life and experiences the same stressful situations. Not only external factors, perception about life is also moreover similar in husbands, so there will be no difference in their QOL. Similarly, wives in both the groups are working- wives in single earning couples work at home, do whole day work for family so they too might experience stress and overload issues same as the wives in dual earning couples experiences at office and at home. The level of stress and working conditions can be different but a wife in both the couples' experiences same environment and therefore, wives in both groups are not differ in expressing their sexual desire. Paradoxically, the other research expressed housewives have a better quality of sex life than women at work.

Conclusion

To summarize, in present study researcher found positive relationship between SSD and QOL in both the couples. Single earning couple expresses their sexual desire more than dual earning couple because of the differences in SSD by wives (as husbands in both groups are not differing). On QOL, there is no difference in both groups.

Suggestions for Further Research

When a researcher begins a study, he or she plans the program trying his best to make it free of limitations and loopholes. However, hindsight is always wiser than foresight (Chauhan, 2015). Therefore, after the work is over, there is a feeling that something different, something additional would have made the work better. According to Tang, Bensman & Hatfield (2012) it is likely that characteristics of an intimate relationship- such as the duration of the relationship and the power balance in the relationship- might affect people's SSD to their intimate partners. Rubin et al. (1980) speculated that there is a correlations between people reported SSD and the duration of their relationships. In the present study, researcher has included married couples but the duration of marriage is not taken into consideration though the duration of the marriage has great impact on the SSD and QOL.

The educational level is also an important factor that can have impact on SSD and QOL in couples. The educated individuals might be broad minded to do sexual self disclosure with the partner and adapt well to the environment, making their quality of life better than the less educated people. The environmental conditions play a part in sexual self disclosure between intimate partners. The present research was done only in urban areas of the country and the rural area was not taken into consideration, so the comparison between the rural and urban areas on SD and QOL can be done. Relationship of culture and SSD is also a research topic to explore. A clear, comprehensive picture emerges when research findings covering various aspects of the phenomena are integrated. It is hoped that this humble work has some contribution.

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