

## Sexual Satisfaction, Well-Being, and Kink Roles and Behaviors among a Unique Sample in the US

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### BACKGROUND

- Very little research on sexuality has focused on self-identified individuals who engage in kink behaviors<sup>1</sup>
- Those who engage in kink behaviors often encounter stigma and prejudice from lay people and health professionals, which may influence health disparities<sup>2</sup>
- Recent literature is focusing less on criminal and psychological perspectives that pathologize non-conforming, non-heterosexual, non-monogamous and non-genital modes of sexual expression and more on de-pathologizing non-normative sexual practices<sup>3</sup>
- To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study exploring the positive associations between sexual satisfaction, kink behavior, and well-being in a US sample of individuals who engage in kink behavior attending a conference event specifically organized for the kink community
- Sexual Script Theory<sup>4</sup> and Post-Colonial Feminist Theory<sup>5</sup> were used to guide the study's research questions

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the characteristics of kink conference participants, specifically those who have actively engaged in kink behaviors over the past six months?
- What are the differences in characteristics among those who've engaged in kink behavior with regard to kink roles (dominant vs. submissive)?
- To what extent is the frequency of kink behavior associated with sexual satisfaction, perceived overall well-being, and other participant characteristics?

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### METHODS

- This study used a two-armed approach (passive [study flyers in participant conference bags] and active [invisible line intercept]) to recruit conference participants over three days to complete a short electronic questionnaire
- The survey collected data on self-reported knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and beliefs with regard to sexual satisfaction (New Sexual Satisfaction Scale<sup>6</sup>), kink behaviors and fantasies, perceived well-being (Well-Being Composite Measure<sup>7</sup>), and demographic information
- The hosting organization received \$2 for each completed survey
- Both descriptive and analytic analyses were performed to explore the study's aims
- Data analysis continues

### DISCUSSION

- The sample lacked racial, ethnic, and educational diversity, while being diverse with regard to sexual orientation
- Participant roles in kink behaviors seemed to mirror traditional gender/sexual orientation and power hegemonies
- Among participants in this sample, increased participation in kink behaviors was positively related to several aspects of sexual and relationship health
- While there is a lack of empirical literature on the positive aspects of kink and related behaviors, it is still necessary to educate the public and health professionals on the salutogenic and sex-positive aspects of kink behaviors as part of one's sexual repertoire
- Because the kink community is severely misunderstood and often pathologized, the authors anticipate that these findings will show that like most humans (who are sexual beings), study participants' kink behavior is not an internal source of pain, disease, distress or discomfort
- A limitation of this study includes the representativeness of the sample; the majority of participants were older and identified as white women
- Future research should include larger and more diverse samples.

For more information: <https://osf.io/6gyjz/>



Characteristic	Overall		Engaged in the Past Six Months (A)		Not Engaged in the Past Six Months (B)		X <sup>2</sup>	df	p
	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Race							.13	1	.83
White/European Origin	111	75.5	109	75.7	2	66.7			
Non-White/European Origin	36	24.5	35	24.3	1	33.3			
Gender Identity							.37	2	.33
Man	56	37.3	55	37.4	1	33.3			
Woman	81	54	79	53.8	2	66.7			
Transgender/Gender NC	13	8.7	13	8.8	0	0			
Sexual Orientation Identity							1.07	2	.58
Heterosexual (straight)	67	45	66	45.2	1	33.3			
Bisexual/Pansexual	60	40.3	58	39.7	2	66.7			
Homosexual (gay)/Asexual/Other	22	14.7	22	15.1	0	0			
Partner Status							12.25	1	<.01 <sup>a</sup>
Partner(s)	120	80	120	81.6	0	0			
No Partner(s)	30	30	27	18.4	3	100			
Education							2.16	1	.20
Some High School/College	43	28.7	41	27.9	2	66.7			
College Graduate or More	107	71.3	106	72.1	1	33.3			
Age	Mdn	Range	Mdn	Range	Mdn	Range	U	n	p
Man	39	21-73	39	21-73	35	23-53	308	152	.54
Woman	39	14-50	39	14-50	36	22-40	151.5	145	.39
Well-Being	6	4-7	6	4-7	6	5-6	127.5	122	.20

Table 1. Comparison of Demographics, Sexual Satisfaction, and Well-Being among Participants (A) Who've Engaged in at Least One Kink Behavior in the Past Six Months and (B) Who Have Not Engaged in at Least One Kink Behavior in the Past Six Months; and as (C) Dominant or (D) Submissive in Kink Behavior over the Past Six Months

Characteristic	Engaged as Kink Role Dominant (C)		Engaged as Kink Role Submissive (D)		X <sup>2</sup>	df	p
	n	%	n	%			
Race					.16	1	.69
White/European Origin	41	73.2	61	76.3			
Non-White/European Origin	15	26.8	19	23.7			
Gender Identity					38.37	2	<.01 <sup>a</sup>
Man	39	67.2	13	16.1			
Woman	16	27.6	62	76.5			
Transgender/Gender NC	3	5.2	6	7.4			
Sexual Orientation Identity					9.03	2	.01
Heterosexual (straight)	36	62.1	29	36.3			
Bisexual/Pansexual	16	27.6	36	45			
Homosexual (gay)/Asexual/Other	6	10.3	15	18.7			
Partner Status					.97	1	.39
Partner(s)	49	84.5	63	77.8			
No Partner(s)	9	15.5	18	22.2			
Education					.51	1	.56
Some High School/College	14	24.1	24	29.6			
College Graduate or Higher	44	75.9	57	70.4			
Age	Mdn	Range	Mdn	Range	U	n	p
Man	44.5	21-71	37	22-73	1776.5	139	.01
Woman	39	17-50	38	14-50	2121.5	134	.74
Well-Being	6	5-7	6	4-7	2139.5	133	.98

<sup>a</sup> Expected counts fall below 5 in one or more cells; Chi-square statistic should be interpreted with caution. Differences are significant using Fisher's exact test

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	1				
2. Sexual Satisfaction (Ego Sub-scale)	.10				
3. Sexual Satisfaction (Partner Sub-scale)	.14	.69**			
4. Well-Being	.05	.41**	.33**		
5. Frequency of Kink Behaviors	-.02	.28**	.17	.24**	
Mean (SD)	41.24 (12.38)	37.21 (8.45)	37.55 (9.29)	6.16 (.67)	9.11 (6.88)

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Intercorrelations among Age, Sexual Satisfaction Sub-scales, Well-Being, and Frequency of Kink Behaviors in the Past Six Months

\*\* p < .01

### PRELIMINARY RESULTS

#### RQ #1:

- 152 individuals consented to take the survey
- The sample largely identified as white (75.5%), as women (54%), and was well-educated (71.3% reported earning a bachelors degree or higher)
- Nearly half the sample identified as heterosexual (45%), while 40.3% of the sample reported a bisexual or pansexual identity
- Those who engaged in kink were more likely to be partnered

#### RQ #2:

- Those who engaged in majority dominant kink behaviors in the past six months were more likely to self-identify as men, report a heterosexual identity and be older than those who engaged in majority submissive kink behaviors

#### RQ #3:

- Sexual satisfaction (ego) was positively associated with partner sexual satisfaction ( $r_s=.68$ ), overall well-being ( $r_s=.41$ ), and frequency of kink behavior ( $r_s=.28$ )
- Overall well-being was also positively associated with partner sexual satisfaction ( $r_s=.33$ )
- Frequency of kink behaviors was also positively associated with overall well-being ( $r_s=.24$ )
- All associations were statistically significant ( $p<.01$ )