

Sexual Rejection Scale

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Purpose

The Sexual Rejection Scale (SRS) is a 20-item measure which assesses the distinct behaviors people use to decline their partner for sex. The scale consists of four types of sexual rejection behaviors: (1) *reassuring* (i.e. affirming love for one's partner), (2) *hostile* (i.e. criticizing or hurting one's partner), (3) *assertive* (i.e. communicating reasons for rejection directly), and (4) *deflecting* (i.e. attempting to avoid conflict and diverting attention away from the situation). We have used this measure to understand which specific sexual rejection behaviors are effective at buffering against drops in relationship and sexual satisfaction when romantic partners experience conflicting levels of sexual interest (Kim, Muise, Sakaluk, & Impett, in prep).

Development

Initial development. A bottom-up, data-driven approach was used to identify sexual rejection behaviors using a online sample of individuals who were in romantic relationships and sexually active ($n = 456$). Exploratory factor analysis of this initial set of 44 items in a new sample ($n = 414$) revealed a four-factor solution and a final 20-item scale consisting of five items in each of the four subscales selected based on items that had strong factor loadings ($> .5$) and low cross-loadings ($< .3$).

Confirmatory factor analysis. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in a new sample of participants online ($n = 411$). The final 20-item four-factor scale had good model fit (CFI = .948, RMSEA = .049 CI_{90%} = [.042, .056], SRMR = .069). The measurement structure of the SRS was further confirmed in an online pre-registered study ($n = 364$; <https://osf.io/3tq43/>).

Response Mode and Timing

The SRS takes 1-3 minutes to complete. Participants respond to a list of items after being asked to think about the ways in which they reject their partner for sex. The frequency for each of the 20 listed behaviors are rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *rarely*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *frequently*, and 5 = *very frequently*).

Scoring

The SRS could be used to assess sexual rejection behaviors in a number of relational contexts. However, it should be noted that the SRS items and factor structure were identified and finalized in samples of individuals in romantic relationships. In the process of evaluating the SRS, we consistently identified a subgroup of individuals who did not engage in any sexual rejection behaviors (i.e., “non-rejecters”), using latent class analysis (LCA; McCutcheon, 1987). We excluded these individuals from our analyses, as they biased factor correlations. We recommend researchers also identify and exclude

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“non-rejecters” prior to scoring the measure by either: (1) using LCA (a more precise, but complicated approach); or (2) using two highly discriminating items from the SRS (a less precise, but more straightforward approach; see supplementary materials for implementing both approaches: <https://osf.io/9m6ps/>).

To score the SRS, the mean is calculated for each subscale of the SRS. No items are reverse-scored. Higher scores in each subscale indicate more frequent use of that type of sexual rejection behavior (see Table 1).

Reliability

Across several samples, our measure demonstrated adequate reliability, with Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .72 to .90, with the exception of an alpha of .60 in one subscale in Study 4 (see Table 1).

Validity

The SRS subscales demonstrate convergent validity with constructs that are similar in nature. *Reassuring* behaviors correlate with sexual communal strength (see Muise & Impett, this volume), $r = .43$), *hostile* behaviors correlate with trait aggression ($r = .39$), *assertive* behaviors correlate with sexual assertiveness ($r = .29$), and *deflecting* behaviors correlate with attachment avoidance ($r = .49$). The SRS subscales are conceptually distinct from general measures of relationship conflict behaviors (e.g. Rusbult & Zembrodt, 1983), providing evidence for discriminant validity. The SRS is also invariant across gender, thereby indicating a four-factor structure is appropriate for both men and women, who interpret and respond to the SRS in a similar manner.

Summary

The SRS has been used to measure sexual rejection among individuals in relationships. Further, the measure has been applied to diverse samples in North America, but has not been examined cross-culturally, which is an important avenue for future research.

Table 1

Summary of Sexual Rejection Scale Descriptive Statistics Across Studies

Sample	Mean and SD	Reliability (α)
Study 1 (N = 414 EFA individuals in relationships) Together on average for 6 years	<i>Reassuring</i> $M = 2.78, SD = 1.12$	$\alpha = .86$
	<i>Hostile</i> $M = 1.40, SD = .62$	$\alpha = .86$
	<i>Assertive</i> $M = 2.78, SD = 1.21$	$\alpha = .82$
	<i>Deflecting</i> $M = 1.74, SD = .80$	$\alpha = .84$
Study 2 (N = 411 CFA individuals in relationships) Together on average for 6 years	<i>Reassuring</i> $M = 3.19, SD = 1.06$	$\alpha = .85$
	<i>Hostile</i> $M = 1.60, SD = .74$	$\alpha = .86$
	<i>Assertive</i> $M = 2.94, SD = 1.08$	$\alpha = .88$
	<i>Deflecting</i> $M = 1.81, SD = .80$	$\alpha = .83$
Study 3 (N = 315 individuals in relationships) Recruited online; in a relationship for 7 years on average	<i>Reassuring</i> $M = 3.51, SD = .91$	$\alpha = .79$
	<i>Hostile</i> $M = 1.64, SD = .71$	$\alpha = .83$

	<i>Assertive M = 3.35, SD = .98</i>	$\alpha = .85$
	<i>Deflecting M = 1.92, SD = .83</i>	$\alpha = .82$
Study 4 (N = 422; 211 couples who were first-time parents)	<i>Reassuring M = 3.14, SD = .74</i>	$\alpha = .72$
Recruited online, together on average for 4 years	<i>Hostile M = 2.40, SD = .95</i>	$\alpha = .88$
	<i>Assertive M = 2.98, SD = .73</i>	$\alpha = .60$
	<i>Deflecting M = 2.46, SD = .96</i>	$\alpha = .88$
Study 5 (N = 191 individuals in relationships)	<i>Reassuring M = 3.01, SD = 1.23</i>	$\alpha = .88$
Recruited online	<i>Hostile M = 1.56, SD = .78</i>	$\alpha = .89$
(Kim, Muise, Sakaluk, & Impett, in prep)	<i>Assertive M = 2.85, SD = 1.26</i>	$\alpha = .90$
	<i>Deflecting M = 1.76, SD = .90</i>	$\alpha = .88$
Study 6 (N = 196; 98 long-term couples)	<i>Reassuring M = 3.24, SD = 1.23</i>	$\alpha = .81$
Couples recruited online, had been in a relationship for at least 2 years; together on average for 7 years	<i>Hostile M = 1.71, SD = .80</i>	$\alpha = .85$
(Kim, Muise, & Impett, in prep)	<i>Assertive M = 3.28, SD = 1.14</i>	$\alpha = .90$
	<i>Deflecting M = 1.90, SD = .79</i>	$\alpha = .81$

References

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