

High Prevalence of Sexual Aggression in Iran: Examining Correlates of Sexual Aggression Victimization and Perpetration between Women and Men

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Abstract

This pre-registered survey study investigated the prevalence and correlates of sexual aggression in a sample of 530 Iranians (322 women, 208 men). To obtain the prevalence rates, we used the Sexual Aggression and Victimization Scales (SASV-S), a behaviorally specific questionnaire which distinguished between different coercive strategies, victim-perpetrator relationship, and sexual acts. Significantly more women (63.0%) than men (51.0%) experienced at least one incident of sexual aggression victimization since the age of 15 years. Significantly more men (37.0%) than women (13.4%) reported at least one incident of sexual aggression perpetration. Taking the severity of sexual victimization into account, the higher overall rate of female victimization was due to a significantly higher rate in the lowest severity category of unwanted sexual contact. In women and men, the experience of child sexual abuse predicted sexual victimization and sexual aggression perpetration after the age of 15 years, both directly and indirectly through higher engagement in risky sexual behavior. Greater endorsement of hostile masculinity, only measured in men, explained additional variance in the prediction of sexual aggression perpetration. This research is the first to provide a detailed understanding of sexual aggression victimization and perpetration among Iranian women and men. Such knowledge is of particular interest given the specific cultural and social norms regarding sexuality, resulting from 'Sharia' (i.e., Islamic law).