

An Exploratory Study of the Role of Interpersonal Religious and Spiritual Struggle in the Relationship of Sexual Attraction and Religious Commitment

Abstract

There is a common trend among individuals with non-heterosexual attractions (homosexual women and bisexuals of both genders) of reporting higher levels of interpersonal conflict within the church body (interpersonal religious and spiritual struggle) and lower levels religious commitment; however, the sexual attraction-interpersonal religious and spiritual struggle-religious commitment causal sequence has not previously been investigated. While the relationship between sexual attraction and religious commitment has been well established in the literature, little work has been done to explore the role of interpersonal religious and spiritual struggles in that relationship. The current study was conducted to probe this question.

Data was collected as part of a larger study through a survey administered on Mechanical Turk. Sexual attraction was coded manually based on the participants' indicated genders and the genders they indicated attraction to. Interpersonal religious and spiritual struggle and religious commitment were assessed through the interpersonal subscale of the Religious and Spiritual Scale and the Religious Commitment Inventory, respectively. The proposed mediation model was assessed using model 4 of the Hayes macro for SPSS. The analysis yielded a significant direct effect between sexual attraction and religious commitment and between sexual attraction and interpersonal religious and spiritual struggle. However, the indirect path from sexual attraction to religious commitment through interpersonal religious and spiritual struggles was not found to be statistically significant.

Biblical Rationale

As Christians, our call is to love God and love people. If our only purpose were eternal salvation, there would be no reason for believers to remain in this earthly life after conversion. However, we are purposed for so much more. We are created for relationships. We have become disciples with the aim to make disciples. We are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus, to display His love to lost, hurting, and broken. However, it is often these various groups that the Church seems to isolate more than embrace. The subject of sexual attraction is a sensitive one in our society.

Our culture has so fully embraced relativism that we struggle to lovingly tell people that their actions are wrong without casting a devaluing judgment on them. Many in the field of psychology have seized to consider homosexuality or bisexuality as a mental health disorder. Many Christians refuse to accept that these attractions may be biologically. Even if an individual's sexual attraction is not a choice, he does have the choice of committing sinful actions because of that attraction or seeking to live pure and please the Holy God. Often, members of the body of Christ often fail to separate their condemnation of an action and the individual committing that action. This can lead to division and isolation.

If an individual experiences primarily judgement and disdain from Christ ambassadors, it is possible this may lead her to expect nothing else from Christ himself. If our actions are pushing others away from Christ, it is our responsibility to be aware of that and do what we can bring restoration.