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A Sex Affair: Mate or Break

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RSCH 202: Introduction to Research Methods

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Abstract

In recent years, divorce rates have increased to 4% globally (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2020). Although there are many reasons leading to a divorce, our research is focusing on the sexual aspects that contribute to it. Since insufficient studies have been done on this topic, we are offering a regression analysis on the impact of sexual frequency and satisfaction on marital status. We have consolidated and sifted out pertinent data needed from the National Survey of Families and Households, National Survey of Midlife Development in the US.

Keywords: Divorce, Sex Frequency, Sexual Satisfaction

A Sex Affair: Mate or Break

Divorce rates have been increasing due to various factors such as income differences, lack of commitment and lack of gender equality, to name a few. Many couples end up having a divorce as one feels unappreciated or unsatisfied with their partners, and we feel that the quality of their sexual life would play a part in the divorce. Thus, we wanted to study how important it is as a factor of marriage. The quality of sexual life would be considered by looking into the frequency and satisfaction level from the couples. Finding a solution for the increasing divorce rates is extremely important as everyone wants to lead a happy life, and the average quality of life would be lifted if the divorce rate decreases. Solving this problem would raise the public's awareness as the research in this field is relatively premature. Therefore, we collected data from various articles and journals that have done a sufficient amount of research with regards to this area of study.

Literature Review

Past studies on this topic covered different areas of concerns such as the importance of sexual life in sustaining a marriage, the effect of the quality of sex in a marriage, the impact of sexual frequency and satisfaction in the later stage of a marriage, and the reasons of divorce. Across the studies, we can draw similarities from them and sift the information that is associated with divorce or a sustaining marriage with sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. The journals that involved married couples compared sexual frequency and satisfaction to marital satisfaction. The results were conclusive that marital satisfaction which constitutes sexual frequency and satisfaction correlates to the sustainability of the marriage (Schoenfeld, Loving, Pope, Huston, & Stulhofer, 2017). One of the articles which interviewed divorced women revealed that the quality of sex during the tenure of their marriage impacted their ability to express themselves sexually

after the divorce, implying that sex affected their later marriage. The research revolved mainly around a few hundred couples (see Table 1). These studies show a strong correlation between the sex life of couples and sustainable marriage.

Journal Title	Marital Status	Variables	Result
Sex, Property Rights, and Divorce (1998)	Divorced	Frequency of Sex	Throughout the life cycle of a married couple, demand for sex varies over the relative age of the couples.
Does Sex Really Matter? Examining the Connections Between Spouses' Nonsexual Behaviors, Sexual Frequency, Sexual Satisfaction, and Marital Satisfaction (2016)	Married & Divorced: N = 168 (at the beginning of the interview) Altogether 4 phases but results only phase 2-4. Phase 2: 1982(married for 14 months on average) Phase 3: 1983(2 months after 2nd anniversary) Phase 4: 1994-1995(married for 13-14 years) 105 remained married, 56 divorced, three widowed, & four unable to locate *Phase 1 not included because sexual satisfaction was not assessed.	Sex Frequency	The sexual frequency was not associated with marital satisfaction if sexual satisfaction is taken into account.
		Sexual Satisfaction	Sexual satisfaction is associated with marital satisfaction. Sexual satisfaction would lead to an increase in sexual frequency and hence, overall marital satisfaction.

For better or for worse: Marital status transitions and sexual life in middle and later life (2020)	Married & Divorced Wave 1&2= 1,769 (1995-1996, 2004-2006) Wave 3= 1,100 (2013-2014) N = 1,769	Sexual Frequency & Satisfaction	Sexual life is an important component of well-being throughout the life course, including later life
Sexual Frequency and the Stability of Marital and Cohabiting Unions (2009)	Married & Divorce: N = 5,440 After seven years N = 4,896 (10% divorced)	Sexual Frequency: The monthly basis between '88-'89 & '92-'94	Six times/mth = significant negative relationship between sex frequency & rate of marital dissolution (it slows the decision to divorce/less impact on getting a divorce)

Table 1: Journal Findings Summary

Connections To Our Study

Despite the different objectives of the journals, there were common variables useful to our research. The difference also played a crucial role in helping us to conclude inference. For instance, the article titled “sex after divorce” interviewed divorced women (Morrissey Stahl, Gale, Lewis & Kleiber, 2018). Through the response, we can infer that the quality of sex does have an impact on one’s marriage and the effect is still evident even after they remarry, which resulted in another divorce. Also, these journals provided results on the sexual frequency and satisfaction, which were compared to the marital satisfaction of the respondents. They further support each other as their results were conclusive in saying that sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction are pivotal to marital satisfaction (Stokes, Gallagher, Kanyat, Bui, & Beaulieu, 2020) and therefore, implying that with greater marital satisfaction results in the decrease in divorce rates.

The difference in objectives and period of each article resulted in a relatively incoherent conclusion. This is because specific results were obtained even before the 21st century. Also, some were obtained in a more traditional culture where strong values on marriage are still evident would cause the results of the research to be different. Another factor that resulted in the clash of resources would be the sample range; the respondents across the study were in various stages of their marriage (see Table 1). For instance, some in the early stage while some in the later stage of their marriage, thus, this difference resulted in a clash because sex life as a factor to a sustaining marriage would take precedence in the earlier stage of marriage.

Contributions

As with all the journals having their research direction, the solutions to each one of them have a stark difference. Nonetheless, we can consolidate them and take the necessary measures to ensure that the research would be optimized. Defining a specific range of respondents was among the solutions recommended. For example, some of the journals only surveyed the women of the marriage, while some looked at different age groups of couples and their sexual life. By having the specified range of respondents, we will be able to align with the objectives and purpose of the research. Additionally, the level of biases can be reduced to produce an objective conclusion.

Not to mention, a further collection of recent and updated data is needed for a more comprehensive and current result analysis on the problem. Most of the surveys collected by these journals were dated far back across the decades. In addition to the solution, as mentioned earlier, this new data set might have the potential to be used for further studies on the issue of sexual life in marriages. The data set would be well-defined and focused for future analyses.

We took different quantitative data from various resources. We merged them to have an overview as to how sexual frequency and satisfaction would positively or negatively affect the course of the marriage. We will also filter the data for sex frequency for married couples that are still married after five years, and divorced couples that have been in a marriage for five years. We will sift out relevant data from past journals and conclude if sex was a contributing factor leading up to a divorce.

Some limitations are, prior researches were not able to provide information for divorced/separated couples as they are researching married couples only, and the study was done quite some time ago. On sources that examine divorced couples, there were some variables' data not able to be obtained or omitted, which may be important variables that might alter the overall accuracy of the research. Specific resources have too many variables that are not controlled, which in turn made the report messy.

Research Question

In our research, our objective is to find out why divorce rates have been increasing. More specifically, we would like to find out the importance of sex life, mainly the sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction of couple as factors in sustaining a marriage.

Theoretical Framework

To determine the relationship between the importance of sex life and the couples' decision to end the marriage or continue, we will be using the frequency of sex and its satisfaction levels to quantify the value of sex life. Firstly, by filtering the data of couples with at most five years of marriage can help us to emphasize the amplitude of sex life. This is because later on in the marriage, i.e. after five years, the couples' union stability would be more affected by other factors as they would have invested in other things in the relationship (Morrissey Stahl,

Gale, Lewis & Kleiber, 2018). Therefore, we can analyze the data with greater objectivity and see the relationship between sex life and stability of a marriage. As such, the dependent variable of the research is the marital status of these couples at the end of the five years.

The first key independent variable is the frequency of sex these couples perform on average per month throughout the five years. Though couples may get divorced before the end of five years, their response will remain as a contribution to the entire data set. For instance, couples who get divorced after two years of marriage will still be considered as part of the data set. Frequency of sexual activities can illustrate how active couples are in the bedroom (Stack & Gundlach, 1992). In other words, how much they prioritize their sex life, so much so that they are willing to set them aside time for it.

The second key independent variable is the levels of sexual satisfaction these couples are getting. To be able to measure this variable, respondents were asked to rate their levels of satisfaction based on a scale from one (extremely dissatisfied) to ten (extremely satisfied). However, there might be perceptible differences between couples where the husband might be satisfied but not the wife (Yabiku & Gager, 2009). As a result, the average satisfaction levels of each couple will be used instead to increase consistency.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis of this research will state that there is no relation to sustaining a marriage with the couples' frequency of sex and satisfaction. Our research will be determining if there is a relation to sustaining a marriage with the couples' sex frequency and satisfaction.

H₀: Sex frequency and satisfaction are not related to sustaining a marriage.

H₁: Sex frequency and satisfaction are related to sustaining a marriage.

Research Methodology & Data Analysis

Study Design

The divorce rate has been rising gradually due to various factors such as income differences, lack of commitment and lack of gender equality. This research will question the importance of quality of sexual life in their marriage. Our purpose for this research is to determine how much does sexual life contribute as a factor in a marriage life by looking into their frequency of sexual activities and satisfaction level. The null hypothesis for this study is that there is no relation to sustaining a marriage with the couples' frequency of sex and satisfaction. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis would be having relation to maintaining a marriage with the couples' frequency of sex and satisfaction. We would be conducting a quantitative study with the national survey data collected in the US, as well as the data compiled by a past study.

Study Parameters

People who are divorced but were married up to five years will make up our study's population. The study sample, however, is the respondents of the surveys that are conducted in the United States. Our dependent variable would be the marital status

Key Independent Variables. The key independent variable would be sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. The increase of sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction will dictate how good or how bad their sex life is and how this may lead to a divorce. In the past studies, sexual satisfaction was measured from zero to ten, zero being the worst and ten being the best. Sexual frequency is measured in one to six. 1, is two or more times a week, 2, once a week, 3, two or three times a month, 4, once a month, 5, Less often once a month and 6 never or not at all.

Control Variables. Due to multiple factors as to why a couple would get a divorce, we are including some of the control variables that would be considered the most common reasons; socio-economic status, number of children, ethnicity, and the religion of the couples. These are some of the more consistent control variables that were included in past studies.

Data Collection Methods

Our research will use the data collected from past studies, as mentioned in our literature review because it is an extensive survey comprising a large number of US citizens from different periods (see Table 1). Furthermore, the data will be very reliable due to the nature of its collection origin under official organizations. These data come in the form of survey answers collected from divorced couples in the past decades. However, we were not able to access and obtain the raw data from said surveys due to incomplete archives of these dated surveys. Nonetheless, a description of where the data originates from and how it will be used is outlined in the following sections. Three out of the eight journal articles we reviewed contained the relevant data we needed for our research. Although all three articles used surveys conducted in different time frames, they were able to meet the criteria we required - divorcees who were married up to five years.

Dataset 1. The first dataset we will use for the study is the National Survey of Families and Households. Of all three waves of the survey, we are proposing to use the data from wave 1 ('88-'89) because it was reported by Yabiku and Gager (2009) that there was a 10% drop in the population from 5,440 to 4,896 in wave 2 ('92-'94). This 10% (544) of the data are the married couples that had at most five years of marriage and got divorced. An example of questions relevant for our study would be the question MT608: "*About how often did you and your husband/wife have sex during the past month?*".

Dataset 2. The second dataset is compiled by Schoenfeld, Loving, Pope, Huston & Štulhofer in their paper, *Does Sex Really Matter? Examining the Connections Between Spouses' Nosexual Behaviours, Sexual Frequency, Sexual Satisfaction, and Marital Satisfaction* (2016). The data are in four phases between 1981 to 1995. We are proposing to compare the data in phase four and phases two & three because 56 out of the 168 respondents got divorced and were not included in phase four. As such, we would have the values of these divorcees' sexual satisfaction levels during their marriage. The particular question that we can use is "*How Satisfied or Dissatisfied Have Been With Your Sexual Relationship Over the Last Two Months*".

Dataset 3. The third data we will use is the National Survey of Midlife Development in the US. We are proposing to use the data in the third wave (2011-2014) out of the three waves. However, more survey questions will need to be constructed to refine further the exact data we need for the research. This is because the data requirements are not fulfilled to meet the parameters of the sample for this research. As a result, you will need to ask the respondents from wave three, how long their marriage lasted to be able to get the values of their sexual frequency and satisfaction in that marriage.

Data Analysis Methods

The test we will be using is multilinear regression analysis. Multilinear regression analysis aims to determine the relationship between marital status, which is the dependent variable and two other independent variables which are sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency. We can combine them into an equation:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1(\text{sexual satisfaction})_i + \beta_2(\text{sexual frequency})_i + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon_i$$

Breaking down the above equation, Y_i will be the marital status, and β_x will represent the coefficients for the independent variables. X_3 is a vector of control variables which consists of socio-economic status, number of children, and religion.

There are three things we will be focusing on as we tabulate and gather the results; the R-square, P-value, and coefficients. The value of R-square would give us a good indication or estimate of the research. For instance, if the R-square value is 0.98, this means that 98% of the observations could be explained by the estimated model. Putting it into context, sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction will hold importance in determining whether the marriage will prolong or not. Secondly, we will be looking at the P-value. P-value will provide us with information on statistical significance. For instance, if the P-value is lower than 0.05 at 5% significance level, we can then say that our results are statistically significant which means that sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction are paramount in whether a couple of divorce or not - rejecting the null hypothesis. Lastly, the coefficient which is represented by β_x . The coefficient would give us an indication of the magnitude of the independent variables. Putting this into context, if the coefficient is negative, this means that as sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction increases, it is less likely for couples to divorce, vice versa.

Conclusion

This research was done to find out the importance of sexual life in sustaining a marriage and how sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction impacts it. From our research, we found three surveys that were conducted on married couples who got divorced, and these data are credible and reliable sources. Some limitations that were faced are that the studies were done on a different timeline and had different objectives for their research. There were certain variables that were omitted or not taken into consideration, which might have a more considerable impact

on the result of the survey. Also, we were not able to retrieve raw data to conduct a preliminary analysis of our research. As a result, we are unable to provide an initial statistical result that would help us answer our research question.

Nonetheless, we are proposing to future researchers who are studying this topic to collect raw data and run the multilinear regression analysis to conclude how the frequency and satisfaction of sexual activities affect marital status. With research on this particular topic and trend in our society, it is vital to analyze the situation and come up with possible solutions to improve the quality of marriage lives. If no studies are done, the divorce rate may increase gradually as more couples feel unsatisfied with their relationships.

Recommendations

In an attempt to reduce the increase in divorce, we are proposing policymakers to reduce tariffs and taxes on contraceptive methods, making it affordable for couples to engage in protected sex. Similarly, the government could make it more accessible for couples to utilize these contraceptives methods to increase the frequency of sexual intercourse even if couples are afraid of unwanted pregnancy.

Secondly, we would recommend the collaboration between the government and the tourism board to introduce free staycations for married couples. This would encourage them to spice their marriage lives through more sex and hence, building a more meaningful marriage and not get divorced.

Lastly, existing policies such as the baby bonus should remain as it incentivizes and encourages married couples to make babies by having more sex. Thus, in an attempt to conceive,

the sexual frequency will increase and theoretically, increase sexual satisfaction as well. This is provided that our null hypothesis is not rejected and more couples remain married.

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