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Stacey Diane Arañez Litam  
*Cleveland State University*

Megan Speciale  
*Pacific Graduate School of Psychology*

Richard S. Balkin  
*University of Mississippi*

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# Sexual Attitudes and Characteristics of OnlyFans Users

Stacey Diane Arañez Litam<sup>1</sup> · Megan Speciale<sup>2</sup> · Richard S. Balkin<sup>3</sup>

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## Abstract

As new forms of sexually explicit material (SEM) platforms emerge, sex research and sexuality-based studies must also evolve. Although the subscription-based platform OnlyFans has become an increasingly popular way for content creators to share and access SEM, the demographic information and sexual attitudes of users across sex have not yet been reported. The present study contributes to the existing body of SEM literature by providing a demographic analysis of OnlyFans users and an assessment of sexual attitudes between users and nonusers across sex. In this study, participants from a US-based sample ( $n = 718$ ,  $M_{\text{age}} = 29.46$ , male [ $n = 335$ , 46.7%], female [ $n = 383$ , 53.3%]) were solicited using the Mechanical Turk platform. Participants were predominately White ( $n = 475$ , 66.2%); additional representation of ethnic/racial groups included Black/African-American ( $n = 121$ ; 16.9%), American Indian/Alaskan Native ( $n = 10$ ; 1.4%), Asian-American/Asian ( $n = 32$ ; 4.4%), Hispanic/Latinx ( $n = 53$ ; 7.3%), Arab American/Arab ( $n = 10$ ; 1.4%), and biracial or multiracial ( $n = 17$ ; 2.4%). Based on our findings, OnlyFans users were predominantly married, white, males who identified as heterosexual or bisexual/pansexual. Our findings also revealed that OnlyFans users and nonusers endorsed similar sexual attitudes related to permissiveness, communion, instrumentality, and birth control across sex. Findings from this study may be helpful for future studies on OnlyFans and other forms of subscription-based platforms.

**Keywords** OnlyFans · Sexually explicit material · Sexual attitudes · Pornography

## Introduction

Greater accessibility to sexually explicit material (SEM) via smartphones and the Internet has uncovered new frontiers in sex research and sexuality studies among diverse populations (Cunningham et al., 2018; Downing et al., 2014; Peter & Valkenburg, 2011; Walby, 2012). For example, the subscription-based, direct-to-consumer platform OnlyFans has become increasingly popular, boasts more than 100 million registered users, and has paid out over \$3 billion to content creators (OnlyFans, n.d.). The meteoric rise of OnlyFans, as well as similar cam platforms during

the COVID-19 pandemic, represents a novel phenomenon that remains understudied in sexuality research. To date, an empirical analysis of OnlyFans users remains absent from the literature. Obtaining a deeper understanding of the sexual attitudes and demographic characteristics of OnlyFans users would provide an important foundation for future studies on subscription-based, direct-to-consumer platforms.

Because OnlyFans represents a new platform for people to buy, sell, and access SEM from an entirely online environment (Cunningham et al., 2018), identifying user demographics and sexual attitudes are of paramount importance to understand the evolving nature of the sex industry (Bernstein, 2007; Sanders, 2008). Learning more about OnlyFans users would also greatly add to the paucity of SEM research and discourse because the sex industry has historically been stratified in ways that obfuscate digital sex work and minimize the diversity of sex workers (Cunningham et al., 2018; Laurin, 2019; Ray, 2007). Examining OnlyFans users' sexual attitudes and characteristics therefore has important implications for emerging research at the intersection of human sexuality, online behaviors, and the broader SEM discourse.

✉ Stacey Diane Arañez Litam  
s.litam@csuohio.edu

<sup>1</sup> Counseling, Administration, Supervision, and Adult Learning Department, Cleveland State University, 2121 Euclid Avenue, Julka Hall 275, Cleveland, OH 44115, USA

<sup>2</sup> Department of Counseling, Palo Alto University, Palo Alto, CA, USA

<sup>3</sup> Department of Leadership & Counselor Education, The University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS, USA

Though an extensive overview of previous SEM research was beyond the purview of this study, the following sections describe direct-to-consumer platforms, such as OnlyFans, broadly identifies SEM users, and outlines the relationship between sex and sexual attitudes to establish the need for a preliminary analysis of OnlyFans users' characteristics and sexual attitudes. This exploratory study sought to do the following: (1) obtain demographic and background information about OnlyFans users compared to nonusers, and (2) compare the sexual attitudes of OnlyFans users and nonusers based on biological sex. This exploratory study was designed to provide a deeper understanding of the inter- and intragroup differences of OnlyFans users and nonusers, which may elucidate the changing landscape of online SEM access for both consumers and creators.

### OnlyFans

OnlyFans was created in 2016 by Fenix International Ltd and was later purchased by the owner of MyFreeCams.com. The website is marketed as a non-adult content social media platform designed to connect subscribers with exclusive content from creators in a variety of industries (e.g., fitness, cooking, sports). However, mainstream audiences have increasingly begun to regard OnlyFans foremost as an erotic content platform following the rapid influx of SEM creators during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. López (2020) cited a 75% increase in OnlyFans signups during the months of March and April 2020, which has been attributed to the massive unemployment and displacement of face-to-face sex industry workers brought on by COVID-19-related shelter-in-place mandates. The site gained additional notoriety as an erotic content provider following high-profile celebrity involvement and a bombshell announcement that the platform would be banning adult content in August 2021. The ban has been temporarily suspended at the time of this writing.

Camming sites have been on the rise for over a decade and OnlyFans is just one of several sites that offer SEM subscriptions (e.g., IsMyGirl, AVN Stars, Fansly). Consistent with other subscription-based platforms, OnlyFans content creators are employed as independent contractors and their income is secured through monthly subscription fees (typically \$9.99 to \$29.99/month). OnlyFans content creators can earn more money through an optional tipping service that unlocks exclusive content unavailable to non-tipping subscribers. The monthly hosting fee for OnlyFans creators constitutes 20% of their total revenue. Creators have shared common approaches to building subscribers that include marketing on non-adult content social media platforms such as Instagram, SnapChat, Facebook, and TikTok—although sweeping anti-SEM and anti-sex work policies have recently been adopted by many of these platforms, rendering SEM creators subject to various punishing

actions (e.g., account deletion and “shadowbanning”) for marketing their SEM-focused channels, websites, and subscription platforms (López, 2020).

While OnlyFans, to date, has not released data detailing the exact nature of the SEM services provided on the platform, descriptions of creators' accounts are available across the Internet, including in discussion platforms (i.e., Reddit) that are moderated by and for sex workers and other SEM content creators. The SEM content accessed through subscriptions varies widely based on creators and can include nude, partially nude, and fully clothed photographs and videos that may or may not involve explicit sex acts. Creators may also provide access to written content (e.g., blog posts, poetry, or erotic stories), participate in “Ask Me Anything” (AMA) discussions, give options for personal chats with subscribers, or allow subscribers to submit special requests for specific photographs, acts, and scenes. The increasing trend of accessing SEM through subscription-based, direct-to-consumer platforms may suggest that users are drawn to the opportunity to feel more intimately connected with SEM creators and are seeking out more authentic depictions of creators than may not be accessed through mainstream SEM websites (López, 2020).

### Sexually Explicit Material User Demographics and Motivations for Use

Obtaining a deeper understanding of SEM usage represents an important area of burgeoning research (McKee et al., 2020), especially as the Internet provides greater accessibility, affordability, and anonymity to SEM (Cooper, 1998). SEM encompasses a broad category of media, representing diverse formats with varying levels of categorized subject matter, user interactivity, and costs for access. Although people of all genders access SEM, the motivations associated with SEM usage may vary (Grubbs et al., 2019). The extant body of research indicates individuals may use SEM to achieve sexual pleasure with oneself and one's partner(s) (Bóthe et al., 2021; Grubbs et al., 2019), enhance masturbation and avoid boredom (Bóthe et al., 2021; Carvalheira et al., 2015; Paul & Shim, 2008), relieve stress (Peter & Valkenburg, 2011), and increase one's sexual knowledge (Attwood, 2005; Campbell & Kohut, 2017; Hesse & Pedersen, 2017; Weinberg et al., 2010). SEM usage may additionally vary at group and individual levels as users tend to adapt their SEM viewing styles and frequency based on their relationship status (Carroll et al., 2017; Rissel et al., 2017) and across the lifespan (Nieh et al., 2020; Price et al., 2016; Rissel et al., 2017; Ševčíková et al., 2014; Willoughby & Busby, 2016). The following sections briefly outline the current body of research on SEM users across gender, age, and relationship status.

## Gender

Across a variety of previous studies, men were more likely to access SEM (Albright, 2008; Regnerus et al., 2016; Rissell et al., 2017) and reported more frequent SEM usage compared to women (Hald & Stulhofer, 2016; Morgan, 2011; Weinberg et al., 2010). Over a 40-year period, rates of lifetime SEM engagement spanned from 45 to 84% among men compared to 16–41% among women (Albright, 2008; Cooper et al., 2002; Price et al., 2016). Approximately 46% of men reported viewing SEM in a typical week (Regnerus et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2016) compared to only 16–43% of women (Campbell & Kohut, 2017; Carroll et al., 2017; Regnerus et al., 2016). To date, literature on gender differences among SEM usage has largely neglected to explore the viewing behaviors of transgender and gender non-binary individuals, as well as others who fall outside of the male–female binary (e.g., agender, bigender, Two-Spirit, and genderfluid individuals). This dearth of research represents a significant gap in the discussion of gender difference in SEM access and consumption (Böthe et al., 2020).

According to a 2019 US report, Pornhub indicated 30% of their visitors were women, which represented a 9% increase since 2014 (Pornhub, 2014, 2019). Although women may be using SEM at higher rates than in previous years, a variety of factors that predict usage may exist (Brown et al., 2017; Price et al., 2016). As a group, women may demonstrate greater heterogeneity in sexual behaviors and motivations for SEM usage than men. Specifically, women who accessed SEM were more likely to have engaged in masturbation in the past year (Rissell et al., 2017) and were more likely to report using SEM for educational purposes (Cooper et al., 2002). Internet-based SEM platforms, such as OnlyFans, may also engage users by offering opportunities to rate content, comment on content, and utilize chat features (Albright, 2008; Tyson, 2013). Although a paucity of studies exist that measure the purpose, form, and function of these types of usership behavior, women may be more likely than men to engage in the communicative and communal features of SEM themed websites such as chat features, email exchanges, and arranging in-person meetings (Albright, 2008; Cooper et al., 2002). Although the relationship between gender and broad SEM usage has been reported, a paucity of research remains that compare OnlyFans users and nonusers across biological sex.

## Age

The current body of research on the relationship between SEM exposure and age has yielded mixed results (Doornwaard et al., 2015; Nieh et al., 2020; Rissell et al., 2017; Ševčíková et al., 2014), whereas studies have noted increased SEM exposure among both genders from adolescence into adulthood (Farré et al., 2020; Nieh et al., 2020), and for boys

but not girls (Ševčíková et al., 2014), other researchers have reported SEM usage may peak in youth and decline with age (Doornwaard et al., 2015; Price et al., 2016; Rissell et al., 2017). Results reported by Carroll et al. (2008) assessed usage among emerging adults ages 18–25 years and determined 87% men and 31% of women reported SEM usage. These findings echo a study of 20,094 Australian adults ages 16–69 that reported 84% of men and 54% of women had viewed SEM in their lifetimes with 76% of men and 41% of women using SEM within the past year (Rissell et al., 2017). The trend of decreased SEM usage with age was consistently reported over five generations of men despite cohort differences (Price et al., 2016). Although the motivations associated with SEM usage across age may vary, younger SEM users, including those who reside in rural, under-resourced, and/or politically conservative communities, may lack effective and comprehensive sex education programs (Atkins et al., 2012; Pound et al., 2016), which may lead viewers to seek out SEM for educational purposes and to learn about sexual functioning (Hesse & Pedersen, 2017; Kubicek et al., 2010). Although researchers have reported how broad SEM usage may change throughout the lifespan, no study to date has examined the average age of OnlyFans users.

## Relationship Status

Researchers have begun to examine the frequency and impact of SEM usage among individuals in relationships (Campbell & Kohut, 2017; Maas et al., 2018; Poulsen et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2017). On one hand, SEM usage may have deleterious effects on relationships (Doran & Price, 2014; Wright et al., 2017) and may contribute to lower levels of sexual satisfaction, commitment, and communication as well as higher rates of infidelity among couples (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Brown et al., 2017; Morgan, 2011; Sun et al., 2016). In one study of 20,000 nationally represented couples, partners who viewed an X-rated film in the last year were significantly less likely to report happy marriages, were more likely to be previously divorced, and were more likely to have had an extramarital affair (Doran & Price, 2014). In a similar vein, a meta-analysis of 50 studies that included over 50,000 participants across 10 countries indicated SEM usage was associated with lower levels of interpersonal satisfaction (Wright et al., 2017). Indeed, SEM usage among one or both partners has been linked to lower self-esteem and poorer relationship quality, especially among women (Campbell & Kohut, 2017; Carroll et al., 2017). Conversely, research has noted increased sexual satisfaction (Poulsen et al., 2013), as well as higher levels of sexual knowledge, openness, and excitement among partnered women who viewed SEM (Campbell & Kohut, 2017). These mixed findings may suggest that the association between SEM usage and sexual satisfaction among couples may vary based on

patterns of use, as well as attitudes toward viewing SEM (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Brown et al., 2017; Maas et al., 2018; Willoughby & Busby, 2016).

SEM usage may vary across relationship status and duration (Carroll et al., 2017; Rissel et al., 2017). In one study, SEM usage declined among men and women over the course of dyadic relationships (Rissel et al., 2017). In another study with a sample of 21,555 participants, men in dating relationships viewed SEM at higher rates than their married counterparts, at 75% and 63.5%, respectively (Carroll et al., 2017). Women in dating relationships also reported viewing SEM at higher rates than married women, a difference of 43% and 35%, respectively (Carroll et al., 2017). Across both genders, the largest decline in SEM usage was reported between those seriously dating and participants who were engaged (Carroll et al., 2017). Additionally, whereas men were more likely to report solitary usage regardless of relationship status (Kraus & Rosenberg, 2014, 2016), women in relationships were significantly more likely to report viewing SEM with their partner (Bridges & Morokoff, 2011; Carroll et al., 2017). Though studies have reported the relationship between broad SEM usage and relationship status, an exploratory study examining the relationship status of OnlyFans users compared to nonusers remains absent from the literature.

### Sexual Attitudes and Sexually Explicit Material

Sexual attitudes are the beliefs and values that frame one's understanding of the ethics, morality, and appropriateness of sex for oneself and others (Guerra et al., 2012). Sexual attitudes begin to form in early childhood and continue to evolve throughout the lifespan in response to individual experiences and socialization processes such as family-of-origin and peer group interactions, formal and informal sex education, media exposure, and religious teachings (Doornwaard et al., 2015; Litam & Speciale, 2021). Sexual attitudes often serve as a guiding compass for sexual decision-making and have been shown to have strong relationships with myriad biopsychosocial issues, including sexual behaviors (e.g., age of first sexual experience, safer sex practices, SEM viewing, masturbation, and sexual communication), sexual and relational satisfaction, and sexual shame (Litam & Speciale, 2021; Guerra et al., 2012; Marcinechová & Záhorcová, 2020; Petersen & Hyde, 2011).

Sexual attitudes may be conceptualized on a continuum of conservative/restrictive to liberal/permissive (Guerra et al., 2012). Religiosity, cultural background, and exposure to sex education have all demonstrated strong impacts on the development of sexual attitudes. Specifically, more restrictive beliefs are positively associated with higher levels of religiosity, conservative cultural values, and restricted access to comprehensive sex education (Petersen & Hyde, 2011). In Western societies, restrictive sexual attitudes are often rooted in traditional,

Judeo-Christian conventions of sexuality that privilege heterosexual intercourse within marriage as normative sexuality. As such, sex outside of marriage and non-procreative forms of sexual expression such as same-sex sexuality, masturbation, oral/anal sex, sex work, SEM, and kink/BDSM are marginalized and viewed as indecent, immoral, and/or unnatural. In contrast, permissive sexual value systems often reflect more sex- and queer-affirmative stances, which center on beliefs that “emphasize the acceptance and/or affirmation of individual sexual freedom and respect for one’s sexual autonomy” (Guerra et al., 2012, p. 1028).

The relationship between sexual attitudes and SEM usage seems to be bidirectional in nature, as there is evidence that viewing SEM may shape sexual attitudes and sexual attitudes may determine the likelihood of whether an individual will seek out SEM. For instance, while researchers have reported that teens with more permissive attitudes about sex were more likely to view SEM than teens with more conservative attitudes (Doornwaard et al., 2015; Owens et al., 2012), there is also evidence to suggest that teens’ attitudes of sex are shaped by the behaviors, communication, and stereotypes depicted in mainstream SEM (Rodenhizer & Edwards, 2017). Though the extant body of research has examined the relationship between broad SEM usage and sexual attitudes, the sexual attitudes of OnlyFans users compared to nonusers remain absent from the literature. This information would be crucial to guide future studies on the direct-to-consumer platform, OnlyFans.

### Purpose and Rationale

Based on our review of the SEM literature, a paucity of research exists on OnlyFans. Identifying the sexual attitudes and demographic characteristics of OnlyFans users compared to nonusers has important implications for future studies on subscription-based, direct-to-consumer platforms. To the best of the authors’ knowledge, a demographic analysis OnlyFans users compared to nonusers has not been conducted. The following research questions were developed to address the research gap:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of OnlyFans users compared to nonusers?
2. What are the differences between self-identified males and females who are OnlyFans users and nonusers on the Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (BSAS; Hendrick et al., 2006)?

## Method

### Participants

A total of 718 adult participants completed the survey. Of the total sample, 285 self-identified as college/university

students with the remaining 433 from MTurk. The mean age of participants was 29.46 (SD = 11.28) and ranged from 18 to 71. The distribution of male ( $n = 335$ , 46.7%) to female ( $n = 383$ , 53.3%) participants was fairly equivalent. Participants were predominately White ( $n = 475$ , 66.2%); additional representation of ethnic/racial groups included Black/African-American ( $n = 121$ ; 16.9%), American Indian/Alaskan Native ( $n = 10$ ; 1.4%), Asian-American/Asian ( $n = 32$ ; 4.4%), Hispanic/Latinx ( $n = 53$ ; 7.3%), Arab American/Arab ( $n = 10$ ; 1.4%), and biracial or multiracial ( $n = 17$ ; 2.4%). Participants reported their relationship status as single ( $n = 192$ , 26.7%), partnered/in a relationship ( $n = 127$ , 17.7%), married ( $n = 397$ , 55.3%), and divorced or other ( $n = 2$ , 0.28%). Regarding social status, participants identified as poor/in poverty ( $n = 11$ , 1.5%), working class ( $n = 191$ , 26.6%), lower middle class ( $n = 248$ , 34.5%), upper middle class ( $n = 252$ , 35.1%), and upper class ( $n = 16$ , 2.2%). A total of 348 participants (48.5%) reported they were OnlyFans users compared to nonusers ( $n = 370$ ; 51.5%).

## Measures

### Demographic/Background Form

A demographic and background form was created to collect participant demographic information. Participant information included age, sex, race/ethnicity, employment status, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, and relationship status (i.e., single, partnered or in a relationship, married, divorced, or other). Three items collected data on OnlyFans engagement. The first item assessed OnlyFans usage as a subscriber (e.g., “Have you ever used OnlyFans as a paid subscriber, given tips, or paid for exclusive content?”) Participants were asked to check all that applied among the following responses: Yes, as a paid subscriber; Yes, I have given tips; Yes, I have paid for exclusive content; No, I have not. The second item collected data on OnlyFans content creators (e.g., “Have you ever created content for OnlyFans?”) Participants were asked to check all that applied among the following responses: “Yes, I am a content creator; Yes, I provide exclusive content; No, I have not.” Participants additionally had the option to type in responses to the following prompt: “If you have provided exclusive content, please briefly describe the types of requests you have received.”

### Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale

The Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (BSAS; Hendrick et al., 2006) was used to measure sexual attitudes. Participants responded to 23 items on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The BSAS has four subscales that measure sexual attitudes related to the following: (1) permissiveness (10 items; “Casual sex

is acceptable”) regarding pre-marital/casual sex, sex with multiple partners, and sex without relational commitment (e.g., no strings attached sex); (2) birth control (3 items; “Birth control is part of responsible sexuality”) regarding the responsibility of birth control for men and women; (3) communion (5 items; “Sex is the closest form of communication between two people”) regarding the relational/emotional nature of partnered sex; and (4) instrumentality (5 items; “Sex is primarily a bodily function, like eating”) regarding the purpose and function of sex, such as pleasure or physical release (Hendrick et al., 2006). Reliability scores for the permissiveness, birth control, communion, and instrumentality subscales were 0.92, 0.57, 0.86, and 0.75, respectively (Hendrick et al., 2006). In our study, reliability scores for the permissiveness, birth control, communion, and instrumentality subscales were 0.92, 0.70, 0.75, and 0.82, respectively.

## Procedure

Researchers obtained University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval prior to data collection. An electronic assessment packed consisting of the demographic and background form, as well as the BSAS (Hendrick et al., 2006), was created using Qualtrics. Prospective participants were invited to participate in a study on sexual attitudes and behaviors. Participants were informed that completing the survey was voluntary, responses would be evaluated in aggregate form only, and that they could end the survey at any time. The Amazon MTurk platform was used to attain geo-demographically diverse adult participants residing in the USA. MTurk participants earned \$0.50 compensation for completing the online survey. The MTurk survey included one screening question to monitor data quality (“What is the monetary value of a quarter + dime + nickel?”). This item was included to screen out “bots,” non-US participants and to promote the trustworthiness of survey data. Participants who responded incorrectly to the prompt were screened out from the overall dataset. Prospective participants were also collected using the SONA system at a public Midwest university. Undergraduate students who completed the survey earned 0.5 credits as part of their psychology course requirements.

To address the research questions, frequency distributions and chi-square analyses were conducted to evaluate demographic characteristics. The researchers additionally conducted four factorial ANOVA analyses to examine the differences in BSAS subscale scores (i.e., permissiveness, birth control, communion, and instrumentality), across OnlyFans users and nonusers. Factorial ANOVAs were selected over MANOVA to emphasize the univariate relationships for each of the BSAS subscales and to identify any potential interaction effects of the independent variables (males and females across OnlyFans users and nonusers). Given the repeated use of factorial ANOVA and the large sample size, a conservative

alpha level of 0.01 was utilized to control for type-I error (Field, 2018). An a priori analysis using G\*power 3.1 with an alpha level of 0.01 and power set at 0.90 indicated a sample size of 242 was necessary to establish statistical significance with a moderate effect size ( $\eta^2 = 0.059$ ). The sample for this study was 718, indicating statistical significance would be identified with a small effect size ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ).

## Results

### Samples

Prior to addressing the research questions, an evaluation of the two divergent samples, university student participants (USP) and MTurk participants (MTP), was necessary to determine whether the samples could be combined. The mean ages of the respective participants were 21.14 (SD = 7.80) for USP and 34.94 (SD = 9.78) for MTP. USP were under-represented as OnlyFans users ( $n = 4$ , 1.4%) with two male participants and two female participants resulting in 281 (98.6%) nonusers consisting of 54 males and 227 females. MTP consisted of 344 (79.4%) OnlyFans users (217 males [63%] and 127 females [37%]) and 89 (20.6%) OnlyFans nonusers (62 males [69.7%] and 27 [30.3%] females). The four USP who self-identified as OnlyFans users resulted in an insufficient number to draw inferences. However, we compared the BSAS scores between USP and MTP OnlyFans nonusers. Significant differences with large effects were noted in the permissiveness, communion, and instrumentality subscales; a significant difference with a small effect was noted in the birth control subscale. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics and results from the Welch’s *t* test, as the variances were heterogeneous. The MTP nonusers scored notably higher than the USP nonusers for permissiveness, communion, and instrumentality. Given the noted differences between the samples and the lack of representation of OnlyFans users from the student sample, subsequent analyses focused on the MTP sample. No statistically significant associations of sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, and sexual identity status to user status for MTP (see Table 2) were noted, and effect sizes were small with Cramer’s *V* ranging from 0.05 to 0.12. As noted

in Table 2, the typical OnlyFans user could be described as male (63.1%), white (68.9%), married (89.5%), and either heterosexual (59%) or bisexual/pansexual (37.8%). However, inferences from these demographic characteristics should be made cautiously, as these percentages do not differ substantially from nonusers in the respective categories.

### Differences between Males and Females Across OnlyFans User Status in Sexual Attitudes

Demographic factors including race/ethnicity, marital status, and sexual identity lacked sufficient numbers in the groupings for null hypothesis statistical testing. We sought to examine differences between males and females across user status. A factorial ANOVA was conducted using an alpha level of 0.01. Table 3 provides data from the BSAS subscales. Normality was evaluated through evaluation of boxplots, indicating normal distributions. Levene’s test for equality of variances indicated the homogeneity of variance assumption was met.

#### Permissiveness

No statistically significant interaction for sexual attitudes was indicated between males and females across OnlyFans users and nonusers for permissiveness,  $F(1, 429) = 1.42$ ,  $p = 0.234$ . No significant differences were noted between males and females,  $F(1, 429) = 0.75$ ,  $p = 0.386$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.002$ , yielding a negligible effect size. A statistically significant effect was noted between OnlyFans users and nonusers,  $F(1, 429) = 5.56$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.013$ , yielding a small effect size. Marginal differences were noted with OnlyFans users endorsing slightly, but not meaningfully, higher scores in permissiveness.

#### Communion

No statistically significant interaction for sexual attitudes was indicated between males and females across OnlyFans users and nonusers for communion,  $F(1, 429) = 3.30$ ,  $p = 0.070$ . No significant differences were noted between males and females,  $F(1, 429) = 0.002$ ,  $p = 0.965$ ,  $\eta^2 < 0.001$ , yielding a negligible effect size. A statistically significant

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics and independent samples *t*-tests of Nonusers of Only Fans

| Scale           | USP<br>( <i>n</i> = 281) |      | MTP<br>( <i>n</i> = 89) |      | Welch’s <i>t</i> test | df     | <i>p</i> | Cohen’s <i>d</i> | 95% CI for Cohen’s <i>d</i> |       |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------|-------------------------|------|-----------------------|--------|----------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
|                 | M                        | SD   | M                       | SD   |                       |        |          |                  | Lower                       | Upper |
| Permissiveness  | 2.57                     | 0.96 | 3.66                    | 0.57 | −13.07                | 251.37 | <.001    | −1.38            | −1.65                       | −1.11 |
| Birth Control   | 3.94                     | 0.92 | 3.66                    | 0.67 | 3.11                  | 203.06 | 0.002    | 0.35             | 0.11                        | 0.59  |
| Communion       | 3.10                     | 0.78 | 3.76                    | 0.60 | −8.42                 | 189.08 | <.001    | −0.96            | −1.21                       | −0.70 |
| Instrumentality | 2.82                     | 0.81 | 3.74                    | 0.53 | −12.34                | 227.98 | <.001    | −1.34            | −1.60                       | −1.07 |

MTP MTurk participants; USP university student participants

**Table 2** Contingency table for demographics of Mechanical Turk participants across Users and Nonusers

| Variable                              |                 | Status |         |       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|--------|---------|-------|
|                                       |                 | User   | Nonuser | Total |
| <i>Sex</i>                            |                 |        |         |       |
| Male                                  | Count           | 217    | 62      | 279   |
|                                       | % within row    | 77.8%  | 22.2%   | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 63.1%  | 69.7%   | 64.4% |
| Female                                | Count           | 127    | 27      | 154   |
|                                       | % within row    | 82.5%  | 17.5%   | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 36.9%  | 30.3%   | 35.6% |
| <i>Race/ethnicity</i>                 |                 |        |         |       |
| Black                                 | Count           | 62     | 10      | 72    |
|                                       | % within row    | 86.1%  | 13.9%   | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 18%    | 11.2%   | 16.6% |
| American indian/alaskan native        | Count           | 6      | 2       | 8     |
|                                       | % within row    | 75%    | 25%     | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 1.7%   | 2.2%    | 1.8%  |
| Asian/Asian-American                  | Count           | 12     | 4       | 16    |
|                                       | % within row    | 75%    | 25%     | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 3.5%   | 4.5%    | 3.7%  |
| White/caucasian                       | Count           | 237    | 62      | 299   |
|                                       | % within row    | 79.3%  | 20.7%   | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 68.9%  | 69.7%   | 69.1% |
| Hispanic/latinx                       | Count           | 23     | 11      | 34    |
|                                       | % within row    | 67.6%  | 32.4%   | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 6.7%   | 12.4%   | 7.9%  |
| Other                                 | Count           | 4      | 0       | 4     |
|                                       | % within row    | 100%   | 0%      | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 1.2%   | 0%      | .9%   |
| <i>Marital status</i>                 |                 |        |         |       |
| Single                                | Count           | 21     | 9       | 30    |
|                                       | % within row    | 70%    | 30%     | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 6.1%   | 10.1%   | 6.9%  |
| Partnered/in a relationship           | Count           | 14     | 8       | 22    |
|                                       | % within row    | 63.6%  | 36.4%   | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 4.1%   | 9%      | 5.1%  |
| Married                               | Count           | 308    | 72      | 397   |
|                                       | % within row    | 81.1%  | 18.9%   | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 89.5%  | 80.9%   | 87.8% |
| Divorced/Other                        | Count           | 1      | 0       | 2     |
|                                       | % within row    | 100%   | 0%      | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | .3%    | 0%      | .2%   |
| <i>Sexual or affectional identity</i> |                 |        |         |       |
| Heterosexual/straight                 | Count           | 203    | 65      | 268   |
|                                       | % within row    | 75.7%  | 24.3%   | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 59%    | 73%     | 61.9% |
| Gay/lesbian                           | Count           | 5      | 1       | 6     |
|                                       | % within row    | 83.3%  | 16.7%   | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 1.5%   | 1.1%    | 1.4%  |
| Bisexual/Pansexual                    | Count           | 130    | 21      | 151   |
|                                       | % within row    | 86.1%  | 13.9%   | 100%  |
|                                       | % within column | 37.8%  | 23.6%   | 34.9% |



**Table 2** (continued)

| Variable |                 | Status |         |       |
|----------|-----------------|--------|---------|-------|
|          |                 | User   | Nonuser | Total |
| Asexual  | Count           | 6      | 2       | 8     |
|          | % within row    | 75%    | 25%     | 100%  |
|          | % within column | 1.7%   | 2.2%    | 1.8%  |
| Total    | Count           | 344    | 89      | 433   |
|          | % within row    | 79.4%  | 20.6%   | 100%  |
|          | % within column | 100%   | 100%    | 100%  |

*MTP* MTurk participants; *USP* university student participants

**Table 3** Descriptive statistics for sexual attitudes by user status and sex

| Sex    | Status  | N   | Permissiveness |      | Communion |      | Instrumentality |      | Birth control |     |
|--------|---------|-----|----------------|------|-----------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|-----|
|        |         |     | M              | SD   | M         | SD   | M               | SD   | M             | SD  |
| Female | Nonuser | 27  | 3.55           | 0.62 | 3.67      | 0.72 | 3.64            | 0.60 | 3.49          | .70 |
|        | User    | 127 | 3.83           | 0.68 | 4.05      | 0.54 | 3.99            | 0.53 | 3.89          | .65 |
| Male   | Nonuser | 62  | 3.71           | 0.55 | 3.80      | 0.54 | 3.78            | 0.50 | 3.73          | .64 |
|        | User    | 217 | 3.80           | 0.59 | 3.92      | 0.57 | 3.90            | 0.59 | 3.87          | .67 |

effect was noted between OnlyFans users and nonusers,  $F(1, 429) = 11.51$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.026$ , yielding a small effect size. Marginal differences were noted with OnlyFans users endorsing slightly, but not meaningfully, higher scores in communion.

### Instrumentality

No statistically significant interaction for sexual attitudes was indicated between males and females across OnlyFans users and nonusers for instrumentality,  $F(1, 429) = 2.55$ ,  $p = 0.111$ . No significant differences were noted between males and females,  $F(1, 429) = 0.167$ ,  $p = 0.683$ ,  $\eta^2 < 0.001$ , yielding a negligible effect size. A statistically significant effect was noted between OnlyFans users and nonusers,  $F(1, 429) = 10.86$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.025$ , yielding a small effect size. Marginal differences were noted with OnlyFans users endorsing slightly, but not meaningfully, higher scores in instrumentality.

### Birth Control

No statistically significant interaction for sexual attitudes was indicated between males and females across OnlyFans users and nonusers for birth control,  $F(1, 429) = 2.29$ ,  $p = 0.131$ . No significant differences were noted between males and females,  $F(1, 429) = 1.86$ ,  $p = 0.173$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.004$ , yielding a negligible effect size. A statistically significant effect was noted between OnlyFans users and nonusers,  $F(1, 429) = 9.92$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.022$ , yielding a small effect

size. Marginal differences were noted with OnlyFans users endorsing slightly, but not meaningfully, higher scores in instrumentality.

## Discussion

The purpose of our exploratory study was to examine OnlyFans user demographics and compare the sexual attitudes between males and females who use and do not use OnlyFans. Based on our results, OnlyFans users could be described as white, married, males who identify as heterosexual or bisexual/pansexual. These findings are consistent with the existing body of research, which identified SEM users as primarily males (Albright, 2008; Hald & Štulhofer, 2016; Morgan, 2011; Regnerus et al., 2016; Rissell et al., 2017; Weinberg et al., 2010) and supplement existing findings on SEM usage across relationship status (Carroll et al., 2017; Rissell et al., 2017). Although findings reported by Carroll and colleagues (2017) reported men in dating relationships were more likely to view SEM than their married counterparts, our exploratory study identified married males as more likely to use OnlyFans compared to males who were single, partnered or in a relationship, or divorced.

Our findings reveal that OnlyFans users and nonusers endorse similar sexual attitudes. OnlyFans users reported slightly higher scores across each of the BSAS subscales, but these differences were not meaningful. Thus, OnlyFans users and nonusers reported similar sexual attitudes related to permissiveness, communion, instrumentality, and birth control across sex. Based on our findings, it would behoove

sexuality researchers, as well as laypeople, to consider that individuals who access and create SEM content endorse similar sexual attitudes as those who do not.

Differences between males and females across OnlyFans users and nonusers in this study were small with limited effect. Our findings counter existing SEM research that reported men may endorse more liberal sexual attitudes than women because of marked discrepancies in sexual socialization across gender (Petersen & Hyde, 2011). Specifically, Zaikman and Marks (2017) reported that boys and men may receive more sexual messages that encourage sexual exploration, normalize casual (non-married) sexual encounters, and prioritize their sexual pleasure. Girls and women, however, may be encouraged to remain chaste and to de-prioritize their sexual pleasure and agency (Zaikman & Marks, 2017). Despite the double standard of sexual socialization, research findings indicated that societal attitudes about sex may be trending toward more liberal, sex-positive perspectives across gender (Petersen & Hyde, 2011; Zaikman & Marks, 2017). Our findings therefore supplement research that examine the relationship between gender and sexual attitudes in SEM viewing. Specifically, the results of our study are consistent with research that posited people who viewed SEM, regardless of gender, tend to possess similar attitudes about sex (Carroll et al., 2008; Petersen & Hyde, 2011; Zaikman & Marks, 2017). Our findings may point to the increasing normalization and decreasing levels of stigma related to accessing and creating SEM.

### Future Directions and Limitations

A cross-sectional and retrospective research design was used for the study and thus may limit the directionality and causality present in our findings. Future studies may consider mixed methods designs that incorporate qualitative components that explore the purposes, uses, benefits, and drawbacks of OnlyFans usage. For example, studies may conduct semi-structured interviews with OnlyFans users to obtain a deeper understanding of how their sexual attitudes influence platform selection and to examine the phenomenological experiences of creating SEM content on direct-to-consumer platforms. Cross-sectional research designs may additionally result in common methods variance (i.e., correlational bias) that may limit the research findings. Future studies may consider integrating longitudinal designs that can better assess directionality across various time points. The utilization of MTurk to solicit participation in the study limits the number of potential participants, as well as the diversity of the sample, whom may be over-exposed to research participation in other

studies using the MTurk platform (Chandler et al., 2019). Additionally, it is possible the MTurk participants may have misidentified themselves as OnlyFans users to obtain the monetary compensation. Future studies may consider using alternative strategies to collect more diverse data.

### Conclusion

As new forms of SEM platforms emerge, sex research and sexuality-based studies must also evolve. The following study contributes to the existing body of SEM literature by providing a demographic analysis of OnlyFans users and an assessment of sexual attitudes between users and nonusers across sex. Based on our findings, OnlyFans users were predominantly white, married, males who identified as heterosexual, bisexual, or pansexual. The results of our factorial ANOVA additionally indicated that OnlyFans users and nonusers endorsed similar sexual attitudes. Findings from this study may be helpful for future studies on OnlyFans and other forms of subscription-based platforms and may be used to dispel narratives that stigmatize SEM users and content creators as deviant.

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### Declarations

**Conflicts of interest** The authors have no COIs to report.

**Ethical Approval** Procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the Institutional Review Board and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

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