

The Effects of Kink on Sexual Harassment Proclivity

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Clinical Psychology

Master thesis

June 15, 2022

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Abstract: This study investigates the concept of kink as a predictor of sexual harassment proclivity. A kink, the sexual preference for stimuli that deviate from the norm, can come in many different forms and often leads to stigmatization and isolation. Individual and interpersonal influences, such as sexual fantasies, pornography, and dating, are explored as aspects of the concept of kink that have previously been linked to sexual harassment proclivity. This study investigates whether these influences, when cumulatively used under the umbrella term kink, can be used as a predictor of sexual harassment proclivity. Additionally, toxic masculinity/femininity is investigated as a moderator, that may amplify the effect of kink on the sexual harassment proclivity. The results do not support the hypothesis that kink influences the sexual harassment proclivity, but confirm that toxic masculinity/femininity predicts an increased sexual harassment proclivity in men and women. Additionally, it was found that men score higher in kink, the proclivity to sexually harass, and toxic masculinity/femininity, than women. These findings provide information that can be used in designing preventative measures for sexual harassment.

The viral #MeToo movement that gained traction in 2017 started a new discussion about sexual harassment (Carlsen et al., 2018; Chuck, 2017; Frye, 2018). With famous people coming forward about their experiences, the once overheard voices gained public support to come forward with their own stories (Bonos, 2017; Fernandez, 2017). In a poll in the UK, 80% of women declared that they had experienced public sexual harassment, with an even higher percentage of 97% in the 18-24 year old demographic (Topping, 2021). Similar results were reported globally (Stop Street Harassment, 2021; Wilkinson, 2016). To prevent these staggering numbers, a lot of research has focused on the causes of sexual harassment (DeGue et al., 2014). Multiple predictors for sexual harassment and sexual violence have been identified. They include different individual, interpersonal and group factors (Tharp et al., 2013). Many of these predictors can be found in the sexually diverse preferences that are known under the term kink. Kink describes consensual sexual practices that fall outside the current mainstream or societal norm (Hart, 2020; Nevard, 2019; Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2016). This paper investigates the concept of kink as a new, more global predictor for sexual harassment proclivity than the related sub-factors and groups that have already been studied.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome behaviour of sexual nature. This can include but is not limited to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature (McLain, 1980). These behaviours can range as far as sexual abuse, assault, or rape (Dziech & Weiner, 1990; Kelly, 1987). While these extreme cases of assault and rape dominate the media coverage of sexual harassment, catcalling and other forms of verbal sexual harassment are the most common form of sexual harassment, followed by unwelcome sexual touching (Stop Street Harassment, 2018). The victims who suffer from sexual harassment are primarily young women (Smith et al., 2018). A lot of the research on the predictors of sexual harassment has focused more on sexual violence and rape because they are crimes that have severe legal ramifications and are more easily

classified (World Health Organization, 2012). This research focuses on individuals that have not stood out or have been charged with any extreme form of sexual harassment. While more nuanced, it is essential to investigate this general demographic as the variables proposed under the term kink in this study are a potential gateway towards sexual harassment. An early identification and prevention or education for mild offenders may decrease their escalation towards more severe offenses.

Kink

Sexuality has self-evidently always played an influential role in human existence. Healthy sexuality and what that includes has always been culturally defined by the groups and individuals with the strongest social influence (Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2016). Deviations from that norm are considered to be kinky. It is often stressed that there is no correct way of being kinky. Because of these blurred lines, in the real world, kink and BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism) are often used synonymously as non-traditional types of sexual activity. BDSM involves sexual practices that focus on playing with power dynamics (Faccio et al., 2014), the psychological mind, and bodily sensations such as pain or the deprivation of sensation (Langdrige, 2007; Pawlowski, 2009), while kink describes an even broader category of sex that can, but does not have to, involve BDSM dynamics (Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2016). It can include more specialized fetishes that would not be considered part of BDSM and other deviations from the norm, with examples ranging from concepts such as a foot fetish to adult diaper lovers (Hawkinson & Zamboni, 2014). Kink is a broader term, but BDSM makes up a big part of it, making some people use it synonymously.

These preferences and likings are often stigmatized, so that people may hesitate to identify with either of these groups (Wright, 2006) and hide their desires from others, potentially leading to inappropriate or risky sexual behaviors. Having a kink or kinks can complicate and limit the openness in communication and interactions individuals have

concerning their sexuality, as these niche interests are met with stigma and disapproval (Kolmes et al., 2006; Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2016; Wright, 2006). This can lead to shame that has to be coped with (Ortmann & Communities, 2012). Especially since the topics of sex, and kink specifically, are still a taboo in conversations, that can lead to isolation or compartmentalization in the individual (Hughes & Hammack, 2019; Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2016), making them have to go on their own way to explore and live out their sexuality without much or any feedback. This lack of feedback creates a risk of taking or giving away too much sexual and social control or power, that can easily cross the barrier to sexual harassment (Kratzer, 2020; Weiss, 2011). Exploring and living out kinks can take multiple forms that will be discussed in the following section.

Individual influences

Sexual fantasies

A lot of our sexuality is not strictly dictated by our behaviour but also by how we think about it (Toates et al., 2017). An essential aspect of the desire for sex are sex-related cognitions and sexual fantasies. Sexual fantasies are a commonly experienced phenomenon (Joyal et al., 2015) that can enhance the sexual experience (Davidson Sr & Hoffman, 1986) and increase sexual arousal and orgasm likelihood (Renaud & Byers, 2001). Especially in a lot of kinky preferences, these individual cognitions contribute a vital part to the experience (Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2016).

Having sexual fantasies and, in particular, violent sexual fantasies has been associated with the perpetration of sexual violence (Greendlinger & Byrne, 1987; Knight & Sims-Knight, 2003; Malamuth et al., 1995). In a study with convicted sex offenders, it was found that they had more violent sexual fantasies than controls (Cortoni & Marshall, 2001). Similar results were found in the comparison between a kink and control sample (Bondü & Birke, 2020).

Pornography consumption

Another predictor that has been shown to increase violent sexual fantasies is pornography consumption (Allen et al., 2020). Since having a kink is often combined with insecurity and shame (Barker et al., 2007; Pitagora, 2019), it is the way of least resistance to start exploring kinks by oneself, especially in the early stages of exploration. The Internet enables access to kinky sex and offers easy ways to explore different sexual approaches, such as erotica and pornography (de Alarcón et al., 2019; Döring, 2009).

Pornography consumption is very prevalent in the general population and becoming more available than ever before (Horvath et al., 2013). Even without any intention, consumers of pornography are likely to be exposed to sexual harassment, as close to 90% of best-selling pornography includes physical aggression and close to 50% include verbal aggression (Bridges et al., 2010). Individuals with increased consumption of porn rate degrading pornography as more arousing than individuals who watch porn less frequently (Minarcik, 2016). Pornography consumption has been proven to increase the acceptance of violence and normalize dominance (Hald et al., 2010; Malamuth et al., 2012), which have been shown to be predictors of sexual violence. This process is not limited to video pornography and extends to other sexually explicit media such as erotic literature, graphic novels, sexual pictures, as well as reality TV (Galdi et al., 2014).

Furthermore, because of low barriers of availability and content suggestion algorithms, consumers of non-violent and degrading pornography can move on to more extreme forms of pornography because they become desensitized to the content of mainstream pornography (Bindel, 2010; Bridges et al., 2010; Daneback et al., 2018; Donnerstein et al., 1987; Kunaharan et al., 2017; Toates et al., 2017). Pornography directed at niche preferences often fulfils criteria for multiple kinks to cater to a broader audience and maximize profit. This allows users to look for specific stimuli, such as one of their kinks, and come across novel stimuli (McKee et al., 2008; Wilson, 2014). The desensitization also occurs

for the more extreme material tailored to kinky individuals, leading to consumers seeking ever-more arousing stimuli (Grundner, 2000). This desensitization and availability allow the kinky individual to encounter new kinks and for them to normalize (Abel et al., 1988; Hogben & Byrne, 1998). Because of this, kinky individuals may, as Dines (2011) puts it, “end up masturbating to images that had previously disgusted them” (p. 118). Following social learning theory and observational learning (Bandura & McClelland, 1977), there is both a theoretical and reported risk that viewing violent and degrading pornography will facilitate imitating the shown behaviour and changes in attitude (Binnie & Reavey, 2020; Galdi & Guizzo, 2020).

Interpersonal influences

Apart from self-stimulation, kinky individuals usually want to live out their preferences with a partner in real life. This creates an interpersonal interaction in which both parties have equal preconditions. It is difficult to disclose sexual preferences early on in a dating setting, especially if the preferences are kinky (Meeker, 2013).

Online dating platforms offer a great low-risk opportunity that allows for a broader and more anonymous exploration of potential like-minded partners or hook-ups. In the rapid and wide "sexual marketplaces" that apps such as Tinder and similar more kink oriented services provide, there are many cases of sexual harassment (Gillett, 2018; Thompson, 2018). Looking for a partner on these platforms with the same sexual preferences can prioritize the sexual interest over the interpersonal or romantic interest. This fulfils the criteria of being one of the differing motivations for sex (Sevi et al., 2018; Sumter et al., 2017) that have been linked to sexual harassment. This motivation for sex can be problematic by itself.

Additionally, it may also facilitate other behaviour that has been established to predict sexual harassment, such as having multiple sexual partners (Choi et al., 2016), more impersonal/casual sex (Sevi et al., 2018; Sumter et al., 2017) and increased sexual risk-taking (Choi et al., 2016; Sawyer et al., 2018) that are all correlated with sexual violence.

Additionally, the more anonymous setting allows for risky and inappropriate messages because of more negligible risk of repercussions (Barak, 2005; Jane, 2014). The search for novel stimuli leads to more extreme preferences and expectations that a partner often cannot fulfil (Park et al., 2016; Zillmann & Bryant, 1988).

This combination of individual and interpersonal facets of kink and how a lot of them are predictors of sexual harassment in their own right, opens up the possibility that using the overarching concept of kink may be a useful approach to predict sexual harassment proclivity, without having to investigate each of these variables individually.

Toxic Masculinity/Femininity

A broader predictor that has already been linked to sexual harassment proclivity is toxic masculinity (Ingram et al., 2019; Levtov et al., 2014). Toxic masculinity refers to traditional cultural masculine norms that can be harmful to men, women, and society in general (Hess, 2016; Salam, 2019; Waling, 2019). The aspect that is regarded as toxic about it is the promotion of misogyny and violence in the form of sexual harassment and abuse (Salter, 2019). When women have a similar perspective on gender norms, that favours a patriarchal system, it is referred to as toxic femininity (McCann, 2020). Toxic masculinity/femininity and the adherence to conservative stereotypes of gender can create cognitive dissonance in individuals with sexual preferences, that can extend to internalized kink phobia (Dines, 2010; Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2016; Stein, 2021) and make individuals with kink preferences and toxic masculine/feminine values not want to associate with kink communities.

Depending on how individuals handle their kinks, it can lead to different attitudes. Toxic masculine/feminine ideology clashes with the open discussion and confrontation of kinks and preferences, but it does not decrease the desire to experience them. People who have a toxic masculine/feminine ideology are not likely to be open to accepting their sexual preferences and kinks which do not conform with their toxic ideology. Since the open

discussion of kinks is avoided in toxic groups, it can lead to even more isolation, shame, guilt or compartmentalization in individuals (Hughes & Hammack, 2019; Roush et al., 2017), which further increases the risk of overstepping boundaries of consent (Weiss, 2011). In contrast to this, individuals who are more open about gender roles and sexuality are likely to be more accepting and embracing of their own kinks and the ones of others.

In summary, many individual (Allen et al., 2020; Binnie & Reavey, 2020; Bondü & Birke, 2020; Galdi & Guizzo, 2020) and interpersonal elements (Choi et al., 2016; Sawyer et al., 2018; Sevi et al., 2018; Sumter et al., 2017) found in kink have been shown to be predictors for sexual harassment and sexual harassment proclivity in previous literature. In this study these individual predictors are combined into the umbrella concept of kink, to see if kink can be used as a stronger predictor, that is better suited than the sum of its individual parts. This would open doors to a new approach towards the prevention of sexual harassment, more focused on and tailored to the broad concept of kink. It would allow for this prevention to be applied to a broader target group than current programs. The first research question is whether kink orientation that combines these individual and interpersonal elements can be applied as a predictor for sexual harassment proclivity. In addition, one key predictor for sexual harassment proclivity, toxic masculinity/femininity (Ingram et al., 2019; Levtov et al., 2014) will be used as a moderating variable to account for the attitude towards the opposite gender. Thus, the second research question is whether toxic masculinity/femininity has a moderating effect on the relation between kink and sexual harassment proclivity. The research question of how kink influences the proclivity to sexually harass is therefore investigated by testing two separate hypotheses.

Hypothesis I_0 : Kink has no effect on the proclivity to sexually harass

Hypothesis I_a : Kink has a positive effect on the proclivity to sexually harass

Hypothesis 2₀: Toxic masculinity/femininity has no moderating effect on the relation between kink and sexual harassment proclivity.

Hypothesis 2_a: Toxic masculinity/femininity has a moderating effect on the relation between kink and sexual harassment proclivity.

Method

Participants & procedure

Participants were recruited and took part in the study between March and May 2020. Recruitment occurred via convenience sampling in two ways. Firstly, officially enrolled psychology students at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) were drafted using the online Erasmus Behavioral Lab (EBL). Participants outside the Psychology Department of the EUR were approached using personal social networks of the researchers, snowball sampling, and sharing an invitation for participation in the study on social media. EBL participants were compensated for their participation through the reception of course credits, and non-EBL participants were compensated by the possibility of winning a gift card through a lottery. There were no inclusion criteria except for age between 18 and 30 and the consent of participants. The questionnaire was filled out by the participants on their personal computers.

340 participants answered the questionnaire. For further analyses, 25 participants (7.4%) had to be removed because of missing values. 6 of the remaining participants (1.8%) did not disclose their age and were removed. Another 4 participants (.6%) were removed as outliers, leaving a total of 305 participants for further investigation.

Table 1

Outliers

	Frequency	Percent
Valid		
Missing	25	7,4
GEM outlier	2	,6
PSHS outlier	2	,6
Age missing	6	1,8
Used in analysis	305	89,7
Total	340	100,0

One of the included participants identified as diverse in the question about their biological gender and is therefore missing from the analyses that concentrate on male and female subgroups. The sample of young adults was comprised of participants with an average age of 22.4 years [SD = 2.71] with the youngest participant being 18.17 years old and the oldest being 31.05 years old. Participants had a mean educational level around MBO and HBO and were at 71.1% predominantly female as shown in table 2.

Table 2

Frequencies

		Gender			Total
		Male	Female	Other	
Highest achieved educational level	VMBO	6	2	0	8
	HAVO	8	20	0	28
	VWO	24	95	1	120
	MBO	6	5	0	11
	HBO	14	32	0	46
	WO	24	55	0	79
	Other:	4	9	0	13
Total		86	218	1	305

Materials

Participants were asked to answer a wide array of questions and test batteries about their sexuality. Among them were the three questionnaires used to determine the levels of sexual harassment proclivity, kink, and toxic masculinity/femininity, respectively.

A questionnaire by Bartling and Eisenman (1993) was used to test for the sexual harassment proclivity. It consists of ten statements with responses on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with a Chronbach's alpha of .85. This questionnaire extends upon the work by (Pryor, 1987) by investigating the sexual harassment proclivity in

both female and male participants. The lowest possible score of 10 points indicates a low proclivity to sexually harass, and higher scores of up to 50 indicates a higher proclivity to sexually harass.

As the measurement for kink, four questions with a yes or no option were asked. If any of these questions were answered with yes, the participant was qualified as being kinky for the purpose of this study. The first question implying a subjective definition of hard sex without the term BDSM was "Are you interested in rough/hard sex?". For the individual influences, namely porn and sexual fantasies the two questions "Have you fantasized, for example during masturbation, about BDSM that is bondage and discipline, sadomasochism, or dominance and submission?" and "In the past 12 months have you watched/looked at any form of pornographic BDSM material" were asked. To learn about interpersonal influences and whether a participant is interested in participating in kinky sexual practices with a partner, the question "Are you interested in BDSM, that is bondage and discipline, sadomasochism, or dominance and submission?" was asked. If any of these questions were answered with yes the participant was considered part of the group "kink" and if none of them were answered with yes the participant was considered part of the "no kink" group. A reliability analysis came to a Chronbach's alpha of .78, which is above the necessary threshold of .7 for a reliable scale (Cortina, 1993).

For the second research question, the Gender Equitable Men Scale (GEM) (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2008) was used to assess the participants' attitude toward gender norms in intimate relationships. The questionnaire consists of 24 items scored on a 3-point Likert scale (disagree = 1, somewhat agree = 2, agree = 3) with an overall reliability of .72. Both the GEM scales, one asking for inequitable, and one for equitable gender norms in intimate relationships, were used. The equitable part of the questionnaire was inversely coded to achieve an overall score. After recoding, the minimum score of 24 indicates a low gender equity perception, which in return means a high toxic masculinity/femininity. The highest score of 72 codes for a high

gender equity score, translating into a low toxic masculinity/femininity in the participant. While this is counter coded in comparison to the concept of toxic masculinity going up, the scale coding is kept in its original format for easier comparison.

To control for potential unequal distribution and influence of participants, the variables age, level of education, and gender were looked at. Especially the variable of gender plays a role in sexuality and kink, but even more distinctly in toxic masculinity/femininity (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993; Brown et al., 2020). They were included in a second model for all the statistical analyses regarding the hypotheses as control variables.

Statistical analyses

The data was imported and analysed in SPSS statistics. After the previous detection and cleansing of outliers, some preliminary analyses were conducted to get an overview of the sample. To get an idea of the distribution between the categories “Kink” and “No Kink” that were used as the independent variable to test for the hypotheses, a chi-square analysis was used to analyse the distribution of participants in relation to the control variables age, gender, and education level.

After these preliminary tests the first hypothesis was investigated. The relation between the independent variable kink and the dependent variable sexual harassment proclivity was investigated by using a linear regression. This regression included two models, one with and one without control variables. This was repeated for male and female participant groups separately to look at the effect of kink on sexual harassment proclivity per gender.

To integrate the influence of toxic masculinity/femininity as a moderator for the second hypothesis, a moderation analysis was done using the PROCESS v4.0 macro by Andrew F. Hayes (2017). Using model 1 of the PROCESS macro, toxic masculinity/femininity was investigated as a moderator between the independent variable kink and the dependent variable sexual harassment proclivity. Afterwards, this analysis was repeated for both the male and female subsets individually.

All of these calculations to test the hypotheses used a form of linear regression, with varying amounts of predictors. The calculation with a maximum of seven predictors was the PROCESS moderation analysis with controls: kink, toxic masculinity/femininity, interaction kink*toxic masculinity/femininity, age, dummy female, dummy other gender, level of education. Assuming a medium effect size of $f^2 = .15$ (Cohen, 1988) using a linear regression, and using a confidence interval of .95 the total sample size necessary for a power of .80 is $n = 103$, and for a power of .95, it is $n = 153$. Given that the other analyses are also linear regressions, using less predictors, it can be assumed that with a sample of 305 participants sufficient power was achieved.

Beyond the analyses done for the hypotheses a further analysis was conducted that is not answering the hypotheses. Previous research has established that there are gender differences in toxic masculinity/femininity and sexual harassment proclivity. To test the gender differences distinctly, a T-test was used to compare the male and female groups on their scores on the variables toxic masculinity/femininity, kink, and sexual harassment proclivity.

Results

Table 3

Descriptives kink

Gender	Kink	Mean	SD	N
All	No Kink	19.00	6.66	107
	Kink	20.83	7.67	198
	Total	20.19	7.37	305
Male	No Kink	22.58	8.06	19
	Kink	23.46	7.91	67
	Total	23.27	7.91	86
Female	No Kink	18.23	6.09	88
	Kink	19.55	7.19	130
	Total	19.02	6.79	218

Before testing for the hypotheses, a chi-square test was performed to see if there is any uneven distribution between the groups of kinky and non-kinky individuals. This came out insignificant for the age [$X^2(290) = 291.83, p = .459$] and education level variable [$X^2(6) = 8.48, p = .205$], but was significant for gender [$X^2(2) = 9.585, p = .008$].

Hypothesis 1: Kink as a predictor of sexual harassment

To test the first hypothesis a hierarchical linear regression was performed using two models. The first model only includes the independent variable kink, and the second model adds the control variables for gender, age, and level of education.

Table 4

Regression Analyses

Model	All		Male		Female	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
(Constant)	19.00*	15.83*	22.58*	16.46*	18.23*	12.22*
	(.71)	(3.75)	(1.82)	(8.00)	(.72)	(3.82)
Kinky	1.83*	1.18	0.88	0.69	1.33	1.20
	(.88)	(.86)	(2.07)	(2.09)	(.94)	(.92)
Dummy Female		-3.72*				
		(.94)				
Dummy Other		-11.76				
		(7.12)				
Age		0.21		0.33		0.13
		(.17)		(.35)		(.19)
Level of education		0.39		-0.35		0.77*
		(.27)		(.53)		(.32)
Observations	304	304	85	85	217	217
R ²	0.014	0.096	0.002	0.0014	0.009	0.05
F-statistic	4.346	6.357	0.183	0.402	2.013	3.75
df	(1, 303)	(5, 299)	(1, 84)	(3, 82)	(1, 216)	(3, 214)

The first model testing only kink as a predictor of sexual harassment proclivity came out significant [$F(1, 303) = 4.346, p = .038$], explaining 1.4% of the variance in the degree of sexual harassment proclivity, which is a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The predictor kink in

this model [$B = 1.833$, $t(303) = 2.085$, $p = .038$], predicted a higher proclivity to sexually harass for people that qualify for the kink group.

The second model added the genders as dummy variables and the other control variables age and level of education to the regression model. It came out significant [$F(5, 299) = 6.357$, $p < .001$], explaining 9.6% of the variance in sexual harassment proclivity, which is still considered a small effect size. In this model kink is no longer significant [$B = 1.184$, $t(299) = 1.374$, $p = .170$], while female participants have significantly lower scores on sexual harassment proclivity compared to the male reference group [$B = -3.718$, $t(299) = -3.954$, $p < .001$]. The variables age and level of education turned out to be insignificant. Once controlling for other variables, especially gender, the hypothesis that kink predicts a high sexual harassment proclivity has to be rejected.

Because of the significant effect that gender has on the relationship between kink and sexual harassment proclivity, and the significant chi-square test, another regression for male and female subgroups each were conducted. Each gender group was tested for only the predictor kink first and in a second model for kink and the control variables age and educational level.

The first model for the male subgroup testing only kink as a predictor came back insignificant [$F(1, 84) = 11.561$, $p = .670$], and the second model including the control variables too [$F(3, 82) = 76.967$, $p = .752$], with none of the individual variables having a significant effect on the proclivity to sexually harass.

For the female subgroup a similar non-significant result was found in the first regression that only included kink as a predictor [$F(1, 216) = 2.013$, $p = .157$], while the second model, adding the two control variables age and level of education turned out significant [$F(3, 214) = 3.750$, $p = .012$]. Looking at the coefficients in this second model it was found that only the level of education had a significant effect on the proclivity to sexually harass [$B = .769$, $t(214) = 2.416$, $p = .017$], indicating that women with a higher level of

education had a higher sexual harassment proclivity. This further underlines the finding that kink does not predict a higher sexual harassment proclivity and the first hypothesis must be rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Toxic Masculinity/Femininity as a Moderator

A moderator analysis was performed using the PROCESS macro to investigate whether toxic masculinity/femininity has a moderating effect on the relationship between kink and the proclivity to sexually harass (Hayes, 2017).

Table 5

Moderation Analyses

Model	All		Male		Female	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
(Constant)	88.78*	80.67*	102.06*	93.77*	81.17*	73.72*
	(12.17)	(12.71)	(26.97)	(30.10)	(13.32)	(13.81)
Dummy Kinky	10.62	11.04	-0.58	4.39	10.89	11.77
	(14.43)	(14.25)	(30.70)	(32.02)	(16.25)	(16.08)
GEM	-1.23*	-1.14*	-1.42*	-1.35*	-1.11*	-1.07*
	(.21)	(.21)	(.48)	(.50)	(.23)	(.23)
Interaction Kink*GEM	-0.15	-0.17	0.02	-0.07	-0.16	-0.18
	(.25)	(.25)	(.55)	(.57)	(.29)	(.28)
Dummy Female		-2.29*				
		(.81)				
Dummy Other		-5.32				
		(6.06)				
Level of education		0.40		0.06		0.59*
		(.23)		(.46)		(.27)
Age		0.15		0.17		0.12
		(.14)		(.30)		(.16)
Observations	305	305	86	86	218	218
R ²	0.321	0.36	0.313	0.32	0.286	0.31
F-statistic	47.444	23.640	12.445	7.41	28.623	19.170
df	(3, 301)	(7, 297)	(3, 82)	(5, 80)	(3, 214)	(5, 212)

The dependent variable was the proclivity to sexually harass. The predictor variable for the analysis was kink. The moderator variable was toxic masculinity/femininity, measured using the GEM scale. Again, two models, one with only kink and one with kink and controls, were tested.

Overall, the first model with only kink as a predictor [$F(3, 301) = 47.442, p < .001$], significantly explains 32.1% of the variance in the proclivity to harass. While kink is not significant [$B = 10.622, t(301) = .736, p = .462$], the toxic masculinity/femininity is [$B = -1.232, t(301) = -5.740, p < .001$]. The moderation between kink and toxic masculinity/femininity on sexual harassment proclivity was found to be statistically insignificant [$B = -.151, t(301) = -.595, p = .552$]. In the second model including the control variables [$F(7, 291) = 23.640, p < .001$], kink remains insignificant [$B = 11.040, t(297) = .775, p = .440$] and toxic masculinity/femininity significant [$B = -1.143, t(297) = -5.394, p < .001$]. Additionally, women score significantly lower on sexual harassment proclivity than men [$B = -2.286, t(297) = -2.832, p = .005$], while age and education level do not show a significant effect. Overall, this second model accounts for 35.8% of the variance in sexual harassment proclivity. The same analysis with two models testing for kink and kink with controls was repeated for male and female gender subgroups separately.

Looking at the analysis for female participants, the first model with kink as the only independent predictor [$F(3, 214) = 28.623, p < .001$], significantly explains 28.6% of the variance in the proclivity to harass. Kink alone [$B = 10.894, t(214) = .670, p = .503$] was not significant, while toxic femininity was significant [$B = -1.109, t(214) = -4.732, p < .001$], indicating that higher toxic femininity predicts a higher sexual harassment proclivity. The interaction between kink and toxic femininity was found to be statistically insignificant [$B = -.158, t(214) = -.555, p = .580$]. For the second model, including the covariates, similar results were found, with kink being insignificant [$B = 11.765, t(212) = .670, p = .503$], toxic femininity significant [$B = -1.066, t(212) = -4.593, p < .001$], but the interaction between

toxic femininity and kink insignificant [$B = -.177$, $t(212) = 2.153$, $p = .535$]. Education level was again significant [$B = .588$, $t(212) = 2.153$, $p = .049$], as had already been found in the regression without a moderator, while age was not.

In the group of male participants, the first model [$F(3, 82) = 12.445$, $p < .001$] significantly explains 31.3% of the variance in the proclivity to harass. Kink alone [$B = -.582$, $t(82) = -.019$, $p = .985$] was not significant, whereas toxic masculinity was [$B = -1.418$, $t(82) = -2.952$, $p = .004$] implying that, similar to the female subgroup, a higher toxic masculinity predicts a higher proclivity to sexually harass. The moderation between kink and toxic masculinity was found to be statistically insignificant [$B = .022$, $t(82) = .041$, $p = .968$]. In the second model with the covariates, similar results as in the first model were found. All variables and the interaction were found to be insignificant, except for toxic masculinity which remained significant [$B = -1.347$, $t(80) = -2.709$, $p = .008$]. Different than in the female group in the male subgroup the effect of education level was not significant [$B = .059$, $t(80) = .129$, $p = .898$]. These findings show that, while kink could not significantly explain a variance in sexual harassment proclivity in any of the analyses, toxic masculinity/femininity always could.

Further Analyses

As could be found by the previous analyses, gender had a significant effect on the sexual harassment proclivity and kink group distribution. To explore this effect of gender further, a T-test comparing male and female groups on the independent, moderating and dependent variable was conducted. It came out significant for the SHPS [$t(302) = 4.686$, $p < .001$], GEM [$t(302) = -2.930$, $p = .004$], and kink [$t(302) = -3.264$, $p = .003$]. Men scored significantly higher on the proclivity to sexually harass, toxic masculinity and kink level than the female participants.

Table 6*Scores on Kink, GEM, and PSHS by gender*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Kinky	Male	86	0.22	0.42	0.04
	Female	218	0.40	0.49	0.03
GEM	Male	86	55.93	3.15	0.34
	Female	218	57.05	2.94	0.20
PSHS	Male	86	23.27	7.91	0.85
	Female	218	19.02	6.79	0.46

Discussion

This research aimed to investigate whether the concept of kinky could be considered a predictor of the proclivity to sexually harass. A measure of kinky was constructed based on individual and interpersonal influences established by prior research and tested against the sexual harassment proclivity scale score of participants.

Before any analysis to investigate the hypotheses, it was found that there was a skewed gender distribution between kinky and no kinky. The significant difference in gender distribution on kinky is in line with previous findings on general paraphilia, although no explanation for this has been found (Konrad et al., 2015).

The results from the regression analyses show that when accounting for this skewed gender distribution on the kinky measure, there is no significant evidence for a difference in the proclivity to sexually harass between people that are kinky and people that aren't kinky. The effect of kinky is insignificant even when split into male and female subgroups. This shows that the first hypothesis, that kinky predicts a higher sexual harassment proclivity must be rejected, as no supporting evidence for the relationship between kinky and proclivity to sexually harass was found.

What was found, is a significant difference in the proclivity to sexually harass between men and women. This is in line with previous research and statistics on perpetrated sexual harassment (Stop Street Harassment, 2018). While this research does not focus directly

on the enactment of sexual harassment, a difference between genders in sexual harassment proclivity has also been noted to a marginal extent by the authors of the SHPS (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993) used in this study. In their study men had a mean score of 26.6 (SD = 7.42) and women a score of 24.8 (SD = 4.92). Compared to the 23.3 (SD = 7.91) for men and 19.0 (SD = 6.79) for women in this study, these values are higher and not as significantly different as in this sample.

Another significant finding was the relationship between level of education and kink in women. This effect of level of education in women was surprising and could not be found in the male subgroup. While previous research has focused on specific educational levels and the prevalence of sexual harassment in these individual groups (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Gilbert et al., 1998), no research has focused on comparing different levels of education. Without any further research, only speculations can be made. One possibility is that women have to work harder and seem “tougher” when climbing the career ladder in a system that is rigged more towards men (McLaughlin et al., 2017). In order to compensate for their disadvantage they might adopt more permissive attitudes towards sexual harassment. This would have to be tested in future research.

The goal of the second hypothesis was to find out whether toxic masculinity had a moderating role in the relationship between kink on the proclivity to sexually harass. The results of the analysis showed no evidence for this moderating effect. What this analysis could show, however, was that toxic masculinity in men and women was a significant predictor of the proclivity to sexually harass. While most studies focus on the male role, hostility against women was found to be a shared trait among both men and women, and it was related to acceptance of interpersonal violence and adversarial sexual beliefs in previous studies (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995; Russell & Trigg, 2004). While perpetration of sexual harassment is primarily done by men, it was revealed that with women, their hostility toward women was correlated with victim blame in sexual harassment (Cowan, 2000). These findings

further add to the research on toxic masculinity/femininity, showing that even in a clinically and criminally inconspicuous sample, an effect of toxic masculinity/femininity on the proclivity to sexually harass could be found.

The effects of toxic masculinity/femininity could be found as expected and a significant relation between gender and sexual harassment proclivity was found as shown in previous research. No evidence, on the other hand, was found for the effect of kink on the proclivity to sexually harass. This goes against the stigmatisation of kink in public debate (Kolmes et al., 2006; Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2016; Wright, 2006).

For example, the effect of pornography is often exaggerated and utilized by politicians and media (Ferguson & Hartley, 2009). This does not help kinky people who may already feel isolated, unfulfilled or unsatisfied because they encounter difficulties acting out their fantasies or cannot find somebody to live out their fantasies with (Bezreh et al., 2012), as the non-normativity of kinks can lead to feelings of guilt, shame and isolation (Shahbaz & Chirinos, 2016). People who are newly aware of having kink related desires frequently seek therapy because they are ashamed and afraid of their desires as a result of socialization or internalized stigmatization, and they may ask a therapist to "cure" them (Bettinger, 2002; Ling et al., 2022). This can be traced back to one of the two major narratives that distinguish the views on kink into a dichotomous debate (Hughes & Hammack, 2019).

On one side, there is the pathology narrative, which has its foundation in the criticized early clinical observation studies by von Krafft-Ebing (1907), and Freud (1905), who deemed kinky thoughts and behaviour to be indicative of disordered or unhealthy sexuality. To this day, 'paraphilia' and 'paraphilic disorders' can be found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), which describe kinky practices which are used for diagnosing pathological behaviour. This has been justified by its usefulness in working with a forensic population (Krueger,

2010) but has also been critiqued by many for marginalization and stigmatization (Connolly, 2006; Joyal & Carpentier, 2017; O'Donohue, 2010; Singy, 2012).

The liberatory narrative, on the other hand, embraces the liberation from norms and taboos that come with identifying and living out one's kinks. In it, kinkiness is embraced as a healthy, playful, horizon-broadening form of sexual desire and practice that is inclusive and provides an equal platform for social exchange and discussion about sexuality, desire, and fantasies (Lindemann, 2011; Rogak & Connor, 2018). Research has focused on more specific preferences and groups that can be classified in part or completely as kink. Prominent examples of this are the BDSM community (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism) and, in part, the LGBTQ community (Sprott & Hadcock, 2018). The public outlets of these communities promote their demarginalization and try to destigmatize their still stigmatized interests and actions (Coppens et al., 2020; Jozifkova, 2013).

The results of this study give support to this liberatory narrative in showing that there is no significant effect of kink on the proclivity to sexually harass. Even in combination with toxic gender views no significant results could be found supporting an influencing effect of kink. It adds to the evidence that freely exploring one's sexuality does usually not lead to predatory behaviour. It can therefore be seen as a small step in destigmatizing kink and providing empirical evidence in a discussion in which adversaries of the liberatory narrative push fear and ostracization.

Limitations

The major limitation of this study is the number of questions asked to find out whether a person is included in the kink group or not. With four yes or no questions, only a limited differentiation between individual preferences could be achieved. With just one yes on any of these questions, it is possible that people were included in the kink category that

otherwise would not have fit in. While the scale is very sensitive, it does not provide many insights into the degree of how kinky a participant is.

Another limitation with questions was the inclusion of the term BDSM, making people choose whether they identify with this group. A study asking specifically about the interest in BDSM found only 2% of its participants identify with it (Richters et al., 2008), while other studies that did not stress the group identification and only concentrated on some of the behaviour and thoughts that come with it found that, with around 60%, a lot more participants were interested in BDSM practices (Joyal & Carpentier, 2017). However, an exploratory regression analysis was conducted for this sample, using dummy coding for the groups “no kink”, “kink but no BDSM” and “any BDSM” and could not confirm a significant difference in identification with the statements that include the term BDSM and the one without.

Further research could improve upon the findings of this study by using a more detailed and more kink-specific questionnaire. A modified version of the Paraphilia scale proposed by Seto et al. (2012) could address many of these shortcomings. The more detailed questions cover a wide variety of prevalent kinks and could give more kink specific insights. In general, what is important for a future measure of kink is that it that it is not judging, and demonstrates reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity. This would help in including participants that would not identify with the BDSM or LGBT communities or as paraphilic but still fulfil all the criteria that would qualify them to be part of these groups.

Summary and conclusions

Kink is a concept that is becoming more and more publicly prominent and discussed. With growing communities to safely exchange questions and experiences, many of the earlier taboos will be destigmatised over time. For now, as a first step, it was shown in this study that kink as an umbrella concept cannot be seen as a predictor for sexual harassment proclivity and predatory behaviour.

The implication of this study from a clinical perspective and for real life application, is twofold. First, it was found that kink as defined in this study does not show a lot of potential as an angle for impactful prevention of sexual harassment proclivity or sexual harassment. It would need to be further defined, narrowed down and tested in future research. The individual and interpersonal influences that were included under the umbrella term kink on their own are better fitted to detect potential risk for sexual harassment proclivity in individuals and patients. Secondly it was found that toxic masculinity and toxic femininity were significant predictors for sexual harassment proclivity in this non-criminal sample. This puts an emphasis on the importance of research into the topic of toxic masculinity/femininity. This research is needed to further understand the mechanisms behind toxic masculinity/femininity and to design education and campaigns to decrease gender inequitable mindsets, to lower sexual harassment proclivity in the long run. Thirdly it was found that with higher scores on kink, sexual harassment proclivity, and toxic masculinity, men should be more directly targeted by these interventions.

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