

Expose Level, Morality, and Sexual Attraction from A Cross-Cultural Perspective: A Comprehensive Analysis of Individual Differences and Cultural Influences

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Abstract. Exposure level, morality, and sexual attraction are essential themes involving interaction between individuals and cultures. Whether in the context of globalization or the prevalence of gender equality movements today, exploring these three factors remains an integral part of moral discussions. This study investigates the relationship between exposure level, moral standards, and sexual attraction across different cultural backgrounds. Using the experimental paradigm of implicit association tests, this paper designs a 2x2 within-subjects experimental study to measure people's reactions to different levels of exposure under various moral contexts. By analyzing the differences in response time, data conclusions are drawn. Furthermore, based on the perspectives of moral relativism, and social constructivism, possible outcomes of the study are explained and described. Two potential models of variable relationships are established. In both models, sexual attraction mediates moral standards and exposure level. Still, the difference lies in the presence of demographic variables as either influencing the relationship between sexual attraction and moral standards or moderating the relationship between moral standards and exposure level.

Keywords: Expose level, Morality, Sexual attraction, Cross-cultural perspective.

1. Introduction

Individual differences and cultural influences profoundly affect human behavior and perspectives in today's globalized world. Morality, sexual attractiveness, and exposure level are prominent issues in our society, and they manifest in diverse forms across different cultural backgrounds.

Clothing is one of the significant indicators that distinguish humans from animals. However, with the development of time, clothing has acquired not only the functions of protection and warmth but also specific moral implications, which carry varying weights in different regions and eras. In ancient China, for example, women were taught not to expose any part of their bodies before marriage. In some areas, women were even required to marry men who had seen their bodies. In countries like India, women are expected to wear traditional garments like sarees, covering every part of their bodies. Exposing their bodies could be prohibited or even punished. In these conservative cultures, traditional beliefs tend to impose more vital religious and traditional values on individuals.

Women in the United States, Canada, and other countries can wear more revealing clothing, such as bikinis. This open-dressing style reflects different cultural and societal understandings of morality and personal freedom. In these cultures, individuals can choose their attire based on their preferences and free will without excessive consideration of others' judgments or societal moral norms.

Another interesting phenomenon is that we are likelier to encounter images of exposed clothing in contexts typically associated with lower moral standards, such as adult magazines or brothel posters. We rarely see exposed body parts on morally elevated occasions, such as charity events or formal gatherings.

These cultural differences have sparked discussions on dressing styles and gender roles. On one hand, some argue that women should have the right to choose their attire, as it reflects values of individual autonomy and equality. They advocate breaking stereotypes and gender constraints, allowing women to display their bodies freely. On the other hand, some believe that conservative dress norms help protect women's dignity and reduce gender discrimination. They argue that exposed

clothing may lead to sexual harassment or disrespectful behavior and advocate upholding traditional moral values and social order.

Moreover, different moral standards exist regarding exposure to men's and women's attire. Some news reports have highlighted the greater likelihood of female-generated photos and videos being subjected to scrutiny and restrictions on specific social media platforms. Another example is scrutinizing female artists' clothing choices during concerts or performances. Female artists' attire is sometimes criticized as too revealing or sexual, while male artists rarely face the same level of criticism.

This study aims to explore the differences in nudity, morality, and sexual attractiveness across different cultural backgrounds and analyze the combined influence of individual differences and cultural impacts on these relationships. By reviewing and comparing relevant research from various cultural backgrounds, we establish a model that considers the roles of nudity, moral level, and sexual attractiveness.

2. Literature Review

The level of exposure is the extent to which an individual's body is exposed. The naked body is one of the fundamental rights and freedoms of human beings. In Western art, nudity is a common theme. In various artworks of ancient Rome or ancient Greece, we can see the naked body, and the naked male often symbolizes the strength, elegance, and perfect proportion of the male body, such as Michelangelo's "David" and Miro's "The Discus Thrower." Naked women often show the elegance, softness, and physical beauty of women, such as the Birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli and the Mona Lisa by Leonardo Da Vinci.

Similarly, in Eastern art, there are many similar depictions of the nude. In ancient Chinese, Taoist, and Buddhist sculptures or paintings, the nude image is seen as the practitioner's transcendent state and inner purity. In the traditional Hindu murals of ancient India, nude images were often associated with images of goddesses and gods. As Lynda Nead notes in *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, anyone who examines the history of Western art must be struck by the prevalence of images of the female body [1].

However, with the passage of time and the change in the social system, the degree of people's nudity is subject to moral and legal constraints. Excessive nudity is regarded as a severely wrong behavior in the laws of various countries, and people are only allowed to expose their bodies on specific occasions. For example, in some states, people are prohibited from exposing their bodies in public places, including breasts, buttocks, and genitals. In Arab countries, nudity is considered illegal, against Sharia law, and heresy by local religions.

The moral judgment of individuals is also the focus of many psychologists. For example, the classic Stanford Prison Experiment explored the changes in individuals' moral judgments under certain circumstances [2], and the Milgram Experiment explored whether individuals' moral judgments were influenced by authority [3].

Under the change in society, the degree of nudity of the body has become an indicator for people to evaluate a person's moral level, and the standard of this indicator will be different according to different demographic factors such as cultural level, gender level, and age level. For example, in print advertising, there are significant differences in the attitudes of consumers of different genders toward car models with different degrees of nudity [4, 5]. Women are more likely than men to have negative feelings about female nudity in print ads. Men tend to feel more positively about this type of advertising [6].

One of the more plausible explanations for this is Objectification; objectification refers to treating a person as an object or thing, typically focusing solely on their physical appearance or sexual appeal while disregarding their individuality, dignity, and autonomy. The more naked the body, the higher the Objectification of the individual, the less individual and social attributes of the individual, and the more it is regarded as a symbol of "female" or "male" in a group. American philosopher, social activist,

and feminist Martha Nussbaum explores Objectification in her book *Sex and Social Justice: The Nature of Sexuality*. She emphasized the problem of treating human beings as objects and proposed a solution that focused on the needs and rights of the individual [7]. This objectification will not only affect people's moral cognition but also affect people's physical health on some levels. For example, excessive objectification will cause women to have disordered eating cognitive distraction [8]

However, some studies have also proved that Objectification is not the only explanation for this phenomenon. Paul Bloom et al. pointed out in their articles that the focus on the body caused by the exposure level of the body does not directly lead to objectification but leads to the redistribution of the mind. Their view comes from the dualism of mind and body. They believe that the higher the level of nudity, people's allocation to agency will decrease, while the allocation to experience will increase [9]

In previous studies, people paid more attention to the research on gender opposition between men and women, and most studies only used the form of a literature review to analyze and guess the causes behind it. However, the internal psychological process of this change and whether there are significant differences in people's moral evaluation of naked women in a cross-cultural environment. There has been a lack of quantitative research on these two issues in past studies.

The Implicit Association Test(IAT) is a widely used method in cognitive psychology. The method was developed by American psychologists Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji and Canadian psychologist Brian Nosek [10]. The measurement targets are individual attitudes and biases, often influenced by social desirability, making it difficult for researchers to measure the actual subconscious attitudes of subjects. IAT measures an individual's reaction time during a classification task to infer their relevance or preference for different concepts. During the test, participants were asked to classify related words or images into different categories based on specific guidelines or concepts, such as associating positive words with one concept and negative words with another. By measuring participants' reaction times while classifying different words or images, it is possible to infer an individual's cognitive association with these concepts [11].

This test method can solve the problem of the social desirability of subjects to obtain their subconscious preferences and attitudes, which is consistent with the research purpose of this study, so IAT is chosen as the test method for studying exposure degree and moral judgment.

3. Expected Experimental Design

Participants: Convenience sampling will be used in this study, recruiting participants through posters or Facebook posts based on voluntary participation. Ultimately, participants from three cultural backgrounds will be recruited, including Eastern cultures (such as China and Japan), Western cultures (such as the United States and Canada), and other cultures (such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt) from multiple universities. Each cultural group will have over 100 participants, with a balanced gender ratio close to 1:1, and ages 18 to 35.

3.1. Methods and Materials

This study will employ experimental analysis and questionnaire survey methods using the classic IAT paradigm for the experiment.

3.2. Materials

Two experimental models will be recruited, dressed in clothing with different levels of exposure (high exposure, low exposure) for photography. The photographs will cover the head, only exposing body parts.

Moral level photographs: The same two models will be used to capture two different moral situations, with the high moral group depicting an embracing scenario and the low moral group depicting a violent scenario.

Exposure level and moral level words: Testing will be conducted within different cultural contexts, selecting 100 words related to different levels of exposure and moral levels from The New Oxford American Dictionary. Participants will be invited to match these words with the photographs, selecting words with a matching rate exceeding 75%. Each group will have 20 words as experimental materials for this study.

3.3. Experimental Procedure:

First, the subject will enter the laboratory. The experimenter showed the instructions, explained the experiment process to the subjects, and confirmed that the subjects fully understood the experiment, and the experiment officially began. First of all, subjects will enter the first part. We will show subjects pictures of different exposure levels of a specific gender (male or female) and words related to exposure levels (see Figure 1), and subjects will judge them. The next step will be taken when the accuracy rate reaches more than 90%. We will show the subject's different moral levels and their related words (see Figure 2), and when the subjects judge them and reach more than 90% accuracy, continue to the next part. In this part, we will present pictures of moral scenes and pictures of exposure degrees at the same time and ask the subjects to judge the words (see Figure 3). When measuring the subjects' responses, the matching group of high moral scenes and high exposure degree is recorded as RT1, and the matching group of low moral scenes and high exposure degree is recorded as RT2. Then, the keys are exchanged, and the second part is re-performed. The matching group of the high moral scene and high exposure degree is recorded as RT3, and the matching group of the low moral scene and high exposure degree is recorded as RT4. After this, the experiment was repeated by changing the gender of the photos. Finally, the subjects were asked to rate the sexual attractiveness of the photos of different genders with different levels of exposure (0-7 points were used, ranging from not sexy to very sexy).

The subjects were randomly divided into four groups in the experiment, and the two intra-subject factors (male and female, keystroke order) were divided into groups. Finally, the average value of the four groups was obtained to calculate the final result.

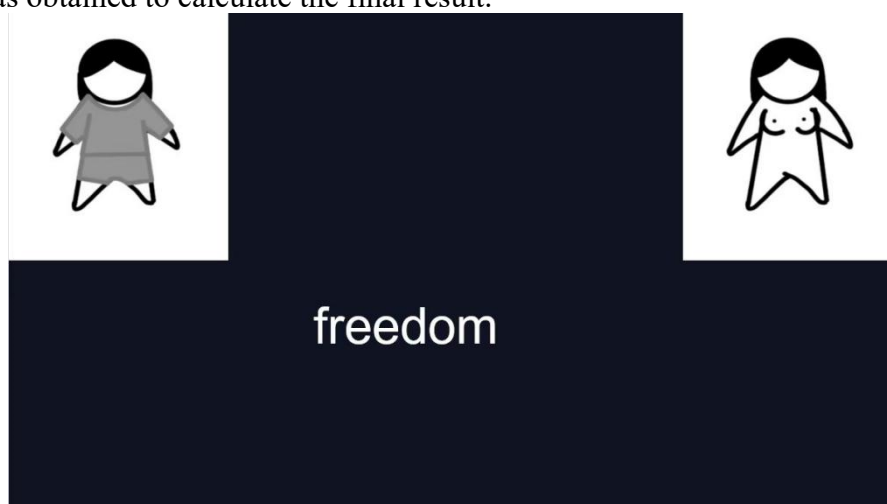


Figure 1 Classification training sample diagram

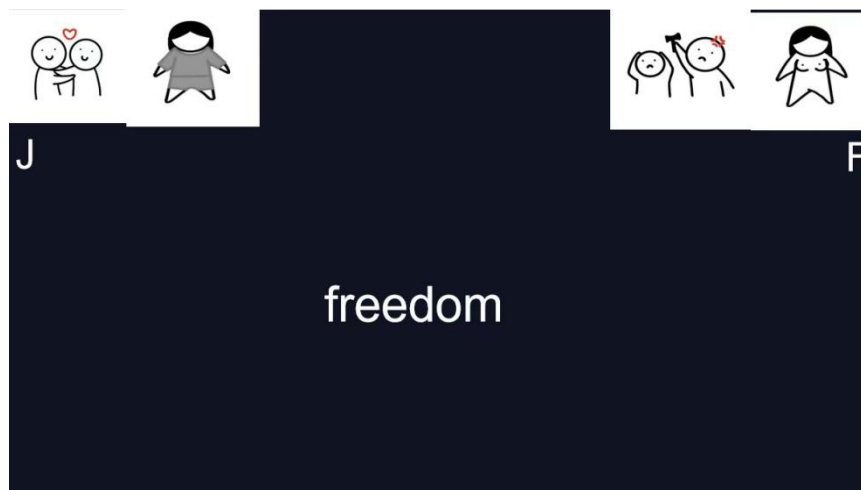


Figure 2 Positive sequential experimental group

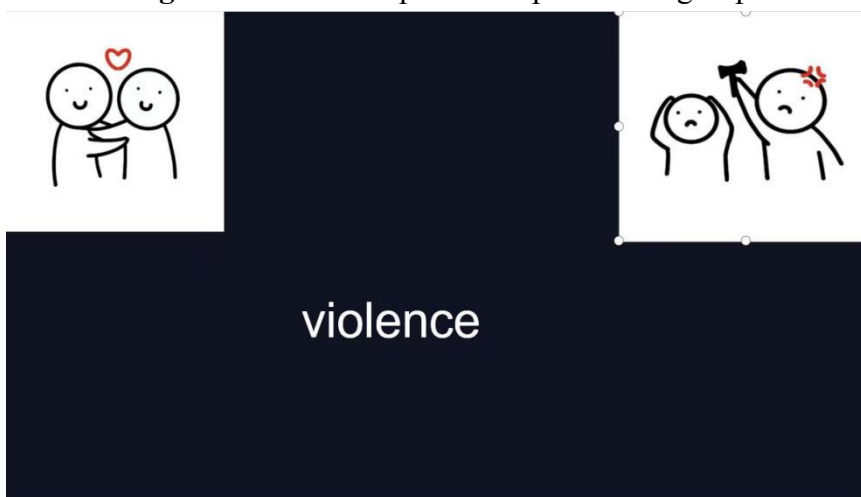


Figure 3 Exchanged sequential experimental group

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Gender

The results of this study are expected to be as follows: people's rating of sexual attraction for highly exposed male photos will be significantly lower than that for highly exposed female photos, and the degree of low moral association for men in the highly exposed group will be significantly lower than that for women in the highly exposed group.

Albert Bandura [12] proposed that an individual's impression of a particular group is generated by integrating information observed and learned in society. People's judgment of gender is more from the relative mainstream view of the society in which it is located; in today's society, when the naked male appears, it is often a strong, confident, and sexy image, while the naked female appears, often accompanied by sexual suggestion or sexual objectification. For example, in movies and television shows, male nudity is often portrayed as a natural and normal part of plot and character development. Male nudity can show strength, heroism, or the body's natural state. In contrast, female nudity is used in many cases as a means of eroticizing and engaging the audience, regardless of the plot development. Female nudity is often manipulated into focus to satisfy the visual desires of male viewers. After that, Regardless of the cultural context, women typically engage in activities closely related to fertility and family relationships, such as caring for children, gathering food, making clothing, and managing household chores. This pattern of division of labor reflects the demands of fertility and survival. Therefore, the stereotype of women is more limited to the social responsibility of bearing and raising

children, so the female body is more assigned to the parts related to sex. Therefore, when the public obtains such gender information with a particular bias, it will cause them to observe and learn from women with high exposure to a lower moral level, thus forming gender role bias, which may lead to the predicted results in this paper

4.2. Theory Model of Three Variables

Two scenarios are proposed in this study. The first scenario is that the cultural level is a moderating variable between sexual attraction and exposure degree. In contrast, sexual attraction is an incomplete mediating variable between moral level and exposure degree.

Second, cultural level acts as a moderating variable between moral level and exposure level, and sexual attraction acts as an incomplete mediating variable between moral level and exposure level.

First of all, according to Lev Vygotsky [13], the individual cognitive process is developed through the mediating role of society and culture, emphasizing the critical role of social interaction, language, and culture in cognitive development. People's social cognition is produced through the interaction between their culture and their individuals, and morality is an integral part of social cognition. Different regional cultural, historical, and religious differences lead to different evaluations of morality. Therefore, demographic variables (race, education level, etc.) are bound to influence people's moral judgments of different exposure levels.

Secondly, due to the different historical development and geographical locations of different regions, it is possible to affect the sexual degree of recognition of different exposure levels. For example, as a fashion capital, Paris, France is known for its highly diverse and avant-garde fashion styles. On the streets of Paris, people can see a variety of sexy clothes in different styles and degrees. In contrast, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, a region that adheres strictly to Islamic teachings, has more conservative dress requirements, and women often opt for traditional clothing that covers the body. At this level, the region variable will act as the mediating variable of the relationship between the level of regulatory attraction and the degree of exposure, and the first hypothetical theoretical model will appear.

However, different population differences will also lead to different judgments of moral level. In areas with a more open culture, people will more commonly see individuals with relatively high exposure, so the specificity of their appearance will be significantly reduced. Demographic variables can reflect an individual's social identity and group identity. Different social and group identities may shape individuals' views and attitudes toward physical exposure and moral evaluation. Individuals may be influenced by the group to which they belong and have a more consistent moral evaluation of body exposure within the group. This leads to a second hypothetical theoretical model.

5. Conclusion

With the development of social class culture and the progress of social system differentiation, globalization has become inevitable. Faster social and technological change means faster cultural collision. Whether it is the difference in social status between men and women or the religious and cultural differences between different regions, it will become an essential factor affecting the development process of globalization. The study of moral judgments and exposure levels can help promote harmony between cultures to adopt a more equitable and rational attitude towards the needs of a few individuals.

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