

IS CASUAL SEX BAD? ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN NON-COMMITTED SEX AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING WITH MARITAL STATUS' MEDIATING EFFECTS AMONG US YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

The association between sexual experience and non-committed relationships have long been a popular topic for discussion. In addition to that, many empirical research results suggest that casual sex motivation and sociosexuality also play crucial roles in the effects of casual sex on people's subjective well-being. This study investigates the associations between having casual sex and the subjective well-being of the participants. This work builds on previous research and has contributions to the field in two major aspects. Firstly, I studied the mediating effects of marital status of participants on their subjective well-being. Secondly, I examined the influence of both motivation and sociosexuality on subjective well-being after casual sex events. Utilizing the data from Add Health, I ran OLS Regression models to test the associations. The results indicate that casual sex experience increases participants' chance of feeling depressed in general. This effect is subject to modifications by the marital status after interaction terms are taken into considerations. People who cohabit with their partners can feel more depressed if they have casual sex while married individuals seem to be less susceptible.

Key Words: Young Adults, Casual Sex, Subjective Well-being, Marital Status .

1. INTRODUCTION

The possible ramifications of non-committed sex on subjective well-being for young adults have long been a topic of concerns. Early research indicates that having casual sex will likely increase stress or depression levels for young people in the United States (Lyons et al. 2014). More recent research discovers that the interactions between having casual sex and subjective well-being is more complicated than a direct and straightforward process. The motivation of having casual sex and sociosexuality have non-negligible impacts on the outcome of having casual sex for subjective well-being (Townsend, Jonason and Wasserman 2020). While autonomous motivation is beneficial for individuals' subjective well-being after casual sex, non-autonomous motivations will make people more stressed and depressed. Regarding the sociosexuality, people with more open attitude and less sensitivity towards sex will gain more positive outcomes from having casual sex. Therefore, in this research, motivations of having casual sex and sociosexuality are important indicators to investigate in order to study the association between casual sex behaviors and subjective well-being.

Few research has investigated the influence of marital status as a potential mediating indicator when studying the associations between having casual sex and subjective well-being. In this study, I included participants' marital status in the model to test its possible mediating effect on subjective well-being. With the data from Add Health and the method of OLS Regression, I developed three models with different variables including motivations & sociosexuality, marital status, and the interactions between them. The results in model 1 indicate that casual sex experience increases participants' depression levels, results in model 2 suggest that marital status also influences participants' subjective well-being, and results in model 3 posit that the effect can be moderated by marital status or marriage history. In addition, factors like motivation, sociosexuality, gender etc. also show considerable effect on subjective well-being.

Marital status and subjective well-being

Getting married is important for individuals' subjective well-being, as evidenced by empirical research which discovered positive impact of marriage on individuals' happiness/life time satisfaction (DeMaris 2018; Diener et al. 2000; Haringhidore et al. 1985) Diener et al. (2000) in their research found that married people typically receive more social support from their marriage and are associated with greater subjective well-being. Their findings combined 58 empirical studies between being married and subjective well-being. The protective effect of marriage is also supported by the research by DeMaris (2018): individuals who are currently married have less distress than the unmarried ones. Diener et al. (2000) found that married persons are more satisfied than the unmarried.

Married people have generally better subjective well-being states/level than cohabiting and single people. Diener et al. (2000) showed that there is a common difference of subjective well-being levels for married and cohabiting people. Soons and Liefbroer (2008) investigated young adults' different subjective well-being across relationship status. They found that single people have the lowest well-being level, followed by young adults who are in relationships, and by cohabitators. Married young adults have the highest level of subjective well-being across all relationship status.

Marital status doesn't impact the subjective well-being singularly. The influence of marital quality is also remarkable. Although Haringhidore et al. (1985) proved the positive influence of marriage on subjective well-being, they also suggested that the efficacy of these benefits is greatly influenced by the satisfaction levels are reduced by the marriage. In addition, the marital quality is strongly associated with individual's overall life evaluations (as reflected in judgments of life satisfaction) and every moment's experiences of happiness (Carr et al. 2014). The association between husband's marital quality and life satisfaction is positively associated with his wife's opinions of the marriage: the association is elevated when his wife reports a happy marriage, and decreased if unhappy.

Casual Sex and Well-being

Having causal sex without a romantic relationship has become increasingly common among young people in the United States. Studies show that 60% to 80% students have had some form

of casual sex experience in their life (Garcia et al. 2012) and between 30% and 50% of them report that their casual sex experiences included sexual intercourse (Paul 2006). Pleasure derived by having sex, simple desires, and substance uses are some of the most obvious reasons for engaging in non-romantic relationships. However, the fact that they are still very young, unable to take responsibility, together with their tendency to frequently move as required by educations or jobs, is one major reason for casual sex to be so common among these people. (Lyons et al. 2014).

When more young people are engaging in casual sex, it is hence more important to study the impact of having casual sex on subjective well-being. There has not been a consensus among the scholars and researchers on this particular subject. Though some research suggests that the difference of impacts on psychological well-being of people from having casual sex and having sex with a committed partner is insignificant (Eisenberg et al. 2009), many other research indicate that casual sex relationships and experiences have negative influence on individuals' subjective well-being and are associated with psychological distress.

The findings of Bersamin et al. (2014) indicated that casual sex is harmful to individuals' well-being and would result in the increase of individuals' psychological distress for both genders. For emerging college students, casual sex relationships and experiences create greater risks for negative psychological consequences. Dube et al. (2017), who divided casual sex relationship and experience into two types, friends with benefits and one-night stands, found that lifetime suicidal tendency is correlated with engagement in the casual sex with friends and continuous participation in both types of casual sex relationship and experience. However, at the time this study shows that this correlation is for young females only, especially for those who are more socially isolated with the need to connect with others for trust and intimacy via casual sex relationship and experience. They also found casual sex relationship and experience result in more drug and alcohol consumptions among these young females. Even if they discontinue their casual sex relationship and experience, they will likely maintain this frequent alcohol and drugs use. Owen and Fincham (2011) found that young adults could harbor negative emotions after casual sex that are related to their depressive symptoms and loneliness.

However, more recent empirical research suggests that the relationship between having casual sex and subjective well-being is sophisticated and even flexible when some factors such as the motivation of having casual sex and sociosexuality are taken into consideration. In the following sections, I will review empirical research that studies the mediating effects of the motivation of having casual sex and the sociosexuality on subjective well-being.

Motivation and socio-sexuality as important factors for subjective well-being

Motivation of having casual sex is also an important factor to study to understand the relationship between casual sex and well-being of young adults. Townsend, Jonason and Wasserman (2020) found that in both genders, the correlation between autonomous motivation with subjective well-being after casual sex is stronger than that of non-autonomous motivation. Autonomous motives commonly refer to participation due to desires that are reproduced internally and reflecting one's own interests and people usually expect pleasure from it. Non-autonomous motives mean engagement in casual sex due to self-imposed or external pressures, or a lack of

sufficient intention to participate in casual sex-people are forced to engage in something they may not be completely willing to. People with lower motivation to engage in casual sex are considered as people with insufficient motivation, which is of non-autonomous motives. Both autonomous and non-autonomous motives lead to females' sexual victimization, but non-autonomous motives bring greater negative effects. Autonomous motivation is positively correlated with female sexual victimization, but not with males. Compared with autonomous motivation, sexual behavior with non-autonomous motivation will lead to lower self-esteem of both genders, and lead to more depression and sexual victimization of women. These findings are further substantiated by Vrangalova (2015) research with one difference. Vrangalova concludes that autonomous hookup motivation would not bring any consequences, no matter positive or negative. Compared to people who do not have casual sex experiences, individuals who have higher non-autonomy in their casual sex experiences usually experience lower subjective well-being, while individuals with lower non-autonomy in their casual sex experiences do not.

Socio-sexuality, which refers to the difference in the individual's willingness to engage in sexual activities in a non-committed relationship, is considered to have moderating influence on subjective well-being. Some research has found that sociosexual unrestricted individuals, otherwise known as people who are more willing to engage in casual sex, usually have better well-being after having casual sex (Bersamin et al. 2014; Vrangalova and Ong 2014).

When determining the number of sexual partners one is expected to have in his or her life, Ostovich and Sabini (2004) found that the sociosexual restriction level is more indicative than the individual's desire to have sex. They also found sapiosexuality is an independent predictor of the lifetime number of sex partners, but the desire for having sex is not. Gender identity is related to women's lifetime number of sex partners. Gender identity is determined as the similarity level an individual acts as the other gender in childhood. Women whose behaviors are more men-orientated in childhood have more sex partners and are less sociosexually restricted. The research by Rodrigues, Lopes and Smith (2017) showed that individuals' commitment to a consensual monogamous relationship would lower the association between socio-sexuality and sex experience outside that relationship, and socio-sexually unrestricted people usually have less satisfaction in a consensual monogamous relationship .

Some empirical research indicates that the effects of motivation and socio-sexuality do not work separately. The socio-sexuality will influence individuals' motivations of engaging in casual sex. Sevi, Aral and Eskenazi (2018), who examined the reasons for using Tinder, a popular online dating application with an unspoken heavy tendency for casual sex, found individuals with higher sexual disgust sensitivity (lower socio-sexuality) had a lower motivation, while people with higher socio-sexuality had a higher motivation for casual sex.

As aforementioned, non-autonomous motivation will lead to more depression among people who have casual sex and individuals with lower socio-sexuality usually have lower motivation to engage in non-committed sex and relationships. Together with these two relationships, it can be reasonably inferred that, people with lower socio-sexuality, and hence lower motivation, which is considered non-autonomous, typically have lower well-being, probably more substance use, and

higher depression after engaging in casual sexes. On the contrary, individuals with higher socio-sexuality have higher motivation to take part in casual sexes, so non-romantic sex experience does not have significant impact on their well-being.

Gender differences in subjective well-being

There is yet a consensus on the impact of genders on subjective well-being after casual sex. Some of the research showed that genders have influence on casual sex/marital status. Social norms have less impact on men, so men tend to have higher subjective well-being than women after non-romantic sex (Dube et al. 2017; Woerner and Abbey 2017)(Jacqueline Woerner and Antonia Abbey, 2016). Dube et al. (2017) found that casual sex experiences increased females' psychological distress and both alcohol and drug consumption, while it did not have the same effects on males. England and Bearak (2014) showed that there indeed exists a double standard: people judge women who have non-romantic sexual behaviors more negatively than men when these other people know that they have had casual sex. In addition, men are free of emotional burdens and judgments to have casual sex (Dube et al. 2017; England and Bearak 2014) while there is generally an attitude of disapproval if women engage in casual sex (Bersamin et al. 2014). The findings of del Rio et al. (2019) indicate that men do have a more unrestricted orientation, which only manifests as sexual desire but not actual sexual behaviors and attitude. However, their findings are not consistent with other studies who suggest women have more unrestricted sociosexual attitudes than men. Some research challenges such conclusions. Carr et al. (2014) suggest gender is not a significant factor in terms of life satisfaction and experienced happiness and Diener et al. (2000) suggests the relations between marital status, culture, and subjective well-being do not differ by gender. Gender did not moderate the associations between casual sex and well-being (Bersamin et al. 2014).

2. DATA AND METHOD

The results and findings of this study are mostly based on the data from the Add Health, which is federally funded and is most comprehensive study of young survey in the world. It longitudinally studies a nationally representative sample of over 20,000 young adults around 13-18 during 1994-1995 in the United States.

Add Health has been followed for five waves and, in this study, I use the data from the Wave IV, the fourth in-home interview that was conducted in 2008 with 15,701 original Wave I respondents. The Wave IV focuses on collecting the data of subjective well-being, sexual behavior and sexual health. The survey questions have expanded, compared to previous waves, to include interpersonal and occupational stressors, loneliness, attitudes about parenting, substance addiction and dependency, emotional content and quality of relationships, and maltreatment during childhood by caregivers. Additional indicators of educational levels and economic status are also included. The individuals from Wave I had become young adults at the time of the Wave IV, around their late twenties or early thirties. It provides an important sample to study the life course from adolescence to adulthood.

Measurement

Subjective well-being

Subjective well-being is measured by whether the respondent feels depressed, which is a four-point scale with 1 being Never or rarely to 4 being most of the time or all of the time.

Motivation variables

In this study, I divide motivation into two categories. The first category is autonomous motive, which means the desire for casual sex is originated from respondents themselves. The second category is non-autonomous motive, which means respondents engage in casual sex with someone not completely willingly due to any internal or external pressure. The type of motivation is measured by a yes/no answer to a question on the survey. Respondents were asked to answer the question: "whether you have been forced to have sex in a non-psychical way?" The answer 'yes' indicates non-autonomous motivation while the answer 'no' indicates autonomous motivation.

Socio-sexuality

Socio-sexuality indicates different levels of acceptance in terms of casual sex. In this study, sociosexuality is measured by the same two variables as in the survey. The first variable is the answer to the question 'have you ever had sex with more than one partner at around one time'. The second is 'have you ever paid someone or being paid for sex', which the participants are required to answer on a four-point scale with the anchors 1 (1 to 2 times) to 4 (26 or more times). Higher scores indicate higher sociosexuality.

Marital status

Marital status is determined by a series of questions about the respondents' current and past relationship participation. To measure the marital status, I generate a variable based on respondents' relationship with each recorded partner. Respondents' marital status are divided into four categories: never married nor cohabitated, cohabitated, married and never divorce/separate/widowed, married but divorce/separate/widowed.

Other control variables

Other control variables in this study include sex, race, age, and total family income of the participants. Previous research identifies the possible effect of gender difference on the subjective well-being, so the gender of participants is controlled in this study. People's subjective well-being may change as time passes, so the age of respondents is also a control variable. Total family income is included due to its mediating effect on people's subjective well-being (Soons and Liefbroer 2008).

Analytical strategy

Three OLS regression models are utilized in this study to examine the associations between having casual sex and subjective well-being. In the first model, the variable measuring the frequency of having casual sex, motivation of having casual sex, sociosexuality and other control

variables are included. In the second model, individual’s marital status is added. In the third model, the interaction term of having casual sex and marital status is added.

3. RESULTS

Descriptive results

The descriptive results are shown in table 1. The age of most of the participants falls between the 27 - 31 bracket, with very small portion of them were 25 or 34. Among them, the family income ranges from \$30,000 to \$149,999, with little gender difference.

It is interesting to find some gender variations regarding marriage and having causal sex. Among the respondents who never married or cohabitated and who currently cohabitate, the ratio of men is higher than women. Among the respondents who are currently married and never divorce/separate/widowed, and who once married but currently divorce/separate/widowed, the ratio difference has been revered: the number of women is higher than that of men. On the contrary, in terms of having causal sex on only one occasion, the proportion of women who never have casual sex is nearly a third higher than that of men, while the proportion of man, who have had casual sex with the number of sexual partners above the national average number of 7, is higher than that of women. It supports the findings of previous research that men are more motivated in having casual sex than women and that marriage is a preferable choice for women than having causal sex.

Men and women also have different performance on socio-sexuality. A total of more than 96.8% of all respondents never paid or were paid for sex. Again, more men than women pay/are paid for sex 1 to 2 times or more. However, in the cases of more than 11 times (*11 to 25 times* and *26 or more times*), the ratio of women is higher than that of men, which may be due to the fact that the number of female sex workers is much higher than that of the other gender. Over 83.9% of the participants never have sex with more than only one person at the same time. However, for those who have had sex with more than one person at the same time, the portion of men is larger than that of women. These two variables may suggest that men generally have higher socio-sexuality than women.

About 96% of the male respondents never had the experience of being forced to have sex in a non-physical way, but around 21.6% of female respondents did have. Women respondents have poorer subjective well-being than men in general according to the data. Women tend to feel depressed, exhausted, and sad more frequently than men. When asked how frequently they feel depressed, 6% more men report never or rarely than do women, while 3.2% more women report sometimes, 1.8% more women report a lot of the time, and 1% more women report most of the time or all of the time than do men.

Table 1 (a): Descriptive statistics

	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total

<i>Past 7 days felt depressed</i>			
Never or rarely	74.2%	68.2%	71.0%
Sometimes	21.2%	24.4%	22.9%
A lot of the time	3.1%	4.9%	4.1%
Most of the time or all of the time	1.5%	2.5%	2.0%
<i>Having sex on only one occasion</i>			
Never	22.40%	29.90%	26.40%
Yes, but below average number	56.90%	57.10%	57.00%
Yes, and above average number	20.70%	13.10%	16.60%
<i>Paid/was paid for sex</i>			
None	96.80%	99.10%	98.10%
1 to 2 times	2.20%	0.60%	1.30%
3 to 10 times	0.90%	0.10%	0.50%
11 to 25 times	0.00%	0.10%	0.10%
26 or more times	0.00%	0.10%	0.10%
<i>Sex with more than 1 person at the same time</i>			
No	79.40%	87.80%	83.90%
Yes	20.60%	12.20%	16.10%
<i>Forced to have sex in a non-psychical way</i>			
No	96.30%	78.40%	86.70%
Yes	3.70%	21.60%	13.30%
<i>Total</i>	100%	100%	100%

Table 1 (b): Descriptive statistics

Sex

	Male	Female	Total
<i>Respondent marital status</i>			
Never married or cohabitated	13.90%	11.00%	12.40%
Cohabitated	39.70%	33.40%	36.30%
Married and never divorce/separate/widowed	42.60%	50.30%	46.70%
Married but divorce/separate/widowed	3.80%	5.30%	4.60%
<i>Family total income</i>			
Less than \$5,000	1.60%	2.50%	2.10%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	1.70%	2.80%	2.30%
\$10,000 to 14,999	2.20%	4.10%	3.20%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	2.70%	3.40%	3.10%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	4.20%	5.20%	4.70%
\$25,000 to \$29,999	4.90%	5.70%	5.30%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	9.30%	10.50%	9.90%
\$40,000 to \$49,999	18.50%	16.00%	17.10%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	23.70%	23.40%	23.50%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	14.80%	13.20%	13.90%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	10.50%	8.90%	9.70%
\$150,000 or more	5.90%	4.40%	5.10%
<i>Race</i>			
White	74.40%	70.90%	72.50%
Black or African American	21.90%	26.00%	24.10%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.80%	0.70%	0.80%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3.00%	2.50%	2.70%

<i>Age</i>			
25	0.10%	0.20%	0.10%
26	8.20%	9.80%	9.00%
27	13.60%	14.70%	14.20%
28	16.30%	18.60%	17.50%
29	18.60%	16.90%	17.70%
30	18.50%	17.00%	17.70%
31	17.00%	16.80%	16.90%
32	6.30%	5.40%	5.80%
33	1.20%	0.40%	0.80%
34	0.20%	0.10%	0.20%
<i>Total</i>	100%	100%	100%

Regression results

Regarding the subjective well-being, participants who have had casual sex with above average number of sexual partners in the USA have about 0.06 points higher than those who never had casual sex, and the impact is significant. For those who have had sex with more than one partner at the same time, they have 0.17 points more than those who do not in terms of the feeling depressed, and the influence is significant. In addition, those who have had the experience of being forced to have sex in a non-physical way show 0.21 points more than those who do not, in terms of the feelingdepressed, indicating that the control variable of motivation is significantly associated with the subjective well-being. As the family total income increases, points of the depressed feeling decline. Those whose family total income is higher than \$5,000 show less feeling of depression than those whose family total income is not, and the impact starts to become significant when the family total income reaches \$15,000. The control variable of gender is also significant, with female has 0.06 points higher than male in terms of the feeling of depression.

Compared to those who never married or cohabitated, the participants who have married before but divorce/separate/widowed show 0.15 points more in terms of the feeling of depression, and, when the marriage history is included in the analysis, the control variable that participants who have had casual sex and above average number of sexual partnersbecome insignificantly associated with the feeling of depression.

In model 3, I include interaction terms between having casual sex and marital status. The result indicates that marital status will modify the associations between having casual sex and feeling of depressed. It is obvious that for those who have had casual sex but with below average number of sexual partners, if they are cohabitating, they have 0.14 higher points in terms of the feeling of depression compared to those who never have casual sex or who are single. This association that is modified by the cohabitating status is significant. Other modifying effects of marital status on the association between having sex and feeling depressed are negative but not significant. It may indicate that having romantic relationship will contribute to the person’s subjective well-being by reducing his/her feeling of depression.

Table 2: OLS with interaction terms

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.
<i>Having sex on only one occasion</i>			
yes, but below average number	0.02	0.02	0.12
yes, and above average number	0.06	0.06	0.17
<i>Paid/was paid for sex</i>			
1 to 2 times	0.03	0.03	0.08
3 to 10 times	-0.03	-0.03	0.09
11 to 25 times	0.37	0.38	0.34
26 or more times	0.36	0.38	0.38
<i>Sex with more than 1 person at the same time</i>			
Yes	0.17	0.17	0.16
<i>Forced to have sex in a non-psychical way</i>			
Yes	0.21	0.21	0.21
<i>Family total income</i>			
\$5,000 to \$9,999	-0.13	-0.13	-0.13
\$10,000 to 14,999	-0.14	-0.13	-0.13

\$15,000 to \$19,999	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40
\$20,000 to \$24,999	-0.37	-0.36	-0.36
\$25,000 to \$29,999	-0.44	-0.43	-0.43
\$30,000 to \$39,999	-0.52	-0.51	-0.50
\$40,000 to \$49,999	-0.51	-0.50	-0.44
\$50,000 to \$74,999	-0.56	-0.56	-0.55
\$75,000 to \$99,999	-0.56	-0.55	-0.55
\$100,000 to \$149,999	-0.64	-0.64	-0.63
\$150,000 or more	-0.64	-0.63	-0.62
<i>Age</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Sex</i>			
Female	0.06	0.06	0.06
<i>Race</i>			
Black or African American	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
American Indian or Alaska Native	-0.07	-0.07	-0.12
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.04	0.05	0.06
<i>Respondent marital status</i>			
cohabitated		0.06	0.20
married and never divorce/separate/widowed		0.05	0.09
married but divorce/separate/widowed		0.15	0.19
<i>Having casual sex ## Marital status</i>			
Below average number#cohabitated			-0.18
Below average number#married and never divorce/separate/widowed			-0.07
Below average number#married but divorce/separate/widowed			-0.08

Above average number#cohabitated					-0.18
Above average number#married and never divorce/separate/widowed					-0.04
Above average number#married but divorce/separate/widowed					0.06
_cons		0.73	0.72	0.65	

4.DISCUSSION

This present research suggests that having had casual sex and above average number typically increase participants’ feeling of depression. Participants’ marital status dynamics, like divorce and separation and widow, also increase their feeling of depression. In addition, with marital status as a control variable, the effect of having casual sex becomes not significant. It may indicate that a person’ marital status can directly influence his/her level of depression. To test how marital status might modify the association between having casual sex and feeling depressed, I include the interaction term in Model 3. The results suggest that the influence of having casual sex on one’s subjective well-being will be modified by the marital status. Having more sex partners will not by itself boost the level of depression but will be fixed by the person’s marital status. For example, for those young people who are currently cohabitating with partners, having some casual sex will not increase their feeling of depression. One possible explanation for this is that these young people are immature and may be still exploring their lifestyles including sexuality. Therefore, they tend to have several experiences of casual sex and it will not cause significant changes of their depression levels.

The present research also examines the influence of the motivation of having casual sex and sociosexuality on subjective well-being. Those who have had the experience of being forced to have sex in a non-physical way generally feel more depressed than those who weren’t, indicating that non-autonomous casual sex has negative impact on the subjective well-being. In terms of sociosexuality, I used two variables to measure the concepts: the number of times paid/was paid for sex and whether they have had sex with more than one person at the same time. The results are not conclusive because of inconsistent influence of these two variables. Having sex with more than one person at the same time is significantly positively associated with the feeling of depression while paid/was paid for sex is not significant. Moreover, this finding is not consistent with previous empirical research. Existing research suggest that higher sociosexuality is positively associated with subjective well-being after having casual sex. However, my findings suggest that higher sociosexuality can also bring about more depression. It could be because existing literatures mainly use subjective attitudes variables to measure sociosexuality but the

present research uses a particular behavior variable. Individuals' attitudes sometimes do not correspond to their actual behavior especially concerning issues which are related to social norms and constrains.

Among the other control variables, gender is also a notable role. I find that women are more depressed than men. Young adults from families with higher income feel less depressed than their peers from less advantaged families, indicating the noteworthy effect of social-economic status.

5. CONCLUSION

As predicted, having casual sex will have negative impact on individuals' subjective well-being. This effect is especially significant for those who have had casual sex more than an average number of times. This paper found that this effect will be modified by individual's marital status or marriage history. The mediating effect of marital status is significant when respondents are cohabitating or have cohabitated before. In this case, having casual sex will make individual feel less depressed. It may be because that young people are exploring their lifestyle and romantic relationship and they choose to cohabitate rather than to get married. Therefore, having casual sex becomes part of their exploration and brings less depression to them.

Motivation and sociosexuality will influence the level of depression. When people engage in casual sex in a non-autonomous way, no matter with friends with benefits or with strangers, they typically show more depression symptoms, more drug and alcohol consumption, as well as lower subjective well-being. Sociosexuality plays a crucial role as well. While previous research suggests that higher sociosexuality is associated to better subjective well-being after having casual sex, this research shows the opposite. People who have had sex with more than one person at the same time feel more depressed. This difference may be due to the fact that previous research mainly utilizes attitudes towards sexual behaviors to measure the sociosexuality while the present research is measuring a particular behavior.

There are some limitations of this research that require further exploration. Firstly, this research utilizes the 2008 wave of ADD Health data which is collected more than 10 years ago. The associations between having casual sex and subjective well-being might change during this decade and further research should be conducted with more recent data. Secondly, this research has identified that the influence of sociosexuality on subjective well-being is inconsistent with previous research. It is because this research uses the variable 'whether have sex with more than one person at a time' to measure the sociosexuality, while existing research mainly use attitudes towards sexual behavior to measure the sociosexuality. I suggest further research should be conducted on sociosexuality and subjective well-being.

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