Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures

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Sexual Interaction System Scale

Publication details
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Published online on: 12 Aug 2010

Accessed on: 12 Jul 2023

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The Sexual Interaction System Scale (SISS) is a self-report instrument designed to measure the quality of a heterosexual couple’s sexual interaction, including specific sexual dysfunctions. It provides a measure of each partner’s perception (i.e., individual's scores), which may then be added for a total couple score. The SISS measures five factors believed to interact during a given sexual encounter.

1. Sexual Functioning encompasses the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) classification of sexual dysfunctions; the subfactors are Desire, Arousal, Orgasm, (and a fourth subfactor for females, Pain Dysfunctions). In systemic terms, sexual responses at each phase of the sexual response cycle, including physiological responses, constitute communication to which the partners are constantly reacting, in part, with their own physiological responses.

2. Attitudinal Set refers to each individual’s attitudes about the purpose and focus of sexual intimacy and the level of maturity that these attitudes reflect—whether self-focused, role focused, or individual connected.

3. Nonsexual Interaction refers to the presence of interactions around territoriality, ranking, attachment, and exploratory/sensory patterns that may either promote or interfere with desired sexual arousal and satisfaction. This factor taps patterns that a couple has established for dealing with these issues in their overall relationship and which may emerge and be communicated during the sexual encounter.

4. Interaction Coordination refers to the partners’ action language that serves to coordinate all aspects of the sexual encounter so as to lead to the desired outcome—arousal and satisfaction. It encompasses verbal and nonverbal behaviors that serve as communicative exchanges that may move the couple’s sexual interaction in the desired direction.

5. Postsexual Interaction refers to the emotional tenor of the relationship following sex. It consists of each partner’s evaluation of the sexual encounter relative to feelings and behaviors of distance versus closeness toward the partner as a result of the sex. These feelings, and behaviors too, constitute communication that is assumed to carry over and impact on the couple’s next sexual encounter.

**Description**

The SISS is distinct from prior sexual functioning inventories in that it focuses on the interaction taking place during the couple’s actual sexual encounters. In spite of the fact that the couple is typically the preferred unit of treatment for sexual dysfunctions, a systemic understanding of a couple’s sexual relationship is a fairly recent development (Schnarch, 1991; Woody, 1992). The five factors were derived in part from Verhulst and Heiman’s (1979) systemic explanation of sexual functioning as an interactional communication process. The SISS consists of 48 statements with responses to be made on a 6-point scale (0 = none, never, does not occur in our relationship to 5 = high, always, always occurs in our relationship). Of these statements, 10 items deal with Sexual Functioning, 7 with Attitudinal Set, 12 with Nonsexual Interaction, 6 with Interaction Coordination, and 10 with Postsexual Interaction. The SISS is appropriate for use with heterosexual couples in clinical practice involving sexual distress, sexual dysfunction, or general relationship problems, and for use in couple premarital and enrichment programs.

**Response Mode and Timing**

Partners are to complete the SISS independently, preferably on the same day, so that they have a common frame of reference (i.e., their most recent two or three sexual encounters with each other). Completion time is approximately 10 minutes. Responses, for hand scoring, are placed on the line in front of each item.

**Scoring**

Directions appear on the Male and Female Scoring/Profile Sheets. These directions indicate the items for which the response must be reversed in value before totaling the items within each factor to obtain the subfactor, factor, and individual scores. Reversed values are placed on the inventory, and these can be totaled on the inventory itself and then transferred to the Scoring/Profile Sheets. The couple score is the sum of both partners’ total individual scores. Individual scores can range from 0 to 225, with higher scores indicating more positive sexual interaction. Maximum scores possible for the factors are Sexual Functioning (50), Attitudinal Set (35), Nonsexual Interaction (60), Interaction Coordination (30), and Postsexual Interaction (30).

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Interaction (50). Plotting scores on the profile allows comparison of the individual’s scores to a Nonclinical sample (N = 58) and to a Sexual Dysfunction sample (Males, N = 20; Females, N = 24). The profiles show mean scores for the Nonclinical sample placed at T-score = 50 and the mean scores of the Sexual Dysfunction sample circled; the latter suggests a cut-off score that may be seen as clinically significant.

Reliability

In a sample of 143 couples, internal consistency, analyzed by the five SISS factors, resulted in Cronbach’s alpha = .90 (Woody & D’Souza, 1994). This coefficient was chosen because, theoretically, a systemic explanation of the sexual encounter holds that the five factors would be correlated.

Validity

Validity was supported by several methods. Face validity was supported by the ratings of six experts on the content of the items of the scale. In addition, in a sample of 143 couples, significant differences were found on the t test between known groups: the Sexual Dysfunction group and the Nonclinical group (t = 7.14, p < .001); and the Sexual Dysfunction group and Other Problems group (t = 2.05, p < .05). Criterion validity was supported by a Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r = .80; p < .001) between the SISS couple score and the couple score on a criterion question dealing with sexual satisfaction. Finally, as expected, a moderate correlation was found between the SISS couple score and the overall couple relationship as measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (r = .61, p < .001; Woody & D’Souza, 1994).

Other Information

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References


Exhibit

Sexual Interaction System Scale (sample items)

Directions. The items in this scale deal with your current sexual relationship with your spouse or regular partner. In answering each item, think of the last few times you engaged in sex with your partner.

For each of the statements, you are to answer for yourself, that is, give a response choice that reflects your own experience, your own opinion, or your own impression. You will answer each item according to a response scale of 0 to 5, which is explained below. Put your answers on the line in front of each item. Please answer all items. See the sample answers, explanations and directions below.

Response choices

For rating your experience or your opinion, select a rating from 0 to 5. The meanings of the ratings are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>None or never on the characteristic described. Does not occur in our relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Extremely high or always on the characteristic described. Always occurs in our relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Answers and Explanations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>I express complaints or negative feelings during sex. This answer means that you gave a rating of 0 because you believe that you never express complaints or negative feelings during sex.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. I worry about the success of my sexual performance.
   This answer means that you gave a rating of 1 because only rarely do you worry about the success of your performance.

2. Female has consistent or recurring genital pain with intercourse. If you are a female, this answer means that you gave a rating of 2 because you occasionally have pain during intercourse. If you are a male, your answer in the response column will be NA, not applicable to you.

If an item describes a behavior that you never engage in or a reaction that you never have in your relationship, remember to look at the scale, as a rating of 0 means none or never, or does not occur in the relationship. The scale makes it possible for you to answer all questions.

Before starting to answer, take a minute to imagine yourself and your partner during the most recent few times you engaged in sex. This should be your frame of reference for answering the questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SISS Factors</th>
<th>Sample Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Functioning</td>
<td>I am interested in sex—willing to get involved, either initiating or responding to partner's initiating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudinal Set</td>
<td>I worry about the success of my sexual performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsexual Interaction</td>
<td>I feel my partner is too possessive of my body during sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Coordination</td>
<td>With actions and/or words, I do what it takes to make sex pleasurable for both of us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsexual Interaction</td>
<td>I feel withdrawn and distant from my partner as a result of sex.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Masculine Gender Identity Scale for Females

RAY BLANCHARD,1 Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

The Masculine Gender Identity Scale for Females (MGIS; Blanchard & Freund, 1983) was developed to measure “masculinity” occurring in homosexual females. Masculine gender identity in females was conceived as a continuous variable, inferable from the extent of an individual’s departure from the usual female pattern of behavior toward the pattern typical of female-to-male transsexuals.

The MGIS was developed as a companion instrument to the Feminine Gender Identity Scale for Males (FGIS; Freund, Lagevin, Satterberg, & Steiner, 1977; Freund, Nagler, Langevin, Zajac, & Steiner, 1974). The FGIS is presented elsewhere in this volume in the article by Freund and Blanchard; differences between the gender identity scales and conventional masculinity-femininity scales are also discussed there.

Description

The MGIS is a self-administered, multiple-choice questionnaire measure. It includes two subscales. The 20 items of Part A mainly concern the examinee’s childhood preference for female versus male playmates, games, and toys; the predilection for stereotypically masculine household chores; childhood fantasies of adult pursuits commonly associated with the male or female sex; and the frequency of frank cross-gender wishes at various ages. Part A may be administered to any female over the age of 17. Part B consists mostly of items concerning cross-dressing and erotic preferences presupposing homosexuality. This subscale, which includes nine items, is only appropriate for homosexual females.

Scale development for both parts was conducted using all-female samples. The initial item pool for Part A was administered to 236 heterosexuals, 44 homosexuals who did not desire sex-change surgery (simple homosexuals), and 50 homosexuals who did (female-to-male transsexuals). From an initial pool of 25 items, those 20 were retained whose part-remainder correlations were greater than or equal to .30. The item pool for Part B was administered only to the 94 homosexual subjects. Because none of the nine items in the pool had a part-remainder correlation less than .30, all were retained.

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