likelihood to sexually harass scale

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The Likelihood to Sexually Harass (LSH) scale was developed to measure men’s proclivities to sexually harass women (Pryor, 1987). The LSH measures a readiness for a specific type of sexually harassing behavior, sexual exploitation (Pryor & Whalen, 1997) or the tendency to use social power for sexual access or gain. Researchers have found that men’s tendency to behave in a sexually exploitative manner toward women may be predicted by the LSH in combination with certain social normative factors that permit or condone such behavior (Pryor, Giedd, & Williams, 1995; Pryor, LaVite, & Stoller, 1993).

Description

The original LSH scale consists of 10 brief scenarios describing social situations in which a male protagonist has the power to sexually exploit a female with impunity. Male respondents are asked to imagine themselves in the role of the protagonist in each scenario. Following each scenario, respondents are asked to rate the likelihood that they would perform an act of quid pro quo sexual harassment. Since its initial publication in 1987, several studies have reported shorter versions of the LSH that have used a subsample.
of the original scenarios. Two-scenario (Isbell, Swedish, & Gazan, 2005; Pryor & Meyers, 2001), four-scenario (in German: Siebler, Sabelus, & Bohner, 2008), and five-scenario versions have been developed (in Italian: Dall’Ara & Maass, 1999; and in Chinese: Lam & Chan, 2007).

Response Mode and Timing

Respondents typically complete the LSH scale anonymously. Ratings of the likelihood of performing sexually harassing behaviors are made on a 5-point Likert-type scale with the anchors Not at all Likely (1) and Very Likely (5). The original LSH scale takes about 15 minutes to complete.

Scoring

In the original 10-scenario version, the likelihood ratings from the key items (see b items in Exhibit) are summed to form a LSH score. Scores range from 10 to 50. In the Italian and German versions, blatant quid pro quo items are not used. Instead, after each scenario participants are asked to rate the likelihood of their performing several more subtle behaviors that could be seen as sexually harassing. Likelihood ratings are averaged across these more subtle items on these versions.

Reliability

Across several studies of college men reviewed by Pryor et al. (1995), the Cronbach alpha for the original LSH scale always exceeded .90. The two-scenario version produced alphas ranging from .74 to .78. The four- and five-scenario versions produced alphas ranging from .74 to .83. Initial principal components analyses of the 10-scenario version produced a single-factor solution (e.g., Pryor, 1987). Although two-factor solutions have been reported sometimes (Perry, Schmidtke, & Kulik, 1998), scales based upon these factors are highly correlated. For this reason, it is recommended that the summed score of the 10 items be viewed as a homogenous measure of men’s proclivity for sexual exploitation.

Validity

Most validity studies have examined all-male samples. Across numerous studies, the LSH has been found to be correlated with self-report scales related to sexual violence, gender roles, and sexuality (Pryor et al., 1995). Some example correlations include the following (all ps < .05). With regard to sexual violence, the LSH scale has been found to correlate with Attraction to Sexual Aggression (r = .38; Pryor & Stoller, 1994) and the Rape Myth Acceptance (r = .37; Begamy & Milburn, 2002). With regard to gender roles, the LSH scale has correlated significantly with Hostile Sexism (r = .27; siebler et al., 2008). With regard to sexuality, the LSH has correlated significantly with endorsing a dominance function of sex (r = .45; Pryor & Stoller, 1994) and the acceptability of premarital sex (r = .29; Lam & Chan, 2007). Pryor (1987) also examined the discriminant validity of the LSH scale. For example, he found a relatively low correlation between the LSH and the Crowne and Marlowe (1964) Social Desirability Scale (r = -.13). Several research teams have examined the connection between the LSH and social cognitive processes. The LSH has been found to correlate with a tendency to cognitively link concepts of sexuality with concepts of social dominance (Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995; Pryor & Stoller, 1994). With regard to behavioral validity, several studies have found that high LSH men behave in a sexually harassing manner toward women in laboratory settings when the men are exposed to social norms accepting or condoning sexual harassment (Pryor et al., 1995; Pryor et al., 1993). Investigators, using a procedure called the computer harassment paradigm, have found that high LSH men are more likely than low LSH men to send unsolicited pornography (Dall’Ara & Maass, 1999) and sexist jokes to women (Siebler et al., 2008) over the Internet. High LSH men are also more likely to report that they have actually engaged in sexually harassing behavior in the past and that they have viewed pornography over the Internet (Lam & Chan, 2007; Pryor & Whalen, 1997).

References

Exhibit

Likelihood to Sexually Harass Scale

Instructions: On the sheets that follow you will find 10 brief scenarios that describe 10 different interactions between males and females. In each case you will be asked to imagine that you are the main male character in the scenario. Then you will be asked to rate how likely it is that you would perform each of several different behaviors in the described social context. Assume in each scenario that, no matter what you choose to do, nothing bad would be likely to happen to you as result of your action. Try to answer each question as honestly as you can. Your answers will be completely anonymous. No one will ever try to discover your identity, no matter what you say on the questionnaire.

Scenario 1

Imagine that you are an executive in a large corporation. You are 42 years old. Your income is above average for people at your job level. You have had numerous job offers from other companies. You feel very secure in your job. One day your personal secretary decides to quit her job and you have the task of replacing her. The personnel department sends several applicants over for you to interview. All seem to be equally qualified for the job. One of the applicants, Michelle S., explains during her interview that she desperately needs the job. She is 23 years old, single and has been job-hunting for about a month. You find yourself very attracted to her. She looks at you in a way that possibly conveys she is also attracted to you. How likely are you to do the following things in this situation?

a. Would you give her the job over the other applicants? (Circle a number to indicate your response.)

1 .......................................................... 2 .......................................................... 3 .......................................................... 4 .......................................................... 5
Not at all Likely Very Likely

b. Assuming that you are secure enough in your job that no possible reprisals could happen to you, would you offer her the job in exchange for sexual favors?

c. Assuming that you fear no reprisals on your job, would you ask her to meet you later for dinner to discuss her possible employment?

Scenario 2

Imagine that you are the owner and manager of an expensive restaurant. One day, while going over the receipts, you discover that one of the waitresses has made some errors in her checks. She has undercharged several customers. The mistake costs you $100. In talking to some of the other employees, you find that the particular customers involved were friends of the waitress. You call her into your office and ask her to explain her behavior. The waitress confesses to having intentionally undercharged her friends. She promises that she will never repeat this dishonest act and tells you that she will do anything to keep her job. The waitress is someone you have always found particularly attractive. She is a divorcée and about 25 years old. How likely are you to do the following things in this situation?

a. Would you let her keep her job?

b. Would you let her keep her job in exchange for sexual favors?

c. Would you ask her to meet you later for dinner to discuss her possible employment?

Scenario 3

Imagine that you are the manager of a shipping company. One day your supervisor asks you to study the possibility of buying several computers for the office. You call up several competing companies that sell computers. Each company sends a sales representative over to your office who describes the company’s products. A salesperson from company “A” calls you and asks to come to your office. You agree and the next day a very attractive woman shows up. She can offer no real reason for buying her company’s products over those of the other companies. However, she seems very sexy. How likely are you to do the following things in this situation?
a. Would you recommend her line of computers?
b. Assuming that you are secure enough in your job that no possible reprisals could happen to you, would you agree to recommend her line of computers in exchange for sexual favors?
c. Given the same assumptions as in the last question above, would you ask her to meet you later for dinner to discuss the choice of computers?

Scenario 4
Imagine that you are a Hollywood film director. You are casting for a minor role in a film you are planning. The role calls for a particularly stunning actress, one with a lot of sex appeal. How likely are you to do the following things in this situation?

a. Would you give the role to the actress whom you personally found sexiest?
b. Would give the role to an actress who agreed to have sex with you?
c. Would you ask the actress to whom you were most personally attracted to talk with you about the role over dinner?

Scenario 5
Imagine that you are the owner of a modeling agency. Your agency specializes in sexy female models used in television commercials. One of your models, Amy T., is a particularly ravishing brunette. You stop her after work one day and ask her to have dinner with you. She coldly declines your offer and tells you that she would like to keep your relationship with her “strictly business.” A few months later you find that business is slack and you have to lay off some of your employees. You can choose to lay off Amy or one of four other women. All are good models, but someone has to go. How likely are you to do the following things in this situation?

a. Would you fire Amy?
b. Assuming that you are unafraid of possible reprisals, would you offer to let Amy keep her job in return for sexual favors?
c. Would you ask Amy to dinner so that you could talk over her future employment?

Scenario 6
Imagine that you are a college professor. You are 38 years old. You teach in a large midwestern university. You are a full professor with tenure. You are renowned in your field (Abnormal Psychology) and have numerous offers for other jobs. One day following the return of an examination to a class, a female student stops in your office. She tells you that her score is one point away from an “A” and asks you if she can do some extra credit project to raise her score. She tells you that she may not have a sufficient grade to get into graduate school without the “A.” Several other students have asked you to do extra credit assignments and you have declined to let them. This particular woman is a stunning blonde. She sits in the front row of the class every day and always wears short skirts. You find her extremely sexy. How likely are you to do the following things in this situation?

a. Would you let her carry out a project for extra credit (e.g., write a paper)?
b. Assuming that you are very secure in your job and the university has always tolerated professors who make passes at students, would you offer the student a chance to earn extra credit in return for sexual favors?
c. Given the same assumptions as in the question above, would you ask her to join you for dinner to discuss the possible extra credit assignments?

Scenario 7
Imagine that you are a college student at a large midwestern university. You are a junior who just transferred from another school on the East coast. One night at a bar you meet an attractive female student named Rhonda. Rhonda laments to you that she is failing a course in English Poetry. She tells you that she has a paper due next week on the poet Shelley, and fears that she will fail since she has not begun to write it. You remark that you wrote a paper last year on Shelley at your former school. Your paper was given an A+. She asks you if you will let her use your paper in her course. She wants to just retype it and put her name on it. How likely are you to do the following things in this situation?

a. Would you let Rhonda use your paper?
b. Would you let Rhonda use your paper in exchange for sexual favors?
c. Would you ask Rhonda to come to your apartment to discuss the matter?
**Scenario 8**

Imagine that you are the editor for a major publishing company. It is your job to read new manuscripts of novels and decide whether they are worthy of publication. You receive literally hundreds of manuscripts per week from aspiring novelists. Most of them are screened by your subordinates and thrown in the trash. You end up accepting about one in a thousand for publication. One night you go to a party. There you meet a very attractive woman named Betsy. Betsy tells you that she has written a novel and would like to check into getting it published. This is her first novel. She is a dental assistant. She asks you to read her novel. How likely are you to do the following things in this situation?

a. Would you agree to read Betsy’s novel?

b. Would you agree to read Betsy’s novel in exchange for sexual favors?

c. Would you ask Betsy to have dinner with you the next night to discuss your reading her novel?

**Scenario 9**

Imagine that you are a physician. You go over to the hospital one day to make your rounds visiting your patients. In looking over the records of one of your patients, you discover that one of the attending nurses on the previous night shift made an error in administering drugs to your patient. She gave the wrong dosage of a drug. You examine the patient and discover that no harm was actually done. He seems fine. However, you realize that the ramifications of the error could have been catastrophic under other circumstances. You pull the files and find out who made the error. It turns out that a new young nurse named Wendy H. was responsible. You have noticed Wendy in some of your visits to the hospital and have thought of asking her out to dinner. You realize that she could lose her job if you report this incident. How likely are you to do each of the following things?

a. Would you report Wendy to the hospital administration?

b. Assuming that you fear no reprisals, would you tell Wendy in private that you will not report her if she will have sex with you?

c. Assuming that you fear no reprisals, would you ask Wendy to join you for dinner to discuss the incident?

**Scenario 10**

Imagine that you are the news director for a local television station. Due to some personnel changes you have to replace the anchor woman for the evening news. Your policy has always been to promote reporters from within your organization when an anchor woman vacancy occurs. There are several female reporters from which to choose. All are young, attractive, and apparently qualified for the job. One reporter, Loretta W., is someone whom you personally find very sexy. You initially hired her, giving her a first break in the TV news business. How likely are you to do the following things in this situation?

a. Would you give Loretta the job?

b. Assuming that you fear no reprisals in your job, would you offer Loretta the job in exchange for sexual favors?

c. Assuming that you fear no reprisals in your job, would you ask her to meet you after work for dinner to discuss the job?

Note. Scoring the LSH: The key items are respondents’ answers to the b item for each scenario. Ratings for these items are simply summed to produce an overall LSH score.

*The following scale is reproduced after each response option.*