

PSYCHOMETRICS

Psychometric Properties of the Orgasm Rating Scale in Context of Sexual Relationship in a Spanish Sample

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ABSTRACT

Background: The Orgasm Rating Scale (ORS) is one of the few self-reported measures that evaluates the multidimensional subjective experience of orgasm.

Aim: The objective of this study was to examine the psychometric properties of the ORS in context of sex-with-partner in a Spanish sample.

Methods: We examined a sample of 842 adults from the general Spanish population (310 men, 532 women; mean age = 27.12 years, SD = 9.8). The sample was randomly divided into two, with a balanced proportion of men and women between each sub-sample. Sub-sample 1 consisted of 100 men and 200 women (33.3% and 66.6%) with a mean age of 27.77 years (SD = 10.05). Sub-sample 2 consisted of 210 men and 332 women (38.7% and 61.3%) with a mean age of 26.77 years (SD = 9.65). The ORS, together with the Sexual Opinion Survey-6 and the Massachusetts General Hospital-Sexual Functioning Questionnaire, was administered online. The survey included a consent form, in which confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed.

Outcomes: Based on exploratory factor analysis, we obtained a reduced 25-item version of the ORS, distributed along 4 dimensions (*affective, sensory, intimacy, and rewards*).

Results: We performed both exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. The Spanish version of the ORS had adequate values of reliability that ranged from .78–.93. The 4 factors explained 59.78% of the variance. The factor structure was invariant across gender at a configural level. Scores from the ORS positively correlated with erotophilia and sexual satisfaction. The scale was useful to differentiate between individuals with orgasmic difficulties and individuals with no difficulties. We found that individuals with orgasmic difficulties showed a lower intensity in the affective, intimacy, and sensorial manifestations of orgasm.

Clinical Translation: This version of the ORS could provide an optimum measure for the clinical assessment to identify individuals with difficulties in their orgasmic capacity, thus, it could be used as screening device for orgasmic dysfunction.

Conclusions: The ORS is an appropriate measure for its use for both research and clinical purposes. As limitations, quota sampling implies that the extent to which the results can be generalized is modest. Measurement invariance did not reach the level of weak invariance, and it was not tested across sexual orientation because most individuals identified themselves as heterosexual. The ORS is a multidimensional measure of the subjective experience of orgasm which has adequate psychometric properties; it is a reliable and valid scale.

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INTRODUCTION

Orgasm constitutes an intense sensation of pleasure that is accompanied by an alteration in consciousness, intense and quick contractions of the genitourinary musculature,¹ and an increase in the respiratory rate, blood pressure, and heart rate.² It is a complex mixture of subjective mental and physical body changes.³ It has also been defined as the subjective statement of having reached a distinct sensorial climax during sexual activity.⁴

Most research regarding orgasm has focused on the examination of its presence or absence, its difficulties, and how important it is for sexual activity.⁵ However, the psychological characteristics of the orgasm experience have received far less attention.^{5–7}

A major difficulty in investigating the orgasm experience has been the lack of a standardized measure of the psychological characteristics of orgasm.⁶ Measures of orgasm have typically been limited either to a dichotomous approach (occurrence or nonoccurrence).⁷ There is currently no universally accepted measure of subjective qualities making up the orgasm experience.^{7,8} There are many studies that highlight the need for this kind of scale.^{5,9–11} In particular, there has been little research about subjective orgasm experience in Spain.⁵ Consequently, no Spanish standardized measures to exclusively assess the orgasm experience exist.

Among the scarce number of measures focused on the subjective experience of orgasm is the Orgasm Rating Scale (ORS).⁷ The ORS is a 40-item self-report adjective-rating scale that quantifies the subjective experience of orgasm. It was developed through research with undergraduate and graduate populations. Exploratory factor analysis of the ratings data resulted in a reduced pool of 28 adjectives; the remaining 12 adjectives included in the current 40-item version reflect aspects hypothesized to be relevant to the orgasm experience (eg, intensity, altered state of consciousness). These items were randomly selected from an initial pool of 60 items and were not specifically examined by the developers.^{7,12} The scale was distributed into 2 dimensions: (1) cognitive-affective, related to evaluative and affective experiences associated to orgasm; and (2) sensory, related to the physiological sensations from orgasm. The scale was designed in a way that orgasm experience is susceptible to be evaluated in 2 sexual contexts: solitary masturbation and/or sex-with-partner. The ORS uses a 6-point Likert scale, in which 0 indicates “does not describe it at all” and 5 indicates “describes it perfectly.” Regarding the psychometric properties, the authors evaluated a 2-dimensional model and reported an internal consistency that ranges from .88–.92.^{7,12} In regards of the external validity of the scale, they reported significant correlations with sexual satisfaction and other aspects of sexual functioning.⁶

There is a lack of standardized measures to evaluate the subjective experience of orgasm in Spanish. Furthermore, no previous research has analyzed the factorial structure of the ORS with data from a Spanish sample. Thus, the goal of the present study was to examine the psychometric properties of the ORS in context of sexual relationships in a Spanish sample.

METHODS

Participants

The sample was composed of 842 adults from the general Spanish population (310 men and 532 women), with ages between 18 and 77 years (mean = 27.12, SD = 9.8). About 65.9% were in a stable relationship. Regarding sexual orientation,

86.7% identified themselves as heterosexual and the remaining individuals identified themselves as bisexual or same-sex oriented.

In order to examine the factorial structure of the ORS, the sample was randomly divided into two, with a balanced proportion of men and women between each sub-sample. Sample 1 consisted of 100 men and 200 women (33.3% and 66.6%) with a mean age of 27.77 years (SD = 10.05). Most of them had a university degree (91.9%), were involved in a relationship (67.4%), and 87% identified themselves as heterosexual. Sample 2 consisted of 210 men and 332 women (38.7% and 61.3%), with a mean age of 26.77 years (SD = 9.65). Most individuals had a university degree (94.3%), were involved in a relationship (65%), and 86.6% identified themselves as heterosexual.

Measures

Sociodemographic Characteristics

This background questionnaire assessed sexual history, age, sex, nationality, sexual orientation, educational level, civil state, and sexual activity.

Orgasm Experience

We used the 40-item version of the ORS⁷ described in the introduction.

Erotophilia

The Sexual Opinion Survey-6¹³ includes 6 items that evaluate the continuum erotophobia-erotophilia. High scores indicate greater erotophilia. In this study, we obtained a Cronbach α value of .73.

Sexual Function

Spanish version of the Massachusetts General Hospital-Sexual Functioning Questionnaire (MGH-SFQ)¹⁴ includes 5 items about sexual functioning. Only items 3 (orgasm) and 5 (sexual satisfaction) were used. Scores from 0–3 (markedly diminished to minimally diminished) show individuals with difficulties, and scores equal to 4 (normal) show no difficulties. Its Cronbach α was .90 in men and .93 in women.

Procedure

First, 4 researchers carried out the linguistic adaptation into Spanish of the ORS. We conducted a forwarded translation.¹⁵ The initial translated version was sent to 4 experts in sexuality, who evaluated the comprehension of the items in the scale. Items that did not reach at least 85% agreement regarding content comprehension were modified: “immersing,” “flowing,” “shooting,” and “swelling.” After expert judgment, we conducted a pilot study where 20 adults (10 men and 10 women) were asked about the understanding of this version. In case participants did not understand some items, they were asked to specify which particular aspects or words were ambiguous. The following items were modified: “elated,” “immersing,” “spurting,” “building,”

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