

## Personality Characteristics of Women With Negative Sexual Attitudes

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### Abstract

**Introduction.** Conceptual issues in studying personality characteristics of women that contribute to their successful self-realization as a subject of sexual behaviors are especially important today. A decrease in sexual segregation should have led to women's satisfaction with the significant easing of moral standards related to manifestations of their sexuality. However, there is an increase in the number of women seeking help for their sexual problems. This study examines a sample of women with negative sexual attitudes and investigates their specific personality characteristics.

**Methods.** A sample of 152 women (clients of crisis and counseling centers in Irkutsk) took part in this study. The study used the following techniques: (a) Eysenk Inventory of Attitudes to Sex (EIAS) to examine women's sexual attitudes and (b) Cattell Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16 PF, Form C) to identify personality profiles of women with different sexual attitudes. Fisher's F test was used to test the significance of differences.

**Results.** Six groups of women with positive and negative attitudes towards various aspects of the sexual sphere were identified. Sexual aversion was observed in 15.38 % of the respondents. Significant differences between women with negative and positive attitudes towards physical sexual contact were determined using the 'femininity/masculinity' factor. This factor is responsible for the severity of traditional female sexual behaviors, adherence to strict moral standards, which is consistent with low scores on the EIAS ('permissiveness', 'impersonal sex', 'sexual excitability', and 'sexual libido').

**Discussion.** Traditional feminine views of sexuality, desire to save a marriage, and intolerant attitudes towards everything shameful are prevalent among women with negative sexual attitudes. Rigidity in thinking, high-normative behaviors, subordination, shyness, self-restraint in emotional manifestations, and flight into internal illusions are prevalent in personal profiles of women with negative sexual attitudes.

### Keywords

attitude, sexuality, sex, sexual behavior, female sexuality, femininity, sexual attitudes, relation to sex, gender individuality, normative behaviors

## Highlights

- ▶ Traditional feminine views of sexuality, desire to establish personal relationships between partners, desire to save a marriage, and intolerant attitudes towards everything 'immoral' and 'shameful' prevail among women with negative sexual attitudes.
- ▶ As a rule, women with negative sexual attitudes have low sexual sensitivity and excitability.
- ▶ Women with extremely negative sexual attitudes demonstrate increased sensitivity, romanticism, anxiety, vulnerability, tendency towards depression, guilt, dissatisfaction with themselves, and anxiety as a personality trait.

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## Introduction

Conceptual issues in studying personality characteristics that contribute to women's successful adaptation and self-realization as a subject of sexual behaviors are of particular importance today. Global changes in society that took place in the 20th century affected economic, political, and cultural spheres which determined changes in women's self-consciousness. Issues in gender differences between men and women are currently transformed into issues in gender individuality, as indicated by Il'in (2007). Peplau (2003), Hunger (1996), Ellis (2010), Sathyanarana Rao & Nagaraj (2015) note that sexuality has also undergone significant changes, and many of its psychological 'foundations' have changed.

Breaking gender stereotypes leads to transformations in marriage, family, and partnership relations, affects the sexual sphere, which changes women's relation to sex (Chalova, 2015, 2016). A decrease in sexual segregation should have led to women's satisfaction with the significant easing of moral standards related to manifestations of their sexuality. However, the picture is different in practice. Sexologists assert that along with an increase in the level of sexual culture and awareness of sex issues there is an increase in the number of women seeking help for their sexual problems (Gusakova, 2010; Deryagin, n.d.; Deryagin, Sidorov, & Solov'ev, 2003; Bass, 2016; Krishtal, n.d.). On the one hand, this speaks in favour of overcoming uneasiness in discussing this topic and increasing interest in issues of female sexuality. On the other hand, this indicates more deep mechanisms underlying female sexual problems than a simple lack of information on various aspects of sexual life (Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1998; Chalova, 2015, 2016).

Modern slogans about women's equal rights, including issues of sexual self-determination, pose a challenge to women who have been brought up in an atmosphere of rigid gender stereotypes that transmit a woman's passive role. This requires the rearrangement of internal personality constructs, including existing sexual attitudes. Studies on women's reproductive attitudes, their relation to motherhood, preservation of virginity, and sexual deprivation show the duality of this issue and the presence of intrapersonal conflicts, which lead to difficulties in women's adaptation

to modern conditions (Markova, n.d.; Nashkoev & Il'ina, 2000; Nokhurov, 1988; Popova, 2006; Temkina, 2002; Renshaw, 2001). In particular, Amaro (1995) makes the point that modern women have distortions in sexual attitudes in the context of the risk of HIV infection.

Geer & Robertson (2005), Fisher, White, Byrne, & Kelley (1988), and Hispanic researchers García-Vega, Rico, & Fernández (2017) have convincingly shown that sexual attitudes not only determine women's behaviors, but also form their personal qualities.

The role of sexual attitudes in sexual fantasies is illustrated by Hsu, Kling, Kessler, Knapke, Diefenbach, & Elias (1994).

Rammsayer, Borter, & Troche (2017), Petersen & Hyde (2010), Meston & Ahorld (2010) described specific characteristics of sexual attitudes in women of different ethnic groups, taking into account the factor of age and education.

In general, little attention has been devoted to detailed and comprehensive studies of personality characteristics of women with different sexual attitudes. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine personality characteristics of women with negative sexual attitudes.

The main hypothesis of the study was that women with negative sexual attitudes have specific personality characteristics. In particular, we assumed that negative sexual attitudes have positive associations with certain personality characteristics including shyness, anxiety, social withdrawal, highly normative behaviors, rigidity in thinking, sensitivity, and dreaminess.

## Methods

The empirical study involved 152 women (clients of crisis and counseling centers in Irkutsk). The sample was formed in accordance with stratometric selection. The female respondents were selected taking into account their education, social status, and marital status: balancing of the stratometric layers was achieved at the level of 50–50 % in terms of education, 30–40 % in terms of age, 40–60 % in terms of income, and 50–50 % in marital status. The stratometric approach to sampling made it possible to achieve relative independence of the results obtained in the study from the formal characteristics of female respondents. The mean age of female respondents was 42 years.

The following psychological diagnostic techniques were used in the study: (a) Eysenk Inventory of Attitudes to Sex (EIAS) and (b) Cattell Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16 PF, modified version, Form C) (Eysenck & Wilson 2000; Rukavishnikov & Sokolova, 2002).

The women's sexual attitudes were examined using the Inventory of Attitudes to Sex which also made it possible to forecast satisfaction with marriage, deviations in sexual behaviors, and to diagnose femininity/masculinity.

The EIAS does not contain a scale directly assessing sexual attitudes. The analysis of attitudes was based on a generalization of the values of the 'permissiveness', 'sexual excitability', 'pornography', 'impersonal sex', 'physical sex', 'sexual shyness', 'chastity', and 'sexual aversion' scales which indicate subjects' attitudes to various aspects of the sexual sphere. This is entirely justified, because a sexual attitude is not only a willingness to sexual behaviors for satisfying a physiological need but a complex socio-psychological mechanism consisting of behavioral acts, attitudes, judgments, assessments, and individual viewpoints. In addition, the formation of a sexual attitude is influenced not only by biological but also environmental factors, including psychological, social, economic, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual, which manifest themselves in women's attitudes towards various aspects of the sexual sphere, estimated by the questionnaire.

The keys for each scale of the EIAS contain scores that enable us to divide the sample into

groups of subjects with clear positive and negative attitude to various aspects of the sexual sphere and those with not clear poles of sexual attitudes. In this regard, at the first stage of the study we determined women's positive and negative sexual attitudes according to the results of the 'pornography', 'physical sex', and 'sexual aversion' scales. The scores on these scales were distributed to opposite poles, up to the maximum score. Therefore, we identified women with pronounced positive and negative attitudes towards aspects of the sexual sphere studied by these scales.

According to the results on the 'permissiveness', 'sexual excitability', 'impersonal sex', 'sexual shyness', and 'chastity' scales, the data are in the range of low and medium scores, which is not of interest for our study.

Fisher's F test was used to test the significance of differences.

## Results

We distinguished six groups of women who have positive and negative attitudes towards various aspects of the sexual sphere such as pornography, real sexual contact ('physical sex' scale), and sexuality ('sexual aversion' scale).

The first group included subjects who scored from 6 to 8 points on the EIAS 'pornography' scale. These were women with a pronounced positive attitude towards pornography, who derive pleasure from drawings or photographs depicting sexual scenes, or verbal descriptions of sexual scenes, usually in the most explicit form. Women of the first group had high scores on the 'sexual libido' scale (~21 points) and average scores on the scale of 'femininity/masculinity' (~26 points).

The second group included subjects who scored from 0 to 3 points on the 'pornography' scale. These were women with a pronounced negative, disapproving attitude to pornography. They were also characterized by low scores on the scales of 'permissiveness', 'impersonal sex', and 'sexual libido'. The scores on the 'femininity/masculinity' scale are low, which indicates pronounced feminine qualities in this group of women.

The respondents who scored from 3 to 6 points on the 'pornography' scale were excluded from the study, because their preferences were not clearly expressed. As a result, the sample was divided into three uniform groups as follows: 32.69 % of the subjects showed positive attitudes towards pornography, 34.62 % of the subjects showed negative attitudes towards pornography, and 32.69 % of the subjects showed intermediate attitudes towards pornography (Fig. 1).

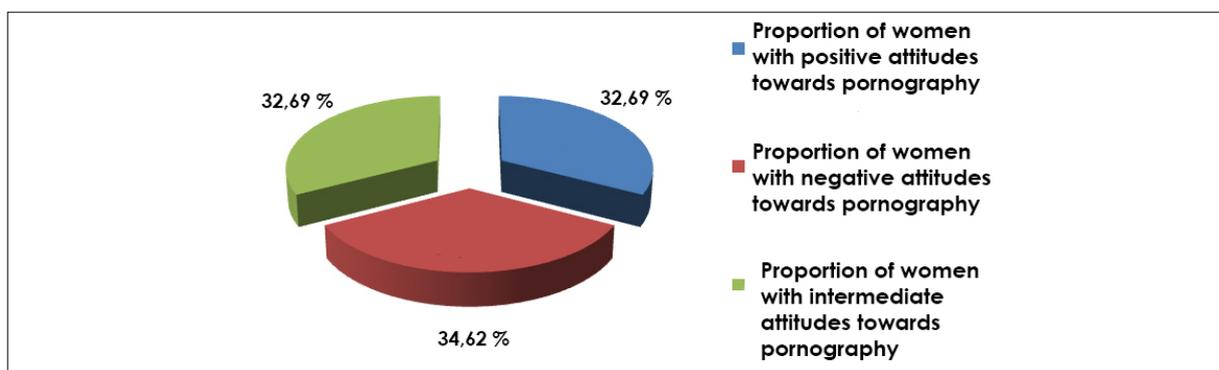


Figure 1. Proportion of women with different poles of attitudes towards pornography in the sample

The third group included the respondents who scored greater than 6.5 points on the 'physical sex' scale. These were women with a pronounced active desire for real sexual contact; they place sex above everything else and pay special attention to sexual intercourse at the expense of other aspects of love relationships.

The fourth group included subjects who scored less than 3 points on the 'physical sex' scale. These were women who avoided real sexual intercourse; spiritual communication was more preferable for them. Subjects who scored from 3 to 6.5 points on the 'physical sex' scale were excluded from the study because their preferences were not clearly expressed.

Thus, we found that 25 % of the female respondents showed a pronounced positive attitude towards sex and the desire for physical contact, 17.31 % of the subjects showed an extremely negative attitude towards physical contact, and 57.69 % of the subjects demonstrated intermediate attitudes towards physical sexual contact (Fig. 2).

The fifth group included the subjects who scored greater than 4.5 points on the 'sexual aversion' scale; these women react with disgust to certain types of sex, even with their regular partners.

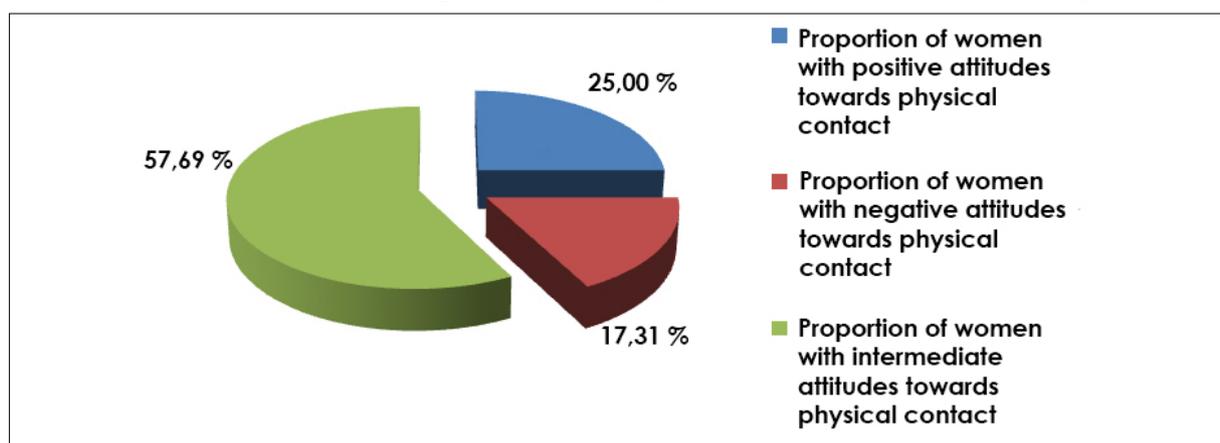


Figure 2. Proportion of women with different poles of attitudes towards physical sexual contact in the sample

The sixth group comprised the subjects who scored less than 2 points on the 'sexual aversion' scale.

After testing we found that the proportion of women with positive attitudes towards manifestations of sexuality is 26.92 %, 15.38 % of the subjects showed sexual aversion, and 57.69 % of the subjects showed intermediate attitudes towards manifestations of sexuality (Fig. 3).

At the next stage of the study, we examined sixteen personality traits in women from the six groups and analyzed an additional factor of self-appraisal: A – the level of interpersonal sociability; B – intelligence; C – emotional instability/emotional stability; E – subordination/dominance; F – self-restraint/expressiveness; G – the degree of acceptance of moral standards: consciousness/unscrupulousness; H – shyness/courage; I – sensuality/resoluteness; L – suspicion/credulity; M – dreaminess/practicality; N – straightness/diplomacy; O – calm/anxiety; Q1 – radicalism/conservatism; Q2 – conformism/non-conformism; Q3 – low self-control/high self-control, strong will; Q4 – relaxation/emotional tension; MD – self-appraisal.

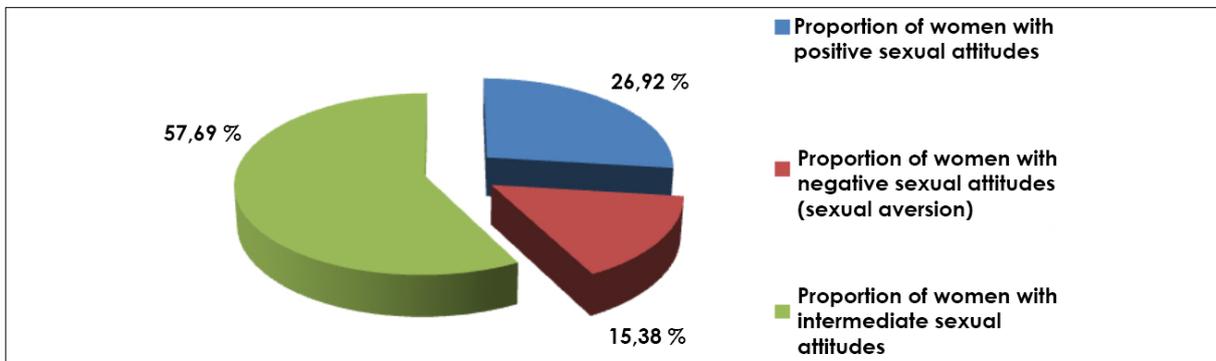


Figure 3. Proportion of women with different poles of attitudes towards manifestations of sexuality in the sample

The analysis of the distribution of the Cattell questionnaire factors in the averaged profiles of women with negative and positive attitudes towards pornography (Fig. 4) enabled us to conclude that compared to women who approve of pornography the following personality traits are more pronounced in the profiles of those with negative attitudes towards this aspect of the sexual sphere: openness (A), emotional stability (C), consciousness (G), radicalism (Q1), independence (Q2), shyness (H), and compliance (L). We also observed lower scores on the intelligence scale (B) and higher self-esteem (MD). Taking into account the data from the EIAS we assume the correspondence to feminine behaviors in sexual issues. This is consistent with data from Husain & Qureshi (2016), who studied the impact of attitudes towards pornography on women’s family relationships.

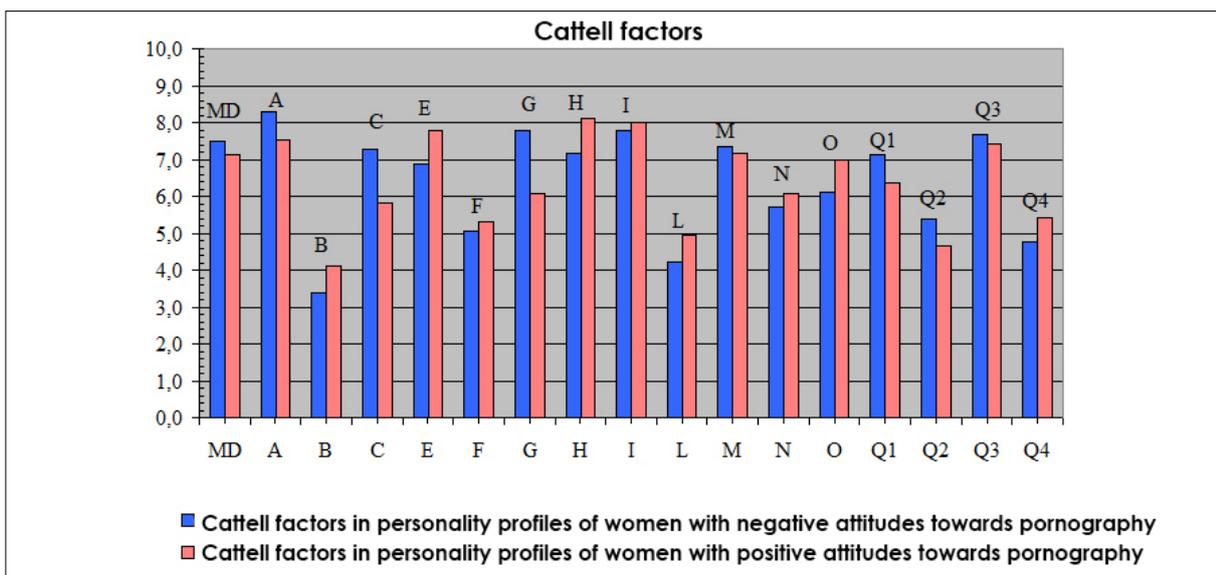


Figure 4. Averaged profiles of women with positive and negative attitudes towards pornography (Cattell Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, 16 PF)

The results for statistical verification of differences are presented in Table 1.

Factor	Designation	$F_{emp.}$	$p$
<b>MD</b>	Adequate self-esteem / inadequate self-esteem	2,11	0,05
A	Unsociability/sociability	1,55	
<b>B</b>	Concrete (rigid) thinking / abstract thinking	2,11	0,05
C	Emotional instability / emotional stability	1,55	
E	Subordination/dominance	1,27	
F	Self-restraint/expressiveness	0,86	
<b>G</b>	Low-normative behavior / high-normative behavior	1,88	0,05
<b>H</b>	Shyness/courage	2,46	0,01
I	Sensuality/resoluteness	0,21	
<b>L</b>	Suspicion / credulity (compliance)	1,89	0,05
M	Dreaminess/practicality	0,14	
N	Straightness/diplomacy	0,92	
O	Calm/anxiety	0,49	
Q1	Radicalism/conservatism	0,93	
Q2	Conformism/non-conformism	0,16	
Q3	Low self-control / high self-control	0,85	
Q4	Relaxation / emotional tension	0,84	

At the 1 percent significance level we observed significant differences in factor H in the profiles of women with different attitudes towards pornography. At the 5 percent significance level we observed significant differences in factors B, G, L and MD in the profiles of women with different attitudes towards pornography. As mentioned above, these factors are associated with rigidity of thinking, high normative behavior and self-control, shyness, compliance and high self-esteem in the profiles of women with negative attitudes towards pornography.

In addition, at the five percent significance level, we observed significant difference in the ‘femininity/masculinity’ factor between women with different attitudes towards pornography, which is associated with traditional feminine sexual behaviors corresponding to the gender stereotypes described in the literature. These results agree with low scores on the EIAS, including ‘permissiveness’, ‘impersonal sex’, ‘sexual excitability’, and ‘sexual libido’, and with the data obtained from the 16 PF on high-normative behavior, self-control, shyness, and compliance.

It is easy to notice that all these factors correspond to the qualities of a conscientious, responsible person, with a developed sense of duty, who observe generally accepted moral rules and norms but is, however, socially passive, cautious, shy. Such a person finds it difficult to accept the new, especially in the sexual sphere due to some rigidity of thinking and shyness.

In addition to the above stated personality traits, women with negative attitudes towards pornography are sociable, emotionally stable, restrained, sensitive, have a rich imagination, are dependent on the opinions and requirements of the group, are not frustrated. This is also true for women with positive attitudes towards pornography.

The analysis of the distribution of the Cattell sixteen factors in the averaged profiles of women with negative and positive attitudes towards physical sexual contact (Fig. 5) indicated that such personality traits as subordination (E), self-restraint (F), compliance (tolerance) (L), and dreaminess (M) are prevalent in the profiles of women who avoid physical sexual contact. We obtained higher scores on the ‘self-esteem’ scale (MD). The EIAS results enabled us to assume the correspondence to feminine behaviors in sexual issues.

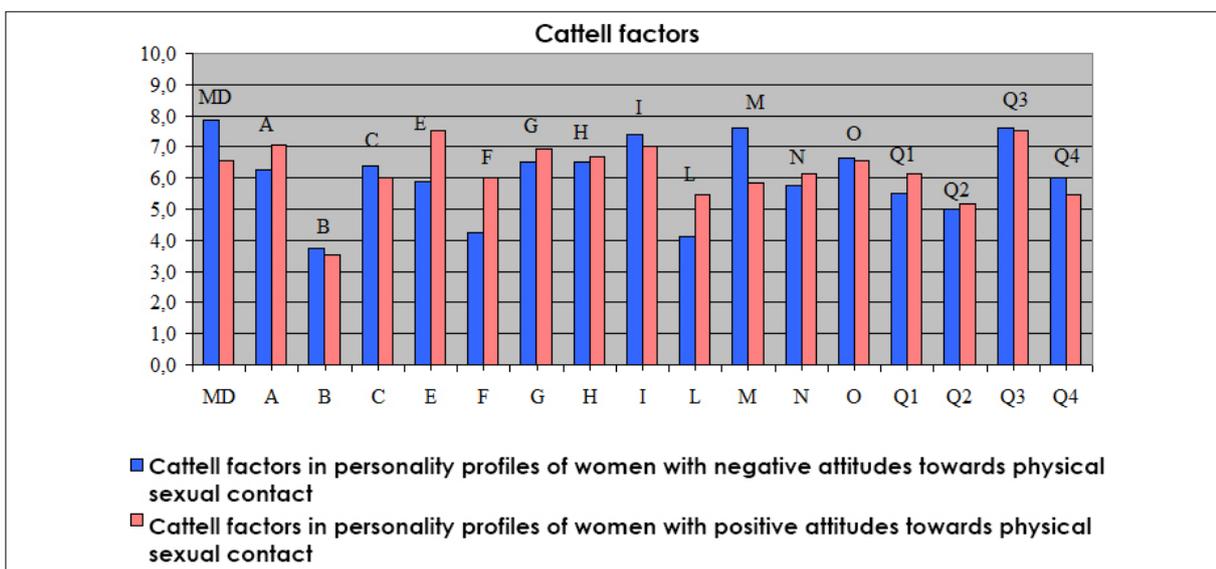


Figure 5. Averaged profiles of women with positive and negative attitudes towards physical sexual contact (Cattell Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, 16 PF)

The results for statistical verification of this aspect of the sexual sphere are presented in Table 2. At the 1 percent significance level we observed significant differences in factors L and M in the profiles of women with different attitudes towards physical sexual contact. At the 5 percent

significance level we observed significant differences in factors E and F in the profiles of women with different attitudes towards physical sexual contact. In the profiles of women who avoid physical sex, these factors are associated with the following characteristics: obedience, submission, shyness, prudence, self-restraint in emotional manifestations, tolerance, compliance, as well as dreaminess and flight into illusions.

Table 2

*Empirical values for Fisher's F test in the profiles of women with negative attitudes towards physical sexual contact*

Factor	Designation	$F_{emp}$	$p$
MD	Adequate self-esteem / Inadequate self-esteem	0,53	
A	Unsociability/sociability	0,7	
B	Concrete (rigid) thinking / abstract thinking	0,1	
C	Emotional instability / emotional stability	0,3	
<b>E</b>	Subordination/dominance	2,26	0,05
<b>F</b>	Self-restraint/expressiveness	2,04	0,05
G	Low-normative behavior / high-normative behavior	0,41	
H	Shyness/courage	0,31	
I	Sensuality/resoluteness	1,44	
<b>L</b>	Suspicion / credulity (compliance)	2,61	0,01
<b>M</b>	Dreaminess/practicality	2,98	0,01
N	Straightness/diplomacy	0,65	
O	Calm/anxiety	0,65	
Q1	Radicalism/conservatism	0,31	
Q2	Conformism/non-conformism	0,29	
Q3	Low self-control / high self-control	0,1	
Q4	Relaxation / emotional tension	1,08	

Such women, as a rule, have their heads in the clouds and wait for their prince. The above factors correlate with each other and correspond to the qualities of a gentle, dependent, flexible woman who is ready to give up her desires for the sake of a partner, but dreams of her one and only one man who will correspond to her inner expectations of romantic relationships. We may assume that women with such a personality portrait are immature and use such psychological defenses as flight into fantasy to protect their fragile inner world.

At the 5 percent significance level we observed significant differences in the 'femininity/masculinity' factor between women with negative and positive attitudes towards physical sexual contact. As mentioned above, this factor is associated with traditional female sexual behaviors, adherence to strict moral standards and attitudes, which is also consistent with the data obtained by the 16 PF and low scores on the following scales of the EIAS: 'permissiveness', 'impersonal sex', 'sexual excitability', and 'sexual libido'.

In addition to the above personality traits, women who avoid physical sexual contact are characterized by emotional stability, rigidity, and the ability to control their emotions and behaviors. Lower scores for factor A indicate difficulties in establishing interpersonal, direct contacts, excessive strictness in assessing people, which may also be associated with the presence of a negative past experience related to violence in a woman's life. Similarly to women who seek physical sex, those who avoid physical sexual contact are sensitive, diplomatic, calm, conservative, sociable, and non-frustrated.

The analysis of the distribution of the Cattell sixteen factors in the averaged profiles of women with negative and positive attitudes towards manifestations of sexuality (Fig. 6) indicates that such personality traits as shyness (H), sensitivity (I), compliance (tolerance) (L), dreaminess (M), anxiety (O), and higher self-esteem (MD) are more pronounced in personality profiles of women with sexual aversion.

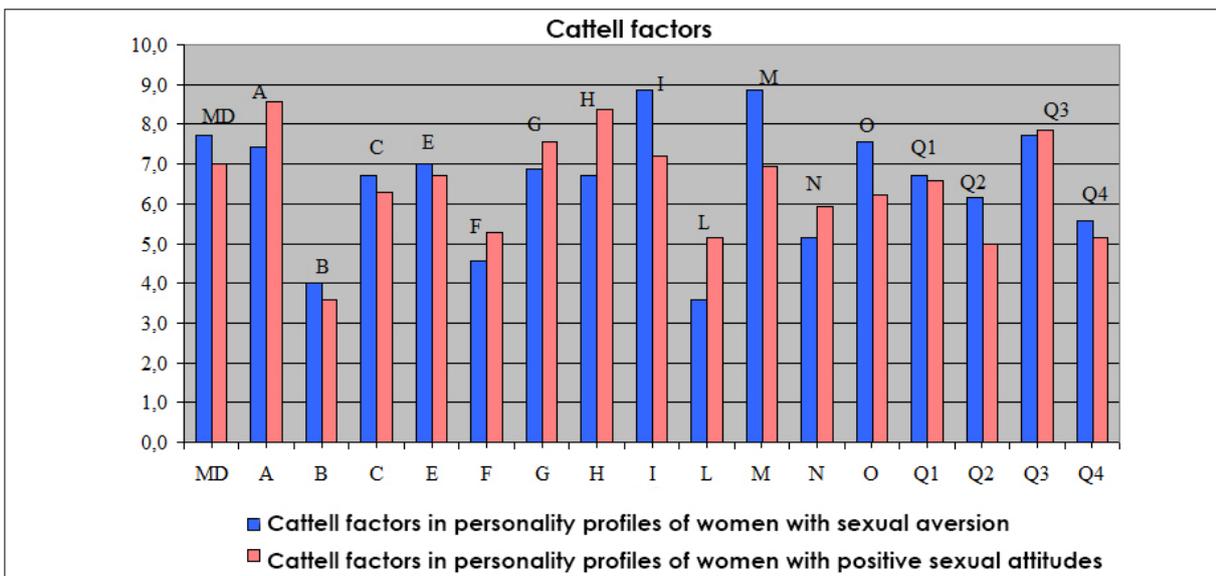


Figure 6. Averaged profiles of women with positive and negative attitudes towards manifestations of sexuality (Cattell Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, 16 PF)

Table 3 shows statistics for this parameter.

Table 3			
<i>Empirical values for Fisher's F test in the profiles of women with sexual aversion</i>			
<u>Factor</u>	<u>Designation</u>	$F_{emp}$	$p$
MD	Adequate self-esteem / inadequate self-esteem	0,86	
A	Unsociability/sociability	1,23	
B	Concrete (rigid) thinking / abstract thinking	1,37	
C	Emotional instability / emotional stability	1,22	
E	Subordination/dominance	0,25	
F	Self-restraint/expressiveness	0,19	
G	Low-normative behavior / high-normative behavior	0,08	
<b>H</b>	Shyness/courage	1,76	0,05
<b>I</b>	Sensuality/resoluteness	1,94	0,05
L	Suspicion / credulity (compliance)	1,59	
<b>M</b>	Dreaminess/practicality	1,83	0,05

Table 3

*Empirical values for Fisher's F test in the profiles of women with sexual aversion*

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Designation</u>	$F_{emp}$	$p$
N	Straightness/diplomacy	1,18	
O	Calm/anxiety	1,83	0,05
Q1	Radicalism/conservatism	0,08	
Q2	Conformism/non-conformism	0,19	
Q3	Low self-control / high self-control	1	
Q4	Relaxation / emotional tension	0,59	

At the 5 percent significance level we observed significant differences in factors H, I, M, O in the profiles of women with different attitudes towards sexuality.

These factors are responsible for the degree of manifestation of certain traits in the profiles of women, including shyness, timidity, emotional restraint, increased sensitivity, romanticism, dreaminess, focus on one's inner world, anxiety, vulnerability, and tendency towards depression, as described above. Guilt and self-discontent may be also observed. We may assume that women with such a personality profile are excessively sensitive, fearful, feel insecure when communicating with others, find it difficult to establish contacts, especially in partnerships, because of subtle emotionality and, possibly, neuroticism (high scores on scale I). Due to the feeling of vulnerability and excessive claims to a partner, they avoid sexual relations as the most traumatic for their inner world, which correlates with low scores on scale F, which is associated with caution in choosing a communication partner. We may assume a higher cultural level, an artistic type of personality and anxiety as a property of personality in women of the studied group. The above conclusions are consistent with higher scores on the 'sexual neuroticity' scale of the EIAS, which may indicate a certain imbalance or functional changes in the behavior of women with sexual aversion. Low scores on the 'sexual excitability' scale indicate the need for a number of certain conditions to get into a state of sexual arousal, which is associated with high emotionality and sensitivity of women in this group. All of the above may be associated with the presence of a negative experience related to violence in women who avoid physical sexual contact.

Similar to women with negative attitudes towards pornography, in the personal profiles of those with negative attitudes towards the manifestation of sexuality we observed high scores on the

scales of emotional stability (C), normative behavior (G) and self-control (Q3), which determines the degree of volitional characteristics.

On the 'femininity/masculinity' factor we did not observe any significant differences between women with sexual aversion and women with positive sexual attitudes.

Despite a number of significant differences, women with negative attitudes towards manifestations of sexuality and those with positive sexual attitudes are sociable, independent; they are characterized by the independence of judgments, views, and behaviors.

## Discussion

Thus, traditional (feminine) views on sexual behaviors, desire to establish personal relationships between partners, desire to save a marriage, and intolerant attitudes towards everything immoral and shameful are prevalent in women with negative sexual attitudes. As a rule, they have low sexual sensitivity and excitability.

Such personality traits as high, sometimes inadequate self-esteem, rigid thinking, high-normative behavior, subordination, shyness, prudence in choosing a partner, self-restraint in emotional manifestations, as well as dreaminess, flight into illusions are prevalent in personality profiles of women with negative sexual attitudes.

Along with the above personality characteristics women with extremely negative sexual attitudes are characterized by increased sensitivity, tendency towards romanticism, anxiety, vulnerability, and tendency towards depression. Guilt and self-discontent may be also observed.

The results confirm the main hypothesis that women with negative sexual attitudes have specific personality characteristics.

The theoretical and practical data obtained in this study may be used in counseling to predict negative sexual attitudes and to develop appropriate correctional programs, as well as in the practice of upbringing and psychological support of teenage girls by leveling the factors that contribute to the formation of negative sexual attitudes.

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