The Relationship between Women's Objectification of Women and Self-objectification: Parallel Mediating Effect of Sexual Objectification and Self-Esteem

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BACKGROUND

Since the publication of Fredrickson and Robert's (1997) study on objectification theory as well as the subsequent publication regarding self-objectification (Fredrickson et al. 1998), research has blossomed on the influences and effects of objectification. The majority of the objectification literature thus far has focused on how either men or society in general (e.g., social media) sexually objectify women (Calogero 2004; Fredrickson et al. 1998; Swim et al. 2001) and how sexual objectification comes to be internalized as self-objectification in many girls and women. However, research on the phenomenon of women objectifying other women is growing (e.g., Gurung and Chrouser 2007; Strelan and Hargreaves 2005) and there are few scales to assess this phenomenon. Parent et al. (2020) developed an assessment of women's experiences of objectification by other women. And then Chinese version of the Women's Objectification of Woman Scale (WOWS) was developed on the work of Parent et al. to explore the utility of the construct of women's objectification of women within relevant theoretical frameworks.

GOALS

To explore the relationship between women's objectification of woman and self-objectification, as well as the mediating effect of the sexual objectification and self-esteem in the relationship among Chinese female college students .

METHODS

398 (19.22±1.19 years) Chinese female college students were surveyed with the Chinese version of Women's Objectification of Women Scale (WOWS), the Body Surveillance subscale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS), Interpersonal Sexual Objectification Scale (ISOS), and Self-Esteem Scale (SES).

DISSCULTION

Theoretical implications
There are a number of theoretical contributions in this study. Extant studies mostly focused on how either men or society in general (e.g., social media) sexually objectify women. However, women may also contribute to the objectification of other women. This study confirms this phenomenon and finds the relationship between women's experiences of objectification by men, other women and themselves. So this finding not only provides a different perspective to know the factors that influence the extent to which women are objectified, but also reveals mediating effect of the self-esteem which is helpful for expanding the nomological network of objectification theory.

Practical implications
It is helpful for us to know how to reduce the negative impact of objectification on women and girls.

Limitations and future directions
The relationship between sexual objectification and self-esteem in this study is not found as usual. The reason is probably that the scales of assessing sexual objectification are different. But future studies can consider designing an experiment to confirm it and to reveal more mechanism according to objectification theory.

CONCLUSION

The results suggest that women's objectification of woman has a positively predictive effect on self-objectification, and the influence can be achieved by the indirect effect of sexual objectification and self-esteem. (see figure 1)

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RESULTS

(1) Women's objectification of women had a significant relation with self-objectification, sexual objectification and self-esteem. (see table 1)
(2) Sexual objectification and self-esteem were significantly correlated with self-objectification.
(3) Bootstrap test showed that the indirect effects of sexual objectification and self-esteem were 0.232 and 0.070. (see table 2 and table 3)

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, and correlations (N=380)

Variables	M±SD	1	2	3	4
1.Women's objectification of woman	12.51±2.88	1			
2.Self-objectification	32.50±8.83	0.15**	1		
3.Sexual objectification	21.89±5.28	0.39***	0.22***	1	
4.Self-esteem	30.03±4.37	−0.20***	−0.13**	−0.04	1

Note. * $P<0.05$, **$P<0.01$, *** $P<0.001$, the same bellow.

Table 2

Regression results

Dependent variables	Independent variables	R^2	F	B	β	t
Self-objectification	Women's objectification of woman	0.02	8.07**	0.44	0.15	2.84**
Sexual objectification	Women's objectification of woman	0.15	67.88***	0.71	0.39	8.24***
Self-esteem	Women's objectification of woman	0.04	15.30***	−0.30	−0.20	−3.91***
	Women's objectification of woman			0.14	0.05	0.83
Self-objectification	Sexual objectification	0.06	8.59***	0.33	0.19	3.59***
	Self-esteem			−0.23	−0.12	− 2.27*

Table 3

Indirect effects results

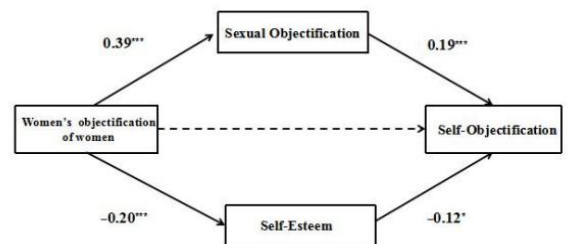| Indirect paths	Effect size	Bootstrap SE	95%CI
women's objectification of woman →sexual objectification →self-objectification	0.232	0.076	[0.095, 0.396]
women's objectification of woman → self-esteem →self-objectification	0.070	0.042	[0.001, 0.162]
Total	0.302	0.088	[0.143, 0.489]

Figure 1. Parallel mediating model

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