

**Associations Between Sexual Activities, Dominance-Submission Preferences, and Perceived  
Consequences of Sexual Compliance**

Helmi Vihro 1902922

Master's Thesis in Psychology

Supervisors: Annika Gunst & Sabina Nickull

Faculty of Arts, Psychology, and Theology

Åbo Akademi University

2023

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
WHEN AND WHY DO PEOPLE COMPLY? .....	1
SEXUAL COMPLIANCE AND ITS OUTCOMES .....	2
PERCEIVED CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL COMPLIANCE WITH DIFFERENT SEXUAL ACTIVITIES .....	3
DOMINANCE AND SUBMISSION PREFERENCES AND THE PERCEIVED CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL COMPLIANCE .....	5
<b>AIMS AND HYPOTHESES</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>METHODS</b> .....	<b>7</b>
PARTICIPANTS .....	7
PROCEDURE .....	8
ETHICAL APPROVAL .....	9
MEASURES .....	9
<i>Sexual Activities</i> .....	9
<i>Dominance and Submission Preferences</i> .....	10
<i>Perceived Consequences</i> .....	12
STATISTICAL ANALYSES .....	12
<b>RESULTS</b> .....	<b>13</b>
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS .....	13
ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN SEXUAL ACTIVITIES AND PERCEIVED CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL COMPLIANCE .....	16
ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN DOMINANCE AND SUBMISSION PREFERENCES AND PERCEIVED CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL COMPLIANCE .....	19
<b>DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>20</b>
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL COMPLIANCE .....	20
MAIN FINDINGS .....	21
<i>Sexual Activities</i> .....	21
<i>Dominance and Submission Preferences</i> .....	24
LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS .....	25
CONCLUSIONS .....	26
<b>SUMMARY IN SWEDISH – SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b> .....	<b>38</b>

<b>Subject:</b> Psychology	
<b>Author:</b> Helmi Vihro	
<b>Title:</b> Associations Between Sexual Activities, Dominance-Submission Preferences, and Perceived Consequences of Sexual Compliance	
<b>Supervisors:</b> Annika Gunst & Sabina Nickull	
<p>Consenting to sex without feeling sexual desire (i.e., sexual compliance) is a common phenomenon in intimate relationships. Previous research suggests that people perceive both positive and negative consequences of sexual compliance, but less is known about the contextual and individual factors that might contribute to them. The present study investigated the types of sexual activities one has complied with, dominance and submission preferences for sexual dynamics, and their associations with the perceived individual and relationship consequences of sexual compliance. Sexual activities were observed through hypotheses about the potential pleasure, intrusiveness, and sexual agency related to them. The data consisted of online survey responses from 295 individuals who had engaged in sexual compliance at least once. Analyses were conducted with Pearson’s chi-square tests and multiple logistic regression. Having complied with giving and receiving sexual touching of genitals was associated with larger odds of reporting negative individual consequences among women. No significant associations were found between sexual activities and relationship consequences of compliance. Submissive preferences for sexual dynamics did not explain the perceived consequences of sexual compliance. Among women, having a dominance preference was associated with perceiving positive consequences for both the individual and their relationship. More information about compliance with sexual activities and the perceived outcomes of it needs to be acquired via daily diary studies. Another potential objective would be examining the consequences of compliance with sexual activities one enjoys vs. does not enjoy.</p>	
<b>Keywords:</b> sexual compliance, sexual activities, sexual dominance, sexual submission, sexual preferences, consequences of sexual compliance, sexuality, sexual behavior	
<b>Date:</b> 10.12.2023	<b>Page count:</b> 27

## ÅBO AKADEMI – FAKULTETEN FÖR HUMANIORA, PSYKOLOGI OCH TEOLOGI

<b>Ämne:</b> Psykologi	
<b>Författare:</b> Helmi Vihro	
<b>Title:</b> Associationer mellan sexuella aktiviteter, dominans-underkastelsepreferenser, och upplevda konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående	
<b>Handledare:</b> Annika Gunst & Sabina Nickull	
<b>Abstrakt:</b> <p>Att med samtycke delta i sex utan att känna sexuell lust (dvs. sexuellt tillmötesgående) är ett vanligt fenomen i intima relationer. Tidigare forskning tyder på att människor upplever både positiva och negativa konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående, men man vet mindre om de kontextuella och individuella faktorerna som kan bidra till dem. Denna studie undersökte typer av sexuella aktiviteter man har varit tillmötesgående med, dominans- och underkastelsepreferenser för sexuell dynamik, och deras samband med de upplevda individuella och förhållanderelaterade konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående. De sexuella aktiviteterna observerades genom hypoteser om potentiell njutning, intrång och sexuell agens relaterat till dem. Forskningsmaterialet bestod av svar på en online-enkät från 295 individer som hade varit sexuellt tillmötesgående minst en gång. Analyserna utfördes via Pearsons chi-kvadrat-test och multipel logistisk regression. Tillmötesgående med att ge och ta emot sexuell beröring av könsorganen var kopplat till större odds för att rapportera negativa individuella konsekvenser bland kvinnor. Inga statistiskt signifikanta samband hittades mellan sexuella aktiviteter och upplevda konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående för parförhållandet. Underkastelsepreferenser för sexuell dynamik förklarade inte de upplevda konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående. Bland kvinnor var en dominanspreferens kopplad till att uppleva positiva konsekvenser för både individen själv och hens förhållande. Man behöver mer information om tillmötesgående med sexuella aktiviteter och dess samband med de upplevda konsekvenserna via dagliga dagboksstudier. Ett annat potentiellt mål för framtida forskning skulle vara att undersöka konsekvenserna av tillmötesgående med olika sexuella aktiviteter som man njuter av jämfört med sådana aktiviteter som man inte tycker om.</p>	
<b>Nyckelord:</b> sexuellt tillmötesgående, sexuella aktiviteter, sexuell dominans, sexuell submission, sexuella preferenser, konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående, sexualitet, sexuellt beteende	
<b>Datum:</b> 10.12.2023	<b>Sidantal:</b> 27

## Introduction

In intimate relationships, individuals may sometimes encounter situations where they have ambivalent thoughts about whether to have sex with a partner or not. Sexual decision-making has been theoretically and empirically conceptualized as a cognitive process involving two distinct elements: sexual want and sexual consent (Khera et al., 2022; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007). Sexual want, or sexual desire, is an inner experience of interest or willingness to engage in sexual activity (Darden et al., 2019). Sexual consent is commonly defined as the process of communicating, verbally or nonverbally, the willingness or agreement to participate in sexual activity (Darden et al., 2019).

Being distinct constructs, sexual desire and sexual consent – or the lack of them – may align with one another but not necessarily. For example, a person might experience sexual desire with their partner but have reasons for not consenting to sex, such as being worried about sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancy. Thus, sexual desire does not always occur simultaneously with sexual consent and vice versa. Nonconsensual sexual activities count as sexual coercion regardless of the absence or presence of sexual desire. Correspondingly, consensual sex can take place with or without the experience of sexual desire (Darden et al., 2019; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007). Consensual sex in the absence of desire is called sexual compliance, and it is this phenomenon that is at the center of interest of the present study. Sexual compliance means consenting freely to partnered sexual behavior without experiencing sexual desire, and it cannot and does not involve the use of physical force or psychological coercion (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Morgan et al., 2006).

### **When and Why Do People Comply?**

Previous research on mostly Western and heterosexual convenience samples has shown that sexual compliance is relatively common. In studies on committed relationships, 38–46% of the participants had engaged in sexual compliance at least once during observation periods of two to four weeks (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010). In the context of casual relationships, 31% of participants in one study had complied with sex with a casual partner at least once during their lifetime (Katz & Schneider, 2015), whereas with completely new sexual partners (including one-night stands) the rate has been found to be as low as 0.6% (Willis et al., 2022). When considering the overall occurrence and not just the current or most recent relationships of the participants, sexual compliance appears to be very common. In a large Finnish sample consisting mostly of women, 93% reported having consented to sex without experiencing desire at least once during their lifetime (Himanen & Gunst, 2023).

In studies that have compared sexually compliant behaviors between genders, women seem to engage in sexual compliance more than men. Half of the women versus 26% of the men in O'Sullivan and Allgeier's study (1998) had engaged in sexual compliance with their current partners, and in a sample by Impett and Peplau (2003), 65% of female participants and 40% of male participants had been sexually compliant at least once during their lifetime. However, it must also be taken into consideration that the existing evidence is scarce and mostly based on small convenience samples. Studies also vary greatly in terms of samples and methodological choices. Nonetheless, it seems that sexual compliance is rather common regardless of gender. While most studies have not observed trans or non-binary populations, in a few studies that have included non-binary and trans participants in their samples, 44–88% had engaged in sexual compliance at least once during their lifetime (Himanen & Gunst, 2023; Rubinsky, 2020).

Being a common phenomenon, it is no surprise that people's reasons for engaging in sexual compliance vary. On a social and cultural level, embracing traditional gender roles of male dominance and female passivity can increase the likelihood of sexual compliance among men and women (Katz & Tirone, 2009; Khera et al., 2022). The motives for compliance can also be relational: people have reported both in survey forms and interviews reasons such as promoting intimacy with their partner, avoiding relationship tension, or an unspoken agreement about sexual reciprocity regardless of sexual desire (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010). Other given reasons for complying are situational and individual, such as alcohol intoxication (Willis et al., 2022), or wanting to gain sexual experience (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998). Additionally, Kosenko (2010) found that some transgender individuals might comply with sex for fear of losing their partner and, thus, some of the gender identity validation they have access to through their relationship.

### **Sexual Compliance and Its Outcomes**

While the individuals engaging in sexual compliance and their reasons for doing so are diverse, so are the outlooks on sexual compliance in research and clinical sexology. Some perspectives suggest that sexual compliance should be treated as a normal part of intimate relationships (Dewitte et al., 2020) and that compliance might have positive associations with sexual and relationship satisfaction (Day et al., 2015; Impett et al., 2019; Muise et al., 2013). Other studies problematize the neutrality of sexual compliance or at least take a skeptical stance toward its alleged positive outcomes. Some evidence suggests that the tendency to sexual compliance in heterosexual women is associated with covert social expectations, low sexual assertiveness, and previous experiences of sexual coercion (Conroy et al., 2015; Katz & Tirone, 2010; Tirone & Katz, 2020). These discrepancies highlight the fact that there is still much that is not known about the

subject and that there is a great need for further investigations to refine our perspectives on sexual compliance and its outcomes.

In existing research, the question of the consequences of sexual compliance on individual well-being and relationship quality is often approached by measuring sexual and relationship satisfaction. Overall, people seem to rate compliant sex as less pleasurable than desired sex both in established relationships (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010) and with novel sexual partners (Willis et al., 2022). Engaging often in sexual compliance has been shown to be negatively associated with relationship satisfaction in heterosexual women (Katz & Tirone, 2009). Compliant sex has even been associated with higher cortisol levels, an indicator of physiological stress (Hartmann & Crockett, 2016).

However, the perceived consequences of sexual compliance are not solely negative. Some indication for this can be found in research on sexual motives. Pursuing sex for approach motives (such as to enhance intimacy in the relationship) has been associated with increased individual positive affect, life satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction, whereas sex for avoidance motives (such as to avoid negative outcomes, like an argument) has been associated with negative individual well-being and relationship satisfaction (Day et al., 2015; Impett et al., 2005; Muise et al., 2013). Existing evidence suggests that these associations also apply to situations that involve sexual compliance (Himanen & Gunst, 2023; Katz & Tirone, 2009). Yet, even though an approach motive to meet the partner's needs can be beneficial both for the individual and the relationship, focusing on approach motives but doing so by neglecting one's own needs is associated with diminished individual sexual satisfaction (Impett et al., 2019).

The relationships between approach and avoidance motives and consequences of sexual compliance underline the notion that contextual and individual factors seem to have relevance for how individuals perceive the outcomes of their sexually compliant behavior. At the same time, not much is known about other possibly significant contextual elements beside sexual motivation. Next, I will discuss two such elements and their possible associations with the perceived consequences of sexual compliance: the type of sexual activity one has complied with, and preferences regarding dominance and submission in sexual roles and dynamics.

### **Perceived Consequences of Sexual Compliance with Different Sexual Activities**

People seem to engage in the same sexual activities regardless of whether the sexual encounters are compliant or desired. For example, the participants in Vannier and O'Sullivan's study (2010) had engaged in sexual touching, oral sex, and intercourse approximately to the same extent both in desired and compliant sex. While complying with sex does not differ much from desired sex on the level of sexual activities, it is not known if the perceived consequences of sexual compliance

vary depending on the sexual activity in question. Below, I will present three alternative theories that could predict the individual and relational outcomes of different compliant sexual activities.

One factor that could explain the possible differences in the consequences of sexual activities is the likelihood of pleasure, orgasm, and satisfaction related to different activities. Herbenick et al. (2023) found in a recent survey study with a large U.S. sample ( $N = 2,525$ ) that cuddling and kissing, activities sometimes associated with affection and intimacy, predicted relationship and sexual satisfaction. The same study found that receiving oral sex was a predictor of sexual pleasure and orgasm probability for both men and women, whereas giving oral sex was not. There is no existing literature to confirm whether these findings would apply to compliant sex, but based on theories on sexual pleasure, it could be predicted that this is the case: experiencing sexual pleasure and orgasm increases sexual satisfaction (Frederick et al., 2017), which could be perceived as a positive consequence of sexual activity. It can be hypothesized that complying with activities that promote sexual satisfaction and a higher likelihood of orgasm could be associated with perceiving more positive consequences both for the individual and the relationship.

Another factor that may help determine the perceived consequences of compliance is the intrusiveness of different sexual activities. Vaginal and anal penetrative activities are traditionally perceived as more physically invasive than non-penetrative activities (e.g., kissing and touching) and penile-vaginal penetrative sex involves a risk of unintended pregnancy. Anal sex may be especially intrusive in a heterosexual context because of a cultural stigma at group level (McBride & Fortenberry, 2010; Santtila et al., 2007). Additionally, even though compliance is distinct from sexual assault, some indications of the intrusiveness of sexual activities can be derived from research on sexual violence. Nonconsensual penetration might be associated with more severe negative consequences than less invasive nonconsensual incidents to post-assault sexual and psychological function in women (Crown & Roberts, 2009; van Berlo & Ensink, 2000). Drawing from these findings, a higher level of intrusiveness of the compliant sexual activity could imply a greater sacrifice at the cost of the individual's own needs. Making sexual sacrifices while neglecting one's own needs is negatively associated with sexual satisfaction (Impett et al., 2019), so penetrative sexual activities could be associated with perceiving more negative individual consequences.

Third, the perceived consequences of sexual compliance could be explained by the level of sexual agency related to different sexual activities. Sexual agency is a broad concept that includes aspects such as bodily autonomy, the ability to promote one's sexual interests, and the ability to navigate power imbalances in sexual relations (Cense, 2019; Chmielewski et al., 2020). Sexual agency is related to sexual well-being by protecting against harm and enabling sexual pleasure (Chmielewski et al., 2020). Based on these definitions, complying with activities with low sexual agency could be



predicted to be associated with more negative consequences, and activities with high sexual agency could be associated with neutral or positive consequences. Defining the level of sexual agency with different sexual activities is challenging, since the experience of agency is deeply context-bound and subjective (Cense, 2019; Chmielewski et al., 2020). To enable building a hypothesis with this theory, a simplified approach is to look at whether one has had a receiving or a giving role during sexual activity.

From the perspective of having bodily autonomy, complying with receiving sexual deeds (i.e., touching, oral sex, penetration) could entail a higher risk of compromising one's sexual agency, since submitting one's body to being an object of activity may reduce the experience of power and control one has over the situation. Therefore, complying with sexual activities in a receiving role could be associated with lower sexual agency and perceiving more negative consequences. Conversely, compliance with giving sexual deeds could be seen to preserve sexual agency more likely by enabling bodily subjectivity and control in the situation, since it is not one's own body that is the object of the activity. Compliance with sexual activities in a giving role could, thus, be associated with perceiving more positive or neutral consequences. However, taking a controlling vs. a submissive role during sexual interactions is not just a question of behavior, but also preference, a theme I will discuss next.

### **Dominance and Submission Preferences and the Perceived Consequences of Sexual Compliance**

The terms dominance and submission can be used to describe the dynamics between different parties in a sexual interaction. Dominance refers to having a more active role in initiating and directing the situation, whereas submission means having a more passive, responsive position during a sexual encounter. Dominance and submission can be used to describe both actual behavior and internal preference for sexual dynamics (Sanchez et al., 2012).

To some extent, sexual compliance can be interpreted as sexually submissive behavior. When a person consents to sexual activity without experiencing sexual desire, they presumably submit themselves to their partner's desire instead of their own. Occasions of sexual compliance are more likely initiated by the partner than by the individual complying, and the partner has control over the pace of the sexual act more often in compliant than in desired sex (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010). As is known, people's actual and preferred sexual behaviors do not often concord with one another (Santtila et al., 2007). Therefore, it can be argued that the compatibility of sexual compliance with the individual's preferences of dominance and submission might influence how the consequences of engaging in sexual compliance are perceived.

The outcomes of dominant and submissive behaviors and preferences have mostly been studied in the context of traditional sexual scripts. According to sexual script theory, sexual

behaviors in heterosexual relationships are mostly dictated by shared and internalized cultural norms of conduct (Gagnon, 1990; Gagnon & Simon, 2017). The traditional sexual script prescribes men the dominant role and sets women as the submissive party (Gagnon, 1990; O'Sullivan & Byers, 1992). Previous research suggests that endorsing these traditional scripts in sexual interactions is associated with increased sexually passive behavior in women (Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007). Internalized traditional scripts are also associated with increased sexual compliance among men (Khera et al., 2022). It has been hypothesized that engaging in sexually passive behavior may be related to feelings of having less freedom and choice in the sexual interaction and, thus, to less sexual satisfaction (Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007).

However, submissiveness or passivity does not automatically mean losing sexual autonomy. In their survey study with 181 heterosexual couples, Sanchez et al. (2012) discovered that women with a higher interest in submission did not report low sexual satisfaction when they engaged in sexually submissive behavior. In contrast, for women with less interest in submission, submissive behavior predicted lower sexual satisfaction both in them and their male partners (Sanchez et al., 2012). Taking these findings back to sexual compliance, it can be stated that even if compliance is interpreted as submissive behavior, this does not imply that compliance would simply mean passivity and loss of sexual autonomy. If a person had an interest in submission, their preference would at least partly concord with the practice of compliance and, thus, be more associated with positive consequences. Similarly, if a person had a dominance preference, their sexual compliance could be associated with negative consequences.

### **Aims and Hypotheses**

The present study aimed to explore how individuals perceive the consequences of sexual compliance for themselves and their relationships with their sexual partners. More precisely, I aimed to explore the associations between different sexual activities, sexual power dynamics preferences, and the perceived consequences of sexual compliance. Drawing upon the literature presented in the Introduction section, I formed the research questions and hypotheses listed below.

**Q1)** Are the types of sexual activity one has complied with associated with the perceived consequences of sexual compliance? Based on the theories presented above, I expected to find support for either H1 and H2, H3, or H4 and H5.

**H1.** People who have complied with sexual activities that are more (vs. less) likely to promote their own sexual pleasure (e.g., receiving oral sex and receiving sexual touching) report positive individual consequences to a larger extent than people who have not.

**H2.** People who have complied with sexual activities that are more (vs. less) likely to promote partner sexual pleasure (e.g., giving oral sex, giving sexual touching) report positive relational consequences to a larger extent than people who have not.

**H3.** People who have complied with sexual activities that are considered more intrusive (e.g., receiving vaginal or anal penetration) report negative individual consequences to a larger extent than people who have not. No hypothesis was formed on relational consequences due to insufficient information on the subject.

**H4.** People who have complied with sexual activities that are more (vs. less) likely to promote sexual agency (sexual activities in a giving role) report positive individual consequences to a larger extent than people who have not. No hypothesis was formed on relational consequences due to insufficient information on the subject.

**H5.** People who have complied with sexual activities that are more (vs. less) likely to diminish sexual agency (sexual activities in a receiving role) report negative individual consequences more often than people who have not. No hypothesis was formed on relational consequences due to insufficient information on the subject.

**Q2)** Are preferences of sexual dominance and submission associated with the perceived consequences of sexual compliance? Based on previous research, I expected to find support for both the following hypotheses:

**H6.** Preferring (vs. not preferring) sexual submission is associated with perceiving at more positive consequences of sexual compliance at least on an individual level.

**H7.** Preferring (vs. not preferring) sexual dominance is associated with perceiving more negative individual consequences of sexual compliance at least on an individual level.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

As inclusion criteria for the present study, participants had to be at least 18 years old and had complied with sexual activity during a committed intimate relationship at least once in their lifetime. No other conditions for participating were set, for example, regarding sexual orientation or gender identity. To reach participants as broadly as possible, the term 'committed intimate relationship' was not specified in any further way in terms of duration or other qualities.

At the end of the data collection, we received 469 responses, of which 84 participants had not completed the survey beyond informed consent. An additional 21 responses were removed from the sample because of a reason to suspect that they were created by Internet bots. These responses had internally inconsistent Likert scale answers, and free text answers written in Chinese, which

after translation made sense only remotely or not at all for the subject of the study. Forty-eight participants had not completed the survey in terms of answering survey items about the consequences of sexual compliance and were therefore excluded from the analyses. Despite the efforts of the research group to reach a large enough participation rate of non-cis participants, only ten participants of trans, nonbinary, and other identities responded to the survey. We made the decision not to include them in the analyses, because separate analyses for gender minority groups would not have been possible to administer due to the low number of participants. Additionally, 11 more participants were removed from the sample. These were participants who had chosen 'man' as their gender identity and reported having received vaginal penetration. We had not included the alternatives "cis" or "assigned at birth" to the gender alternatives in the survey, and therefore we did not have enough information on these participants' backgrounds to administer reliable analyses. After these steps, the final sample consisted of 295 participants.

### **Procedure**

Data were collected from May 2022 to September 2022 via an online survey created with the survey software SurveyAnalytics. The survey was available in English, Finnish, and Swedish. Participants were recruited by sharing and advertising the survey on different platforms. The survey was shared on the official page of the research group on the host university website, and a link to the survey was posted on university mailing lists for students. We used paid advertisements on Facebook targeted at users over 18 in Finland, and members of the research group also shared the survey on different Reddit threads, personal Instagram, and Facebook accounts. Physical flyers, including information on the study and a scannable QR code with a link to the survey, were distributed over two university campuses. As the data collection proceeded, we observed that we had not reached as many senior, male, or sexual and gender minority participants as we had aimed for. We made additional inquiries to better reach these groups and shared the survey in Finnish social media groups targeted at these populations.

As an incentive, participants had the opportunity to enter a raffle of two 50€ gift cards to an international multi-brand fashion online store. To enter the raffle, a participant could give their e-mail address at the end of the survey. The e-mail addresses were filed separately from the survey responses, and at the end of the data collection, two e-mail addresses were randomly selected, and respective participants were sent a gift card.

At the beginning of the survey, participants were given general information about the study. Definitions of sexual compliance, sexual activity, and sexual desire were provided to enhance a uniform understanding of the central concepts among participants. Participants also gave informed

consent before beginning the actual survey. See Appendix A for informed consent and the definitions given to participants.

### **Ethical approval**

Before the data collection began, the research plan was reviewed by the Ethical Committee of the Departments of Psychology and Speech and Language Pathology at Åbo Akademi University, who gave a positive evaluation of the research plan. Following the Declaration of Helsinki, participants were given information about data confidentiality and voluntary participation before giving their consent to participate in the study. Participants were also informed that they could discontinue the survey at any time without having to give any reason for it.

The data collection did not involve any invasive procedures, but our research group considered that some participants might have had distressing experiences regarding the subject of the study. To enhance psychological safety, participants had the opportunity to express a wish for resources for support at the end of the study. Such participants were given the contact information of some free mental health service providers in Finland.

### **Measures**

At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked about sociodemographic information, such as age, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, education, occupation, and nationality. Information on sexual compliance was gathered with questions about how the participants saw their behavior in intimate relationships. These questions were preceded with the following instruction: "The next questions refer to sexual compliance within any committed intimate relationship. If you have had several committed intimate relationships, take all these relationships into account when answering the questions." To gain descriptive data about the frequency of sexual compliance, participants were asked to give a rough estimate of how many times they have complied with sexual activities: once, a handful of times, a few dozen times, or more than a hundred times. This was chosen as the scale, since no established scales existed, and we saw that this one had good face validity. Participants were also asked to give percentage estimates on how much of the sex they have had involved sexual compliance from their side.

### ***Sexual Activities***

To chart the types of sexual activities the participants had complied with, the following question was presented: "What types of sexual activities have you complied with?". The question succeeded with a list of options to which participants could answer 'yes' if they had complied with them. The list of activities involved sexual touching excluding genitals, sexual touching of genitals, oral stimulation, vaginal penetration, anal penetration, and video/phone sex. The participants could also choose the alternative 'other' and specify with a free-text answer. All the activities but

video/phone sex and 'other' were listed in a manner that specified between giving and receiving the said activity, resulting in 12 items altogether.

This array of activities presented to the participants was chosen on both theoretical and explorative grounds. Parts of the items were based on the Desired and Actual Sexual Activity Scale (DASA; Santtila et al., 2007), a measure for assessing the desired and actual frequency of sexual behaviors. The alternative of video/phone sex was added, since recent research has shown that many people engage in it, but only a few studies have examined it in the context of sexual compliance (Drouin & Tobin, 2014). With this selection of activities, the aim was to cover sexual behavior in the context of sexual compliance as broadly and as specifically as possible. For analysis purposes, every activity was formed into a dichotomous variable (0 = has not complied with said activity; 1 = has complied with said activity).

To investigate whether some activity variables would overlap so greatly that it would be necessary to combine them, we conducted tetrachoric correlations between the activity variables in R using the *psych* package. Before running the correlations, we set the cut-off limit to .90. The highest correlation ( $r = .77, p < 0.001$ ) found was between sexual touching excluding genitals (giving) and sexual touching of genitals (giving). As the highest correlation was below the cut-off, the decision was made not to combine any of the activity variables with one another. The activity alternative 'other' was excluded from further analyses because the frequency was relatively low (3.9%), and the free-text answers were so diverse that it was not possible to form any new categories from them.

### ***Dominance and Submission Preferences***

The scales aimed to measure the participants' dominance and submission preferences were formed as follows: first, items from existing scales, as well as new items, were created to study dominance and submission preferences. Secondly, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine if the factor structure followed a specified two-factor theory (i.e., submission and dominance). This was chosen as the procedure, since no such scale appeared to exist that would cover dominance and submission preferences in a way that was fitting for the present study's aims.

The first scale used was the Dyadic Sexual Regulation Scale (DSR; Catania et al., 1984). It is intended to measure the subjective experience of the regulation of internal versus external locus of control during sexual encounters (Catania, 2019). The DSR is a reliable measure (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$  in a college-aged adult sample) and convergently valid with a similar measurement scale (Catania, 2019). From the DSR, four items were included in the present study that seemed to measure dominance and submission preference. We made some minor changes to the wording of these items so that they would reflect more preference than actual behavior (for example: changing "I

often take the initiative” to “I often *like to* take the initiative”). Two examples of the revised items from the DSR are “I often like to take the initiative in beginning sexual activity.” and “I often want to be the active member during sexual relations while my partner takes a passive role.” The second scale used was the Affective and Motivational Orientation Related to Erotic Arousal Questionnaire (AMORE; Hill & Preston, 1996), which is intended to measure individual differences in eight subscales of sexual motives. The internal consistency coefficients of the AMORE have typically been greater than .85, making it a reliable measure, and several studies have found support for the validity of the AMORE and its subscales as well (Hill, 2019). The present study used eight items from two subscales covering expressing power and experiencing one’s partner’s power as sexual motivation. These items were such as “I really enjoy having sex as a way of exerting dominance and control over my partner.” and “It is frequently very arousing when my partner gets very forceful and aggressive during sex.”

In addition to the items chosen from the DSR and the AMORE, four items formed by the research group were added to the survey to complement the measurement of dominance and submission preferences. These items were such as “I want my partner to be the one who initiates sex.” and “I like to feel that I am the one who controls the situation when we have sex.” All in all, the final set of items aimed to measure preferences consisted of 16 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Eight of the items aimed to measure dominance preferences, and the other eight aimed to measure submission preferences. The complete set of items in the survey is listed in Appendix B.

At the end of the data collection, I conducted exploratory principal component analyses with varimax rotation to examine clusters among items and to form final scales. The analysis revealed four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, but two of the factors with the lowest eigenvalues loaded only on one or two items. According to common recommendations, a factor should load at least on three items to enable interpretations. Therefore, I conducted a subsequent two-factor analysis which explained 54% of scale variance, with only one non-loading item, which was dominance-coded (“I generally don’t like when my partner is the one who initiates sex.”, see Appendix B). I excluded this item, since it did not load on either of the factors, and there were enough items to form the scale without it. The first factor (eigenvalue 5.2) included seven dominance preference items, and the second factor (eigenvalue 3.2) included all eight submission preference items. After observing the internal consistencies of the two scales, I excluded one additional submission item (“I don’t like to be the one who decides about when we have sex.”, see Appendix B) to improve scale reliability and to balance out the number of items in the final scales. Two composite variables with a scale of 7–49 were calculated for use in further analyses. In the

present study, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) was excellent ( $\alpha = .905$ ) for the dominance variable and good ( $\alpha = .854$ ) for the submission variable.

### ***Perceived Consequences***

To examine how the participants perceived the consequences of sexual compliance to themselves individually and to their relationships, the following questions were presented: "Has complying with sexual activities affected yourself personally (apart from any consequences it may have had on the relationship)?" and "Has complying to sexual activities affected the relationship?" For both questions, participants could choose from four options: "No", "Yes, it has only had negative consequences", "Yes, it has only had positive consequences", and "Yes, it has had both negative and positive consequences". To enable further statistical analyses, I formed two dichotomous variables for the perceived consequences: one for individual consequences and another for relationship consequences. "Positive and negative consequences" and "only negative consequences" were combined into one item representing any negative consequences. Similarly, "no consequences" was combined with "only positive consequences". I saw this as an appropriate way to form variables, since I was especially interested in separating any forms of negative consequences from positive or neutral consequences of sexual compliance.

### **Statistical Analyses**

Statistical analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29.0 for Mac) and R. Binary variables for different sexual activities and consequences and composite variables for dominance and submission scales were formed. Descriptive analyses were conducted for all study variables, and bivariate and tetrachoric correlations between them were examined for possible associations. The research questions were investigated through Pearson's chi-square test of independence and multiple logistic regression analyses. The research questions were tested separately for men and women because existing literature suggests that men and women may experience sexual compliance differently. However, the low number of male participants did not allow for comparisons between gender groups, hence the separate analyses.

To investigate the first research question, I conducted several chi-square tests to compare whether the observed frequencies of the variables were significantly different from such frequencies that could be expected if sexual compliance with different sexual activities and the perceived consequences were unrelated. The chi-square tests were conducted between different sexual activities and perceived individual consequences, as well as between different sexual activities and perceived consequences for the relationship. Odds ratios between sexual activity variables and the likelihood of the occurrence of perceiving negative consequences for sexual compliance were calculated to examine the directions of differences between the chi-square test variables. The



second research question was investigated with multiple logistic regression to test whether the perceived individual and relationship consequences of sexual compliance were associated with dominance and submission preference variables as predictors of the model. To control the effects of multiple comparisons, I used Bonferroni correction for the analyses. For sexual activities, the Bonferroni cut-off was  $.05 / 42 \text{ tests} = .001$ . For dominance and submission preferences, the Bonferroni cut-off was  $.05 / 4 \text{ tests} = .013$ .

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

The majority of the sample identified as women (78.6%), and most participants (76.2%) identified as heterosexual. There were also ten non-cisgender participants, of which two identified as trans women, two as trans men, five as non-binary, and one as 'other'. These participants had to, unfortunately, be excluded from the final sample because the group size was so small that any separate analyses were not possible to conduct. The age of the participants in the final sample ranged from 18 to 63 years ( $M = 27.9, SD = 8.2$ ). A little under a third (29.8%) reported their relationship status as single, and the rest of the participants were in some type of relationship during the time of taking the survey. See the complete demographic data from Table 1. Almost all participants; 94.9%, had complied with sexual activities more than once during their lifetime, and the remaining 5.1% had complied only once ever. On average, women estimated that 39.6% of the times they had partnered sex had involved compliance from their side ( $SD = 31.7, \text{ range} = 0 - 100$ ). Among men, sexual compliance had been involved 43.4% of the time during partnered sex ( $SD = 37.8, \text{ range} = 0 - 100$ ).

Of the sample, 79.7% of participants had complied with sexual touching of genitals in a giving role. The activity that was the least complied with was anal penetration in a penetrating role (9.5%). Of male participants, the activity that was most frequently complied with was sexual touching of genitals in a giving role (79.4%). The activities that male participants had complied the least with were receiving anal penetration (12.7%) and video/phone sex (12.7%). The activity that women had most frequently complied with was receiving vaginal penetration (84.5%). Women had least frequently complied with anal penetration in a penetrating role (6.0%). See Figure 1 for complete frequencies of complying with different sexual activities among men, women, and the full sample.

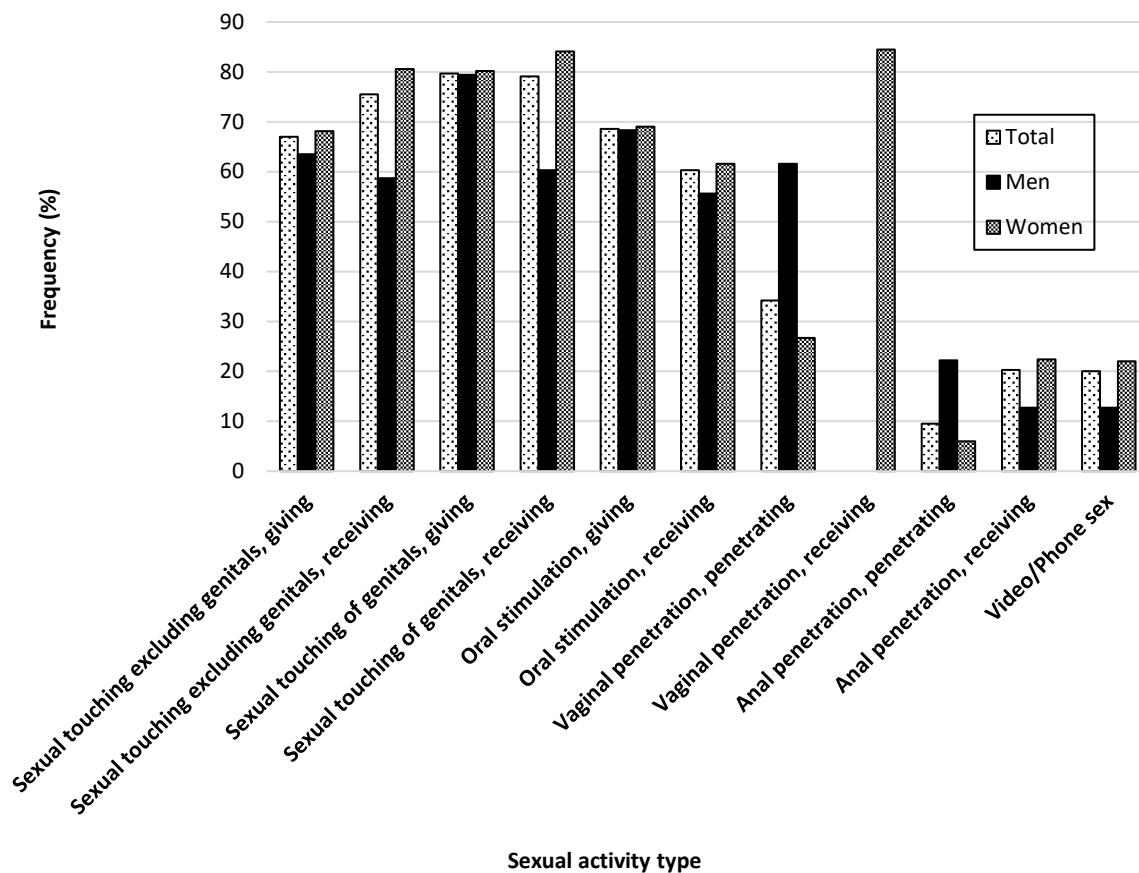
**Table 1***Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Baseline characteristic	Women		Men		Full sample	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>						
Heterosexual	156	67.2	48	76.2	204	69.2
Bisexual	50	21.6	7	11.1	57	19.3
Homosexual	9	3.9	6	9.5	15	5.1
Pansexual	10	4.3	1	1.6	11	3.7
Asexual	6	2.6	1	1.6	7	2.4
Other	1	0.4	.	.	1	0.3
<b>Relationship Status</b>						
Single	73	31.5	15	23.8	88	29.8
Committed relationship	61	26.3	13	20.6	74	25.1
Cohabiting	50	21.6	10	15.9	60	20.3
Married	23	9.9	14	22.2	37	12.5
Dating	15	6.5	8	12.7	23	7.8
Non-Monogamous	8	3.4	2	3.2	10	3.4
Other	2	0.9	1	1.6	3	1.0
<b>Education</b>						
Basic education or less	4	1.7	2	3.2	6	2.2
Secondary school	69	29.7	19	30.2	88	29.8
Bachelor's degree	93	40.1	32	50.8	125	42.2
Master's degree	62	26.7	4	6.3	66	22.4
Doctoral degree	3	1.3	6	9.5	9	3.1
Other	1	0.4	.	.	1	0.3
<b>Occupation</b>						
Studying	124	53.4	26	41.3	150	50.8
Employed/Self-employed	96	41.4	37	58.7	133	45.1
Other	7	3.0	.	.	7	2.4
Unemployed	4	1.7	.	.	4	1.4
Retired	1	0.4	.	.	1	0.3
<b>Nationality</b>						
Finnish	209	90.1	51	81.0	260	88.1
Other	23	9.9	12	19.0	35	11.9

*Note.* Number of women = 232, number of men = 63, total *N* = 295.

**Figure 1**

*Frequencies of Compliance with Types of Sexual Activities Among Participants*



*Note.* Number of men = 63, number of women = 232, total  $N = 295$ . The frequencies presented in the figure are based on the number of participants who have answered ‘yes’ when asked if they have ever complied with said activity during their lifetime.

In the full sample, the most frequent type of perceived consequences individually (38.9%) and for the relationship (39.2%) was negative and positive consequences. This was also the most frequent type of individual (43.1%) and relationship (43.1%) consequences among women, whereas men reported “no consequences” most often both individually (55.6%) and in the relationship (44.4%). See the distribution of perceived consequences among men and women in Table 2.

**Table 2***Frequencies of Types of Perceived Consequences of Sexual Compliance, Men and Women*

Consequence type	Women		Men	
	Individual	Relationship	Individual	Relationship
	%	%	%	%
No consequences	29.7	31.0	55.6	44.4
Negative consequences only	19.0	12.5	3.2	11.1
Positive consequences only	8.2	13.4	15.9	15.9
Negative and positive consequences	43.1	43.1	25.4	28.6

*Note.* Number of women = 232, number of men = 63, total  $N = 295$ .

The dominance preference among participants was on average 21.4 ( $SD = 9.1$ , range = 7 – 49). The average submission preference was 31.7 ( $SD = 8.6$ , range = 7 – 49). Among women, the average dominance preference was 26.7 ( $SD = 9.3$ , range = 7 – 49) and the average submission preference was 30.7 ( $SD = 7.8$ , range = 14 – 46). Among men, dominance preference was on average 26.1 ( $SD = 9.1$ , range = 7 – 49), and submission preference was 30.5 ( $SD = 7.7$ , range = 14 – 45). Bivariate correlations were conducted between the composite variables of dominance and submission to investigate if they were associated. A small positive correlation ( $r = .23$ ;  $p < .001$ ) was observed, but it was considered sufficiently weak for interpreting that the variables do not measure the same construct.

#### **Associations Between Sexual Activities and Perceived Consequences of Sexual Compliance**

The chi-square tests of independence showed that compliance with two types of sexual activities was significantly associated (using the Bonferroni-corrected cut-off  $p < .001$ ) with perceived individual consequences of sexual compliance among women. These activities were giving and receiving sexual touching of genitals. Odds ratio was 3.27 for giving sexual touching of genitals and 3.29 for receiving it. This means that the odds of perceiving individual negative consequences were over 3 times higher for female participants who had complied with either giving or receiving sexual touching of genitals, compared with those who had not. None of the hypotheses concerning sexual activities received support from these analyses among women.

Without the Bonferroni correction, an additional five activities were significantly ( $p < .05$ ) associated with perceived individual consequences of sexual compliance among women. These activities were: giving sexual touching excluding genitals, giving and receiving oral stimulation, receiving anal penetration, and video/phone sex. The odds ratios varied between 1.75 (receiving oral stimulation) and 2.79 (receiving anal penetration) depending on the sexual activity variable. Therefore, the odds of perceiving individual negative consequences were 1.75–2.79 times higher for

female participants who had complied with some of the five sexual activities compared with those who had not. The complete chi-square test results for women are listed in Table 3.

For relationship consequences among women, the chi-square tests did not show any significant associations (using the Bonferroni-corrected cut-off  $p < .001$ ) with perceived consequences. Thus, none of the hypotheses concerning sexual activities received support from the analyses among women. Without the Bonferroni correction, four sexual activities were significantly ( $p < .05$ ) associated with consequences to the relationship. These activities were: giving sexual touching excluding genitals, giving and receiving sexual touching of genitals, and receiving oral stimulation. The odds ratios varied between 1.95 (receiving sexual touching excluding genitals) and 2.58 (giving sexual touching of genitals) depending on the sexual activity variable. Therefore, the odds of perceiving negative relationship consequences for sexual compliance were 1.95–2.58 times higher for female participants who had complied with some of the four sexual activities than for those who had not. The complete chi square test results for women are listed in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Pearson's Chi-Square Tests of Independence Between Compliance with Different Sexual Activities and Perceived Individual and Relationship Consequences Among Women*

Activity type	Individual consequences			Relationship consequences		
	$\chi^2$	$p$	OR	$\chi^2$	$p$	OR
Sexual touching excluding genitals, giving	1.30	.254	1.39	0.11	.745	1.10
Sexual touching excluding genitals, receiving	7.37	.007	2.46	4.05	.044	1.95
Sexual touching of genitals, giving	12.82	<.001*	3.27	8.08	.004	2.58
Sexual touching of genitals, receiving	10.98	<.001*	3.29	5.63	.018	2.36
Oral stimulation, giving	8.03	.005	2.26	1.33	.249	1.39
Oral stimulation, receiving	4.06	.044	1.75	8.12	.004	2.18
Vaginal penetration, penetrating	1.16	.282	1.40	0.19	.660	0.88
Vaginal penetration, receiving	1.56	.211	1.58	1.21	.271	1.49
Anal penetration, penetrating	0.03	.860	1.11	0.19	.663	0.79
Anal penetration, receiving	8.01	.005	2.79	0.96	.328	1.37
Video/phone sex	4.30	.038	2.07	0.71	.399	1.31

*Note.*  $N = 232$ ; degrees of freedom for Pearson's  $\chi^2$  is 1.  $p$  = significance; OR = Odds ratio

\* =  $p < .001$  using Bonferroni cut-off.

Among men, the chi-square tests of independence did not reveal any significant associations (using the Bonferroni-corrected cut-off  $p < .001$ ) between any of the activities and perceived individual or relationship consequences. None of the sexual activity hypotheses received support from the analyses among men. Without the Bonferroni correction, a significant ( $p < .05$ ) association was found between compliance with vaginal penetration and perceived individual consequences. The odds of perceiving individual negative consequences were 7.86 times higher if a male participant had complied with vaginal penetration, compared with those who had not. The complete results for the chi-square tests of independence for men are listed in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Pearson's Chi-Square Tests of Independence Between Compliance with Different Sexual Activities and Perceived Individual and Relationship Consequences Among Men*

Activity Type	Individual Consequences			Relationship Consequences		
	$\chi^2$	$p$	OR	$\chi^2$	$p$	OR
Sexual touching excluding genitals, giving	0.69	.408	0.63	1.00	.316	0.59
Sexual touching excluding genitals, receiving	0.11	.746	0.83	0.78	.379	0.63
Sexual touching of genitals, giving	1.40	.237	2.59	0.54	.461	1.63
Sexual touching of genitals, receiving	0.24	.625	0.76	0.24	.628	1.29
Oral stimulation, giving	1.10	.304	1.93	0.00	.972	0.98
Oral stimulation, receiving	0.32	.575	0.73	0.96	.328	0.60
Vaginal penetration, penetrating	7.78	.005	7.65	1.79	.181	2.08
Anal penetration, penetrating	1.80	.180	2.31	0.80	.371	1.72
Anal penetration, receiving	1.16	.280	0.31	2.83	.093	0.18
Video/Phone sex	0.06	.811	0.81	0.41	.523	1.62

*Note.*  $N = 63$ ; degrees of freedom for Pearson's  $\chi^2$  is 1.  $p$  = significance; OR = Odds ratio.

Significance level is  $< .001$  using Bonferroni cut-off.

### Associations Between Dominance and Submission Preferences and Perceived Consequences of Sexual Compliance

In the multiple logistic regression models, sexual dynamics preferences explained significantly (using the Bonferroni-corrected cut-off  $p < .013$ ) the variance of the perceived individual ( $\chi^2 (2) = 8.85; p = .012; Nagelkerke R^2 = .062$ ) and relationship consequences ( $\chi^2 (2) = 11.13; p = .004; Nagelkerke R^2 = .077$ ) of sexual compliance among women. The higher the dominance preference a female participant had, the lower were the odds that they perceived both negative individual and relationship consequences. By contrast, submission preference did not significantly change the odds of perceiving negative consequences either individually or in the relationship among women. Along with these results, neither of the hypotheses concerning sexual dynamics preferences received support, and the hypothesis about dominance being associated with perceiving negative consequences was refuted. See Table 5 for the full listing of the results of the multiple logistic regressions for women.

**Table 5**

*Multiple Logistic Regression: Dominance and Submission Preferences as Predictors of Perceived Consequences of Sexual Compliance Among Women*

Consequence Type	Preference	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i> $\chi^2$	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	95% CI	
							<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Individual	Dominance	-.06	0.02	7.97	.005*	0.95	0.91	0.98
	Submission	.03	0.02	2.31	.129	1.03	0.99	1.07
Relationship	Dominance	-.06	0.02	7.39	.007*	0.95	0.91	0.98
	Submission	-.02	0.02	0.76	.382	0.98	0.95	1.02

*Note.*  $N = 188$ ; degrees of freedom for *Wald*  $\chi^2$  is 1. *B* = standardized regression coefficient; *SE* = standard error; *p* = significance; *OR* = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval for odds ratio; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit. A significant result indicates that there is an association between perceived individual or relationship consequences and dominance or submission preferences.

\* =  $p < .013$  using Bonferroni cut-off.

For men, sexual dynamics preferences did not significantly explain (using the Bonferroni-corrected cut-off  $p < .013$ ) either the variance of the perceived individual ( $\chi^2 (1) = 11.26; p = .119; Nagelkerke R^2 = .059$ ) or relationship consequences ( $\chi^2 (1) = .14; p = .934; Nagelkerke R^2 = .006$ ) in the multiple logistic regression models. No significant association was found between men's dominance and submission preferences and their perceived consequences for sexual compliance. The odds of

perceiving negative individual consequences or relationship consequences from sexual compliance were not significantly lower if a male participant had a higher dominance preference. Neither were the odds of perceiving negative individual consequences or relationship consequences significantly higher if a male participant had a higher submission preference. Therefore, neither of the hypotheses concerning sexual dynamics preferences received support among men. See the complete results from the multiple logistic regression analyses in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Multiple Logistic Regression: Dominance and Submission Preferences as Predictors of Perceived Consequences of Sexual Compliance Among Men*

Consequence Type	Preference	B	SE	Wald $\chi^2$	p	OR	95% CI	
							LL	UL
Individual	Dominance	-.05	0.04	1.42	.234	0.95	0.88	1.03
	Submission	.04	0.05	0.72	.398	1.04	0.95	1.15
Relationship	Dominance	-.01	0.03	0.08	.776	0.99	0.93	1.06
	Submission	-.01	0.04	0.10	.752	0.99	0.91	1.07

*Note.*  $N = 49$ ; degrees of freedom for Wald  $\chi^2$  is 1.  $B$  = standardized regression coefficient;  $SE$  = standard error;  $p$  = significance;  $OR$  = odds ratio;  $CI$  = confidence interval for odds ratio;  $LL$  = lower limit;  $UL$  = upper limit. A significant result indicates that there is an association between perceived individual or relationship consequences and dominance or submission preferences.

Significance level is  $< .013$  using Bonferroni cut-off.

## Discussion

This study examined the perceived consequences of sexual compliance in relation to different sexual activities and preferences. The first aim was to test whether the types of sexual activity one has complied with are associated with the perceived individual and relational consequences of sexual compliance. The second aim was to test if there was an association between preferences for sexual dominance and submission and the perceived consequences of sexual compliance.

### Demographic Characteristics and Consequences of Sexual Compliance

The sample of the present study was asymmetrical regarding gender, with an overrepresentation of women. Therefore, comparisons between women and men could not be administered. However, the sample was still larger and more diverse in terms of age and sexual



orientation than in typical studies on sexual compliance with small samples consisting mostly of young heterosexual women.

Even though comparisons between women and men were not possible to administer, it can still be considered an interesting finding that the majority of men had not perceived any individual or relational consequences of sexual compliance, while most women considered the consequences as both positive and negative. It must be noted that the sample size of men was small, thus questioning the reliability of these results, but this may nevertheless indicate that men and women perceive the consequences of sexual compliance differently.

### **Main Findings**

None of the seven hypotheses I had formed for sexual compliance with different activities and dominance and submission preferences received support from the results. Among women, complying with a sexual activity was associated with increased odds of perceiving negative individual consequences regardless of the type of the activity, both significantly and without statistical significance. Among men, several activities had statistically no significant associations with increased odds of neutral or positive individual and relationship consequences. Against what I had hypothesized, having a dominance preference was associated with increased odds of perceiving *positive* individual and relationship consequences for sexual compliance among women. Below, I will dissect these findings in more detail.

### **Sexual Activities**

**Individual Consequences.** Among women, having complied with giving and receiving sexual touching of genitals was associated with larger odds of reporting negative individual consequences. Thus, neither the pleasure hypothesis (H1), the intrusiveness hypothesis (H3), nor the agency hypotheses (H4 and H5) received support from the results. In other words, the pleasure, intrusiveness, and level of agency of different sexual activities do not seem to have significance for the perceived consequences of sexual compliance. According to previous research on pleasure (e.g., Herbenick et al., 2023), one could assume that certain activities would be associated with increased pleasure at least at group level. However, the present study did not have information on the participants' subjective experiences of pleasure, or for agency or intrusiveness for that matter. Including subjective estimates of these concepts in inquiries of the perceived consequences of sexual compliance would be something that future research could examine further.

The pleasure hypothesis not gaining support is interesting, since according to research, engaging in sexual touching of genitals (petting) is among such sexual activities that women tend to desire the most (Santtila et al., 2007), and that predict sexual pleasure and orgasm (Herbenick et al., 2023). One explanation could be that while this is the case for desired sex, the complying itself might

be the factor that overturns the positive aspects of sexual touching. Gunst et al. (2023) collected qualitative data on the perceived consequences of sexual compliance and found that among the individual negative consequences of sexual compliance were feelings of anxiety, regret, shame, and guilt, decreased sexual pleasure, and decreased sexual desire. Some of these aspects may also be included in the negative consequences of giving and receiving sexual touching. However, they do not explain why this is the case for sexual touching of genitals specifically and not any other activity.

Some help for interpreting this question can be found in the results that appeared statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) without the Bonferroni correction. Here, of course, it must be noted that these findings might be a result of multiple comparisons instead of actual findings. Among women, in addition to sexual touching of genitals, there were significant associations between negative individual consequences and giving sexual touching excluding genitals, giving and receiving oral stimulation, receiving anal penetration, and video/phone sex. Considering this list of activities, at least two noteworthy observations can be made: first, complying with receiving vaginal penetration is not among the activities, while compliance with receiving anal penetration is. Second, compliance with oral stimulation and sexual touching had associations with negative consequences, even though they traditionally predict sexual pleasure. In other words, there are interesting contrasts between activities that could be assumed to be more intrusive, and activities that are expected to associate with pleasure.

Why were sexual touching and oral stimulation associated with negative individual consequences while vaginal penetration, a more physically intrusive activity, was not? One speculation could be that women experience that oral sex and sexual touching require more effort to be actively present in the sexual encounter, compared to vaginal penetrative sex, where the minimal effort needed is to concentrate on receiving penetration. Therefore, compliance with activities that feel more inconvenient or laborious could be perceived to have more negative consequences.

This could also apply to receiving anal sex, which requires different steps and preparations to be engaged in safely. However, the negative individual consequences associated with receiving anal sex may bear something more to them than the effort it requires. Because receiving anal sex was associated with the perceived negative consequences and receiving vaginal penetration was not, it could be speculated that anal penetration might be experienced as more intrusive than vaginal penetrative sex. This explanation does not receive full support, however, since other less-intrusive activities were also associated with negative consequences. One alternative interpretation is that anal sex is an activity that few like (Santtila et al., 2007), and that negative outcomes of compliance could simply be related to complying with activities one does not personally enjoy. As a

final note, video or phone sex often leaves physical evidence behind in the form of text, pictures, and videos, so this can likely evoke feelings of regret and contribute to perceiving negative consequences of compliance among women.

Among men, none of the sexual activities were associated with perceived individual consequences. This might largely be explained by the small sample size of men, but also by the previously mentioned observation that over half of the male participants in this study reported experiencing no individual consequences of sexual compliance. However, if we again cautiously examine the associations that were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) without controlling for multiple tests, some indication can be found in the experiences of men who did perceive negative individual consequences of sexual compliance. Even then, only one association could be detected, and it was with vaginal penetration. This link between complying with vaginal penetration and negative individual consequences may be connected to traditional heterosexual scripts of men always desiring sex and being ready for it. Previous research has found that some men might even initiate sexual activity that they themselves do not desire (Vannier & O'Sullivan 2010). Endorsing stereotypes and implicit scripts of (hetero)sexual encounters can create performance pressure (e.g., for having an erection) and, thus, limit the pleasure and feeling of autonomy a man has over their sexuality (Montemurro, 2022). Furthermore, having an erection may have more relevance to penile-vaginal penetrative sex than sexual touching, which also may contribute to the potential performance pressure.

**Relationship Consequences.** No significant associations were found between any of the sexual activities and perceived relationship consequences of sexual compliance either among women or men. The hypothesis concerning sexual activities promoting partner pleasure and positive relationship consequences (H2) did not receive support. It seems that the sexual activities one has complied with do not have significance for the perceived consequences of sexual compliance to the relationship, either among men or women.

Without controlling for multiple testing and with the caution of the results being spurious, four activities had significant ( $p < .05$ ) associations with negative relationship consequences among women: giving sexual touching excluding genitals, giving and receiving sexual touching of genitals, and receiving oral stimulation. This is again an interesting observation, because of the associations these activities have with sexual pleasure in desired sex (Herbenick et al., 2023). The associations with receiving sexual touching and oral stimulation could have indications with partner expectations of pleasure and orgasm, meaning that these activities might be expected to result in a female orgasm more likely than vaginal penetration (Herbenick et al., 2023; Kontula & Miettinen, 2016). In the context of sexual compliance, it could require more effort from the complying woman to reach

orgasm. If this expectation is not fulfilled, it might generate fear of disappointing their partner among the women or negative reactions in their partner, creating negative relationship consequences.

Even though there were no significant associations among men's perceived relationship consequences, observing their odds ratios can give some interesting perspectives. Among men, the odds ratios for negative consequences revealed that several activities were associated without statistical significance with positive relationship (and individual) consequences. This finding may suggest that there are specific factors in men's sexual compliance that cause them to see that sexual compliance can have a positive or neutral effect on their relationships and themselves. Further scrutiny is needed to investigate these perspectives beyond speculation.

### ***Dominance and Submission Preferences***

Neither of the hypotheses (H6 and H7) concerning sexual dynamics preferences were supported by the results. Against what I had hypothesized, the higher the dominance preference a female participant had, the lower the odds of experiencing negative individual and relationship consequences. Women's submission preference, in turn, did not explain perceived individual or relationship outcomes. Among men, neither dominance nor submission preferences predicted the perceived outcomes of compliance.

Reflecting these results, the concept of dominance preference could overlap with concepts such as sexual agency, sexual resourcefulness, and sexual self-efficacy, especially among heterosexual women. Female sexual agency is associated with comfort in one's own body, a sense of entitlement to pleasure, and comfort with one's sexual desire (Chmielewski et al., 2020). Sexual resourcefulness means the ability to navigate through challenging sexual situations, such as refusing a sexual advance (Quinn-Nilas & Kennett, 2018), and sexual self-efficacy refers to one's perception of one's ability to control sexual encounters (Kennett et al., 2013). A woman with a dominant preference stands against the cultural expectations of women's submission and may have needed to develop higher sexual agency, resourcefulness, and self-efficacy to be able to live out her preference. Higher sexual resourcefulness and sexual self-efficacy are associated with perceiving less negative consequences of sexual compliance among women (Himanen & Gunst, 2023). Thus, a conceptual overlap between dominance preference and other characteristics could help explain the lower odds of experiencing negative consequences of sexual compliance when a woman has a higher dominance preference.

Possibly even more interesting is the fact that submission preference did not have any associations with how female participants perceived the consequences of sexual compliance. This raises at least two questions. First, one could speculate if this could be explained by strongly

internalized traditional sexual scripts. As mentioned previously in the Introduction section, sexual compliance is very common, and it could be so embedded in the submissive preferences of women that it does not evoke any specific perceptions of outcomes. Second, however, we need to ask if it is even viable to interpret sexual compliance as submissive behavior. Since sexual compliance does not involve sexual desire, it may be a completely separate phenomenon from such sexual submission one enjoys.

The features of the male sample in this study (small sample size, most men reported having perceived no consequences) have likely contributed to the results. Even though it is possible that no associations between consequences of sexual compliance and dominance and submission preferences would be found in a larger sample, further investigations of men's sexual compliance, its associations with sexual dynamics preferences, and the perceived outcomes are needed.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Several limitations need to be highlighted regarding the present study. Since we used convenience sampling, the results cannot be generalized to reflect the Finnish population. Furthermore, we did not collect data on people who have not engaged in sexual compliance, so the data cannot be used to draw conclusions about what sexual compliance looks like among Finnish populations in general. As mentioned previously, the research group did not reach enough participants of non-cis-gender identities to include them in the analyses. Like many of the studies around this topic, our sample also had an overrepresentation of women and an underrepresentation of men. The full sample only included 49 to 63 men depending on the analysis method, thus limiting the generalizability of conclusions among men. The present study did not succeed in our goal of attaining more information on sexual compliance among non-cisgender and senior populations, which have been and still are much underrepresented in research on sexual compliance.

Even though the present study reached participants of sexual minority identities relatively well, the theories and previous research I applied were more or less based on research on heterosexual populations and heterosexual cultural norms. The results and my conclusions may overlook some of the aspects that are unique to queer sex. Therefore, it would be important to examine sexual compliance and its consequences among sexual minority populations in a way that takes into consideration the hegemony of heterosexuality in current research. Research on larger, more representative samples is needed to allow for comparisons between sexual minorities with other populations. These notions do not only apply to sexual orientation, but similar requirements also concern research on sexual compliance among non-cisgender populations.

There are also limitations concerning the variables and measures in this study. First, the consequence variable was formed by combining the categories of "only negative consequences" and

“both positive and negative consequences” into “negative consequences”. This limits the accuracy of conclusions concerning negative consequences of sexual compliance, since some of the results also include experiences of positive consequences. Overall, some results might have been lost because a binary consequence variable was needed to run the analyses. The perceived consequences were also measured by only one estimate, which means that the preciseness of the data might be limited. It is likely that, in reality, the perceived consequences of compliance are more diverse than in the results, and that they vary over time.

Second, the information gathered on different sexual activities was not very detailed, since we did not collect data on when or how often participants had complied with these activities, or which activities they had complied with when they had experienced the positive or negative consequences. A suggestion for future research would be to use daily diary studies to obtain more precise estimates of the associations between different activities and consequences. Daily diary data would make it possible to compare sex that has involved compliance with certain activities and sex that has not, thus giving more detailed information on the subject. Similarly, since none of the hypotheses I had formed concerning the activities and their perceived consequences gained support, an examination of other possible factors might be necessary. These would include, for example, investigating the associations between the perceived consequences of sexual compliance and complying with activities one likes vs. one does not like.

Third, the dominance and submission scales were self-formed. Although the selected items were based on existing and reliable scales, the final scales did not provide any distinct recommendations for how to define high vs. low preferences. This created restrictions to the analyses: the present study could not deliver information on the perceived consequences of sexual compliance in situations where a participant prefers both submission and dominance or does not prefer either.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the present study offers new information about a previously uncharted territory of sexual compliance. None of the three hypotheses (pleasure, intrusiveness, and agency) of sexual activities received support from the results among men or women. These concepts did not seem to have relevance to the perceived individual and relational consequences of sexual compliance with different sexual activities. Among women, complying with a sexual activity was associated with increased odds of perceiving negative individual consequences regardless of the type of the activity, both significantly and without statistical significance. Significant associations were found between giving and receiving sexual touching of genitals and individual negative consequences. Among men, several activities had statistically no significant associations with

increased odds of neutral or positive individual and relationship consequences. There were no statistically significant associations between sexual activities and relationship consequences of compliance either among men or women. Neither men's nor women's submissive preferences for sexual dynamics explained the perceived consequences of sexual compliance. Among women, having a dominance preference was associated with perceiving positive consequences of sexual compliance.

However, there are several limitations to this study and its results. It would be important to acquire more detailed information about compliance with sexual activities and the perceived outcomes via daily diary studies. Drawing upon the results, it would also be viable to investigate the relationship between the perceived consequences and compliance with sexual activities one enjoys vs. does not enjoy. Reflecting on the results and limitations of the present study, several open questions and potential subjects for future research on sexual compliance remain.

#### **Summary in Swedish – Svensk sammanfattning**

#### **Associationer mellan sexuella aktiviteter, dominans-underkastelse-preferenser, och upplevda konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående**

Inom intima förhållanden kan det ibland uppstå situationer där man har ambivalenta tankar om huruvida man ska ha sex med sin partner eller inte. Sexuell beslutsfattning består av två separata element: sexuell lust och sexuell samtycke (Khera et al., 2022; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007). Att ha sexuell lust och att ge sexuell samtycke kan ibland uppkomma samtidigt, men inte alltid. När man med samtycke deltar i sexuell aktivitet med en partner utan att känna sexuell lust kallas det för sexuell tillmötesgående. Sexuell tillmötesgående skiljer sig från sexuella övergrepp eftersom sexuell tillmötesgående avser situationer där man frivilligt har gett samtycke utan påtryckningar, manipulation, eller tvång från partnern (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Morgan et al., 2006).

Tidigare forskning i sexuell tillmötesgående tyder på att det är ett vanligt fenomen bland alla könsidentiteter, och att det förekommer både i långvariga parförhållanden och i samband med dejting. Däremot är forskare och kliniker inte enhälliga om dess konsekvenser. Vissa anser att sexuell tillmötesgående borde behandlas som en normal del av intima förhållanden (Dewitte et al., 2020), och att det kan ha positiva samband med sexuell välmående och förhållandekvalitet (Day et al., 2015; Impett et al., 2019; Muise et al., 2013). Samtidigt har andra studier visat att sexuell tillmötesgående kan vara förknippat med lägre sexuell tillfredsställelse (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010), lägre upplevd förhållandekvalitet (Katz & Tirone, 2009) och fysiologiska stressreaktioner (Hartmann & Crockett, 2016). Dessa diskrepanser framvisar att det ännu finns mycket som man inte vet om konsekvenserna av sexuell tillmötesgående, och att vidare forskning behövs. Denna studie fokuserade på två kontextuella faktorer som kunde ha betydelse för hur man

upplever konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående: typ av sexuell aktivitet man har varit tillmötesgående med, och preferenser i sexuell dynamik i form av dominans och underkastelse.

### **Syfte och forskningsfrågor**

Syftet med denna studie var att undersöka hur individer upplever konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående för dem själva och deras förhållanden med deras sexuella partners. Studien observerade associationer mellan olika sexuella aktiviteter och de upplevda konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående, och associationer mellan dominans- och underkastelsepreferenser och de upplevda konsekvenserna. Baserat på tidigare forskning och teorier skapade jag följande hypoteser och forskningsfrågor:

**F1)** Är typer av olika sexuella aktiviteter man har varit tillmötesgående med kopplade till de upplevda konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående? Jag förväntade mig att hitta stöd för antingen H1 och H2, eller H3, eller H4 och H5.

**H1.** Individer som har varit tillmötesgående med sexuella aktiviteter som mer (vs. mindre) sannolikt ger sexuell njutning (t.ex att ta emot oralsex eller sexuell beröring) rapporterar mer om positiva individuella konsekvenser än individer som inte har varit tillmötesgående med dessa aktiviteter.

**H2.** Individer som har varit tillmötesgående med sexuella aktiviteter som mer (vs. mindre) sannolikt främjar sexuell njutning hos partnern (t. ex att ge oralsex eller sexuell beröring) rapporterar mer om positiva förhållandekonsekvenser än individer som inte har varit tillmötesgående med dessa aktiviteter.

**H3.** Individer som har varit tillmötesgående med sexuella aktiviteter som anses vara mer fysiskt inträngande (att ta emot vaginal och anal penetration) rapporterar mer om negativa individuella konsekvenser än individer som inte har varit tillmötesgående med dessa aktiviteter. Ingen hypotes kunde skapas för förhållandekonsekvenser eftersom information om dem inte fanns till hands.

**H4.** Individer som har varit tillmötesgående med sexuella aktiviteter som mer (vs. mindre) sannolikt främjar sexuell agens (dvs. att ge sexuella gärningar) rapporterar mer om positiva individuella konsekvenser än individer som inte har varit tillmötesgående med dessa aktiviteter. Ingen hypotes kunde skapas för förhållandekonsekvenser eftersom information om dem inte fanns till hands.

**H5.** Individer som har varit tillmötesgående med aktiviteter som mer (vs. mindre) sannolikt försvagar sexuell agens (dvs. att ta emot sexuella gärningar) rapporterar mer om negativa individuella konsekvenser än individer som inte har varit



tillmötesgående med dessa aktiviteter. Ingen hypotes kunde skapas för förhållandekonsekvenser eftersom information om dem inte fanns till hands.

**F2)** Är preferenser för sexuell dominans och underkastelse kopplade till de upplevda konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående? Jag förväntade mig att hitta stöd för båda följande hypoteser:

**H6.** Att ha (vs. att inte ha) en preferens för sexuell underkastelse är kopplat till att uppleva mer positiva konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående åtminstone på individuell nivå.

**H7.** Att ha (vs. att inte ha) en preferens för sexuell dominans är kopplat till att uppleva mer negativa konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående åtminstone på individuell nivå.

### **Metod och material**

Data samlades via en online-enkät. För att delta behövde man vara minst 18 år gammal och ha varit sexuellt tillmötesgående i en stadigvarande intim relation minst en gång. Av de 469 individer som svarade på enkäten exkluderades de som inte hade svarat på frågor som var relevanta för denna studie samt de vars svar inte gav tillräckligt pålitlig information om deras bakgrund. Trots att vår forskningsgrupp hade strävat efter att nå så många transkönade och icke-binära deltagare som möjligt, lyckades vi bara få svar av tio sådana personer. Separata analyser för denna grupp var således inte möjliga, och därför inkluderades bara deltagare som hade identifierat sig som män eller kvinnor i det slutliga samplet. Efter dessa åtgärder bestod det slutliga samplet av 295 deltagare.

Typer av sexuella aktiviteter kartlades genom en lista av 12 olika sexuella aktiviteter, av vilka deltagarna kunde svara 'ja' till alla alternativ som de hade varit tillmötesgående med. Som mått för dominans- och underkastelsepreferens skapade vi en egen skala för båda preferenser. Delar av skalorna baserade sig på redan existerande mått på sexuella preferenser, och vissa delar hade forskningsgruppen skapat för just denna studies ändamål. Reliabiliteten hos skalorna var god. De upplevda konsekvenserna kartlades ur ett individuellt och ett förhållanderelaterat perspektiv. Deltagare kunde välja huruvida de hade upplevt positiva, negativa, både positiva och negativa, eller inga konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående för dem själva och deras förhållande. För att möjliggöra statistiska analyser skapades dikotoma variabler för individuella och förhållandekonsekvenser genom att kombinera positiva och inga konsekvenser till en kategori som hette "positiva konsekvenser", och negativa och både negativa och positiva konsekvenser till "negativa konsekvenser". Statistiska analyser gjordes i SPSS med Pearsons chi-kvadrat och logistisk regression. Multipla test kontrollerades via Bonferroni-korrigeringsmetod.

### **Resultat**

Ingen av de sju hypoteserna jag hade format fick stöd i de statistiska analyserna. Att ha varit tillmötesgående med sexuella aktiviteter var kopplat till ökade odds för att rapportera negativa individuella konsekvenser bland kvinnor, både med och utan statistisk signifikans och oberoende aktivitet. Aktiviteterna som hade statistiskt signifikanta samband med de upplevda konsekvenserna bland kvinnor var att ge och ta emot sexuell beröring av könsorganen och negativa individuella konsekvenser. Detta var ett intressant resultat eftersom tidigare forskning (Herbenick et al., 2023, Santtila et al., 2007) tyder på att sexuell beröring tillhör sådana aktiviteter som människor tycker om och som ökar sannolikheten för njutning. Vidare observation av aktiviteter som hade signifikanta samband med negativa individuella konsekvenser utan Bonferroni-korrigerings gav upphov till olika eventuella förklaringar för detta resultat. Till exempel graden av fysisk ansträngning vid olika aktiviteter, personliga preferenser, och för mäns del prestationsångest gällande erektion kunde ha betydelse för hur man upplever de individuella konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående.

Inga signifikanta samband hittades mellan sexuella aktiviteter och förhållandekonsekvenser, varken bland kvinnor eller män. Typen av sexuell aktivitet man har varit tillmötesgående med verkade inte ha betydelse för de upplevda konsekvenserna av tillmötesgående för förhållandet. Genom att observera resultat som var statistiskt signifikanta utan Bonferroni-korrigerings kunde man dock spekulera huruvida graden av ansträngning som krävs för att nå orgasm bland kvinnor skulle ha betydelse för de upplevda negativa förhållandekonsekvenserna. För mäns del kan en del av resultaten förklaras genom att de flesta män inte hade upplevt några konsekvenser alls av sexuellt tillmötesgående.

I motsats till hypotesen om sexuell dominanspreferens och negativa konsekvenser, ökade dominanspreferensen oddsen för att uppleva positiva konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående bland kvinnor. Detta kan delvis bero på en eventuell överlappning av dominanspreferens med begrepp som sexuell agens och sexuell självförmåga. En kvinna med dominanta preferenser står emot kulturella förväntningar av kvinnlig underkastelse, och kan därför ha utvecklat högre sexuell agens och självförmåga för att kunna leva enligt sina preferenser. I tidigare forskning har man hittat samband mellan högre sexuell självförmåga och upplevda positiva konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående (Himanen & Gunst 2023), vilket skulle kunna förklara resultatet. Däremot hittades inga signifikanta samband mellan underkastelsepreferenser och de upplevda konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående bland kvinnor. Bland män förklarade varken preferens för dominans eller submission variationer i de upplevda konsekvenserna. Samplet av män i denna studie var relativt litet, och de flesta män rapporterade att de inte hade upplevt några konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående, vilket sannolikt har bidragit till dessa resultat.

Sammanfattningsvis tillför denna studie värdefull information om ett tidigare okänt område av sexuellt tillmötesgående. Resultaten tyder på att fördjupande kunskap behövs speciellt om sexuella aktiviteter och deras associationer med konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående. Framtida forskning skulle kunna utföras i form av dagliga dagboksstudier, eller genom att jämföra konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående vid sådana aktiviteter man njuter av jämfört med sådana som man inte tycker om.

## References

- Catania, J. A. (2019). Dyadic Sexual Regulation Scale. In R.R. Milhausen, J.K. Sakaluk, T.D. Fisher, W.L. Yarber, & C.M. Davis (Eds.), *Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures* (4th ed., pp. 87–89). Routledge. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.vasa.abo.fi/10.4324/9781315183169>
- Catania, J. A., McDermott, L. J., & Wood, J. A. (1984). Assessment of locus of control: Situational specificity in the sexual context. *The Journal of Sex Research, 20*(3), 310–324. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224498409551228>
- Cense, M. (2019). Rethinking sexual agency: Proposing a multicomponent model based on young people's life stories. *Sex Education, 19*(3), 247–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2018.1535968>
- Chmielewski, J. F., Bowman, C. P., & Tolman, D. L. (2020). Pathways to Pleasure and Protection: Exploring Embodiment, Desire, and Entitlement to Pleasure as Predictors of Black and White Young Women's Sexual Agency. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 44*(3), 307–322. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684320917395>
- Conroy, N. E., Krishnakumar, A., & Leone, J. M. (2015). Reexamining Issues of Conceptualization and Willing Consent: The Hidden Role of Coercion in Experiences of Sexual Acquiescence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 30*(11), 1828–1846. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514549050>
- Crown, L., & Roberts, L. J. (2009). Capturing Complexity: An Empirical Typology of Nonagentic Sexual Interactions. *International Journal of Sexual Health, 21*(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19317610802434765>
- Darden, M. C., Ehman, A. C., Lair, E. C., & Gross, A. M. (2019). Sexual Compliance: Examining the Relationships Among Sexual Want, Sexual Consent, and Sexual Assertiveness. *Sexuality & Culture, 23*(1), 220–235. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-018-9551-1>
- Day, L. C., Muise, A., Joel, S., & Impett, E. A. (2015). To Do It or Not to Do It? How Communally Motivated People Navigate Sexual Interdependence Dilemmas. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 41*(6), 791–804. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167215580129>
- Dewitte, M., Carvalho, J., Corona, G., Limoncin, E., Pascoal, P., Reisman, Y., & Štulhofer, A. (2020). Sexual Desire Discrepancy: A Position Statement of the European Society for Sexual Medicine. *Sexual Medicine, 8*(2), 121–131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esxm.2020.02.008>
- Drouin, M., & Tobin, E. (2014). Unwanted but consensual sexting among young adults: Relations with attachment and sexual motivations. *Computers in Human Behavior, 31*, 412–418. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.11.001>
- Frederick, D. A., Lever, J., Gillespie, B. J., & Garcia, J. R. (2017). What Keeps Passion Alive?

Sexual Satisfaction Is Associated With Sexual Communication, Mood Setting, Sexual Variety, Oral Sex, Orgasm, and Sex Frequency in a National U.S. Study. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 54(2), 186–201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2015.1137854>

Gagnon, J. H. (1990). The Explicit and Implicit Use of the Scripting Perspective in Sex Research. *Annual Review of Sex Research*, 1(1), 1–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10532528.1990.10559854>

Gagnon, J. H., & Simon, W. (2017). *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315129242>

Gunst, A., Alanko, K., Nickull, S., Dewitte, M., Källström, M., Antfolk, J., & Jern, P. (2023). A Qualitative Content Analysis of Perceived Individual and Relational Consequences of Sexual Compliance and Their Contributors [Preprint]. PsyArXiv. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/a563e>

Hartmann, A. J., & Crockett, E. E. (2016). When sex isn't the answer: Examining sexual compliance, restraint, and physiological stress. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2016.1154142>

Herbenick, D., Fu, T., & Patterson, C. (2023). Sexual Repertoire, Duration of Partnered Sex, Sexual Pleasure, and Orgasm: Findings from a US Nationally Representative Survey of Adults. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 49(4), 369–390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2022.2126417>

Hill, C. A. (2019). Affective and Motivational Orientation Related to Erotic Arousal Questionnaire. In R.R. Milhausen, J.K. Sakaluk, T.D. Fisher, C.M. Davis, & W.L. Yarber (Eds.), *Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures* (4th ed., pp. 462–467). Routledge. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.vasa.abo.fi/10.4324/9781315183169>

Hill, C. A., & Preston, L. K. (1996). Individual differences in the experience of sexual motivation: Theory and measurement of dispositional sexual motives. *Journal of Sex Research*, 33(1), 27–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499609551812>

Himanen, M., & Gunst, A. (2023). Sexual Compliance in Finnish Committed Relationships: Sexual Self-Control, Relationship Power, and Experienced Consequences. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2023.2246965>

Impett, E. A., Muise, A., & Harasymchuk, C. (2019). Giving in the bedroom: The costs and benefits of responding to a partner's sexual needs in daily life. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 36(8), 2455–2473. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407518787349>

Impett, E. A., & Peplau, L. A. (2003). Sexual compliance: Gender, motivational, and relationship perspectives. *Journal of Sex Research*, 40(1), 87–100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490309552169>

Impett, E. A., Peplau, L. A., & Gable, S. L. (2005). Approach and avoidance sexual motives:

Implications for personal and interpersonal well-being. *Personal Relationships*, 12(4), 465–482.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2005.00126.x>

Katz, J., & Schneider, M. E. (2015). (Hetero)sexual Compliance with Unwanted Casual Sex: Associations with Feelings about First Sex and Sexual Self-Perceptions. *Sex Roles*, 72(9–10), 451–461.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-015-0467-z>

Katz, J., & Tirone, V. (2009). Women's Sexual Compliance with Male Dating Partners: Associations with Investment in Ideal Womanhood and Romantic Well-Being. *Sex Roles*, 60(5–6), 347–356. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9566-4>

Katz, J., & Tirone, V. (2010). Going Along With It: Sexually Coercive Partner Behavior Predicts Dating Women's Compliance With Unwanted Sex. *Violence Against Women*, 16(7), 730–742.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801210374867>

Kennett, D. J., Humphreys, T. P., & Bramley, J. E. (2013). Sexual resourcefulness and gender roles as moderators of relationship satisfaction and consenting to unwanted sex in undergraduate women. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 22(1), 51–61. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjhs.933>

Khera, D., Champion, A., Walton, K., & Pedersen, C. (2022). Why men don't say no: Sexual compliance and gender socialization in heterosexual men. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 13(5), 1336–1349.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2022.2031263>

Kiefer, A. K., & Sanchez, D. T. (2007). Scripting sexual passivity: A gender role perspective. *Personal Relationships*, 14(2), 269–290. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2007.00154.x>

Kontula, O., & Miettinen, A. (2016). Determinants of female sexual orgasms. *Socioaffective Neuroscience & Psychology*, 6(1), 31624. <https://doi.org/10.3402/snp.v6.31624>

Kosenko, K. A. (2010). Meanings and Dilemmas of Sexual Safety and Communication for Transgender Individuals. *Health Communication*, 25(2), 131–141.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10410230903544928>

McBride, K. R., & Fortenberry, J. D. (2010). Heterosexual Anal Sexuality and Anal Sex Behaviors: A Review. *Journal of Sex Research*, 47(2–3), 123–136.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490903402538>

Montemurro, B. (2022). Having It: PROFICIENCY, PRESSURE, AND PERFORMANCE. In *Getting It, Having It, Keeping It Up: Straight Men's Sexuality in Public and Private* (Vol. 2022, pp. 85–116). Rutgers University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2v55hhq.6>

Morgan, E., Johnson, I., & Sigler, R. (2006). Gender differences in perceptions for women's participation in unwanted sexual intercourse. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 34(5), 515–522.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2006.09.006>

Muise, A., Impett, E. A., & Desmarais, S. (2013). Getting It On Versus Getting It Over With:

Sexual Motivation, Desire, and Satisfaction in Intimate Bonds. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39(10), 1320–1332. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167213490963>

O’Sullivan, L. F., & Allgeier, E. R. (1998). Feigning sexual desire: Consenting to unwanted sexual activity in heterosexual dating relationships. *Journal of Sex Research*, 35(3), 234–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499809551938>

O’Sullivan, L. F., & Byers, E. S. (1992). College students’ incorporation of initiator and restrictor roles in sexual dating interactions. *Journal of Sex Research*, 29(3), 435–446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499209551658>

Peterson, Z. D., & Muehlenhard, C. L. (2007). Conceptualizing the “Wantedness” of Women’s Consensual and Nonconsensual Sexual Experiences: Implications for How Women Label Their Experiences With Rape. *Journal of Sex Research*, 44(1), 72–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490709336794>

Quinn-Nilas, C., & Kennett, D. J. (2018). Reasons why undergraduate women comply with unwanted, non-coercive sexual advances: A serial indirect effect model integrating sexual script theory and sexual self-control perspectives. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 158(5), 603–615. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2018.1427039>

Rubinsky, V. (2020). Sexual Compliance in Understudied Relationships. *Communication Studies*, 71(5), 879–895. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2020.1807374>

Sanchez, D. T., Phelan, J. E., Moss-Racusin, C. A., & Good, J. J. (2012). The Gender Role Motivation Model of Women’s Sexually Submissive Behavior and Satisfaction in Heterosexual Couples. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(4), 528–539. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211430088>

Santtila, P., Wager, I., Witting, K., Harlaar, N., Jern, P., Johansson, A., Varjonen, M., & Sandnabba, N. K. (2007). Discrepancies between Sexual Desire and Sexual Activity: Gender Differences and Associations with Relationship Satisfaction. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 34(1), 31–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00926230701620548>

Tirone, V., & Katz, J. (2020). When Do Motives to Sexually Please a Male Partner Benefit Women’s Own Sexual Agency? *Sex Roles*, 82(5–6), 336–344. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01057-5>

van Berlo, W., & Ensink, B. (2000). Problems with Sexuality After Sexual Assault. *Annual Review of Sex Research*, 11(1), 235. Academic Search Complete.

Vannier, S. A., & O’Sullivan, L. F. (2010). Sex without Desire: Characteristics of Occasions of Sexual Compliance in Young Adults’ Committed Relationships. *Journal of Sex Research*, 47(5), 429–439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490903132051>

Willis, M., Fu, T.-C. (Jane), Jozkowski, K. N., Dodge, B., & Herbenick, D. (2022). Associations between sexual precedent and sexual compliance: An event-level examination. *Journal of American College Health, 70*(1), 107–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2020.1726928>



## Appendix A

### Informed Consent and Definitions of Central Concepts

We kindly invite you to participate in a scientific study which investigates experiences of sexual compliance and the consequences of complying to sex. The study is carried out at the Department of Psychology at Åbo Akademi University, Finland. Participation includes filling out an online survey about your experiences of sexual compliance.

To take part in the study, you have to:

- 1) be at least 18 years old and
- 2) have complied to sexual activity within a committed intimate relationship at least once.

**Sexual compliance** is defined as consensually engaging in sexual activity with a partner despite the lack (at least in the beginning) of sexual desire. **Sexual activity** is defined as a broad range of sexual behaviors which can include, for instance, touching/petting, oral sex, penetrative sex, or video/phone sex. **Sexual desire** is defined as being interested in and personally motivated to engage in sexual activity, with or without physical reactions (e.g., erection, tingling, lubrication). Sexual compliance differs from sexual assault, as sexual compliance refers to situations where consent has been given voluntarily (either explicitly or implicitly), without any pressure, manipulation, or coercion from the partner.

The survey is short and should at most take 15 minutes to complete. In the survey, we also ask you to describe your experiences of sexual compliance in your own words. Participation is voluntary and all responses will be treated completely anonymously, meaning your replies cannot be linked to you. If you decide to participate in the study, you can still discontinue at any point during the survey, without giving a reason for doing so. However, as your responses are anonymous, already collected data cannot be deleted upon request. If you complete the survey, you will be given the option to take part in a lottery of a gift card worth 50€ to Zalando (Finland) by filling out your e-mail address. The e-mail address is stored separately from the survey responses and is deleted once the lottery has taken place. The material is stored on a closed server at Åbo Akademi University. At the end of the study, the research material is archived at Åbo Akademi University. Anonymized research material can also be made openly available through an online repository.

[ ] I have read and understand the information above and I want to take part in the study

## Appendix B

### Survey Items for Dominance and Submission Preferences

1. I often like to take the initiative in beginning sexual activity.
2. I find sexual behavior and sexual fantasy most exciting when I can feel forceful and dominant with my partner.
3. I want my partner to be the one who initiates sex.
4. I really enjoy having sex as a way of exerting dominance and control over my partner.
5. I want my partner to be responsible for directing our sexual encounters.
6. Often the sense of power that I have over my sexual partner can be extremely exhilarating.
7. I like to feel that I am the one that controls the situation when we have sex.
8. I frequently find it quite arousing to be very directive and controlling while having sex with my partner.
9. I often want to be the active member during sexual relations while my partner takes a passive role.
10. Sexual activities and fantasies are most stimulating when my partner seems extremely self-assured and demanding during sex.
11. During some sexual encounters I like to be passive while my partner is the active person.
12. It is frequently very arousing when my partner gets very forceful and aggressive during sex.
13. I generally don't like when my partner is the one who initiates sex. \*
14. Often I have a real need to feel dominated and possessed by my partner while we are engaged in sex or sexual fantasy.
15. I don't like to be the one who decides about when we have sex. \*
16. I often find it a real turn-on when my partner takes charge and becomes authoritative during sexual activity or fantasy.

\* = Not included in the final scales

### Pressmeddelande

Forskare vid Åbo Akademi har visat att de upplevda konsekvenserna av sexuellt tillmötesgående, dvs. att med samtycke ha sex utan att känna sexuell lust, kan variera enligt typ av sexuell aktivitet och preferens för sexuell dominans eller underkastelse bland kvinnor. Kvinnor som hade varit tillmötesgående genom att ge eller ta emot sexuell beröring av könsorganen rapporterade med större sannolikhet negativa konsekvenser av tillmötesgående än kvinnor som inte hade gjort detta. Därtill rapporterade kvinnor som hade en preferens för dominerande roller i sexuella aktiviteter med större sannolikhet positiva konsekvenser av tillmötesgåendet. ”Resultaten kan bero på bland annat att man kan vid dessa aktiviteter uppleva särskild press på att få orgasm, vilket kan försvåras av att man inte känner lust. Däremot kan kvinnor med dominanta preferenser ha utvecklat högre sexuell agens och självförmåga, vilka i sin tur kan skydda mot att uppleva negativa konsekvenser av att ha varit sexuellt tillmötesgående. Men vi behöver mer forskning för att säkerställa dessa teorier”, säger forskare Vihro. I studien analyserades enkätdata som samlats in under året 2022 av forskare vid ämnet psykologi vid Åbo Akademi. Materialet omfattade också manliga deltagare, men bland dem hittade man inga signifikanta resultat för upplevda konsekvenser av sexuellt tillmötesgående enligt typ av sexuell aktivitet och dominanspreferenser.