

Gender Stereotypes and Relationship Equity and Satisfaction

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Introduction

- **Gender stereotypes divide men and women** along biological, emotional, and cognitive lines. This social construct can be summed up by the phrase “men are from Mars, women are from Venus.”
- The sex of a person is the biological category of male or female and gender is the social aspect of being male or female (Robinson et al., 2001).
- **Social constructs that promote gender stereotypes** can have an impact on the suppression of biological responses (Brody, 1997). **This thinking influences behavior in men and women that is self-fulfilling to gender stereotypes** (Baez et al., 2017).
- **This may have an effect on how men and women perceive the equity and satisfaction within romantic relationships.**

Hypotheses

Among people with high gender stereotype scores

- **Comparative equity is positively correlated with satisfaction**

Among people with low gender stereotype scores

- **Relationship equity is positively correlated with satisfaction.**

Measures

The Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI; Funk & Rogge, 2007) measures the relationship satisfaction of the participants on a 6-point Likert scale.

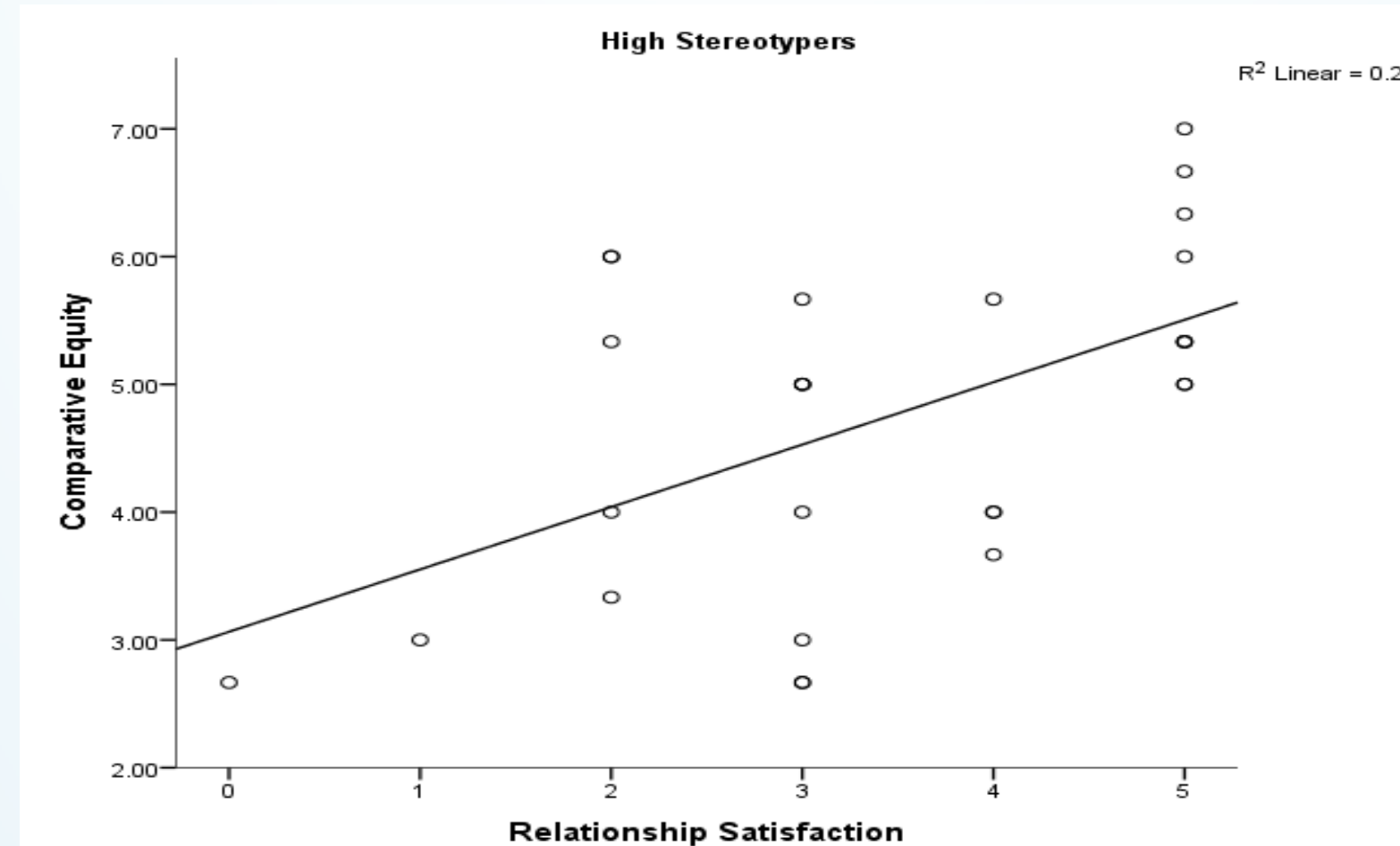
The Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974) measures how a participant identifies with gender stereotypes based on 60 items from the categories of masculinity, femininity, or neutral items on a 7-point Likert scale

The Equity Index (Guerrero, La Valley, & Farinelli, 2008) is administered twice. The first version measures the perceived equity of the relationship compared to their partner. The second version measures the relationship equity compared to others in relationships of the same sex they know well. All measures were scored on a 7-point Likert scale.

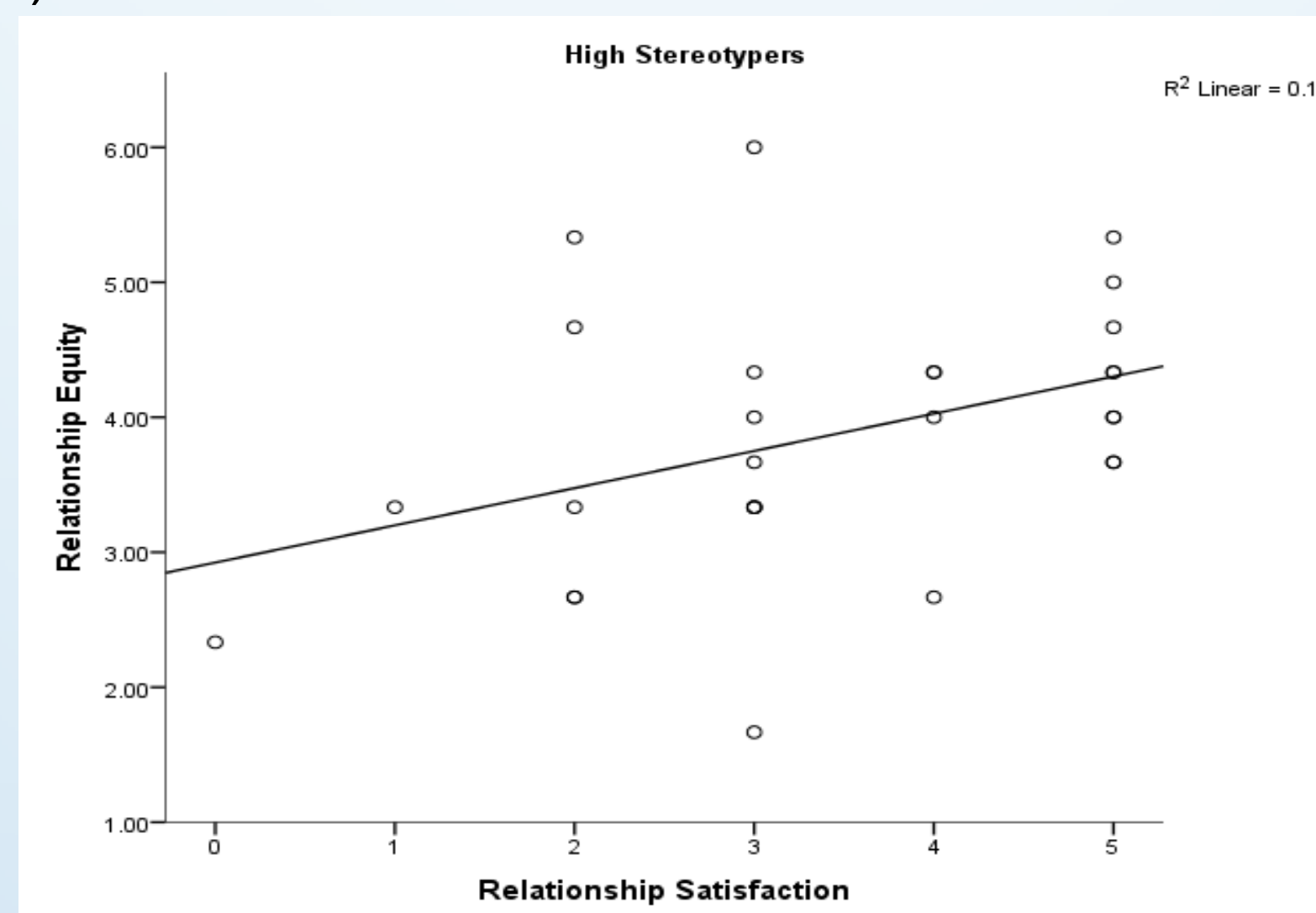
- **The Hatfield Measure (Hatfield, Utne, & Traupmann, 1979)** measures who is getting a “better deal” based on what each participant and partner contributed and received from the relationship.
- **The Sprecher Measure (Sprecher, 1986)** measures who is likely to contribute more when the exchange in the relationship becomes unbalanced.
- **The Level of Benefits Received (Guerrero, La Valley, & Farinelli, 2008)** measures who benefits more from the relationship between the participant and their partner.

Results

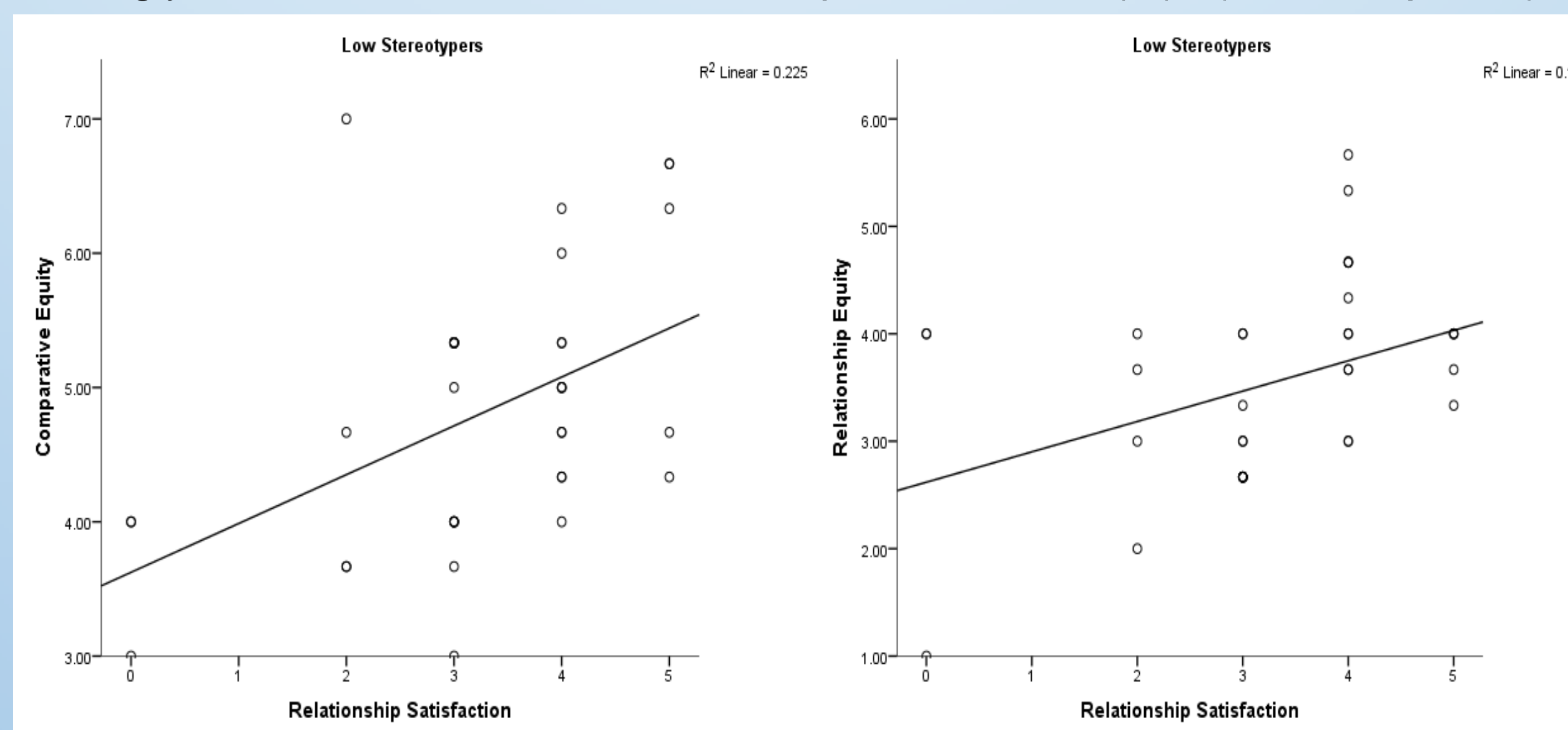
The first hypothesis was tested using a Pearson correlation. The results confirm that among those with a high stereotype score comparative equity is the strongest indicator for relationship satisfaction ($r(26) = .536, p > .01$).



An additional analysis on those with high stereotype scores also show a high correlation in relationship equity and relationship satisfaction ($r(26) = .396, p > .05$).



The second hypothesis was rejected. Data shows the strongest correlation in relationship satisfaction for participants with low stereotype scores was comparative equity ($r(34) = .475, p > .01$). Relationship equity was also strongly correlated but not the most important factor ($r(34) = .402, p > .05$).



Methods

64 men and women were recruited via Facebook to participate in a voluntary online survey.

From the sample participants there were 47 women and 17 men. The ages from the sample group ranged between 22 to 76 years old with a mean age of 40.14 years old ($SD = 16$ years).

Participants were asked to complete an online survey that included a demographic questionnaire about their sex, age, ethnicity, duration of their current relationship, relationship status, the CSI, Bem Sex Role Inventory, and Equity Index.

Discussion

The goal of this research was to measure gender stereotypes, relationship equity, and satisfaction to understand the relationship between these three factors in men and women with high or low gender stereotype scores.

While results confirmed those with high gender stereotype scores connect their relationship satisfaction with comparative equity. The data contradicts the hypothesis for low gender stereotype scores by showing the strongest indicator of relationship satisfaction of was also comparative equity.

Upon deeper analysis, another strong correlation when determining relationship satisfaction for high gender stereotype scores was, in fact, relationship equity.

While it was surprising the strongest correlation for low stereotype scores was comparative equity, the correlation to relationship equity was nearly as significant.

Limitations:

- **Small sample size**
- **Participants recruited only from social media which does not allow for the most diverse sample**
- **Unable to eliminate bias in self-reporting as the participants may have discussed the items with their partner while taking the survey**

Conclusion

When it comes to relationship satisfaction, men and women, both indicate that regardless of a high or low stereotype score, what is most important is how they compare to other people in relationships of the same sex that they know well.

While it is important to receive equity from their partner, the results highlight that gender stereotyping is so strong that people will be more satisfied by accepting less equity in their relationships as long as they keep in line with gender stereotypes.

Future Research

- This research is extremely important to achieving equity and satisfaction in relationships between men and women. Much of the conversation about the relationships between the sexes stall when we view each other's behavior through the lens of a gender stereotype.
- Further research should include cultural traditions, other sexual orientations, and genders. This would allow for further examination of the deeper roll gender stereotypes play in relationships.
- This would help advance the understanding we have when in relationships of all kinds. The better the understanding the more we would be able to move away from prejudgement on the basis gender stereotypes. Removing preconceived notions of how people should act based on gender stereotypes will allow for a better understanding of others and ourselves.