

Development and Validation of a Filipino Contextualized Sexual Self-Esteem Scale (FC-SSES)

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Abstract. Sexual self-esteem is a vital aspect of an individual's perception of their sexual identity and capacity to engage in meaningful and satisfying sexual experiences. It shapes sexual decisions and behaviors across emotional, physical, and relational dimensions. Despite its importance, research on sexual self-esteem remains limited, particularly in culturally traditional societies like the Philippines, where societal norms and values often constrain discussions about sexuality. To address this gap, the present study aimed to develop a culturally contextualized instrument to measure sexual self-esteem within the Philippine setting. Employing an exploratory sequential mixed methods design, the study began with a qualitative exploration to capture the multifaceted construct of sexual self-esteem within the Filipino context. Thematic analysis of interview data revealed six emergent themes that guided the development of the Filipino Contextualized Sexual Self-Esteem Scale (FC-SSES). The scale underwent rigorous testing, including a pilot study with 300 participants and a field test with 1,000 participants from a state university in the Philippines. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) identified six underlying factors: Sexual Agency, Sexual Self-Awareness, Sexual Self-Acceptance, Sexual Assertiveness, Sexual Education, and Sexual Empowerment. The FC-SSES demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.91$, $\omega = 0.91$) and strong convergent evidence of construct validity, establishing its reliability and suitability for measuring sexual self-esteem in the Philippine setting. The FC-SSES holds significant implications for improving sexual health and well-being. It offers a culturally relevant tool to identify individuals at risk for sexually related distress, dissatisfaction, and negative self-perceptions. Moreover, it serves as a foundation for developing interventions aimed at promoting sexual health, education, and overall well-being among Filipinos.

Keywords: Cultural psychology; Exploratory mixed methods; Sexual health; Sexual self-esteem; Sexual well-being

1.0 Introduction

The exploration of human sexuality and its impact on individual experiences and relationships has been a topic of interest and study for many years. Understanding the complexities and emotional significance of sexual activities has shed light on the profound ways in which individuals shape their relationships, self-perception, and overall well-being. For many individuals, engaging in sex or sexual activities transcends mere physical satisfaction; it serves as a profound means of expressing a wide range of emotions such as love, passion, trust, and vulnerability. Through these intimate encounters, individuals often deepen their connections with their partners, establish a sense of closeness and understanding, and experience emotional fulfillment that contributes significantly to their overall well-being and satisfaction in relationships. However, it is important to note that the significance of sexual experiences extends beyond the realm of relationships (Buss, 2018).

The American Psychological Association (2018) defines "sex" as encompassing both physiological and psychological processes associated with procreation and sexual pleasure. It is commonly regarded as an inherent aspect of human existence, often perceived as the biological purpose of an individual's existence. Building on this foundational understanding of sex, sexual self-esteem plays a pivotal role in shaping how individuals perceive their bodies and engage in intimate relationships. Sexual self-esteem, or sexual esteem, is defined by the significance individuals place on their sexual identity and their perception of being accepted as sexual beings (Mayers et al., 2003, as cited in Shaheen and Batool, 2019). It encompasses the evaluation and confidence in one's ability to engage in meaningful and pleasurable sexual experiences, as well as the emotional and physical aspects that a person brings to sexual encounters (Snell and Papini, 2010, as cited in Shaheen and Batool, 2019). This self-perception influences every sexual decision and behavior an individual makes.

Individuals with higher sexual self-esteem are often found to have better mental and emotional health outcomes. Research has shown that those who have a favorable view of their sexual selves tend to report lower levels of depression and anxiety (Heidari et al., 2017). Moreover, higher sexual self-esteem is associated with more satisfying relationships. According to Oattes and Offman (2007), individuals who feel confident and optimistic about their sexuality are more likely to engage in open communication with their partners about their sexual needs and desires, leading to greater intimacy and relationship satisfaction.

In addition to mental health and relationship satisfaction, individuals with higher sexual self-esteem exhibit a greater sense of empowerment and agency in their sexual decision-making. Empowered individuals are more likely to practice safe sex, negotiate condom use, and make informed choices about their sexual health, which are critical behaviors for reducing the risk of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies (Nkhoma et al., 2020).

However, amidst the ever-evolving field of sexuality research, a notable gap persists regarding sexual self-esteem. Although Western societies have increasingly adopted a progressive stance on sexuality, which highlights a culture of openness and acceptance, this liberal approach is not universally observed (Træen et al., 2018). In contrast, more traditional societies such as the Philippines still maintain a reticent attitude towards sexual discourse, despite the growing presence of sex education in various media forms (Ortega et al., 2024). This amplifies the imperative for a more discerning investigation into the construct of sexual self-esteem, primarily as it manifests and is interpreted across diverse cultural landscapes.

The intricate relationship between cultural and psychological concepts, such as sexual self-esteem, underscores the need for psychological tools to be tailored to fit local contexts. This necessity emphasizes the importance of customizing assessment tools to align with specific cultural contexts, ensuring their relevance and precision in reflecting the complexities of human experiences and beliefs. Acknowledging this necessity, there has been a global effort to integrate indigenous methodologies and instruments across different countries (Dong & Dumas, 2020). This collective endeavor seeks to reconcile the disparity between Western paradigms and indigenous perspectives regarding various psychological constructs, such as sexuality.

In Asia, particularly in the Philippines, there has been a pioneering effort to embrace an indigenous perspective in understanding the behaviors of its populace (Cheung, Zhang, & Wada, 2003, as cited in Dong & Dumas, 2020). This initiative finds its roots in the recognition, dating back to as early as 1960, by Filipino scholars of the "inadequacy" and "unfairness" inherent in Western psychological concepts. However, it was not until 1970 that Virgilio Gasper Enriquez catalyzed the incorporation of *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology). In collaboration with Dr. Alfredo V. Lagmay, this movement spurred continuous research efforts delving into the historical and cultural underpinnings of the Philippines (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000).

Subsequently, in response to the limitations of Western approaches, various indigenous tools have been developed. Starting in the 1970s, local tests assessing creativity, self-perception, personality, and vocational aptitude began to emerge. The 1980s witnessed a heightened interest in personality testing. In comparison, the 1990s saw the creation of measures tailored to Filipino traits such as intelligence, religiosity, sexual morality, stress coping abilities, concern, emotional stability, verbal proficiency in Filipino, Filipino management styles, dementia screening, empathy, and trustworthiness. Throughout the period spanning from the 1980s to the 1990s, there was a notable surge in efforts towards test development, with a continuous emphasis on the creation of local

assessment tools being encouraged (Cirpes-Ortega & Guanzon-Lapena, 1997, as cited in Bries et al., 2018). The intricate relationship between cultural and psychological concepts, such as sexual self-esteem, underscores the need for psychological tools to be tailored to fit local contexts. This necessity emphasizes the importance of customizing assessment tools to align with specific cultural contexts, ensuring their relevance and precision in reflecting the complexities of human experiences and beliefs.

Consequently, the researchers aim to develop a scale specifically tailored to assess sexual self-esteem among individuals, with a particular focus on adapting it to reflect the cultural and societal nuances of the Philippines. This initiative aligns with established practices in psychological assessment, emphasizing the importance of integrating sexuality assessments for individuals aged 18 and above, regardless of their sexual experience. Psychological evaluations seek to provide a comprehensive understanding of an individual's mental and emotional health. Sexuality significantly influences self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being. Including sexuality assessments ensures a thorough and holistic evaluation of each individual (Mitchell et al., 2021).

Additionally, normalizing discussions about sexual health reduces stigma. It promotes open communication, creating a therapeutic environment where individuals can comfortably address sexual issues, which is essential for accurate diagnosis and effective treatment. Moreover, sexuality assessments can uncover potential concerns such as sexual dysfunction, trauma, or relationship difficulties that individuals might not disclose voluntarily, all of which can significantly affect mental health and may necessitate professional intervention (Hensel et al., 2011). Furthermore, from Arnett's (2008) developmental psychology perspective, emerging adulthood (typically ages 18-25) represents a critical phase for exploring and establishing one's sexual identity. Assessing sexuality during this period provides valuable insights into an individual's developmental trajectory and identifies potential areas of concern.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The researchers adopted an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach in this study, following the guidelines put forth by Creswell and Creswell (2018, pp. 341–351). This methodological framework consisted of two distinct phases. The first phase encompassed an initial qualitative exploration and analysis, and the second phase focused on the development and testing of a specific feature, such as a new survey instrument, in a quantitative manner.

During the first phase, the researchers delved into a comprehensive qualitative exploration and analysis to understand the intricacies of the construct under study. This qualitative approach established the foundation for the subsequent phase of the study, enabling the researchers to identify critical aspects and underlying themes that are crucial for constructing an effective survey instrument. The second phase involved a thorough survey design and development process, including testing, where the researchers meticulously created survey items that accurately represented the sexual self-esteem construct within the Philippine context. In this phase, the researchers conducted a pilot study to gather preliminary data. Once the pilot study was completed and the survey items had been refined, the researchers conducted a rigorous field test to ensure that the finalized scale accurately measured the construct of sexual self-esteem within the Philippine context.

2.2 Qualitative Phase

Research Participants

In the qualitative phase of the study, the researchers employed purposive sampling to select three participants who met specific, predefined criteria aligned with the study's objectives. This method enabled the researchers to deliberately choose individuals capable of providing rich, relevant insights into the research topic. To be included, participants had to be native-born and currently residing in the Philippines, possess a background or specialization in clinical psychology, and be married.

Data Measure

The researchers engaged in semi-structured interviews, utilizing open-ended questions to delve into participants' knowledge and expertise concerning sexual self-esteem within the Philippine context. This approach was designed to elicit rich and comprehensive information, enabling the researchers to extract diverse and detailed insights from participants' responses, which subsequently guided the development of pertinent items.

The researchers derived the interview questions from existing literature, ensuring a comprehensive coverage of relevant topics. Subsequently, the constructed interview guide questions underwent validation by three Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to ensure their accuracy, relevance, and appropriateness for gathering consistent and meaningful data.

Data Collection Procedure

The researchers initiated contact with the participants, beginning the process of scheduling interview sessions by prioritizing their availability. Recognizing the significance of accommodating participants' schedules, the researchers gave them the flexibility to select both the date and time for the interviews. Subsequently, the researchers opted to conduct online interviews to accommodate the participants' requests, given their distant locations and busy schedules. This approach provided a personalized and comfortable environment, allowing participants to engage in meaningful discussions while in the comfort of their settings.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the interview phase of the qualitative study was entirely voluntary, and the researchers sought explicit permission from participants to record the interviews. Participants were presented with an informed consent form detailing the study's purpose, background, potential risks, benefits, and their absolute right to withdraw from the study at any time. Upholding the principles of anonymity and confidentiality, all gathered data was handled with the utmost care and reserved exclusively for research purposes. Any identifiable information linked to the participants was meticulously redacted to safeguard their privacy. By the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), the researchers implemented stringent measures to store all collected information securely. This entailed establishing a dedicated folder with restricted access, ensuring that only authorized researchers can access or review the data. These measures were in place to ensure the integrity, confidentiality, and ethical handling of participants' data throughout the research process.

2.3 Quantitative Phase

Research Locale

Participants were recruited from the population of college students enrolled at a state university in the Philippines. Convenience sampling was employed as the sampling method for participant selection, which is widely recognized as the most common approach in psychological research.

Research Participants

The study focused on individuals aged 18 to 25 who are currently pursuing tertiary education. Research supports this demographic selection, as studies (Li et al., 2023; Romero & Espinoza, 2023; Jahanfar & Pashaei, 2022; Osuala et al., 2020) indicate that university students in this age range frequently engage in risky sexual behaviors influenced by peer pressure. Moreover, this transitional phase toward adulthood is characterized by increased exploration and autonomy, further contributing to a heightened propensity for such behaviors. Additionally, this age range aligns with Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory, particularly as individuals in this stage navigate the formation of intimate relationships (Papalia & Martorell, 2021, p. 412).

The sample size for the pilot testing was established based on the guidelines provided by Guadagnoli and Velicer (1988, as cited in Boateng et al., 2018), which indicate that a minimum of 300 participants is essential for achieving acceptable comparability of patterns. For the field testing, the determination of sample size was guided by the recommendations of Comrey and Lee (2013), who advocate for an optimal sample size of 1,000 participants. Adhering to these criteria ensured that the study maintained a robust sample size capable of supporting thorough statistical analyses and effectively evaluating the psychometric properties of the assessment instrument.

Research Instrument

The researcher utilized two open-access survey questionnaires to assess key psychological constructs in this study. First, the Sexuality Scale (SS) was developed by Snell & Papini in 1989 to assess three dimensions of human sexuality: sexual esteem, sexual depression, and sexual preoccupation. The scale comprises 30 self-report items and utilizes a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (coded as "agree") to 5 (coded as "disagree"). Scores are summed and interpreted separately for each subscale, with higher scores indicating greater levels of sexual esteem, sexual depression, and sexual preoccupation. The second scale used is the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965 as a measure of an individual's self-esteem. This scale consists of 10 items presented

in a self-report questionnaire format, utilizing a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Scores on the RSES can range from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-esteem.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection procedure for both the pilot testing and field testing phases adhered to a standardized protocol to ensure consistency and reliability across all participants. Utilizing a pen-and-paper approach, participants directly provided their responses on the assessment scale, promoting ease of use and familiarity. The pen-and-paper format facilitated participant engagement by allowing them to work at their preferred pace and in a comfortable setting, thereby reducing potential biases associated with electronic data collection methods.

2.3.5. Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary, and each participant was presented with an informed consent form detailing the study's purpose, background, potential risks, benefits, and their absolute right to withdraw from the study at any time. The collected data was handled with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity, strictly for research purposes. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), all information collected was securely stored in a designated folder accessible only to authorized researchers. For inquiries regarding study results, participants were provided with the researchers' email address.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Qualitative Findings

The thematic analysis of the interviews revealed six emergent themes: (1) Cultural, Religious, and Societal Influences on Sexuality, (2) Psychological and Emotional Factors Affecting Sexuality and Self-Esteem, (3) The Role of Sexual Expression and Identity on Sexual Self-Esteem, (4) Exploring the Intrinsic Foundations of Sexual Self-Esteem, (5) Sexual Behavior, Satisfaction, and Dysfunction, and (6) Education, Media, and Awareness on Sexual Self-Esteem. For each emergent theme, several cluster themes were identified.

Cultural, Religious, and Societal Influences on Sexuality

Participants' accounts highlight that cultural, religious, and societal factors profoundly influence individual sexuality. This theme emphasizes a multifaceted perspective, capturing not only the personal challenges posed by cultural and religious values but also the broader societal expectations that shape sexual self-esteem and identity formation. Within this emergent theme, four distinct cluster themes emerged.

Cultural Conservatism. The theme of cultural conservatism reveals that adherence to traditional norms and family-oriented values in the Philippines creates an environment where discussions about sexuality are often restrained. This cultural backdrop frames sexuality as a sensitive or even forbidden topic, limiting individuals' opportunities to explore or discuss their sexual identities openly.

Religious Expectations on Sexual Behavior. The theme of religious expectations on sexual behavior reveals how deeply religious values in the Philippines shape attitudes toward sexuality, fostering an environment where sexual behavior is often framed within a moral and religious context. This influence of religious teachings reinforces an abstinence-before-marriage standard and discourages open expression of sexuality.

Belief Systems and Their Impact on Sexual Self-Esteem. The theme of belief systems and their impact on sexual self-esteem underscores how firmly held beliefs and societal expectations influence individual behavior, often shaping self-esteem in matters of sexuality. This rigid framework can sometimes lead to cognitive dissonance, especially when individuals feel pressured to align with societal standards that may conflict with their personal experiences.

Gender Norms and Public Stigma. The theme of gender norms and public stigma reveals how societal expectations and biases create a restrictive environment for individuals exploring their sexual identities. This cultural framework enforces a double standard that stigmatizes women for behaviors celebrated in men, fostering an environment where gender-based judgment impacts self-perception and sexual self-esteem.

Psychological and Emotional Factors Affecting Sexuality and Self-Esteem

As participants shared their insights, it became evident that psychological and emotional factors play a crucial

role in shaping sexuality and self-esteem. This theme encapsulates the internal struggles and emotional challenges individuals face, as well as their enduring impact on sexual self-worth and personal expression. Within this overarching theme, four distinct cluster themes emerged.

Shame, Fear, and Sexual Inhibition. The theme of shame, fear, and sexual inhibition highlights how social judgment, cultural shame, and low sexual self-esteem collectively discourage open and authentic sexual expression. This social and internalized stigma around sexuality fosters a sense of constraint, making individuals wary of discussing or exploring their sexuality.

Trauma and Past Experiences and Their Impact on Sexual Self-Esteem. The theme of trauma and past experiences reveals that exposure to traumatic events, especially involving abuse, can result in varied impacts on sexual self-esteem. This complexity is evident in the range of responses to trauma, with some individuals withdrawing from sexual engagement while others become more active. Moreover, childhood and formative experiences play a crucial role, as early positive or negative encounters can have lasting impacts on self-perception.

Psychological Influences on Sexuality. The theme of psychological influences on sexuality reveals that mental health and cognitive processes significantly affect sexual experiences and self-esteem. Intrusive thoughts and stress-related issues can inhibit sexual desire and satisfaction, illustrating the close connection between psychological wellness and sexual responsiveness.

Personal Fulfillment and Sexual Expression. The theme of personal fulfillment and sexual expression illustrates that genuine sexual self-esteem empowers individuals to pursue their desires without succumbing to external judgments. This freedom aligns with a secure sense of self that supports open discussions about sexuality, even in settings where such topics may be considered taboo.

The Role of Sexual Expression and Identity on Sexual Self-Esteem

Participants' narratives conveyed that the development of sexual self-esteem is deeply intertwined with the process of understanding and expressing one's sexual identity. This emergent theme encapsulates how self-esteem in sexuality is shaped by both the personal challenges and the often vulnerable journey of discovering and embracing one's sexual identity. Within this theme, two distinct cluster themes emerged.

Complexity of Personal Sexual Identity. The theme of personal sexual identity complexity reveals that sexual self-esteem is shaped by multiple aspects of identity, including orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. This complexity can either facilitate or inhibit self-acceptance, especially when aspects of identity are concealed or unacknowledged.

Vulnerability and Identity Struggles. The theme of vulnerability and identity struggles illustrates that societal pressures and internal confusion can hinder individuals' ability to fully accept and express their sexual identity, particularly within vulnerable groups like the LGBT community. These struggles often result in a suppression of authentic self-expression, which can have lasting effects on sexual self-esteem.

3.1.4. Exploring the Intrinsic Foundations of Sexual Self-Esteem

The development of sexual self-esteem, as described by participants, is deeply influenced by a range of internal factors that shape self-perception and sexual confidence. These intrinsic elements, which include personal beliefs, self-image, and psychological security, play a crucial role in guiding the formation of one's sexual self-esteem. Within this emergent theme, four distinct cluster themes emerged.

Role of Self-Perception in Sexual Self-Esteem. The foundation of sexual self-esteem involves a deep-seated confidence in one's self-worth as a sexual being, which influences overall satisfaction and well-being. Participants' reflections reveal that sexual self-esteem encompasses not only the physical dimension of sexuality but also self-perception and psychological security.

Attractiveness and Appearance in Sexual Self-Esteem. The theme of attractiveness and appearance in sexual self-esteem highlights that perceptions of beauty and attractiveness contribute to one's confidence in sexual contexts. These reflections suggest that feeling attractive enhances not only individual self-esteem but also fosters positive

relationship dynamics, as it reinforces self-assurance and comfort with one's identity.

Generational Differences in Sexual Self-Esteem. The theme of generational differences in sexual self-esteem illustrates how evolving cultural and family norms have fostered greater openness and acceptance around sexuality for younger individuals. These insights suggest that today's younger generation benefits from a more progressive environment that encourages higher sexual self-esteem compared to previous generations.

Impact of Self-Control on Sexual Self-Esteem. The theme of self-control's impact on sexual self-esteem reveals that a lack of regulation over one's physical and sexual behaviors can contribute to a decreased sense of sexual self-worth. These findings suggest that self-control may be integral to individuals' confidence and self-esteem in their sexual identity.

Sexual Behavior, Satisfaction, and Dysfunction

The participants' discussions highlighted an intricate relationship between sexual behavior, satisfaction, and dysfunction, reflecting how these factors collectively influence sexual self-esteem. The theme of "Sexual Behavior, Satisfaction, and Dysfunction" encapsulates how experiences with performance, fulfillment, and challenges related to dysfunction shape individuals' perceptions of self-worth. Five distinct cluster themes emerged within this theme.

Sexual Performance and Satisfaction. The theme of sexual performance and satisfaction reveals that both partnered and individual satisfaction practices play a vital role in enhancing sexual self-esteem. Participants' emphasis on partner satisfaction and self-fulfillment suggests that achieving sexual satisfaction, regardless of relationship status, contributes to a positive self-view and strengthens self-confidence.

Sexual Self-Esteem and Dysfunction. The theme of sexual self-esteem and dysfunction suggests that maintaining a balanced level of sexual self-esteem is crucial to mitigating the risk of sexual dysfunction. Participants' insights reveal that both extremes of self-regard—either high or low—are associated with potential sexual difficulties, implying that self-esteem stability may be necessary for healthy sexual functioning.

Sexual Compatibility and Sexual Self-Esteem. The theme of sexual compatibility and self-esteem highlights how alignment in sexual preferences and needs with a partner fosters a positive sexual self-image. Participants emphasized that compatibility in intimate relationships enhances self-esteem by promoting fulfillment and satisfaction. However, repeated experiences may require reassessment, as routine encounters can affect perceived compatibility and influence overall satisfaction.

Role of Communication in Sexual Relationships. The theme of communication in sexual relationships highlights the essential role of open dialogue in meeting mutual needs and reinforcing sexual self-esteem. Effective communication clarifies preferences and expectations while strengthening relational bonds through intimacy and compromise. This dynamic fosters an environment where partners can confidently express and fulfill their sexual needs, enhancing self-worth within the relationship.

Patterns in Determining Sexual Esteem. The theme of patterns in determining sexual esteem highlights that both verbal comments and micro gestures serve as indicators of intimacy and sexual self-esteem in relationships. Verbal affirmations of satisfaction provide a clear, explicit reflection of an individual's sexual esteem, while micro gestures offer a subtler but equally significant insight into relational intimacy and confidence.

Education, Media, and Awareness on Sexual Self-Esteem

Education, media exposure, and societal awareness, as articulated by participants, play a pivotal role in shaping individual perceptions of sexuality and influencing sexual self-esteem. This theme highlights a multifaceted perspective, capturing not only the foundational role of education in fostering awareness but also the influence of media and shifting societal norms on individual self-perception and sexual openness. Within this emergent theme, four distinct cluster themes emerged.

Impact of Education on Sexual Awareness. The theme of education's impact on sexual awareness suggests that both formal educational systems and family-based sexual education play a crucial role in shaping individuals' understanding of sexuality. Educational programs provide foundational knowledge, reducing ignorance on

sexual topics and encouraging informed perspectives. Meanwhile, parental involvement in sexual education contributes to awareness by reinforcing family values and signaling levels of openness regarding sexuality.

Impact of Digital Media on Sexual Awareness. The theme of digital media's impact on sexual awareness reveals that social media and the internet serve as pivotal platforms for increasing knowledge and broadening perspectives on sexuality. The exposure to open discussions on these platforms, especially for Gen Z and millennials, facilitates greater awareness and acceptance of diverse sexual attitudes and behaviors. The access to varied information and lifestyles supports a more inclusive and informed view of sexuality.

Changing Attitudes Towards Sexual Openness. The theme of changing attitudes towards sexual openness indicates a notable shift in societal views, where discussions about sexuality are becoming more accepted and commonplace. This transition is driven by individuals who increasingly view open discussions as natural and essential, challenging traditional stigmas associated with sexual topics.

Holistic Perspective on Sexuality. The theme of a holistic perspective on sexuality reveals an understanding that sexuality is a composite of affective, behavioral, and cognitive elements. This approach challenges simplistic views and acknowledges the broader dimensions that contribute to one's sexual identity and experiences. By recognizing these varied facets, this perspective encourages a more inclusive understanding of sexuality, aligning with modern frameworks that view it as an integral aspect of personal and relational health.

3.2 Quantitative Results

Following the development and translation of the Filipino Contextualized Sexual Self-Esteem Scale (FC-SSES), the scale underwent a rigorous validation process by three subject matter experts. Subsequently, it was pilot tested on a representative sample of the target population and analyzed using various statistical methods. Based on the outcomes, the scale was refined and administered to a larger sample for field testing to establish its convergent validity with existing scales.

Demographic Variables

A total of 1,300 emerging adults participated in the study, with 300 participants involved in the pilot testing and 1,000 in the field testing. The majority of the respondents were female, and a significant portion were enrolled under the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy (CSSP). The detailed demographic data of the participants are presented in Tables 1 and 2, which show the frequency and percentage distribution of demographic variables for the pilot testing and field testing participants, respectively.

Table 1. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Demographic Variables for Pilot Testing Participants*

Demographic Variables	n	%
Sex		
Female	185	61.67
Male	115	38.33
Age		
18	38	12.67
19	104	34.67
20	84	28
21	51	17
22	17	5.67
23	3	1
24	1	0.33
25	2	0.67
College		
CAS	9	3
CBS	28	9.33
CCS	24	8
CEA	42	14
CHTM	38	12.67
CIT	22	7.33
COE	4	1.33
CSSP	133	44.33

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Demographic Variables for Field Testing Participants

Demographic Variables	N	%
Sex		
Female	610	61
Male	390	39
Age		
18	144	14.4
19	323	32.3
20	300	30
21	137	13.7
22	68	6.8
23	17	1.7
24	7	.7
25	4	.4
College		
CAS	86	8.6
CBS	101	10.1
CCS	44	4.4
CEA	118	11.8
CHTM	51	5.1
CIT	84	8.4
COE	38	3.8
CSSP	478	47.8

Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the underlying factor structure of the newly developed Filipino Contextualized Sexual Self-Esteem Scale (FC-SSES). The data comprised responses from $n = 300$ respondents. Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) was chosen as the extraction method due to its suitability for non-normally distributed data and its focus on identifying latent constructs. To account for potential factor correlations, a Promax (oblique) rotation was applied. Items with factor loadings above 0.50 were deemed significant for interpretation. Before conducting the EFA, data suitability was assessed. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(105) = 5237.915$, $p < .001$, confirming that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix and that factor analysis was appropriate. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was excellent (0.92), exceeding the 0.80 threshold for "meritorious" adequacy (Kaiser, 1974). Individual KMO values ranged from 0.87 to 0.96, further supporting the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) resulted in the extraction of six factors based on parallel analysis. This method indicated that six factors should be retained, explaining a cumulative variance of 50%.

Factor Loadings

Items were retained based on their factor loadings, and the six factors were interpreted as follows: (1) Sexual agency, (2) Sexual self-awareness, (3) Sexual self-acceptance, (4) Sexual assertiveness, (5) Sexual education, and (6) Sexual empowerment.

Table 3. Factor Loadings of Filipino Contextualized Sexual Self-Esteem Scale

Item	Factor Loadings					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel content with the frequency of my sexual activities.	0.83					
I feel capable of achieving sexual satisfaction.	0.77					
I feel confident in my ability to communicate my sexual needs.	0.65					
I am comfortable with my body's response when I orgasm.	0.64					
I am comfortable with my sexual desires and fantasies	0.56					
I feel confident in my ability to enhance my sexual experiences.	0.53					
I believe I have the right to prioritize my sexual pleasure.	0.52					
I feel confident in my ability to initiate sexual activities.	0.52					
I believe that exploring my sexual identity is a personal journey that I control.		0.77				
I believe my sexual identity is an important part of who I am, but it does not define my entire self.		0.72				
I feel secure in my understanding of what a healthy sexual relationship looks like.		0.54				
I am comfortable with my sexuality even if it does not conform to typical norms.		0.53				
I accept that my sexual feelings are a natural part of being human.			0.59			
I believe I have the right to prioritize my sexual comfort and desires.			0.56			

I believe I have the right to make choices about my sexual life that prioritize my happiness.	0.55	
I believe my sexual experiences contribute positively to my self-esteem.	0.51	
I feel comfortable initiating conversations about sex.		0.65
I find it easy to express my sexual preferences.		0.54
Education about sexual consent has made me feel more empowered in my sexual decisions.		0.83
Continuous learning about sexuality is important to me.		0.57
I feel confident about my sexual attractiveness as I age.		0.57
I have developed effective coping strategies to deal with my sexual insecurities.		0.56

Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the Filipino Contextualized Sexual Self-Esteem Scale was assessed using both Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega to provide a comprehensive evaluation of internal consistency. The Sexual Agency subscale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$, $\omega = 0.87$), effectively capturing the ability to make informed decisions about sexual behaviors. The Sexual Self-Awareness subscale exhibited acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.72$, $\omega = 0.71$), with McDonald's omega providing a more nuanced measure for multidimensional constructs. Similarly, the Sexual Self-Acceptance subscale showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.77$, $\omega = 0.78$), reflecting an individual's acceptance of their sexual identity, desires, and behaviors.

The Sexual Assertiveness subscale exhibited acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.70$, $\omega = 0.70$), effectively measuring the ability to recognize and prioritize one's sexual needs. The Sexual Education subscale also demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.75$, $\omega = 0.75$), capturing an individual's knowledge and understanding in navigating their sexuality. Finally, the researchers revisited and revised the items in the Sexual Empowerment factor to improve its reliability, as its initial Cronbach's α and McDonald's ω were 0.58—falling below the generally accepted threshold of 0.70 for good internal consistency. This refinement aimed to address potential variability in how empowerment is understood and experienced across individuals, ensuring a more robust and consistent measure for future studies.

Overall, the scale displayed excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.91$, $\omega = 0.91$), confirming it as a consistent and robust tool for measuring sexual self-esteem. Reporting McDonald's omega alongside Cronbach's alpha enhances the robustness of the findings, particularly in capturing the multidimensional nature of sexual self-esteem, as omega accounts for different item loadings and correlations. Table 5 summarizes the reliability statistics, including the mean and standard deviation for each factor.

Table 4. Reliability Statistics for the Filipino Contextualized Sexual Self-Esteem Scale

Factor	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α	McDonald's ω
Sexual Agency	3.484	0.879	0.87	0.87
Sexual Self-Awareness	4.043	0.854	0.72	0.71
Sexual Self-Acceptance	4.019	0.875	0.77	0.78
Sexual Assertiveness	3.392	1.161	0.70	0.70
Sexual Education	4.127	1.004	0.75	0.75
Sexual Empowerment	3.442	1.063	0.58	0.58
Overall Scale	3.729	0.719	0.91	0.91

Convergent Validity

The analysis of convergent validity for the Filipino Contextualized Sexual Self-Esteem Scale (FC-SSES) subscales revealed significant positive and negative correlations with established measures related to self-esteem and sexual well-being, as seen in Table 6. For the sexual agency subscale, moderate positive correlations were found with the Rosenberg Self-esteem ($r(998) = 0.26$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.22, 0.43]) and a strong positive correlation with Sexual-Esteem ($r(998) = 0.54$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.45, 0.62]). Additionally, a moderate positive correlation was noted with Sexual-Preoccupation ($r(998) = 0.24$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.13, 0.34]). In contrast, a strong negative correlation was observed with Sexual-Depression ($r(998) = -0.47$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.56, -0.38]), indicating that higher sexual agency is associated with both higher self-esteem and lower sexual depression.

In terms of sexual self-awareness, a moderate positive correlation with Rosenberg Self-esteem ($r(998) = 0.24$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.13, 0.34]) was identified, along with a weak positive correlation with Sexual-Esteem ($r(998) = 0.15$, $p = .009$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.26]). A weak negative correlation with Sexual-Preoccupation ($r(998) = -0.14$, $p < .014$, 95% CI [-0.25, -0.03]) and a strong negative correlation with Sexual-Depression ($r(998) = -0.46$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-0.54, -0.36]) further indicate that greater sexual self-awareness correlates with higher self-esteem and sexual well-being.

while reducing depressive symptoms.

For the sexual self-acceptance subscale, moderate positive correlations were observed with both Rosenberg Self-esteem ($r(998) = 0.25, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.14, 0.35]$) and Sexual-Esteem ($r(998) = 0.22, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.11, 0.32]$). However, a non-significant correlation with Sexual-Preoccupation ($r(998) = -0.05, p = 0.45, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.16, 0.07]$) suggests no meaningful relationship in this area. A strong negative correlation with Sexual-Depression ($r(998) = -0.44, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.53, -0.34]$) highlights that higher sexual self-acceptance is associated with lower levels of sexual depression.

In terms of the sexual assertiveness subscale, a strong positive correlation was found for both Rosenberg Self-Esteem ($r(998) = 0.30, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.20, 0.40]$) and Sexual Esteem ($r(998) = 0.43, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.34, 0.52]$). Additionally, a weak positive correlation with Sexual Preoccupation ($r(998) = 0.17, p = .004, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.06, 0.28]$) and a strong negative correlation with Sexual Depression ($r(998) = -0.47, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.55, -0.37]$) indicate that higher sexual assertiveness is associated with greater self-esteem and sexual esteem, as well as lower levels of sexual depression.

For the sexual education subscale, a weak positive correlation was observed for both Rosenberg self-esteem ($r(998) = 0.18, p = .002, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.06, 0.28]$) and sexual esteem ($r(998) = 0.12, p = .036, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.01, 0.23]$). Additionally, a weak negative correlation was found with sexual preoccupation ($r(998) = -0.15, p = .008, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.26, -0.04]$), while a strong negative correlation was observed with sexual depression ($r(998) = -0.39, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.48, -.29]$). These findings suggest that greater sexual education is modestly associated with higher self-esteem and sexual esteem, while being strongly linked to lower levels of sexual depression.

The sexual empowerment subscale demonstrated strong positive correlations with both Rosenberg self-esteem ($r(998) = 0.43, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.34, 0.52]$) and sexual esteem ($r(998) = 0.46, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.37, 0.55]$). Additionally, a weak positive correlation was observed with sexual preoccupation ($r(998) = 0.15, p = .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.04, 0.26]$). In contrast, a strong negative correlation was found with sexual depression ($r(998) = -0.39, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.48, -0.29]$), indicating that greater sexual empowerment is associated with higher self-esteem and sexual esteem, as well as lower levels of sexual depression.

Lastly, the overall FC-SSSES demonstrated strong positive correlations with Rosenberg Self-esteem ($r(998) = 0.38, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.28, 0.47]$) and Sexual-Esteem ($r(998) = 0.46, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.37, 0.55]$), indicating a positive relationship with overall sexual self-esteem. A nonsignificant correlation with Sexual-Preoccupation ($r(998) = 0.09, p = .119, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.02, 0.20]$) suggests no association. In contrast, a strong negative correlation with Sexual-Depression ($r(998) = -0.58, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.65, -0.49]$) indicates that higher overall sexual self-esteem correlates with lower levels of sexual depression.

4.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study successfully developed the Filipino Contextualized Sexual Self-Esteem Scale (FC-SSSES), a 22-item tool designed to assess sexual self-esteem within the unique cultural context of the Philippines. Through qualitative interviews, the study explored the construct of sexual self-esteem, leading to the creation of relevant scale items. This study contributes to the growing research on sexual self-esteem in the Philippine context by providing a culturally relevant instrument for both research and practice. The FC-SSSES offers valuable insights into various aspects of sexual well-being, including sexual agency, self-awareness, self-acceptance, assertiveness, education, and empowerment. With strong reliability and validity, it serves as a valuable tool for researchers, clinicians, and educators in promoting sexual health and well-being among Filipino populations.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations are proposed for future research within the Philippines. First, it is recommended that future studies extend the subject population to include individuals from various regions of the Philippines, encompassing a diverse range of age groups, educational backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses. A more representative national sample would provide a broader perspective and improve the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, future research should focus on strengthening the psychometric properties of the FC-SSSES to further establish the scale's robustness as a culturally relevant and accurate measure of sexual self-esteem. To enhance the scale's effectiveness, future studies should also consider conducting factorial analyses to assess the construct equivalence of the FC-SSSES across different Filipino populations.

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Indicate the contribution of each author—example: AA – editing, writing, supervising, BA – data analysis, encoding, etc.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

Indicate if there is any conflict or no conflict of interest.

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