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Sex Frequency and Perceived Relationship Quality

Niki Costello

ncostello18@wou.edu

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PERCEPTIONS of RELATIONSHIPS

Niki Costello | Western Oregon University

Abstract

Previous research indicates that couples who engage in sexual intercourse more frequently, experience higher levels of overall relationship satisfaction. This study measured perceptions of overall relationship satisfaction according to sexual frequency as a bystander. Participants read one of three stories which depicted a married couple who had one of 3 levels of intercourse frequency (i.e., level 1 = low sex frequency 4 times a month, level 2 = medium sex frequency 8 times a month, level 3 = high sex frequency 16 times a month) and rated the couple's relationship satisfaction and level of positive attitudes on a Likert type scale (5 = extremely satisfied to 1 = extremely negative). A One-way ANOVA was conducted for relationship satisfaction and positive spousal attitudes. The hypothesis was partially supported. As predicted, the low sex frequency group was perceived as the least satisfied in the relationship; ($F(2,54) = 6.862, p = 0.003, \eta^2 = 0.2$). There was no difference between the groups in perceptions of positive spousal attitudes according to sex frequency. These results suggest that people believe sex frequency to be important for overall relationship satisfaction, but that there is a drop off.

Prior Research

- Heterosexual men and women who reported not having their desired sexual frequency met, also reported being dissatisfied with their relationship (Smith et. al., 2011)
- The act of sex itself, promotes meaningful companionship between couples (Yabiku & Gager, 2009).
- The frequency of sex depends on an individual's attitudes toward casual sex (Trond Viggo, Leif Edward Ottesen, & Mons, 2019).
- Positive thoughts and attitudes among partnerships is linked with couples who engaged in sexual acts frequently (Hicks, McNulty, Meltzer, & Olson, 2016).
- Sexual frequency demonstrates no significance for the outcome of the quality of a relationship; however, the more often a couple is sexually active, the more likely it is that couples hold each other in high regard, leading to greater relationship satisfaction (Hicks, McNulty, Meltzer, & Olson, 2016).
- How often a female partner is willing to engage in intercourse, along with how often she reaches climax, is an important factor of whether the male partner is sexually satisfied within the relationship (Velten & Margraf, 2017).

Hypothesis

- It was expected that the lowest sexual frequency couple in the story would receive the lowest rating for relationship satisfaction.

Participants

- Participants = 57
- Female = 46, Male = 11
- Age: All but six participants were between the ages of 18 to 25
- Heterosexual = 47, Homosexual = 3, Bisexual = 3, Other = 3, Not Reported = 1
- Participants were psychology students recruited online via SONA.

References

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Apparatus

Vignette of a couple engaging in 3 levels of sex frequency

- Mike and Jan have been married for 10 years. They have two children, ages 8 and 5. Jan's parents live nearby and take the kids every week while Mike and Jan have a date night. Mike and Jan engage in sex [four, eight, or sixteen] times a month. Mike and Jan pride themselves on the support they give to one another and often complement each other on accomplishments in their individual lives.

Questions

- How satisfied in the relationship do you believe this couple to be?
- What would you say is the level of positive attitudes the couple holds toward each other?

Procedure



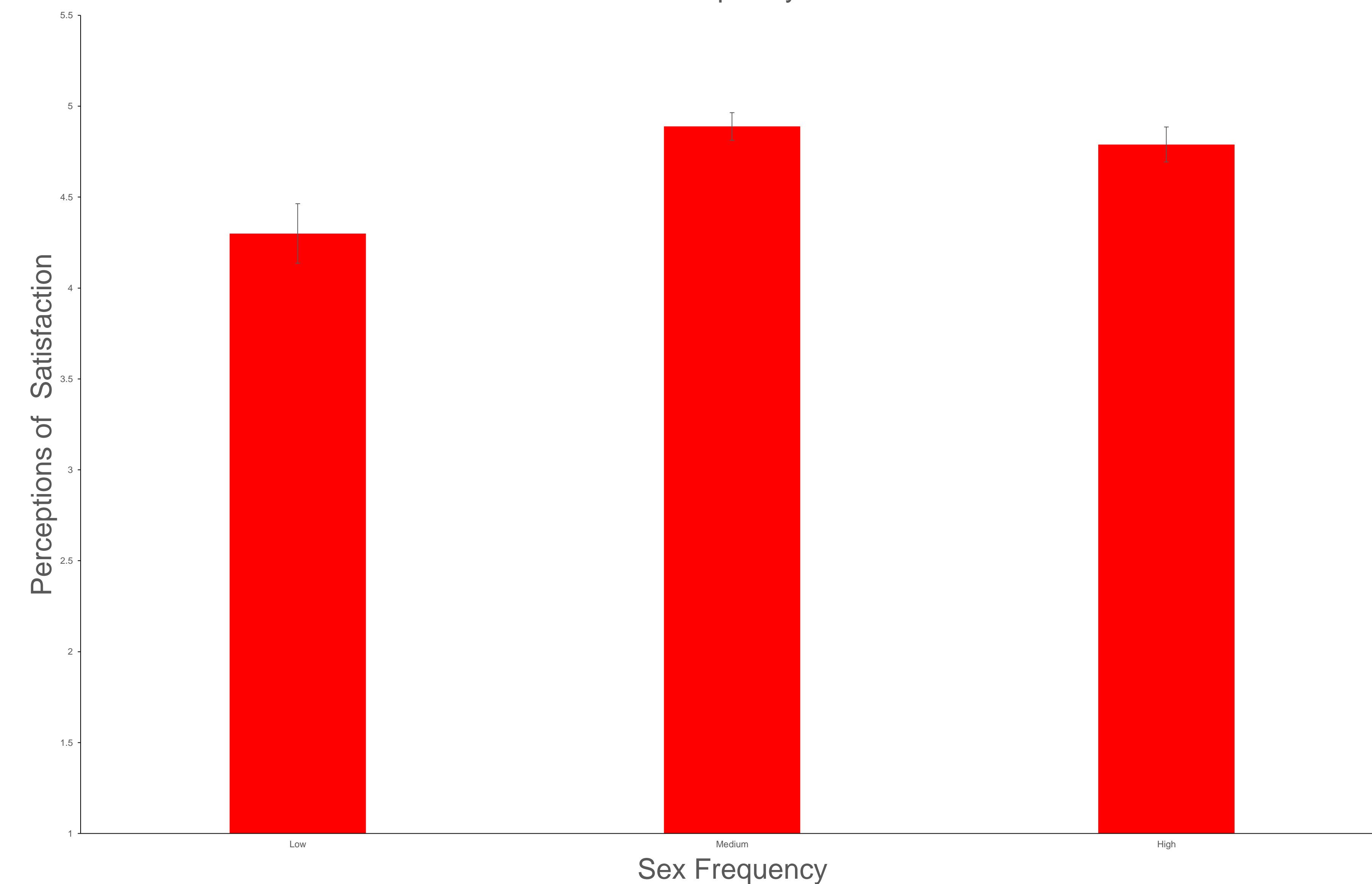
Participants read one of three stories online depicting a couple in which the amount of sex they engaged in varied, based on the random assignment of groups. Participant's then rated their perceived level of relationship satisfaction and positive spousal attitudes of the couple.

Conclusion

- It is perceived that couples who engage in intercourse two or more times a week have higher levels of relationship satisfaction, compared to couples whose sex frequency is less than twice a week.
- It is perceived that sexual frequency has no effect on the level of positive spousal attitudes that couples have toward each other.
- These results relate to previous studies in that frequent sex between partners is an important piece to relationship satisfaction.

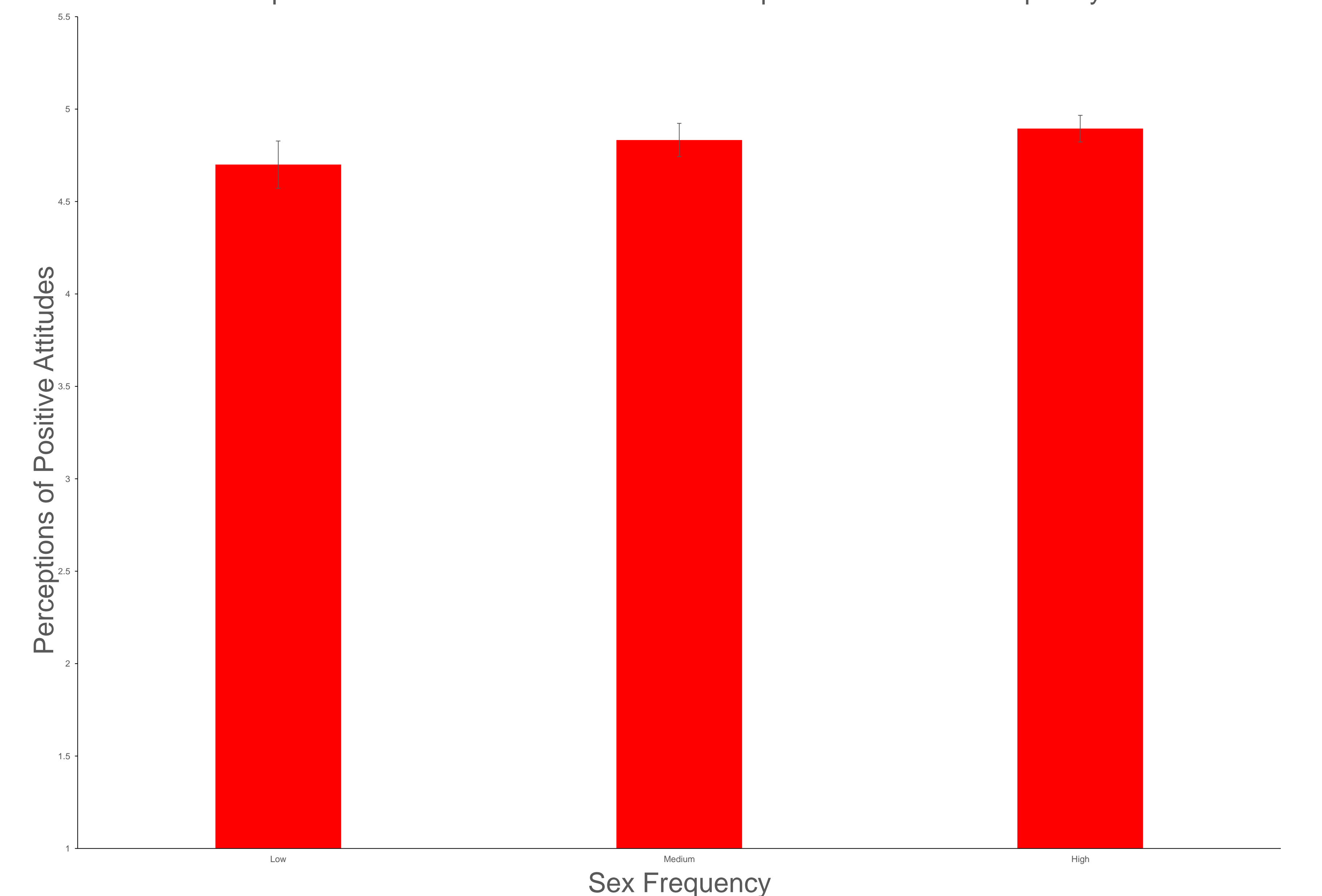
Results

Perceptions of Relationship Satisfaction Based on Sex Frequency



$$F(2,54) = 6.862, p = 0.003, \eta^2 = 0.2.$$

Perceptions of Positive Attitudes in Relationships Based on Sex Frequency



$$F(2,54) = 0.998, n.s.$$