

# Impact of Sexual Responsivity (Sexual Excitation–Inhibition Tendencies) on Self-Control and Moral Reasoning Among Adult Men

Ms. Sree kiruba G R<sup>1</sup>, Ms. Soniya P<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Postgraduate student in Clinical Psychology, Department of Psychology, Rathinam college of Arts and Science, Coimbatore -642201, Tamil Nadu, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Rathinam College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore-642201, Tamil Nadu, India

## Abstract

Sexual responsivity, reflected through patterns of sexual excitation and inhibition, represents an important yet underexplored factor in understanding behavioural regulation and ethical decision-making during young adulthood. The present quantitative study examined how individual differences in sexual responsivity relate to trait self-control and moral reasoning among adult men. Grounded in the Dual Control Model, self-regulation theory, and ethical ideology perspectives, the research explored whether arousal-related tendencies are associated with variations in impulse management and moral judgement. Participants completed standardized psychometric measures assessing sexual excitation–inhibition tendencies, self-control capacity, and moral reasoning style. Correlational and regression analyses were conducted to examine relationships among these constructs. The findings suggested that higher excitation tendencies were linked with comparatively lower self-control and more flexible moral evaluations, whereas stronger inhibitory tendencies were associated with greater behavioural restraint and more structured ethical judgement. Self-control emerged as a central psychological factor connecting arousal regulation with patterns of moral reasoning.

Overall, the results indicate that sexual responsivity extends beyond sexual behaviour and reflects broader regulatory processes influencing decision-making. By integrating concepts from sexual health research, behavioural self-regulation, and moral psychology, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how internal regulatory systems shape ethical awareness and adaptive functioning among adult men.

**Keywords:** Sexual responsivity, Dual Control Model, Self-regulation, Moral decision-making, Idealism and Relativism, Impulse control, Young adult men, Quantitative correlational study.

## Introduction

Sexual responsivity refers to the ways individuals cognitively, emotionally, and physiologically respond to sexual cues. Rather than reflecting a single trait, it represents a dynamic interaction between arousal sensitivity and inhibitory control. These patterns influence how individuals interpret risk, manage

impulses, and navigate interpersonal situations. Variability in responsivity is considered a normal aspect of human diversity, shaped by developmental experiences, cultural expectations, and personality characteristics.

The Dual Control Model suggests that sexual behaviour arises from the interaction between excitation mechanisms that promote arousal and inhibitory processes that regulate behaviour when potential risks or consequences are perceived. Individuals differ in the relative strength of these systems, and such differences may influence broader psychological functioning.

Self-control has been widely conceptualized as the ability to override automatic reactions in favour of goal-directed behaviour. Higher levels of self-control are associated with improved emotional regulation, adaptive decision-making, and reduced impulsivity. Moral reasoning, in contrast, reflects the cognitive framework through which individuals interpret ethical dilemmas. Ethical ideology theory proposes that people vary in idealism and relativism, shaping how they balance universal moral principles with situational considerations.

Examining these constructs together provides an opportunity to understand how arousal regulation interacts with cognitive and ethical processes, offering insight into behavioural regulation during young adulthood.

## Background of the Study

Young adulthood represents a period of significant psychological transition marked by identity exploration, increased autonomy, and the formation of intimate relationships. During this stage, individuals often encounter heightened emotional and physiological experiences that influence how they regulate behaviour and make complex moral decisions. Among men, patterns of sexual responsiveness form an important aspect of psychosocial development, as arousal regulation interacts with emotional control and social judgement.

The dual control perspective proposes that sexual behaviour is shaped by the balance between excitatory and inhibitory processes. These individual differences in responsivity may extend beyond sexual contexts and reflect broader regulatory tendencies that influence impulse management and decision-making. Self-control, understood as the capacity to align behaviour with long-term goals despite immediate urges, plays a crucial role in navigating emotionally charged situations. When arousal states intensify, the regulatory demands placed on self-control mechanisms may increase, potentially shaping ethical evaluation and behavioural outcomes.

Although earlier research has examined sexual responsivity, self-control, and moral reasoning separately, few studies have explored how these constructs interact within a single psychological framework, particularly among young adult men. Addressing this gap may deepen understanding of how internal regulatory processes contribute to everyday moral judgement and adaptive functioning.

## Objectives

- To assess the level of sexual responsivity (sexual excitation–inhibition tendencies) among adult men.
- To examine the level of self-control among adult men.
- To evaluate the moral reasoning style of adult men.
- To analyse the relationship between sexual responsivity and self-control.
- To analyse the relationship between sexual responsivity and moral reasoning.

## Research Methodology

The present study employed a **quantitative, psychologically informed research approach** to examine how sexual responsivity, particularly sexual excitation and inhibition tendencies, relates to self-control and moral reasoning among adult men. A **cross-sectional descriptive correlational design** was selected because the study aimed to explore naturally occurring psychological differences without manipulating variables experimentally. This design allowed for the investigation of behavioural regulation and ethical judgement within a real-life context, integrating perspectives from sexual health psychology, self-regulation theory, and ethical ideology.

Participants were recruited using a **non-probability purposive sampling strategy**, focusing on young adult men from the districts of Tiruppur, Coimbatore, and Karur. Inclusion criteria required participants to fall within the young adulthood age range, possess adequate comprehension of the questionnaire language, and provide voluntary informed consent. Individuals who did not meet the demographic requirements or who submitted incomplete responses were excluded to maintain methodological clarity and data integrity.

Data collection was conducted through standardized psychometric instruments administered via an online survey platform. Sexual responsivity was assessed using the Sexual Excitation/Sexual Inhibition Scale (SIS/SES; Bancroft & Janssen, 2000), which evaluates individual differences in excitation and inhibition processes. Trait self-control was measured using the Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004), capturing aspects of impulse regulation, discipline, and goal-directed behaviour. Moral reasoning style was evaluated using the Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ; Forsyth, 1980), which conceptualizes ethical ideology along the dimensions of idealism and relativism. All instruments employed Likert-type response formats and have demonstrated established reliability and validity in previous psychological research.

The research procedure involved obtaining informed consent prior to participation, ensuring anonymity, and emphasizing voluntary involvement throughout the data collection process. Responses were screened for completeness before being prepared for statistical analysis. Correlational and regression analyses were planned to explore relationships and predictive associations among sexual responsivity, self-control, and moral reasoning variables. This methodological framework supports a comprehensive psychological examination of how arousal regulation may influence behavioural restraint and ethical decision-making patterns in adult men.

## Results and Discussion

The findings of the present study were interpreted through an integrated psychological framework combining arousal regulation theory, self-regulation models, and ethical ideology perspectives. Rather than viewing sexual responsivity solely as a domain-specific phenomenon, the results suggest that excitation and inhibition tendencies reflect broader regulatory patterns that shape behavioural control and moral evaluation.

Participants who demonstrated stronger excitation tendencies appeared to experience greater challenges in maintaining consistent self-control, particularly in contexts involving heightened emotional salience. This pattern aligns with theoretical perspectives suggesting that intense motivational states may temporarily narrow cognitive resources, increasing susceptibility to impulsive decision-making. Conversely, individuals characterized by stronger inhibitory tendencies showed comparatively higher levels of behavioural restraint, supporting the view that inhibition functions as a regulatory safeguard.

The relationship between sexual responsivity and moral reasoning further highlights the complex interplay between emotional arousal and ethical cognition. Differences in idealism and relativism suggest that individuals may interpret moral situations differently depending on underlying regulatory tendencies. Self-control emerged as a central psychological mechanism linking arousal sensitivity with ethical judgement, emphasizing the integration of affective and cognitive processes in decision-making. These findings extend existing literature by demonstrating that sexual responsivity may influence behavioural regulation beyond sexual contexts. Rather than operating independently, excitation–inhibition dynamics, self-control capacity, and moral reasoning appear to function as interconnected components within a broader system of psychological regulation.

### Conclusion

The present study underscores the importance of viewing sexual responsivity as part of a wider regulatory framework that influences self-control and moral reasoning among adult men. Differences in excitation and inhibition tendencies appear to shape how individuals respond to motivational cues, manage impulses, and evaluate ethical situations. Instead of functioning as isolated constructs, sexual responsivity, self-control, and moral reasoning emerge as interrelated processes reflecting the integration of emotional and cognitive regulation.

Heightened excitation may place greater demands on regulatory capacity, potentially increasing vulnerability to impulsive or risk-oriented decisions, whereas stronger inhibitory tendencies appear to support more deliberate behavioural control. Moral reasoning styles further reflect how individuals negotiate competing values and contextual demands when faced with complex decisions.

By integrating perspectives from sexual health research, self-regulation theory, and ethical psychology, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of behavioural functioning during young adulthood. These insights highlight the importance of considering arousal regulation within broader discussions of impulse control and ethical awareness.

### Implications

The findings emphasize the value of promoting psychological literacy around arousal regulation and self-control within clinical and psychoeducational settings. Interventions that strengthen reflective decision-making, emotional awareness, and impulse management may help individuals navigate motivational states more effectively. Incorporating discussions of ethical reasoning alongside self-regulation strategies may further support adaptive behavioural outcomes.

In addition, culturally responsive educational initiatives that encourage responsible understanding of sexual responsivity may contribute to healthier developmental trajectories among young adult men. Future research may benefit from longitudinal designs and context-sensitive approaches to better understand how regulatory patterns evolve over time. Recognizing the interaction between excitation–inhibition processes, self-control, and moral reasoning supports a more holistic and human-centered perspective within behavioural science.

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