




Shame Proneness and Fear of Intimacy Predicting Sexual Avoidance in Couples

Elena. Radu¹, Luis. Morales^{2*}

¹ Department of Counseling and Human Development, West University of Timișoara, Timișoara, Romania

² Department of Psychology, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, Lima, Peru

* Corresponding author email address: lmorales@pucp.edu.pe

E d i t o r	R e v i e w e r s
Izet Pehlić  Full professor for Educational sciences, Islamic pedagogical faculty of the University of Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina izet.pehlic@unze.ba	Reviewer 1: Masoud Asadi  Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Counseling, Arak University, Arak, Iran. Email: m-asadi@araku.ac.ir Reviewer 2: Stephen C. L. Lau  Professor (Assistant) at Washington University in St. Louis, United States. Email: lauc@wustl.edu

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The statement “shame functions not only as an internal emotional state but also as a relational barrier” is insightful but could be supported by citing additional empirical studies demonstrating this relational impact in clinical samples.

While the manuscript references studies on same-sex couples (e.g., Guzmán-González et al., 2023), it does not clarify whether the present sample includes LGBTQ+ individuals. Stating whether sexual orientation moderated any effects would enhance inclusiveness and analytical depth.

The authors report mean scores for all variables but do not interpret whether these scores indicate clinical relevance or only theoretical importance. Referencing cutoff scores or normative comparisons would provide context for these results.

The correlation between shame proneness and fear of intimacy is moderate ($r = .51$). The authors could briefly discuss multicollinearity risk and its implications on interpretability despite reporting VIF values.

The standardized beta for fear of intimacy ($\beta = 0.49$) is higher than shame ($\beta = 0.33$), but no interaction terms were tested. Including or at least discussing the possibility of an interaction effect would provide additional analytical insight.

Cultural implications are discussed generally in relation to Peru, but no direct analysis of cultural variables was conducted. Including a brief explanation of how Peruvian norms might uniquely influence shame or intimacy would substantiate this section.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The authors mention “gendered expectations or grief” as exacerbating fear of intimacy but do not elaborate on these mechanisms. Expanding on how gender roles or grief processes may influence intimacy fears would enrich the theoretical discussion.

The mention of “dyadic designs” is important but underutilized. It is suggested to elaborate on how future dyadic methods could reveal bidirectional influences between partners regarding shame and sexual avoidance.

The discussion notes that both predictors contribute “substantially,” but does not address the unexplained variance (56%). A brief statement on what other factors might contribute to sexual avoidance would present a more balanced conclusion.

The authors write, “fear of intimacy often manifests as heightened sensitivity to relational closeness,” yet the potential role of attachment anxiety (not just avoidance) is not explored. Addressing this omission would strengthen the attachment-based interpretation.

The authors cite “intimacy-enhancing therapies,” yet these are not specified. Naming specific models (e.g., EFT, IBCT) would give clinicians clearer direction for practice.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.