Determinant factors of female sexual satisfaction

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Introduction: There is a growing debate about the predictors of sexual satisfaction. Various scales have been developed to measure sexual satisfaction despite the difficulty in the operationalisation of the concept. Nevertheless, we recognize how much we have imposed male-oriented criteria of sexual pleasure onto women. But there are some gender differences to consider and we realize how little we understand about the determinants of sexual satisfaction in women.

Objectives: We present an on-line survey on female sexual function and the determinant factors of female sexual satisfaction. Our major purpose is to identify and analyse the meaningful factors for female sexual satisfaction in the perspective of women themselves. This is a descriptive correlation study.

Methodology: The study was conducted in 3 phases: (a) construction of the website and database; (b) conducting a pilot testing in order to check the functioning of the website and database, and questionnaire structure; (c) sampling and data collection.

Voluntary participants over the age of 18 completed an on-line questionnaire concerning demographic data, sexual functioning and determinant factors of sexual satisfaction. We used a snowball method for recruiting participants by e-mail. Data collection was conducted over a four month period. The final sample was 2400 Portuguese women.

Results: Factor analyses reveal the interpersonal factors as the most important determinant of sexual satisfaction for this women sample. The second factor appears to be related with physical functioning variables.

The most important determinants of sexual satisfaction were (a) to feel desired for the partner, (b) to received attention of the partner, (c) to be able to satisfy the partner. Less significant were physical/sexual factors as (d) to feel sexual desire, (e) to have physical pleasure, (f) to feel physical excitement. Other factors were related to psychosocial variables and sexual fantasies.

Orgasm consistency does not appear to be a significant factor to female sexual satisfaction.

Discussion: This study may contribute to a better understanding of female sexual functioning. Understanding the determinant factors of female sexual satisfaction is an important achievement to the discussion of diagnostic criteria of women sexual dysfunctions, as well as to improve clinical intervention.

This study may also contribute to the operationalisation of the concept of sexual satisfaction in order to improve instrument measures.

Sexual desire and related factors

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Sexual desire results from the interaction between biological, psychological and cultural components. These dimensions play a central role on the lack of sexual interest, although the subject’s gender may also be related to the way these factors interact with sexual desire. It is essential to clear which differences both sexes present in their sexual desire response in order to develop a better clinical achievement to each gender.

The aim of the present study is to characterize both genders along specific dimensions in order to find which of them predict different levels of sexual desire.

200 men and 200 women were analysed regarding medical factors, cognitive-emotional factors during sexual activity, psychopathology and relationship adjustment. Statistical analyses were conducted in order to control the interaction between all variables, including gender.

Results showed that cognitive factors are the main predictors of sexual desire, with both genders presenting negative automatic thoughts during sexual activity having significantly less sexual desire. According to this, erection concerning thoughts and lack of erotic thoughts in men, or failure/disengagement thoughts and lack of erotic thoughts in women, were the best predictors of deficient desire. Regarding psychopathology and medical factors, both play a more peripheral role on sexual interest. Dyadic adjustment is strongly connected with female sexual desire, but much less with male desire. It was also found an interaction between the variables gender and medical factors, gender and dyadic adjustment and gender and age, as having a main effect on sexual desire.