

Impact of body image related variables on the psychophysiological indicators of human sexual response: Comparative study with a clinical and non-clinical sample

ABSTRACT:

Background

Human sexual response has scarcely been studied from a dyadic approach.

Aim of the study

This project aimed to take a dyadic perspective and demonstrate the role of beliefs and body image dimensions as predictors of self-reported and psychophysiological sexual response among heterosexual couples. It sets out specifically: to develop the Beliefs About Sexual Functioning Scale (BASEF) and adapt the Beliefs About Appearance Scale (BAAS) to Portugal; to understand the impact of sexual functioning on sexual satisfaction from a dyadic perspective; to establish the role of cognitive distraction with body appearance as a mediator between both sexual beliefs or beliefs about appearance and sexual response; and to test a dyadic model of the impact of sexual beliefs and body image on psychophysiological sexual outcomes.

Method

Using a cross-sectional, correlational design, data was collected from single informants as well as amorous dyads using mixed methodology (self-report and psychophysiological data).

Results

Both BASEF and BAAS proved to be valid, reliable, gender invariant and suitable for the goals of the project. It was established that the impact of sexual functioning on sexual satisfaction is better explained from a dyadic perspective. Furthermore, it was verified that cognitive distraction mediated the impact of sexual beliefs and body appearance beliefs on sexual functioning. None of the body image variables under study proved to be interdependent among couples or adequate for an interdependence explanatory model of sexual response (self-reported or psychophysiological).

Conclusions

Results support a relational cognitive model of sexual response, but do not demonstrate interdependence of body image variables.

Keywords

Body image, Psychophysiological sexual response, Dyadic approach, Sexual belief

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Published Work:

Pascoal, P. M., Alvarez, M.-J., Pereira, C., & Nobre, P. (in press). Development and initial validation of the Beliefs About Sexual Functioning Scale: A gender invariant measure. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*. doi: 10.1016/j.jsxm.2017.01.021

Silva, E. P, Pascoal, P. M., & Nobre, P. (2016). Beliefs about appearance, cognitive distraction and sexual functioning in men and women: a mediation model based on cognitive theory. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 13, 1387-1394. doi: 10.1016/j.jsxm.2016.06.005

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