

Intimacy and sexual satisfaction: the mediator role of sexual self-disclosure in an heterosexual sample

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Rationale: The present study has the main goal to test a mediation model of the effect of emotional intimacy indicators in sexual satisfaction, trying to understand if, from a set of indicators (feelings' expression, closeness, and communication and conflict), there's a better predictor for sexual satisfaction, as well as, if this is verified, sexual self-disclosure as a process, is a significant mediator variable of the found association.

Research Question: Is the effect of Intimacy on sexual satisfaction mediated by sexual self-disclosure for both men and women?

Method: The study is cross-sectional, correlational and data was collected online. The sample is made of 526 cisgendered, heterosexual participants (men and women), who are in a dyadic and exclusive relationship of commitment. There were used the following instruments: an introductory questionnaire (for sociodemographic information), the feelings' expression, and communication and conflict subscales from EASAVIC, the IOS (for measuring closeness), the SSDQ (as the sexual self-disclosure measure), and the GMSEX (as the sexual satisfaction measure). To compare groups according to gender in the interest variables, T-tests for independent samples and chi squared tests were applied, as well as a one-way MANOVA. To test the association between variables, Pearson's bivariate correlation tests were used. Two models were also tested: a simple mediation one and a moderated mediation model, in which the main goal is to test the gender influence in the mediation model using Macro PROCESS.

Results: All indicator were positively associated with sexual self-disclosure and sexual satisfaction. Results showed that globally, men and women show close mean values in the variables of interest. Expression of feelings was a significant predictor of sexual satisfaction and sexual self-disclosure is partially a mediator variable of the model. Gender did not moderate the associations found.

Conclusions: The present study shows that, in the present sample, emotional intimacy, namely its indicator expression of feelings and sexual self-disclosure are important aspects of sexual satisfaction. This perspective is consistent with a systemic perspective of human sexuality, as it demonstrates relational dimensions as explanatory of individual sexual satisfaction.

Key-words: emotional intimacy, sexual satisfaction, sexual self-disclosure, gender.

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