

Abstract

TITLE: PORTUGUESE WOMEN'S SEXUALITY AND BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL DETERMINANTS: FOCUS ON SEXUAL WELL-BEING

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Over the past decade the linear model of human sexual response has been successfully questioned for women. However, the major research emphasis has remained on sexual dysfunction rather than on positive aspects of women's sexual experiences. Following this, our main goal is to understand how Portuguese women assess their sexuality and how components of their sexual well being may interact with psychological, relationship, biological and contextual factors.

Participants were 497 women from the general population, ages between 18 and 75 and relationship for 6 months or more. Questionnaires assessed: Sexual well-being, including sexual self-esteem, satisfaction (GRISS) and pleasure; sexual functioning (FSFI); sexual activity; relationship satisfaction (GRIMS); affect (PANAS-X); general well-being (SES; SWLS; GBD); sexual beliefs (QCSD), focus of attention and sexual fantasies; psychopathology (BSI); medical conditions; life habits; contextual aspects. The study was cross-sectional.

We found that women who scored higher on sexual satisfaction also scored significantly higher on sexual self-esteem, pleasure, functioning and positive emotions during sexual activity, particularly self-assurance, joviality and serenity. Findings also indicate as main predictors of women's sexual satisfaction: relationship status, focus of attention on own pleasure and behaviour and on partner's pleasure during sexual activity, partner's sensitiveness, physical and emotional attraction for the partner, less conservative sexual beliefs (particularly sexual desire as sin).

Problematic relationships were associated with age and relationship duration but that association became insignificant after controlling for sexual satisfaction.

Findings will be discussed in terms of implications for promotion/protection of sexual well-being.