

Research Paper

The Mediating Role of Sexual Self-Schema in the Relationship of Sexual Functioning With Sexual Satisfaction in Married Female College Students



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ABSTRACT

Objectives This study aimed to examine the mediating role of sexual self-schema in the relationship of sexual functioning with sexual satisfaction in married female students.

Methods This is a descriptive correlational study. The study population consists of all married female students of Alzahra University and Islamic Azad University of South Tehran branch in 2017. Of these, 360 were selected by multistage cluster random sampling method. Data were collected using Women's Sexual Self-Schema Scale of Anderson and Cyranowski (1994), Female Sexual Function Index of Rosen et al. (2000), and Index of Sexual Satisfaction designed by Hudson (1993). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and using path analysis.

Results The Passionate-Romantic factor of sexual self-schema had a positive mediating role in relationship of sexual function with sexual satisfaction, while its Embarrassed-Conservative dimension had a negative mediating role ($P < 0.001$). The factor of Open-Direct had no mediating role. Moreover, sexual functioning had a significant positive effect on Passionate-Romantic and Open-Direct dimension of sexual self-schema, while its effect on Embarrassed-Conservative was significantly negative. Furthermore, the Passionate-Romantic factor had a significant positive effect on sexual satisfaction, while the factor of Embarrassed-Conservative had a significant negative effect ($P < 0.001$). The factor of Open-Direct had no direct effect on sexual satisfaction. The effect of sexual functioning on sexual satisfaction was significantly negative ($P < 0.001$).

Conclusion Sexual self-schema mediates the relationship of sexual functioning with sexual satisfaction.

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The study of sexual functioning and its physical and psychological components is one of the most important issues in studies related to family, relationships, and marriage [1]. Sexual functioning is one of the most important issues affecting marital satisfaction of couples. One of the

most recent theories of sexual functioning has been introduced by Rosen et al. (2000), where six components have been defined for sexual functioning including sexual desire, sexual arousal, lubrication, orgasm, satisfaction and pain. The factors that can affect the mental health of women in marital life, their sexual desire, sexual satisfaction, and sexual functioning are physiological, psychosocial, developmental and sexual responses [9]. Maladaptive thoughts and feedback play an important role in how information interpreted in sexual situations and ultimately, in experi-

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ence, desire, arousal and orgasm. If the input stimulus is interpreted to cause negative thoughts, it may have different effects on one's sexual responses [11].

One of the key factors in assessing one's quality of life in general, and the quality and continuity of relationship marriage in particular, is sexual satisfaction in marital life [12]. Sexual satisfaction is a component associated with human sexuality that is considered as the last stage of the sexual response cycle [16]. Sexual satisfaction is an emotional response arising from the subjective evaluation of positive and negative dimensions related to sexual relationship [17]. Sexual satisfaction is not just a physical pleasure, but also includes satisfaction from sexual activity and emotional satisfaction [18]. Studies have shown that sexual Functioning has a significant relationship with sexual satisfaction [23, 34-36, 38]. Theoretical and empirical advances have led to a greater understanding of effective cognitive attitudes in marital relationships. One of the schemas involved in marital affairs is the sexual self- schema. Sexual self-schemas are cognitive generalizations about sexual aspects derived from one's past experiences manifested in current experiences, and influence the processing of social information related to sexual activity and guide sexual behavior. Self-concept and positive sexual feedback can lead to satisfying sexual functioning, while negative sexual feedback along with conflicts and weakness can lead to distress, and sexual problems [42]. The present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of sexual self-schema in the relationship of sexual functioning with sexual satisfaction in married female college students.

2. Methods

This is a descriptive correlational study. The study population consisted of all married female students of Alzahra University and Islamic Azad University of South Tehran Branch. of these, 360 students were selected by multistage

cluster random sampling method. Data were collected using Women's Sexual Self-Schema Scale of Anderson and Cyranowski (1994) [41], Female Sexual Function Index of Rosen et al. (2000) [4], and Index of Sexual Satisfaction designed by Hudson (1981) [56].

3. Results

To examine the mediating role of sexual self-schema in the relationship between sexual functioning and sexual satisfaction, the path analysis was used. In order to determine the goodness-of-fit of the model, X^2/df ratio, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSA) and Non-Normed Fit Index (NFI) are considered were used. According to these indices obtained for the presented model (NFI=0.914, RMSA=0.026, AGFI=0.961, GFI=0.938, CFI=0.918, $X^2/df=1.295$), it can be said that the model has good fit. The standardized and unstandardized coefficients of determination of the paths are presented in Table 1.

Results showed that the direct effect of sexual functioning on passionate-romantic and open-direct factors of sexual self-schema was positively significant and the direct effect of sexual functioning on embarrassed-conservative factor was negatively related to sexual self-schema. Moreover, the direct effect of sexual functioning on sexual satisfaction was negatively significant. Furthermore, the direct effect of passionate-romantic factor of sexual self-schema on sexual satisfaction was positively significant, while and the direct effect of its embarrassed-conservative factor was negatively significant; However, the open-direct factor of sexual self-schema had no direct effect on sexual satisfaction of students.

Table 1. Summary of path analysis results

Hypotheses (Paths)	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Standardized Coefficient
Passionate-romantic/Sexual functioning	0.0970	0.019	5.084*	0.259
Open-direct/Sexual functioning	0.066	0.019	3.541*	0.184
Embarrassed-conservative/Sexual functioning	-0.086	0.016	-5.461*	-0.277
Sexual satisfaction/Sexual functioning	0.627	0.054	11.586*	0.516
Sexual satisfaction/Passionate-romantic	0.588	0.137	4.293*	0.181
Sexual satisfaction/Open-direct	0.047	0.140	0.739	0.014
Sexual satisfaction/Embarrassed-conservative	-0.464	0.165	-2.808**	-0.119

**P<0.01; *P<0.001

4. Discussion

This study was conducted to examine the mediating role of sexual self-schema in the relationship of sexual functioning with sexual satisfaction in married female students. according to the results, it can be said that the frequency of sexual activity can also affect sexual satisfaction. With the increase in the length of marriage and possibility reduced sexual attractiveness of the partner, increased age, taking care of children and etc , the frequency of sexual activity decreases which can predict the sexual satisfaction of couples [21].

Many theoretical perspectives believe that the cognitive structures of people evolve through interaction with their environment. These cognitive structures, developed from childhood to adulthood, extend to other areas of communication (such as marital and interpersonal relationships) and interfere with the cognitive structures of others. Self-concept and positive attitude towards sexual activity can lead to satisfying sexual functioning, while negative attitude along with conflicts and weakness can lead to distress, and sexual problems. Women who describe themselves as passionate/romantic, have a more positive attitude towards sexual issues, and experience arousal, stimulation and orgasm at higher levels and in general, they have better sexual relationships. On the contrary, women embarrassed-conservative women sexually have poor activity and have a more negative attitude towards sexual issues. Women with open-direct schema report sexual desire and behavior like women with passionate/romantic schema, but they have less commitment and less stable relationships [10, 41]. Overall, the findings of this study showed that sexual self-schema is a predictive of sexual functioning and sexual satisfaction, and it plays a mediating role between the two variables.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

This study is based on observing all ethical standards, participant satisfaction, confidentiality of data and other important points of research ethics.

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Authors contributions

Conceptualization, validation, review and editing: All Authors; Research analysis, resources, data processing, writing, and drafting: Fatemeh Zargari-Nejad; Supervision: Mehrnaz Ahmadi.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

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