

The relationship between sexual self-esteem and all its components with marital satisfaction in athletic women of Tehran

Mohammadreza Zarbakhsh, Parastou Taghavi Dinani, Mohammadali Rahmani

Department of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between sexual self-esteem and all its components with marital satisfaction in athletic women of Tehran. The statistical sample is 196 of married athletic women among 22 regions of Tehran who were selected by cluster sampling. Sexual self-esteem inventory for women (SSEI-W) by Zeanah & Schwarz (1996) and Prakash marital satisfaction by Amrithraj & Prakash (1985) were used to collect data. The statistical analysis by Pearson correlation and multi-variable regression showed there was a significant and positive relationship between sexual self-esteem and all its components (skill, attractiveness, control, moral judgment, adaptiveness) with marital satisfaction. Stepwise regression analysis revealed that adaptiveness, control, moral judgment and skill were able to predict marital satisfaction in athletic women.

Keywords: marital satisfaction, sexual self-esteem, women, athletic.

Introduction

Marriage is a sacred covenant that is possible among all nations and in all times and places. A long-standing tradition in which women and men begin their life as a companion and contract together to be as friend and sympathizer, understand each other and make each other happy, love each other and end his own loneliness by marriage (Nooranipoor *et al.*, 2007).

One of the common concepts to illustrate happiness and stability of marital relationship is the concept of marital satisfaction. In fact, the marital relationship provides an overall assessment of the current situation (Edalati & Redzuaun, 2010). Winch (2000) argues that marital relationship is adaptation between current situations with couples' expected situation. Based on this definition, marital satisfaction is when current status is consistent with the expected state.

Many scientific efforts have been made to increase marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction can be considered as a psychological situation that does not come into its own, but requires both spouses to work, especially in the early years marital relation is very unstable and relations are most at risk (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2010).

Starting a successful marriage and sex is capable to meet many physical and psychological needs in a safe environment and effects on the mental health of people (Nooranipoor *et al.*, 2007). Marital satisfaction is one of the important concepts of sociology and psychology of the family. The concept refers to the quality of life enjoyment and satisfaction in marriage and it covers the innermost and most secret feelings and perceptions about the relationship with his or her spouse in comparison with other similar concepts (Khaniki, 2009). So many variables can affect it.

As you can guess the sex appeal and sexuality are the factors that influence a person's propensity to be married. It is expected that quality of sex and satisfaction could also be involved in the individu-

Corresponding author: Parastou Taghavi Dinani, Department of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran. E-mail: psychologygroup89@yahoo.com.

al sense of sexual satisfaction. Problems with sexual issues such as lack of sexual desire, impotence, etc., which may be due to fear, anxiety, shame, or feelings of inadequacy and guilt is not hidden expression especially in women, because of timidity and modesty, just do not rely on symptoms and sexual problems lies with physical symptoms such as sadness, depression and marital dissatisfaction (Ohadi, 2005). Abnormal function of sex in women are more than men (43% vs. 31%), in such a situation, less sex desire with low levels of arousal and excitement leads to inadequate orgasm and sexual satisfaction (Basson, 2006). Basson (2006) found that women participate in sexual activity by different causes and libido in women is not enough for sex. There is an instinctive spontaneous sexual desire in a woman, but it must be accompanied by a positive impulse to emerge the acceptance of sexual desire in women. Brotto (2010) said in research with sexual desire and arousal disorders in women that sexual desire and arousal patterns show up in different stalls including motivational and cognitive methods. Motivational reasons can be satisfying your partner's sexual needs, feelings of femininity and strength and a sense of emotional closeness to a partner. Cognitive route also refers to the meaning to sex noted the previous experience of the person that caused her current cognitive.

Studies conducted by the Christopher and Sprecher (2000) in the context of sexual intercourse shows that sexual satisfaction is associated with high levels of marital satisfaction. Overall marital happiness is related to sexual satisfaction. Happy couples are more satisfied than unhappy couples in their sex life. Danesh and Nejatian (2004) found that the higher the level of sexual satisfaction, marital satisfaction also increases. Also Mousavi *et al.* (2006) in research entitled sexual functioning; general health and marital satisfaction in married women in Qazvin showed that there is a significant relationship between sexual function and sexual satisfaction in women. Women who have good sexual function have more marital satisfaction comparing women with sexual dysfunction. Many studies have pointed to the impact of marital satisfaction on the sexual satisfaction (Breznsnyak, & Whisman, 2004; Byers, 2005; Slosarz, 2000; Nichols *et al.*, 2000).

Since the notion of sexual activity whether as sexual satisfaction or emotional satisfaction, causes perceptions of self-efficacy (Vaziri *et al.*, 2008) and on the other hand, high levels of sexual satisfaction

can increase quality of life and result in increased stability and marital satisfaction, so it is necessary to increase sexual satisfaction and efficient identification of relevant factors (behavioral, cognitive, motivational). Below there are some of the research carried out.

Cash, Theriault and Annis (2004) concluded that women who have negative feelings about their appearance are more anxious in close relationships with the opposite sex. Yeh and Lorenz *et al.* (2006) found that women who have a positive body image and thus involve themselves more in sexuality are likely to experience greater sexual satisfaction, so they increase satisfaction of their relationship. According to Yates and Heindselman research (2008) on the impact of physical confidence on sexual behavior concluded that a person feeling about their body can be affected on the sexual behavior. Results of Meston *et al.* (2004) showed that to increase sexual arousal, the most common ways are decreasing anxiety, such as relaxation, offering sexual knowledge, sensate focus exercises, and systematic desensitization, respectively. Pakgozar and colleagues (2006) concluded that sex education can cause feelings of closeness and intimacy and increase marital relationships and marital satisfaction. Yousefi (2006) in a study assessed the knowledge and attitudes about sex and marital satisfaction and showed a positive correlation between knowledge and sexual attitudes and marital satisfaction significantly. Muehrer and colleagues (2006) found a negative correlation exists between self-esteem and sexual dysfunction, which means that low self-esteem, causes sexual dysfunction increasing.

In general, inaccurate sexual beliefs, poor communication about sexual needs of each party, the partner's sexual dysfunction, anxiety about sexual performance failure and fear of sexual relationships, messy family relationships, and limited parental education, unpleasant experience of having sex before marriage, being inconsistent with guilt about sex and religion, anxiety and depression are the most common psychological factors on sexual function disorders (Mehrabi, & Dadfar, 2003).

In the topic of sexual relationship there is a concept called sexual self-esteem which is another aspect of self-esteem. Sexual self-esteem effects on sexual behavior and includes emotional response to assess thoughts, feelings and sexual behavior (Beth *et al.*, 2010). Sexual self-esteem, sometimes used interchangeably with sexual self-perception, has been

defined as the “value that one places on oneself as a sexual being, including sexual identity and perceptions of sexual acceptability” (Mayers, Heller & Heller, 2003). Sexual self-esteem plays a significant role in one’s ability to maintain a close relationship with her spouse and enjoy a sexual relationship. Simply, Sexual self-esteem, reflecting a woman’s evaluation of her own worth as a sexual being (Buzwell & Rosenthal, 1996), sexual self-esteem is an ability to assess herself as a sexual partner and ability to cope with sexual challenges. Also Rosenfield (2004) believes that sexual self-esteem reflects characteristics that will facilitate the sexual communication within relationships. Sexual self-esteem include five components: “skills and experience” that reflect the ability to enjoy from sexual partner, “attractiveness” that reveal belief in being beautiful and attractive, “control” means the ability to manage sexual thoughts, feelings and behavior, “moral judgment “shows moral values are in line with sexual behavior and beliefs” adaptiveness “means the ability to adapt their sexual experiences with other personal goals, which can be different aspects of sexual behavior from a psychological threads to simultaneously studied shows. Dolatian and colleagues’ study (2011) shows the relationship between sexual satisfaction and sexual self-esteem and sexual dysfunction. Shafi Abadi *et al.* (2009) in a research named by The Effect of Sexual Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy on Females’ Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Attitude, and Sexual Self-Confidence in Shiraz came to the conclusion that after CBT, sexual knowledge, attitude and confidence in women were significantly different compared with pre-intervention group and the control group.

Melani and Offman (2007) concluded that the global self-esteem and sexual self-esteem predicted a higher ability to communicate about satisfying sexual behaviors with a partner, hierarchical regressions demonstrated that sexual self-esteem was a unique predictor of sexual communication over and above the contribution of global self-esteem. James Raven (2011) concluded in a study of Correlates of sexual self-esteem in a sample of substance-abusing women that women who have had sexual intercourse showed higher sexual self-esteem comparing to women who weren’t active in sexual intercourse and obtained more scores in control and adaptiveness subscale. And also women who didn’t have sexual relationships got lower scores on moral judgment comparing to others.

This study seeks to answer the scientific ques-

tion “whether the sexual self-esteem and its components are associated with marital satisfaction?”

Hypotheses

There is a relationship between sexual self-esteem with marital satisfaction.

There is a relationship between skill and marital satisfaction.

There is a relationship between attractiveness and marital satisfaction.

There is a relationship between control and marital satisfaction.

There is a relationship between moral judgment and marital satisfaction.

There is a relationship between adaptiveness and marital satisfaction.

Methodology

Statistical society and sampling methods

The research population consists of all athletic married women in 22 regions of Tehran. The research sample includes 196 of athletic married women who were selected by multi-stage cluster random procedure. For sampling purposes, first we chose 2 regions (3,8) randomly then between all sports club of these regions, one sports club were selected from each region (Shahin, Pasdaran) randomly and all women who were registered more than one year answered to questionnaire.

Instruments

Parakash marital satisfaction questionnaire

Parakash marital satisfaction questionnaire (1985) is designed in India which includes 25 questions. It is translated by Mohammadi far and Karami on 2010 in Iran. Psychometric properties in Iran show that Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient of questionnaire after using four methods is 0.81 in average which indicate high and proper reliability. After reviewing the three types of validity (content, criterion, construct), it could be argued that there is appropriate validity as well.

Sexual self-esteem inventory for women (SSEI-W)

This questionnaire designed by Zeanah and Schwarz in 1996 and includes 81 questions and 5 subscales which are skill and experience, attractiveness, control, moral judgment and adaptiveness The questionnaire assessed subjective emotional reactions of women to their thoughts and feelings about sexual behavior. Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient of questionnaire is reported 0.85 to 0.94 by creator of the

inventory. The correlation of this inventory with Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire has been calculated and the value of attractiveness 0.56, control 0.45, adaptiveness 0.45, moral judgment 0.38 and skill & experience 0.44 reported. In this research Cronbach's alpha calculated and gained between 0.75 to 0.95 for subscales.

Results

We used Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regressions to test the hypotheses.

Statistical characteristics of the study variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of the research variables (n =196).

Variable	Mean (X)	Stand. deviation (S)
Marital satisfaction	35.36	10.20
Overall sexual self-esteem	347.54	55.36
Skill and experiences	78.78	15.28
Attractiveness	67.62	21.44
Control	70.46	12.00
Moral judgment	66.54	12.80
Adaptiveness	64.13	12.16

The mean scores and standard deviations of the variables in question have been summarized in Table 1.

As observed in the table, the mean score of marital satisfaction has been 35.36 and the overall mean score of sexual self-esteem has been 53.84 among all predictive variables of sexual self-esteem the highest mean is related to skill and the lowest one is related to adaptiveness. In order to answer the research question regarding the relation between sexual self-esteem and its components with marital satisfaction, we have used the regression correlation coefficient and step-by-step multi-variable regression analysis.

As it's shown in table 2 the Correlation Coefficients between sexual self-esteem and all its component with marital satisfaction is positive and significant at the level of 0.01 which means with an increase in score of sexual self-esteem, skill, attractiveness, moral judgment, control, and adaptiveness, score of marital satisfaction would increase as well.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients between sexual self-esteem and its components with marital satisfaction.

Predicting variables	Marital satisfaction	P
Overall score of sexual self-esteem	0.69	0.000
Skill and experience	0.61	0.010
Attractiveness	0.44	0.000
Control	0.66	0.000
Moral judgment	0.62	0.000
Adaptiveness	0.69	0.000

Table 3. Summary analysis of step-by-step regression analysis of the predictors and criterion.

Step	Predicting variables	R	R2	Adjusted R	Standard error	F	P
1	Adaptiveness	0.693	0.48	0.48	7.38	179.13	0.000
2	Adaptiveness, control	0.718	0.52	0.51	7.13	102.97	0.000
3	Adaptiveness, control, moral judgment	0.727	0.53	0.52	7.06	71.74	0.000
4	Adaptiveness, control, moral judgment, skill	0.738	0.54	0.53	6.96	56.94	0.000

According to table 3 it can be concluded that adaptiveness, control, moral judgment and skill entered into model and are able to predict marital satisfaction. adaptiveness as a strongest variable entered the model and is able to explain 48% variance of marital satisfaction. By adding control to adaptiveness in to second step variance has resulted in-

crease of about 4% in variance and can explain 52% variance of marital satisfaction. In third step adaptiveness and control by moral judgment could explain 53% variance of marital satisfaction. In last step by adding skill to adaptiveness, control, moral judgment variance has been increased about 1% and can predict 0.54% variance of marital satisfaction.

Table 4. Coefficients of step-by-step regression analysis.

Step	Component	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	P
		Non-standard B	Standard Error	Standard Beta		
4	Fixed number	-8.47	3.06		-2.77	0.006
	Adaptiveness	0.504	0.100	0.60	5.06	0.000
	Control	0.225	0.074	0.26	3.04	0.003
	Moral judgment	0.175	0.063	0.22	2.78	0.006
	Skill	-0.203	0.08	-0.30	-2.54	0.012

According to table 4, in fourth step, adaptiveness ($B=0.504$, $t=5.06$, $P<0.001$), control ($B=0.225$, $t=3.04$, $P<0.003$), moral judgment ($B=0.175$, $t=2.78$, $P<0/006$), skill ($b=-0.203$, $t=2.54$, $p<0.01$) have a significant role in predicting marital satisfaction. Adaptiveness by $B=0.60$ has highest share in predicting marital satisfaction. Taking into consideration the standardized B value of the variable “adaptiveness”, it is known that one single unit of change in the variable in question will result in an increase of 0.60 in the variable “marital satisfaction”.

Conclusions

As the results showed there is a positive and significant relationship between the sexual self-esteem and all its components with marital satisfaction. The increase in sexual self-esteem also increases marital satisfaction. Actually a successful marriage is capable of meeting mental and physical needs of people in a safe environment. As sexual instinct is the basic needs of human and one of the main reasons for marriage, it is possible that the quality of sexual relationship can be effective on marital satisfaction.

Maslow (1976, as cited in Vandermassen, 2004) put this need in the category of vital needs or physical needs and Perls knows human drive as partial or incomplete gestalt. Most emergency situation, to be un-satisfied, will guide our thoughts and actions, and then the next important state will appear and so on. On the Perls view, a person’s sexual problems occur when remains unfinished in person, and the integrity of the human being prejudicial. According to Perls, many people have learned from their parents and their culture that they should extinguish their motivation and incentives, as a result, they are fearful to express them.

However, suppressed incentives cannot be simply disappeared and reveal themselves in other ways. It can be said in the context of sexual relationship, although happy marriage is only partly related to sexual relationship, however, this relationship may be the main cause of happiness or lack of happiness in marriage because if this relationship is not convincing, it leads to deprivation, frustration and the disintegration of the family.

In explaining the positive relation between sexual self-esteem and its components with marital satisfaction, it must be said that because sex is one of the most important relationship between couples and there is a relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction, it is obvious that any factor can impact on sexual satisfaction and improve the relationship, it can also be effective in marital satisfaction.

Therefore, numerous researches have been conducted on the population of women with low sexual desire and arousal disorders in women to examine the psychological dimensions. One of the components of the general concepts related to sexual function in women is sexual self-esteem that refers to sureness that every person has about her sexuality. Assurance about whether she would be accepted in sexual relationship or not and her sexual relationship can be enjoyable. Dolatian and colleagues’ study (2011) about the correlation between self-esteem with sexual dysfunction and satisfaction in women showed that sexual self-esteem is associated to sexual dysfunction and satisfaction. And particularly those who had low sexual self-esteem, experienced more sexual dysfunction and their sexual satisfaction was reduced as well.

Subscale of Skill and experience in sexual self-esteem refers to ability to enjoy from sex partner and

sexual relationship, people who have skills and experience, are more confident in their sexual situations. They believe they can easily learn and apply sexual knowledge in various ways. Overall knowledge of sexual relationship and practical skills can prevent them from many various fears and anxieties about sexual relationship and make them feel more capable. We can refer Yousefi's study (2006) that showed a significant positive correlation between sexual knowledge and sexual satisfaction. Or Pakgohar research (2006) has also confirmed this.

About Control subscale should say that a person who can control sexual relationship feels more capable to manage his own behavior and his sexual partner's behavior as well that can prevent many fears such as the fear of being abused or afraid of losing consciousness, resulting shows more tendency for sex relationship and can experience greater sexual satisfaction, they are consistent with researches of Lisak *et al.* (2006) and James Raven (2011).

Attractiveness subscale refers to satisfaction about physical appearance and not feeling ashamed and concern about body shape. Sexual relationship intrinsically tied to persons' appearance, when women have a positive body image of themselves enter to sexual relationship more than who have a negative body image. As a result, their sexual satisfaction increased and the sexual satisfaction is associated with satisfaction from relationship so overall satisfaction will increase. There is consistency between searches of Cash, Theriault and Annis (2004), Yeh and Lorenz *et al.* (2006) and Yates & Heindselman (2008).

Moral judgment subscale refers to person's beliefs and values about sexual relationship that directly or indirectly comes from family and society and finally incongruent beliefs can cause feelings of guilt and shame or feelings of sexual disability during the sexual relationship. Obviously, if the input stimuli interpreted in a way that cause positive sexual thought, will have a different effect on sexual response comparing to one that cause a negative thought. Fromm also believed that sexual restraints are imposed to sexual relationship can cause feeling guiltily. Although Fromm knows sexual drive as an instinct element but believed that the influencing factors are the result of learning and culture. Yousefi (2006) suggests a positive relationship between sexual attitudes and marital satisfaction which confirm this issue.

Finally, the adaptiveness subscale refers to adaptability and adjusting knowledge and experi-

ences in various sexual situation in order to meet the demands of her sexual partner with a sense of satisfaction. As it seen adaptiveness is strongest predicting variable for marital satisfaction. People, who have high adaptability, feel satisfied and joy during their sexual relationship. Obviously, all of the above would improve the quality and quantity of the sexual relationship therefore sexual satisfaction will increase and consequently marital satisfaction shows improve.

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