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Relationship Status as an Influence on Cybersex Activity: Cybersex, Youth, and Steady Partner

Rafael Ballester-Arnal, Jesús Castro-Calvo, Maria Dolores Gil-Llario, and Cristina
Giménez-García

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TABLE OF CONTENTS LISTING

The table of contents for the journal will list your paper exactly as it appears below:

Relationship Status as an Influence on Cybersex Activity: Cybersex, Youth, and Steady Partner

Rafael Ballester-Arnal, Jesús Castro-Calvo, Maria Dolores Gil-Llario, and Cristina Giménez-García

Relationship Status as an Influence on Cybersex Activity: Cybersex, Youth, and Steady Partner

Rafael Ballester-Arnal and Jesús Castro-Calvo

*Departamento de Psicología Básica, Clínica y Psicobiología, Universitat Jaume I,
Castellón, Spain*

5

Maria Dolores Gil-Llario

Departamento de Psicología Evolutiva y de la Educación, Universitat de València, Spain

Cristina Giménez-García

*Departamento de Psicología Básica, Clínica y Psicobiología, Universitat Jaume I,
Castellón, Spain*

10

The authors focus on the influence of participants' having or not having a steady partner when reference to cybersex use. Participants were 1,239 young, Spanish individuals who completed the Internet Sex Screening Test. Results showed the influence of being in a relationship on certain consumption dimensions of cybersex; the influence was found to be greater in men than in women. In general, cybersex activity was higher for single participants, although it was also significant for participants with a steady partner. The authors' findings facilitate the comprehension of the effect of new technologies in intimate human relationships.

15

Engaging in cybersex, similar to using the Internet for sexually gratifying activities (Cooper & Griffin-Shelley, 2002), is a phenomenon that is becoming more relevant, especially in light of new technologies. The motivations for taking part in cybersex are diverse. For some people, cybersex is yet another way to experience pleasure (self-experience of satisfaction caused by psychological or physical stimulation or a combination of both) or an alternative to satisfying sexual desire (motivational state required to enjoy the sexual activity and to motivate the attention and response to erotic stimulus) when they do not have a physical partner. For others, cybersex offers the possibility of meeting someone with whom to have online or offline sexual practices, to establish romantic relationships, or to enjoy their sexuality freely (Cooper, Månsson, Daneback, Tikkanen, & Ross, 2003). Between 33% and 60% of Internet users participate in online sexual activities (Cooper et al., 2003; Daneback, Cooper, & Månsson, 2005; Shaughnessy, Byers, & Walsh, 2011).

Q1

Q2

20

25

Q3

30 One would assume that there is higher cybersex use by single people to satisfy their sexual
needs, because of an absence of possible offline sexual relationships. Nevertheless, the conven-
tional model of a monogamous relationship seems to be inadequate in explaining the diversity
of interests and sexual tendencies in the human population (Brandon, 2011). There is the likeli-
hood that there would be some people with a steady partner who would participate in cybersex.
35 For example, they could enjoy sexual interests or desire not satisfied by their partners or they
could just obtain self-pleasure. These cybersex activities may cause serious consequences for the
relationship associated with being unfaithful.

Q4

Cybersex is a new way in which people with a steady partner may satisfy, in different manners,
their sexual desire. The number of people who engage in cybersex to obtain sexual or emotional
40 stimulation outside a monogamous relationship is increasing (Merkle & Richardson, 2000). In
this sense, Maheu (2001) noticed that 72% of participants knew someone (either male or female)
engaging in online sexual relations, despite having an offline relationship.

Q5

The influence of having a steady partner on cybersex has been barely studied and is in line
with two main perspectives. First, certain studies have focused on what kind of online sexual
45 activities would be identified as infidelity (concept of online infidelity). Second, there are also
relevant studies about some consequences for the deceived partner and the general relationship
(consequences of online infidelity).

Concept of Online Infidelity

In real life, the infidelity description and the difference between sexual and emotional infidelity is
50 relatively clear. People who are in a relationship usually define *infidelity* as the act of maintaining
sexual relations with a person other than the steady partner (sexual infidelity) or falling in love
with the other person (emotional infidelity; Buss & Haselton, 2005).

Q6

However, noticing this difference in the sexual Internet context is more difficult. Some online
sexual activities by people in a relationship do not include other users, such as isolated cybersex
55 (e.g., reading erotic stories while they are masturbating). However, in social cybersex, there is
an interaction with others users that could be sexual (e.g., reproducing fantasies on chat or via
webcam) or emotional (online emotional relationships). The geographical distance that charac-
terizes any type of cybersex practice and, consequently, the nonexistence of physical interaction,
complicate the identification of these practices as transgression (Underwood & Findlay, 2004).

60 Several researchers have tried to classify what types of sexual activities are considered in-
fidelity when people have an offline steady partner. Whitty (2003), studying the meaning of
infidelity among 1,117 people, supported the existence of three types of online infidelity: emo-
tional infidelity (e.g., friendship and emotional intimacy with other users), sexual infidelity (e.g.,
sexual relations with other users through chat or webcam), and online pornography viewed (e.g.,
65 viewing pornographic films, reading erotic stories). The threat perceived was higher for online
emotional and sexual infidelity as opposed to online pornography viewed, although all of them
were smaller than the threat perceived for offline infidelity (Whitty, 2003, 2005). Women had a
greater perceived threat in emotional infidelity, whereas men had a greater perceived threat in
online sexual infidelity (Whitty & Quigley, 2008).

70 Henline, Lamke, and Howard (2007) supported Whitty's (2003) finding in a study among
123 young people. Thus, the online sexual activity more identified as infidelity was the "sexual
infidelity" termed by Whitty (2003). This infidelity was followed by friendship or emotional

Q7

implication and innuendo (emotional infidelity) and viewing pornography (pornography). In this study, regardless of participants' gender, between 60 and 82% of participants reported more distress associated with emotional infidelity as opposed to sexual infidelity or pornography use. 75

Q8

Consequences of Online Infidelity

Even if most of the recreational cybersex users do not usually report the negative consequences (Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg, 2000; Velezmoro, Negy, & Livia, 2011), this may, for individuals who are in a relationship, cause serious damage, such as marital deterioration, partner distress, or divorce (Barak & Fisher, 2002). Schneider, Weiss, and Samenow (2012) found 35 cybersex users' partners who reported the negative effect of sexual Internet use by their partners. Most of them reported feeling devastated, aggrieved, and betrayed. Their perceived physical appearance and self-esteem also deteriorated, and all of them lost trust in their partners. The couples' sexual lives also declined as a consequence of online sexual relations. In particular, Schneider (2003) revealed a reduction of sexual desire in the user's partner or cybersex user because of online sexual activity. In this situation, a decrease of sexual desire was frequent for partners of users (16%), users (34%), or both (18%). Only in approximately 32% of couples did none of partners feel a decrease of sexual desire. 80 85

Online Sexual Behavior of People With a Steady Partner

Most of the studies on the influence of having or not a steady partner on cybersex activity have been usually focused on antecedents (attitudes) or online infidelity consequences (Hertlein & Weeks, 2011). Therefore, there are fewer studies regarding characteristics of cybersex among people in a steady relationship. 90

The few studies related to the influence of sentimental condition on specific cybersex behaviors show diverse results. Some of them have revealed higher percentages of cybersex users among single individuals than among those in a steady relationship (Cooper, Griffin-Shelley, Delmonico, & Mathy, 2001; Daneback et al., 2005). As a consequence, the supported hypothesis would be "if people satisfy their sexual desire with a partner, they do not resort to cybersex practices." However, recent studies observe how married people report more probability (until five times) of searching sexual or sentimental online relations than singles (Albright, 2008). 95 100

Q9

Dew, Brubaker, and Hays (2006) concluded, after an evaluation of 508 married heterosexual men, the common use of cybersex was for isolated sexual purposes, social sexual purposes, or for a search for offline relationships. However, the characteristics of the sample make difficult to generalize the results. In any case, these findings might reveal the contradiction between online infidelity conception and online behaviors. 105

In Spain, there are almost no studies that have focused on the cybersex experience. One exception was developed by Ballester, Gil, Ruiz, and Castro (under review). However, this research does not analyze the role of offline relationships in cybersex activity. Considering the diversity of results in the international scientific literature, which is deficient in Spain, the purpose of this article was to analyze possible differences in cybersex prevalence between people who were and who were not in a steady relationship. Moreover, this study considered whether gender played a modulating role in this relation. 110

Q10

METHOD

Participants

115 Participants were 1,239 young Spanish individuals. All of them belonged to the middle-class
and were located in urban areas, and 64.3% of them were women. The participants' ages ranged
between 18 and 25 years ($M = 20.37$, $SD = 2.04$). In addition, 95.5% of them identified themselves
as heterosexual, 3.1% as bisexual, and 1.4% as homosexual. All of them were studying in
120 I de Castellón and Universidad de Valencia). The percentages of being or not being in a steady
relationship were similar (53.5% and 46.5%, respectively), although most of them were living
with their families or house mates.

Most of the men (98.6%) and women (94.3%) reported sexual experience and 90.8% of men had
sexual activity weekly, in comparison with 72.6% of women. Men usually practiced masturbation
125 (88%), vaginal sex (85%), oral sex (77.6%), and mutual masturbation (75.2%). Women were more
frequent in terms of vaginal sex (87.2%), oral sex (68.8%), mutual masturbation (67.8%), and
masturbation (51.7%).

To homogenize the sample and improve the reliability of the results, we excluded participants
younger than 18 years of age and those older than 25 years. We also excluded participants who
130 were not studying at college, who do not have access to computer easily, or who did not complete
the whole instrument.

Outcome Measure

For the participant's evaluation, we used two instruments.

Ad hoc questionnaire

135 We designed the ad hoc questionnaire for this study; it examined information associated
with demographical variables (sex, age, and studies), sexual life (sexual orientation, same-sex
relations, steady partner, frequency of sexual activity, specific sexual behaviors, and frequency
of pornography use different from cybersex), and use and Internet access (accessing computer at
home, number of hours being online in the last week, and number of hours they go online for
140 sexual pursuits in the last week).

Internet Sex Screening Test

This test was adapted and validated for a Spanish population (Ballester, Gil, Gómez, & Gil,
2010); we considered the original version by Delmonico (1997). This test includes 25 true/false
items to determine whether online sexual behavior is a problem. Regarding psychometrical
145 attributes, Ballester and colleagues (2010) revealed an internal consistency of 0.88 and a test-retest
reliability of 0.84.

This questionnaire offers a global index of cybersex addiction and a result for five factors:

1. Online sexual compulsivity (“COMPULS”): feeling out of control and other pathological indicators (e.g., frequency of use, interference, severity perceived).
2. Online sexual behavior-isolation noncompulsive (“COSOL”): isolating forms of cybersex 150 (searching explicit sexual material such as online films, images, or stories) and using these materials for sexual purposes. This factor includes behaviors, which are termed *online infidelity*, seen as someone using pornography while being in an offline relationship (Whitty, 2003).
3. Online sexual behavior-social (“COSOC”): cybersex being in interaction with other online 155 users (e.g., sexual chats, sexual meetings via webcam, innuendos with others while online) and the possibility of moving that relationship to offline. This factor refers to behaviors that are identified by Whitty (2003) as “emotional online infidelity” (e.g., “I have taken part in sexual chats”). Q11
4. Online sexual spending (“GASTO”): economical investment in online sexual behavior 160 (e.g., having paid up membership in sexual sites).
5. Seriousness perceived of online sexual behavior (“PERGRA”): self-perception of cybersex as a problem or not.

Procedure

The instruments were applied in a university campaign to raise cybersex addiction awareness 165 organized by UNISEXSIDA (Research Unit on Sexuality and AIDS, Universitat Jaume I, Spain) and developed in different campuses. To provide basic information about this problem, various informational tables were opened. Then, we explained our main purpose to study the cybersex phenomenon among young people and offered students the opportunity to collaborate in this project, altruistically. When they agreed, participants gave informed consent and filled out both 170 questionnaires. So that we could control the possible effect of social desirability, participants completed the instruments anonymously and alone. Two psychologists supported them in case they had some doubt and to maintain their privacy. Q12

Q13

Data Analysis

Considering previous studies which have already demonstrated the influence of gender on cy- 175 bersex behaviors (Ballester et al., under review), we grouped data depending on this variable. To prevent this influence, first, this study compared men who were or were not in a relationship and, second, women who were or were not in a relationship. We used chi-square for categorical variables (items of the questionnaire) and *t* test for continuous variables (factors and total score). Q14

RESULTS

180

Access and Use of Internet

First, we analyzed the main characteristics of Internet access and use. Most of the participants (98.6%) had a personal computer at home, which guaranteed the possibilities of accessing online material.

TABLE 1
Means for Men and Women With or Without a Partner on Subscales and General Index of
Cybersex Addiction

Scale	Range	Men						Women					
		With partner (n = 176)		Without partner (n = 257)		t	General index	With partner (n = 478)		Without partner (n = 312)		t	General index
		M	SD	M	SD			M	SD	M	SD		
COMPULS	0–8	0.62	1.45	0.81	1.53	–1.28	428	0.13	0.53	0.20	0.76	–1.68	785
COSOL	0–6	2.23	1.74	2.44	1.74	–1.22	424	0.69	1.02	0.61	0.96	1.06	777
COSOC	0–6	1.35	1.43	1.92	1.72	–3.60	428***	0.91	1.22	1.19	1.28	–3.08	781**
GASTO	0–2	0.10	0.38	0.13	0.38	–0.61	431	0.03	0.18	0.03	0.17	0.439	787
PERGRA	0–3	0.39	0.66	0.42	0.72	–0.44	420	0.10	0.38	0.14	0.41	–1.274	763
ISST Total	0–25	4.66	4.30	5.68	4.37	–2.41	431*	1.87	2.31	2.18	2.76	–1.71	787

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Q15

185 The average amount of time spent in Internet was 8.85 hr ($SD = 12.13$) of which approximately 0.68 hr ($SD = 4.66$) were associated with visiting sexual sites specifically. In both cases, this large variance may be due to the important percentage of participants who scored high above this average. The larger part of the participants (90%) asserted access to cybersex only in the privacy of their homes.

190 Internet Sex Screening Test Subscales and General Index of Cybersex Addiction

As shown in Table 1, the general average scores for men and, in particular, for women are situated in lower score range. Specifically, men without a steady partner frequently exceeded men with a steady partner on the five subscales of cybersex and on the General Index of Cybersex Addiction. However, differences between both groups only revealed a statistical significance for online sexual behavior-social ($t = -3.60$, $p < .001$) and for the General Index of Cybersex Addiction ($t = -2.41$, $p < .05$).

Regarding average scores for women, those without steady partner did not show a clear tendency of having higher scores. This tendency was reversed for the COSOL dimension, in which women with a steady partner slightly exceeded the mean use of isolated cybersex for single women; however, there were no statistical differences. Only the average scores for COSOC dimension were higher for women without a steady partner ($\bar{X} = 1.19$) than for women who were in a relationship ($\bar{X} = 0.91$), and obtained statistical significance ($t = -3.08$, $p < .01$).

Q16

Prevalence of Behavior Identified as “Online Infidelity”

Q17

205 The results in this article refer to 10 items that are included in the Questionnaire of Cybersex Addiction, because their content is more related to behaviors identified as online infidelity by Whitty (2003) or Henline and colleagues (2007).

TABLE 2
Prevalence of Cybersex Behaviors Depending on Gender and Having a Steady Partner (%)

Item	Men			Women		
	Steady partner (n = 176)	No steady partner (n = 257)	χ^2	Steady partner (n = 478)	No steady partner (n = 312)	χ^2
Sexual infidelity dimension						
I have participated in sexual related chats.	15.3	22.6	3.458	4.4	10.3	10.262***
I have masturbated while on the internet.	45.5	53.7	2.839	8.4	8.3	0.001
I use sexual humor and innuendo with others while online.	22.7	41	15.644***	16.2	25	9.110**
Emotional infidelity dimension						
I have increased the risks I take online (give out name and phone number, meet people offline, etc.).	12.6	19.1	3.260	9.7	9.3	0.033
I have met face to face with someone I met online for romantic purposes.	19.9	29.8	5.356*	10.7	12.2	0.404
Infidelity dimension caused by pornography viewed						
I have some sexual sites bookmarked.	43.1	41.3	0.132	22	17.7	2.086
I have joined sexual sites to gain access to online sexual material.	5.7	7.4	0.489	0.2	0.6	0.927
I have searched for sexual material through and Internet search tool.	41.5	52.5	5.112*	18.2	13.8	2.723
I have accessed sexual sites from other computers besides my home.	26.7	29.3	0.346	4.6	3.5	0.564
I have stayed up after midnight to access sexual material online.	21	18.8	0.341	1.3	2.6	1.824

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

As shown in Table 2, most of the behaviors have not revealed differences between men being or not being in a relationship. Nevertheless, in relation to behaviors defined as sexual infidelity, there were nearly twice as many men without steady partner who used humor and sexual innuendo with other users (41%) than men with a steady partner (22.7%), and this difference revealed statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 15.644$, $p < .001$). Regarding behaviors defined as *emotional infidelity*, the percentage of single men who had met face-to-face somebody after meeting online for romantic purposes was also higher than in men who were in a relationship ($\chi^2 = 5.356$, $p < .05$). Last, pornography use reveals a higher percentage for men without steady partner, who reported searching for sexual material on Internet (52.5%), than in men with a steady partner (41.5%). This difference is again statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 5.112$, $p < .05$).

On the other hand, women's prevalence of online sexual behaviors was smaller than that of men. Moreover, behaviors defined as infidelity differences between women being or not being in a relationship are limited and there are only two regarding behaviors defined as sexual infidelity. First, the percentage of single women who participated in sexual chats (10.3%) exceeded that of women with a steady partner (4.4%) and obtained statistical differences ($\chi^2 = 10.262$, $p < .001$). Likewise, the percentage of women with a steady partner using sense of humor

TABLE 3
Behaviors for Hiding Online Sexual Activities Depending on Gender and Steady Partner (%)

Item	Men			Women		
	Partner (n = 176)	No partner (n = 257)	χ^2	Partner (n = 478)	No partner (n = 312)	χ^2
I have a sexualized username or nickname that I use on the Internet.	37.5	42	0.889	28.9	39.7	9.943**
No one knows I use my computer for sexual purposes.	19.2	19.8	0.028	5.3	7.4	1.381
I tried to hide what is on my computer or monitor so others cannot see it.	42.9	47.5	0.083	14.5	16.1	0.381

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

and innuendo (16.2%) was smaller than for single women (25%). This difference also showed statistical relevance ($\chi^2 = 9.110, p < .01$).

225 Prevalence of Hiding Online Sexual Behavior From Others

The Questionnaire of Cybersex Addiction refers to some behaviors about the intention of participants to hide their sexual activity through three items.

In general, the percentages showed a noticeable frequency of hiding online sexual activity for men and women (see Table 3). Moreover, a participant's being or not being in a relationship had a scant influence on this item. It is remarkable the use of nicknames on the Internet, which is higher for single women (39.7%) than for women with a steady partner (28.9%). This reveals statistical differences ($\chi^2 = 9.943, p < .01$). On the other hand, the prevalence of the other behaviors is always higher for men and women without a steady partner. Once again, men exceed women in the practice of these three behaviors.

235 Profile of Cybersex Use

To classify people depending on cybersex profile (recreational, risky, or pathological) the original authors of the Internet Sex Screening Test established some cutoff points (Carnes, Delmonico, & Griffin, 2007). Considering these cutoffs and the score of Global Index of Cybersex Addiction, we identified participants as recreational users (range = 0 to 8), risky users (range = 9 to 18), or pathological users/cybersex addicted (range = 19 to 25).

Table 4 shows the recreational profile as the most frequent category for men and women who were or were not in a relationship, followed far behind by the risky users profile and, last, pathological users. In particular, men who were in a relationship showed a higher percentage of recreational use (86.9%) than did single men (79.8%), obtaining statistical differences for both percentages ($\chi^2 = 3.745, p < .05$). Regarding risky use, which already represents an indicator of maladaptive cybersex, the differences were reversed. The percentage of single men was nearly twice that of men in a relationship (18.7% and 10.8%, respectively), showing statistical differences ($\chi^2 = 4.961, p < .05$).

TABLE 4
Prevalence of Different Profiles of Cybersex Depending on Gender and Having a Steady Partner (%)

Item	Men		χ^2	Women		χ^2
	Partner (n = 176)	No partner (n = 257)		Partner (n = 478)	No partner (n = 312)	
Recreational users	86.9	79.8	3.745*	97.7	96.8	0.336
Risky users	10.8	18.7	4.961*	2.3	2.9	0.260
Pathological users	2.3	1.6	0.296	0	0.3	1.534

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Among women, the prevalence of recreational use was more frequent. Most of the women, in or not in a relationship (97.7% and 96.8%, respectively), were classified in this category. On the other hand, nearly 2.3% of women with a steady partner and 2.9% of single women were classified as risky users, and the pathological profile was reduced. No woman in a relationship was found to use cybersex pathologically. In women, the scores did revealed statistical differences among these profiles regardless of having a steady partner.

Q18

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of a steady partner on cybersex practice and its characteristics among young people (social or isolated behavior). In general, cybersex is frequent for participants both in and not in a relationship. In this context, having a steady partner seemed to diminish the total use of cybersex, but only some sexual activities revealed statistical significance. Moreover, gender played a main role in the steady partner influence.

Cybersex Use Among Women Who Are in a Relationship

According to the General Index of Cybersex Addiction, women in an offline relationship showed lower use of social cybersex. These women rarely engaged in activities with other users to get sexual stimulation or emotional closeness. However, other dimensions of cybersex (i.e., monetary spending) were not modulated by a steady partner. Therefore, the influence of a steady partner was limited for women, and our findings differ from past studies that have revealed higher cybersex use for women in a relationship (Albright, 2008).

Online sexual behavior, which differs between women in or not in a relationship, includes diverse items about sexual and emotional dimensions. In general, being in an offline relationship restricts the most sexual aspect of social cybersex but not other activities such as online pornographic use or sentimental interaction with other users. According to Whitty (2003), participating women who are in a relationship would practice less sexual infidelity but, in our study, they practiced two types of online infidelity: emotional infidelity (developing affective and emotional intimacy with other online users) and pornography viewed. In any case, these women who were in a relationship had rarely engaged in activities identified as a serious transgression (Henline et al., 2007; Whitty, 2003; Whitty & Quigley, 2008) for the steady relationship.

On the other hand, single women take part in some hidden behaviors (nickname instead of real name) more frequently than women being in a relationship. This is probably because women understand that these items of the questionnaire refer to everybody, not only their sentimental partner. For example, a woman in or not in a relationship could report “yes” in “trying to hide what I see on my computer from others.” The first case because she is bearing in mind her husband and, in the second case, because she is considering her family in her answer.

Regarding consumption profiles, most of the women being or not being in a relationship reveal recreational use of cybersex. Taking part in an offline relation does not increase the probability of being classified in some consumer profile. These findings disagree with some studies among cybersex addicts in which the prevalence of cybersex for women with a steady partner or who were married was higher (Cooper et al., 2000; Schwartz & Southern, 2000).

Cybersex Among Men Being in a Relationship

Like women, men with offline partner practice Online Sexual Behavior-Social less frequently than single men but not for other dimensions of Internet Sex Screening Test. Results for men who were in or not in a relationship did not reveal differences in isolated cybersex, online sexual compulsivity, online sexual spending, or self-perceived seriousness of behavior. Contrary to women, there are statistical differences for the General Index of Cybersex Use. Our findings revealed less cybersex use for men in a relationship than for single men, although we cannot confirm the nonexistence of their cybersex. These results support similar use of cybersex between men in or not in a relationship or higher use for single men, which has been demonstrated (Cooper et al., 2001; Daneback et al., 2005) in similar cultural context (Sanabria, 2004).

On the other hand, the number of online sexual behaviors influenced by having a steady partner is higher for men than for women. For example, the percentage of men with offline partner reporting humor or innuendo use or searching sexual material on Internet is smaller than in the percentage for single men. These findings reveal more similarities to studies about online infidelity attitudes than in our results for women. According to Whitty’s classification (2003) about online infidelity, our participants who were in a relationship have shown less frequency of behaviors for three dimensions (online sexual infidelity, online emotional infidelity, pornography). However, we should clarify why some behaviors decrease when young people start a relationship while other similar ones have not changed.

Contrary to our hypothesis, men who were in a relationship did not hide online sexual activity more than did single men. The frequency of cybersex use for men with a steady partner was certainly smaller than in single men, but we expected more prevalence for these behaviors (e.g., not notifying anybody about their use). In particular, anonymity is one of the most eye-catching cybersex characteristics for taking part in relationships outside of the steady partner (Weiss & Schneider, 2006).

The lower prevalence of men with a steady partner who have a risky cybersex profile is another interesting finding. Men who were in a relationship tended to use recreational cybersex, whereas risky use was more frequent for single men. This result is relevant when considering the need of a comprehensive clinical evaluation and even a preventive intervention for pathological use in these risky users (Carnes, Delmonico, & Griffin, 2007). In this sense, our results suggest the protective influence of being in a relationship when considering the development of a risky profile, which could turn into a pathological profile. However, studies on pathological users have

revealed differing results. For example, Cooper and colleagues (2000) supported the existence of 320 55% pathological married users or with a steady partner whereas Schwartz and Southern (2000) increased this percentage to 58%.

Differences Between Men and Women Being in a Relationship

As we have noticed, the influence of steady partner on men and women is different and this effect is higher for men. In consequence, we could consider why being in a relationship restricts 325 more men than women from having online sexual activities. Men (who were or were not in a relationship) always engaged more cybersex than did women (Ballester et al., under review; Cooper et al., 2000). It may be that men tend to stop their online sexual activity when they have a partner because they satisfy their sexual desire. On the other hand, women who engage in cybersex activities (a small percentage) might reveal a harder profile to change. Hence, if women 330 cannot satisfy their sexual or emotional desire in their steady relationship, they would continue engaging in cybersex to seek gratification.

Q20
Q21

Moreover, starting cybersex while being in a relationship could be another reason to explain this maintenance of frequency. For example, this could be a strategy to develop diverse sexual options with their partners. Then, a woman without experience in cybersex would engage in it 335 to improve her sexual life (Danaback, Traen, & Månsson, 2009; Poulsen, Busby & Galovan, 2012). In this sense, the small difference of use between women who were or were not in a relationship would be clarified. Moreover, we could explain two results that differ from expected outcomes. First, this hypothesis supports the slightly larger scores of women with a steady partner for isolated use (online pornography), although there are no statistical differences with single 340 women. Second, this may be the reason because men and women in a relationship do not hide their online sexual activity more frequently than do single people.

Q22

Limitations and Future Research

These findings should be considered in view of some limitations. For example, the origin of our participants (young university students) makes it difficult to extrapolate these results for a young, 345 Spanish population. However, the percentage of young, Spanish people studying in colleges or universities is higher than the European average (Ministerio de Educación, 2009). Therefore, this supports the representative characteristics of our sample. On the other hand, the questionnaire (Internet Sex Screening Test) includes restricted cybersex behaviors and limited length of time (1 week), although this would be enough to collect the information. In addition this instrument 350 has been already validated in our context. Hence, this would support its viability and validity.

Nevertheless, this article offers evidence to improve our knowledge about the offline steady partner role for taking part in online sexual activities. To approach new future research, we would examine diverse directions. On the one hand, because our findings differ from past studies, we should clarify whether young Spanish people identify online sexual activities as infidelity. On the 355 other hand, examining the role of some variables such as the length of relationship or dispositional variables (e.g., sexual compulsivity, erotophobia-erotophilia) would be required to comprehend this phenomenon more carefully.

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