



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY IMAGE, LIFE SATISFACTION AND SEXUAL SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of the study was to examine the relationships between body image and sexual satisfaction, and between body image and life satisfaction.

Material and method: The statistical analysis included 457 people aged 18 to 40 years ($M = 24.54$; $SD = 5.23$). The study was conducted online. The assessment tools included the Body Esteem Scale (BES) (body image), the Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire (sexual satisfaction), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (life satisfaction).

Results: The study found a moderate correlation between sexual satisfaction and the body image, and between body image and life satisfaction.

Conclusions: Both in men and women, satisfaction with individual parts of the body is related to the feeling of sexual satisfaction. A positive body image indicates a high level of life satisfaction regardless of gender.

Key words: sexual satisfaction, life satisfaction, body image

Introduction

Sexual satisfaction is identified with happiness and a high quality of life. It is a very important criterion of sexual health and a factor that significantly affects relationship satisfaction [1, 2]. Satisfaction with sexual life is a subjective evaluation: each person determines individually the level of their satisfaction [3]. In other words, sexual satisfaction is a cognitive-emotional evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with a person's sexual life [4]. The key to sexual life satisfaction, therefore, seems to be positive reflections and feelings in response to sexual situations [5].

Body image is a concept that changes due to the opinions of others. People evaluate their body by taking into account ideals. Moreover, this evaluation can be altered by someone else's remarks or under the influence of mood [6]. People rely on subjective evaluation and ideas about their bodies, compare themselves to others, and consider opinions about themselves [7]. Research indicates that sexual satisfaction has an impact

on body image [8]. Women who evaluate their bodies better experience greater sexual satisfaction [9]. Satisfaction with sex life is influenced by the subjective evaluation of the body. This means that a woman who is objectively not attractive can have a satisfying sex life, if she evaluates her body positively [1]. Studies also show that men have a more positive body image than women, but both genders are satisfied with their appearance [10].

Life satisfaction can be understood as an evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with an individual's life as a whole. The level of life satisfaction, positive feelings, and the absence of negative feelings make up a person's well-being [11, 12]. It can be assumed that the satisfaction a person feels about his or her life is related to whether the person likes it or not. Argyle [13] showed that life satisfaction is influenced by the number of positive experiences that are transformed into positive emotions. Also an individual's health rating, time commitment to work that has a specific

purpose, free time, and satisfying relationships are highly significant. Research shows that women and men who are satisfied with their appearance and their body weight experience higher life satisfaction [14, 15].

Objective

The aim of the study was to demonstrate the relationships between sexual satisfaction, body image and life satisfaction. Following a review of available literature and questionnaire surveys, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Sexual satisfaction is higher when the body image is more positive [1, 8, 9, 10, 1].

H2: A positive body image is associated with higher life satisfaction [14, 15].

Materials and methods

The study involved 482 respondents. The final number of people surveyed was 457. Only people between 18 and 40 years old who were childless were considered. The study, due to its subject matter, which might make respondents feel discomfort, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions was conducted online using Google Forms. The study commenced on 3 September 2020 and ended on 18 January 2021. Questionnaires were posted online and also distributed to various groups on Facebook. As a result the study group was diverse. Details of the study participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents

Variable	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sex				
Female	229	50.11		
Male	217	47.48		
Non-binary	11	2.41		
Age			24.5	5.23
Body height			172	9.76
Body weight			72	16.12
BMI				
Severe thinness	4	0.88		
Moderate thinness	5	1.09		
Mild thinness	23	5.03		
Normal range	278	60.83		
Overweight	97	21.23		
Obese (Class I)	33	7.22		
Obese (Class II)	14	3.06		
Obese (Class III)	3	0.66		

The study consisted of four parts: a demographic questionnaire, and three survey questionnaires: the Questionnaire of Sexual Satisfaction [4], the Body Esteem Scale [16], and the Satisfaction With Life Scale adapted by Jankowski [17, 18]. The demographic questionnaire comprised nine items related to gender, age, sexual orientation, having children, relationship status and years of relationship, body weight and body height, and importance of sexual satisfaction to the respondent. The survey was conducted online from 3 September 2020 to 18 January 2021.

Results

The relationship between body image and sexual satisfaction. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between body image and sexual satisfaction (Table 2).

Relationship between body image and life satisfaction

A Pearson correlation analysis was performed to show the relationship between body image and life satisfaction (Table 3).

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Table 2. Relationship of sexual satisfaction with the Body Esteem Scale subscales depending on respondents' gender

Variable	Sexual satisfaction	
	Women	Men
Sexual Attractiveness	0.530***	
Body Weight Concern	0.313***	
Physical Condition	0.342***	0.471***
Physical Attractiveness		0.457***
Upper Body Strength		0.467***

*** $p < 0.001$

Table 3. Relationship between satisfaction with life and the Body Esteem Scale subscales depending on respondents' gender

Variable	Life satisfaction	
	Women	Men
Sexual Attractiveness	0.549***	
Body Weight Concern	0.558***	
Physical Condition	0.486***	0.507***
Physical Attractiveness		0.461***
Upper Body Strength		0.486***

*** $p < 0.001$

Discussion

Sexual life satisfaction and body image

The study found a moderate correlation between satisfaction with sexual life and the Sexual Attractiveness subscale. This means that the higher the women rated the parts of their body that could not be affected by exercise, a well-balanced diet, or cosmetics, the higher sexual satisfaction they felt. In contrast, the study found a low correlation between sexual satisfaction and the Body Weight Concern and Physical Condition subscales. It can be concluded that body parts that can be affected by exercise, diet and stamina, as well as strength or agility are not relevant to feelings of sexual satisfaction. For men, a moderate correlation was noted between sexual satisfaction and all the subscales of the Body Esteem Scale. This means that sexual satisfaction is higher in the body evaluation among men. In view of this interpretation the first hypothesis can be partially confirmed. Body image research is often conducted only among women. However, it has been shown that men are more satisfied with the appearance of their body, but it does not exclude a positive self-image among women [10, 19]. Research on women indicates a relationship between sexual satisfaction and body image [8]. In contrast, the

present study showed that the parts of the body that cannot be affected do matter.

Body image and life satisfaction

Previous research has shown that positive body perceptions increase life satisfaction [14, 15]. The present study revealed a moderate correlation between all the subscales of the Body Esteem Scale and life satisfaction in all respondents. The second hypothesis was therefore confirmed in agreement with previous studies.

A positive body image indicates life satisfaction. The results of this study clearly indicate the significance of body care and subjective, positive, body evaluation for the perception of life. Psychological education and support for people with low body image is therefore a very important issue as this gives them a chance to have a satisfying life.

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to demonstrate the relationships between body image and sexual satisfaction, and between body image and life satisfaction. Body image was found to be important in the subjective evaluation of life satisfaction and, partly, sexual satisfaction. This shows how important it is to

take care of the body and, above all, to think positively about the body. It is therefore worth strengthening children's self-esteem and positive body image from an early age. These results may be useful in the treatment of people who are characterized by low sexual satisfaction or low body image. Furthermore, the results of the present study may indicate

that body image is an important aspect not only in the lives of women, but also in the lives of men. There has been far less research on body image among men than for women. The study was conducted online on a large group of respondents from all over Poland. Further research could also include other age groups to compare their levels of the examined variables.

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