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Scientists of the Department of Personality, Evaluation and Treatment of the University of Granada (Universidad de Granada) have studied how some psychological variables such as erotophilia (positive attitude towards sexuality), sexual fantasies and anxiety are related to sexual desire in human beings.

The researcher Juan Carlos Sierra Freire states that there are very few reliable and valid instruments in Spain to evaluate sexual desire. Due to this vacuum, the researchers have adapted the Sexual Desire Inventory by Spector, Carey and Steinberg. This inventory is a tool that enables the researcher to measure, on the one hand, the solitary sexual motivation and, on the other hand, the interest in having sexual intercourse with another person (didactic sexual desire). This fact is of a great importance because it gives relevant information about possible disagreements in sexual desire that may appear in a couple". Regarding figures of the Spanish Association for Sexual Health, a loss of sexual desire is one of the main factors that cause sexual dysfunction in the Spanish female population.

The power of imagination

 The results of this research, published in the journals *Analisis y Modificacion de Conducta* and *Psychological Reports*, reveal an important relation between sexual desire and erotophilia in men. Men respond more positively towards sexual stimuli and thoughts, and they accept them more easily. The male population has an attitude that, together with sexual fantasies, heightens sexual drive. Nevertheless, the research stresses that people sometimes may have a negative reaction to some types of fantasies. In this sense, the researchers have studied such behaviour in male subjects, where sexually sadistic fantasies inhibit sexual desire.

In turn, women also share the imagination at play. The more sexual fantasies they have, the more sexual desire they experience. However, "women normally present more anxiety disorders than men" regarding transitory emotional stages such as anxiety, because anxiety strongly affects women's sexual function.

On the basis of the sample studied, which consists of 608 subjects aged 13 to 43, researchers have found that 32% of inhibited sexual desire in men is associated with low erotophilia as well as some sexual fantasies, while a 18% of such inhibited sexual desire in women is because of the increase of anxiety and the decrease of sexual fantasies. According to Juan Carlos Sierra, these figures show that psychological factors, which have a role in sexual response, depend on gender.

Sexual education

Sexual desire leads to other stages of sexual intercourse: excitation and orgasm. Therefore, having intercourse without desire may negatively affect the stages of sexual response. "This first stage is the most complex because it is influenced by many factors", declared the researcher. Sexual desire is explained by a three-dimensional model, which includes social, psychological, and neurophysiologic aspects. For that reason, proper neurohormonal activity with a right sexual stimulation is necessary in order to experience sexual desire. "Besides this complexity, there is no comparison model, as occurs in the men's excitation stage, where it is possible to determine the degree of excitation depending on the erection."

Juan Carlos Sierra points out that education on sexual stimulation and response as well as healthy attitudes towards sexuality is extremely important. In this way, sexual intercourse for those people will be more pleasurable and with less probability of having sexual dysfunctions. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of sexual fantasies in sexuality. In fact, sexual fantasies are used in sex therapy to diminish levels of anxiety of execution or of sexual activity, provided that there are no organic anomalies (lack of hormones, endocrinal disorders, etc.). Researchers from the University of Granada are currently working in this field of study.

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Reference:

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 Contact: Professor Juan Carlos Sierra Freire
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