

## Hedonic capacity, sexual beliefs, and satisfaction experienced in relationship as determinants of women's functioning in the sexual domain

Sexual activity and feeling pleasure as a result of it is an important area of women's life and somatic and mental health. Despite the growing knowledge about sexuality in society, female sexuality is the source of many stereotypes. Beliefs are considered to be a key socio-cultural factor associated with sexual difficulties and dysfunctions, as important for sexual functioning as psychological and biological factors. The biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors are also important for hedonic capacity (the ability to feel pleasure). The relationship between factors of different nature is visible in women's sexual functioning and the pleasure they experience from sexual activity. The deterioration of the subjective quality of life, the occurrence of depressive symptoms, decreased sexual satisfaction and self-esteem, the occurrence of conflicts in relationships and the loss of pleasure from sexual activity are the symptoms most frequently reported by women accompanying the experience of difficulties in sexual functioning.

The aim of the study was to examine the links between sexual functioning and hedonic capacity and to identify risk and protective factors against the development of difficulties in experiencing pleasure and related sexual dysfunctions. Since experiencing sexual dysfunction affects many areas of life and activity, identifying key factors for the development of symptoms of sexual dysfunction is extremely important.

For this purpose, questionnaire studies were conducted to examine the level of sexual functioning, satisfaction experienced in the relationship (both from its sexual and non-sexual aspects), the ability to feel pleasure and the level of dysfunctional beliefs about sexuality. The responses of 321 women were used to verify the research hypotheses.

The statistical analysis and interpretation of the results mostly confirmed the validity of the assumed theoretical model of connections between variables and the significant role of sexual dysfunctional beliefs and satisfaction in the relationship as mediators of the relationship between hedonic capacity and sexual functioning. The results also indicate - among other things - diversity of factors explaining sexual functioning in its individual areas, but for most of them the sexual hedonic ability and satisfaction with the sexual relationship are important. Importantly, the research confirmed that sensory hedonic capacity, mental health, and knowledge about sexuality are significantly positively associated with sexual hedonic capacity, while dysfunctional sexual beliefs regarding pleasure as a sin and conservative beliefs reduce the level of the ability to feel sexual pleasure.

The conclusions resulting from the analysis and interpretation of the results constitute a valuable source of information and can be the basis for designing preventive (including sexual education), diagnostic and therapeutic activities. Activities based on supporting the ability to feel pleasure from various sources (sensory, social, sexual) may indirectly improve the quality of relationships, sexual functioning and reduce the impact of dysfunctional beliefs about sexuality on the occurrence of difficulties in sexual functioning, and also - taking into account the importance of pleasure for sexual, relational and mental health, pleasure training could be a form of prevention of mental disorders and sexual dysfunctions.