

Genital Image Self-Consciousness and Sexual Satisfaction Among Women: The Role of Cognitive Fusion as a Moderator



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Introduction

- Approximately 47-50% of women are dissatisfied with the appearance of body parts found below their torso (Schick et al., 2010).
- In a survey of 50 women in the United States, 94% reported self-consciousness in the appearance of their vulva (Fernando & Sharp, 2020).
- Women with low genital image self-consciousness experience higher sexual satisfaction in comparison to women with high genital image self-consciousness (Schick et al., 2010).
- There must be moderating variables involved in this relationship. One such variable may be cognitive fusion

Methods

Participants

- $n = 432$
- Mean age: 23.07, SD 7.23, range 17-58
- Mean BMI: 26.17, SD 6.59, range 15.33-26.17
- Gender 94.4% female, 1.3% male, 3.4% non-binary, 0.7% other
- Ethnicity 42.1% Hispanic/Latinx
- Race 65.1% white, 8.7% multiple categories or mixed, 8.2% African American, 4.1% Native American/Alaskan Native, 3.4% Asian, 0.5% Middle Eastern/North African, and 9.9% other

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

- Items assessed, gender identity, race, ethnicity, year in school, height, and weight.

Female Genital Self Image Scale (FGSIS)

- This 7-item measure assess genital self image. A total score can be calculated as well as two subscale scores. Subscale scores assess interpersonal concerns and intrapersonal concerns. Higher scores indicate more positive genital self-image, lower scores indicate more negative genital self-image.

Multidimensional Psychological Flexibility Inventory (MPFI)

- We used the 5-item cognitive fusion subscale. Higher scores assess higher cognitive fusion, lower scores assess lower cognitive fusion.

Satisfaction with sex life scale-revisited (SWSLS)

- This 4-item measure assesses sexual satisfaction. A total score can be calculated. A higher score indicates higher sexual satisfaction.

Cognitive fusion does not moderate the relationship between genital image self-consciousness and sexual satisfaction

Procedure

- Undergraduate students completed a series of online questionnaires for course credit. The IRB approved this study.

Results

Correlations

- Fusion, genital self-image, and sexual satisfaction were not significantly correlated. (See Table 1).

Table 1

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations among Constructs

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Genital Self-Image Total						
2. Intrapersonal Concerns	.928					
3. Interpersonal Concerns	.909	.687				
4. Sexual Satisfaction	.244	.212	.237			
5. Fusion	-.335	-.340	-.271	-.146		
6. BMI	.017*	.008**	.025*	-.095	.055	
Mean	20.28	11.94	8.33	15.93	17.91	26.17
SD	4.12	2.41	2.16	7.82	7.17	6.59

Note. $N = 432$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Genital Self-Image Total = total score from the Female Genital Self-Image Scale; Intrapersonal Concerns = Intrapersonal Concerns subscale from the Female Genital Self-Image Scale; Interpersonal concerns = Interpersonal Concerns subscale from Female Genital Self-Image Scale; Sexual Satisfaction = Satisfaction with Sex Life Scale-Revisited; Fusion = Fusion subscale from Multidimensional Psychological Flexibility Inventory; BMI = body mass index

Moderation Analysis for Fusion and Sexual Satisfaction

- The conditional effect of fusion did not significantly predict satisfaction with sex life
- The conditional effect of genital image self-consciousness predicted satisfaction with sex life
- The interaction between cognitive fusion and genital image self-consciousness did not predict satisfaction with sex life

Moderation Analysis for Genital Image Self-Consciousness (Interpersonal) and Sexual Satisfaction

- The conditional effect of female-genital image consciousness (interpersonal) did predict satisfaction with sex life
- The conditional effect of fusion did not predict satisfaction with sex life
- The interaction between fusion and genital image self-consciousness (interpersonal) did not predict satisfaction with sex life

Moderation Analysis for Genital Image Self-Consciousness (Intrapersonal) and Sexual Satisfaction

- The conditional effect of female-genital image self-consciousness (intrapersonal) predicted satisfaction with sex life
- The conditional effect of fusion did not predict satisfaction with sex life
- The interaction between fusion and genital image self-consciousness (intrapersonal) did not predict satisfaction with sex life

DISCUSSION

- Fusion did not moderate satisfaction with sex life
- Fusion did not moderate the relationship between Female Genital Self Image total score and subscales and satisfaction with sex
- Future directions include investigating other possible moderators involved in this relationship
- Limitations include location and population of study. Study was conducted at a single university with a population of students enrolled in an introductory psychology course



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