



Presenting the model of sexual performance of postmenopausal women based on sexual self-expression with the mediating role of state-attribute anxiety and sexual self-esteem

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Abstract

Aim: The purpose of the present study was to provide a model of sexual performance of women under menopause based on sexual self-expression with the mediating role of state-attribute anxiety and sexual self-esteem.

Method: The research method was descriptive and correlation type using structural equations. The statistical population in this research was made up of all post-menopausal women who referred to the health and treatment centers of Rudsar city between August 2022 and the end of September 2022. They were selected by lottery and then the women who visited these centers during the mentioned period of time to receive services and met the conditions to enter the research were selected as a sample and questionnaires were provided to them, and finally 350 were selected as a sample. The measurement tools in this research were questionnaires of women's sexual performance (1997), women's sexual self-esteem (1996), Spielberger's anxiety (1970) and Halbert's sexual entitlement (1992). Data analysis was done using Pearson's correlation coefficient and structural equation modeling with AMOS software.

Results: The results of the fit of the proposed model indicated a good fit of the model with the data, and the standard coefficients of the paths of the proposed model showed that the highest coefficient is assigned to the path of sexual self-expression and sexual self-esteem, and the lowest coefficient is assigned to state anxiety and sexual performance. Also, the bootstrap results for the indirect path of the proposed model showed that sexual self-expression through trait anxiety has an indirect effect on women's sexual performance, and sexual self-expression through sexual self-esteem has an indirect effect on women's sexual performance. **Conclusion:** It is suggested to pay more attention to sexual self-expression and sexual self-esteem in couples therapy and sex therapy centers to help women with sexual dysfunction.

Keywords: State-trait anxiety, sexual self-expression, sexual self-esteem, sexual performance.

Introduction

Sexual desire is a phenomenon whose importance is realistic and it is impossible to ignore it, because like other instinctive human desires, it exists from the beginning of a child's birth and changes and flourishes according to his growth. In other words, it can be said that sexuality is a broad and important dimension of human personality that remains as an inseparable structure of his existential composition (Drogatis et al., 2021). Recognizing and studying sexual desires and performance is one of the most important issues of public health and especially mental health. Sexual performance is a part of human life and behavior and is so intertwined with a person's personality that it seems impossible to talk about it as an independent phenomenon (Milani et al., 2021). Sexual performance is interpreted as performing sexual intercourse or other sexual activities or the ability to perform them, and it is the physical manifestation of people's emotional need for acceptance, approval and coexistence. Therefore, sexual performance is considered a part of a woman's sexual health, and in this regard, the World Health Organization considers sexual health to be a kind of harmony of the mind, emotions and body of a person, which leads to the completion of personality, communication and love (Sabri et al., 2022). Therefore, any disorder that leads to inconsistency and, as a result, lack of satisfaction with sex, can lead to sexual dysfunction (Ghasemi et al., 2022). According to the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, sexual dysfunction is defined as a disturbance in the cycle of sexual response or pain during intercourse (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Also, the 10th revision of the International Classification of Diseases considers sexual dysfunction to be the inability of a person to participate in desired sex. It believes that these disorders may be a sign of problems of biological origin, intrapsychic or interpersonal conflicts, or a combination of these factors, and have negative psychological, physical, social, and economic consequences. Among these consequences, we can mention the negative effect on the body and physical health, depression and low productivity in married life, and severe negative consequences for children (Trento et al., 2021). In fact, there are antecedents that affect women's sexual performance, and examining these antecedents will lead to greater knowledge of healthy sexual performance.

One of these antecedents and factors affecting women's sexual satisfaction is sexual self-expression. So that many couples do not know anything about verbal and non-verbal communication in the sexual field, and this helplessness and silence leads to the separation of couples from each other. Sexual therapists and behaviorists found that discussing people's sexual preferences is beneficial to relationships and also increases sexual satisfaction and reduces sexual performance disorders (Khodayari & Ahadi, 2021). Sexual self-expression, which consists of: The ability to distinguish between feelings, beliefs and thoughts and defend one's rights in a logical manner, including three dimensions: The ability to express feelings, the ability to openly express pleasant and unpleasant thoughts and beliefs, and to make a firm and clear decision, the ability to be persistent in asserting one's rights and not allowing others to hurt or take advantage of one's weakness (Gianoton et al., 2021).

Sexual dysfunction is associated with disorders in emotions, personality, social, emotional and friendship functioning, and dissatisfaction with sexual functioning leads to social problems such as crimes, sexual assaults, mental disorders and divorce (Barchili et al., 2022). As much as women's marital relationships improve, interpersonal relationships with their spouses and all family members, social relationships, and overall mental, physical, and social health will be of higher quality (Gava et al., 2019). Therefore, discovering and solving issues affecting sexual performance helps to develop and improve the quality of life together and plays an important role in increasing sexual satisfaction and preventing contradictions in the family. Desirable sexual performance in a way that can satisfy the parties has a very important and fundamental role in the success and stability of the family center (Ahmadi et al., 2022). The present study aims to answer this question: Does the structural model of postmenopausal women's sexual performance based on sexual self-expression with the mediating role of state-trait anxiety and sexual self-esteem have a favorable fit?

Method

The research method was descriptive and correlation type using structural equations. The statistical population in this research was made up of all postmenopausal women who referred to the health and treatment centers of Rudsar city between August 2022 and the end of September 2022. They were selected by lottery and then the women who visited these centers during the mentioned period of time to receive services and met the conditions to enter the research were selected as a sample and questionnaires were provided to them, and finally 350 were selected as a sample. were chosen. The measurement tools in this research were questionnaires of women's sexual performance (1997), women's sexual self-esteem (1996), Spielberger's anxiety (1970) and Halbert's sexual entitlement (1992). Data analysis was done using Pearson's correlation coefficient and structural equation modeling with AMOS software.

Results

According to the results of the correlation matrix, there was a negative and significant relationship between sexual self-expression and state and trait anxiety, and a positive and significant relationship with sexual self-esteem and sexual performance of postmenopausal women. Also, there was a negative and significant relationship between state and trait anxiety and sexual performance, and a positive and significant relationship between sexual self-esteem and sexual performance.

The estimation of the model in the current research was done in two steps: 1) checking the suitability of the proposed research model, which includes the fit indices, and 2) estimating the parameters (standard path coefficients) of the proposed research model.

1- The suitability of the proposed research model: the results of the suitability of the proposed model and the fit indices indicate a good fit of the proposed model with the data and the proposed model has a good suitability. Therefore, according to the estimated indicators, the results show that the relationship between the structural model of sexual performance of postmenopausal women based on sexual self-expression with the mediation of state-attribute anxiety and sexual self-esteem is suitable.

The highest coefficient (0.500) is assigned to the path of sexual self-expression and sexual self-esteem, and the lowest coefficient (0.077) is to the anxiety of sexual performance.

The bootstrap method was used to determine the significance of the mediation relationship and the indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable through mediation.

The lower limit of the confidence interval for state anxiety as a mediating variable between sexual self-expression and sexual performance of postmenopausal women is (-0.0341) and its upper limit is (0.0461). The confidence level for this confidence interval is 95% and the bootstrap resampling number is 5000. Considering that zero is within this confidence interval, the indirect relationship between the variables is not meaningful. Also, the lower limit of the confidence interval for trait anxiety as a mediating variable between sexual self-expression and sexual performance of postmenopausal women is (0.0218) and its upper limit is (0.0612). The confidence level for this confidence interval is 95% and the bootstrap resampling number is 5000. Considering that zero is outside this confidence interval, the indirect relationship between the variables is significant. In addition, the results of the bootstrap test also showed that this indirect relationship is significant at the $P < 0.05$ level. Therefore, sexual self-expression has an indirect effect on the sexual performance of postmenopausal women only through trait anxiety.

Based on the findings of this table, the lower limit of the confidence interval for sexual self-esteem as a mediating variable between sexual self-expression and sexual performance of postmenopausal women is (0.1022) and its upper limit is (0.2325). The confidence level for this confidence interval is 95% and the bootstrap resampling number is 5000. Considering that zero is outside this confidence interval, the indirect relationship between the variables is significant. In addition, the results of the bootstrap test also showed that this indirect relationship is significant at the $P < 0.001$ level. Therefore, sexual self-expression through sexual self-esteem has an indirect effect on the sexual performance of women under the age of menopause.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of determining the fit of the sexual performance model of postmenopausal women based on sexual self-expression with the mediating role of state-trait anxiety and sexual self-esteem. The results showed that the proposed research model has a good fit and sexual self-expression has a significant relationship with sexual performance, trait-state anxiety and sexual self-esteem. In addition, the relationship between sexual self-expression and sexual performance is significant through the mediation of trait anxiety and sexual self-esteem.

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