

BEHAVIOR

Understanding the Personality and Behavioral Mechanisms Defining Hypersexuality in Men Who Have Sex With Men



Michael H. Miner, PhD,¹ Rebecca Swinburne Romine, PhD,² Nancy Raymond, MD,^{1,3} Erick Janssen, PhD,⁴ Angus MacDonald III, PhD,⁵ and Eli Coleman, PhD¹

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Hypersexuality has been conceptualized as sexual addiction, compulsivity, and impulsivity, among others, in the absence of strong empirical data in support of any specific conceptualization.

Aim: To investigate personality factors and behavioral mechanisms that are relevant to hypersexuality in men who have sex with men.

Methods: A sample of 242 men who have sex with men was recruited from various sites in a moderate-size mid-western city. Participants were assigned to a hypersexuality group or a control group using an interview similar to the Structured Clinical Interview for the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition*. Self-report inventories were administered that measured the broad personality constructs of positive emotionality, negative emotionality, and constraint and more narrow constructs related to sexual behavioral control, behavioral activation, behavioral inhibition, sexual excitation, sexual inhibition, impulsivity, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and sexual behavior.

Main Outcome Measures: Hierarchical logistic regression was used to determine the relation between these personality and behavioral variables and group membership.

Results: A hierarchical logistic regression controlling for age showed a significant positive relation between hypersexuality and negative emotionality and a negative relation with constraint. None of the behavioral mechanism variables entered this equation. However, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis predicting sexual behavioral control indicated that lack of such control was positively related to sexual excitation and sexual inhibition owing to the threat of performance failure and negatively related to sexual inhibition owing to the threat of performance consequences and general behavioral inhibition.

Conclusion: Hypersexuality was found to be related to two broad personality factors that are characterized by emotional reactivity, risk taking, and impulsivity. The associated lack of sexual behavior control is influenced by sexual excitatory and inhibitory mechanisms, but not by general behavioral activation and inhibitory mechanisms.

J Sex Med 2016;13:1323–1331. Copyright © 2016, International Society for Sexual Medicine. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Key Words: Hypersexuality; Sexual Compulsivity; Sexual Addiction; Impulsivity

Received April 19, 2016. Accepted June 30, 2016.

¹Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA;

²The Schiefelbusch Institute for Life Span Studies, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, USA;

³Department of Psychiatry, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA;

⁴Institute for Family and Sexuality Studies, Department of Neurosciences, KU Leuven, Leuven, Flanders, Belgium;

⁵Department of Psychology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA

Copyright © 2016, International Society for Sexual Medicine. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jsxm.2016.06.015>

INTRODUCTION

High-frequency and out-of-control sexual behavior, referred to in this article as *hypersexuality*, has been conceptualized as sexual addiction,¹ sexual compulsivity,² compulsive sexual behavior,^{3,4} sexual impulsivity,⁵ impulsive and compulsive sexual behavior,⁶ paraphilia-related disorders,⁷ and out-of-control sexual behavior.⁸ In the absence of strong empirical data in support of any specific conceptualization,⁹ a more general diagnosis of hypersexual disorder was proposed for the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)*.⁹ Although the diagnosis was rejected, in part owing to the relative lack of scientific support for the proposed criteria, the continued need for basic and clinical research on this topic was recognized.¹⁰

The present study aimed to improve our understanding of hypersexuality by examining whether the underlying phenomena are best explained by more general mechanisms, such as those relevant to reward processing and reward sensitivity,¹⁰ or by processes that are more specific to sexuality. Individual differences in reward processing and sensitivity have been studied using, for example, the personality theory by Tellegen,¹¹ which distinguishes among the three higher-order personality factors of positive emotionality (PEM), negative emotionality (NEM), and constraint (CON). Skegg et al¹² found that hypersexuality was related to higher scores on the Stress Reaction and lower scores on the Control subscale of NEM and CON, respectively on the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire.¹³ In addition, hypersexuality has been found to be related to the “Big Five”¹⁴ factors of neuroticism, which is indicative of deficits in coping skills for stress and vulnerability to depression and anxiety, and (negatively) to agreeableness, which is indicative of individuals with a pattern of distrust, rudeness, manipulation, lack of cooperation, and lack of concern for others.¹⁵ Further, neuroticism was found to be highly correlated with scores on the Sexual Compulsivity Scale¹⁶ and to mediate the relation between shame and hypersexuality.¹⁷ Studies relating Tellegen’s personality structure to the five-factor model indicate that negative emotionality is a higher-order factor that encompasses neuroticism and the inverse of agreeableness.¹⁸ Thus, these findings are consistent and show that hypersexuality is positively associated with NEM.

When it comes to mechanisms more directly relevant to sexuality, the dual control model of sexual response provides a theoretical framework that has proved valuable to our understanding of various aspects of sexual response and behavior, including sexual desire, sexual arousal, and sexual risk taking.¹⁹ The model describes sexual arousal and related processes as controlled by two underlying factors, which reflect distinct neurophysiologic systems, namely sexual inhibition and sexual excitation.²⁰ Individual differences in the propensity for sexual excitation reflect the tendency to experience motivation to engage in sexual behavior and heightened levels of sexual arousal when exposed to sexual cues. The sexual inhibitory system is believed to suppress sexual response and behavior and to do this through two processes: inhibition owing to threat of sexual performance failure and inhibition owing to threat of outcomes of sexual behavior.²¹ Consistent with the dual control model, some initial support has been found for the idea that hypersexuality is more likely in individuals with a high propensity for sexual excitation and a low propensity for sexual inhibition.²² Deficits in inhibition could indicate a more impulsive disorder, although high sexual arousability would be more consistent with the notion that hypersexuality might reflect the high end of a sexual motivation or responsiveness dimension.^{23,24}

Recently, two studies compared the relevance and contribution of the dual control model with those of Gray’s²⁵ theory of behavioral activation and inhibition to the prediction of hypersexuality.^{26,27} Gray’s²⁵ behavioral activation system, a

neurophysiologic system sensitive to signals of reward, non-punishment, and escape from punishment, is responsible for the activation of goal-directed behavior and the experience of positive feelings when a person is exposed to cues of impending reward.²⁸ In contrast, Gray’s²⁵ behavioral inhibition system, which is sensitive to signals of punishment, non-reward, and novelty, is considered responsible for the experience of negative affect, such as anxiety, fear, and frustration, in the presence of cues that a desired behavior might lead to punishment or lack of anticipated reward.

Van Lankveld et al²⁷ found significant contributions for the Fear and Anxiety subscales of the Behavioral Inhibition Scale (BIS) in the prediction of the number of sexual partners. However, the addition of the Sexual Inhibition Scale (SIS) and Sexual Excitation Scale (SES) improved the prediction, with inhibition owing to the threat of outcomes of sexual behavior (SIS2) most prominent. Rettenberger et al²⁶ found significant (although small in magnitude) associations between measurements of behavioral activation and behavioral inhibition and measurements of sexual excitation and sexual inhibition. Further, they found that sexual excitation and sexual inhibition were more relevant in explaining hypersexual disorder than were the more general measurements.²⁶ In other words, although hypersexuality is associated with a lack of general behavioral inhibition, the more specifically sexual traits of sexual excitation and inhibition might be more important to our understanding of hypersexuality.

The present study builds on the existing literature and explores the associations between hypersexuality and behavioral activation and inhibition and sexual excitation and inhibition and compares their role with that of individual differences in NEM and PEM.¹² Consistent with work by Parsons et al,²⁹ hypersexuality might be considered to be related, not specifically to the quantity or frequency of various sexual behaviors, but to the affective response to and effects of such behaviors. Relevant to this observation, Bancroft et al³⁰ and Parsons et al³¹ found a connection between negative affect (eg, depression, stress) and hypersexuality. This connection is consistent with the broad personality factors discussed earlier, which relate to coping strategies and sensitivity to negative affect.

The present study also explores the dimensions of impulsivity, including possible involvement of attention-deficit/hyperactive disorder (ADHD), which has been implicated as a causal factor of hypersexuality in clinical observations.³² It has been argued that hypersexuality can best be conceptualized as an impulse control disorder.⁵ Our research indicates that individuals with hypersexuality differ from controls in general measurements of impulsivity, including the Barratt Impulsivity Scale, used in this study, and a go–no-go procedure.^{33,34} Further, the negative association between the CON factor of the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire¹² and hypersexuality supports this theory regarding impulsivity, because the CON factor is conceptualized as a personality factor characterized by planfulness, lack of risk taking, and high behavioral control.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4268975>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4268975>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)