

**ORIGINAL RESEARCH**

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**Erectile Dysfunction, Boredom, and Hypersexuality among Coupled Men from Two European Countries**Verena Klein, Dipl.-Psych.,\* Tanja Jurin, PhD,<sup>†,‡</sup> Peer Briken, MD,\* and Aleksandar Štulhofer, PhD<sup>†</sup>

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**ABSTRACT**

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**Introduction:** Much of the research on the association between erectile dysfunction (ED) and possible clinical relevant hypersexuality up to now has been only descriptive in nature.

**Aim:** The present study aimed to explore the relationships among hypersexuality, ED, and sexual boredom in a sample of coupled community men.

**Methods:** An Internet-based survey was conducted in two European countries. The sample included 911 Croatian and 210 German coupled men. The survey comprised the Hypersexual Disorder Screening Inventory, the International Index of Erectile Function and the Sexual Boredom Scale. Poisson regression analysis was used to examine how ED, solitary sexual activities and sexual boredom were associated with hypersexuality.

**Results:** Among Croatian and German men, hypersexuality was significantly correlated with proneness to sexual boredom and more problems with erectile function.

**Conclusions:** In some men, hypersexual behavior may serve as a coping mechanism for sexual fantasy poverty-associated boredom. In addition, ED within an intimate relationship can accompany this simultaneously. **Klein V, Jurin T, Briken P, and Štulhofer A. Erectile dysfunction, boredom, and hypersexuality among coupled men from two European countries. J Sex Med 2015;12:2160–2167.**

**Key Words.** Erectile Dysfunction; Hypersexuality; Sexual Boredom

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**Introduction**

Sexual dysfunctions are a common clinical problem worldwide [1]. In general, sexual dysfunction is defined as an impairment of sexual function accompanied by psychological distress. The prevalence of sexual dysfunction in men varies between 10% and 52% [2]. In particular, erectile dysfunction (ED) is common in community samples. Prevalence rates range between 13% and 21% among 40- to 80-year-old men reporting occasional problems with ED [3]. In a sample of younger men, 5.8% of men reported ED lasting for at least 1 month [4]. A body of research pointed to the associations between ED, man's quality of life [5] and female partner's sexual satisfaction [6].

Much uncertainty still exists about ED in hypersexual individuals, because empirical studies on the association between ED and hypersexuality are lacking. In research and clinical practice, hypersexuality is used as an umbrella term to describe excessive sexual behavioral patterns used e.g., to cope with stress or unpleasant mood states leading to significant negative consequences. Individuals seeking help for hypersexual behavior also report unsuccessful attempts to reduce or eliminate problematic sexual activities [7]. Nevertheless, the concept of hypersexuality is still discussed controversially and critically [8,9]. Although the American Psychiatric Association (APA) rejected a proposal to include hypersexual disorder in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) [10], there is a growing body of

research focusing on the phenomenon. For example, the DSM-5 field trial for hypersexual disorder found evidence supporting the reliability and validity of the proposed criteria and examined several behavioral specifiers for hypersexuality such as pornography use, masturbation frequency, cybersex, telephone sex, and sexual encounters with consenting adults [11]. Furthermore, research has shown associations between hypersexuality and various psychological or behavioral indicators such as sexual risk behavior [12], depression [13], paraphilic interests [14], and emotional states like shame [15]. While an examination of the relationship between ED and hypersexuality may appear somewhat surprising at first glance, clinicians recognize the role of ED as a feature of hypersexuality [16]. Indeed, ED (accompanied by a low desire for partnered sexual activity) is a common observation in the clinical practice with patients seeking help for excessive sexual behavior, whereas these men seem to frequently use pornography and masturbate. However, much of the research on the association between ED and hypersexuality up to now has been descriptive in nature. Briken et al. [16]. reported a prevalence rate of 23% for sexual dysfunction in a sample of German hypersexual men. Similarly, in a sample of 23 men who exhibit compulsive sexual behavior 23% (n = 5) reported a lifetime prevalence of ED. In addition, ED was the most common sexual dysfunction in the sample compared with premature ejaculation (9%) and inhibited orgasm (5%) [17]. In the study of Voon and colleagues [18], at least some participants with compulsive sexual behavior reported erectile problems and reduced libido (11 out of 19 participants). Nevertheless, no information on the operationalization of ED was given beside that ED occurred in the context of sexual relationships with a woman whereas not while viewing pornography. A very recent published chart review analyzed data of 115 hypersexual men by categorizing participants to different clinical subtypes (paraphilic hypersexuality, avoidant masturbation, chronic adultery, sexual guilt, designated patient, and better accounted for a symptom of another condition). In contrast, concerning sexual dysfunctions ED was the least prevalent comorbidity among all clinical subtypes, whereas premature ejaculation was commonly reported in the cluster of chronic adulterers and delayed ejaculation was frequently reported by the subtype avoidant masturbators [19]. A further study dealt theoretically with the association between hypersexuality and sexual dysfunction [20].

In the context of hypersexuality, relationship issues seem to have a prominent role. Literature provides evidence for intimacy problems and relationship instability among hypersexual men [7,21]. For instance, significant associations have been found between hypersexual behavior and impairment within intimate relationships [22]. Gold and Heffner [23] pointed out that a lack of interest in partnered sex represents an emotional component of sexual compulsive behavior. This may be high boredom proneness among hypersexual men. Evidence suggests associations between boredom and general impulsivity [24] and sexual preoccupation [25]. For example, in a sample of men who have sex with men, general boredom proneness was related to problematic online sex use. Indeed, some hypersexual men tend to use online sexual activity to alleviate boredom [26]. Thus, it is not surprising that in the “Repetitively engaging in sexual fantasies, urges or behaviors in response to dysphoric mood states” criterion of the proposed hypersexual disorder, boredom was included as mood state. Using sex to avoid boredom and engaging in sexual behavior as a way of coping with dysphoric mood states seem to be different mechanisms, but both seem to be frequent characteristics of hypersexuality. Nevertheless, it is also possible that both mechanisms might be separate facets of the same problem. Furthermore, high levels of (sexual) boredom seem to be accompanied with solitary sexual activity (frequent pornography use and masturbation) and low relationship intimacy [27,28]. Moreover, sexual boredom has been considered as correlate of underlying problems in interpersonal relationships [25].

### Aims

The present study aimed to explore the relationships among hypersexuality, ED, and sexual boredom. We hypothesized that proneness to sexual boredom and ED would predict hypersexuality in a nonclinical sample of coupled men. In addition, the present research explored if the interaction between solitary sexual activity and sexual boredom predicts hypersexuality, because solitary sexuality could be used to cope boredom associated with relationship difficulties. Furthermore, high frequencies of solitary sexual activity accompanied by sexual boredom within the sexual relationship might have an impact on hypersexual behavioral pattern. In addition, it was hypothesized that ED within an intimate relationship could be related to higher rates of solitary sexual activity

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