

The Impact of Disrupted Childhood Attachment on the Presentation of Psychogenic Erectile Dysfunction: An Exploratory Study

Ravi P. Rajkumar, MD

Department of Psychiatry, Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER), Pondicherry, India

DOI: 10.1111/jsm.12815

ABSTRACT

Introduction. Erectile dysfunction (ED) is a common form of male sexual dysfunction. Psychological factors play an important role in the onset and persistence of ED. Disturbed childhood attachment is a biologically and psychologically plausible predisposing factor for psychogenic ED that has not been systematically studied to date.

Aim. This study aims to assess the frequency and correlates of events associated with parental separation (actual or threatened) and loss in men with a diagnosis of psychogenic ED.

Methods. The case records of 46 men who presented to a clinic for psychosexual disorders in the period 2012–2013, and were diagnosed with psychogenic ED using a semi-structured interview schedule, were reviewed.

Results. Events causing actual or potential disturbed attachment (DA) in childhood were reported by 20 of 46 men with psychogenic ED (43.5%). This group of men (DA+) had an earlier age at onset of ED (median 25 vs. 29 years, $P = 0.005$), were more likely to be single (15/20 vs. 5/26 ($\chi^2 = 14.307$, $P < 0.001$), reported sexual performance anxiety more frequently (12/20 vs. 7/26, $\chi^2 = 5.101$, $P = 0.024$), and were more likely to develop ED in the absence of a proximate stressor (4/20 vs. 15/26, $P = 0.015$). They also showed a trend toward being more likely to report guilt over early sexual experiences as a contributory factor (5/20 vs. 1/26, $P = 0.072$). In a binary logistic regression analysis, the presence of performance anxiety ($B = 2.01$, $P = 0.023$) and marital status ($B = -2.85$, $P = 0.001$) were significantly associated with events causing DA.

Conclusions. Disrupted childhood attachment was common in our sample of men with ED and is associated with significant differences in their clinical profile, particularly an earlier onset, a lower likelihood of being married, and higher rates of performance anxiety. This study highlights the need to consider early childhood experiences, particularly using an attachment theory framework, when examining the origins of psychogenic erectile dysfunction.

Rajkumar RP. The impact of disrupted childhood attachment on the presentation of psychogenic erectile dysfunction: An exploratory study. J Sex Med 2015;12:798–803.

Key Words. Erectile Dysfunction; Attachment Theory; Anxiety

Introduction

Erectile dysfunction (ED), also known as erectile impotence, is a common form of male sexual dysfunction. ED affects up to 5% of men in community-based studies [1]. The International Society for Impotence Research has classified ED into organic and psychogenic types, with psychogenic ED being further divided into generalized

and situational subtypes [2]. Though the boundary between organic and psychogenic ED is disputed, and subject to revision in the light of emerging research [3], psychological factors certainly play an important role in the genesis or maintenance of ED [4]. Moreover, psychosocial therapies have robust efficacy in patients with ED, and combination therapy often outperforms monotherapy with agents such as sildenafil [5].

Early formulations of the psychological origins of ED focused on psychodynamic theories, such as Oedipal conflict [4,6]. These were later replaced by behavioral models based on the work of Masters and Johnson [6]. It is now recognized that a wide variety of psychological factors can trigger or aggravate ED. These include anxiety [7], depression [8], interpersonal conflict [9], guilt related to sexuality, body image disturbances, stressful life events, and partner-related problems [4].

Another psychological factor of potential relevance is the impact of early childhood experience, especially the disruption of attachment bonds, on sexual functioning. Though psychodynamic models emphasized these factors, they are often passed over in behavioral or “psychosomatic” formulations that tend to emphasize recent events and current circumstances. In humans, sexual behavior may be shaped and influenced by the attachment system [10], and attachment behavior strongly influences adult romantic relationships and sexuality [11]. Disturbed attachment (DA+) can significantly affect neurochemical and neuroendocrine functioning [12,13], and this may be related to some of the “organic” changes seen in men with ED [3]. Furthermore, DA is one of the key psychological factors underlying both anxiety [14] and depression [13,15], both of which are risk factors for ED.

For these reasons, we determined the frequency and correlates of disturbed childhood attachment in the case records of men presenting to our psychosexual disorders clinic with a primary complaint of ED.

Materials and Methods

The case records of 46 men with psychogenic ED presenting to the Marital and Psychosexual (MAPS) clinic of a tertiary care hospital in South India between 2012 and 2013 were reviewed. Patients in the MAPS clinic are evaluated by psychiatry residents using a semi-structured interview schedule. All diagnoses of psychogenic ED were confirmed by the author using the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition (ICD-10) clinical descriptions and diagnostic guidelines, following referrals to other specialty departments, such as urology or endocrinology, to rule out the presence of “organic” causes.

Questions on early life experiences were a part of the interview schedule and included screening questions on the following: parental loss in childhood (before the age of 10), parental divorce,

prolonged parental separation followed by reconciliation, parental marital disharmony with threats of separation, parental suicide, parental alcoholism or substance abuse, and parental physical or mental illness during childhood. If a patient answered “yes” to a screening question on the above, further details were collected. The inclusion of parental alcoholism in the interview schedule was based on the high rates of childhood adversity experienced in such homes [16].

This study was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the hospital’s Scientific Advisory Committee, which requires no informed consent for retrospective reviews of clinical data as long as patient confidentiality is maintained.

After reviewing the patients’ case records, they were divided into two groups: patients with ED and a history of disturbed attachment (DA+) and those without such a history (DA−). The two groups were compared on demographic and clinical variables, including psychiatric comorbidity. Statistical analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS; SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) version 20 and the WinPEpi program (WinPEpi version 11.0, copyright J. H. Abramson, October 20, 2010, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel). All tests were two tailed, and a significance level of $P < 0.05$ was considered significant.

As this was an exploratory study, there was no *a priori* hypothesis.

Results

A total of 46 case records of men with a diagnosis of psychogenic ED (ICD-10 code F52.2, failure of genital response) were reviewed. The mean age of the sample was 31.04 ± 6.03 years, with a range of 22–47 years. Twenty of these men were single, 24 were married, one was divorced, and one was a widower. Patients had a mean of 9.93 ± 4.18 years of education (range 0–18), and most were employed as laborers or farmers.

Of the entire sample, 20 men (43.5%) had a history of one of more adverse events that led to a disruption of attachment during childhood. These included parental alcoholism (13/20), parental marital discord with threats of separation (10/20), parental separation followed by reconciliation (2/20), natural death of a parent before the age of 10 years (1/20), parental divorce and remarriage (1/20), and suicide of a parent (1/20).

These 20 men (DA+) were compared with the remaining 26 men without a history of actual or

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4269618>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4269618>

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