

# Sexual addiction and Personality features

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## INTRODUCTION

Sexual addiction is a disorder characterized by an increasing loss of control over the practice of sexuality. It is associated to intense and instable emotional states, and the persistence of this behavior despite negative psychological, social, emotional, family or financial consequences (Carnes, 1991; Goodman, 1998; Kafka, 2013). There is currently a controversy concerning its definition or diagnostic criteria. However, its negative and often very destructive consequences lead practitioners and researchers to increasingly recognize its existence and its clinical reality.

## AIMS

Our research aimed to study the relationship between sexual addiction and personality features. The latter were jointly considered in both categorical and dimensional approaches.

## METHOD

### Participants and procedure

322 subjects recruited online through forums dedicated to exchanges on sexual activities. The sample is also composed of a few patients followed in addictology centers (CSAPA-37) for sexual addiction.

### Measures

Completion of questionnaires including socio-demographic data, assessment of sexual addiction (SAST-Fr), personality disorders (PDQ 4+) and personality dimensions (BFI-10-Fr).

### Statistical analysis

Data were analyzed with SPSS® version 25. Performance of descriptive, comparison and multiple linear regression analysis. Significance level for all analyses:  $p < .05$ .

## RESULTS

### Descriptive analysis

The sample is consisted of 58.39% (n= 188) of women and 41.61 % of men (n= 134). Their average age was 28.17 ( $\pm 10.40$ ). Concerning their family situation, 63.04% (n=203) of participants were single. In the sample, 22.05% (n= 71) had a sexual addiction. In this group, men represented 64.79% (n= 46) of the sex addict participants.

### Comparison of BFI-10-Fr's mean scores of subjects in groups with and without sexual addiction

The Student's t-test showed significant high level of Neuroticism ( $t = 2.46$  ;  $p = .01$ ), high level of Conscientiousness ( $t = 1.98$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and low level of Extraversion ( $t = 2.04$ ;  $p = .04$ ) in sexual addiction group compared to the non-addiction group..

### Multiple linear regression analysis

Multiple regression analysis highlighted Openness and Conscientiousness dimensions of the BFI-10-Fr and Schizoid, Narcissistic, Antisocial and Dependent personality disorders of the PDQ4+ as predictors of sexual addiction (Adjusted  $R^2 = .29$ ;  $F(7,314) = 19.80$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The high rate (22.05%) of participants who exhibit sexual addiction can be explained by the fact that our study targeted specifically people who reported difficulties in controlling their sexual behavior.

The current study provides significant support that personality factors may relate to sexual addiction.

-Firstly, it confirmed previous evidence for higher score at Neuroticism dimension in sexual addiction. This result suggested that individuals with this addiction might have a stronger tendency towards negative emotions. Engaging in sexual addiction behaviors might help them regulate these negative affects (Carvalho et al., 2015).

-Secondly, It outlined some characteristics of personality factors (low Extraversion and high Conscientiousness) which, to the best of our knowledge, had not clearly been highlighted in sexual addiction. The low level of Extraversion found in subject with sexual addiction can be related to the type of sexual activity and the kind of sexual desire in which they engaged (solitary sexual desire and online sexual activities than dyadic one). Furthermore, the high level of Conscientiousness might maladaptively indicate a strong tendency to compulsive behaviors, feelings of loneliness and guilt, or even a tendency to blame oneself (Luminet, 2008; Trull & Widiger, 2013). These are clinical characteristics also described in people exhibiting sexual addiction (McBride et al., 2008).

Finally, our results confirmed that some personality disorders might lie along the same latent traits with dimensions of personality, for which they represent a maladaptive variant (Widiger & Costa, 1994). This maladaptation might play a fundamental role in individuals reporting sexual addiction.

In conclusion, the current study seems to be consistent with the literature on the issue of sexual addiction. It opens clinical and research perspectives. At the clinical level, it substantiated the necessity for practitioners to include personality factors' assessment in the clinical assessment and treatment planning of sexual addiction. From a research perspective, our future studies should distinguish the type of sexual activities in which individuals engaged and explore motivational and socio-cultural factors related to this addiction.

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