An Exploration of the Relationships Between Body Image, Hair Removal, Pornography, and Women’s Sexual Self-Efficacy

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Purpose

- To explore the relationships between genital body image, pubic hair removal, exposure to pornography, sexual self-efficacy, and demographic variables.
- Results to aid in healthcare provider’s assessment and management of patients with problems in the sexual health construct related to low genital body image.

Variables:

- Genital Body Image
- Pubic Hair Removal
- Pornography
- Sexual Self-Efficacy

Review of Literature

- Sexual health problems are common in women and have the potential to affect all aspects of their lives. 
- Causes of sexual health issues can be complex and multifaceted, therefore a holistic perspective where all potential factors are considered is warranted.
- Genital body image has implications for women’s sexual function and sexual health but research is lacking.
- As women become more aware of what others look like, the question of what is “normal” is asked.
- This negates the reality that there are many different types of female genitalia that could be considered “normal.”
- Women believe “improving” their genitals through hair removal would somehow improve the way they feel or are seen.
- Current availability of pornography through the internet and other media may impact the way women feel about their genital body image, as they compare themselves to a perceived “norm.”
- Pubic hair removal trends may also be related to exposure to pornography as women become aware of perceived expectations about removal and what is “sexy.”
- Sexual self-efficacy states that the confidence a woman feels about her ability to perform sexually impacts her sexual decisions.
- Theory supports relationships between all four variables, but research is lacking.

Framework

- Sexual dysfunction in women is currently identified using a medical model, but does not address socio-cultural or psychological issues.
- A “New View” of women’s health allows women to identify their own dysfunction.
- This provides theoretical justification as well as establishes that societal influences may have an impact on sexual health.

Methods

- The proposed research is descriptive/exploratory.
- The design is cross-sectional survey methodology.
- Email invitations will be used as recruitment tool. SurveyMonkey.com will be the location of the online survey.
- After survey completion, contact information will be presented on local resources for counseling should women feel they are in need of such services.
- Genital Body Image: The Genital Self Image Scale-GSIS-20, a 20 item self-report measure, will be used.
- Pubic hair removal practices: An 18 question scale used developed by Tiggemann and Hodgson (2008) will be used.
- Pornography: A scale used by Morrison, et al. (2011) that includes four questions measured on an interval scale for frequency of viewing pornography.
- Sexual Health: The Sexual Self Efficacy Scale developed by Bailes et al. (1989) is a 37 question survey. Higher scores indicate higher confidence related to self-efficacy.
- Statistical Analysis: Will include Pearson’s Correlation, Partial Correlations and Multiple Regression

Sample

- An online participant recruitment system will be utilized to recruit women ages 18 and older for participation in the online survey.
- The maximum number of subjects to be recruited for this study is 1500 with a minimum number of subjects of 90, all from the WMU College of Health and Human Services.

References