FEELINGS OF SPIRITUAL TRANSCENDENCE AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

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Objectives: Research shows that penile-vaginal intercourse (PVI) is related to feelings of spiritual transcendence, especially feelings of connectedness with persons beyond their lifetime and a sense of belonging to a flow of human life throughout time (Connectedness). The present study tests if Connectedness is directly related to sexual desire and frequency of various sexual behaviours. The possible explanatory role of several variables is explored.

Methods: Seventy seven unmarried Portuguese (44 women) completed the Connectedness subscale of the Spiritual Transcendence Scale, the Desire dimension of the Female Sexual Function Index (women only) and the Desire dimension of the International Index of Erectile Function (men only). They also reported how many days in the past month they desired to have PVI, partnered noncoital sex (in the absence of same day PVI) and masturbation, as well as the number of days in the past month they actually had PVI, orgasm from PVI (men only), orgasm from PVI without clitoral masturbation (women only), orgasm from PVI with clitoral masturbation (women only), partnered noncoital sex (in the absence of same day PVI), orgasm from partnered noncoital sex, masturbation and masturbation orgasm. The hypothesized explanatory variables included time and frequency domains of resting heart rate variability, resting heart rate, resting blood pressure, interoception (heartbeat perception), tactile sensitivity, waist circumference, Creative Self-Forgetfulness (subscale of the Cloninger’s Self-Transcendence scale; an index of absorption and feelings of unity with nature or the Universe), alexithymia (Toronto Alexithymia Scale; TAS-20), immature defence mechanisms (Defense Style Questionnaire; DSQ-40), depression (Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale), subjective sleep quality (Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index), Openness to Experience (NEO-FFI-20), social desirability (Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale), and degree of adherence to principles and practices of institutional religions on a scale from 0 (non-religious) to 5 (very adherent).

Preliminary results: Connectedness correlated directly with occurrence of PVI in men, and with frequency of noncoital partnered sex and noncoital partnered sex orgasm in women. Surprisingly, degree of adherence to the Catholic religion was the only explanatory variable.

Discussion: The results confirm that Connectedness facilitates sexual interactions; the opposite causal direction is also plausible.