

Sex life and self-esteem in adults with haemophilia

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INTRODUCTION

Although this is a very important aspect of life for every person, including persons with haemophilia, sexuality in this population is rarely investigated. The nature of haemophilia, especially its more severe forms, can definitely have an impact on people's sex lives and there is a need to examine the characteristics of sexuality among persons with haemophilia. In this paper, we attempted to examine the characteristics of the sexual lives of persons with haemophilia in relation to disease severity, level of education, monthly income, followed by the level of their self-esteem.

RESULTS

The severity of haemophilia significantly reduces the frequency of sexual intercourse ($r=-0,263$; $p<0,01$). Respondents with higher monthly incomes are more likely to have sexual intercourse ($r=-0,214$; $p<0,05$) and a permanent sexual partner ($t=4,960$; $p<0,001$), but at the same time there is no significant correlation between levels of income and sexual satisfaction in general ($t=1,836$; $p>0,05$). Levels of education did not show any significant association with any of the sexual life variables.

Self-esteem is positively correlated with the frequency of sexual intercourse ($r=-0,260$; $p<0,01$) and sexual satisfaction in general ($t=4,374$; $p<0,001$), but is not connected to whether respondents have a permanent sexual partner or not ($t=1,565$; $p>0,05$).

If we use all the variables of sexuality as a determinant of self-esteem in the regression analysis, then the sex life satisfaction variable is shown as the most significant predictor.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Severity of the illness and economic stability, in contrast to levels of education, are linked with the sexual activity of persons with haemophilia. At the same time, the frequency of sexual intercourse is positively correlated with self-esteem, but the most important determinant of self-esteem stems from the quality of sexual life, that is the compatibility between characteristics of sexual life and their own desires.

METHODS

An empirical survey among adults with haemophilia was conducted in Croatia (N=135). Characteristics of their sex life were measured using 3 questions (Are they satisfied with their sex lives; Whether they have a permanent sexual partner; How often they have sexual intercourse). The level of self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (ROSENBERG M. 1965. Society and the adolescent self-image. Princeton University Press, Princeton).

Table 1: Clinical and demographic characteristics

| Type of hemophilia | N | % |
|---------------------|-----|-------|
| Hemophilia A | 110 | 81,48 |
| Hemophilia B | 24 | 17,78 |
| Level of hemophilia | | |
| Severe | 55 | 40,74 |
| Moderate | 21 | 15,56 |
| Mild | 30 | 22,22 |
| Unknown | 29 | 21,48 |
| Inhibitors | | |
| Yes | 15 | 11,11 |
| No | 67 | 49,63 |
| Unknown | 53 | 39,26 |
| Age | | |
| ≤ 30 years | 43 | 31,85 |
| 31-40 years | 35 | 25,93 |
| 41-50 years | 24 | 17,78 |
| ≥ 51 years | 31 | 22,96 |
| Unknown | 2 | 1,48 |

Table 2: Sex life in relation to monthly income and level of education

| | Monthly income | Level of education |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Permanent sexual partner | Yes 4,64 | 5 |
| | No 2,80 | 4,67 |
| | ($t=4,960$; $p<0,001$) | ($t=1,229$; $p>0,05$) |
| Satisfaction with sex life | Yes 4,28 | 4,99 |
| | No 3,56 | 4,78 |
| | ($t=1,836$; $p>0,05$) | ($t=0,765$; $p>0,05$) |
| Frequency of sexual intercourse | Range 1 - 5 | ($r=-0,214$; $p<0,05$) |
| | | ($r=-0,036$; $p>0,05$) |

Figure 1: Self-esteem in relation to frequency of sexual intercourse ($r=-0,260$; $p<0,01$)

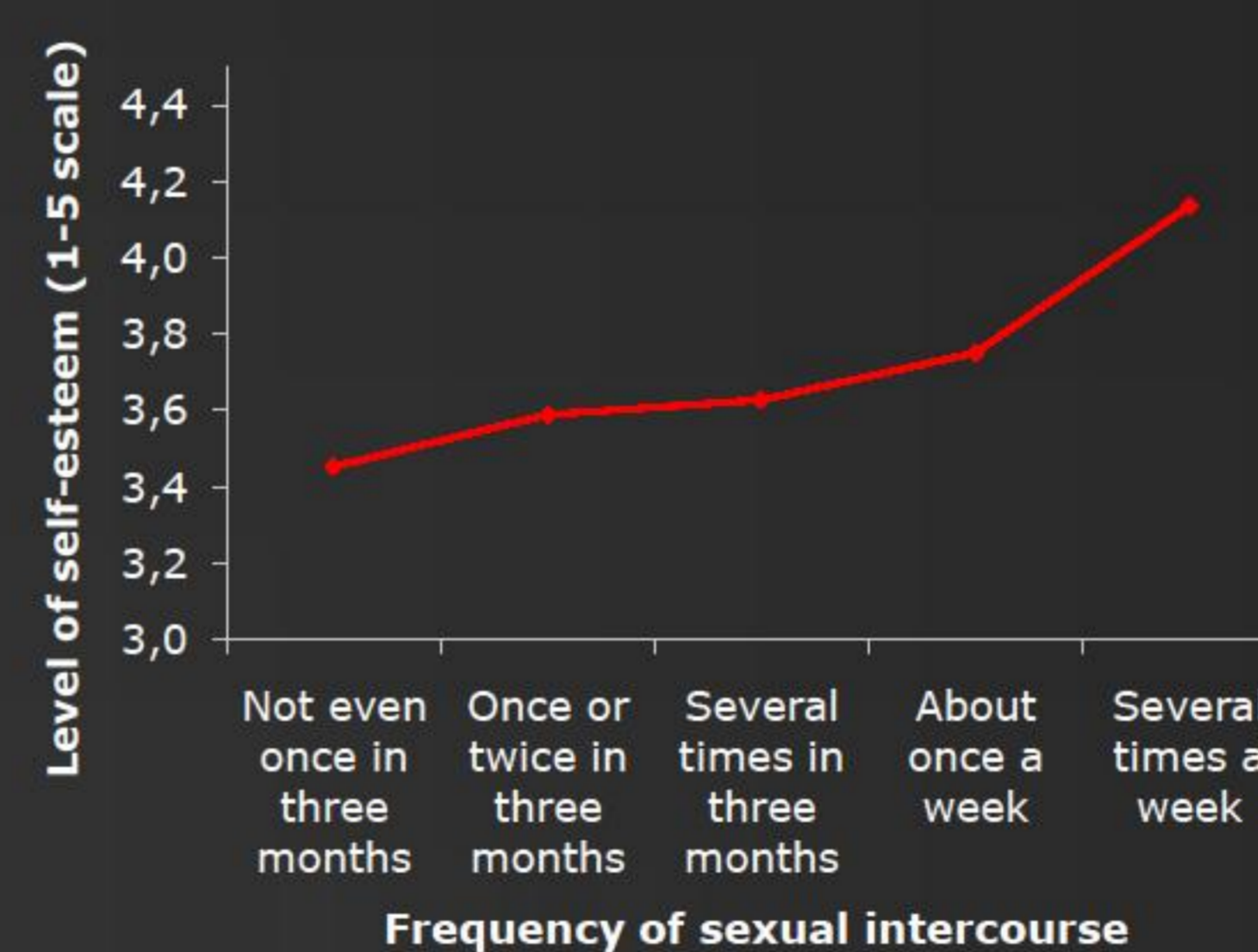


Figure 2: Self-esteem in relation to the existence of permanent sexual partner and sexual satisfaction in general

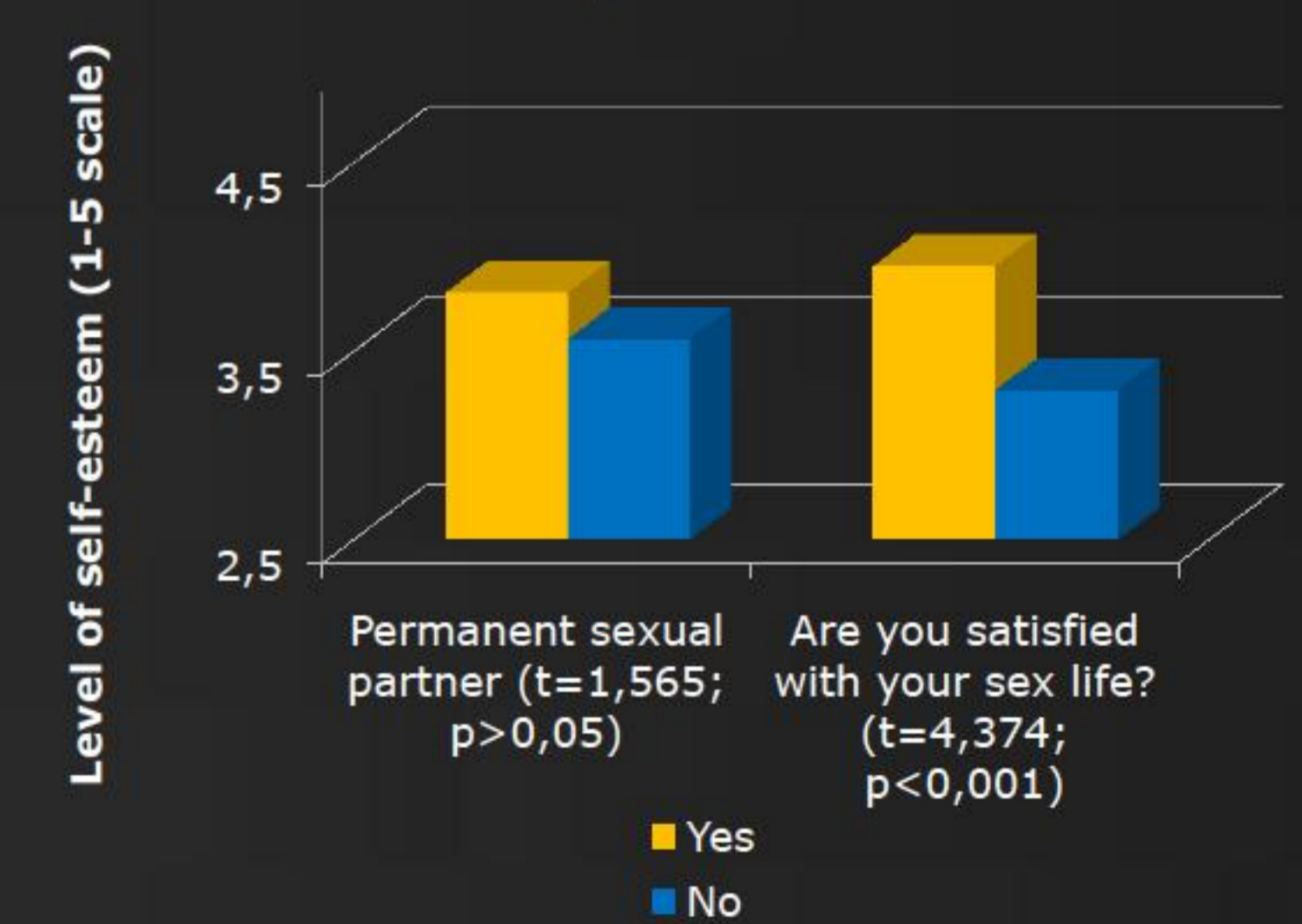


Table 3: Sex related determinants of self-esteem

| | β | t | p |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------|-------|
| Permanent sexual partner | 0,114 | 1,026 | 0,307 |
| Satisfaction with sex lives | -0,364 | -3,237 | 0,002 |
| Frequency of sexual intercourse | -0,098 | -0,787 | 0,433 |

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