

Attachment styles, body image and sexual communication as predictors of sexual satisfaction in young men: A serial mediation model¹

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Piotr Nowicki ^a ✉

^a Piotr Nowicki, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6661-4724>, School of Human Sciences, VIZJA University in Warsaw, Poland

✉ Corresponding author: p.nowicki@vizja.pl

Abstract: The aim of the present study was to identify the psychological mechanisms that mediate the relationship between attachment style and sexual satisfaction among young men in romantic relationships. Based on a review of the literature, a serial mediation model was proposed in which body image and sexual communication serve as mediators. The study included 187 men aged between 19 and 32 years ($M = 26$; $SD = 7.26$). Standardized psychometric instruments were used to assess attachment style, body image attitudes, sexual communication self-efficacy, and overall sexual satisfaction. Results revealed that secure attachment was positively associated with sexual satisfaction, and this effect was fully mediated by a more positive body image and higher sexual communication efficacy. For the anxious-ambivalent attachment style, a full serial mediation was observed: individuals with high attachment anxiety tended to exhibit a more negative body image, which reduced their openness in sexual communication and, in turn, was linked to lower sexual satisfaction. In the case of avoidant attachment, a partial mediation was identified: the negative impact of avoidant attachment on sexual satisfaction was primarily explained by reduced sexual communication efficacy, with a weaker but still significant link to body image. These findings highlight the importance of complex psychological mechanisms that connect early attachment patterns with the quality of adult sexual functioning. The results also point to the relevance of therapeutic interventions aimed at enhancing body image and developing sexual communication skills among men with insecure attachment styles.

Keywords: attachment styles, body image, sexual communication, sexual satisfaction

Introduction

Sexual quality of life constitutes a significant component of an individual's overall psychological and physical well-being, as well as a key factor influencing the stability and durability of romantic relationships (Gómez-López et al., 2019). Contemporary research on intimacy and relationships indicates that sexual satisfaction plays an important role not only in a person's subjective sense of fulfillment but also in the quality of the partner bond, levels of commitment, emotional closeness, and frequency of sexual encounters (Yech et al., 2006). Individuals reporting high levels of sexual satisfaction are more likely to evaluate their relationships as fulfilling and characterized by greater empathy, trust, and mutual support (Alsop et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022).

Furthermore, sexual satisfaction is associated with general mental health – lower levels of stress, higher self-esteem, and better emotional regulation (Carcedo et al., 2020; Fischer et al., 2022; Zayed et al., 2020).

Sexual satisfaction is most commonly defined as a subjective evaluation of one's sexual life, encompassing both emotional and physical aspects (Sánchez-Fuentes et al., 2014). It may include elements such as pleasure derived from sexual activity, a sense of fulfillment, compatibility with a partner regarding needs and preferences, as well as levels of communication and intimacy (Barker, 2005; Shahhosseini et al., 2014). In a more contemporary approach, Pascoal et al. (2014) propose that sexual satisfaction reflects a positive assessment of one's

¹ Article in Polish language: https://stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/62P_now1.pdf

sexual experience, resulting from the comparison between expectations and actual experiences. Thus, it is a multidimensional construct shaped by both individual and relational factors. In today's context of increasing societal openness towards sexuality, interest in the psychological determinants of satisfying intimate lives is also growing. Nevertheless, many factors influencing sexual satisfaction remain under-researched – particularly regarding their interrelations and underlying mechanisms.

One of the key factors determining the quality of intimate relationships, including sexual life, is attachment style – a psychological disposition formed in early childhood that shapes the perception of oneself and others in close relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2019). Attachment theory posits that experiences with caregivers form internal working models that influence expectations regarding interpersonal relationships in adulthood. The primary attachment styles are secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant (Thompson & Simpson, 2019). Individuals with a secure attachment style tend to exhibit greater openness to intimacy, better communication skills, and effective emotional regulation – all of which translate into higher levels of sexual satisfaction (Gagné et al., 2021). Conversely, individuals with an anxious attachment style often experience an intense need for closeness coupled with a fear of rejection, which may result in an excessive focus on sexuality as a source of self-worth validation (Lafortun et al., 2021; Santona et al., 2022). Those with an avoidant attachment style are more likely to distance themselves emotionally and physically, showing tendencies to avoid sexual contact or disengage from the relational aspects of sexuality (Constant et al., 2021).

Another key psychological factor influencing sexual functioning is body image, defined as the subjective evaluation of one's physical appearance, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components (Cash, 2002; Pujols et al., 2010). A positive body image is associated with greater self-acceptance, confidence, and openness to sexual expression. In contrast, a negative body image can lead to feelings of shame, lowered self-esteem, and avoidance of physical intimacy, which may hinder the development of satisfying intimate relationships

(Wiseman & Moradi, 2010). However, body image does not exist in isolation from other personality traits – attachment patterns play a significant role in shaping it. Research shows that individuals with a secure attachment style are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of body acceptance, a stronger sense of self-worth, and greater resistance to societal pressure concerning physical appearance (Laporta-Herrero et al., 2022). On the other hand, individuals with an anxious attachment style tend to be more vulnerable to negative self-evaluation regarding their appearance, react more strongly to rejection, and are more frequently dissatisfied with their bodies, which may contribute to decreased comfort in sexual interactions. Avoidant attachment, by contrast, is linked to a tendency to distance oneself from emotional and bodily experiences, which may result in indifference or even aversion to physicality as a source of closeness and intimacy (Bonev & Matanova, 2021; Cash et al., 2004). Accordingly, body image may serve as an important mediating factor between attachment style and the quality of sexual functioning within a relationship.

Sexual communication – understood as the ability to openly and authentically express needs, boundaries, desires, and emotions related to intimacy – is one of the key factors affecting the quality of sexual life in close relationships (Widman et al., 2021; Mallory, 2022). It includes discussions of sexual preferences, frequency of encounters, as well as concerns, fears, and fantasies. Effective communication in this domain fosters greater partner understanding, increased responsiveness to one another's needs, and the development of an atmosphere of mutual trust and emotional safety (Noar et al., 2006; Moazami, 2023). Two primary types of sexual communication are typically distinguished: instrumental and expressive (affective) communication. Instrumental communication relates to specific, functional aspects of sexual life – such as preferences regarding techniques, timing, frequency, or protection. It is more task-oriented and focused on the physical aspects of sexuality. Expressive communication, on the other hand, involves the articulation of emotions connected to sexuality – such as desire, shame, joy, fears, or the need for closeness (Gauvi & Merwin,

2022; Rancourt et al., 2016). Both instrumental and expressive communication are significantly linked to sexual satisfaction, although they influence it through different mechanisms. Instrumental communication facilitates better sexual compatibility and reduces frustration, whereas expressive communication deepens emotional intimacy and fosters a sense of security within the relationship. A lack of either form of communication can lead to reduced sexual satisfaction, misunderstandings of partner needs, and growing tension in the relationship (Séguin, 2024).

Attachment style can also impact the quality of sexual communication. Individuals with an anxious attachment style often exhibit a strong need for approval and validation from their partner, while simultaneously fearing rejection (Li & Chan, 2012). In the context of sexuality, this may result in hesitation or inhibition in freely expressing personal preferences and desires. Disclosing sexual needs may be perceived as risky due to the potential for partner disapproval, which is interpreted as a threat to the emotional bond (Barnes et al., 2017; Davis et al., 2006). Conversely, individuals with an avoidant attachment style tend to distance themselves from excessive emotional closeness. This distancing extends to the sexual sphere as well – manifesting in difficulties with open, intimate communication and the tendency to avoid discussions about sexual needs (McNeil et al., 2018).

Despite growing interest in the psychological dimensions of sexuality, most existing studies have focused on analyzing individual variables that influence sexual satisfaction, such as attachment style, body image, or sexual communication. Few studies have integrated these factors into comprehensive explanatory models that account for both direct and indirect mechanisms of influence. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to empirically test a serial mediation model in which attachment style influences sexual satisfaction through body image and sexual communication – in that specific sequence. It is hypothesized that individuals with a secure attachment style will demonstrate a more positive

body image, which facilitates greater openness in discussing sexuality, ultimately leading to higher levels of sexual satisfaction. Conversely, individuals with insecure attachment styles – both anxious and avoidant – may experience difficulties in accepting their own bodies and expressing sexual needs freely, which may, in turn, contribute to lower sexual satisfaction. Analyzing such a model enables a more nuanced understanding of the psychological interdependencies and the identification of mediating mechanisms linking attachment patterns to sexual functioning in close relationships.

Research Hypotheses

- H1.** Attachment style is significantly associated with the level of sexual satisfaction among young men in romantic relationships. Individuals with a secure attachment style are expected to report higher sexual satisfaction compared to those with anxious or avoidant attachment styles.
- H2.** The relationship between attachment style and sexual satisfaction is mediated by body image. A secure attachment style is hypothesized to be associated with a more positive body image, which in turn predicts greater sexual satisfaction.
- H3.** The relationship between body image and sexual satisfaction is mediated by sexual communication. Individuals with a more positive body image are expected to exhibit greater openness in sexual communication, which will translate into higher sexual satisfaction.
- H4.** The proposed model includes a significant serial mediation effect:

Attachment Style → Body Image → Sexual Communication → Sexual Satisfaction.

The effect of attachment style on sexual satisfaction is fully or partially mediated by body image and sexual communication, in the specified order.

1. Methodology

1.1. Procedure and Participants

The study was quantitative, cross-sectional, and anonymous, with the aim of examining the relationships between attachment style, body image, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction in men. Informed consent was obtained online after participants reviewed the participant information sheet. They were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their data. The questionnaires were administered via an online survey created using Google Forms, and the average completion time was approximately 15-20 minutes. To minimize order effects, the sequence of psychometric instruments was randomized. The first part of the survey included sociodemographic questions (e.g., age, relationship duration, level of education), followed by four standardized instruments: the Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ), the Body Attitudes Test (BAT), the Sexual Communication Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSES), and the Sexual Satisfaction Scale (SSS).

The study sample consisted of 187 heterosexual men aged between 19 and 33 years ($M = 26$, $SD = 7.26$), all of whom were in romantic relationships lasting at least three months at the time of participation. The majority of participants had completed higher education (53.2%) or secondary education (37.8%), while 9% reported having vocational or primary education. The average self-reported duration of the current relationship was 4.2 years ($SD = 2.8$).

1.2. Instruments

1.2.1. Attachment Styles

Attachment style was measured using the *Attachment Styles Questionnaire* (ASQ) developed by Plopa (2008), a tool designed to assess attachment patterns in adults within the context of romantic relationships. The questionnaire is based on Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory and its extensions to adult romantic relationships by Hazan and Shaver (1987).

It allows for classification into three main attachment styles: secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent. The ASQ comprises 24 diagnostic items grouped into three separate subscales corresponding to each style. Sample items address emotional closeness, the need for intimacy, and tendencies to avoid dependence. Participants respond on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Raw subscale scores are converted into standardized scores (sten scores), allowing for interpretation of attachment style intensity. The tool demonstrates high psychometric reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.85 (secure), 0.78 (anxious-ambivalent), and 0.79 (avoidant), indicating strong internal consistency. The ASQ is widely used in research on romantic relationships, emotional functioning, and interpersonal communication.

1.2.2. Body Image

Body image was assessed using the *Body Attitudes Test* (BAT) by Ben-Tovim and Walker (1991), in the Polish adaptation by Brytek-Matera and Probst (2014). Originally developed for populations with eating disorders, the BAT is also effectively used in non-clinical samples to evaluate subjective perceptions of one's body and cognitive-emotional attitudes toward physical appearance. The questionnaire consists of 20 items covering three core dimensions: 1) *Emotional detachment from the body* – difficulties in accepting one's physicality and emotional distance from one's own body; 2) *General dissatisfaction with appearance* – negative evaluations of appearance, often associated with emotions such as shame, frustration, or aversion; 3) *Overestimation of body size* – the tendency to perceive oneself as larger than in reality. Participants respond on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = never to 5 = always). Higher scores indicate stronger negative attitudes toward the body. The BAT has demonstrated solid psychometric properties and is commonly used in studies on body image and its relationship with emotional and relational functioning. This study used only the *general dissatisfaction with appearance* subscale, considered most relevant to overall body satisfaction and acceptance in the context of physical intimacy.

1.2.3. Sexual Communication

Sexual communication self-efficacy was measured using the *Sexual Communication Self-Efficacy Scale* (SCSES; Quinn-Nilas et al., 2016), in the Polish adaptation by Liberacka-Dwojak and Wilkość-Dęczyńska (2024). Initially developed for adolescents, the tool has also shown strong validity and reliability in adult samples, making it suitable for general population research. The SCSES consists of 20 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not at all confident to 4 = very confident), measuring perceived communication efficacy across five domains: 1) *Contraception communication* – confidence in discussing contraception methods, family planning, and decisions related

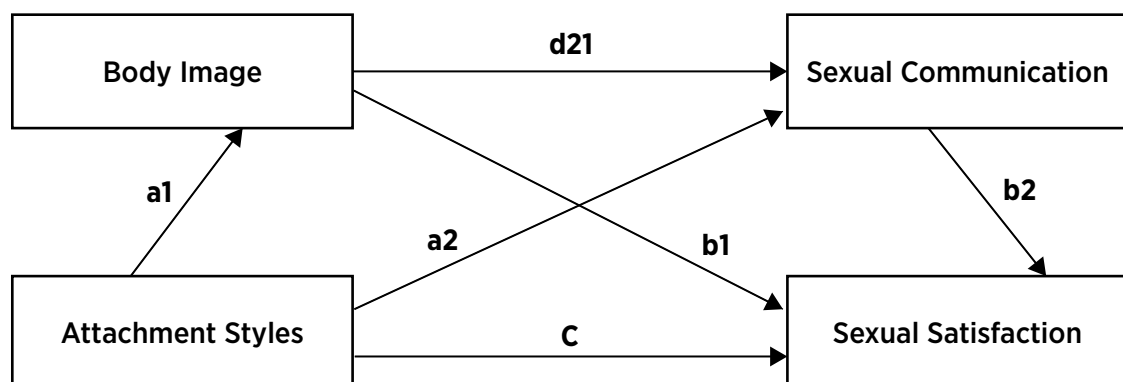
to the use or change of contraceptives; 2) *Negative sexual communication* – ability to express disinterest, discomfort, or dissatisfaction with sexual experiences; 3) *Positive sexual communication* – confidence in expressing desires, preferences, and providing positive feedback; 4) *Discussion of sexual history* – comfort in discussing past sexual experiences, previous partners, STI testing, and related information; 5) *Condom negotiation* – confidence in initiating conversations about condom use, handling partner resistance, and promoting safe sex practices. Higher scores reflect greater sexual communication self-efficacy, which has been linked to increased relationship satisfaction, better sexual health, and enhanced emotional and

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Shapiro-Wilk Test results, and Pearson correlations among the studied variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	W	P
1. Secure Attachment Style	23.26	4.23	-						96	0.52
2. Anxious Attachment Style	26.32	8.02	-0.12	-					96	0.46
3. Avoidant Attachment Style	23.53	4.92	-0.23**	0.22*	-				97	0.25
4. Body Image (Negative)	12.24	4.98	-0.36*	0.42***	0.19*	-			96	0.35
5. Sexual Communication	26.16	6.96	0.31**	-0.35*	-0.34**	-0.27*	-		99	0.97
6. Sexual Satisfaction	42.23	8.06	0.41***	-0.34**	-0.26**	-0.19*	0.29**	-	98	0.55

1. Secure Attachment Style; 2. Anxious Attachment Style; 3. Avoidant Attachment Style; 4. Body Image (Negative); 5. Sexual Communication; 6. Sexual Satisfaction; *M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; **p < .001

Figure 1. Theoretical serial mediation model in which body image and sexual communication mediate the relationship between attachment style and sexual satisfaction



(c) Direct effect of attachment style on sexual satisfaction (prior to including mediators). (a, b) Indirect effect of attachment style on sexual satisfaction through body image. (a₂, b₂) Indirect effect of attachment style on sexual satisfaction through sexual communication. (a₁, d₂₁, b₂) Indirect effect in a serial mediation model, where attachment style influences body image, which in turn affects sexual communication, which then impacts sexual satisfaction. (c') Direct effect of attachment style on sexual satisfaction after accounting for both mediators: body image and sexual communication.

psychological well-being. In the present study, the Polish version of the SCSES was used, demonstrating high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81.

1.2.4. Sexual Satisfaction

Sexual satisfaction was assessed using the *Sexual Satisfaction Scale for Women* (SSS-W; Meston & Trappnell, 2005), adapted into Polish by Janowski and Czyżykowska (2013). Although originally designed for female respondents, the Polish version has been successfully applied in studies involving male participants, confirming its versatility for use in general populations. The SSS-W includes 30 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater sexual satisfaction. The scale measures five dimensions of sexual functioning within relational and emotional contexts: 1) *Contentment* – overall pleasure and emotional fulfillment derived from sexual activity; 2) *Communication* – openness and readiness to express sexual needs, desires, and preferences; 3) *Compatibility* – subjective sense of sexual compatibility with the partner, both physically and emotionally; 4) *Relational concerns* – the influence of relationship quality and emotional dynamics on sexual satisfaction; 5) *Personal distress* – individual tension, dissatisfaction, or anxiety related to one's sexual life. The tool has been positively evaluated for validity and reliability. In this study, the full scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86.

2. Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 26) and the PROCESS macro v4.2 by Hayes (2013). To test the serial mediation model, Model 6 in the PROCESS macro was applied, which allows for the simultaneous inclusion of two mediators in a specified sequence. Attachment style was treated as the independent variable (X), body image as the first mediator (M1), sexual communication as the second mediator (M2), and sexual satisfaction as the dependent variable (Y). Indirect

effects were assessed using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples (Hayes & Rockwood, 2020). Indirect effects were considered statistically significant if the 95% confidence interval (CI) did not include zero. The analysis included three indirect paths:

- a. Indirect effect 1: attachment style → body image → sexual satisfaction,
- b. Indirect effect 2: attachment style → sexual communication → sexual satisfaction,
- c. Indirect effect 3 (serial): attachment style → body image → sexual communication → sexual satisfaction.

Additionally, the direct effect and the total effect of attachment style on sexual satisfaction were calculated. Pearson correlations were computed to assess basic associations between variables, followed by a mediation regression analysis. Prior to conducting the main analyses, data quality checks were performed, including an assessment of missing data, variable distributions, outliers, and normality tests. In cases of significant deviations from normality, appropriate transformations or robust statistical methods were applied.

3. Results

3.1. Correlational Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a number of significant associations among the psychological variables examined. A secure attachment style was positively correlated with both sexual communication ($r = .31, p < .01$) and sexual satisfaction ($r = .41, p < .001$), and negatively correlated with negative body image ($r = -.36, p < .05$). Anxious attachment style showed a positive correlation with negative body image ($r = .42, p < .001$), and negative correlations with sexual communication ($r = -.34, p < .05$) and sexual satisfaction ($r = -.34, p < .01$). Avoidant attachment style was negatively correlated with sexual communication ($r = -.35, p < .01$) and sexual satisfaction ($r = -.26, p < .01$), and positively associated with negative body image ($r = .19, p < .05$). Negative

body image was significantly negatively correlated with both sexual communication ($r = -.27, p < .05$) and sexual satisfaction ($r = -.19, p < .05$). Moreover, sexual communication was significantly positively associated with sexual satisfaction ($r = .29, p < .01$).

3.2. Mediation Analysis

3.2.1. Secure Attachment as Independent Variable

The serial mediation model with secure attachment as the independent variable, body image (M1), and sexual communication (M2) as mediators, and sexual satisfaction as the dependent variable, was statistically significant, $F(3, 246) = 42.31, p < .001$, explaining 38% of the variance in sexual satisfaction ($R^2 = .38$). The total effect of secure attachment on sexual satisfaction was significant ($c = .41, SE = .08, t = 5.12, p < .001$). Secure attachment significantly predicted a more positive body image ($a_1 = .36, SE = .07, t = 5.29, p < .001$), which in turn positively predicted sexual communication ($d_{21} = .31, SE = .06, t = 5.17, p < .001$). Both body image ($b_1 = .18, SE = .06, t = 3.33, p = .001$) and sexual communication ($b_2 = .36, SE = .05, t = 6.80, p < .001$) significantly predicted sexual satisfaction. After including the mediators, the direct effect of secure attachment became non-significant ($c' = .11, SE = .07, t = 1.57, p = .118$), indicating full mediation. The indirect effect through the serial pathway (secure attachment $\rightarrow$ body image $\rightarrow$ sexual communication $\rightarrow$ sexual satisfaction) was significant ($b = .044, 95\% \text{ CI } [.023, .068]$).

3.2.2. Anxious Attachment as Independent Variable

The model with anxious attachment as the independent variable, body image and sexual communication as mediators, was also significant, $F(3, 246) = 44.88, p < .001$, explaining 41% of the variance in sexual satisfaction ($R^2 = .41$). The total effect of anxious attachment on sexual satisfaction was significant and negative ($c = -.47, SE = .07, t = -6.71, p < .001$). Anxious attachment significantly predicted a more

negative body image ($a_1 = -.40, SE = .06, t = -6.62, p < .001$), and body image negatively predicted sexual communication ($d_{21} = .28, SE = .05, t = 5.60, p < .001$). Both body image ($b_1 = .19, SE = .05, t = 3.56, p < .001$) and sexual communication ($b_2 = .36, SE = .05, t = 7.45, p < .001$) were positively associated with sexual satisfaction. After accounting for the mediators, the direct effect of anxious attachment became non-significant ($c' = -.09, SE = .06, t = -1.52, p = .130$), indicating full serial mediation. The indirect effect through body image and sexual communication was significant ($b = -.051, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.084, -.027]$).

3.2.3. Avoidant Attachment as Independent Variable

The third model, with avoidant attachment as the independent variable, and body image and sexual communication as mediators, was also significant, $F(3, 246) = 39.72, p = .001$, explaining 31% of the variance in sexual satisfaction ($R^2 = .31$). The total effect of avoidant attachment was significant ($c = -.43, SE = .07, t = -6.14, p < .001$). Avoidant attachment significantly predicted a more negative body image ($a_1 = -.13, SE = .07, t = -3.34, p = .001$), which was associated with lower sexual communication self-efficacy ($d_{21} = .26, SE = .05, t = 5.20, p < .001$). Sexual communication was positively associated with sexual satisfaction ($b_2 = .36, SE = .05, t = 7.20, p < .001$), and body image was also a significant predictor ($b_1 = .17, SE = .06, t = 2.83, p = .005$). After including the mediators, the direct effect of avoidant attachment decreased but remained significant ($c' = -.19, SE = .06, t = -3.17, p = .002$), indicating partial mediation. The serial indirect effect via body image and sexual communication was significant ($b = -.027, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.049, -.013]$).

4. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to test a serial mediation model in which attachment style affects sexual satisfaction in men through two psychological mediators: body image and sexual communication.

The findings supported the proposed model, revealing that the relationship between attachment and sexual satisfaction is more complex than simple correlational links suggest. Notably, the indirect effects differed depending on the specific attachment style, contributing meaningful insights to the field of psychological predictors of men's intimate lives.

As hypothesized, secure attachment was significantly associated with higher sexual satisfaction, and this relationship was partly explained by a more positive body image and greater efficacy in sexual communication. This indicates that securely attached individuals not only experience greater emotional closeness in relationships but also demonstrate stronger capacities for bodily self-reflection and sexual expression, contributing to a more fulfilling intimate life. These results are consistent with previous findings by Mikulincer and Shaver (2019), who emphasized that secure attachment fosters the development of stable self-esteem and emotional regulation within relational contexts. Such individuals are more inclined to openly communicate their needs, form trust-based, reciprocal relationships, and perceive their bodily experiences – including sexual ones – as positive and validating.

The positive body image observed in securely attached individuals may stem from early relationships with significant others that were generally supportive, accepting, and non-invasive regarding bodily boundaries (Homan et al., 2018). In adulthood, this translates into greater comfort with one's physicality, higher self-acceptance, and reduced susceptibility to societal pressures regarding physical appearance (Jun et al., 2011). This mindset fosters openness to physical and sexual intimacy without the experience of shame or threat. Furthermore, the high sexual communication efficacy observed in securely attached men appears to be a valuable relational resource, enabling effective boundary negotiation, expression of desires, and attunement to a partner's needs.

For individuals with insecure attachment styles, the psychological pathways leading from attachment to sexual satisfaction varied according to dominant defensive and regulatory mechanisms. In the case of anxious-ambivalent attachment, body image played a central role – those with high attachment anxie-

ty were more likely to report dissatisfaction with their appearance, which negatively affected their psychosexual comfort and openness in sexual communication. This suggests that the anxious style was not directly linked to sexual satisfaction; instead, its impact was mediated through body image dissatisfaction, which in turn impaired the ability to openly express sexual needs and boundaries. According to attachment theory, anxiously attached individuals tend to be preoccupied with the need for acceptance while lacking a stable sense of self-worth (Pascoal et al., 2022). Negative body image may reflect this instability and the tendency to regulate self-worth through relationships.

The link between negative body image and lower sexual communication efficacy may be explained by the fact that individuals who feel ashamed of their appearance – especially in intimate contexts involving nudity or closeness – often avoid sexual situations or limit physical contact. They may also avoid talking about sex because the topic itself triggers discomfort. Studies show that individuals who are dissatisfied with their bodies experience greater difficulty initiating conversations about sexual needs and preferences (Wu & Zheng, 2021). Moreover, negative body image is strongly associated with low self-esteem and reduced confidence, including in relational and sexual contexts (Toussi & Shareh, 2019). Individuals with low body acceptance may not feel „worthy” of pleasure, care, or attention from their partners, which limits their ability to assertively communicate needs, boundaries, or sexual expectations. They may lack the belief that their needs are important and will be met positively. The discovery of full serial mediation for the anxious attachment style strengthens the theoretical basis of the model and underscores the importance of addressing body image and communication skills in psychotherapeutic interventions targeting men with high attachment anxiety.

In the case of avoidant attachment, the results also confirmed a significant link with reduced sexual communication quality. However, consistent with theoretical assumptions, the mechanism differed from that observed in anxious individuals. Those with high avoidance of intimacy tend to distance themselves from both emotional and physical close-

ness with their partner. A strong preference for independence, emotional suppression, and difficulty in expressing feelings contribute to a tendency to avoid discussions about sexual needs, boundaries, or preferences – often viewing such conversations as unnecessary or even threatening. Expressive sexual communication, in particular, may be perceived by avoidant individuals as intrusive, as it requires emotional engagement and vulnerability, which contradicts their dominant strategies of avoiding dependence and controlling relational closeness (Brassard et al., 2015; Wu & Zheng, 2021).

This lack of openness to sexual dialogue does not necessarily stem from a lack of desire but rather from difficulties in identifying and communicating those desires. Avoidant individuals often suppress their own needs or downplay the importance of sexuality as a relational dimension, resulting in limited responsiveness to their partner. Significantly, in the case of avoidant attachment, the analysis revealed full mediation between attachment and sexual satisfaction through sexual communication. This indicates that the level of intimacy avoidance was not directly related to sexual satisfaction but exerted its influence entirely via reduced communication efficacy. This finding reinforces the idea that the main barrier to satisfying sexual experiences among avoidantly attached individuals lies in their lack of openness and expressive capacity within the relationship.

In addition to the observed full mediation through sexual communication, the results also showed a significant association between avoidant attachment and more negative body image. Although this association was weaker than in the anxious group, it suggests that avoidant individuals – despite their apparent self-sufficiency and emotional detachment – may also struggle with bodily self-accept-

ance. This could stem from suppressed discomfort with the body, which may be perceived as a source of dependency, shame, or potential judgment in relational contexts.

According to earlier research, avoidant individuals often disengage from bodily experiences not because they view them positively, but because they are emotionally difficult or threatening (Cash et al., 2004; Mili & Raakhee, 2015). Thus, their dissatisfaction with the body may not always be conscious or overt, but rather operate as a latent source of internal tension that restricts sexual expression and intensifies communication difficulties. Consequently, in avoidant individuals, body image and sexual communication may jointly contribute to decreased sexual satisfaction, although sexual communication appears to play a more central mediating role. These individuals may simultaneously experience dissatisfaction with their bodies and avoid sexual conversations – thereby failing to build relational and sexual closeness effectively.

Overall, the findings confirm that body image and sexual communication function as key psychological mechanisms mediating the relationship between attachment style and sexuality. However, the relative importance of each varies depending on the individual's characteristics. These results have important practical implications. Understanding how attachment styles influence sexual life through body image and communication can inform psychotherapeutic interventions and educational programs in the field of sexual health. In particular, there is a need to support men with insecure attachment styles in developing sexual communication skills and cultivating a more positive relationship with their bodies. Working on these aspects may contribute to improving sexual and relational satisfaction, as well as overall psychological well-being.

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