

Psychological and Social Dimensions of Sexual Problems on Marital Compatibility (Female Sexual Apathy, Male Sexual Dysfunction)

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Abstract:

This research paper presents a straightforward perspective on the sacred relationship between man and woman and the sexual problems that may arise, encompassing various psychological and social dimensions. We will focus on two main issues during marital intimacy: female sexual apathy and male sexual dysfunction, and their impact on marital compatibility, which represents an emotional state reflecting the acceptance and continuity of the marital relationship.

Consequently, sexual problems in married life burden both parties in a strange silence, leading to misunderstandings, conflicts, marital incompatibility, and the failure of the relationship between spouses, ultimately resulting in what is considered the most disliked of permissible things: emotional or actual divorce.

Keywords: Sexual problems, marital compatibility, sexual apathy, sexual dysfunction.

Introduction

➤ **Problematic:**

Sexuality in humans is a divine gift that touches the essence of their existence on this planet. It is the source of the human species' survival (reproduction and procreation) and a source of pleasure that fosters the connection between the sexes. Marriage fulfills sexual drives and needs within the framework of a lawful and legal bond, serving as a preventive measure against various forms of sexual deviance. However, this sacred relationship between spouses can be beset by numerous conflicts and disputes attributable to various social, economic, and health-related factors. Among these, sexual issues stand out as particularly sensitive topics that are often deemed taboo. Discussions surrounding these issues are often avoided, even between spouses, out of modesty, shyness, or respect, compounded by the neglect of sexual education during social upbringing due to cultural norms and traditions.

In general, the Arab and specifically Algerian societies view sexuality negatively, often failing to acknowledge the existence of sexual life at all. Instead, they focus on the behaviors associated with sex, leading to a misunderstanding of the distinction between sexual and reproductive matters. Sexual life begins in the early years of an infant's life, as they are born with innate sexual drives that influence them throughout their existence. This innate sexual culture must be reinforced through social sexual education (as per the analytical school), preparing individuals for family formation. Moreover, sexual life aims to achieve the principle of pleasure (both emotionally and physically) while also facilitating reproduction.

Thus, we seek to investigate the following question:

Does the emergence of dimensions of sexual problems (female sexual apathy and male sexual dysfunction) affect marital compatibility?

➤ **Importance of the Study:**

The significance of this topic lies in the neglect or oversight by society (including the family, religious institutions, and media) and by theoretical and practical research regarding such sensitive subjects. This avoidance stems from ethical considerations of uncertain origins, which are neither supported by religion nor by science; as the saying goes, "There is no modesty in religion."

Moreover, the disruption of the sexual relationship between spouses often leads to marital incompatibility, which can ultimately sever this sacred bond through divorce. Such a separation may dismantle the family unit and put children at risk, making them victims of the situation.

This further underscore the importance of this study.

➤ **Objectives of the Study:**

The aim of this research is to emphasize the importance of sexuality in marital life, as it is a crucial factor that influences its continuity or disruption. This will be addressed by answering the central question of the problematic: Does the emergence of sexual problems (female sexual apathy and male sexual dysfunction) affect marital compatibility?

Additionally, through this modest topic, we seek to affirm that marriage is not merely a sexual relationship but rather a spiritual, emotional, and social bond that complements one another. This holistic approach is essential to achieving marital compatibility in its best form, as indicated by the divine saying: "And among His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy."

Sex as a Life Phenomenon:

➤ **The Role of Sex in the Dynamics of Survival**

Sexual instinct is one of the strongest instincts in both animals and humans, regardless of gender. Additionally, physical pleasure is one of the most intense forms of bodily enjoyment. This topic has captured the attention of many, including religious figures, scholars, writers, poets, and even artists and musicians.

When a person reaches puberty and is in good health, they will naturally develop an interest in the opposite sex. This natural desire transforms into a reproductive means for procreation and the preservation of the species. Humans are equipped with various traits, such as women having breasts to nourish their offspring and the innate love for their children, which ensures the continuity of life on Earth.

➤ **The Psychological and Emotional Dimension of Sex:**

In his book "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," Sigmund Freud introduced the concept of "libido," referring to sexual desire. In psychology, libido represents the instinctual sexual energy inherent in humans. Freud posited that we are born with this instinct, which motivates us to embrace life passionately and directs this energy towards various subjects of desire. He differentiates between two stages based on sexual development:

❖ **Pre-Reproductive Stage:**

The analytical theory recognizes three levels of sexual pleasure, starting from birth to about two years of age. During this period, oral pleasure is predominant, as the infant instinctively engages in sucking for nourishment. This results in both physiological satisfaction and relational fulfillment, establishing a loving bond with the mother through breastfeeding. Moreover, the infant develops early feelings of ambivalence characterized by a duality of love and hate (through the act of giving and taking the breast).

The next stage is the anal stage, which spans from the second year of life to approximately four years. This phase coincides with the development of the control and elimination system. Here, sexual pleasure is linked to various tactile stimuli in erogenous zones, particularly when the mother engages in caregiving, hygiene, and nurturing actions. These interactions awaken the initial feelings of pleasure and promote positive engagement through identification with the mother, while also being prone to repression (André, 2009, p. 38).

This stage is considered anal-sadistic, where pleasure is connected to aggression from the parents as the child learns cleanliness rituals (Hanafi, 1997, p. 75).

Phallic Stage: The phallic stage begins around the age of four. During this stage, the developments specific to boys and girls become significant in Freudian theory. One of the most original and striking aspects is the complete erasure of gender differences based on compatibility (the shared male trunk of pre-sexual life). At the beginning of the phallic stage, similarities are more prominent than differences; a little girl may see herself as a little boy, using a substitute for the penis that serves the same purpose (Irigaray, 2011, p. 27).

Thus, the sexual unity of males and females forms one of Freud's initial theories regarding the formation of masculinity and femininity. However, once the anatomical differences are discovered, a literary conflict arises due to significant disappointment. This lays the groundwork for the Oedipus complex (Jeballah, 2004, p. 242). The girl believes her mother is responsible for her lack of a penis, leading her to decisively distance herself and nurture feelings of hatred towards her mother, whom she holds accountable for this perceived deficiency (Jacques, 2009, p. 40).

After the girl loses the ability to love her primary libidinal object her mother, she begins to harbor feelings of hatred and aversion towards her mother and any woman, including herself. This compels her to seek a

compensatory object, paving the way for attachment to her father, who becomes her first love object. This connection signifies a woman's ability to engage with a man throughout her sexual and emotional life (André, 2009, p. 47).

Freud continues to elaborate on the notion of penis envy, linking it to a girl's desire to have a child. The allure of motherhood replaces all other penile desires, positioning the penis as the unconditional factor of reproduction, thereby sidelining femininity to make way for motherhood (Irigaray, 2011, p. 119).

Every child goes through this Oedipal situation, with individuals differing in their capacity to overcome its lasting effects throughout life. The Oedipus complex may remain latent, operating unconsciously, or it may repress sexual tendencies entirely during childhood or adolescence. This repression can lead to specific sexual orientations during the development of the ego and superego, particularly prohibiting sexual relationships with certain relatives, such as the mother and sister, under the influence of the superego (Hanafi, 1997, p. 77).

Freud argues that the formation of the superego in girls differs from that in boys due to the incomplete resolution of the Oedipus complex, resulting in a struggle to repress it as long as they believe they have lost their castrated organ. Instead, they fear losing the love of the person possessing that organ (Irigaray, 2011, p. 137).

This explains the perception of a lack of moral rigidity in girls, where their moral conduct is closely tied to emotional roots, characterized by leniency in judgments, indecisiveness, and a casual approach to life, which ultimately prevents the resolution of the Oedipus complex (Jeballah, 2004, p. 242).

Latency Stage: During the latency stage, all the aforementioned conflicts settle relatively for both genders. In childhood, the focus is not solely on sexual development; there is also active adaptation to the external world and the need to reach maturity. The essence of latency is that sexual interests wane during these years, posing no burden or inciting hatred that could lead to aggression. This creates an opportunity for the self to develop and for the superego to mature through identification with parents, older siblings, teachers, and adult family members (Hanafi, 1997, p. 80).

In the latency stage, children experience shame, which serves as a barrier against sexual desires. This stage can be divided into two periods:

Early Latency Period: Characterized by a withdrawal from sexual and emotional concerns.

Late Latency Period (Pre-Puberty): Helen Dusch considers this pre-puberty phase to be the final part of latency, where some early signs of seeking emotional adventures indicate future sexual motivations. During this time, sexual impulses are weaker while ego development is stronger (Dusch, 2007, p. 17).

❖ **Genital Stage:**

The genital stage coincides with puberty and adolescence, a term that signifies what is intolerable or unbearable, as well as proximity and closeness. It is an age period during which a boy approaches adulthood and nears maturity (Hanafi, 1997, p. 100).

What characterizes this stage is its emotional and affective content. The former is instinctual and temporary, encompassing feelings like fear and anger, while the latter is acquired and lasting, such as love and friendship. When exploring the interrelationship between emotion and affect, we find that affect is a complex emotional readiness, an acquired organization of certain emotions toward a specific situation that motivates the individual to engage in particular behaviors.

The physiological sexual development in humans, both male and female, begins with the onset of adolescence, during which a gradual transition occurs toward physical, sexual, mental, and psychological maturity. During this time, the sexual glands develop and become capable of performing reproductive functions (Al-Aysawi, 2005, p. 243).

Changes also occur in the secretion of endocrine glands, known as hormones. Overall, all observable external bodily changes, as well as internal changes in organ functions, take place. Adolescents may also psychologically reject signs of masculinity or femininity, feeling embarrassed by them. This type of adolescent may have grown up with a sense of sexual taboo, considering it forbidden or prohibited.

The adolescent crisis manifests in adolescents as a sexual hunger; they yearn to feel, hear, and see everything. They exhibit energy and vitality, and the purpose of this sensory urge is to achieve psychological gain in the growth of their ego, which is expanding and seeking independence. During adolescence, the desire for autonomy becomes pronounced in all areas—decision-making, implementation, and experimentation (Hanafi, 1997, pp. 101, 112).

After adolescence, both genders seek sexual fulfillment, as repressing feelings and sensations becomes increasingly difficult. Ultimately, the girl may sacrifice her sexual existence to entice the boy, embodying a

negative masochistic sexual dynamic that seeks sexual life and actions from a sadistic partner. Thus, "the cycle of life presupposes the existence of two opposing yet complementary poles: one positive—masculine—and the other negative—feminine—exchanging energy" (Anzio, 1992, p. 107).

The Social Dimension of Sex:

When discussing sex within the social structure, we view the woman as a sacred ground through her womb, untouched by any predator or aggressor. She is not even granted the right to interact with her own body with absolute freedom. The father's name is what legitimizes and forbids, while anything beyond that is considered an intrusion and a violation of sanctity. This body is seen as a unified whole that does not accept competition or duality; the woman's body is a source of life and may only be approached through the legitimacy granted by the father.

The woman's body is not regarded as belonging to her. From birth, she enters into a contract with society, her father, and her brothers, establishing that her sexuality is not solely hers; it belongs to the family. This notion is closely tied to the concept of honor, and all of this stems from sexual education founded on fear and submission.

The negative impact of inadequate sexual education leads to a distorted understanding of sexuality, where the girl perceives sex as something shameful and dirty, failing to appreciate the natural needs of human beings. This stands in stark contrast to our noble religion, which respects these needs and legitimizes them through marriage.

Marriage and Its Compatibility:

Researchers have long emphasized the significant importance of the term "marriage," considering it a natural, biological inclination and a social necessity that extends from the past to the present.

➤ Definition of Marriage:

In the Arabic language, "marriage" refers to the type or kind of anything. When two things are combined, whether they are similar or opposite, they are considered a pair, with each one being a counterpartⁱ Al-Fiyumi stated, "Marriage is a form that has a counterpart, such as types and colors, or it may have an opposite, like wet and dry, male and female, night and day, sweet and bitter" (Al-Ashqar, 1997, p. 7).

The term has become commonly used specifically to refer to the union of a man and a woman for the purpose of forming a family. Thus, when it is mentioned, it is understood to mean this particular meaning, having previously been used for any pairing, whether between a man and a woman or among other entities (Khazar, n.d., p. 27).

Thus, the language of marriage is rooted in meanings of type, pairing, and connection.

In terms of terminology, there initially appears to be a strong connection between the terms "marriage" and "family." They are often used interchangeably to refer to the same concept. However, they are not identical; marriage is an organized union between men and women, while family encompasses the meanings of marriage along with procreation. Family also refers to the array of roles acquired through marriage and childbearing. Therefore, it is common to view marriage as a primary condition for the establishment of a family and to consider the family as a product of marital interaction.

Various concepts of marriage focus on different aspects, reflecting cultural and disciplinary differences. We will discuss the meaning of marriage according to four main domains:

1. The Religious Concept of Marriage:

From a religious perspective, marriage is considered an act of worship and an integral part of divine teachings aimed at establishing human society, ensuring the continuity of offspring, and forming righteous communities. This concept is realized when both husband and wife adhere to these high divine meanings, treating their marriage as an act of worship and obedience to contribute to the construction of the human society that God has favored over all worlds, utilizing what exists in the universe for their happiness, comfort, security, and safety. This is achieved through shared responsibilities between the couple and their journey together through joys and hardships, which should be based on mutual complementarity rather than superiority, as virtue ultimately belongs to God alone (Al-Dahri, 2008, pp. 25-26).

2. The Social Concept of Marriage:

This concept views marriage as a fundamental social system constrained by customs, traditions, and social norms prevailing in a specific time and place among a group of people. It also serves as a bond that connects two rational beings to establish a suitable family within human society.

3. The Legal Concept of Marriage:

Marriage is a contract signed by a man and a woman to live together under one roof. It includes a set of clauses and regulations that govern their intertwined relationship, establishing a solid foundation that preserves their rights and defines their obligations.

4. The Psychological Concept of Marriage:

Marriage is seen as a dynamic relationship between two individuals aimed at achieving emotional and non-emotional satisfaction. This relationship encompasses both tranquil moments and stressful times, with happiness arising from efforts made by both parties to achieve deep understanding. It also relies on mutual recognition and appreciation of each other's strengths and weaknesses (Abu Saad & Al-Khattaneh, 2011, pp. 33-34).

Marital Compatibility:

Marital compatibility is the result of the interaction between the personalities of the spouses, the appropriate choice of partner, readiness for married life, mutual affection, sexual satisfaction, and the ability to assume the responsibilities of marital life. It also includes the capability to resolve issues, achieve marital stability, and the determination to face all material, social, and health-related problems while striving for mutual harmony and love (Abdel-Maati, 2004, p. 24).

Sexual Disorders Affecting Marital Compatibility:

➤ **Sexual Dysfunction in Men:**

This is characterized as a psychological and physical weakness (a dysfunction in the functioning of the organs rather than in the organs themselves). It is the physiological outcome of emotional arousal, meaning the failure of the bodily responses required for proper erection when a man is under psychological pressure. It represents an incomplete sexual experience in a satisfactory manner (Silamy, 1983, p. 600).

Types of Sexual Dysfunction:

1. Primary: There is never an erection during intercourse, and impotence is consistent throughout sexual life since puberty.
2. Secondary: This occurs after a period of normal and successful sexual relationships.
3. Selective: This happens with certain women but not with others, or in specific locations or times (Charles & Josette, 1983, p. 19).

➤ **Female Sexual Apathy:**

This is a sexual dysfunction characterized by a lack of normal sexual desire and its absence. It often manifests in a woman's aversion to sexual activity, disinterest in it, or an inability to reach orgasm, with vaginal constriction that makes penetration difficult or impossible, leading to the woman's non-responsiveness to sexual activity (Al-Haj, n.d., p. 327).

It is also defined as the inability to achieve pleasure, desire, or orgasm during intercourse (Silamy, 1983, p. 600).

Types of Sexual Apathy:

1. Primary Sexual Apathy:

This occurs when there is a lack of desire due to ignorance, typically accompanying early sexual experiences. In this context, we refer to a current of sexual apathy, where the individual's attitude ranges from indifferent – participation in sexual activity to a strong aversion to any sexual expression from the male partner.

2. Secondary Sexual Apathy:

Sexual apathy can also arise after a period of balanced and fulfilling sexual life. It may occur with aging or following conflicts and struggles, or after an extended period of sexual inactivity. This type is more common (for instance, in cases of pregnancy). However, restoring the situation is not excessively difficult.

Sex in Marital Life:

In marriage, both men and women seek a partner with whom to build a family capable of raising righteous children. Therefore, marriage is not merely a sexual union; it encompasses emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions that play a crucial role in the continuity and compatibility of the marriage.

This means that at its core, marriage is a relational bond between two individuals based on cooperation, love, affection, and mercy (Al-Istanbuli, 1985, p. 478).

The sexual relationship is unlike any other human connection; it unifies two individuals, transforming the relationship between man and woman into a "we" dynamic. In sexual intimacy, a person merges entirely—

mentally, physically, and spiritually—engaging their past, present, and future. Every aspect of existence is involved in sexuality because it seeks continuity and permanence, avoiding separation.

Thus, the importance of marriage lies in the following key points:

- Meeting Sexual Instincts Legally: This means protecting society from sexual disorders and issues such as adultery, homosexuality, and similar problems.
- Protection from Sexually Transmitted Diseases: These can arise from illicit sexual relationships, such as syphilis, gonorrhea, and immune deficiencies.
- Preservation of Lineage: Ensuring that family lines remain distinct and connected through marriage.
- Continuity of the Human Species: Through procreation and reproduction.
- Raising Righteous Generations: Within a healthy family environment and a cohesive community.

Conclusion:

The foundation of the relationship between a man and a woman in a happy marital life is comfort and reassurance, aimed at building a home on solid principles that are resilient to changes and unforeseen circumstances. From the time of Adam (peace be upon him) until today, humanity has aspired to this goal. However, throughout the ages, people have oscillated between remarkable success in achieving this objective and severe failure.

The primary reason behind any success or failure can be traced back, in one way or another, to the process of choosing a life partner. This process is undoubtedly challenging; it requires significant time, contemplation, and emotional investment. As the saying goes, "A marriage made in a night requires a year of planning." Marital compatibility is a necessary outcome of making the right choice. Conversely, any fracture that threatens the bonds of this spiritual relationship and the mechanisms governing sexual instincts and the sexual relationship (marriage) is inevitably a result of poor selection.

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End Note's:

ⁱ(*). Because God Almighty says: “And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows [abundantly] of every beautiful pair.” Verse 5, Surah Al-Hajj.