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# SEXUAL SATISFACTION AS DETERMINANT OF MARITAL STABILITY AMONG MARRIED ADULTS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA: COUNSELLING INTERVENTION

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## ABSTRACT

The prevalence of sexual dissatisfaction among married adults has posed a major concern in many homes. This study investigated sexual satisfaction as a determinant of marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria. At the 0.05 level of significance, two research questions were posed, and four null hypotheses were tested. The study used a quantitative research method and a correlational survey design. A total of 393 married adults from four selected organizations took part in the study. The instrument used to collect data from the respondents was a questionnaire designed by the researchers and titled "Sexual Satisfaction and Marital Stability Questionnaire (SSMSQ)." The data collected was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that respondents agreed that sexual satisfaction was a determinant of marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria. The responses from participants showed no significant differences across items, suggesting that they viewed a well-structured counseling intervention as a practical approach to reducing sexual dissatisfaction among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Sexual satisfaction; Marital stability; Married adults*

## INTRODUCTION:

Marital stability is a critical determinant of individual and societal well-being. A stable marriage provides a foundation for raising children, building strong communities, and contributing to the economy. However, marital instability is a major problem in many societies, including Nigeria. There is a growing body of research that suggests that sexual satisfaction is an important correlate of marital stability. Sexual satisfaction is a key component of marital satisfaction, and it has been shown to predict marital stability over time.

Marriage is a social institution that has existed for centuries and has been the foundation of human societies around the world. It is a unique bond between two individuals who choose to share their lives, hopes, aspirations, and dreams. Marriage is also an institution that is constantly evolving as well as adapting to the changing social, economic, and cultural contexts. One of the most significant changes that have occurred in recent years is the increased emphasis on the importance of individual fulfillment and satisfaction in marital relationships. This shift has led to significant growth in research on the factors that contribute to marital satisfaction and stability. One of such factors is sexual satisfaction.

Sexual satisfaction is an essential component of intimate relationships and has been linked to overall relationship satisfaction and well-being (Adegboyega, Idowu & Ogunleye, 2018). Sexual satisfaction is defined as an individual's subjective experience of pleasure and fulfillment in sexual activities with their partner. Research has shown that sexual satisfaction is positively associated with relationship satisfaction and negatively associated with relationship distress (McNulty & Fisher, 2016). Conversely, sexual dissatisfaction is a significant predictor of relationship dissatisfaction and can lead to increased conflict, infidelity, and even divorce (Owolabi, 2019).

Sexual satisfaction is a complex concept that involves a range of physical, emotional, and psychological factors. It refers to the overall fulfillment and pleasure one experiences during sexual activities. While it's important to acknowledge that individuals have diverse preferences and needs, discussing sexual satisfaction explicitly may involve addressing various aspects, such as communication, consent, arousal, orgasm, and overall sexual well-being.

Open and honest communication with one's partner is crucial for understanding desires, boundaries, and preferences. Consent and mutual respect are fundamental for a satisfying sexual experience. Exploring different forms of stimulation, including foreplay and experimentation, can enhance arousal and increase the likelihood of sexual satisfaction. Additionally, focusing on the emotional connection and intimacy can deepen the overall experience.

It is worth noting that sexual satisfaction can vary greatly from person to person. Factors such as individual preferences, past experiences, health conditions, stress levels, and relationship dynamics can all influence one's satisfaction. Everyone's journey toward sexual satisfaction is unique, and it's important to prioritize personal well-being, self-exploration, and the creation of a safe and supportive environment for sexual expression. Gender norms and societal expectations can influence how individuals communicate about their sexual needs and desires. Men and women may have different communication styles when it comes to discussing intimate matters. This can affect how comfortable they are in expressing their preferences, which in turn may impact on their overall sexual satisfaction. Societal norms and gender stereotypes can influence how individuals perceive their personal as well as their partner's sexual roles, attitudes, and behaviours (Nwagwu, Nwankwo, & Okoye, 2013). These perceptions can affect sexual satisfaction, as individuals may feel pressured to conform to these norms rather than focusing on their desires and preferences.

Research has shown that men and women may have differing patterns of sexual desire and frequency. For example, men might typically report higher levels of sexual desire and a preference for more frequent sexual activity. This difference in desire levels can potentially lead to discrepancies in sexual satisfaction if both partners are not on the same page. Women often emphasize emotional intimacy and connection as integral to their sexual satisfaction. Building emotional intimacy and a sense of closeness can contribute significantly to sexual satisfaction for individuals of all genders. However, this connection might be prioritized differently depending on cultural and gender-related factors. Body image concerns and self-esteem can impact sexual satisfaction. Both men and women may experience body-related insecurities that affect their comfort and confidence in sexual situations. Addressing these issues can lead to improved sexual satisfaction for individuals of any gender.

The duration of marriage can also impact a partner's level of sexual satisfaction. In the early stages of a marriage, couples often experience a "honeymoon phase" characterized by intense passion and novelty. Over time, this initial excitement might decline, but emotional intimacy and a deeper understanding of each other's needs can develop, contributing to sustained sexual satisfaction. On the other hand, longer marriages might face challenges related to routine, stress, and changing life circumstances that could potentially affect sexual satisfaction. Communication and effort to maintain intimacy become crucial factors in the long-term sexual satisfaction of marriage. Occupation can indirectly influence sexual satisfaction through factors such as work-related stress, working hours, and overall job fulfillment. Highly demanding or stressful occupations might lead to fatigue, reduced availability for intimate moments, and decreased sexual satisfaction. Conversely, couples with fulfilling and balanced work lives might have more time and emotional energy to invest in their relationships, positively impacting sexual satisfaction. Communication about work-related stress and finding ways to manage it together is important for maintaining a healthy sexual relationship (Ogundele, Aina, & Aina, 2021).

#### Statement of the Problem

In Nigerian societies today, marital relationships seem to be full of paradoxes. While some married persons enjoy stability as they are fulfilled, many others are faced with challenges of separation, dissolution, or divorce among others, which may have severe implications, especially for the mental health of the couples, and consequently, the behaviours of the products of such marital relationships. When couples record stability and fulfilment in their relationships, they have good mental health. They are more coordinated both physically, socially, and psychologically. Also, they are more disposed to play positive parental roles towards the upbringing of their children and wards.

Thus, marital stability and fulfilment appear to be essential for establishing a peaceful home which may likely promote mental health among others. Home as the foundation of any nation is expected to be solidly built and happy. Since this may not seem to be so, generally, there is a need to find out what would be the correlation between marital stability and sexual satisfaction.

**Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between marital stability and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether moderating variables of gender and age would determine marital stability and sexual satisfaction.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the conduct of this study:

1. What are the levels of sexual satisfaction of married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of marital stability of married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria?

### **Hypotheses**

- (1) Sexual satisfaction will not significantly correlate with marital stability of married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria
- (2) There is no significant difference in sexual satisfaction among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on age.
- (3) There is no significant difference in marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender.
- (4) There is no significant difference in marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on age.

### **METHODOLOGY**

To gather the information required for the analysis, the study used a survey research design of correlational type. An inventory titled, sexual satisfaction and marital stability questionnaire was used to elicit information from the participants. Two separate sections, Section A and Section B, comprised the inventory. Section B included 15 topics related to sexual satisfaction and marital stability in Kwara State, Nigeria, while Section A was intended to gather demographic data. Using the Cronbach technique of reliability, the instrument showed a reliability coefficient of 0.75. With a 4–1 scoring range, the tool used a Four-point Likert Scale style. A purposive selection technique was used in the study to select 393 married adults. The researchers administered the inventory with the respondents in person. Descriptive statistics, the t-test, Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used as statistical techniques in the data analysis. The significance level for the null hypotheses was set at 0.05.

## RESULTS

### Demographic Data

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Demographic Data

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	163	41.5
Female	230	58.5
Total	393	100
<i>Age</i>		
20-35 years	114	29.0
36-50 years	210	53.4
51 years and above	69	17.6
Total	393	100

Table 1 shows the distribution of demographic data of the respondents. The table reveals that 163 (41.5%) of the respondents were male, while 230 (58.5%) of the respondents were female. Based on age, the table reveals that 114 (29.0%) of the respondents were between 20-35 years of age, 210 (53.4%) of the respondents were between 36-50 years of age, while 69 (17.6%) were 51 years of age and above.

Research Question 1: What is the level of sexual satisfaction of adults in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Level of Sexual Satisfaction

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	275	70.0
Low	118	30.0
Total	393	100

Table 2 indicates the respondents' level of sexual satisfaction. The table indicates that 275 (70.0%) of the respondents have high level of sexual satisfaction while 118 (30.0%) of the respondents have low level of sexual satisfaction. This indicates that more than half of the respondents (70.0%) have high level of sexual satisfaction. In order to know the specific areas where they experienced high or low level of sexual satisfaction, mean, standard deviation and rank order analysis was presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank Order Analysis on the Respondents' Satisfaction

Item No	As far as I am concerned,	Mean	S.D.	Rank
3	I feel comfortable discussing my sexual needs and desires with my partner	3.00	.712	1 <sup>st</sup>
6	I am open to exploring new sexual experiences with my partner	2.99	.723	2 <sup>nd</sup>
5	I feel sexually wanted by my partner	2.98	.698	3 <sup>rd</sup>
2	I feel emotionally connected to my partner during sexual encounters	2.96	.773	4 <sup>th</sup>
1	I am satisfied with the frequency of sexual intimacy in my marriage	2.94	.783	5 <sup>th</sup>
7	I am satisfied with the level of communication about sex in my marriage	2.81	.688	6 <sup>th</sup>
10	My spouse responds to my sexual needs without hesitation	2.78	.704	7 <sup>th</sup>
9	I feel sexually confident in my relationship	2.77	.674	8 <sup>th</sup>
8	I feel that my sexual needs are adequately fulfilled in my marriage	2.75	.808	9 <sup>th</sup>
4	I am satisfied with the quality of sexual intimacy in my marriage	2.73	.720	10 <sup>th</sup>

Table 3 presents the mean, standard deviation, and rank order of the respondents' sexual satisfaction. The table indicates that items 3, 6, and 5 which state that as far as I am concerned, I feel comfortable discussing my sexual needs and desires with my partner; I am open to exploring new sexual experiences with my partner; and I feel sexually wanted by my partner ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd with the mean scores of 3.00, 2.99 and 2.98 respectively. Similarly, items 9, 8 and 4 which state that as far as I am concerned, I feel sexually confident in my relationship; I feel that my sexual needs are adequately fulfilled in my marriage; and I am satisfied with the quality of sexual intimacy in my marriage ranked 8th, 9th and 10th with the mean scores of 2.77, 2.75 and 2.73 respectively. Since all the items ranked above 2.50 mean cut-off point, it can be said that respondents attested that they felt comfortable discussing their sexual needs and desires with their partners; opened to exploring new sexual experiences with their partners; felt sexually wanted by their partners; felt emotionally connected to their partners during sexual encounters among others.

Research Question 2: What is the level of marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Level of Marital Stability

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	302	76.8
Low	91	23.2
Total	393	100

Table 4 indicates the respondents' level of marital stability. The table indicates that 302 (76.8%) of the respondents experienced in high level of marital stability while 91 (23.2%) of the respondents experienced a low level of marital stability. This indicates that more than half (76.8%) of respondents experienced a high level of marital stability. To know the specific areas where they experienced high or low marital stability, mean, standard deviation and rank order analysis was presented in Table 5:

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank Order Analysis on the Respondents' Level of				Marital Stability
Item No	As far as I am concerned:	Mean	S.D.	Rank
6	I feel a sense of commitment to my marriage	3.09	.673	1 <sup>st</sup>
9	I feel that my marriage contributes positively to my personal happiness	3.09	.708	2 <sup>nd</sup>
7	I believe that my marriage provides me with a sense of companionship	3.07	.725	3 <sup>rd</sup>
1	I feel emotionally secure in my marriage	3.03	.626	4 <sup>th</sup>
3	I feel that my partner and I share common goals values	2.98	.696	4 <sup>th</sup>
4	We effectively resolve conflicts in our marriage	2.97	.728	6 <sup>th</sup>
5	I feel satisfied with the level of communication in my marriage	2.86	.731	7 <sup>th</sup>
8	I am satisfied with the overall quality of my marriage	2.77	.562	7 <sup>th</sup>
10	My spouse does not use hurtful words on me when angry	2.70	.846	9 <sup>th</sup>
2	I trust my partner completely	2.59	.809	10 <sup>th</sup>

Table 5 presents the mean, standard deviation and rank order of the respondents' marital stability. The table indicates that items 6 and 9 which states as far as I am concerned: I feel a sense of commitment to my marriage, and I feel that my marriage contributes positively to my happiness ranked 1st with a mean score of 3.09 each. Item 7 which stated that I believe that my marriage provides me with a sense of companionship ranked 3rd with a mean score of 3.07. Likewise, items 8, 10, and 2 state that as far as I am concerned: I am satisfied with the overall quality of my marriage; my spouse does not use hurtful words on me when angry; and I trust my partner completely ranked 8th, 9th and 10th with the mean scores of 2.77, 2.70 and 2.59 respectively. All items ranked above 2.50 cut-off points thus this indicates that some of the respondents attested that they felt sense of commitment to their marriage; felt that their marriage contributed positively to their personal happiness; believed that their marriage provided them with a sense of companionship; felt emotionally secure in their marriage.

**Hypothesis One:** *Sexual satisfaction will not significantly correlate with marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria*

**Table 6a: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.605 <sup>a</sup>	.366	.362	4.82

Predictor: (Constant), Sexual Satisfaction

**Table 6b: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	5238.98	2	2619.49	112.34*	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	9093.23	390	23.31		
Total	14332.21	392			

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Stability

b. Predictor: (Constant) , Sexual Satisfaction

\* Significant, p<0.05

**Table 6c: Regression Coefficient showing Sexual satisfaction Influencing Marital Stability of the Respondents**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.16	1.76		3.48	.001
sexual satisfaction	.560	.039	.579	14.32*	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Marital Stability

\* Significant, p<0.05

Table 6a reveals that the independent variable (sexual satisfaction) when combined indicate a significant relationship with marital stability. The adjusted R square of .362 translates to 36.2% and this implies extent in which independent variable correlates with dependent variable.

In the Table 6b, the result of the ANOVA table indicates an F-value of 112.34 with p-value of .000 which is less than 0.05 significant level. Since the calculated p-value is less than significant level hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, sexual satisfaction significantly correlates with marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 6c indicates contribution of variables (sexual satisfaction) to marital stability. Sexual satisfaction has a Beta weight ( ) of .222,  $t = 5.48$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Based on the result, it could be seen that sexual satisfaction was found to significantly influence marital stability of married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the sexual satisfaction among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on age*

Table 7: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing difference in the Sexual Satisfaction of the Respondents Based on Age

Source	SS	df	Mean Square	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. ratio	F-	p-value
Between Groups	1851.78	2	925.89	26.77*	3.00		.000
Within Groups	13486.78	390	34.58				
Total	15338.57	392					

\* Significant,  $p < 0.05$

Table 7 shows that the calculated F-ratio of 26.77 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.00 with a corresponding p-value of .000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference in sexual satisfaction among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on age. To ascertain where the significant difference lies, Scheffe Post-Hoc was carried out and the output is shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Scheffe post-hoc showing where the significant difference lies based on Age

Year	N	Sub set for Alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	
51 years and above	69	25.55		
36-50 years	210		28.06	
20-35 years	114			31.78
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

Table 8 indicates that respondents who were 51 years of age and above have the mean score of 25.55 (in subset 1), respondents who were between 36-50 years of age have a mean score of 28.06 (in subset 2), while who were between 20-35 years have the highest mean score of 31.78 (in subset 3) and thus, contributed more to the significant difference than other age group.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference in the marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender*



Table 9: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value showing difference in the Marital Stability of the Respondents Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	163	31.56	6.077	391	7.04*	1.96	.000
Female	230	27.45	5.424				

\* Significant,  $p < 0.05$

Table 9 shows that the calculated t-value of 7.04 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 with a corresponding p-value of .000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a significant difference in marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender.

Hypothesis four: *There is no significant difference in the marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on age*

Table 10: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing difference in the Marital Stability of the Respondents Based on Age

Source	SS	df	Mean Square	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. ratio	F-	p-value
Between Groups	1759.66	2	879.83	27.29*	3.00		.000
Within Groups	12572.55	390	32.23				
Total	14332.21	392					

\* Significant,  $p < 0.05$

Table 10 shows the calculated F-ratio of 27.29 is greater than the critical F-value of 3.00 with a corresponding p-value of .000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on age. To ascertain where the significant difference lies, Scheffe Post-Hoc was carried out and the output is shown in Table 10.

Table 11: Scheffe post-hoc showing where the significant difference lies based on Age

Years	N	Subset for Alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
36-50 years	210	27.24		
20-35 years	114		30.76	
51 years and above	69			32.33
Sig.		1.000	1.000	.131

Table 11 indicates that respondents who were between 36-50 years have a mean score of 27.24 (in subset 1), those who were between 20-35 years have a mean score of 30.76 (in subset 2), while respondents who were 51 years of age and above have the highest mean score of 32.33 (in subset 3) and thus, contributed more to the significant difference.

## DISCUSSION

The study revealed that 70.0% of married adults have a high level of sexual satisfaction as they felt comfortable discussing their sexual needs and desires with their partners; opened to explore new sexual experiences with their partners; felt sexually wanted by their partners; felt emotionally connected to their partners during sexual encounters among others. The finding relates to the study of Meltzer and McNulty (2010) found that couples who reported higher levels of sexual satisfaction were more likely to communicate

about sexual issues openly and frequently. Similarly, a study by Carpenter, Nathanson and Kim (2009) found that couples who reported higher levels of communication regarding sexual intimacy had higher levels of sexual satisfaction and were less likely to experience sexual dysfunction. In justifying the outcome of this research, drawing inference from Adebayo, Olayiwola-Adedaja and Micheal (2024), it could be that any forms of fulfillment impacts on marital stability as job fulfillment also impacts on marital stability of the used population.

The result of the hypothesis one revealed that sexual satisfaction significantly correlate with marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria. This implies that sexual satisfaction influenced the marital stability of the respondents. Kim and McKenry (2016) who found that sexual satisfaction was positively associated with marital satisfaction, indicating that couples who reported higher levels of sexual satisfaction also reported higher levels of marital satisfaction. This could be that respondents share similar values and goals regarding their sexual intimacy which make them experience marital stability.

Hypothesis two revealed that there was a significant difference in sexual satisfaction among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on age. The finding implies that married adults across the age range enjoy sexual satisfaction at different levels. The result of Scheffe's post-hoc revealed that respondents who were between 20-35 years of age contributed more to the significant difference. The finding agrees with the study of Yucel and Gassanov (2010) who found that middle-aged individuals (40-59 years old) reported the highest levels of sexual satisfaction, while younger and older groups reported slightly lower satisfaction levels. On the contrary, Lammers, Stoker and Jordan (2011) found that age was not a significant predictor of sexual satisfaction in married adults. Instead, they found that relationship duration, communication, and emotional intimacy were more influential factors. This could be that young respondents (20-35 years) might be sexually active compared to older married adults.

Hypothesis three revealed that there was a significant difference in marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender. This implies that male and female respondents did not enjoy similar levels of marital stability. This negates the study of Kurdek, (2005) who reported that not all women or men conform to traditional gender roles, and their characteristics play a more significant role in marital instability. Kalmijn and Poortman (2006) found that women tend to value emotional intimacy and communication more than men in marriages which absence of it could lead to marital instability. This could be because the expectations of both genders towards marital fulfillment are different.

Hypothesis four revealed that there was a significant difference in the marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria based on age. This implies that the experiences of the respondents across ages have different levels of marital stability. The results of post-hoc showed that respondents who were 51 years of age and above contributed more to the significant difference. The finding supports the studies of Amato and Rogers (2009), Härkönen and Dronkers (2016), and Teachman (2022), and Dikko, Adaramoye and Olayiwola-Adedaja (2023), who established a clear link between the age of couples at the time of marriage and marital stability. This could be that respondents who were 51 years of age and above have emotional maturity and tolerance to develop marital stability.

### Implications for Counselling

The findings of this study have several implications for counsellors. Counsellors can explore other factors that could affect marital stability. Marital Counsellors can address the issue of work-life balance. Helping individuals manage their career aspirations and personal life responsibilities can indirectly contribute to marital satisfaction.

The current study revealed that there were significant differences in the sexual satisfaction of married adults in Kwara State based on age and gender. Counsellors can explore other potential contributors to sexual satisfaction, such as communication skills, emotional intimacy, stress levels, and health issues. Identifying these factors can help in developing effective strategies for improving sexual satisfaction. Counselling can be valuable as a preventive measure. Encourage couples to seek counselling before issues escalate to help them build a solid foundation and develop effective relationship skills.

## Conclusion

This study examined sexual satisfaction as correlates of marital stability among married adults in Kwara State, Nigeria. In conclusion, 70 to 76.8% of married adults experienced high levels of sexual satisfaction and marital stability. It was concluded that there were significant differences in the sexual satisfaction of married adults in Kwara State based on age, but no significant difference was found based on gender. Finally, there were significant differences in the marital stability of married adults in Kwara State based on gender and age.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Married adults should manage their career aspirations and personal life responsibilities to enjoy marital stability.
2. Couples are encouraged to seek counselling before issues escalate to help them build a solid foundation and develop effective relationship skills.
3. Marital counsellors should promote open and honest communication between partners about their sexual desires, fantasies, and concerns irrespective of their gender or age to promote sexual satisfaction.

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