

Proposition de communication

Congrès : 2018 SSSS (*The Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality*) Annual Meeting

Titre : What is so appealing in being spanked? 400 masochists/submissive offer an answer

Introduction. Sexual masochism/submission is one the greatest enigma of human psychology. Traditionally considered as the manifestation of a mental disorder, empirical psychology studies repeatedly fail to find signs of psychopathology among sexual masochists (e.g. Wismeijer, & Assen, 2013). Still, enjoying submissive, degrading, and/or highly painful behaviors is counter-intuitive, and the source of that pleasure is mostly unknown. **Objectives.** The main goal of this study was to determine the reasons why some persons enjoy sexual masochism. **Methods.** To reach that goal, online forums devoted to Bondage-discipline/submission-Domination/Sadism-masochism (BDSM) practices were explored, and all tread titles associated with the origins, reasons, motives, benefits, rewards or childhood experiences linked with BDSM were read. Written explanations provided by 400 different masochistic users were found. These descriptions were copied and qualitatively analyzed with NVivo (software) to let recurrent themes emerge until saturation (and inter-raters agreements). **Results:** Seven, non-exclusive, reasons emerged from these analyses: (1) Intrinsic (“I was born that way”); (2) Altered state of consciousness (i.e., endorphin rush; hypnotic analgesia; spiritual ecstasy); (3) Mindfulness (i.e., meditation, high-focus, relaxation, stress reduction); (4) Power plays (i.e. the thrill of giving total power); (5) Learned experience (i.e., instrumental conditioning); (6) Late initiation (i.e. being introduced by a partner); (7) Overcoming a trauma (e.g. childhood maltreatment, therapeutic), in descending order of importance. **Conclusion:** The vast majority of reasons to practice sexual masochism/submission are positive. It is hypothesized that sexual masochism/submission allows reaching pleasurable mind states commonly pursued, although differently (e.g., runner’s rush, hypnosis, meditation, drugs). The reason why certain persons eroticize that quest is unknown, though libido and/or testosterone individual levels might be involved.

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