Psychosocial Variables of Sexual Satisfaction in Chile

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This study analyzed psychosocial variables of sexual satisfaction in Chile using data from the COSECON survey. Participants were 5,407 subjects (2,244 men and 3,163 women, aged 18–69 years). We used a cross-sectional questionnaire with a national probability sample. Data were collected using a thorough sexual behavior questionnaire consisting of 190 face-to-face questions and 24 self-reported questions. A single item included in the COSECON questionnaire assessed sexual satisfaction. Results showed that high education level, marital status, and high socioeconomic levels were associated with sexual satisfaction in women but not in men. The results also showed important gender differences and sustain the idea that sexuality changes may be more present in middle and high social classes. The proximal variables typically used for measuring sexual satisfaction, such as the frequency of sexual intercourse and orgasm, showed a positive but smaller association with sexual satisfaction. Other important variables related to sexual satisfaction were being in love with the partner and having a steady partner. The results confirmed previous findings and are discussed in the frame of approaches like the exchange, equity, and sexual scripts theories.

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In the West and in Chile, an important transformation is taking place in both sexual and gender values (Barrientos, 2003; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Probably one of the most important findings in Chile is changing that of sexual roles and cultural norms regarding sexuality since the late 1970s, as a result of a decreasing role of the Catholic Church on social policy, the decrease of people’s attendance at church, and the consequences of military dictatorship on Chileans’ sexuality (CONASIDA & ANRS, 2000). In this way, the COSECON study and other studies in Latin America have showed the great importance of social context, social factors, and the Catholic Church in sexuality and gender (CONASIDA & ANRS, 2000; Valdés & Olavarría, 1998; Viveros, 2001). In Chile, special emphasis has been given to the understanding of sociopolitical and cultural matrixes and social discourses on sexuality since the Chilean coup d’état in 1973 (Htun, 2003). Htun (2003) has shown how military discourse had gender and sexuality components. But, women’s incorporation into the work force, improvement in women’s education, the decline in fertility rates, and the transition to democratic government in Chile led to a transformation in sexuality, gender relations, and family structure.

Chilean culture, as well as several other cultures, emphasizes the importance of pleasure and sexual satisfaction, particularly men’s pleasure. But this situation might be slowly changing. Diverse studies on sexual satisfaction have been conducted at national and international levels (Dunn, Croft, & Hackett, 2000; Kontula & Haavio-Manila, 1995; Haavio-Manila & Kontula, 1997; Kleinseck, 1996; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Ojanlatva, Helenius, Rautava, Ahvenainen, & Koskenvuo, 2003; Páez et al., 2003; Richters, Grulich, De Visser, Smith, & Rissel, 2003; Valdés, Benavente, & Gysling, 1999; Ventegodt, 1998; Yela, 2000). Sexual satisfaction is regarded as a barometer for the quality of partner relationship, but it also is used, at least in Chile, as an indicator of masculine potency and virility. For men this situation usually leads to a high frequency of sexual intercourse (Kleinseck, 1996; Valdés et al., 1999). However, recent studies in various countries highlight not only the importance of the physical component of sexual satisfaction (e.g., the frequency of sexual intercourse and orgasm) but also affective and emotional components (Bridges, Lease, & Ellison, 2004; Haavio-Manila & Kontula, 1997; Kontula & Haavio-Manila, 1995; Laumann et al., 1994; Richters et al., 2003). These studies appear to highlight the change in perception of sexual satisfaction for men and women, particularly the increasing importance of this appraisal for women (Haavio-Manila, Kontula, & Rotkirch, 2002). Hence, some studies show that, at present, many women sure to increase satisfaction if they assess it negatively, either by seeking other sexual partners or pushing their sexual partners to make them feel pleasure (Haavio-Manila et al., 2002).
THE CONCEPT OF SEXUAL SATISFACTION AND ITS CORRELATES

Sexual satisfaction has been conceptualized in different ways, even though its association with frequency of sexual intercourse and, more recently, with orgasm has prevailed (Haavio-Manila & Kontula, 1997; Laumann et al., 1994). Frequency of sexual intercourse and orgasm, although the variables mostly studied and associated with sexual satisfaction (Haavio-Manila & Kontula, 1997; Laumann et al., 1994), may be only some of the aspects of sexual activity (Bozon, 2002a). Orgasm and frequency of intercourse remain the indicators that most easily allow assessment of sexual satisfaction (Haavio-Manila & Kontula, 1997).

Recent studies show the importance of a series of affective and relational variables (Davies, Katz, & Jackson, 1999; DeLamater, 1991; Haavio-Manila & Kontula, 1994, 1997; Laumann et al., 1994; Waite & Joyner, 2001a; Yela, 2000). Postsexual sensations, particularly happiness or pleasure, may be strongly associated with sexual satisfaction (DeLamater, 1991; Laumann et al., 1994). The absence of discrepancies for desiring sexual relations would be a variable closely associated with sexual satisfaction (Davies et al., 1999). Communication of sexual topics would be another important variable for sexual satisfaction (Byers & Demmons, 1999; Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Metts & Cupach, 1989). Also, discrepancy bargaining in desiring sexual relations would be a variable strongly connected with sexual satisfaction, particularly in contexts showing deep gender inequality (CONASIDA & ANRS, 2000).

Finally, sexual satisfaction has shown to be related to various sociodemographic variables, such as age (middle-aged people report higher satisfaction), high educational level, stable marital status (being married or cohabiting), and high socioeconomic level (Laumann et al., 1994).

THEORIES OF SEXUAL SATISFACTION

There are a lot of theories about sexual satisfaction. The theories of investment and social exchange, for example, that associate sexual satisfaction with the general quality of a conjugal relationship. Sexual satisfaction would then represent a favorable balance of rewards and costs for the sexual and nonsexual aspects of relationships (Sprecher, 2001).

Rational-choice theories take into account how individual resources and several investments made by the partners organize people’s goals for their sexual life. Laumann et al. (1994) suggested that finding a partner and bargaining in sexual relations imply investing in a series of resources such as time, money, and love. Then, if finding a new partner is a difficult process,
people will make a rational selection by assessing which partners are more beneficial for their physical and emotional needs. Thus, stability, long-term temporal horizon, higher degree of sexual exclusiveness (Waite & Joyner, 2001a, 2001b), and years of partner relationship (Bozon, 2001) would be closely related to sexual satisfaction.

Finally, according to the theory of sexual scripts, there may be in a certain culture guidelines specifying (a) who would be probable sexual partners, (b) under what circumstances (when and where) it would be proper to behave sexually and what type of activities would be allowed (what and how), and (c) the reasons that lead us to behave sexually in a certain way (Gagnon & Simon, 1987; Ubillos & Barrientos, 2002). Apostolidis, Antipa, and Paicheler (1992) showed that most people in Western countries, including young people, may think that love is a requirement for stable intimate relations, and this opinion continues to grow. Women, more often than men, may think that love is the basic reason for sexual relations (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992) and, in many cases, the reason for initiating them, although this has been changing in the last few years (Bozon & Kontula, 1998). This prototype scenario might have a standardizing character, that is, it might be considered frequent and desirable.

So, interaction rules most important for partners that live together would be showing confidence in one another, displaying respect for a partner’s privacy, giving emotional support, sharing positive events, and being loyal to each other (Argyle & Henderson, 1985). On the other hand, infidelity and adultery would be strongly rejected, and people may believe this it will not happen to them (Wiederman, 1997).

Sexual satisfaction is specifically understood as stated by Haavio-Manila and Kontula (1997), who recognized a physical component and an affective/emotional component. Physical sexual satisfaction refers to satisfaction or “pleasurableness of sexual intercourse,” whereas emotional sexual satisfaction relates to “happiness of steady relationships.” Although the definition of sexual satisfaction has two components, the COSECON questionnaire included only one question for sexual satisfaction, which was used as the dependent variable for analyses and included both physical and emotional variables. There are no earlier studies about these variables in Chile.

**OBJECTIVE**

Using the COSECON database, this study aims to describe sexual satisfaction levels in Chile and also to characterize the associated psychosocial variables that distinguish the “very satisfied” from the “satisfied” and “dissatisfied.” The specific objective of COSECON study was to describe sexual behavior, sexual attitudes, and attitudes towards AIDS in Chile.
METHODS

Participants

The data used for this inquiry come from the COSECON study. A detailed description of COSECON study procedures has been published in more detail elsewhere (CONASIDA & ANRS, 2000). The COSECON study, conducted in 1998, covered in 24 large Chielean cities, and included 100,000 people. It was based on a probabilistic multistage stratified sample that varied according to city size. The sample was obtained from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (CONASIDA & ANRS, 2000). The sample represents about 80% of the national urban population. Nonurban populations were not represented in COSECON study. A theoretical and original sample consisted of 6,732 questionnaires and the final sample included 5,407 valid questionnaires, (Table 1). The overall sample consisted of 2,244 men (41.5%) and 3,163 women (58.5%) whose age ranged from 18 to 69 years. We chose this age range because 18 years is the minimum age for legal sexual consent in Chile and among people 69 years and older, the AIDS prevalence is rare.

| TABLE 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of COSECON Study Participants |
|------------------|-------|-------|------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| Characteristic   | Women | Men   | Total            | Women | Men   | Total            |
|                  | %     | N     | %     | N     | %     | N     |
| Sex              |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 18–19            | 4.7   | 149   | 4.9   | 109   | 4.8   | 258   |
| 20–29            | 22    | 695   | 24.7  | 455   | 23.1  | 1250  |
| 30–39            | 28.9  | 915   | 25.8  | 478   | 27.6  | 1493  |
| 40–49            | 19.6  | 620   | 21.6  | 484   | 20.4  | 1104  |
| 50–59            | 13.8  | 435   | 13.5  | 304   | 13.7  | 739   |
| 60–69            | 11    | 349   | 9.5   | 214   | 10.4  | 463   |
| Education level  |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| High             | 21.1  | 533   | 24.2  | 460   | 22.5  | 993   |
| Middle           | 43.6  | 999   | 45.2  | 1086  | 44.3  | 2595  |
| Low              | 31.7  | 2508  | 27.2  | 608   | 29.8  | 1607  |
| Don't know       | 3.5   | 122   | 3.3   | 89    | 3.4   | 211   |
| Economic level   |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| High             | 2.9   | 93    | 2.9   | 66    | 2.9   | 159   |
| Middle           | 51.1  | 1617  | 51.4  | 1153  | 51.2  | 2770  |
| Low              | 45.6  | 1441  | 45.4  | 1018  | 45.5  | 2459  |
| Without Information |      |       |       |       |       |       |
| Marital status   |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Single           | 22.2  | 703   | 27.4  | 615   | 24.4  | 1318  |
| Married          | 51    | 1614  | 54.5  | 1224  | 52.5  | 2838  |
| Cohabitant       | 10.9  | 344   | 10.8  | 242   | 10.8  | 586   |
| Separated        | 9.4   | 297   | 5.9   | 132   | 7.9   | 429   |
| Widowed          | 6.4   | 205   | 1.4   | 31    | 4.3   | 236   |

Source: Conasida and ANRS (2000).
We included only respondents who had had sexual activity in the past year because they were the only ones who could respond to the sexual satisfaction item. Only those with a primary sexual partner in the last 12 months were examined. The COSECON study assumed that the primary partner was the cohabiting partner if cohabiting and the spouse if married. Single respondents were asked to consider their most important primary partner. Sexual partner was not necessarily the spouse but the last partner having sex with. A total of 4,339 individuals reported valid information for all relevant sexual satisfaction variables. Respondents with a partner of the same sex were excluded because these were too real of them. Because of the male underrepresentation of the sample, CONASIDA calculated a weighting factor by sex to raise the COSECON study’s precision. We also used this weighting factor in our analysis. Data collection was conducted by CONASIDA, supported by an external agency.

The rejection rate in homes was 9.3% the rejection rate from the subjects selected was 6.7% and the percentage of nonavailable people was 3.7%. Thus, the overall rejection rate (adding both) was 19.7%, and the overall response rate was 80.3% (CONASIDA & ANRS, 2000). Estimated error was ±1.4% at 0.05 levels (CONASIDA & ANRS, 2000).

PROCEDURES AND MEASURES

The data collection device was a cross-sectional sex survey. We prepared COSECON questionnaire with close-ended questions: (a) 190 items for face-to-face application by an interviewer and (b) 24 anonymous self-reported questions grouped into two specific modules. The instrument was divided into modules, or thematic sets, appropriate, depending on each case, to all or some of the population subgroups. The pertinence of each group of questions was shown by the sexual activity state reported by interviewees in relation to three temporal contexts and number of the most recent sexual partners. Using the above criteria, we determined the following subgroups (CONASIDA & ANRS, 2000): (a) nonexperienced: single people having no experience with sexual relations; (b) inactive for the past five years: people who had had sexual relations in their lives but not in the past five years; (c) active in the past five years but inactive in the past 12 months: people who had had sexual relations and who reported penetrative sexual activity in the past five years but not in the past 12 months; (d) Active in the past 12 months, monopartners: people who had had sexual relations with one partner in the past year; and (e) Active in the past 12 months, multipartners: people who had had sexual relations in the past year with more than one partner.

Sexual behavior variables in the COSECON survey included the following sets of questions: sociodemographic background, cultural norms regarding sexuality, communication and rules, sexual negotiation, sexual initiation,
protection and condom use, sexual partnership and sexual practices, commercial sex, rape, HIV/AIDS, and income. We used some of these variables to analyze sexual satisfaction in Chile.

The main dependent variable was sexual satisfaction with the last partner. The variable sexual satisfaction stated: “In general terms, regarding sexual intercourse you have with this individual or partner, you feel?” The Spanish version of the original question was: “En términos generales, respecto a las relaciones sexuales que tiene (o tenía) con esta persona o pareja, usted se siente (o sentía)?” The scale had four categories (very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, and dissatisfied) that were finally recoded into a 3-category scale. This scale ranged from very satisfied, to satisfied and dissatisfied because of the positively skewed distribution of life satisfaction responses.

All psychosocial variables included in COSECON study, theoretically relevant to the physical and emotional components, were used as independent variables in descriptive analyses (see Appendix). we used only some of these variables were used for the discriminant analysis.

The first type of independent variable was sociodemographic background. It included: sex, age, marital status, educational level, and socioeconomic level. Participants were asked about their frequency of sexual intercourse, whether they had had an orgasm, and which type of sexual repertories they had. In addition they were asked which type of relationship they had and if they were in love. Participants were also asked if they thought about time horizon, duration of relationship (in years), degree of sexual exclusiveness, sexual initiative, sexual desire discrepancy, and communication of intimate topics.

Other relevant sexual behavior variables were age at first sexual intercourse, satisfaction with sexual life in the past, effect of long-term sexual relationship with the partner, change of the negative aspects of sexual life, and what was the first consideration regarding a sexual relationship with a partner.

Using various techniques, including the calculation of percentages and testing of statistically meaningful tests such as $\chi^2$ using $p < 0.001$, we analyzed the data.

To control the simultaneous effect of the independent variables used, we conducted multivariate analyses based on stepwise discriminant analysis. We used discriminant analysis to determine the variables that most discriminate among very satisfied, satisfied, and dissatisfied. Knowing what characteristics distinguished these groups considered different from one another was important. Another reason to use this type of analysis was the characterization of dependent variable measurement. The discriminant analysis considered only 11 variables most relevant for predicting sexual satisfaction, after calculating percentages and $\chi^2$. The discriminant analysis was made with only 41.3% of the 4,339 individuals who had had sexual intercourse in the past 12 months, that is, 1,793 subjects. The remaining 48.7% (2,546 subjects) were
left out because they did not meet the requirements for this type of analysis. Table 2 shows the 11 variables that discriminated the most among the three groups of sexual satisfaction. It also shows the 11-step model and the "multicollinearity" controlled by tolerance calculation. This procedure allowed us to obtain only two self-values, because there were three groups and two functions possibly discriminant. The three groups were very satisfied, satisfied, and dissatisfied. We ordered the variables finally included from higher to lower importance, after considering statistics obtained for each of them.

**RESULTS**

Men reported higher satisfaction with sexual intercourse with their partners than did women (51.8% males vs. 44.4% women). From the viewpoint of dissatisfaction, the % increased for women (7.8%) compared with men (2.9%). The gender gap was almost 5%. This difference is statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 35.64$.

Age showed a curvilinear relationship with sexual satisfaction for women, $\chi^2(10) = 41.252$, and men, $\chi^2(10) = 21.529$. Thus, the women with the lowest percentage who felt very satisfied were the 60–69 age group, with 28.6%. Female sexual satisfaction was highest, exceeding the % of very satisfied men in the 20–39 age group (52%). The percentage of very satisfied women in the 18–19 age group is low, 34%.

Educational level and sexual satisfaction were significantly associated, particularly for women, $\chi^2(6) = 108.279$. For men, $\chi^2(6) = 43.102$. The percentage of “very satisfied” increased for both men and women as educational level increased, from 42.3% to 57.4% for men and from 26.8% to 58.5% for

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**TABLE 2.** Discriminant Analysis: Variables Introduced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanatory Variables</th>
<th>Wilks Lambda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Being in love</td>
<td>.851 ,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Good sexual life in the past</td>
<td>.794 ,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Find new emotions</td>
<td>.758 ,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 High educational level</td>
<td>.749 ,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Love</td>
<td>.741 ,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Married</td>
<td>.733 ,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Yes, relationship will continue in the next 12 months</td>
<td>.726 ,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Have had an orgasm</td>
<td>.720 ,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Wished intercourse with your partner</td>
<td>.713 ,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Yes, is it possible to change negative aspects</td>
<td>.708 ,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Early sexual initiation</td>
<td>.705 ,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. In each step, the variable minimizing global lambda is introduced: a. Maximum number of steps is 22; b. Minimal partial F to enter is 3.84; c. Maximum partial F to eliminate is 2.71. d. F level, tolerance or VIN are insufficient for calculation.
women. The similarity between the degrees of satisfaction reported by men and women and high educational level is notable. We observed dissatisfaction in the group of women with low educational level, who had higher dissatisfaction statements (12.4%), compared with men whose satisfaction was homogeneous at all educational levels. This could explain the greater effect of this variable on women.

High socioeconomic level is associated with the level of sexual satisfaction only in women, $\chi^2(4) = 41.846$. The highest “very satisfactory” reports are associated with high or middle socioeconomic level, 49.7% and 49.5%, respectively. The smaller percentage of “highly satisfied,” 36.7%, is associated with low socioeconomic level.

Focusing on present marital status and sexual satisfaction percentage reported, we found that both variables are related only in women, $\chi^2(8) = 51.165$. The high levels of sexual satisfaction reported by those who lived with their partners, either married or cohabiting, was remarkable, 45.5% and 42.6%, respectively. On the other hand, those who were separated reported the highest percentages of dissatisfaction (23.9%).

Physical Variables

We found significant association between frequency of intercourse and sexual satisfaction. A higher frequency of intercourse was related with a very satisfied sexual life, that is, $\chi^2(20) = 58.299$ for men, and $\chi^2(20) = 107.777$ for women.

Experiencing orgasms in past sexual intercourse was associated with a satisfying sexual life by both men, $\chi^2(4) = 21.688$, and women, $\chi^2(4) = 201.371$. Women reported greater satisfaction (50.6%) if orgasm occurred; whereas if it did not occur, the percentage of satisfaction fell to 21%. Men reported a greater percentage of satisfaction (53.3%) if orgasm occurred, but the drop was smaller than in women (45.9%) if orgasm did not occur.

Sexual practice repertoire was associated with sexual satisfaction among both men, $\chi^2(4) = 16.920$, and women $\chi^2(4) = 19.299$. For women, the more extended the repertoire, the greater the percentage of sexual satisfaction (49.6%); the same phenomenon occurred in men. If the repertoire included only vaginal sex, the percentage of satisfaction was lower.

Relational and Emotional Variables

The “steady” or “temporary” type of relationship was associated with sexual satisfaction levels for both men, $\chi^2(4) = 81.386$, and women, $\chi^2(4) = 94.368$. Women reported greater satisfaction with a steady partner (45.3%); the figure decreased when the relationship was “temporary.” Men reported more sexual satisfaction when the relationship was “steady” (64.6%) than when the relationship was “temporary” (32.6%).
Feeling love was clearly the most important variable explaining Chileans’ sexual satisfaction. Being in love with the partner was associated with sexual satisfaction levels both by men, $\chi^2(4) = 117.637$, and women, $\chi^2(4) = 411.776$. Women showed greater satisfaction (49.5%) if they were in love with their partner; this figure decreased to 10.6% when they were not. Figures for men also showed that the greatest levels of satisfaction (56.9%) were associated with being in love, decreasing to 33.3% when they were not.

Duration of partnership partners was positively associated with sexual satisfaction for both men, $\chi^2(12) = 43.664$, and women, $\chi^2(12) = 57.961$. Figures for men and women showed a quite low satisfaction percentage in the first few years as partners, but percentages increased as years of partnership increased. However, satisfaction percentages reached a peak and then fell after many years of relationship, especially among women.

Temporal long-term relationship horizon was associated with sexual satisfaction levels for both men, $\chi^2(2) = 62.266$, and women, $\chi^2(2) = 185.850$. For women, the greater the temporal horizon, the greater the satisfaction percentages (47.7%), with the figure falling to 11.4% when they thought that the relationship would end in the next 12 months. Figures for men showed that the percentage of very satisfied was greater when the temporal horizon was higher (56.1%), but percentages did not drop so suddenly when they thought that the relationship would end in the next 12 months (36.1%).

The greater the degree of sexual exclusiveness, the greater the level of sexual satisfaction for both men, $\chi^2(2) = 33.105$, and women, $\chi^2(2) = 48.647$. Women showed greater satisfaction levels (45.1%) when they had not had sexual intercourse with another partner in the past 12 months; men showed a similar percent (33.9%).

Sexual initiative was positively associated with satisfaction levels by both men, $\chi^2(8) = 83.042$, and women, $\chi^2(8) = 220.739$ Satisfaction percentages for women were related to the alternative “both” (both partners initiating), with 58.8%, falling to 43.3% when initiative frequently came from the male partner. Men reported shared initiative as more satisfactory (59.3%); however, figures did not drop when initiative frequently came from men (56.3%).

Finally, communication of intimate topics with the partner was positively associated with sexual satisfaction levels for both men, $\chi^2(2) = 17.159$, and women, $\chi^2(2) = 55.874$. Women reported 48.4% satisfaction with talking, compared with compared (33.1%) for not talking. Men reported a similar behavior (55.5% versus 43.8%).

Predictors of Sexual Satisfaction

We compared men and women with regard to the variables connected with sexual satisfaction but found no differences. The general discriminant analysis without differences by sex is shown in Table 2. Eleven independent variables were included (see Appendix). The first function explains 91.5% of
the variance, canonic correlation being 0.530; whereas the second function explains only 8.5% of the variance, canonic correlation being 0.187. This suggests that the first function explains sexual satisfaction meaningfully. Function 1, being more discriminant, clearly separates the very satisfied from the dissatisfied. Finally, we calculated the classificatory capacity of the analysis giving us 74.5% for very satisfied, a figure regarded as statistically adequate. Discriminant functions 1 and 2 allow us to properly classify 60.7% of the cases, more easily sorting the very satisfied (74.5%) than to the two other functions.

The analysis showed that the most discriminating variable between satisfied and dissatisfied was being in love with the partner. The next most important variable was good sexual life in the past. Emotions with the long-term partner and degree of sexual satisfaction were also related to educational level: the number of very satisfied increased for both men and women as educational level increased. Sexual satisfaction was positively related to believing that the relationship would have a long-term temporal horizon. Shared initiative in sexual intercourse was positively associated with sexual satisfaction. Orgasms during the last intercourse were positively associated with sexual satisfaction.

**DISCUSSION**

Sexual satisfaction results obtain from data from the COSECON study allowed us to establish a base line for Chile. Results show meaningful differences between men and women, with more positive results among men. This result is one of our most important conclusions and an indicator of the persistence of gender inequity in the country, unlike in other countries. Results are similar to those reported in the United States (Laumann et al., 1994) and Australia (Ritchers et al., 2003) but different from those reported in countries such as Finland (Kontula & Haavio-Manila, 1995; Ojanlatva et al., 2003), France (Delbés & Gaymu, 1997), England (Dunn et al., 2000), Denmark (Ventegodt, 1998), or Spain (Páez et al., 2003), where women reported higher satisfaction percentages than men.

Another finding related to gender could be connected to socioeconomic level. Results support the idea that sexuality, partner, family, and sexual satisfaction patterns may be particularly present in middle and high social classes. In terms of sexuality, these classes are more influenced by the processes of modernity and change (Heilborn, 1992; Salem, 1989). Thus, the higher the socioeconomic level, the higher the sexual satisfaction level. However, the low sexual satisfaction percentages reported in Chile, particularly in low socioeconomic levels, may be the result of factors such as the economic, educational, and cultural deprivation in which many Chilean women still live. (Godoy & Mauro, 2001; Valdés et al., 1999).
Other significant findings were related to age. These results were similar to those reported in the United States, Finland, or France (Delbès & Gaymu, 1997; Kontula & Haavio-Manila, 1995; Laumann et al., 1994): young people are more satisfied, with the exception of very young women. Many studies showed that young men were more positive about sexual satisfaction. This is similar to findings of an Australian study (Richters et al., 2003). However, our study also showed that the largest minority of young men wanted less sex than they were getting. This finding could challenge the myth of the sexual insatiability of young men and could show that sexual desire is a social construction (Richters et al., 2003). Nevertheless, Chile shows results different from those in other countries, particularly for older women. In France, for example, substantial changes have occurred in the past 20 years. Older women reported being very satisfied at rates three times higher than men between 1970 and 1992 (Delbès & Gaymu, 1997); whereas in Chile, older women reported low satisfaction percentages. This result suggests the existence of different sexual generations associated with different values and attitudes regarding sexuality and sexual satisfaction. Satisfaction is particularly high in new sexual generations, a finding reported in other countries (Haavio-Manila et al. 2002). In Chile, for example, shared initiative in sexual relations is positively associated with sexual satisfaction, as it also has been Finland (Kontula & Haavio-Manila, 1995). This finding may indicate a shift, especially for new sexual generations, toward greater equity and equality in gender relations, as suggested by Sharim, Silva, Rodo, and Rivera (1996).

Our results showed that physical components such as frequency of sexual intercourse, orgasm, and sexual practices could be associated with sexual satisfaction as reported in other countries like the United States or Finland, although their importance would be lower as compared with other variables (Kontula & Haavio-Manila, 1995; Laumann et al., 1994). However, the most important finding related to emotional variables. Results showed that these variables are more important than physical variables such as frequency of sexual intercourse. Our results may be similar to those reported in other countries, for example, Finland, Spain, or the United States (Kontula & Haavio-Manila, 1995; Laumann et al., 1994; Yela, 2000). These results also showed the importance of being in love with the sexual partner, similar to results in other studies, in Finland and Spain (Kontula & Haavio-Manila, 1995; Yela, 2000). This may be the variable with the most impact on sexual satisfaction, because it is an important investment according to rational choice theory. Moreover, the loving scenario is the context in which sexual activity predominantly occurs in Western countries, consistent with the sexual scripts Theory.

The importance of relational variables, such as type of relationship, is also important. Thus, having a steady relationship is positively associated with sexual satisfaction, as reported by Waite and Joyner (2001a, 2001b). These results could be applicable in health policy or practice: having a steady
relationship has been shown to be predictive of positive health outcomes (Richters et al., 2003). Therefore, cohabiting with a partner could be an important way to gain confidence with one another, privacy, and emotional support or to share positive events. In addition, a long-term temporal horizon was positively associated with sexual satisfaction, a finding also reported by Waite and Joyner (2001a, 2001b). Finding a new partner is a difficult process, according to the rational choice theory. Since this process is related to different emotional and time investments, people should carefully assess which partners are more beneficial for their physical and emotional needs.

Degree of sexual exclusiveness was also positively associated with sexual satisfaction levels, as suggested by Waite and Joyner (2001a, 2001b). In Chile, this finding may be associated with high intolerance levels toward extramarital sex (CONASIDA & ANRS, 2000); but a sexually exclusive relationship could facilitate emotional investment and therefore be related to sexual satisfaction, as shown by Yela (2000). Furthermore, hedonic scenarios, such as extramarital sex or one-night stands, are seen as less socially acceptable. Therefore, sexual satisfaction increases with sexual exclusivity, emotional investment, and long-time horizon. Marriage and cohabitation could be the type of marital status that fit these characteristics, although in Chile they could be reinforced by religion and norms.

Our findings may also confirm that sexual activity is predominantly a social activity occurring in a relationship context, as suggested by Laumann et al. (1994). Moreover, results confirmed previous findings reported in rational choice theories. Therefore, positive association between sexual satisfaction and a steady partner relationship estimated for the long term (sex with husband or wife is different than sex with a one-night stand) may confirm the value that sexual activity commitment acquires (Waite & Joyner, 2001a). Results also confirmed previous findings related to the importance of equity in the investment and exchange of sexual relation resources and, thus, variables like sexual relation initiative were positively associated with sexual satisfaction, as reported in other studies (e.g., Haavio-Manila & Kontula, 1997). Our results agreed with the theory of sexual scripts. Therefore, the study may provide Chileans with guidelines providing information on choosing sexual partners, under what circumstances it would be appropriate to act sexually (e.g., sex in a long-term relationship and being in love), and what type of activities would be tolerated (e.g., extramarital sex is rejected).

However, the study has many limitations. The first limitation of the study is considering as “intercourse” only sexual practices involving two individual’s genitals, excluding, for example, masturbation. This is because of the aspect the study aimed at identifying sexual practices bearing HIV infection risk.

A second important limitation of the study is related to the use of a single item to assess sexual satisfaction. From a psychometric viewpoint, a single item is not optimal. Psychometric theory has long noted that
single-item scales are much less reliable than multiitem scales and that, in a study with too many items, prediction is imprecise. For that reason, an important limitation in this study is the way we measured sexual satisfaction. In the future, it is necessary to develop searches centered in a suitable evaluation about sexual satisfaction, generating valid and reliable instruments (Arrington, Cofrancesco, & Wu, 2004).

Our results were consistent with the theoretical framework, but, as with other studies, the COSECON survey is a cross-sectional study. Therefore, we measured outcomes (e.g., like frequency of sexual intercourse or sexual initiative) at the same time that we measured the characteristics used to predict these outcomes (Waite & Joyner, 2001a). Therefore, future longitudinal studies should be conducted to confirm these findings.

Finally, one other problem was the difficulty of distinguishing cohort effects from other types of affects, such as age or generational effects from our use of cross-sectional data only. Therefore, it would be appropriate in future to use a life-course perspective.

REFERENCES


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**APPENDIX**

Definitions of Variables

The questionnaire was published in *Estudio de Comportamiento Sexual. Primeros Análisis* (CONASIDA & ANRS, 2000, pp. 276–297). A detailed version of the definition of variables is available from the authors upon request.
Intercourse. Bodily coupling of two individuals, implying the genital area of at least one participant. This definition leaves out erotic practice. So, only practices involving vaginal, oral, and anal sex were considered.

Age. 18–19, 20–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, and 60–69 years old.

Educational level. The educational level was the total number of years Chileans had attended school, college, or other educational institutions. People attending school for 12 or more years were classified as having high education; people attending school for 8–12 years were classified as middle education. People attending school for 0–8 years were classified as low education. Finally, there was the never in school group.

Socio-economic level. Upper, middle, and low class.

Marital status. Single, married, cohabitant, widowed, or separated. Chile does not yet have a divorce law.

Frequency of sexual intercourse. This variable included the number times of intercourse per week, classified as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, or more times.

Orgasm. Did you have an orgasm in your last sexual intercourse with this partner? Answers were yes, no, or I don’t know.

Type of sexual repertoires. Restricted repertoire (only vaginal sex), largest repertoire (vaginal; vaginal and oral and vaginal, oral, and anal sex), and alternative repertoire (only oral and anal). The COSECON survey only included these types of practices.

Type of partnership. This variable was classified as steady, temporary partner, or I don’t know.

Feeling love. Which is your feeling for this partner: in love or not in love.

Duration of relationship. This variable was measured per month and classified in 1 year or less, 1–5 years, 5–10 years, 10–20 years, 20–30 years, 30–40 years, and 40 years or more.

Degree of sexual exclusiveness. Did you have another sex partner in the last year: yes or no.

Time horizon. Do you think this relationship will continue in the next 12 months: yes or no.

Sexual initiative. Who usually takes sexual initiative: always you, usually you, always your partner, usually your partner, or both.

Communication of intimate topics. This variable was classified as Talk with partner about intimate topics or don’t talk.

Sexual satisfaction in the past. How has your sexual intercourse been in the past: bad life in the past or good life in the past.

Long-term sexual intercourse. What happens when are has a long-term sexual intercourse partner: you find new experiences or you feel bored.

What do you first consider regarding sexual intercourse with this partner: love, fear of pregnancy, or fear of HIV/AIDS.

Sexual desire discrepancies. Have you ever desired sexual intercourse with your partner when he/she did not: yes or no.
Changes in negative aspects of sexual life. Can you change the negative aspects of your sexual life? Answers were yes or no.

Age at first sexual intercourse. People who had had their first sexual intercourse at the age of 16 or younger were classified as having earlier sexual initiation. People who had had their first sexual intercourse during ages 16–18 years were classified as having middle sexual initiation. Finally, people 18 years or older were classified as having late sexual initiation.