

Objectification in romantic relationships related to sexual pressure and coercion

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To sexually objectify a woman is to focus on her body in terms of how it can provide sexual pleasure rather than viewing her as a complete human being with thoughts and feelings. While objectification has long been considered a problem in the media, how does it affect individual romantic relationships? New research published in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, a SAGE journal, finds that more objectification of a female partner's body is related to higher incidents of sexual pressure and coercion.

Researchers Laura R. Ramsey and Tiffany Hoyt surveyed 119 males and 162 females who had been in [heterosexual relationships](#). They found that men who frequently objectify their partner's bodies by excessively focusing on their appearance are more likely to feel shame about the shape and size of their partner's body which in turn is related to increased sexual pressure (i.e., the belief that men expect sex and that it is a woman's role to provide sex for her partner) and [sexual coercion](#), both in general and through violence and manipulation.

"Being more aware of how and when one thinks of their partner as an object, sexually or otherwise, could help relationship partners avoid sexual pressure and coercion and increase communication and respect within their relationship," the researchers wrote.

The data also supported the idea that women internalize objectification from their partners. This internalization is related to feeling shame about their bodies, a decrease in asserting themselves, and a decrease in

expressing what they do and do not want to do sexually.

"Acknowledging objectification in their relationships may help women realize when they lack agency and allow them to resist and avoid sexual pressure," the researchers continued. "Furthermore, thinking about objectification in terms of agency and sexual pressure could also have implications for women's relationship satisfaction, both sexual and otherwise. Women who feel that they have no control and who experience sexual pressure from their [partner](#) will not be as satisfied as women who feel like they have control over their body and the decisions in the relationship."

The researchers discussed additional ideas for decreasing objectification in heterosexual relationships.

"Activists should continue their work reducing the objectification of women in our culture, such as through the recognition and removal of objectifying images in the media. However, as male objectification of women is more common than female objectification of men, the onus is on men to reduce objectification and sexual violence. It is of utmost importance that activists and educators work with men to reduce the [objectification](#) of [women](#), both in general and in the context of romantic relationships."

More information: Find out more by reading the full article, "The Object of Desire: How Being Objectified Creates Sexual Pressure for Women in Heterosexual Relationships," available free for a limited time here: pwq.sagepub.com/content/early/.../84314544679.abstract

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