

# When women feel their partner demands perfection, sex life suffers

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Credit: George Hodan/public domain

Women who perceive that their sexual partner is imposing perfectionist standards on them may suffer sexual dysfunction as a result, psychologists at the University of Kent have found.

In the first in-depth study of how different types of sexual perfectionism affect women over a period of time, researchers also found that 'partner-

prescribed' sexual perfectionism contributed to negative self-image.

Perfectionism is defined as a 'striving for flawlessness and the setting of exceedingly high standards for performance, accompanied by tendencies for overly critical self-evaluations and concerns about [negative evaluations](#) by others'. It is a common personality characteristic that may affect all domains of life. However, the longer term consequences of how it affects people's sex life had previously not been explored.

The research, led by Professor Joachim Stoeber at the University's School of Psychology, considered the response of 366 women who completed two surveys in the period December 2013 to February 2014. These women, comprising 230 students and 136 internet users, had mean ages of 19.7 and 30 years respectively. Those recruited to the study were told that the online survey was investigating whether 'personal and interpersonal expectations and beliefs affect one's sexuality and sexual function'.

Researchers differentiated between four forms of sexual perfectionism: self-oriented, partner-oriented, partner-prescribed and socially prescribed. They found that partner-prescribed sexual perfectionism contributed to woman's negative sexual self-concept and female [sexual dysfunction](#). In particular, partner-prescribed sexual perfectionism predicted decreases in female sexual function regarding arousal.

They further found that partner-prescribed sexual perfectionism predicted decreases in sexual esteem and increases in sexual anxiety, suggesting that it is a psychological factor that may contribute to sexual self-concept problems in woman. The study is therefore likely to be of interest to clinicians, therapists and counsellors working to help woman in this area.

**More information:** Joachim Stoeber et al. Multidimensional Sexual

Perfectionism and Female Sexual Function: A Longitudinal Investigation, *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2016). DOI: [10.1007/s10508-016-0721-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-016-0721-7)

Provided by University of Kent

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