

Sex can make men sad, too, according to research

July 27 2018, by Amanda Weaver

A world-first study by QUT researchers concludes men can and do suffer from Postcoital Dysphoria (PCD) which results in feelings of sadness, tearfulness or irritability following sex.

Masters student Joel Maczkowiack and Professor Robert Schweitzer from QUT's School of Psychology and Counselling said that while the condition had been recognised in women, no studies had previously identified the phenomenon among males.

Their paper—Postcoital Dysphoria: Prevalence and Correlates among Males – has been published by the international Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy.

"The study breaks down the results of an international anonymous online survey of 1,208 men from Australia, the USA, the UK, Russia, New Zealand, Germany and elsewhere," said Mr Maczkowiack.

"Forty-one per cent of the participants reported experiencing PCD in their lifetime with 20 per cent reporting they had experienced it in the previous four weeks. Up to four per cent suffered from PCD on a regular basis."

Mr Maczkowiack added that some of the comments from men who participated and who had experienced sadness following sex described experiences ranging from "I don't want to be touched and want to be left alone" to "I feel unsatisfied, annoyed and very fidgety. All I really want

is to leave and distract myself from everything I participated in".

"Another described feeling "emotionless and empty" in contrast to the men who experienced the post coital experience positively, and used descriptors such as a "feeling of well-being, satisfaction, contentment" and closeness to their partner," he said.

Professor Schweitzer said the results indicated the male experience of sex could be far more varied and complex than previously thought. It also had implications for future therapies and more open discourse on the male sexual experience.

"The first three phases of the human sexual response cycle—excitement, plateau, and orgasm—have been the focus of the majority of research to date," Professor Schweitzer said.

"The experience of the resolution phase remains a bit of a mystery and is therefore poorly understood.

"It is commonly believed that males and females experience a range of positive emotions including contentment and relaxation immediately following consensual sexual activity.

"Yet previous studies on the PCD experience of females showed that a similar proportion of females had experienced PCD on a regular basis. As with the men in this new study, it is not well understood. We would speculate that the reasons are multifactorial, including both biological and psychological factors."

Mr Maczkowiack said anecdotal evidence from clinical settings as well as personal accounts posted on online blogs suggested that PCD did occur amongst males and had the potential to interfere with couple interactions following sexual activity

"It has, for example, been established that couples who engage in talking, kissing, and cuddling following sexual activity report greater sexual and relationship satisfaction, demonstrating that the resolution phase is important for bonding and intimacy," he said.

"So the negative affective state which defines PCD has potential to cause distress to the individual, as well as the partner, disrupt important relationship processes, and contribute to distress and conflict within the relationship, and impact upon sexual and relationship functioning."

Professor Schweitzer added that in Western cultures in particular, men faced a range of expectations and assumptions about their preferences, performance, and experience of sexual activity.

"These assumptions are pervasive within masculine sub-culture and include that males always desire and experience sex as pleasurable. The experience of PCD contradicts these dominant cultural assumptions about the male experience [sexual activity](#) and of the resolution phase," he said.

The participants were recruited via social media, online articles, and psychological research websites to voluntarily complete a cross-sectional online questionnaire.

More information: Joel Maczkowiack et al. Postcoital Dysphoria: Prevalence and Correlates among Males, *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/0092623X.2018.1488326](https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2018.1488326)

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