

NEW BLOG POST



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The role of attachment in couples' adjustment to PVD, through partner responses to pain

New publication:

THE JOURNAL OF SEX RESEARCH
2021, VOL. 58, NO. 2, 235-247
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2020.1761936>



An Attachment Perspective on Partner Responses to Genito-pelvic Pain and Their Associations with Relationship and Sexual Outcomes

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*Scroll to the next slide
to see what we found!*



THE BACKGROUND INFO:

PVD can cause pain during sex, which can affect sexual, psychological and relationship wellbeing for couples.

Past research has shown that couples' adjustment to PVD is influenced by how partners respond to women's pain.

One possible explanation for different partner responses is their attachment.

KEY TERMS:

- *Provoked vestibulodynia (PVD)* is a condition that causes pressure-provoked pain at the entrance of the vagina
- *Attachment* affects how a person seeks out support from their partner and how they give support in return



WHAT DID WE WANT TO KNOW?

Knowing why partners respond differently to women's pain may help us improve couple treatments for PVD, so we asked:

1

Can attachment predict how partners respond pain and how women perceive those responses?

2

Do partner responses mediate the relationship between attachment and couple adjustment to PVD?



WHAT DID WE DO?

We recruited

125 couples in which a woman was diagnosed with PVD

We asked

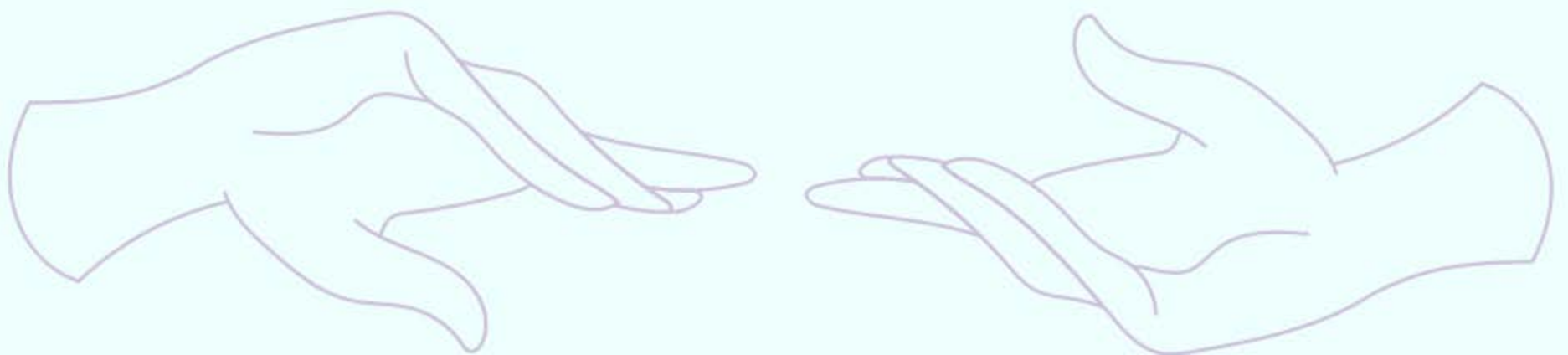
both members of each couple to complete questionnaires assessing:

- their attachment
- the partner's responses to the woman's pain (both self-report and as perceived by the woman)
- their adjustment to PVD (including levels of sexual distress, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction)



WHAT DID WE FIND?

- We found that partner responses (both self-reported and perceived) **did mediate** the relationship between attachment and couple adjustment.
- **Women's perceptions** of negative responses from their partner were more strongly associated with insecure attachment and poor couple adjustment than partners' self-reported responses.



SPECIFICALLY, WE FOUND...

Partners with higher attachment avoidance reported fewer facilitative responses to women's pain

This was associated with their own lower sexual and relationship satisfaction

When women or their partners had high attachment anxiety, women perceived more negative responses from their partners

This was associated with greater sexual distress and lower sexual and relationship satisfaction in both partners

Partners with higher attachment anxiety reported more negative responses to women's pain

This was associated with their own lower but women's higher relationship satisfaction

Women with greater attachment avoidance perceived more negative responses from their partners

This was associated with their own greater sexual distress and lower relationship satisfaction

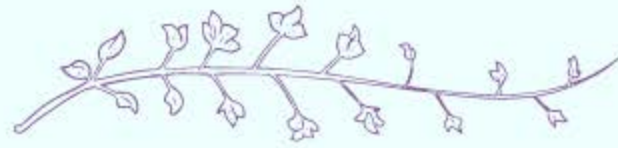


WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Our findings suggests that couples may benefit from treatments that address how partners respond to women's pain and how women perceive those responses, with a special focus on reducing negative responses.



THIS BLOG POST IS A SUMMARY OF OUR PAPER:



Charbonneau-Lefebvre, V., Rosen, N. O., Bosisio, M., Vaillancourt-Morel, M.-P., & Bergeron, S. (2020). An attachment perspective on partner responses to Genitopelvic pain and their associations with relationship and sexual outcomes. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 58(2), 235–247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2020.1761936>