






PARTNER ATTRACTION & SEXUAL WELL-BEING IN COUPLES COPING WITH SIAD

This study examined how daily attraction toward one's partner relates to sexual desire, satisfaction, and distress among couples coping with SIAD.

Scroll to see what we found!




Attraction Toward One's Partner is Associated with Sexual Desire, Satisfaction, and Distress Among Couples Coping with Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder

Charlene F. Belu , Sophie Bergeron , Jackie S. Huberman , Gracielle C. Schwenck  & Natalie O. Rosen 

Pages 892-902 | Published online: 28 Aug 2024

 Cite this article  <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/10.1080/00224499.2024.2391110>

 Check for updates



Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder

(SIAD)* is characterized in the DSM-5-TR as **persistent and distressing** low levels of sexual desire and/or arousal.

SIAD is the **most common sexual problem** among cisgender and transgender women and is one of the most frequent reasons for seeking couples therapy [1-5].

[1] West et al., 2008; [2] Witting et al., 2008; [3] Kerckhof et al., 2019; [4] Wierckx et al., 2014; [5] Pélouquin et al., 2019

For both members, **couples coping with SIAD report lower sexual satisfaction, sexual desire, and greater sexual distress** compared to couples not coping with SIAD [6, 7].

[6] Parish & Hahn, 2016; [7] Rosen et al., 2019

*The official diagnosis in the DSM-5-TR is *Female* Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder (FSIAD). However, we removed “Female” for inclusivity purposes because people who do not identify as female (e.g., non-binary, transgender, intersex individuals) can still meet diagnostic criteria for SIAD. In this study, we refer to participants as women and gender diverse individuals with SIAD.

Existing research and theory suggest that **partner attraction is important to activate the sexual response system** and has been linked to **greater sexual satisfaction** [8–13].

[8] Ågmo & Laan, 2022; [9] Laan & Both, 2008; [10] Both et al., 2007; [11] Toates, 2009; [12] Toates, 2014; [13] Mark & Herbenick, 2014

However, little research has examined **whether daily attraction to one's partner relates to sexual desire, satisfaction, or distress** among couples coping with sexual difficulties.



QUESTION & HYPOTHESES

1

QUESTION: Is daily attraction to one's partner associated with sexual desire, satisfaction, and distress in couples coping with SIAD?

HYPOTHESIS: On days when individuals with SIAD report greater attraction to their partners, both partners would experience greater sexual desire, satisfaction and lower distress.

2

3

HYPOTHESIS: We expected partners of individuals with SIAD to show similar patterns.

N = 227
COUPLES

Women and gender diverse individuals with SIAD and their romantic partners

Participation involved:

- Independently completing daily online surveys for 56 days
- Reporting daily...
 - Partner attraction
 - Sexual desire
 - Sexual satisfaction
 - Sexual distress

WE FOUND THAT...

On days **when individuals with SIAD reported higher attraction** for their partner, **both partners** reported:

- **↑ sexual satisfaction**
- **↑ sexual desire**

Partners reported:

- **↓ sexual distress**



WE FOUND THAT...

On days when **partners reported higher attraction**, both partners reported:

- **↑ sexual desire**

Partners reported:

- **↓ sexual distress**

HOWEVER, individuals with SIAD reported:

- **↑ sexual distress**



SO, WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

This study found that **when partners reported feeling more attraction** to individuals with SIAD, they **experienced less sexual distress**, but the **individuals with SIAD experienced more sexual distress**. The authors suggest that increased **expressions of attraction** (such as touch, flirting, or sexual initiation) **may unintentionally feel like pressure or expectations for sex** to the person with SIAD. Because individuals with SIAD often already feel distressed about their low desire, these **signals of attraction may increase feelings of guilt, anxiety, or worry about disappointing their partner**, even if the attraction itself is positive. Future research could investigate how couples interpret expressions of attraction.

SO, WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

Daily changes in partner attraction may play an important role in **daily sexual well-being** among couples coping with SIAD.

These findings suggest that **partner attraction may represent a potential treatment target** for improving sexual well-being in couples coping with SIAD.



THIS IS A SUMMARY OF OUR PUBLISHED ARTICLE:

Belu, C. F., Bergeron, S., Huberman, J. S., Schwenck, G. C., & Rosen, N. O. (2025). Attraction toward one's partner is associated with sexual desire, satisfaction, and distress among couples coping with sexual interest/arousal disorder. *Journal of sex research*, 62(5), 892-902.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2024.2391110>



Infographic by Audrey Chu