

Introduction

- Sexual well-being is a vital component of healthy development and overall happiness and well-being (WHO, 2019).
- However, individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are often overlooked when it comes to sexuality.
- Psychosexual well-being is a working model that explores how an individual's intrapersonal relationship affects their sexual well-being. Psychosexual well-being is comprised of sexual self-concept, sexual knowledge, and sexual feelings and attitudes.
- Through this presented model, we hope to understand the foundation of sexual expression.

Purpose

By comparing groups of ASD and neurotypical (NT), this study explores how sexuality and sexual identity in autistic individuals may differ from the neurotypical population.

Participants

- 108 participants (54 with a diagnosis of ASD; 54 without an ASD diagnosis)
- Age: $M = 26.7$ years
- Self-reported race: 63% White; Remaining included various groups (largest: 18% mixed race)
- Self-reported relationship status: 80% reported some type of partnered relationship; 20% reported casually dating

Measures

Participants completed anonymous survey questions that aimed to assess for the three components of Conceptual Sexual Well-Being: sexual self-concept, sexual knowledge, and sexual feelings and attitudes. Questions were compiled from the following validated measures:

- Teen Transition Inventory (TTI; Dekker et al., 2017)
- Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG; Klein et al., 1985)
- Social Connectedness survey (Lee & Robbins, 1995)

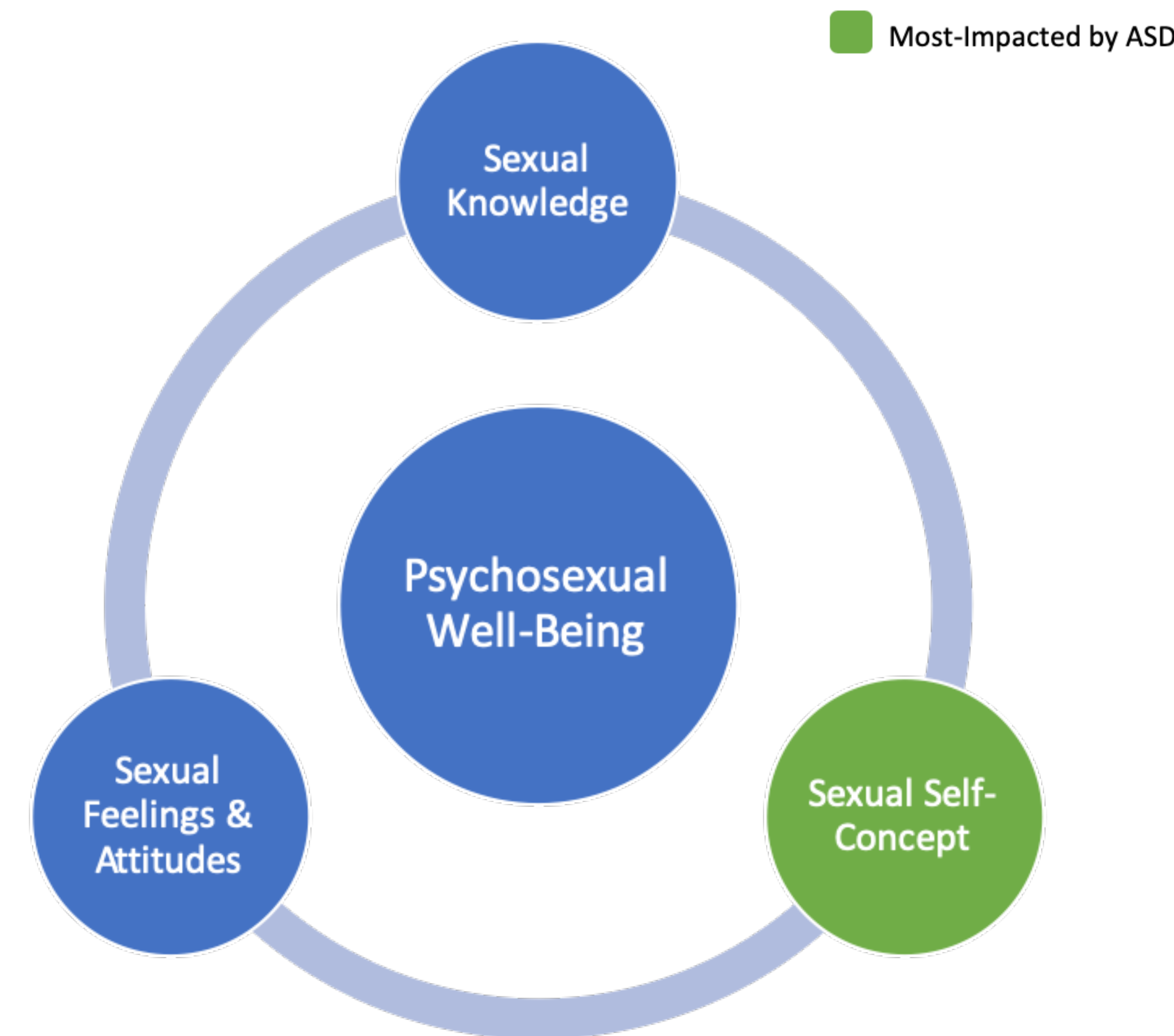


Figure 1. Psychosexual Well-Being Model

Table 1. T-test between ASD and NT on Psychosexual Well-Being (n=108)

	Psychosexual Well-Being			
	M	SD	t	p
NT	9.79	40.45	2.440	.016*
ASD	-9.79	42.90		

* $p \leq .05$

Table 2. T-test between ASD and NT on Sexual Self-Concept (n=108)

	Sexual Self-Concept			
	M	SD	t	p
NT	5.59	11.75	5.008	.000*
ASD	-5.59	11.45		

* $p \leq .05$

Table 3. Pearson Correlation (r) between ASD and NT on Sexual Knowledge and Sexual Self-Concept

	Sexual Self-Concept		r	p
	ASD	NT		
Sexual Knowledge	ASD	NT	.288*	.035
	ASD	ASD	.189	.172

* $p \leq 0.05$

Results

- **Psychosexual Well-Being scores compared by group:**
 - NT individuals scored significantly higher on Psychosexual Well-Being than autistic individuals
- **Sexual Self-Concept scores compared by group:**
 - Comparing sexual self-concept scores between groups, the NT group rated themselves significantly higher than the ASD group
- **Correlation of Sexual Self-Concept and Sexual Knowledge in each group:**
 - NT population there was a slightly significant positive association between sexual knowledge and sexual self-concept
 - No significant relationship between these two variables was found in the ASD population

Conclusions

- These results point to the need for greater exploration of sexuality development in the ASD population. Romantic and sexual expression are vital components of life satisfaction and overall well-being, and it is crucial to understand how we can foster positive sexual well-being and healthy sexuality development for all individuals.
- Findings discovered that autistic individuals do not demonstrate a strong connection between sexual self-concept and sexual knowledge scores, possibly indicating a disconnect in the way that sexual knowledge is disseminated for autistic individuals.

Next Steps

Given the limited amount of research in the field on positive sexuality and ASD, future research should continue to examine the differences in sexuality development between the ASD and NT population to inform future interventions.

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